

**THE MARRIED WOMAN, THE TEACHING PROFESSION AND THE
STATE IN VICTORIA, 1872-1956**

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of married women's teaching labour in the Victorian Education Department. It looks at the rise to power of married women teachers, the teaching matriarchs, in the 1850s and 1860s in early colonial Victoria when married women teachers were valued for the moral propriety their presence brought to the teaching of female pupils. In 1872 the newly created Victorian Education Department would herald a new regime and the findings of the Rogers Templeton Commission spell doom for married women teachers. The thesis traces their expulsion from the service under the 1889 Public Service Act implementing the marriage bar. The labyrinthine legislation that followed the passing of the Public Service Act 1889 defies adequate explanation but the outcome was clear. For the next sixty-seven years the bar would remain in place, condemning the 'needy' married woman teacher to life as an itinerant temporary teacher at the mercy of the Department. The irony was that this sometimes took place under 'liberal' administrators renowned for their reformist policies. When married women teachers returned in considerable numbers during the Second World War, they were supported in their claim for reinstatement by women unionists in the Victorian Teachers' Union (VTU). In the 1950s married women temporary teachers, members of the VTU, took up the fight, forming the Temporary Teachers' Club (TTC) to press home their claims. The TTC's 'cooperative campaign' would eventually force the Department to pass the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act, repealing the marriage bar in 1956.

The thesis takes gender as a central category of analysis and draws on recent perspectives in feminist history on women teachers' lives. Through case studies and interviews it explores the educational bureaucracy's reshaping of the teaching service in the Victorian Education Department.

Declaration

This is to certify that

- (i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD,
- (ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- (iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

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Legislative Timeline

- 1881** **ABOLITION OF PENSIONS ACT (RAMSAY ACT)**
Abolished the payment of government-funded pensions to civil servants
- 1883** **PUBLIC SERVICE ACT**
Teachers became public servants
- 1888** **EDUCATION (TEACHERS) ACT**
Allowed women teachers to retire at fifty years of age or after thirty years service
- 1889** **PUBLIC SERVICE ACT**
Marriage bar introduced
- 1893** **TEACHERS SALARIES ACT**
Married women whose names were on an employment register in 1889 eligible for employment
- 1893** **TEACHERS ACT**
Women appointed prior to 1881 exempt from the marriage bar and not eligible for compensation on marriage
- 1895** **TEACHERS ACT**
Retrenched widows eligible to apply for reinstatement in the Department
- 1932-1947** **MARRIED WOMEN (LECTURERS AND TEACHERS) ACTS (NSW)**
The marriage bar was implemented in New South Wales in 1932, amended in 1935 and removed in 1947
- 1956** **TEACHING SERVICE (MARRIED WOMEN) ACT**
Reinstatement of married women teachers in the service

List of Abbreviations

ADB	Australian Dictionary of Biography
AGTA	Australian Geography Teachers' Association
AS	Australasian Schoolmaster and Literary Review
FWTAO	Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario
MAUM	Movement Against Uranium Mining
MWLTA	Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act, 1932, no.28, George V.
MLA	Member Legislative Assembly (Lower house of parliament)
NSWPD	New South Wales Parliamentary Debates
PND	People for Nuclear Disarmament
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TPTC	Trained Primary Teachers' Certificate
TTC	Temporary Teachers' Club
UAW	Union of Australian Women
UAW	United Associations of Women (in New South Wales)
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VPD	Victorian Parliamentary Debates
VPP	Victorian Parliamentary Papers
VPRO	Victorian Public Record Office
VPRS	Victorian Public Record Series
VSTA	Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association
VSMPA	Victorian Secondary Masters' Professional Association
VTU	Victorian Teachers' Union

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis began as a study of the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department, but it has become much more. Originally I was drawn to this area of research for a number of reasons. The subject of my masters in education was an elementary teacher, Grace Neven, whose poverty-stricken descent into madness resulted from her exploited status as a temporary teacher forced to teach in a hostile and remote country appointment. Grace made two unfortunate marriages after the passing of the Public Service Act 1889, prohibiting the employment of married women. The dramatic story of her first 'marriage' appears in chapter four of the thesis. The second marriage, which disqualified her again from permanent employment as a teacher in the Victorian Education Department, left her a deserted wife, a relatively common occurrence in the nineteenth century, and needing to earn a living as a temporary teacher.

Teaching in a technical school in Victoria in 1971, I was more fortunate. Left with a young baby to support, I was very grateful for the economic independence my permanent teaching position afforded. But I was also keenly aware of the disapproval I attracted in leaving a tiny baby 'to fend for itself' while I returned to teaching. Although the 1970s signified the beginning of women's liberation in Australia, portrayed in contemporary media accounts as a time of freedom and sexual experimentation, there were other forces at work. The discourses surrounding motherhood and the family were still very conservative and tightly controlling. And memories of my experiences were jogged recently by Rebecca Coulter's paper, describing the advice given to women with children wanting to teach in the Ontario teaching service in the 1980s. Married women with children were advised by the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario – itself ambivalent about married women teachers – to cite their child care arrangements in their applications. Coulter includes some of the sample entries that the Federation suggested, for example: 'Married, one child 4 years of age – registered full time in the Sunshine Nursery School; part-time housekeeper is in my home from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. every week day' or 'Married-one child 2 years of age. My mother resides in our home and cares for the child'.¹

As Coulter's study confirms, married women teachers were warned that their professional commitments should take priority over everything else. In the 1970s even my supporters whispered in my ear, 'Never mention you have a child, and if it comes out in conversation point out that your mother is at home looking after her'. If the anger and criticism I encountered as a working mother of a new baby in the 1970s was a backlash against 'liberated' women offering a serious challenge to the established gender order it seems the prejudices lingered on!

Hence my choice of the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department as a thesis study has been the outcome of what Kathleen Weiler and other feminists have termed a 'personal trouble'.² While working on *California Schoolteachers*, and reclaiming the history of her mother's teaching career and a generation of women teachers, Weiler struggled to come to terms with the loss of her mother. It became a work of both personal and intellectual challenge. Similarly after writing Grace Neven's story, some twenty years after struggling to hold my teaching position in the 1970s, I had cause to reflect on what might have been my lot had the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department prevailed. I had no conception of a marriage bar then, let alone its operation in the Department. In the face of the opposition I encountered, I would not have held my teaching position had there been any question as to my legal entitlement to continue as a permanent teacher. This 'personal trouble' has given my thesis an added dimension. I wanted to know whether all 'needy' married women teachers, deserted wives and widows, were deemed 'Outsiders', temporary teachers who were treated as poorly by the Department as Grace Neven. And if so why, and how, had such a mean spirited marriage bar come into effect? Did other states/countries operate similarly? These were some of the questions that I brought to this study of married women teachers' struggle to claim a right to a professional career and financial independence in the Victorian Education Department.

In fact married women have made a significant contribution to the history of teaching in Victoria and this project is a historical investigation of their teaching labour for a period of approximately a century. In early colonial Victoria married women teachers were welcomed by the National School Board (1848-1862) and its successor, the Board of Education (1862-1872). In 1867 the Higinbotham

Commission had accepted their presence as lending moral propriety to the enterprise of coeducational teaching.³ Yet by 1883 the Rogers Templeton Commission was highly critical of the employment of married women teachers.⁴ This thesis looks at the rise to power of married women teachers (the teaching matriarchs) in the 1850s and 60s and focuses on their exclusion from the service in the 1889 Public Service Act. It draws attention to a number of paradoxes in the social and economic liberalism of nineteenth-century Victoria. Liberal parliamentarians were able to support a wide range of reforming measures aimed at improving the lot of the working class family man; the claims of women for the vote and the improvement of civil rights for women in marriage. But they put an end to the financial independence of the married woman teacher and turned a blind eye to the suffering of 'needy' women, the exploited temporary teachers. Married women temporary teachers returned to the Department in considerable numbers during the Second World War. They lobbied the Victorian Teachers' Union (VTU) and the Department and established the Temporary Teachers' Club (TTC), resulting in their successful reinstatement in the Department with the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act 1956.

Methodology

The project has two interrelated research directions. It includes an examination of all Acts of Parliament, regulations and administrative decisions regulating the employment of married women teachers in the latter years of the nineteenth century until the mid 1950s. It focuses, in particular, on the Rogers Templeton Commission 1881-1884, and the legislation pertaining to married women flowing from their recommendations. It was these discourses which established the ground rules for the Department's treatment of married women teachers in Victoria for decades to come. The thesis also examines individual case studies of married women teachers drawn from the career records in the History of Education archives, at pertinent points of time. A comparative chapter on married women teachers in New South Wales draws on career records from the Department of School Education and relevant archives. The latter section of the thesis focuses on the meaning of the bar in married women teachers' lives. It draws on interviews, written submissions and telephone discussions with thirty-five retired married women teachers, including leading figures in the TTC and the campaign to remove the bar in the 1950s. For reasons

mentioned later in the thesis, I have not included the names of some of these women in the bibliography.

Literature Overview

The project is located within certain contemporary debates in the historiography of women teachers. When I began this project in 1993 research was just beginning to be published on writing the lives of women teachers, although women historians had been researching teaching and teachers for sometime. In the mid 1980s, revisionist work, such as Noeline Kyle's study of women teachers in one Australian state, *Her Natural Destiny: education of women in New South Wales*, exposed the structural problems women teachers encountered in attempting to advance professionally in schools.⁵ Kyle's work differed from her North American counterparts in one significant respect. Kyle argued that the Department of Public Instruction and the bureaucracy in New South Wales preferred a masculine teaching service. (A sentiment that had the heartfelt support of their Victorian colleagues.) Kyle argued that the feminisation of the teaching service was, however, less significant in New South Wales than in North America.⁶ There, work of Michael Katz, Marta Danylewycz and Alison Prentice showed that increasing numbers of women in teaching was linked with their low status and cheap labour.⁷ James Albisetti examined the phenomenon in a European context.⁸ Similarly Geraldine Clifford's early work on American schoolteachers published in 1983 included a wide-ranging analysis of the process of feminisation in the teaching profession in America. It concludes with a tantalising remark for a researcher interested in the implementation and effects of marriage bars on women teachers that 'after 1910...educated women had decided *not* to choose between marriage and a career but to try to have both'.⁹ (I wondered what this meant about the existence/operation of marriage bars in the teaching services in America.)

Research on state school teachers also coincided with work reclaiming the importance of women teachers in private academies and women who owned their own schools.¹⁰ Indeed Marjorie Theobald's work on women teachers in Victoria established significant links between these women teachers, their schools and recruitment by the state.¹¹ The release, however, of an important collection of research on women teachers, *Women Who Taught*, edited by Alison Prentice and

Marjorie Theobald, was an important turning point in the development of research on the writing of women teachers' lives. This work brought together key essays specifically concerned with women teachers. Their introductory essay, 'The historiography of women teachers', offered an important and frank analysis of the problematics of gender and power in various educational contexts. It foreshadowed the need to ground analysis of women teachers lives in the material detail of their circumstances.

And it articulated an issue of particular pertinence to this research: the tension between the rule of the state (patriarchal power) and the recognition of the agency of women teachers. This collection would prove a reference point for further feminist work on women teachers and the profession of teaching. Prentice and Theobald's encouragement to continue research was followed by a prodigious output of publications: *Knowing women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia* by Marjorie Theobald, *Love and Freedom*, by Alison Mackinnon, *California Schoolteachers* by Kathleen Weiler, *City Teachers* by Kate Roumaniere, not to mention a host of articles and theses.¹² More recently *Telling Women's Lives* has appeared, in which a number of researchers, including some of the above, reflect on their research questions and methodologies. Of significance, particularly for the latter part of this thesis where I struggle with using the interviews women have given me, are the writers' concerns with their representations as historians/researchers and their recognition that they too are implicated in writing about their subjects.¹³

Yet in this considerable output there has been surprisingly little attention given to the significance of the marriage bar in shaping women teachers lives, careers and the profession of teaching. This is even more surprising given the wealth of anecdotal evidence in the community – there is hardly a woman teacher of a certain age who has not been affected by a marriage bar in teaching or who knows someone who has been. There is, however, some work in Canada, America, Britain and Australia. And what is available is intriguing. The most extensive research is doubtless David Peters' work, *The Status of the Married Woman Teacher*, published in 1934 (reprinted 1972) by the Teachers' College Press, Columbia University, New York City.¹⁴ This is Peters' doctoral project and it is a wide ranging – and highly supportive – analysis of the history of married women's contribution to industry and

most particularly teaching in America. Why did Peters' choose this topic? Aside from his interest in the area it was clearly a controversial topic of the day. No state in America had passed any law against the employment of married women, although the power of the school board to terminate employment had been tested in many. Peters argues that there had been a swing against employing married women teachers in America since the late 1920s.¹⁵ This is supported by Geraldine Clifford who argues that the 1930s was an intensely competitive period, which pitted sex against sex and single women against their married counterparts.¹⁶ Lois Scharf, too, notes in her work on married women teachers in the Depression in America, that the census figures show that 'more than 150,000 married women were working as teachers by 1930'.¹⁷ Not surprisingly, the press of the day was full of 'revealing stereotypes'. This public debate doubtless fuelled Peters' thesis. Peters' introduction is a digest of the prejudices both for and against the married woman teacher, which would do justice to any contemporary analysis.

Peters claimed that married women were unwilling to choose between husbands and careers and problems arose with their employment in times of economic stress, when competition for jobs was keen. His research includes a literature review and a study of the comparative effectiveness, as teachers, of married women versus single women in Virginia in the 1930s. Among other factors, Peters examines absences for illness and non-illness, in-service training, ratings by supervisors, personal responsibilities, learning progress of students and professional attitude. Peters also found no evidence to justify a policy of discrimination against married women teachers as a class.¹⁸ He found that:

No uniformity in practice prevails in this country with respect to employing married women as public school teachers. It ranges from no restriction in Los Angeles, where 50 per cent of the women teachers are married, to absolute restriction in Columbus, Ohio, where no married women teachers are employed.¹⁹

If the handful of research I have uncovered on the married woman teacher holds true, then Peters' findings are valid for married women teachers not only across states in America – but across countries and communities. The married woman teacher's

circumstances are specific to time and place. Peters and Clifford have both noted the introduction of marriage bars and subsequent challenges to these rulings, arising particularly during the 1920s. Similarly Alison Oram, in 'Serving two masters? The introduction of the marriage bar in teaching in the 1920s', compares the opposition to married women teaching in Britain in the 1970s to the problems they faced during the recessions of the 1920s and the 1930s. British elementary teachers were encouraged to return to teaching before and during the First World War. By 1921 more than 15 per cent of women teachers were married and it was only in the 1920s that the vast majority of local education authorities banned married women. Oram offers an incisive analysis of their motivations: as a backlash to feminist gains after the First World War; as deliberate policy in creating a reserve army of labour; as an attempt to create jobs for unemployed young teachers; and as a push for married women teachers to become full-time mothers and increase the birth rate.²⁰

Other writers such as Margaret Littlewood, trace the role of the teacher unions in married women's participation in the workforce.²¹ Geoffrey Partington provides a statistical overview of married women teachers' participation in teaching in England and Wales in the twentieth century.²² This work, in common with recent Australian research examining the operation of the marriage bar in New South Wales, is episodic.²³ What none of these studies do, partly because of the limited nature of their data, is examine the effect of the marriage bar on the construction of a male-dominated teaching profession or in the day-to-day lives of women teachers.

Cecilia Reynold's work on Ontario schoolteachers goes some way to redressing these shortcomings. Once again, the focus is on the introduction of marriage bars, both informal and formal, in the 1920s and 30s. In her masters thesis and in a further study with Harry Smaller, Reynolds examined the symbolic and material effect of marriage bars on women teachers.²⁴ Citing earlier research by historians Alison Prentice and Doris French on the pressures against married women, including married women teachers working during the Depression, Reynolds and Smaller found that both a formal marriage bar implemented by the Toronto Board of Education in 1925 and informal practices 'positioned men and women very differently within the teacher workforce'. The marriage bars in Ontario were very effective in discouraging married women from the teaching service; during the

period 1931 and following, they comprised only 3 - 5 per cent of the teaching population. Consequently, male teachers, regarded as more stable because women were likely resign to marry, were encouraged in gaining higher qualifications. Reynolds and Smaller concluded that the staff was divided along gender lines, older married men, single young women and occasional, older maligned 'spinsters'. The result of the marriage bars in Ontario was, not surprisingly, unequal relations between the sexes.²⁵

A shortcoming of their study is that census data on the marital status of teachers in Ontario is not available prior to 1931. And consequently the status of the married woman teacher before this time when, presumably, married women were at the mercy of informal marriage bars, is a matter for speculation. In another Canadian study, Mary Kinnear examines women teachers' conditions in Winnipeg from 1933-66, focussing on the split in the Winnipeg Teachers' Association in 1931 over the inequitable salary cuts imposed on women teachers during the Depression.²⁶ The Association split into Women's Locals and Men's Locals and Kinnear uses the records of these Locals in addition to interviews with surviving teachers to examine the impact of the Women's Local on gender issues in teaching. In 1931, 80 per cent of the total population of 1,795 teachers were women. And of these only 4 per cent were married women. It is not clear whether this was a result of the operation of informal marriage bars or a formal campaign in 1930 to remove all married women teachers. Kinnear, too, does not have data on the employment of married women teachers prior to 1931. She suggests that 'from early days women teachers were expected to retire on marriage, and if they did not do so voluntarily they were dismissed'. Only two excuses were accepted for the continued employment of married women teachers in 1930: 'Either the teacher had a special skill, such as the teaching of retarded children, which would have been difficult to replace, or she was deemed to have an abnormal domestic situation, which justified her earning a salary.'²⁷

The prohibition of married women was relaxed in 1940 and dropped in 1946. Kinnear notes that after the lifting of the bar more women, both married and single, made longer careers. Teachers also improved their initial qualifications, but it was still male teachers who were rewarded with the highest paid positions at senior high

schools. In the final paragraph of her study Kinnear suggests that women were relegated to the margins of the teaching profession by, 'most importantly, the structural factors which served male dominance in the wider world'.²⁸

Kinnear's comment may seem a truism and it does not explain women teachers' lowly status in a male-dominated teaching profession. But a study of the implementation and operation of a marriage bar does. This study of the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department is important because it offers a unique opportunity to examine the construction of a male dominated teaching service over a period of approximately six decades of continuous operation of the bar. Introduced in the Public Service Act 1889 the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department affords an opportunity to explore what Marjorie Theobald has termed the revolving-door career structure of teaching. Young single women entered the profession, and resigned on marriage. Alternatively, women could remain as the much-maligned spinster of the infant department, while men pursued their careers.²⁹

For a number of reasons, also, it is important to consider the implications of the marriage bar delivered through a public service act. Desley Deacon's detailed study of women's career in the New South Wales Public Service in *Managing Gender: the state, the new middle class and women workers 1830-1930*, is illuminating in a number of respects.³⁰ Deacon shows how the male middle class sought to establish new bailiwicks for male dominance, and teaching was one domain men sought to reclaim. T.A. Coghlan, the New South Wales statist and powerful public servant, was the architect of the New South Wales Public Service Act 1895 which implemented a marriage bar. Devoted to the cause of the working man, Coghlan was determined to construct a 'family' labour market, where men were the natural 'breadwinners'. His aim was to regulate the employment of women and, of course, regulate proper gender relations.³¹ As Deacon has argued, not only did this set formal limits on women's employment and impose new controls on their labour, it gave 'male public servants a high degree of autonomy from political control and allowed them considerable control over their labour market conditions'.³² And this is precisely what occurred in Victoria. Ironically, as chapter seven outlines, women teachers were spared the marriage bar in New South Wales in 1895, although other married women public servants would feel its effects.³³ And it is enlightening to

ponder the differences in approach to the marriage bar by the two colonies. T.A. Coghlan, the force behind the development of the marriage bar in New South Wales and Alexander Peacock, who assiduously administered its operation in Victoria, were both protectionists and shared a nexus of values. But it was in New South Wales that male voices spoke strongly in favour of married women's right to economic independence, not in Victoria despite its much-vaunted claims to social and economic liberalism.

Hence, in the mid 1890s Victoria stood alone in Australia with a public service act banning married women from employment. And the structures were in place to enforce a gendered division of labour: powerful public servants, a highly centralised bureaucracy and an ideology hostile to married women working. This was to prove an ideal formula for establishing a reserve army of very cheap, temporary and desperate female labour.

Unfortunately, despite the formality of the marriage bar under a public service act, and what Desley Deacon calls the Australian 'characteristic talent for bureaucracy', the dealings of the Victorian Education Department with its married women teachers are not transparent to the historian. In keeping with the invisibility of married women teachers in the records of overseas studies, where data on informal marriage bars is not documented and certainly not easy to retrieve, this study, also, suffers from certain limitations. The sweep of territory that the thesis covers, some seven decades, is difficult to do justice to in breadth and in depth. And the invisibility of the married woman teacher after she was formally removed from the Department has proved very frustrating. Legislation on married women teachers in the Victorian Education Department is difficult to 'read'. At certain points, for example, in chapters two and five, my interpretations are speculative. Just as pertinent is the fact that important decisions on the fate of married women teachers were often made by Department regulation, and this could take place in private dealings or in Cabinet and fuel more speculation for the historian as to their meaning and motivation. This is particularly apparent in chapter five.

There are further limitations to this thesis. I have been unable to pinpoint when the 'teaching widow' was reinstated in the Department. I would argue that the marriage

bar in the Victorian Education Department is possibly the earliest of the formal bars to be introduced in teaching in the western world. On this basis it would appear to be the most stringent and the meanest. Its high-handed treatment of the 'unsupported' married woman, the widow and the deserted wife, often women with dependents, is deserving of the utmost criticism. Geraldine Clifford puts the case very clearly for what it meant to be a teaching widow in America:

Widowhood conferred certain career advantages on women teachers. First, it exempted them from the restrictions or prejudices against employing the married woman. Second, it gave them a perceived advantage over single women as having normal emotions and having led a 'normal life'. Finally, it gave them an acceptable economic reason to teach. The latter was especially important if they coveted administrative positions.³⁴

This was certainly not the case for widows in the Victorian Education Department as several chapters in this thesis will attest. But exactly when change occurred in the status of the widow in the Victorian Education Department remains a mystery. Despite an intensive search of Department correspondence and regulations, I can find no documented evidence. Nor have interviews with married women teachers shed any light on the situation. A few recall teaching alongside women who had been widowed but they describe these women as marginalised figures whose circumstances were unclear. Allowing widows permanency in the Department seems to have occurred at some point toward the end of the Second World War, presumably by Department regulation. But which widows? Clearly in the case of Mrs Corey, itself shrouded in mystery, the age of the teaching widow eligible for reinstatement in the Department, remained a problem – presumably linked with the pension to which she might claim entitlement. The resistance to granting permanency to teaching widows in the Department has a long and painful history, which was not easily undone.

Similarly there has been little reference in the thesis, aside from one case study, to the most exploited of all women teachers – the temporary sewing mistress. But here the categories are even more blurred. The Public Service Act 1889 left the

Department with discretion in deciding whether to employ the sewing mistress in a permanent or temporary capacity. The other category of married woman teacher who does not appear in this thesis is the woman teacher who married and broke her 'bond' with the Department.

These shortcomings aside, this thesis makes an important contribution to our understanding of what the marriage bar meant in married women teachers' lives and careers over time. The married woman teacher is the ultimate postmodernist construct – a battleground for the discourses of the day – which is not to deny the agency of women who challenged these categories and those women who eventually destabilised them. Through the changing responses of married women to the marriage bar, we can see the historical shifts over time in the different meanings in being a wife, mother and independent, professional career woman. We can also see how the state's control over the sexual, professional and financial independence of married women teachers was significant in ensuring their dependence on their husbands. Further, in denying them careers and subsequent pensions, the marriage bar retained that dependence on husbands and/or the state in retirement and in old age.

Chapter one of the thesis explores the lives of a number of married women teachers (the teaching matriarchs) who rose to power during successive colonial administrations, the National School Board (1848-62), and its successor, the Board of Education (1862-72) in Victoria. The chapter argues that these regimes were more favourably disposed to married women teachers than the Victorian Education Department that superseded them. In turn, these women positioned themselves opportunistically in the moral discourses of a 'quasi' free enterprise educational market concerned with the education of girls in separated departments. The chapter captures a little of what life was like for these extraordinary women as they combined prodigious maternity with demanding teaching and administrative careers. Their lives would prove immigrant success stories, as they enjoyed prosperous lifestyles in later life and contributed in no small degree to the upward mobility of their families.

Chapter two traces the Department's legislative removal of married women teachers from its first move in 1872 until 1895. By then the Department had established the ground rules for their exclusion for the following six decades. 'Reading' the Department's legislation, aside from the methodological problems it presents, has proven a highly speculative exercise. At pertinent points its legislation on married women remains impenetrable. The chapter examines the effect of the Department's machinations on the careers of the teaching matriarchs introduced in chapter one and the attempts of other married women to make the Department accountable; for example, over pension rights and widows' claims to permanency – to no avail. And paradoxically, the Department was aided in this enterprise by liberal reformers. These members of parliament saw no irony in defending married women's civil and political rights in marriage, but denying them careers and financial independence.

Chapter three examines the legacy of this discriminatory legislation on married women temporary teachers' lives. It offers a revisionist account of our understandings of a reformist Director of Education, Frank Tate and a Minister, Alexander Peacock, liberal protectionist, renowned for his anti-sweating legislation, the Factories and Shops Act of 1896. The Act introduced the Victorian Wages Board to determine a fair wage, hours of employment and other working conditions. The chapter spans the period from 1901, with the release of the findings of the Fink Commission into Technical Education, and subsequent appointment of Frank Tate as Director, until 1934 and the implications of section 8 of the Financial Emergency Act for married women temporary teachers. 'Needy' married women became a reserve army of labour for the Department. They were moved around schools at will, political pawns at the Department's disposal in times of staffing crises, during the implementation of the Teachers' Act 1925 and both World Wars.

Chapter four explores what it meant to be a married woman temporary teacher, an 'Outsider', through case studies of three married women temporary teachers: Martha (Grace) Neven, Alice Jardine and Charlotte (Lottie) Bartlett. Grace Neven made two unfortunate marriages, went mad under a lengthy regime as a temporary teacher, and was incarcerated in Kew Asylum. Alice Jardine struggled for years to support two children on a fragment of a salary, retiring without a pension despite decades of service to the Department. Lottie Bartlett was forced to divorce her first husband in

order to work for the Department, remarried and had to resign again, only to be widowed and return to teaching. Their stories bear sorry testament to the suffering of the 'invisible', but ever present, married woman temporary teacher in the Department.

Chapter five examines the contribution of women unionists to the campaign for reinstatement of the married woman teacher in the Department during and after the Second World War and challenges the orthodoxy that women teachers in the VTU were conservative. Rather, women unionists had a strong commitment to a better deal for women teachers, including equal pay and the right of married women to permanency in the teaching service. The Department, however, had other ideas. This chapter traces the Department's reluctant admission of married women teachers into the service, including the puzzling Cabinet decision not to employ married women who married after 1 September 1939, as temporary teachers. It investigates the intransigent opposition the Department displayed toward the women and the VTU in their quest for reinstatement in teaching.

Chapter six investigates the establishment by married women teacher unionists of the Temporary Teachers' Club (TTC), a highly successful lobby group, whose strategies forced the removal of the marriage bar in 1956. It draws on interviews with Viv Reilly, the president of the TTC and Nan Gallagher, its first secretary, in addition to Union records, to document the political activism of women teachers in the VTU.

Chapter seven offers a comparative account of married women teachers in New South Wales and Victoria. When I first noted that married women teachers had survived the 1895 Public Service Bill introducing a marriage bar in New South Wales, I speculated that the lot of the married woman teacher in New South Wales must have been greatly improved on that of her sister colleague in Victoria. But further research has shown this to be a broad generalisation at best. Although there was more formal support for married women teachers in the New South Wales legislature, and in later decades from Jessie Street and the United Associations of Women, which assisted their cause, they were still at the mercy of informal, but powerful, bars in the service. The story of the formal marriage bar in New South Wales is convoluted. It was imposed in 1932, amended in 1935 and lifted in 1947.

Examination of the career records of married women teachers suggests that while some married women teachers' careers prospered, others did not. Most married women teachers' careers were affected by marriage bars, both informal and formal. This comparative exercise demonstrates one very important point; that women's experiences of the marriage bar are specific to time and place and not easily susceptible to satisfactory qualitative or even quantitative analysis.

Chapter eight looks at the problematics of the theory and practice of oral history in interviewing married women teachers on their experiences of the marriage bar. In order to meet these women, I drew on my friends and associates for introductions and advertised repeatedly in local and daily newspapers. But convincing a number of women to consent to an interview proved difficult, and in part that may have been due to the requirements of the University of Melbourne's ethics committee. The chapter discusses my good fortune in being introduced to a number of left wing women who were prepared to speak to me. Some women told me in confidence of their private and harrowing experiences with husbands traumatised by the war. Others wanted their stories on record. The chapter explores these issues and the problems of the writer's voice in writing the lives of women teachers.

Chapter nine explains in greater depth the stories of three married women teachers, Alvie Booth, Nan Gallagher and Audrey Dodson, who I interviewed during my research. In an attempt to come to terms with the methodological problems of using their interviews, I returned my version of their lives from our interviews and invited their responses. They made lengthy comments on my accounts and rewrote sections of their stories, clarifying points and gradually expanding them. I returned the final version for comment and some changes. And from this to-ing and fro-ing has come representations of three married women, whose stories offer important insights into what the marriage bar in teaching in the Department meant in their lives and how it came to be removed.

Chapter ten is a speculative account, revisiting the marriage bar – with a twist. It explores the idea that it was not only the marriage bar which stood in the way of married women having a career, but also the discourses surrounding marriage and motherhood. How else might we explain the fact that thirteen hundred married

women primary teachers and seven hundred married women secondary teachers chose to remain temporary after the bar was lifted! The chapter takes a brief look across time at marriage, contraception and the meanings of motherhood. It looks at the controlling discourses of maternity and their influence on the lives of the women interviewed. It notes that the leadership of the TTC was childless and it would be their disturbance of the discourses surrounding motherhood that would allow good mothers to be good teachers.

¹ R.P. Coulter, 'Constrained by conformity: Women and their elementary teachers' federation in mid-twentieth-century Ontario', Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, Washington, April, 2001, p.10.

² K. Weiler, *Country Schoolwomen: teaching in rural California 1850-1950*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998, p.ii-v. See also S. Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992, and more recently, K. Weiler and S. Middleton (eds), *Telling Women's Lives: narrative inquiries in the history of women's education*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1999.

³ Royal Commission appointed to enquire into public education, 1867, (*Higinbotham Commission*) p.42; p.284; p.257; p.286.

⁴ Royal Commission into and report upon the administration, organization and general condition of the existing system of Public Instruction, (*Rogers Templeton Commission*) vol. 3. p.35.

⁵ N. Kyle, *Her Natural Destiny: education of women in New South Wales*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, 1986.

⁶ N. Williamson, 'The feminization of teaching in New South Wales: a historical perspective', in *The Australian Journal of Education*, vol.27, no.1, 1983.

⁷ M. Danylewycz and A. Prentice, 'Teachers' Work: changing patters and perceptions in the emerging school systems of nineteenth and early twentieth-century Canada', in A. Prentice and M. Theobald (eds) *Women Who Taught: international perspectives on the history of women teachers*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1991; A. Prentice, 'Multiple Realities: the history of women teachers in Canada,' Paper presented to the 17th International Congress of Historical Sciences, Madrid, 1990.

⁸ J. Albisetti, 'The feminization of teaching in the nineteenth century: a comparative perspective', in *History of Education Review*, vol.22, no.3.,1993.

⁹ G. Clifford, 'Daughters into Teachers: educational and demographic influences on the transformation of teaching into women's work', *History of Education Review*, vol.12, no.1, 1983.

¹⁰ M. Theobald, ' "Mere Accomplishments?" Melbourne's Early Ladies' Schools Reconsidered', *History of Education Review*, vol.13, no.2, 1984.

¹¹ M. Theobald, 'Women's teaching labour, the family and the state in nineteenth-century Victoria.', in M. Theobald and R.J.W. Selleck, (eds) *Family, School & State in Australian History*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990.

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- ¹² M. Theobald, *Knowing women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996; A. Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom: professional women and the reshaping of personal life*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997; K. Weiler, *Country Schoolwomen: teaching in rural California 1850-1950*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998; K. Rousmaniere, *City Teachers: teaching and school reform in historical perspective*, Teachers College Press, New York, 1997.
- ¹³ K. Weiler and S. Middleton (eds), *Telling Women's Lives: narrative inquiries in the history of women's education*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1999.
- ¹⁴ D.W. Peters, *The Status of the Married Woman Teacher*, Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York City, 1934, reprinted 1972.
- ¹⁵ D.W. Peters, p.23.
- ¹⁶ G. Clifford, 'Man/Woman/Teacher', p.314 in D. Warren, (ed.), *American Teachers: histories of a profession at work*, Macmillan, New York, 1989.
- ¹⁷ L. Scharf (ed.) 'Even Spinsters need not apply; Teachers in the Depression', p.76, in *To Work and to Wed: female employment, feminism and the great depression*, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 1980.
- ¹⁸ D.W. Peters, p.89.
- ¹⁹ D.W. Peters, p.2.
- ²⁰ A. Oram, 'Serving two masters? The introduction of a marriage bar in teaching in the 1920s', in *The Sexual Dynamics of History: men's power women's resistance*, the London Feminist History Group, Pluto Press, London, 1988.
- ²¹ M. Littlewood, 'The "Wise Married Woman", and the Teaching Unions, in *Women Teachers: issues and experiences*, H. De Lyon and F. Migniuolo (eds), Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1989.
- ²² G. Partington, *Women Teachers in the twentieth century in England and Wales*, Windsor, NFER, 1976.
- ²³ M. Theobald and D. Dwyer, 'An Episode in Feminist Politics: The Married Women (Lecturer and Teachers) Act, 1932-47, in *Labour History*, no. 76, May 1999.
- ²⁴ C. Reynolds and H. Smaller, 'Ontario School Teachers: a gendered view of the 1930s', in *History of Education Review, Historical Studies in Education, Revue D'Histoire De L'Education*, No.3, 1994, C. Reynolds, 'Limited Liberation: a policy on married women teachers', in *Women Educators: employees of schools in western countries*, .P. Schmuck, (ed.), Albany: State University of New York Press 1987; C. Reynolds, 'Ontario School teachers 1911-1971: a portrait of demographic change', MA thesis, University of Toronto, 1983'.
- ²⁵ C. Reynolds and H. Smaller, 'Ontario School Teachers', p.167.
- ²⁶ M. Kinnear, "'Mostly for the Male Members": Teaching in Winnipeg, 1936-66', in *Historical Studies in Education, Revue D'Histoire de L'Education*, vol.6, no.1, Spring, 1994.
- ²⁷ M. Kinnear, 'Mostly for the Male Members', p.10.
- ²⁸ M. Kinnear, 'Mostly for the Male Members', p.20.
- ²⁹ M. Theobald, *Knowing Women*, p.172.
- ³⁰ D. Deacon, *Managing Gender: the state, the new middle class and women workers 1830-1930*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989.

³¹ T.A. Coghlan, 'The Employment of Women', General Report on the Eleventh Census of New South Wales, Sydney, Government Printer, 1894.

³² D. Deacon, *Managing Gender*, p.145.

³³ D. Deacon, *Managing Gender*, p.146.

³⁴ G. Clifford, 'Man/Woman/Teacher', p.323.

THE RISE OF THE TEACHING MATRIARCHS

When I talk about my research on married women teaching for the state in nineteenth-century Victoria I am invariably greeted with disbelief. To many it comes as a surprise that they were there at all. And it is inconceivable that they had power, status and salaries to match in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Indeed nineteenth-century Australia is renowned for social conservatism. Campaigns for female suffrage had barely begun and marriage for women meant, as Marilyn Lake has argued, that they were subjected to particular tyrannies.¹ It is particularly surprising for women teachers familiar with the Victorian Education Department's policy of formally excluding married women teachers until their reinstatement under the 1956 Teaching Service (Married Women) Act.

Yet for many decades in Victoria under successive colonial administrations, the National School Board (1848-62), and its successor, the Board of Education (1862-1872) there was never any question about married women teaching. Indeed many wielded considerable power, holding important positions and being paid accordingly. In 1885 their success can be measured by their presence on the first classified roll of teachers published in the *Victorian Government Gazette*. Of the twenty-eight women teachers at the top of the highest division for women teachers, the second division, fifteen were married women, among them partners in the well-known teaching couples such as John and Maria Hadfield of St Kilda, Patrick and Jane Whyte of the Model School, John and Anne Drake of Collingwood and Henry and Lucy Tisdall of Walhalla. In total, married women comprised just over 40 per cent of the top three divisions of the classified roll.²

This chapter gives something of the flavour of this period. It explores the lives of a number of these extraordinary teaching matriarchs in the mid-decades of the nineteenth century, when it was possible to combine marriage, maternity – indeed prodigious maternity – with a highly successful career in teaching. But at what personal cost? How did these women cope with decades of constant pregnancies and breast feeding, while teaching in and managing very large schools? We can only guess at what contraception methods were available to them, let alone whether they

or their husbands would have approved of using such intervention.³ We do, however, know a little of the arrangements they made for what was delicately termed ‘accouchement’ leave, because of the Department’s correspondence records. But how did they balance the responsibilities of ever growing families and domestic chores, not to mention the demands of husbands, many preoccupied with their professional responsibilities as headmasters?

Marjorie Theobald has drawn attention to these silences in the records in her article, the ‘Everyday world of woman who taught’.⁴ In her considerable research on women teachers she has noted only rare, oblique references to women teachers breast feeding their children at school. And the same is true of my research. I have found some reference in the records regarding maternity leave for married women teachers. But I can only draw on comments from the descendants of Anne Drake, one important teaching matriarch whose story is told here, and oblique references to Lucy Tisdall’s child rearing practices in *Forerunners* for anecdotal evidence of how these women managed. Anne Drake’s babies were brought to school for her to breast feed them and presumably as the first female assistant (headmistress) she had the means and the time to accommodate them. No doubt other senior women adopted similar strategies. We can never really know. In writing the following stories of these women’s professional and personal lives there are many gaps, unanswered questions and possible inaccuracies.

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In October 1852 Elizabeth Mattingley and her husband John Thomas Mattingley, a forty-three-year-old cabinet maker from Reading, England, arrived as unassisted migrants at the district of Hotham, as North Melbourne was then known. With them came their nine surviving children. The Mattingleys temporarily pitched a tent at the end of Kings Street. And in November Thomas became the first householder of North Melbourne by renting a four-roomed timber house in Bendigo Street, a harbinger of the significant role the Mattingleys and their ownership of property were to play in the development of North Melbourne and the Errol Street State School.⁵

In 1851, the year prior to the arrival of the Mattingleys, gold had been discovered in Victoria and possibly this drew them, along with thousands of other immigrants, to begin a new life in the colony. In 1857, however, forty-six-year-old Elizabeth opened an Infant School in her house at 18 Errol Street. The entrepreneurial Elizabeth had taken advantage of what her grandson, Arthur Mattingley, in his diamond jubilee history of the school, has described as the preference of 'some people to have their children taught in private schools'.⁶ The school was described as a 'double-storey weather board residence, with a tin roof, for which Elizabeth paid a weekly rental of one pound'. The two rooms, including one which served as the family dining room, accommodated her pupils who expanded in number from the twenty-two who arrived on the first day to the one hundred and ten in one room who were present on the roll in December of that year.⁷

Elizabeth was not alone in establishing a school in her own right at this time. Enterprising women were also establishing ladies' schools in the colony in the mid-decades of the nineteenth-century. Indeed in the same year as Elizabeth opened her school, the Thompson sisters were advertising their ladies' school in the *Kyneton Observer*.⁸ But it would be the state system of education to which Elizabeth Mattingley would turn for assistance in maintaining her school.

In Victoria the provision of public education was modelled on the approach of the poorest colony, New South Wales. In 1851, when Victoria had become a colony, Governor Fitzroy's compromise legislation of 1848 was adopted, establishing two parallel systems of state-assisted schooling, that controlled by the National School Board and that controlled by the Denominational School Board to superintend church schools. Key features of the system were that it was fee paying and attendance was not compulsory. In practice the two parallel systems were obliged to compete with each other and also with child-minding schools serving the poor, and middle-class ladies' schools such as that opened by the Thompson sisters. This fostered a quasi-free market where the power of parents to influence schools, teachers and, more particularly, administrators, was assured. And within this system, women teachers, particularly married woman teachers, had their market value. Educating girls in coeducational classes was considered to be fraught with moral danger. As Marjorie Theobald has argued, the discourses of moral propriety surrounding married women

teachers gave them bargaining power in co-educational settings, not only shielding girls from their male classmates but also from the possibility of advances from male teachers. Parents in large urban centres preferred their daughters taught by women teachers in separate departments and in country areas they favoured a husband and wife teaching couple.⁹

It was this acceptance of the married woman teacher that gave Elizabeth Mattingley her bargaining power. Not that this should detract from her ability or entrepreneurial style. For in this era of 'free enterprise' schooling when the rival Denominational and National School Boards competed for students, Elizabeth appealed successfully to the National School Board for assistance as a non-vested school, namely a privately owned school that was state subsidised. As there were already a number of Denominational schools in the area, it is not surprising that the National School Board was more than willing to offer assistance.¹⁰ Elizabeth received support in the form of two mistresses whose salaries were paid by the National School Board, and the appointment of a board of local patrons, one of whom was Martin Irving, the Professor of Greek at the University of Melbourne who was to prove an invaluable ally. This was in spite of Elizabeth's lack of formal qualifications and inspectors who drew attention to her speech, complaining of her 'defective aspiration'. Of more concern was her classification. Professor Irving's repeated requests to the Commissioners to grant her a classification without examination were to no avail and Elizabeth remained on the lowly classification of division 2 class iii.¹¹ But Elizabeth had one further card to play.

In 1858 Elizabeth Mattingley's son Albert, a trained National School teacher, received the National School Board's approval to establish a 'non-vested' upper school in Hotham, on the corner of Errol and Queensberry Streets, North Melbourne.¹² Albert's upper school attracted a large following and later that year Albert's school combined with his mother's infant school to form the non-vested Errol Street National School No. 206 Hotham. In 1864 the school became a Common School. (There had been constant objection to the 'awkward system of duality' which had produced an ineffective and expensive school system. A Common Schools Act brought in another regime.)¹³ But unlike most of the other Common Schools, which were vested, the Mattingleys' schoolrooms were built on

their own land at their own expense.¹⁴ In 1867 Albert Mattingley wrote to the Board submitting that ‘a special allowance should be made to him for expenses incurred in the erection and maintenance of the building’.¹⁵ With her son as headmaster and now in the position of first female assistant, Elizabeth Mattingley had managed to carve a niche for herself in the lucrative teaching market of the colony. As one of a couple, albeit an unorthodox one, mother and son rather than husband and wife, they held the much envied positions of headmaster and first assistant in what would become a large urban school.

We know nothing of Elizabeth’s struggle to combine motherhood and teaching, partly because she began her teaching career at forty-six years of age, most probably at the end of her childbearing years. It is likely that she opened her school because of the ill health of her husband, who was to die shortly after she began teaching.¹⁶ But as I trace Elizabeth’s career into the 1870s, we discover that she had her share of family problems in later life. Elizabeth was devastated by the loss of her son Charles, whose ‘suffering and lingering death’ in 1878 caused her absence from school on a number of occasions.¹⁷ One wonders, too, how she felt about the very public struggle over the position of first assistant at Errol Street State School, between her daughter, Ellen Bryan, who held the position and her daughter-in-law, Mary Jane, who coveted the position. (This dispute is referred to briefly in chapter two.) Elizabeth was sixty-one when the Victorian Education Department took over in 1872. She continued undisturbed as first assistant at Errol Street until December 1878 when the Department pronounced her ‘feeble for her age and unable to do justice to the position’.¹⁸ The Department wrote to her recommending that she be superannuated out of the service. Elizabeth immediately responded. She asked that she be retained until 30 June 1879, when she would ‘voluntarily retire’. She claimed that she deserved this extension because of her ‘excellent conduct’, her ‘long service’ and the ‘good reports of various inspectors’. Elizabeth also pointed out that she had received no compensation from the Department for the use of her two schoolrooms, ‘which had been leased to the Department for a nominal rent of one shilling a year’.¹⁹ The wily Elizabeth won the day and retired in June 1879 with a retiring allowance of £100.9.11 per annum

Elizabeth Mattingley died in 1881. She was one of the earliest woman teachers to have contributed to establishing a state school in Victoria. There is a plaque commemorating her work and achievements in the foyer of the Errol Street State School, which is still a significant state school in North Melbourne. Elizabeth was indeed a teaching matriarch, and a worthy forerunner of the powerful and much envied women who would rise to power in the colony

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Given her lengthy and significant teaching career, Mary Jenvey's teaching record is surprisingly short, amounting to little more than two-thirds of one page. Such a brief account makes drawing conclusions about her private life all the more difficult. Born in 1824 in Surrey, England, Mary was the daughter of a merchant, William Crooks; her mother is listed as unknown. In 1847, when she was twenty-three years old, Mary married Thomas Jenvey. Her first child Horace John was born in 1847, Henry Walter was born two years later and her last child, Charles Frederick was born in 1856, the year in which Mary was classified in the first division of ordinary teachers under the Denominational School Board in Victoria.²⁰ In 1859 Mary Jenvey had achieved 4th honors, the second highest level of classification under the Denominational School Board. Not only did this mean a considerable increase in pay, as her record notes, it helped establish her as the respected headmistress of the prestigious St Marks Church of England Girls' School in Fitzroy. It is probable that Mary Jenvey was by now a deserted wife. Her death certificate makes no mention of her husband and there is no indication that she was ever widowed. (It is important to note that a future regime, the Victorian Education Department, would be far less accommodating of such women after the passing of the Public Service Act 1889.) Unencumbered by successive pregnancies, she had more time to engage in the politics of survival than did her married women colleagues. She was certainly a feisty woman, with three young children to support, who believed in defending her rights.

In 1866 Mary Jenvey was the only woman called as a witness before the Higinbotham Commission into Education (1866-67). She argued that a female teacher should be employed 'as boys suffer less under a mistress than do girls under

a master'.²¹ At this time Jenvey was under suspension by the School Committee over a dispute regarding the distribution of fees paid by children attending the school. Jenvey had been accustomed to collecting and distributing the fees to her staff at her own discretion, giving the remainder to the Committee for the upkeep of the school. But in 1866 a largely new committee attempted to wrest power from her, demanding control over the collection of the fees, claiming that the Committee had the right to determine her share. Jenvey appealed to the Board of Education. Her status in the educational community can be gauged by the response of Benjamin Kane, the permanent secretary of the Board, who described her as 'one of the best, if not the best assistant teacher, in our schools'.²² Jenvey had correctly anticipated that the community would support her during her suspension, as the school's attendance plunged dramatically from one hundred and ten pupils to just thirty-three. As attendance was not compulsory, parents kept their children home, perhaps in agreement with Jenvey, or perhaps because they feared what might happen to their daughters in her absence. This was an issue not missed by the Board. Jenvey's suspension was possible because she was on a one-year contract, which could be terminated at a month's notice by the school's Committee. But her dismissal needed the approval of the Board. In the circumstances, it is not surprising that a compromise agreement settled the dispute.

Mary Jenvey was frank in her submission to the Higinbotham Commissioners. She made it clear that she was responsible for the success of the school. She claimed that the school had been rundown when she took over. It was, she claimed,

a kind of speculation, as soon as I could make it a profitable school the profits should be mine, but as soon as it became profitable, first one percentage was taken off and then a larger one, so that I feel myself very much ill-used indeed.

The Commissioners learned that her base salary was £80 to which was added weekly fees, state subsidies for destitute children, payment for results of her pupils at twice yearly exams and a bonus for her classification in second class honours. In 1865 her salary was £316, roughly three times that of the average salary earned by male assistant teachers in the Common Schools era. The Commissioners were taken aback at her status and salary and doubtless her self-confidence. Jenvey's influence rested

on two related factors: her ability to attract and keep students in the educational free market of the time and the official policy of separate divisions for boys and girls in major urban centres. St Marks consisted of three divisions: a boys', a girls' and an infants' division. Jenvey was at pains to drive home the claim that girls who were not in segregated divisions and taught by a woman teacher were in grave moral danger.

The Commissioners agreed. Perhaps they had in mind the case of Agnes Grant and her allegations of improper proposals on the part of head teacher James Eastwood which were currently preoccupying the Board of Education. Agnes's charges precipitated events, which included a Board of Education inquiry, two actions before the Supreme Court and a parliamentary select committee of inquiry.²³ The Commissioners believed that married women teachers provided the 'proper moral development of children'.²⁴ Nevertheless, in spite of their recommendations that separate departments for the schooling of girls be maintained, the Board, in the interests of economy, chose to amalgamate them with the boys' departments. Thereafter the Board conducted a war of attrition against the separate departments which was often successfully resisted by the schools and the parents. Mary Jenvey, in company with the remaining married women in this account, Maria Hadfield, Jane Whyte, Anne Drake and Lucy Tisdall, and other senior women teachers would eventually suffer the indignity of being demoted from the position of head teacher in their respective schools. But the blow was softened for them when they were created first assistants, with commensurate salaries above the highest ranking male assistant in recognition of the demanding role of senior women in mixed schools. A decade or more older than the remaining women in this account, Mary Jenvey would take early retirement in 1883 at fifty-eight years of age, after much less happy experiences under the following regime, the Victorian Education Department. In 1896 she died at her son's residence in Manningtree Road, Hawthorn, at the age of seventy-three--seventy-two according to the date registered on her teacher career record. Her death certificate is inscribed with the comment 'retired state school teacher, Pensioner of the Victorian Government', a comment usually reserved for male teachers.

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In 1885 Maria Hadfield held the number one position on the classified roll as first female assistant at St Kilda State School. Both the National School Board and the Board of Education were accommodating of Maria Hadfield when she and her teacher husband John Hadfield arrived in the colony in 1853. Born in England in 1831 she was trained and accredited as a teacher at the National School of Training in England in 1844.²⁵ Her English teaching qualification was considered superior to the Licence to Teach, the minimum qualification for teaching in Victoria and equivalent to the Certificate of Competency issued by the Board and held by all those classified in the second division. Maria's appointment in the first division as a mistress (which meant headmistress at that time) to teach the girl pupils at the Acland Street School in St. Kilda was welcomed by the National School Board. The Board recruited in England through the services of E. C. Tufnell, Inspector of Schools to the Committee of the Council on Education. As headmistress Maria was paid accordingly. But in addition to these responsibilities, Maria would bear twelve children during her lengthy career. Aside from an occasional reference to her ill health, not one revealing comment about her confinements or her domestic life appears in the records.²⁶ Her head teacher husband, John Hadfield, with whom she taught for many years, would write to the Department on her behalf. In 1865 Maria was teaching in a mixed school under the Board of Education, evidence of the Board's attempts to combine its separate departments of male and female pupils. Maria was regarded as an excellent 'work mistress', which meant that she was a sewing mistress. In this traditional role, Maria and her husband John were exemplars of the teaching family that formed the mainstay of the teaching service. In 1872, for example, there were at least 294 married couples teaching together in schools in Victoria.²⁷ Indeed there are a number of examples in the correspondence records of male teachers petitioning the Department for work for themselves and their wives. In 1873 William Bush called in to the Department and requested a school with seventy-five to one hundred pupils with his wife as assistant. The Department was keen to oblige him.

In 1875 Maria was transferred as first assistant to St Kilda State School in Brighton Road where her husband was headmaster. This school typically had an enrolment of 600 pupils. Despite the Board's preference for amalgamated departments, St Kilda State School had resisted. And for some time it would successfully resist pressure

from the Department of Education to amalgamate its senior classes. At this school the Department, too, commented approvingly on the superior teaching of Maria's needlework classes as well as her work as an 'excellent disciplinarian' in managing the senior girls' department and supervising the pupil teachers. John Drake was highly regarded by the Department and called upon to give evidence by the Rogers Templeton Commission. It is his correspondence with the Department which predominates over Maria's, which may partly explain Maria's departure from the service, shortly after his death in 1888. But, under the Victorian Education Department as described in the following chapter, she was clearly made to feel redundant.

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Jane Pullar was an outstanding and dedicated teacher. In 1856 the National School Board appointed her mistress, that is, headmistress, at its prestigious Model School. In the following year, the National School Board classified her first in the second class division. In 1864 Jane graduated from the Training Institute with first class honours, making her the most highly qualified of all the teaching matriarchs and more qualified than most of her male colleagues.²⁸ Born in Suffolk, England, in 1833, Jane had reached this position at thirty-one years of age. Two years later, in 1866, she married the recently widowed Patrick Whyte, highly regarded headmaster of the Model school.

Whyte was an Irishman who had come to Melbourne in April 1853, aged thirty, on the 'Africa' as an unassisted migrant, was appointed to the Model School in 1855 and in 1863 became its headmaster.²⁹ R.J.W.Selleck has described Whyte as an urbane and genial classical scholar who had obtained a degree in civil engineering and his Master of Arts from Trinity College, Dublin.³⁰ From the work of M. Pawsey and L. Elliott, we know that Whyte met his first wife, Catherine McMullen, on board ship en route to Australia.³¹ A year after Catherine died of consumption in 1865, Patrick married Jane Pullar, who was eleven years his junior. It must have been considered quite a match: the 'refined and intellectual' headmistress of the girls' section of the Model School, marrying the headmaster, her former supervisor and colleague. As Pawsey and Elliott note, the 'Whyte's joint income was now on a

level with that of well-established professional men'.³² The marriage certificate shows that they were married in the Presbyterian Church in Brunswick. Patrick gives his address as South Yarra, while Jane lived at Williamstown. Patrick's humble background is suggested by his father's occupation as baker and draper, while Jane's background seems more affluent, given that her father was a spirit merchant.³³ This aside, there is little personal detail about their private lives. Pawsey and Elliott note that Jane was a devout Presbyterian and her husband was a Roman Catholic. Indeed Whyte's Catholicism almost certainly prevented him from being appointed an inspector. The Whytes resolved their difficulties by raising the girls in the family as Protestants and the boy as a Catholic. Jane had seven children in nine years. In 1867 the Whyte's first child, a daughter, Elizabeth, was born. In 1868 another girl, Margaret, was born. In 1869 Jane gave birth to twin girls named Jane and Catherine. Catherine would survive for just five months, dying from 'irritation of stomach and bowels'. In 1873 another daughter, Grace was born. Grace lived for nineteen months, dying from congestion of the brain. In 1875 the Whyte's first son, William, was born. In 1876, at forty-three years of age, Jane had her last child, Frederick James. Frederick, too, would die at seventeen months of age from diphtheria.³⁴

Jane's biographers suggest that she worked through each pregnancy up until her confinement, returning to work 'with increasing difficulty' some three weeks after each birth. There is nothing in the records to support this. After each confinement Patrick would apply for confinement leave from the Department on Jane's behalf and outline the staff who would take her place and whom Jane would pay while she was on leave. He would, however, invariably claim an extra week's leave for Jane in addition to the standard confinement leave of three weeks.³⁵ As Marjorie Theobald has pointed out, although maternity leave was never codified, this was the conventional understanding.³⁶

Jane's leave, in common with other teachers, was very carefully monitored. In 1888 Jane was granted furlough of twelve month's leave with six months on full pay and six months on half pay. The prerequisites for this leave included 'excellent conduct', 'punctuality' and 'no extended periods of leave'.³⁷ It is remarkable that Jane was able to cope with her domestic responsibilities and tragedies and remain as a teacher

‘capable and industrious’, able and diligent in her duties, and ‘thoroughly good’. Despite this praise Jane, too, would be demoted to first assistant and suffer further indignities under a future regime.

.....

We know considerably more about Anne Drake. This is partly because Anne had a very public and highly successful career as a school manager in her own right under successive administrations, which has generated more information about her. It is also because of my good fortune in contacting her descendents, who are genealogists and generous with their time and information. Encouragingly, their representations of Anne and her teacher husband, John Drake, reinforced my own impressions, with invaluable evidence.³⁸

On 10 January 1857 Anne arrived in Australia from England with her teacher husband John on the sailing ship, the SS Tiptree. With them was their new baby boy, born on board when ‘the ship was in almost dead calm and it was very warm’. The baby was christened Edwin Tiptree Drake – there were no god parents, but the christening, it seems, had been prompted by a Mr and Mrs Madden, who were devout Catholics and were fearful of the fate of the child if it died unchristened.³⁹ But the baby survived and twenty-three-year-old Anne, with her first baby in tow, began teaching as a sewing mistress at a school in Abbotsford under the National School Board in November of that year. Anne Drake was highly qualified. She was trained and accredited at two institutions in England, the Home College Training Institute in London and the South Audley National School in London. The results she obtained from these institutions would stand her in good stead in the colony. They would entitle her to the qualification of Certificate of Competency with second class honours in the Victorian Education Department.⁴⁰

Anne’s husband, John Drake, is a shadowy figure. Born in 1826, he was seven years older than his wife. As their teacher records suggest, they seemed the typical husband and wife teaching couple when both were appointed to Abbotsford State School. Here John was head teacher from 1 November 1857 until 29 February 1864. In that year the secretary of the local school committee at Abbotsford (now a

Common School) appealed successfully to the Board of Education to recognise the school as a separate boys' and girls' school in order that Mrs Drake, the mistress of the school, be retained. The committee requested that she be paid a higher salary on account of her second class honours qualification and her contribution to the school that had resulted in it flourishing.⁴¹ The Board requested evidence of her qualifications and accorded her first division status, as had her previous employer, the Denominational School Board. Her teacher husband, John Drake, was now employed only as an assistant. No doubt he accompanied her to the reception for HRH the Duke of Edinburgh, to which she was invited by the Board in 1867.⁴²

By now Anne had given birth to three more children: Harriet Ann, who was born in 1858 and died in 1860, the year her brother Francis John was born, and Edith Ellen, born in 1862. Family lore has it that the babies were brought to the school to be breast-fed. Anne would have five more children, John Roberts born in 1865, Lucy born in 1867, Florence born in 1869, Frederick Charles born in 1872 and Percy born in 1877, died 1878. In contrast to Jane Whyte, who had seven babies in nine years, Anne's births are spaced at two-yearly intervals. Was this the result of lactation – notoriously unreliable as a contraceptive – or some form of family planning? Presumably Anne took the requisite three weeks confinement leave and paid a substitute teacher to take her place on each occasion. (In chapter two the matter of confinement leave surfaces again under another regime.)

Anne Drake's career as head teacher at the Abbotsford school and her promotion is evidence that earlier administrations were less discriminatory toward married women teachers and prepared to accept that senior women could successfully juggle child bearing and rearing in addition to teaching and administrative duties. Just as admirable is the fact that Anne coped with a husband who was probably less than supportive. For John Drake had been demoted and finally forced to leave teaching, not because of ill-health as his career record might suggest, but because he had no teaching qualifications and he was completely unsuited to the position. He was, as his career record discreetly states – in faint handwriting in the far corner of the record – a baker by trade. And when the Victorian Education Department took over in 1872, they were in no doubt about John's teaching capabilities. The Department issued two damning reports: 'Has not exhibited much animation either in his teaching or

with reference to the examination for results. At present does little more than superintend the classes when engaged in school work’.

John Drake’s family biographer, alert to what he terms the ‘problems with corrupted memory’, nevertheless presents a picture of a pretentious, unsettled and unlikable man. John Drake’s background was unclear. Edwin Tiptree Drake, the child born on the ship bringing the Drakes to Melbourne, has two birth certificates. The first is a record by the ship’s captain who lists the father as John Drake, alias Thompson. The captain notes that ‘this passenger was entered on the list as Thompson but was known on board as Drake’. It appears that John Drake may have been illegitimate; certainly the family recalls his failed attempt in returning to England to claim an inheritance. This trip took place at about the time that John Drake took sick leave from the Department. It was clearly Anne Drake who had to cope with earning the family income and steering the family fortunes to respectability. In this she was highly successful. Anne was held in high esteem by the various regimes in which she worked. But under the amalgamations of separate departments by the Board of Education, Anne would eventually lose her position as head teacher and find herself demoted to the position of first assistant in 1871. In 1874, under a new regime, the Victorian education department, Inspector Gilchrist acknowledged Anne Drake’s managerial potential and in 1877 she was appointed as first assistant at Cambridge Street State School, Collingwood. In 1878, we get a rare glimpse into her private life as she explains her absence from the school:

I am extremely sorry to be obliged to ask you to excuse me from duty this morning. My dear little baby is too ill to be left. The doctor does not find any hope of his recovery. Should he take a change for the better I shall be present this afternoon to attend to the needlework.⁴³

It appears from the correspondence records that the child recovered, although Anne did not return to work for several days. But the reprieve was temporary – Percy died later that year. Anne’s absences from work were rare, and she managed the extremely difficult task of juggling the responsibilities of her public and private life with a frankness and confidence that is rare in today’s workforce. Unfortunately, in

later life Anne would find teaching under the Department demeaning and difficult and she would resign.



Anne Drake: photograph courtesy of her great-grandson, John Drake

Lucy Tisdall also finished her career at the top of the classified roll in the highest division for women teachers as did two of her unmarried sisters, Alice and Clara. But her route to success was rather different to that taken by the other teaching matriarchs discussed in this chapter. Lucy had numerous country teaching appointments. And we know much more of her teaching experiences and the exigencies of bearing and raising a family from the family biography, *Forerunners*, written by one her daughters, Constance Tisdall.⁴⁴

Forerunners is the saga of a pioneering family of teachers beginning in 1838 when Eliza and Henry Weekes married in Clifton, England. They had ten children, eight girls and two boys.⁴⁵ As Constance Tisdall recounts, in 1855 Henry Weekes took his only son, Fred, and sailed for Australia in the ship, *Balmoral*, informing Eliza, by letter, after the event. Henry had left his thirty-three-year-old wife behind with six girls to look after, sending money delivered through his sister to support them. Eliza was to recall this incident as a humiliation 'that came of marrying at fifteen, and marrying a man fifteen years older than yourself'. In 1858, three years after his departure, he brought the family to Victoria where he was by now well established in a terrace house in North Melbourne. Four more children were born, but Henry died in 1869 leaving a young widow with no training and six children under thirteen to support. And as Marjorie Theobald has noted in her study of the Weekes family, 'Fred later disappeared, confirming the worst suspicions of the Weekes family about men'.⁴⁶ Judith Biddington argues that the perilous fortunes of the Weekes' family influenced the older girls to become teachers.⁴⁷

Lucy, the eldest of the family, was fifteen when her father left for Australia and she began training as a teacher in England. She continued training in Victoria, probably briefly at the old Model School under Patrick Whyte. In 1861 at twenty-one years of age, she married Henry Tisdall, a scholarly man whose failed business ventures led him also to train as a teacher. Lucy had other suitors, but Constance Tisdall notes that the children (Lucy's sisters) 'took to' this wooer and no doubt softened Lucy's heart.⁴⁸ Henry was still in training when Lucy became head teacher of the Church of England Denominational School at Eltham, fourteen miles outside Melbourne. He walked the distance every Monday morning and returning home every Friday. Lucy,

having had the first of her eight children, had her sister Alice with her to help with the child. In 1864 Henry completed his training and the new Board, which had replaced the dual Boards in 1864, appointed Henry as head teacher over Lucy and demoted her to sewing mistress on the grounds that attendance at the school did not warrant the employment of an assistant. At this point Lucy resigned and returned to work briefly as a work mistress. (This cheap, exploitative use of qualified women's teaching labour, would become a fine art by a future regime.)

In 1866 the Tisdalls transferred to Port Albert, near the Ninety Mile Beach and Lucy once again became an assistant. At this school Lucy's younger sister Alice became a pupil teacher, adding a further £10 to the Tisdalls' income. From *Forerunners* we learn that several aunts were assigned at various times to help with Lucy's increasing family, (Lucy also helped her widowed mother financially). The births were always at home and always with the assistance of the local midwife. The first six of Lucy's children were breast fed, suggesting that Lucy must have, on many occasions, juggled breast feeding with teaching. While teaching at this school Lucy lost two of her children. Two-and-half-year-old Dora died in 1867 after a scalding accident. Another child, Annie, died in the following year. Lucy would lose a third child, Alan, some years later. Possibly because of the epidemics which swept the schools, Lucy and Henry often sent their children to live with various relatives. As Theobald has noted, Lucy made no pretence of raising the children on her own, and presumably this was the pattern adopted by many of the teaching matriarchs who maintained large households, but who taught and managed large schools at the same time. The Weekes' sisters provided a network of family support for Lucy's children. Lucy's youngest child, Theo, left home when she was ill as a toddler to stay with her grandmother and did not return to the family home until she was eleven.

But the trauma of losing two children must have taken its toll for Lucy resigned in 1868. This was a common occurrence in many married women teachers' careers in colonial Victoria.⁴⁹ But it did not prevent them returning to teaching. Indeed in 1869 Lucy and Henry began teaching at Walhalla, where they were to teach for eighteen years. These years provide a chronicle of the problems typically encountered in teaching in country schools, including the inevitable complaint of impropriety on the part of a male teacher with a female student. At Walhalla Henry

was head teacher and Lucy was first assistant. Alice was second assistant 'awaiting her qualification' and another sister, Clara, was a pupil teacher. The Tisdall/Weekes had clearly taken over the Walhalla school. But they were not the only teaching fiefdom in Victoria. The Rae family at Ironbark outside Bendigo, which under the following regime would earn considerable criticism for nepotism, was even more successful in grooming and promoting family members.⁵⁰ John Rae was headmaster, his wife Emily was first assistant, daughter Barbara was second assistant, son William was seventh assistant and three other children, John, Alexander and Helen, were pupil teachers. Their combined wages exceeding £1000 pounds per year. Henry and Lucy Tisdall would eventually return to schools in Melbourne. Lucy would finish her teaching career as first assistant at Brunswick State School.

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There is an important postscript to the stories of these teaching matriarchs. We may be surprised at how well they fared under the dual Boards and the Board of Education as head teachers and first assistants in prestigious urban schools or in country appointments. But in reclaiming their contribution to married women's teaching labour, I have presented only part of the picture. Theirs were also immigrant success stories. The reward of their teaching partnerships with their husbands was an affluent lifestyle. They often built fine houses. A photograph of the Whyte family home in Victoria Parade, East Melbourne shows a substantial two-storey brick home on what we would now describe as a double block of land in a prime position.⁵¹ Similarly, Constance Tisdall describes the purchase of land and the building of her beloved family home 'Rosbercon' in Toorak, still Melbourne's most fashionable district. She notes that the Tisdalls bought this land at the height of the land boom and built during the period of high cost of living that followed. She describes the house of which they were so proud as:

a large and roomy double-fronted weatherboard villa, with a jutting bay window and a verandah in front and around one side, a house built on a slope, so that, at the back it was two-storied with a back verandah having a balcony above it.⁵²

And to look after the house, in the absence of its teacher owners, there were servants. But despite this highly desirable real estate, teachers, as Constance Tisdall makes clear, did not consider themselves members of ‘genteel’ society. And what these teachers desired was upward social mobility for they held grander aspirations than teaching for their children. And in many cases they were rewarded.

Arthur Herbert Mattingley, the fourth child of Albert and Jane Mattingley, became a renowned photographer and ornithologist and his younger brother, Harold Vernon Mattingley became a leading Melbourne dentist. The entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, notes that Arthur was ‘educated at his father’s school in North Melbourne and then at Scotch College.’⁵³ Patrick and Jane Whyte’s children were just as successful. As their biographers note, Margaret successfully completed medical training; Elizabeth, having gained an M.A., became headmistress of a girls’ school; and their youngest son was articled to a firm of architects.⁵⁴ Evidence of successful upward mobility also appears in John Drake’s obituary. It states in part that:

Mr Drake has left four sons and three daughters. The sons are Mr E.T. Drake, Secretary of Public Works; Dr Drake, Proprietor of the Mitcham Consumptive Sanatorium; Mr J.R. Drake, solicitor of Madden, Drake and Candy and Mr F.C. Drake, farmer and grazier of the Warracknabeal district.⁵⁵

Anne Drake is described as having outlived her husband, but the dismissive approach to the contribution of she and her daughters, one of whom was a teacher, is ironic considering that she had been for many years the sole breadwinner for the family. Overlooked too is the outstanding career of her daughter Lucy Drake who was a highly successful teacher of domestic science, and the head of a number of cookery centres in the state.⁵⁶ Lucy published several texts, including *The Original and Only Miss Drake’s Home Cookery*, and *Every Lady’s Cookbook*. This last work was republished recently by Swinburne University of Technology in honour of seventy-five years of education and as a tribute to Miss Drake.

In 1872 the Victorian Education Department inherited a number of teaching matriarchs who were accustomed to wielding power. They had survived the

economies of the previous Board and were the envy of male and female teachers alike. Waiting in the ranks behind them were younger married women career teachers, ready to fill their shoes. But the Department had a new agenda: teachers were to be 'professional' public servants and preferably male. It remained to be seen where married women teachers would fit into this scheme.

¹ Lake argues that marriage was a sexual contract in which men gained access to women's bodies in return for which women were promised maintenance. The outcome of this dependence for women was horrific and fuelled the preoccupations of feminist and the early feminist movement. See M. Lake, *Getting Equal: the history of Australian feminism*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1999, ch.1.

² See *Victorian Government Gazette*, no.1, 1 January 1885, pp. 1-98, the first classified roll, see number of married women teachers in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th division. Married women made up approximately one-fifth of the much younger women in the 5th division.

³ K. Alford, *Production or Reproduction? An economic history of women in Australia, 1788-1850*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1984, p.58. See also F. Kelly, 'Mrs Smyth and the body politic: health reform and birth control in Melbourne', in M. Bevege, M. James and C. Shute (eds) *Worth Her Salt: women at work in Australia*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1982.

⁴ M. Theobald, 'The "everyday world" of women who taught'. *History of Education Review*, vol.19, no.2, 1990, p.20.

⁵ A. Mattingley, 'The Early History of North Melbourne', in the *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol.5, no.2, 1915, p.6.

⁶ A. Mattingley, *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir History 1874-1934: Errol Street State School, no 1402*, North Melbourne, 1934, Pamphlet, no publisher, p.3.

⁷ E. Warne, *Errol Street: the first hundred years 1857-1957*, Errol Street Centenary Committee, Melbourne, 1974, p.6.

⁸ M. Theobald, *Knowing Women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 32-3.

⁹ M. Theobald, 'Women's teaching labour, the family and the state in nineteenth-century Victoria', in M. Theobald and R.J.W. Selleck (eds), *Family, School and State in Australian History*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990.

¹⁰ A. Mattingley, *Diamond Jubilee History*, p. 7.

¹¹ Victorian Public Record Series (VPRS) 880 Inward registered correspondence 1852 - 1862, unit 27, 62/1945, 62/1624.

¹² A non-vested school was a privately owned school that was state subsidised. See L.J. Blake (ed.), *Vision and Realisation: a centenary history of state education in Victoria*, Melbourne, 1973. (hereafter *Vision and Realisation*), vol. 1, pp.93-4.

¹³ D.H. Rankin, *The History of the Development of Education in Victoria, 1836 - 1936: the first centenary of educational effort*, Arrow Printery, Melbourne, 1939, pp. 88-95.

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- ¹⁴ E. Warne, p.13.
- ¹⁵ Board of Education Inward Registered Correspondence 903,unit 80, 67/6799.
- ¹⁶ A. Mattingley, *Diamond Jubilee History*, there is little reference to Elizabeth's husband Thomas, except for his illness and death not long after they arrived in the colony.
- ¹⁷ VPRS 640, Primary school correspondence files 1872 – 1962, unit 1158, 78/28226.
- ¹⁸ VPRS 640, unit 1158, 78/43106.
- ¹⁹ VPRS 640, unit 1158, 79/553.
- ²⁰ Death certificate, Mary Jenvey, no.9843.
- ²¹ *VPP, 1867*, Higinbotham Commission, pp.285-6.
- ²² Record of service, no.1459, Mary Jenvey.
- ²³ M. Theobald, 'Agnes Grant', in R. J.W. Selleck and M. Sullivan (eds), *Not So Eminent Victorians*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1984.
- ²⁴ *VPP, 1867*, vol.4, p.84.
- ²⁵ Record of service, no.917, Maria Grace Hadfield.
- ²⁶ John Drake typically appealed for leave on behalf of his wife, see VPRS 640, unit 1252, 85/1666,
- ²⁷ VPD, 1874, vol.20, p.868.
- ²⁸ Record of service, no.2847, Jane Whyte.
- ²⁹ PROV, Immigration Index, unassisted shipping index of inward passenger lists of British and foreign immigrants 1852-1889.
- ³⁰ R.J.W. Selleck , *Frank Tate : a biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1982, pp.22-3.
- ³¹ M. Pawsey and L. Elliott, 'Patrick Whyte', in R.J.W. Selleck and M. Sullivan (eds), *Not so Eminent Victorians*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1984, p.64.
- ³² M. Pawsey and L. Elliott 'Patrick Whyte', p. 73.
- ³³ Marriage certificate of Jane Pullar and Patrick (Pat) Whyte, no.2852.
- ³⁴ See Digger Pioneer Index, Victoria 1836-1888, for Elizabeth Whyte no.9703; Margaret Whyte no.10809; Jane no.23337; Catherine no.23338, death certificate no.1798; Annie no.24823; Ellen no.25236; Grace death certificate no.2884. William no.8117; Frederick no.22224, death certificate no.6111.
- ³⁵ VPRS 794/P000, Central inward correspondence 1873 - 1963 ,unit 77, 73/22036;VPRS 903/P000,unit 80, 67/6432; VPRS 794/P000, unit 388, 77/1327.
- ³⁶ M.Theobald, 'Gender, Teaching and Institutional Change: an historical perspective. In T. Seddon and L. Angus (eds) *Beyond Nostalgia: reshaping Australian education*, ACER, Melbourne, 2000, p.7.
- ³⁷ VPRS 640/P000, unit 228, 88/21727.
- ³⁸ Interview with John and Joan Drake.
- ³⁹ Death certificate, John Drake, no.3473; notes from the records of John Drake's great grandson, also named John Drake.
- ⁴⁰ Record of service, no.2702, Anne Drake.
- ⁴¹ VPRS 903, Inward Registered Correspondence 1862-1972, unit 25, 64/3845.
- ⁴² VPRS 906, School roll no., register of Inward Correspondence, vol.I, 67/12909.
- ⁴³ VPRS 640/p1, Primary Correspondence Schools File, unit7, 78/4328.

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- ⁴⁴ C. Tisdall, *Forerunners: the saga of a family of teachers*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1961.
- ⁴⁵ J. Biddington, 'The Weekes Family', in *Not so eminent Victorians*, p.7, p.132-3.
- ⁴⁶ M. Theobald, 'Women and Teaching: an historical perspective', in *School Days: past, present and future: the education of girls in 20th century Australia*, papers from Magill Campus, University of South Australia, 20-21 September, 1996.
- ⁴⁷ J. Biddington, 'The Weekes family', in *Not so eminent Victorians*, p.133.
- ⁴⁸ C. Tisdall, *Forerunners*, p.33.
- ⁴⁹ Record of service, no.2074, Lucy Tisdall.
- ⁵⁰ VPD, 1874, vol.20, p.868.
- ⁵¹ M. Pawsey and L. Elliott, 'Patrick Whyte', p.79.
- ⁵² C. Tisdall, *Forerunners*, p.124.
- ⁵³ B. Nairn and G. Serle, (eds) *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, (1891-1939), vol.10, pp. 449-50.
- ⁵⁴ M. Pawsey and L.Elliott, 'Patrick Whyte' p .79.
- ⁵⁵ Record of service, no.2701, John Drake.
- ⁵⁶ Record of service, no.9873, Lucy Drake.

IMAGINING THE DEPARTMENTAL MIND: GENDERED POLITICS AND MARRIED WOMEN TEACHERS IN THE VICTORIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT 1872 - 1895

Attempting to understand the mind of the Victorian Education Department in its dealings with its married women teachers has proved both a necessary exercise and a challenge for this study. As Bruce Curtis has shown in his work on Canadian education, the nineteenth-century educational state developed an unprecedented capacity to 'know' and control its teachers.¹ And nowhere is this more evident than in the hugely documented bureaucracy that was the Victorian Education Department in the period under consideration. In these records generated by the state lies the tangled tale of the Department's power struggle with its married women teachers.

Nevertheless, for a study influenced by postmodernist feminist theory on power and the construction of gendered identity, writing from the perspective of the records of the Victorian Education Department raises a number of theoretical issues of some concern. The study's focus on the centralised authority of the Department would appear to be at the expense of the agency of the Department's women teachers, an approach that does not sit easily with current feminist interest in the local and personal operations of power. Similarly, attempting to make sense of the Department's decision-making by tracing its chronological development over time, leaves the study open to charges of teleological reductionism.

This chapter argues that this methodological approach is essential in understanding the Department's legislation and its intentions regarding married women, as the approach replicates the Department's practices of drawing on both legal and Departmental precedent in support of its decision making. It also permits close scrutiny of the changing and often-disputed meanings of the legislation over time as the Department removed married women teachers from positions of power and eventually excluded them. Married women teachers, including widows and deserted wives, would be reduced to 'Outsiders', an 'invisible' exploited army of temporary

labour at the mercy of the Department until their reinstatement in the Department with the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act 1956.

The story of the nineteenth century Victorian Education Department's relationship with its married women teachers is a story told against the grain of our understandings of Australian history in the period. There are important reasons why this occurred. Nineteenth-century Australia is renowned for a range of democratic reform: manhood suffrage, factory protection acts, the working man's wage and the eight-hour day, stemming from a strongly developing liberal tradition. And Victoria led the way in many of these reforms. But the philosophy and practice of liberalism struck at married woman teachers in a number of ways. Liberalism in Australia took a particular form, focussing on the rights of the 'breadwinner' to a fair wage, exemplified in the Harvester Judgement delivered in 1907 by Mr Justice Higgins. Higgins sought to establish a fair wage necessary to support a male with a wife and three dependents.² There could be no place for the married woman teacher in this scheme! Furthermore in a climate premised on the dependence of women – there was no place for a 'fair go' for the widow and deserted wife with children to support. When pressed on this, Justice Higgins neatly sidestepped the issue, claiming 'Fortunately for society, the greater number of breadwinners are men. The women are not all dragged from their homes to work while the men loaf at home'.³ Higgins banished to invisible poverty working women with dependents, a theme reflected in the Department's treatment of married women teachers as 'Outsiders'.

But liberal reformers also improved married women's legal and democratic rights in marriage through property acts and child custody laws; encouraged women's access to higher education; and generally supported female suffrage. They were, nevertheless, imbued with what Stuart Macintyre has identified as the profoundly gendered culture of Victorian liberalism, careful to shore up the institution of marriage and the dependence of married women.⁴ The liberal vision did not include the financially, or professionally, independent married woman teacher. In their work on the English middle class, *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall detail a similar experience for married women in a different setting. They describe how married women in the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England were partners in their husbands' businesses. But as these enterprises shifted to outside the home, women 'for their own good and protection', were banished from the workplace and confined to the home and the domestic sphere.⁵ Feminist writers have theorised this transition as the doctrine of separate spheres.⁶ Effectively the sexual division of labour put an end to married women's financial and emotional/sexual independence. But, as Davidoff and Hall have shown, this did not preclude married women's labour as an important, if unnoticed and unrewarded, component of the success of middle class men. Similarly, the married woman teacher would play an important, highly exploited and hidden role in the successful operation of a male-dominated bureaucracy in the form of the Victorian Education Department.

The following account covers some three decades of administrative territory. But this focus on the legislation should not suggest that the 'truth' of the Department's intentions are there for the finding. On the contrary, there are times when they appear so deliberately obscure as to make even the most careful reading an imaginative exercise. This is particularly true of the 1890s when, in a flurry of legislative activity, the Department established what were to become the ground rules for its discriminatory handling of married women teachers for generations to come. With these caveats in mind this chapter attempts to trace the Department's labyrinthine legislation, speculating on the strategies of a duplicitous Department intent on removing married women teachers and thereafter controlling and containing them.

The Education Act of 1872

The Education Act of 1872 delivered Victoria a state education system that was secular, compulsory and free. Teachers were not yet public servants; the 1870 Royal Commission into the Civil Service had declined to include teachers in its census and recommendations for the improvement of the public service. The Commissioners claimed that the field of teaching was 'enlarging so formidably' that they had to abandon their enquiries into 'the emoluments and status of school teachers and the position they held with reference to the state'.⁷ It is highly likely that the Commissioners were unable to reconcile the masculine project of 'professionalising' the teaching service with an increasingly feminised teaching workforce which

included married women. (It was no doubt one thing to categorise the married woman in the Civil Service when she was employed in the lowly position of matron, female warder or telegraphist, and quite another to account for the professional senior married woman teacher!) The Commissioners handed over their detailed information to the newly created Victorian Education Department and with it the problem of producing a 'professional' service. The ball was in the Department's court.

The newly established Victorian Education Department changed the ground rules for married women teachers. Teaching was now suffused with male discourses of 'professionalism'. The era of the entrepreneurial 'star' teacher, which married women head teachers had used to excellent advantage, was over.⁸ The compulsory attendance and non-fee paying nature of the new system struck directly at the power base of married women teachers. No longer could they rely on the influence of the parents to lobby for special treatment for female pupils in the form of separate departments, with the threat of withdrawal if administrators did not respond favourably. In 1875, the Victorian Education Department deliberately moved against all women teachers, formally ending separate departments for female pupils. Perhaps the first to suffer among the teaching matriarchs discussed in chapter one was Mary Jenvey. After the withdrawal of State aid to denominational schools under the 1872 Act, the Church of England closed its elementary schools and St Marks closed in 1874. Mary Jenvey's remaining teaching career would be spent in the newly constituted coeducational state schools. No longer would she be able to lay claim to the status and salary of a powerful head teacher of a separate girls' section. Highly regarded in the state school system, and acclaimed as 'one of the best (if not the best) first assistant, teaching in our schools', Mary Jenvey nevertheless took early retirement. After a brief absence due to illness, she was superannuated out of the Department in 1883, at fifty-eight years of age after service of twenty-seven years and five months on a pension of £140-19-9.⁹ (Under the Victorian Education Department, a pension was calculated on the basis of one sixth of the average salary earned during the past three years, providing it did not exceed two thirds of the average annual salary.)

Within a few years married women would find themselves targetted. The Rogers Templeton Commission, which began in 1881 and finished its deliberations in 1884, would prove a turning point in the relationship of the state and its married women teachers. The dealings of the Victorian Education Department with its senior women teachers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century are therefore of great interest.

The Rogers Templeton Commission and its aftermath

In 1881 when the Commissioners began their enquiry into the administration and organisation of the teaching service in Victoria, a service bedeviled by patronage which their recommendations were intended to remedy, they noted that the service was more attractive to women than to men. The Commissioners were particularly bemused at the number of married women teachers holding first assistant positions. These were the 'teaching matriarchs', women who had been removed from head teaching positions and for whom the position of first assistant was a consolation prize.

During their questioning of Inspector Charles Tynan, the Commissioners made a particular point of confirming with him that there was only one male first assistant in the Department and that all the others were females, receiving salaries in the order of £260 and £270 per year.¹⁰ By implication they were questioning why women, rather than men, were accorded this status and salary. One wonders how much influence an organisation such as the Male Teachers' Association may have had in this attack. W. Trudinger, author of an early work on teacher unions, credits the male assistants with considerable political clout, noting that for them the coveted prize was the position of first assistant held by a number of women teachers.¹¹ The Commissioners' difficulties in reconciling a service colonised by women with the project of transforming teachers into public servants is reflected in their deliberations.

The final report and minutes of evidence produced by the Rogers Templeton Commission present a compilation of gendered prejudices about the presence of women teachers in a professional (male?) public service. Among other things, concern was expressed for women's 'natural' physical and mental frailty, which made them unsuited to 'male' tasks such as the teaching of senior classes, despite

ample evidence to the contrary. Discourses carrying notions that women were better suited to teaching younger pupils operated against the interests of the careers of senior women teachers. The Commission also expressed concern about the authority of women teachers over men and the monopoly of first assistant positions, with salaries higher than those of the average male teacher, held by a select band of women teachers. On the basis of these criteria, the powerful teaching matriarchs of the Department, whose experience, qualifications, and inspectors' recommendations had led to their promotion as first assistants, stood condemned.

Married women teachers came in for particular criticism. A section of the Third Report pertained particularly to the employment of married women teachers. Not only did the Commission reaffirm old prejudices about the propriety of the pregnant woman in public life, it criticised the teaching wives of men without occupations or men outside the profession of teaching. It argued that:

if married women were employed at all, it should be, as far as practicable, only when their husbands are also teachers in the same school, and even in such cases a declaration should be required that the wife (except in the case of a work mistress) is not engaged in the performance of household duties.¹²

At the same time, parliamentary debate on these issues prompted strong criticism of the married teaching partnership which, it was claimed, drew two large salaries from the state and was often supplemented by the salaries of pupil-teacher children.¹³ The married woman had become a problem for the Department regardless of the status of her husband. Ominously the Commission noted that 'in every case where women are employed as teachers some rules should be observed in reference to married women'.¹⁴

The social context of colonial Victoria must also have had some bearing on the Commissioners' response and their preference for the dependent married woman. As Audrey Oldfield has pointed out, the issue of women's rights was more firmly established in the wider debate in Victoria than it was in any other Australian colony. In 1884, the year in which the Commissioners delivered their report, Henrietta

Dugdale and Annie Lowe had formed the Victorian Women's Suffrage Society. Female suffrage would not be well received by certain powerful sections in Victoria. The Victorian Legislative Council, the most representative of power and privilege of all the Australian upper houses, consistently opposed female suffrage in Victoria and would be one of the main factors delaying the passing of the legislation in Victoria until 1908.¹⁵ But formidable opposition to married women teaching would also come from liberal reformers in parliament. This in spite of their support for female suffrage and divorce reform and the significant role liberal reformers played in the successful passage of the married woman's property act in 1884.¹⁶ Liberalism, as Macintyre has theorised, was a masculine doctrine enshrining individualism, independence and mastery. And these were not characteristics which liberal reformers would have wanted to encourage in married women or their own wives. Indeed it was one thing to protect the rights of married women, or perhaps more accurately, family fortunes, in divorce and custody settlements and quite another to argue for the financial/emotional independence of married women teachers. Liberal reformers had no intentions of destroying the 'natural order of things'.

In 1883 a conservative liberal coalition came to power with James Service as both Premier and Minister of Public Instruction. The Rogers Templeton Commissioners' recommendations contained in the First and Second reports quickly became law and teachers were made public servants by the 1883 Public Service Act. Women teachers, and in particular married women teachers, would find that the Commissioners' promises to deliver stability, a merit system in recruitment and promotion, and a career structure free from political intervention, would not necessarily apply to them. Indeed they were to be immediately undercut. (Single women teachers also had very good reason to feel aggrieved. Their story has been well documented elsewhere.)¹⁷

The Commissioners' misgivings regarding married women teachers' authority over men, and their ability to rise in the system, were translated into practice in clause 62 of the Act, which specifically forbade women becoming head teachers of schools having more than fifty pupils.¹⁸ Now the most highly qualified women would be excluded from the first class of teachers and cluster in the second class. Their future

lay in managing and teaching infant classes. This change of policy did not pass without comment in the legislature where James Mirams was prompted to point out:

He was in favour of allowing ladies to be eligible for appointment as head teachers...He called to mind two cases in which husband and wife had been school teachers and in both cases the wife was by far the more successful teacher of the two. There was one school in the district of Collingwood in which for years the head teacher was the wife and the first assistant teacher was the husband.

This was doubtless a compliment to Anne Drake's management of Cambridge Street State School, but Mirams' comments were not a reflection of the general mood of the parliament.

Indeed a number of prejudices against married women, formally aired for the first time in the Rogers Templeton Third Report, came to light with a vengeance. Married women were no longer valued for the moral propriety their presence lent to coeducational teaching. Comments such as that of Bill Gardiner show just how differently the married woman teacher was now positioned. He remarked that:

It was well-known that many mothers objected to the appointment of females and particularly married females as heads of schools... He thought that provision should be made in the Bill that when female teachers entered the bonds of matrimony they should retire from their position. He knew of a painful case in which a female teacher in charge of a State School, who was in the condition he had just mentioned, died just before her trouble came on. And many of the elder girls in the school thus became acquainted with matters of which they would have known nothing but for that event.¹⁹

Concern was also expressed a number of times over 'the wives of highly-paid teachers who were allowed to teach in city schools'. The teaching matriarch had indeed fallen from favour!

Nevertheless, in 1886 with the liberal, Charles Pearson, as Minister of Public Instruction, married women teachers considered that they had reason to be optimistic. Pearson, former headmaster of Presbyterian Ladies' College, one of the first girls' schools in Australia to offer a 'serious' academic curriculum for girls, was rightly considered a champion of women's rights to higher education.²⁰ He was also a supporter of suffrage and divorce law reform. But as the chief administrator in the Education Department he would prove a bitter disappointment. A true 'liberal' with conservative notions of the home and woman's place in it, he would maintain gender inequality in the service.²¹ Pearson would also prove a shrewd manager of Department finances.

The Education (Teachers Act) 1888: an enticement to leave?

Under Pearson the Department began in earnest the reshaping of women's teaching labour. In one astutely crafted act, the Education (Teachers Act) 1888, he achieved several purposes.²² Clause 16 of the Act allowed women teachers to retire at fifty years of age or after thirty years of service and retain superannuation or retiring allowances which would have been their entitlement on reaching the age of sixty.²³ These apparently benign provisions put in place the mechanism for the departure from the service of its senior women teachers – which was exactly what the Department had in mind. (The language of the debate on this Bill was couched in terms of the tired, overworked senior woman who had given excellent service and was now deserving of some consideration. It was clearly code for discussing post-menopausal women, who were past their prime.) Two of the women who are the subject of the first chapter, Maria Hadfield and Anne Drake, took advantage of its 'chivalrous' provisions and retired.

In 1888 Maria Hadfield's husband, John Hadfield, died suddenly and the Department paid Maria a gratuity equal to nine months of his salary. In 1889 she ceased duty and retired at the age of fifty-eight after thirty-six years of service. Her annual salary was £296, nearly twice the average earnings of all head teachers and four times the average earnings of all assistants. Her pension entitlement was £177 a year. On the surface it can be argued that grief led Maria to retire at this time. She was certainly very affected by her husband's death. In one of the few occasions in which Maria

engaged directly with the Department, rather than through her head teacher husband, she asked for:

Permission to erect in one of the halls of the State School St. Kilda, a small marble tablet to the memory of my late husband who was a state school teacher for 35 years for the most part at St Kilda, until the time of his lamented death.²⁴

But Maria could not return to her former position without the support of her head teacher husband. John Hadfield had been instrumental in his wife remaining in the traditional moral and supervisory role of a senior married woman teacher, taking responsibility for pupil-teachers (predominantly girls) and supervising the needlework of the senior female students. He had helped resist the attempts by the Victorian Education Department's predecessor, the Board of Education, to amalgamate the boys and girls departments. Under the coeducational policy of the Victorian Education Department, and a new head teacher, Maria would not have continued in this role. The inspectors noted that she was 'an excellent work mistress', who 'does not teach but superintends the pupil teachers.'²⁵ The Department now had different expectations of its senior women teachers: they were to teach in and superintend large infant departments. This is clear in its requirements of Anne Drake, in the following account. It is also clear in its comments on Lucy Tisdall, another teaching matriarch, and who was once considered an excellent disciplinarian, and who had good literary attainments. In 1888 Inspector Curlewis remarked of Lucy: 'Does not seem fitted for infant teaching – May improve with practice'.²⁶ Maria Hadfield's financial circumstances are unknown, but the household no longer had the support of two substantial salaries and like her female colleagues, Maria had a large number of children to whose upkeep she was obliged to contribute. At the time of her retirement, the youngest child was fourteen years of age. Clearly Maria knew she had the option to retire or change her working life and she chose the former course of action.

In 1889, the same year in which Maria Hadfield retired, Anne Drake also retired. She was fifty-six years old and after a career of thirty-six years, she exchanged her considerable salary of £319 per year, for a pension of £170 per year. Anne Drake

was much more forthcoming in her comments on her retirement. When the Department required her to furnish details of her claim of 'overwork', Drake cited family considerations, and went on to outline in her forthright manner senior married women teachers' experiences of Department policy. She wrote:

I refer to my length of service, thirty-two years and to the kind of work, or rather the changes of my work, which I have been called upon to do during the last three or four years, than to any specific strain.

Previous to that my school duties were mostly supervision and general school work. For twenty years I was Head Teacher of Abbotsford State School. For the first 6 years of my service at Cambridge Street (during which time the school was very large) Mr Horsfall employed me in assisting with the general management.

Since then I have had charge of a class (infants) and general supervision of their room and the extra strain on the nervous system and voice (which I sometimes lose) had been telling upon me for sometime, to which Mr Horsfall, the head teacher can testify.²⁷

Anne Drake then referred to another reason for her retirement:

In January my daughter aged nineteen was brought home from the country, where she was visiting, a raving lunatic – apparently from fright. She had to be confined at Kew Lunatic Asylum where she has been confined up till the present. The seriousness, the suddenness and the unexpectedness of the attack produced a nervous shock from which I have not yet recovered.²⁸

As Anne Drake documented, Department policy of curtailing married women teachers' power and requiring them to work in/manage infant departments, meant that these senior married women teachers took the bait offered them in the Pearson's early retirement legislation in 1888.

Other senior married women were enticed from positions of power. Jane Jagoe was single. She was the first assistant at Port Melbourne State School and held the second position on the classified roll. Jane was considered an excellent infant teacher with a kindly way with children. In 1889 fifty-two-year-old Jane took advantage of the opportunity of early retirement on a pension and married Arthur Scott, a fifty-year-old widower and grazier from Dimboola – doubtless to the surprise of the Department which would have considered her well beyond marriageable age.²⁹ At Errol Street State School in North Melbourne the first assistant, Ellen Bryan also resigned under the early retirement provisions for women, to be married. In 1888 Ellen Bryan was replaced as first assistant by Jane Whyte. Transferred from the Model School, Jane served only four months at Errol Street before being transferred to Cambridge Street Collingwood. William Burston, later to become Assistant Secretary of the Male Teachers' would become first assistant at Errol Street State School. The Male Teachers' Association, intent on levering senior women, including married women, out of the position would have been pleased with this result.

But Charles Pearson's 'reform' of the service had just begun. Pearson also capitalised on constant anxiety expressed in parliament over the staffing of country schools. Clause 7 of the Education (Teachers' Act) 1888, designed to 'make better provision for the employment, transfer and promotion of teachers in the Department and for other purposes', allowed the Department to regain powers to transfer teachers against their will, without reference to the Public Service Commissioner, if the transfer was 'required in the public interest'. The Act also gave the Department power to establish 'temporary unclassified schools ... in thinly populated districts'.³⁰ In one stroke Pearson had established a cost cutting method of staffing country schools which would satisfy the demands of the country lobby in parliament – temporary schools staffed by temporary teachers – a blueprint from hell for married women teachers, as chapter three of this thesis illustrates.

The labyrinthine way ahead

In 1889 the Department introduced the single most important act to reshape the teaching service. The marriage bar contained in the 1889 Public Service Act was a final solution to the Department's problems with its married women teachers.³¹ In

anticipating the opposition it might encounter in the legislature, the Department's crafting of its legislation was also particularly astute. The bar was to apply only to women who married after the passing of the Act, avoiding confrontation with those remaining in the service and their supporters. Similarly, the preamble to the legislation exempted widows from the marriage bar, although the Department would later renege on this. The sewing mistress could be exempted from the bar at the Department's discretion. This Act made teaching a revolving door for women teachers. The era of women aspiring to the status of teaching matriarch combining career, marriage and a family and hence the requisite length of service and experience, was over. Married women employed prior to the Act who continued teaching in the service would find themselves on borrowed time.

The year after the passing of the 1889 Public Service Act, Victoria began to slide into a severe economic recession. Land speculation and building, which had boomed in the prosperity of the eighties, came to a halt. Financial institutions crashed as world commodity prices fell and the English money market turned against colonial governments. As building ceased, the colony was hit by a wave of strikes and unemployment was widespread. Stringent economies were applied throughout the colony and in the public service. In the Department, salaries were reduced, schools closed and teacher training ceased with the closure of the Teachers' College.³² Retrenchments left increasing numbers of the colony unemployed. In this economic climate there could be no justification of a two-salaried family, particularly of a husband and wife teaching partnership, drawing two state-funded salaries. The time was ripe for the Department to move on the married women remaining in the service – those who had been employed prior to the passing of the 1889 Public Service Act containing the marriage bar – an Act which supposedly guaranteed their continuing right to work.

In 1893, in this economic climate, two amendments to the Public Service Act of 1889 were introduced by the Minister of Public Instruction in the government, Richard Baker. Why the Department pursued these amendments is a matter for speculation, but the murky politics surrounding them was to be typical of the way in which legislation on married women teachers would be handled. Richard Baker defended

the revisiting of the legislation pertaining to the 1889 Public Service Act as merely 'tying up the ends, putting the books in order'. But it is likely that there was more to this legislation than Baker was prepared to acknowledge. The first change to the Act was introduced in clause 12 of the 1893 Teachers' Salaries Act. This established the right to work, if it were available, of a handful of married women teachers whose names were on the employment register at the time of the passing of the act of 1889.³³ Its intent bewildered the legislature. As one member pointed out, he had assumed that the purpose of the Public Service Act had been to remove all married women from the service. Baker was quick to assure him that the section would grant work only to a handful of women on the lowest classification, and only when teaching was available. Then why did the Department consider such a change necessary?

It is safe to say that Baker was not acting altruistically in these women's interests, though it is possible that he was responding to lobbying on their behalf. But given the circumstances of the time there is a more likely explanation. It is possible that he had received legal advice that he should formally recognise these women's rights before he proceeded with a plan to remove the remaining married women teachers (those already married in 1889) from the Victorian Education Department in the following year. Baker would have been aware that teachers were taking considerable interest in their 'rights' in the precarious economic circumstances of the 1890s.³⁴ Indeed the Department was already experiencing the 'fallout' from a poorly conceived attempt to implement a change in funding pensions for public servants. On 24 December 1881 the Ramsay Act (or Abolition of Pensions Act) had abolished the right of public servants, including teachers, to receive government funded pensions. But in 1883 the situation changed. The 1883 Public Service Act, which formalised teachers' status as public servants, also compelled them to take out private insurance. This Act did not become law until 1 January 1885. There was an unfortunate outcome for teachers, and other public servants, who were employed between 1 November 1883 and 1 January 1885. They were denied pensions. The 'Twilighters', as they became known, included a group of trainee teachers whose names were on an employment register at the time.³⁵ The Department claimed that they were not employed, but the teachers laid claim to a moral/legal right to a

pension. Richard Baker would have known how necessary it was to be meticulous in his observation of the legislation, 'tying up the ends', if he were planning to make further changes to the way in which married women were positioned in the Department.

In the light of the Twilighters' concern over pension rights, the second of Baker's amendments deserves careful attention. Clause 5 of the Teachers Act 1893 exempted from the marriage bar, single women who had been in the service prior to December 1881, the date of the passing of the Ramsay Act that put an end to government funded pensions.³⁶ Should these women marry they were given a choice: to remain in the service until retirement and receive a pension, or retire on marriage and receive nothing. Richard Baker claimed this would help reduce the cost of compensation payments made to women retiring on marriage. The Public Service Act 1889 removed married women from the service, and the Department softened their departure by paying them a percentage of the pension to which they would have been entitled – a compensation payment. It was never clear in the records how this was calculated, but the Mattingley case and the records of other women suggests that it amounted to approximately five years of pension entitlements. In 1895 the Regrading Act guaranteed their right to compensation or gratuity computed upon their length of service.

To an uncomprehending legislature this was too confusing. As one politician slyly remarked:

The number of these teachers would be very small indeed, since it was some time since the Act was passed [the Ramsay Act of 1881] and he did not suppose that many of these ladies who had had these twelve years added to their lives would be likely to think seriously of matrimony now.³⁷

This remark seems logical considering that the number of women concerned was so few, compensation payments would be of scant concern. Perhaps, however, this change to the legislation allowed the Department to honour the provisions of the Ramsay Act and avoid paying out compensation or a pension to a married woman

teacher in the immediate future?³⁸ It could also have been a calculated attempt by the Department to clear the ground for removing the remaining married women teachers in the following year, and to deny them pensions. If this were the case the Department would be disappointed. Clause 5 of the Teachers Act 1893 was legislation that would come back to haunt them. Fundamentally, however, the purpose of this change to the 1889 Public Service Act defies satisfactory explanation. It is worth noting that a future royal commission into education, the Fink Commission, would declare Baker's regime a disaster.

In 1894, the year after these puzzling changes to the legislation, the Department moved on the remaining married women teachers. In the deep recession in which the colony now found itself, when one job per family was a luxury, the idea of married women working (and the possibility of a state-funded, dual-income family) could not be justified. In 1894, in the guise of a recession measure, Richard Baker sent a memorandum to all women over fifty; all male teachers over fifty with twenty-five years service; all male teachers over sixty and all married women requiring their resignation.³⁹ The retrenchment of married women teachers went ahead with scant comment. Nevertheless, as we will see in the detailed accounting of the Mattingley case which follows, Baker did not hold to this. Baker granted a reprieve to an unspecified number of married women like the unfortunate Caroline Nunweek, who wrote to Baker outlining her necessitous circumstances and pointing out that she was well under the age of fifty.⁴⁰

But the Department went too far when it denied married women teachers their pension rights if they had less than thirty years' service. It was, however, powerless to prevent some teaching partnerships from their entitlement to two pensions. Lucy Tisdall, compulsorily retired in 1894 on a pension of £165-1-6, joined her retired husband Henry, also on a pension. And Lucy drew her pension until her death at eighty-seven years of age! In 1893 Patrick Whyte died and Jane took a week's leave. (There is a nice touch here, as Jane's request for two days' sick leave is authorised by her daughter, Dr Margaret Whyte.) When she returned to work in October 1893 Jane Whyte was compulsorily retired at sixty years of age on a pension of £194-7-0 per annum.

The Department, however, underestimated the married women teachers' determination to prove the legitimacy of their claims and the support these women would receive. Even more problematical for the Department was the division within their own ranks in support of the women, highlighting the Department's inconsistencies in its dealings with its married women teachers and its determination to win at all costs. The married woman teacher who would challenge the Department in the courts was Mary Jane Mattingley of the teaching family described in chapter one. As a teacher of many years standing who had married into a teaching dynasty highly regarded in the Department and the wider community, she was well placed to do this.

Pension denied: The case of Mary Jane Mattingley

As Mary Jane Hayman, a sixteen-year-old pupil teacher at Errol Street State School, she married Albert Mattingley, the twenty-six-year-old head teacher at Errol Street State School, on June 23 1863 at St James Cathedral Melbourne. But Mary Jane would never reach the height of power, the position of first assistant in the school, held by her mother-in-law, Elizabeth Mattingley, or following Elizabeth's retirement, Ellen Bryan, Mary Jane's sister-in-law. The tide had already turned against married women teachers.

When Elizabeth Mattingley retired in 1879, Mary Jane Mattingley had been teaching at the school as fifth assistant for six years. She had returned to teaching in 1873 shortly before the old school closed. On her marriage in 1863 Mary Jane resigned from teaching. In 1864 the first of Mary Jane's twelve children was born, a daughter named Alberta Emily. Two years later she had another child named Arthur Herbert who died very shortly afterwards. Two more children followed, Mabel in 1868 and Arthur in 1870, before Mary Jane decided to enter the Training Institute as an external student and return to teaching.⁴¹ Her fifth child, a son named Albert, was born shortly before she graduated from the Training Institute on 6 December 1872.⁴² But although she was more qualified than many of her teaching colleagues, Mary Jane's career did not prosper.

She applied for promotion on numerous occasions. Her application in 1883 was typical of many attempts:

Having heard that the first female assistant has been offered a superior appointment, I am anticipating her acceptance of it. I have the honour to apply for the position held by her. I base my claim on the following grounds. First that I have been in the employ of the Department for nearly fifteen years, independently of two years spent in the training institution, that making seventeen years spent in teaching, that I have gained experience under three systems viz. the National System, the Common Schools System and the present State Schools System.

Second that I went through a successful course of teacher training and hold a Trained Teachers Certificate, that most of the teachers who were at the training school at the same time as myself were appointed to much superior positions than I have had the opportunity of being appointed to up till now, that during the greater part of the time I have been employed I have received a small salary, and that on three occasions teachers holding only a Licence to Teach, and not, I believe, senior to me in the service, were placed over my head and Thirdly I would refer you to the favourable reports of the District Inspectors.⁴³

The first female assistant was Ellen Bryan, Elizabeth Mattingley's eldest daughter, who had acquired the position of first assistant at Errol Street State School after Elizabeth's retirement. On this occasion she declined the appointment, much to the chagrin of the Mattingleys.

But it should also be noted that in 1883, the year that Mary Jane made this application, the Public Service Act 1883 had begun to erode the power of women teachers. More importantly, the Rogers Templeton Commissioners were already targetting senior married women teachers. No doubt in a climate acutely aware of nepotism and increasingly sensitive to the wealth and power of teaching couples in the Department, Mary Jane's chance of promotion to a position held by her sister-in-law was jeopardized. She received only temporary promotions, and her classification did not rise above the fifth division. This in spite of an unusually supportive and

powerful husband – or perhaps his support of his wife also displeased the Department.

Albert Mattingley was a highly respected member of North Melbourne Anglican society, whose pioneering role is commemorated in the history of North Melbourne. He was head teacher of Errol Street North Melbourne for thirty-seven years and held the number one position on the male Triennial Roll until his retirement. With their family of ten surviving children the Mattingleys represented the fecundity and dignity of the typical Victorian family. Mary Jane certainly had what Farley Kelly has called a ‘well developed sense of maternity’. But an examination of the dates of the twelve Mattingley births shows that, with one exception, they were at two-yearly intervals, with a four year gap when Mary Jane was very ill, a fact which suggests more than mere good fortune on their part. Indeed it is possible to catch a glimpse of the extraordinarily demanding lives of continually pregnant teachers in Albert’s correspondence with the Department, as he reveals that on at least one occasion Mary Jane taught all day and gave birth that evening. We learn that: ‘Mrs Mattingley was confined after school hours (11pm) on the 24th of November, so that leave should commence from the 25th inclusive.’⁴⁴

In the latter part of her child bearing years Mary Jane Mattingley ‘returned to work with increasing difficulty’ within the requisite three weeks leave. Albert Mattingley made several attempts to extend the three weeks’ confinement leave to which married women teachers were entitled.⁴⁵ In July 1884 he wrote to the Department regarding his wife’s confinement: ‘in consequence of her accouchement to ask you to be good enough to grant one month’s leave.’ The Department’s response was prompt: ‘In accordance with established practice three weeks only with pay will be granted.’ Mary Jane Mattingley supplied a certificate proving that she was suffering from varicose veins and was granted a month’s leave with pay.

In this exchange we have a rare instance of the circumstances surrounding maternity leave in the Department. There appears to be no clause in the Department’s regulations that referred specifically to maternity leave. Instead it was apparently covered by clause 86 of the Public Service Act 1883 under the heading ‘leave of

absence for recreation'. Or re-creation? One wonders whether this anticipated the postmodernists' pleasure in word play.

In 1886 Albert penned a furious response to the Department, claiming that

In the Penal Department where great strapping female warders are engaged, whose occupation is rather conducive to health than otherwise and utterly unlike the extraordinary nature of teaching, I am informed that three weeks also are allowed. If they are not then sufficiently recovered to return to duty an application accompanied by a medical certificate would certainly be accepted without loss of pay. If such be the case in the Penal Department it should also hold good in the Department of Education.⁴⁶

Albert also took the opportunity, as he did on a number of occasions, to take aim at his sister, Ellen Bryan. He pointed out that:

In Mrs Mattingley's case your rule deprives her of a fortnight's salary in putting forth extra effort in order to perform the extra duties which you placed upon her. I refer to the twelve month's furlough granted to the first female assistant, Mrs Bryan; a large part of whose duties in addition to her own devolved upon Mrs Mattingley, and this overwork exhausted her system and induced premature labour.

No doubt Albert did not endear himself to the Department with these demands. He was ahead of his time in his recognition that combining maternity and teaching required more recognition than the Department was prepared to acknowledge. But his ideas would have been anathema to his contemporaries who could only see the benefits he accrued from a two-salaried family. In the same year Mary Jane Mattingley's maternal commitments did not preclude her from signing the petition circulated by the Victorian Lady Teachers' Association against the 'raising of male salaries only and the impression that female teachers were less useful to the Department'.⁴⁷

In the latter years of her career, although inspectors continued to comment favourably on her work, Mary Jane Mattingley gave up trying to extract justice from the Department and made no further effort to upgrade her classification. But in 1894 when she received Richard Baker's memorandum requiring the resignation of all married women teachers she immediately sensed what was in the air. She wrote to inquire as to the amount of pension she would receive. And she soon discovered that the government would not allow a pension to women who had not reached fifty years of age or had less than thirty years' service. Mary Jane then wrote to the Department detailing her qualifications, experience and excellent teaching record, pointing out that when she joined the Department she understood that, given that she met their requirements, she could retire at sixty years of age with a pension. After her lengthy and faithful service, she requested that the Department grant her a pension or allow her to continue teaching until she reached fifty years of age.⁴⁸

And at this point the story becomes more complex and certainly more murky. According to the *Australasian Schoolmaster*, Thomas Brodribb, Secretary of the Department, wanted pensions to be allowed to women employed prior to 1881, but the Treasurer, C.D. Carter, an outspoken anti-suffragist, refused to allow pensions unless the women were fully entitled to them. Baker allowed three of the women twelve months leave-of-absence in order to qualify them for the pension, and in some cases, he withdrew the resignation notices.⁴⁹

Brodribb, as R.J.W. Selleck has detailed, disagreed with Baker over a number of the retrenchment issues and resigned from the Department.⁵⁰ In a letter addressed to Charles Tynan, who succeeded Brodribb as Secretary of the Department, Mary Jane claimed to have been made promises of a pension (the amount specified) or a period of absence without pay until she was eligible at fifty years of age to claim a pension. She also indicated that she possessed a telegram containing information to this effect.⁵¹ But Mary Jane had now shifted ground, attempting in this letter to retire on the grounds of ill-health. The letter caused considerable consternation in the Department and her claims were strongly denied. Nor would the Minister entertain an application for permission for Mary Jane to 'retire on the grounds of ill-health so as to secure a pension'.

On 31 March 1894, at forty-seven years of age, Mary Jane Mattingley was removed from the Education Department under clauses 27 and 121 of the 1890 Public Service Act which provided the means for removal of officers who were found to be in excess. Mary Jane was paid £273-9-6 compensation for a teaching career of twenty-four years and 342 days. On 20 July 1894 Albert Mattingley, aged fifty-seven, tendered his resignation to the Department to take effect on 19 October 1894.⁵²

Even more disconcerting for Mary Jane Mattingley and other married women who had been denied pension rights and offered only compensation were the inconsistencies in the government's rulings. Clerks outside the teaching service were entitled to pensions after twenty-five years service as were singing and drawing masters and truant officers.⁵³ The government argued that these men were 'breadwinners.' The State School Teachers' Union objected to the dismissal of the women and supported their pension rights.⁵⁴ Within parliament opinion was divided and Robert Harper presented a petition to parliament on their behalf.⁵⁵ The Department went on the defensive. The Patterson government, according to the *Australasian Schoolmaster*, was defeated in the 1892 elections on its poor handling of the retrenchment/pension issue. Indeed W. Trudinger, in his work on the history of the Victorian Teachers' Union, claims Alexander Peacock, the new Minister of Public Instruction in the incoming Liberal government under George Turner, admitted that 'teachers had contributed in a slight measure to the downfall of the late Cabinet'.⁵⁶ But, as Trudinger notes, when Peacock refused to change his predecessor's policy on pensions for the married women and this government also offered the women compensation, but not a pension, the Department found itself facing a challenge in the Supreme Court.

Mary Jane Mattingley, on behalf of the women who refused to accept compensation, and supported by the former Department officer Thomas Brodribb and the retrenched Charles Topp, challenged the Department. Her challenge was based on the grounds that there was no 'excess' of teachers at Errol Street and that the Minister could not dismiss a teacher without the authority of the Governor-in-Council in the manner outlined in the Public Service Act no. 1133.⁵⁷ Mary Jane claimed reinstatement, a

pension or damages for wrongful dismissal. Although Justice à Beckett in the Supreme Court ruled that the Department had the right to declare her in excess at Errol Street State School, he found that the Department had erred on a technicality. The Department had illegally removed her by Department circular. It had not informed her of her legal removal by Order-in-Council until the answer to her petition was delivered on 14 November 1894. He ordered that Mary Jane Mattingley be paid salary to this date and monies she was entitled to until the Order-in-Council dispensed with her services.⁵⁸ Stung by the judgement, in the following year the Department appealed to the full bench of the Supreme Court and the judgement was overturned. The Department, having won the case, agreed to pay costs.⁵⁹ In 1895 Mary Jane Mattingley and the other women concerned were paid only compensation for their dismissal from the service. It is pertinent at this point to pause and consider just how far married women teachers' careers had been diminished by the Department. Just over a decade before, Mary Jenvey, with an almost identical length of teaching career to Mary Jane Mattingley, had been permitted to retire on a pension, which was much more handsome than that to which Mary Jane Mattingley would have been entitled! There was more indignity and injustice to follow.

By late 1894 Alexander Peacock had succeeded Baker as Minister of Public Instruction in the liberal Turner government. As a liberal protectionist, Peacock was a supporter of women's suffrage and a man who achieved what G. Serle has termed 'almost legendary fame' for his anti-sweating legislation in the Factories and Shops Act 1896. Peacock enjoyed a lengthy parliamentary career including six periods as Minister of Public Instruction under different governments.⁶⁰ Given the lengthy span of his career at the helm of education, his influence on and responsibility for the teaching lives of married women teachers cannot be underestimated – an issue which is explored in more depth in the following chapter. Indeed, his retrenchment policy in education would come in for considerable criticism from the Fink Commission of 1901. Although popularly regarded as a humane politician, Peacock would turn a blind eye to the injustices meted out to married women teachers and their exploitation by the Department. The reasons for this and the hypocrisy of the liberal position on married women teachers can be seen in the circumstances of the debate

surrounding a Bill introduced in parliament by Peacock in the months immediately following the overruling of the Mattingley case by the Supreme Court.

In 1895, to the astonishment of the legislature and outrage on the part of the women's supporters, Peacock introduced a Public Officers' Retirement Bill. Among other things, it was designed to remove from teaching a number of younger married women, who either had not received notification of their dismissal in 1894 or who had received such notification but had been granted a reprieve on the grounds of hardship. Inexplicably the Bill proposed to offer them pensions. In parliament R. Murray Smith demanded to know 'why some male teachers were retrenched in 1893 and allowed pensions, some women were dismissed in 1894 and paid compensation and now there was a proposal to retire another group of younger women teachers on pensions'.⁶¹ A possible answer to his query lies in the Department's correspondence regarding four married women, whose services Baker had decided to retain for twelve months owing to financial hardship. The Department puzzled over what to do with these individual cases. Presumably the advice of James Bagge, Departmental Secretary, on the matter was ignored. Outlining the situations of the individual women he concluded with a warning:

If it is decided that these teachers are to go and they are permitted to retire on their pensions, as it is proposed to allow members of the service to do, then those married teachers who were dispensed with last year and retired with compensation would have a grievance and would apply to Parliament to have that grievance removed.⁶²

And that was precisely what occurred. Debate on the Public Officers' Retirement Bill was intense. Parliament balked at the prospect of granting pensions to one group of officers while denying it to others. It divided between those who wanted to add the names of Mary Jane Mattingley and the married women teachers she represented (approximately twenty-eight) to the list of married teachers to whom it was proposed to offer pensions and those who opposed in principle the payment of pensions. In highlighting the discriminatory treatment the women received, Murray

Smith affirmed that promises had been made to the women regarding the possibility of qualifying for a pension and that:

the twenty-eight lady teachers had been pilloried by having their names read out in parliament, and that the champions of these women had been sneered at because these teachers were women, and it had been suggested that their gallantry had upset their mental balance.

In a revealing comment Peacock argued that there was no suffering involved in the case for 'if their husbands did not support them they should be able to support them'.

The Bill was thrown out. The women who were the subject of the Public Officers' Retirement Bill returned to teaching in the Department and were discreetly retired – at a later date – on pensions.⁶³

Collapsing categories: maintaining control of married women teachers

At the same time as the Mattingley case was proceeding, the Department was facing challenges on other fronts. It could see the categories which the marriage bar had constructed for married women teachers collapsing, as determined married women tried to maintain their livelihood. Shortly after her dismissal, Martha Simcocks, a married woman teacher who had been retrenched in 1894, applied for reinstatement as a sewing mistress. The original public service legislation had exempted the sewing mistress from the marriage bar subject to the Department's discretion. The Department supported her through the 'correct processes', her reinstatement in the Department as a sewing mistress subject to confirmation by the Attorney General. This duly agreed upon, all seemed to be going smoothly for three years. After all, an agreement of this kind worked in the Department's favour, providing them with a fully qualified teacher on the salary (pittance?) of a sewing mistress who was required to take up whatever work she was offered. Then Martha complained about the nature of the work she was required to do. She pointed out the unfairness of a sewing mistress being required to supervise students and being expected to work as an unpaid assistant in the school. The Department, accustomed to exploiting its sewing mistresses in precisely this way, quickly changed its mind about Martha Simcocks. It feared, probably correctly, that she was attempting reinstatement in her

previous role as a classified member of the service. The Attorney General's approval was quickly revoked. Martha Simcock's record was marked 'never to be employed in the Department with supervision of junior staff or other duties', effectively ending her career.⁶⁴ The Department had made her case a deterrent for any married women teacher who might attempt to teach as a sewing mistress as a back door re-entry to the Department.

In 1895, mindful of the Mattingley controversy and the recent Simcocks case, the Department met yet another challenge. In the same year Mary Mathieson's teacher husband died shortly before she was retrenched and paid compensation.⁶⁵ Questions were raised in the legislature about her future and the lot of the widow with children to support. The Department was caught. It could not risk being seen as publicly indifferent to her plight, yet it was mindful that her case would set a precedent and that numbers of women (now widowed) would troop back into the Department. This would undermine the work the Department had done in reshaping the teaching service. It moved swiftly, revisiting the original legislation which did not bar widows from re entry to the Department, to make it very selective of those it would accept. Clause 15 of the Teachers Act of 1895 gave the Secretary of Public Instruction the discretion to deal with the situation.⁶⁶ Only those women who had been declared in excess by the Department and retrenched, were eligible to apply. They were to be under the age of fifty years and could only be appointed, irrespective of their prior classification, to the first eighth, or lowest, grade position which became available.

Waiting in the wings were a number of women teachers who had been widowed since leaving the Department and, unlike Mary Mathieson, were not prepared to accept reinstatement to an eighth class position at considerable loss of salary and status. In 1900 Norah Molloy and Alice Griffin, who had both been retrenched, sought clarification from the Public Service Board of their right to be reinstated at the level they held at the time of their retrenchment. They sought to reclaim their original position on the classified roll and their rights to a pension. They were successful and were granted the right to pensions on retirement with repayment of their previous compensation at £4 per month and £2 per month respectively.⁶⁷ The relative ease with which they were reinstated is possibly related to the publicity their

situation attracted. Alice Griffin's failed attempts to open a private school in order to support her family were on several occasions mentioned in parliament. Only six widows managed reinstatement and three argued successfully for reinstatement in the fifth class. And one of these women was Mary Davies.

The situation of Mary Davies was more complicated, for she was not a widow when she reapplied for work with the Department.⁶⁸ In 1900 she wrote to the Department in response to an advertisement for temporary teachers placed in the *Argus* newspaper. She wrote setting out her qualifications, a Certificate of Competency, and acknowledging that she was one of the married women who had been retrenched in 1894. In contrast to its response to many other married women teachers, including Mary Jane Mattingley, the Department offered her a temporary teaching position in Melbourne which she held for a number of years. Her salary was presumably in addition to that of her teacher husband, George Davies. When he died suddenly in 1903 she informed the Department that she had been left with three young children to care for and wished to apply for permanency in the Department in her former position on the classified roll. When the Department received her letter it noted that a 'similar concession' had been granted in five other cases including those of Norah Molloy and Alice Griffin. As there were a number of problems in her case the Department sought legal opinion on her claim. The first problem lay with the number of vacancies in class v to which Mary Davies wished to return. There were fewer positions available than fifth class teachers wanting promotion, a situation which had prevailed since 1895. On the advice of the Crown Solicitor, the Public Service Commissioner argued that Mary Davies could not be reappointed to her previous classification while there was an excess of teachers in the fifth class. Mary Davies, however, suggested that there were a number of fifth class positions not in excess and she persisted with her claim until her name was entered on the class list. She was then confronted by the next problem, the issue of pension rights. If she repaid the compensation granted in 1894 she could resume her pension rights. The Department was in a quandary over this:

Mrs Davies is at present forty-five years of age. It is a question for the Minister to decide whether he is justified in reinstating Mrs Davies with the risk of her claiming retirement on a pension in five years time.

After much indecision the Department agreed to reinstate her, requiring her to repay the compensation at £2 per month, a repayment rate which would ensure that she would be required to teach until she was fifty years of age. Mary Davies was fully reinstated in the Department in 1905 and taught for a further nineteen years, retiring at sixty-four years of age on a pension entitlement of £204-17-1.⁶⁹

The reinstatement of Mary Davies and the small number of widowed women who successfully challenged the Department in this way was a personal victory worthy of note. A battle with significant implications for a wider cohort of widowed women teachers was less successful. The Department's treatment of widowed teachers was again challenged in 1899 when the Department Secretary James Bagge sought legal opinion on a case brought by Mrs Mary Jelbart for reinstatement. This was an attempt by women to use the Department's torturous legislation against itself. In 1899 the Department sought legal opinion on a case brought by Mary Jelbart, claiming reinstatement.⁷⁰ Mary Jelbart had been employed as a teacher under the Department from 1879 until 1885 when she was admitted to the Training Institute. After completing training, she was given a permanent position but was required to retire on marriage in 1890. Subsequently widowed and with a young family to support she attempted reinstatement in the Department through the legislation introduced in 1893 for a completely different purpose. The Department had introduced the legislation to encourage women teachers employed prior to 1881 to remain in the service on marriage and avoid paying them compensation. Mary Jelbart now claimed that:

section 5 of the Teachers Act 1893 repealed that portion of clause 14 of Act No 1024 (that section of the Public Service Act 1889 containing the marriage bar) pertaining to female teachers employed prior to 24 December 1881 and that she was entitled to reinstatement.

As the Department knew only too well this was an important test case. There were many teaching widows in the same category as Mary Jelbart, who would be eligible for re-entry to the Department and keen to return should she prove successful. Further, Mrs Jelbart claimed that clause 20 of the Public Service Act 1893 provided an avenue of re-entry into the public service of persons 'whose services had been dispensed with'. This was the clause under which Norah Molloy and others retrenched during the recession had re-entered the Department. The Attorney General rejected Mary Jelbart's case. He ruled that the provisions of 'section 5 of the 1893 Act did not apply to Mrs Jelbart, because although she was a female teacher appointed prior to 4 December 1881 she had ceased to be a teacher before the passing of the 1893 Act'. Nor was Mrs Jelbart 'a person whose services had been dispensed with' as these words had a special and restricted meaning referring to cases where an officer 'had committed no fault ... and who had not (as in this case) done anything to disqualify himself from continued employment in the public service'. Mrs Jelbart by her own voluntary act (marriage) came within the provisions of the statute which compelled her to retire.⁷¹ Such were the Byzantine rulings of a Department, which had no intention of reinstating married women teachers.

The Department had now successfully fended off challenges to the meanings of the legislation and dashed the hopes of the many married women teachers hoping to return to the service. But this defeat had wider significance. Married women teachers had explored their last legal avenue in the struggle with the Department over their status. As temporary teachers, or 'Outsiders' as they were known in the Department, they had little redress against Department decisions. For the next five decades, married women teachers were to be a contingent of indigent female labour on whom the Department relied to fill temporary appointments, staff distant rural schools and, in the latter decades, fill in the gaps at secondary schools.

This chapter has speculated on the strategies and the philosophy behind the Victorian Education Department's purging of married women teachers, not only the powerful teaching matriarchs, but all married women, from permanent positions in the Department. Despite concerted opposition from married women teachers, including a court case and numerous legal challenges, by 1895 the Department had established

a basis for legitimising its exclusion of married women, including needy widows and deserted wives, from the teaching service. This was a procedure it routinely called on for successive decades until married women teachers were reinstated in 1956. The Department was aided in this by liberal reformers whose belief in the male family 'breadwinner' precluded their acknowledgement of married woman teachers, even if these women were deserted wives separated from their husbands or widows and the sole support of families. Indeed liberal, humanist reformers could not conceive of the financially or professionally independent married woman, in spite of, or indeed perhaps because of, their commitment to married women's civil and political rights in marriage.

¹ B. Curtis, *True Government by Choice Men? Inspection, education and state formation in Canada West*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1992; see the introduction, in particular, for a discussion on Foucault's 'panoptic' modes of power.

² S. Macintyre in *Winners and Losers: the pursuit of social justice in Australian history*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1985, pp.52-3, cites J.S. Mill's comment that liberalism in Australia took a peculiar form. The tradition with which Mill was familiar emphasised the rights of the individual and the restriction of the role of the state. But in Australia the state was increasingly entrusted with responsibility for the individual.

³ S. Macintyre, *Winners and Losers*, p.128.

⁴ S. Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism: the lost world of three Victorian visionaries*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, pp.200-205.

⁵ L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle class 1780-1850*, Hutchinson, London, 1987.

⁶ See R. Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: intellectual roots of modern feminism*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1982; Harriet Bradley, *Men's Work, Womens' Work: a sociological history of the sexual division of labour in employment*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989. More recently a collection of Australian essays has examined these themes, B.Caine (ed.), *Australian Feminism: a companion*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998.

⁷ *VPP* 1873, vol.2, p124.

⁸ Before compulsory schooling, educational authorities believed that pupil attendance was related to the prestige of the head teacher in the community and the quality of the school.

⁹ Record of service, Mary Jenvey, no.1459.

¹⁰ *VPPapers 1884*, Royal Commission on Education, (Rogers Templeton Commission) Minutes of evidence, p.278, question 9454.

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- ¹¹ W. Trudinger, 'The Victorian Teachers' Union, its history and its influence on education', B.Ed. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1941, pp.19-25.
- ¹² *Rogers Templeton Report*, vol.3, p.26.
- ¹³ *VPD*, vol.38, 1881, 972.
- ¹⁴ *Rogers Templeton Report*, vol.3, p.26.
- ¹⁵ A. Oldfield, *Woman Suffrage in Australia: a gift or a struggle?*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1992, pp.131-135.
- ¹⁶ In 1883, Charles Pearson, Minister of Public Instruction 1886-90, was co-sponsor of a new bill to allow divorce to women on grounds of simple adultery. The proposal failed although divorce proceedings were simplified and custody rules made less disadvantageous to women. See S. Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, pp.201-202
- ¹⁷ Marjorie Theobald, 'Gender, teaching and institutional change: an historical perspective', in *Reshaping Australian Education* revised paper, The first classified roll which appeared in 1885 demonstrated how the Department had reshaped the careers of all women teachers. Women were excluded from the first class and twenty-five appeared in the second class, of whom fifteen were married. There were only six places allotted for women in the third class and eighty-two in the fourth class. The fifth class contained the largest group over 780 women. But a further 240 women were classified in a newly created class beneath this fifth class. The politics behind the Department's manoeuvring of single women into teaching in the bush and the challenge undertaken by Helena Stark has been told in R.J.Selleck, 'Mary Helena Stark: the troubles of a nineteenth-century state school teacher' in Alison Prentice and Marjorie Theobald (eds), *Women Who Taught: perspectives on the history of women and teaching*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1991.
- ¹⁸ Public Service Act, 1883 (46 Vic. no.773).
- ¹⁹ *VPD*, 1883, vol. 44,p.1287.
- ²⁰ Brisbane Girls' Grammar was also opened in 1875.
- ²¹ S. Macintyre, *A Colonial Liberalism*, pp. 205 - 7
- ²² Education (Teachers) Act, 1888 (52 Vic. No.1001).
- ²³ Section 13 of the 1895 Regrading Act, may have offered the Department some leeway. Clause 1 reiterates the provision that female teachers may retire from the service at the age of fifty years or after thirty years of service. Clause 2 states that if any female continues in the public service after fifty years, she may be called upon at any time before she attains the age of sixty-five by the Governor-in-Council, to retire.
- ²⁴ VPRS,794, unit 1253, 89/33072.
- ²⁵ Record of service no.917, Maria Hadfield.
- ²⁶ Record of service, no.2074, Lucy Tisdall.
- ²⁷ VPRS 640, unit 1707, 89/19844.
- ²⁸ VPRS 640,1707, 89/19844.
- ²⁹ Record of service, no.2816, Jane Scott.
- ³⁰ Education (Teachers) Act, 1888 (52 Vic. No.1001).

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- ³¹ Public Service Act, 1889 (53 Vic. No.1024.)
- ³² D.H. Rankin, *The History of the Development of Education in Victoria 1836-1936*, Arrow Printery, Melbourne, 1939, pp. 140-2; L.J.Blake, (ed.), *Vision and Realisation: A Centenary History of State Education in Victoria*, vol. 1, pp. 269-70.
- ³³ Teachers' Salaries Act 1893, no 1334.
- ³⁴ *Australasian Schoolmaster and Literary Review (AS)*, May 1890, p.130.
- ³⁵ See C.Griffin, 'The Saga of the Twilighters' Campaign 1881-1931', M. Ed. thesis, Monash University, 1998, for details of the Twilighters' campaign for justice over pensions.
- ³⁶ Teachers Act 1893, no.1302.
- ³⁷ *VPD*, 1892-93, vol.71, p.4470.
- ³⁸ Both amendments appear in the Public Service Act of 1905, remaining in the Act until 1927, presumably the career lifetime of the women concerned.
- ³⁹ VPRS 892, Education Department special case files, unit 64, no.902.
- ⁴⁰ VPRS 640/p001, unit 816, 94/6136.
- ⁴¹ Record of service no. 5533, Mary Jane Mattingley
- ⁴² Death certificate Mary Jane Mattingley no.10744.
- ⁴³ VPRS 640, unit 158, 83/3100.
- ⁴⁴ VPRS 640, unit 158, 80/43621.
- ⁴⁵ There appears to be no clause in the Department's regulations which referred specifically to maternity leave. Instead it appears to be covered by section 86 of the Public Service Act 1883 under the heading 'leave of absence for recreation'.
- ⁴⁶ VPRS 640, unit 160, 86/20043.
- ⁴⁷ VPRS 640, Miscellaneous, 86/ 13847.
- ⁴⁸ VPRS 640, unit 1160, letter dated 14 March 1894.
- ⁴⁹ VPRS 892, unit 902, memo 26 Sept.1894.
- ⁵⁰ R.J.W. Selleck, *Frank Tate: a biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1982, p.72.
- ⁵¹ VPRS 640, unit 1160, letter dated 21 May 1894.
- ⁵² Record of service no 5533; VPRS 640 unit 1160, 94/23741.
- ⁵³ *A S*, xvi, May 1895, p.206.
- ⁵⁴ In 1885 the State School Teachers' Union of Victoria was formed. Both the Male Assistant Teachers' Association and the Victorian Lady Teachers' Association (VLTA), containing a number of the teaching matriarchs, would prove significant lobby groups. Judith Biddington has argued that there was considerable overlap between the Victorian Women's Suffrage Society and the VLTA. See J. Biddington, 'The role of women teachers in the Victorian Education Department 1872-1925', M.Ed. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1994.
- ⁵⁵ L. Scholes, 'Education and the Women's Movement in Victoria: 1875-1914', Ph.D., University of Melbourne, 1984.
- ⁵⁶ W. Trudinger, 'The Victorian Teachers' Union,' p.27.
- ⁵⁷ VPRS 640, unit 1160, 94/3381.

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- ⁵⁸ VPRS 640, unit 1160, 94/33881.
- ⁵⁹ *Argus*, 6 February 1895; *Argus*, 19 March 1895.
- ⁶⁰ *ADB*, vol 11, pp.173-5; *V&R*, vol.1, p.1481.
- ⁶¹ *VPD 1895-6*, vol.77, p.201.
- ⁶² VPRS 640/pl, unit 821, memorandum 4 April 1895.
- ⁶³ See Teacher Career Records : Sarah Ann Fuller no. 4427; Agnes Slattery no. 4285; Catherine Helliard no.6464.
- ⁶⁴ Record no.7788, Martha Simcocks.
- ⁶⁵ Record no. 5955, Mary Mathieson.
- ⁶⁶ Teachers Act 1895, no. 1382.
- ⁶⁷ VPRS 794, Central Inward Registered Correspondence, unit 956; VPRS 892, Education Department Special Case File, unit 79, 1903/6488.
- ⁶⁸ Record of service no. 8574, Mary Davies.
- ⁶⁹ VPRS 892, unit 1053, 1900/3480; 1904/8879.
- ⁷⁰ VPRS 2028, Register of Legal Opinion.
- ⁷¹ VPRS 2028, Register of Legal Opinions, vol.i, Folio 206, 99/2029.

THE LEGACY: 'MARRIED' WOMEN TEACHERS AS A RESERVE ARMY OF LABOUR 1901-1934

On 18 June 1900 Richard Baker wrote to Dr Charles Carty Salmon, the Minister of Public Instruction in the McLean government, claiming that he had been asked by the married women teachers who had been retrenched during his term of office, if it had been his intention to offer them pensions instead of a lump sum as compensation. He replied:

Certainly, 'yes', and for my own guidance I had prepared a list of all such teachers showing name, date of birth, years in service, No. on the roll, class, salary amount of pension and compensation. This list you have in your department.

The question arose as to how these pensions were to be provided for. I was advised by the Crown Law officers that the only way was to place the sum on the yearly estimates. It will be in your recollection, no doubt, that at this time the depression through the shrinkage of revenue was so great, that I deemed it quite useless to ask Parliament to add to the already large pension list. It felt at the same time these teachers were morally entitled to have received their pensions as I had intended.¹

I forward the above statement at the earnest request of the Ladies and their friends.²

Mary Jane Mattingley and her colleagues now had evidence to press again for justice from the Victorian Education Department. Disillusioned after their retrenchment, they had watched as Norah Molloy and others, who had been widowed after their retrenchment from the Department, were reinstated in the teaching service.³ They were not alone, however, in their discontent with the Victorian Education Department.

For in 1898 Alfred Deakin, speaking in Parliament on the sum proposed for the Education Department, voiced his concern with the inadequacies of the system and

unleashed a tide of criticism. Many supported Deakin's stand including David Syme who wrote lengthy critiques in the *Age* of the state's technical education.⁴ Concern with the chaotic state of education in Victoria prompted the appointment in 1899 of a Royal Commission, the Fink Commission, initially to report upon 'the provision of a systematic and graduated course of technical education'. The chairman, Theodore Fink, purposefully widened the scope of the Commission's inquiry to take in every phase of education below that of the University. Fink was scathing in his criticisms of the Department administration and the 'unwise and unstatesmanlike retrenchment in expenditure'.⁵ Alexander Peacock, who had been Minister of Public Instruction in the 1892-93 Shiels ministry and in the 1894-99 Turner ministry, although chastened and under considerable pressure, escaped criticism.⁶ But Richard Baker, as Minister of Public Instruction during 1893-94, did not. In 1899 an embarrassed government heard Thomas Brodribb, Inspector-General under Baker until he resigned in protest against his actions, claim that Baker had acted illegally or improperly during 1893-94 and had caused the educational system to be 'tumbled down like a pack of cards'.⁷

Six months later Baker wrote the letter of support for the married women. One wonders about his motives. Was he prompted by revenge on a government that had scape-goated him or was it a matter of his conscience and the women's persistence in the matter? In 1900 another event sparked the women's determination to mount a deputation to parliament. Advertisements in the *Age* and the *Argus* called for temporary teachers to fill positions the women had vacated because they had been declared 'in excess' during the Depression. As Mary Jane Mattingley pointed out to Charles Carty Salmon, the Minister of Public Instruction, they been encouraged by the report of the Reclassification Board stating that 'those persons who were dispensed with owing to retrenchments should now receive generous consideration from the Government'. She added that 'the ladies were hoping to come in for a portion of that generous treatment'.

D. Williams and I. Palmer, members of parliament, introduced the women's case. They supported the women's claims to reinstatement where vacancies had since occurred. Palmer brought Baker's letter to the Minister's attention. Palmer praised their teaching capabilities and acknowledged that when he had the conduct of a school he thought it was very desirable to have at least one married lady on the staff.

He also pointed out that Mrs Mattingley and the women she represented had been most unlucky in the conduct of their case claiming a pension. He described what happened after the Full Supreme Court had ruled in the Department's favour. The women had planned to bring the matter before the Privy Council but they 'had a solicitor who had not acted straight, and the money lodged had got astray in some peculiar way'.

Nevertheless, despite considerable support for the women from members of parliament, the Minister claimed that there was a 'great disinclination on the part of the members to reinstate the women or increase the pension list. Mary Jane Mattingley was provoked to reply: 'But parliament is opposed to anything like repudiation! We have the promise of fifty members to support us'. Nevertheless, the women underestimated the opposition to their claims for reinstatement in the Department or for a pension. The Minister was pushed to comment on individual cases. 'Why, the women asked, were some married women reinstated, some offered temporary work and others refused'. Salmon could only claim that 'he had acted illegally, but if he had acted against the law in the case of people absolutely destitute, that was no reason for breaking the law again'. Another deputation of married women, this time without Mary Jane Mattingley, met the Minister in the following month and encountered similar opposition. Peacock went further when their case was raised yet again in debate on the Teachers Bill of 1901. He repeated that the issue was about 'the wives of men earning good salaries from the state' wanting more.⁸

Postscript

Mary Jane Mattingley and the women she represented would never achieve justice on the issue of a Department pension. Albert Mattingley died at the age of eighty-six in 1923.⁹ Mary Jane Mattingley was still active in 1934 when she attended the Jubilee festivities of the Errol Street State School with Dr William Maloney. She died the following year at the age of eighty-eight. Even without the benefit of a pension, Mary Jane Mattingley was in comfortable circumstances when she died. Her probate papers show that among her assets were a house and a total of £1000 left to her spinster daughter.¹⁰ Perhaps Peacock would have felt vindicated.

There are important reasons why the Mattingley case, and the women she represented, have again been foregrounded in this chapter. Theirs was an important test case of married women teachers' future in what was hailed as a new educational era, as an educational renaissance. The findings and recommendations of the Fink Committee were released in five progress reports and one final report in 1901.¹¹ In the same year, in an attempt to remedy the deficiencies of the state system exposed by the Fink Commission, the Education Act of 1901 was passed. The Act provided for a Director to be in charge of the Department and abolished the old position of Inspector General. Frank Tate, one of the inquiry's key witnesses who was Inspector of Schools at the time, would be appointed the first Director in 1902. Tate has been hailed as a reformist who laid the foundations of the contemporary education system. He worked very well with Alexander Peacock, Minister of Public Instruction for much of his regime. (Peacock's career, including his anti-sweating legislation was mentioned in the previous chapter.) Peacock and Tate shared similar philosophies. Peacock's support of the working man's wage meant he was implacably opposed to married women working. Tate was inherently conservative when it came to gender issues, for example, in his opposition to equal pay.¹²

Tate and Peacock would be instrumental in reshaping Victoria's educational landscape and forging a new future for Victoria's teachers. New courses of study were introduced in schools and the Teachers' College reopened; links were forged with the University and the training of secondary teachers was made possible; high schools and technical schools were introduced and the administrative structure of the Department was overhauled.¹³

But this utopia came with certain reservations: there would never be sufficient money to finance these reforms. This is where the married woman as temporary teacher – and cheap labour – would play an important role. Indeed the stringent economies practised under Tate and the poverty-stricken married woman temporary teacher would go hand-in-hand for decades.

Mary Jane Mattingley would make the married women teachers' last public stand to regain status in the Department for many decades. She was unsuccessful. Rather, married women teachers would form a significant but 'invisible' presence. Their

careers have to be prised from the records. But they are present and often in considerable numbers. The married woman temporary teacher comes to light at moments of crisis (or ruptures as Foucault termed them) in the Department and invariably she is at its mercy. It is these occasions and other rare glimpses of the outside temporary teachers that are explored here. Through occasional glimpses of the lives of a number of married women, this chapter offers a revisionist perspective of the enlightened reformist era under the Department's first Director Frank Tate and beyond.

On the backfoot

In 1900, not only was Mary Jane Mattingley unsuccessful in her plea for reinstatement or a pension from the Department, she was even refused temporary teaching. Helen Ross wrote to the Department stating that she was one of the married women whose services were dispensed with during 1894. She pointed out that she was now widowed and in indigent circumstances with three children to support, and would welcome the opportunity to teach temporarily. Despite offering to take charge of a remote school in the state, and seemingly meeting the requirements of the 1895 Act allowing reinstatement in the Department to retrenched women who were subsequently widowed – she was refused work.¹⁴ Yet Mary Davies, (whom we met in chapter two when she was reinstated in the Department) and whose husband George was also a teacher, was successful. She was given temporary teaching in a city school. The Department was clearly a law unto itself.

For the next five decades, 'married' women teachers in indigent circumstances were to be a contingent of female labour on whom the Department relied to fill temporary appointments, staff distant rural (unpopular) schools and respond at moments of crisis or experimentation in the Department. As 'Outsiders', they were employed by the Department through the Public Service Commissioner, who was required to exempt them from the marriage bar before they could be employed. Although the Department publicly appeared to defer to the authority of the Public Service Commissioner in its dealings with married women teachers, this was purely a formality. In a difference of opinion the Department made it clear who was in charge.¹⁵ The salaries and conditions of temporary teachers were at the Department's discretion, usually at a rate slightly under half the salary of the lowest

classification. They had no sick leave and of course no guarantee of continuous employment. As temporary employees their lives were spent criss-crossing the countryside, filling in at schools for periods of a few days to a few weeks or months. There were, according to Department statistics, seventy-seven married women temporary teachers in 1902, and this rose to 217 in 1910. Strangely the number of married women temporary teachers dropped to 201 at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.¹⁶ When one would have expected the Department to employ more temporary teachers, including married women temporary teachers, this was not the case. In 1913 temporarily employed married women received the following memo from the Department secretary:

I have to point out that the lowest qualification for permanent employment as a teacher under the Department is the Second Class certificate, particulars concerning which were published in the supplement to the *Education Gazette*, 20th March 1909.

You are reminded that, under the terms of your employment as a temporary teacher, your services are liable to be dispensed with at any time that a qualified teacher becomes available.

The Department could now afford to be choosy in selecting temporary staff!

Some women were fortunate to have an influential and sympathetic ally in the inspector. In 'Memories of a Gippsland Childhood', Winifred Grassick recounts her mother's concern at being a temporary teacher during this period prior to her father acquiring his small farm. She recalls:

There is one memory of the war years. Mother could never forget that she was only a temporary teacher, and the sinister word retrenchment entered my vocabulary. As the war dragged on it appeared more frequently in the monthly *Gazette* and in the *Argus*. There was consternation when we heard that retrenchment in the Department seemed inevitable.

The insecurity of those years brought apprehension into the annual visit of the school inspector, but Mr Saxon, whom mother had known in her years of training, was a good, reassuring friend. When he was promoted and a new

inspector of uncertain temper was appointed, worry increased. However, all was well. Retrenchment did not affect my mother's career then or ever.¹⁷

Other women were less fortunate. The Department files contain a bundle of letters written to them from women frightened of losing their livelihood, many struggling to care for young children or other dependants. And the letters in this collection are all stamped with the remark 'Is she a widow? Married women are not eligible for appointment'.¹⁸ It is difficult to know how these women fared. Presumably some did lose their positions. Katherine Ashford in her work on the status of women teachers in the Victorian Education Department cites the letters of several desperate women who relied on their teaching salary to support invalid husbands and dependant children. The *Woman Voter* took up the cause of one of these women, arguing that:

A duly qualified woman teacher should have the same opportunities that a duly qualified male enjoys. The state does not ask him whether he is unmarried or married. It chooses the best man qualified for the position and so it should be with women.¹⁹

In response the Department implied that widows would be treated as more deserving cases. This did not necessarily follow. The employment of the 'needy widow' in preference to other 'married' women teachers was a smokescreen the Department used to keep married women teachers at bay. The teaching widow would not receive more generous treatment.

It was the Victorian Education Department's refusal to grant permanency to the teaching widows which distinguished its policies from those of other states of Australia and overseas jurisdictions operating a marriage bar. Given my reservations about assessing the comparative effects of the bar on the lives of married women teachers, outlined in chapter seven of this thesis, it is unwise to go beyond this statement. But it should be noted that in the first decade of the twentieth century married women teachers in New York City fought successfully to keep their jobs after marriage and during and after pregnancy. When the New York City School

Board tried to restrict entry to the candidates the Victorian Education Department refused to admit, the Board was lampooned in the *New York Tribune*.

Campaign of Schoolteachers

Characters:

Board of Education

Three women candidates

Chorus by the Board:

Now please don't waste your time and ours,

By pleas all based on mental powers.

She seems to us the proper stuff who has a husband bad enough.

All other pleas appear to us excessively superfluous.

1st Teacher: My husband's really not that bad. ..

Board: How very sad, how very sad!

1st Teacher: He's good, but hear my one excuse. ..

Board: Oh, what's the use, oh, what's the use?

1st Teacher: Last winter in a railroad wreck,

he lost an arm and broke his neck.

He's doomed but lingers day by day.

Board: Her husband's doomed hurray, hurray!

2nd Teacher: My husband's kind and healthy, too. ..

Board: Why then, of course, you will not do!

2nd Teacher: Just hear me out. You'll find you're wrong.

It's true his body's good and strong;

But, ah, his wits are all astray.

Board: Her husband's mad, hip, hip hurray!

3rd Teacher: My husband's wise and well -the creature!

Board: Then you can never be a teacher!

3rd Teacher: Wait. For I have lead such a life;

He could not stand me as a wife;

Last Michaelmas, he ran away.

Board: Her husband hates her hip hurray!

Chorus by Board: Now we have found without a doubt,

By process sound and well thought out,

each candidate is fit and truth, to educate the mind of youth.

No teacher need apply to us,

whose married life is harmonious. (Miller, 1915)

'The Ideal Candidate' printed in the *New York Tribune* in *The Teacher's Voice:*

a social history of teaching in twentieth-century America. R.J. Altenbaugh (ed.)

The Falmer Press, London, 1992, p. 51.

In 1914, a year after the Department had cut back its number of married women temporary teachers, Australia was at war. The Department put a submission to Cabinet on the need to fill vacancies on the teaching staff. It cited numerous reasons: the enlistment of male teachers in the expeditionary forces; the marriage of women teachers, (the Department cited a figure of 30 per cent of retirements on account of women marrying); the illness of women teachers; the retirement of women at fifty years of age; the continuous demand on its resources by the spread of schools throughout Victoria; and the establishment of high schools. It proposed the temporary re-employment of teachers who had been superannuated out of the service and of married women whose husbands had enlisted and who had been hard hit by the drought.²⁰

But was this call for temporary teachers really necessary? The Department clearly possessed a supply of married temporary teachers, including those it had just retrenched, to which it would add superannuated single women teachers, as later statistics would show. Presumably the need to call in farmers' wives who were trained teachers was an act of political expediency on the part of the Department to appease the country vote. The Department, however, was immediately inundated with offers, most of which it declined, demanding to know of the married women, 'Is your husband enlisted?' By 1917 it would reply in response to the query of A. Ricks MLC, regarding Mrs Pentreek's application for employment:

There is no work for her as there are so many teachers who were displaced at Christmas who are still available ... Temporary employment is the only means of support for these ladies and preference is given to them. Mrs Pentreek's husband holds a Commission in H.M. Imperial forces and has made provision for her equivalent to the salary he was receiving as a teacher.²¹

During the war the Department was confronted with the problem of employing the teacher-trained war widow. In 1915 Dr John Smyth, the Head of the Teachers' Training College, wrote to the Director of Education, Frank Tate, with suggestions regarding the employment of widows:

In view of the fact that a number of widows of fallen soldiers that were once teachers will likely desire to enter the profession ... would it not be a good thing to make provision so that they can enter the class to which they belonged before their marriage? In all probability at the end of this year she [Mrs Haggard] will approach the Department to get a position. Her pension will not be large enough to enable her to rear and educate her girls and besides she feels she should be doing something. It seems to me it would be a generous and just act and would be a true expression of our gratitude to the men who have fallen if the government were to make such changes as are necessary in the Public Service Act to enable such women to resume their profession where they left off.²²

No doubt the fact that war widows were granted a pension by the federal government in 1914 provided the Department with an excuse for not employing them permanently in the service. As Joy Damousi has pointed out, the war widow was paid the same pension as an incapacitated soldier, and those with children received 10s for the first child, 7s 6d for the second and 5s each for the others. But civilian widows received no pension at all. They were regarded as fit to work.²³ Indeed civilian widows, deserted wives and divorced women, with or without children were not eligible for pension entitlements until 1942.²⁴ Hence the 'teaching civilian widow' in the Department was doubly damned: disqualified from permanency in the Department by the state of Victoria on account of marriage, yet ineligible for a pension from the Commonwealth of Australia because she was fit to work.

In 1919 the Teachers' Union took up the issue of the rights of widows to permanency in the Department. In November of that year, the Union requested the Department to have the Public Service Act amended to permit widows who were formerly teachers

to be re-appointed at their previous status.²⁵ The Department Secretary's response was typically evasive. Adroitly using the Union's own philosophy against it, he replied that:

the Public Service Act recognises that a teacher re-entering the service could be reinstated only in the sixth class. Such a practice commends itself to the general body of teachers. If a widowed teacher were acceded her former status and salary as suggested, teachers affected would probably complain.²⁶

At the same time, D. Smith, MLA for Bendigo, wrote to the Minister of Education, W. Hutchinson, forwarding the complaint of a 'soldier's wife with two children to care for' who held a First Class Certificate and was doing assistant's work in a local school. She asked for an increase in her salary that had been granted to permanent women teachers. The Minister replied:

The salary fixed for women teachers who are permanently employed as assistant and are not on the permanent staff is £80 per annum. This rate of salary was definitely fixed by the then Government, and I regret that I am unable to authorise any increase in the particular instance mentioned by you.²⁷

From the implementation of the marriage bar, the Department had developed procedures which permitted the Public Service Commissioner to exempt women teachers from the clause prohibiting their employment for periods of three months, six months and, in the latter decades, twelve months. Although the decisions were made by the Department, it was careful to conceal itself behind the authority of the Public Service Commissioner. Its standard reply read: 'I have the honour to inform you that the Public Service Act precludes the permanent employment of married women and the Public Service Commissioner will only consent to their employment in a temporary capacity.'²⁸

Women teachers did try to bring the Department to account. In 1920 the Department responded to a question by a member of parliament on behalf of Mrs Tobin, a widow, querying her exclusion from the service. She had also drawn attention to anomalies regarding married women teaching in the service – outlined in Chapter

two of the thesis. The Minister replied: 'The Act provided for the exemption from these provisions (the marriage bar) of women teachers who have retired with pension rights such as the case of Mrs Johnson referred to in Mrs Tobin's letter.'²⁹

In the mid-1920s the Department, however, did reappoint a handful of widows. These were, in the main, well-qualified women, whom the Department needed to staff its domestic science centres.³⁰ They were re-appointed 'in the public interest' and their career records draw on clauses from the 1890 Public Service Act and the 1905 Public Service Act.³¹ Some widows who were re-appointed were not domestic science teachers and they found grudging acceptance. In 1925 Ivy Fowler returned to teaching as a widow with a child to support, teaching at highly sought after teaching positions in city schools such as Armadale State School, South Yarra State School and Caulfield State School. In 1926 she was reinstated as a permanent teacher at Nungurnen State School, a distant rural school. She wrote to the Department:

I wish to apply for permission to apply for a transfer. I am a widow and have a son who attends Essendon High School. It was very hard for both of us when my work forced me to part from him and take a country position. I left him with my sister and mother who is old and in bad health. My sister has married and I am emboldened to ask to be allowed to apply for a transfer. For these reasons I would ask you to allow me to apply for a lot of vacancies as the place I am in is so remote I can never see him for even an occasional visit.³²

The Department was unmoved and it was five years before Ivy was given a city appointment, ironically when her son had accepted a studentship and a country teaching appointment.

If the Department's approach to married women temporary teachers was controlling and exploitative, the implementation of the Teachers Act 1925 shows just how opportunistic it was prepared to be in using the labour of the married woman temporary teacher. And equally it shows how these women were hapless pawns in the games the Department played. The Teachers Act 1925, incorporating the ratio

system, introduced a long awaited change to the system of classification and promotion of teachers.

Implemented to remove the blocks to promotion, the ratio system stipulated that the number of classified teachers in the service on 30 June each year should be the medium for arriving at the number of positions allowed in classes i to v. For male teachers it was arranged that for every forty-four there should be two in class i, three in class ii, six in class iii, eleven in class iv, and twenty-two in class v. Thus 50 per cent were above the lowest class. For female teachers it was provided that for every 121 of the total number of such teachers one should be in class ii a (a new class), three in class iii, twenty-seven in class iv and eighty-one in class v. Thus slightly over 33 per cent were above the fifth class. Hence as small schools opened in the country districts every forty-four of these under male head teachers necessitated the promotion of twenty-two teachers elsewhere. The female teachers were not so fortunate as it required an increase of 121 classified teachers to make a variation of their numbers to the fullest extent possible.³³ The result of the ratio system was that in 1926 a number of teachers received a rise in salary at considerable cost to the Department.

Focussing on the number of teachers in the system rather than the number of pupils attending schools, the basis for the previous classification system, meant a head count of teachers. An increase in the number of teachers in the lowest class would result in proportionate increases in the classes above. Suddenly the Union became interested in the temporary teachers in the system. And the Union quickly became aware that the Department was using the appointment of temporary teachers to subvert the effective operation of the Ratio Act. Rather than advertise vacancies, the Department made temporary appointments and avoided the cost of promotion. In November 1926 the Union focussed the spotlight on the 'invisible' temporary teacher. Henry Hart, Secretary of the Union, noted that:

a number of positions at present held by temporary officers (male and female) in the Technical Schools were not advertised in the October number of the *Education Gazette*.

The positions particularly referred to are those occupied by teachers of trade and craft subjects; many of whom have been for years, 'temporary teachers', not because they lack qualifications or skill, but because of a policy which, though relaxed in a number of cases last year, still appears to be operating. The work of these teachers lies mainly in the Junior Technical Schools.

These temporary positions are not only unsatisfactory to the teachers occupying them, but, since they are not included in determining the ratio of positions in the various classes they directly concern the whole of the secondary service.³⁴

The Department was pressured into a response. Donald Clark, Chief Inspector of Technical Schools, claimed that using temporary teachers allowed the Department necessary flexibility. And in a lengthy letter to the Director he argued strongly that there were special reasons why the positions should not be advertised at the time. Clark claimed that many of these temporary teachers would have difficulty competing successfully for their positions. The positions were all trade positions, held by a mix of older, partly qualified men and some single women, for example, 'Miss Kerr, who was appointed on the recommendation of Mr Carew-Smyth, but whose work in pottery classes may not be needed under the new scheme of pottery training'.³⁵ And of course there were married women. There was Mrs Kelly who was a war widow, teaching dressmaking, who was a 'very good teacher and unlikely to get her position if it were advertised'. There would be a problem too with Mrs Walker, a teacher of domestic science, who was 'not robust'.³⁶ Perhaps not robust enough to pass the stringent Department medical examination, but capable of teaching classes – at a cheap rate – for years.

The Department was unrepentant. It would continue using temporary teachers to offset the costs of the Ratio system. The Union was, however, successful in uncovering the number of temporary teachers the Department was employing. In 1925 the Department had 269 temporary teachers. This rose to 416 in 1926 and 531 in 1927.³⁷ The human face behind this dramatic increase in temporary employment was the married woman temporary teacher. Their careers were pitifully short, often in difficult situations where they earned the displeasure of the Union and their fellow colleagues.

This displeasure was expressed by the Secretary of the Ballarat Labor Party. In 1927 he queried the Department's use of temporary teachers, 'some of whom were married women', to the disadvantage of teachers who were trying to get promotion. He claimed that this caused qualified teachers to leave the service.³⁸ The married woman temporary teacher had become the *bete noire* of the Union. In 1929 the Union was so concerned over the issue of their employment that its representative, David Black, reported to the Director that the Union could give instances of cases where the Department employed married women teachers who had no need to seek employment. He stated that: 'at State school No 253, in 1928, there were three married women teachers, two of whom came to school by car, accompanied by their husbands and in the third case the teacher's husband was a well-to do man'.³⁹ But there was more than criticism in store for the married woman temporary teacher during the world wide economic Depression of the 1930s.

In May 1931 in the depths of the Depression, a Board of Inquiry into Education was established, chaired by C.M. Mcpherson. Ominously known as the 'Economy Enquiry', The Board recommended sweeping economies. Among these were the closure of Ballarat and Bendigo Teachers' Colleges. Many rural schools were closed and others amalgamated – these schools were invariably staffed by married women temporary teachers. There was little outcry. G.C. Frost, MLA for Maryborough, wrote to the Department about the plight of the widowed woman teacher. He was concerned that: 'temporary teachers had been given notice that their services would not be required after the holidays'. He had several cases of hardship in his electorate. 'Two of the temporary teachers were widows bringing up families.'⁴⁰ He pointed out that if the Department did not find work for them, these women would have to apply to the Children's Welfare Department for support for their children.

It was unlikely that the Department would have acceded to this request for it was troubled by cases closer to home. The Department wanted special consideration for the employment of thirteen temporary teachers: widows, deserted wives and single women who had resigned but returned to temporary teaching in the service working with opportunity classes for retarded children. The Department claimed that these were classified teachers who had been induced to take the work of teaching

'subnormal' children. Many held the Special Teachers' Certificate and all had a proven ability in the teaching of 'backward and defective' children. If their services were dispensed with it would be difficult to replace them and 'because of this and because of the claims of these teachers on our sympathy and consideration their services should be retained'. The Minister did not think this was possible but recommended that the five married women teachers recommended for special consideration would be the last to go.

Department statistics in 1932 show that only one teacher, the most highly reconunended special school teacher, remained in the temporary teaching service. The teacher career records show that in this, as in other dealings with its married women teachers, the Department was as duplicitous as ever. The statistics concealed that the Department had made alternative arrangements for at least one of its special school teachers. Mrs G.N. Fletcher was enrolled to undertake the Special Teachers' certificate at the Training College in 1932 and returned to teaching in 1934.

But fundamentally by 1932 it appeared that, with the odd exception, the married woman temporary teacher had finally been purged from the system. In 1940 a Department examination of the employment of temporary teachers since 1902 noted that in 1932 there were eighteen married women, five deserted wives, eleven widows, and seven divorced women teaching in the Department. That is a clear indication that the teaching widow had yet to be reinstated in the Department. Between 1932 and 1940 the Department claimed to have employed only one widow and one divorced woman as temporary teachers. The absence of married women temporary teachers during the period prior to the Second World War lent credence to the orthodoxy that married women teachers made their first appearance in the Victorian Education Department during that period.⁴¹

But nothing is ever quite as it seems when it comes to the labour of the 'married' woman temporary teacher. Statutory declarations lodged with the Public Service Comunnissioner in 1934 tell another story. Clause 8 of the Financial Emergency Act 1934 was designed originally to allow applications by unmarried male officers with dependants, for example, impoverished parents, to be treated as married in order to avoid a percentage reduction in their salary during a period of the 1930s Depression.

The file shows that this Act also included married women temporary teachers in similar situations. In a covering note to the Under Secretary of the Department, the Public Service Commissioner certified that a number of officers, approximately fifteen, who were all married women temporary teachers, should for the purposes of the Financial Emergency Act be treated as if they were married. Did the irony of what was happening occur to the Public Service Commissioner or the Director of Education? Did they realise that these married women were required to prove that they were not married in order to be exempt from the marriage bar in the Public Service Act and qualify for temporary teaching? And now they were to make application to be treated as married officers so as not to incur a percentage reduction in their salary? ⁴² The probability is that it did not concern the Department. Their interest was solely in legitimising the cost of the exercise.

A typical response came from Victoria Charlotte Vaughan. Victoria was thirty-two years of age and she claimed that her present salary was £180 and that after the percentage reduction implemented by the Department it would be reduced to £159-6-0. Victoria pointed out that she had two children aged ten and eleven and had a legal annulment of her marriage. She had received no assistance for her children from her husband for over ten years. She had been employed continuously as a temporary teacher for five and a half years and was a teacher prior to marriage. She received a reply from the Public Service Commissioner stating that:

by reason of the dependency of certain persons upon Mrs Victoria Charlotte Vaughan, an unmarried officer (temporary teacher) – the said Mrs Victoria Charlotte Vaughan should for the purposes of part 1 of the Act above cited be treated as if she were married.⁴³

Several others, like Mary Elizabeth Harrison, assured the Department that they were taking divorce proceedings and were offered interviews with the Public Service Commissioner to discuss the details of their claims. Two married women had their appeals refused on the grounds that their claims were vague and difficult to substantiate. The most surprising account came from Mrs G.N. Fletcher. She wrote to the Public Service Commissioner:

I desire to appeal against the reduction made on my salary under the percentage reduction basis. I have been employed by the Education Department during the past five and a half years in a temporary capacity. I was ineligible to apply for permanent employment until December of last year when I obtained a divorce from my husband on the grounds of desertion. I have three children. Jay aged 16 who at present is attending Hampton High School. Athol aged 13 attends Brighton Technical School. Beryl aged 11 is at Elsternwick State School.

The court awarded me all costs and £2-7-6 maintenance, but as the police cannot find my husband, I have received nothing from him. I had to borrow money to obtain my divorce, and since having been reduced, I cannot keep everything going and repay the money I borrowed. I keep a home, really a flat, for which I pay £1 a week.⁴⁴

Mrs Fletcher was one married woman temporary teacher who had retained her position in the Department in spite of the recommendations of the McPherson Inquiry. I had imagined that as a Department 'favourite' she would have been insulated from such problems. Not so – the married woman temporary teacher was always dispensable. Mrs Fletcher was, however, granted her exemption from the percentage reduction in her salary.

The marriage bar and its rigorous enforcement by a Department meant a lifetime of anxiety and poverty for those it chose to employ. This chapter has attempted to trace their 'invisible' presence over many decades, raising as many questions as it answers. It is unavoidably piecemeal and speculative. But the silent suffering of the married woman temporary teacher is an ironic backdrop to our understandings of a reformist Director of Education, Frank Tate and a Minister, Alexander Peacock renowned for his anti-sweating legislation. Unless, of course, one remembers that both men considered married women should be mothers and housewives, not teachers.

¹ VPRS 794, unit 961, 1900/35506.

² VPRS 794, unit 961, 1900/35506.

³ VPRS 794, unit 961, 1900/35506.

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- ⁴ A. Austin, *Australian Education 1788-1900: Church, state and public education in colonial Australia*, Pitman, Carlton, 1961, third edition 1972, pp.262.
- ⁵ L.J. Blake (ed.) *Vision and realisation: a centenary history of state education in Victoria*. Education Department of Victoria, Melbourne, 1973, vol.1, p.316.
- ⁶ A. Gregory 'Peacock the laughing premier, a preliminary sketch', *Victorian Historical Journal*, 52,1, February 1981, p.15.
- ⁷ *Vision and realisation*, p.316.
- ⁸ *VPD* vol.99, 1901, p.2915.
- ⁹ Death certificate of Albert Mattingley no.10866.
- ¹⁰ Probate and administration papers of Jane Mattingley VPRS 28/3, VPRS 28/p2.
- ¹¹ See D. Garden, *Theodore Fink: a talent for ubiquity*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1998 pp.111-117.
- ¹² R.J.W. Selleck, *Frank Tate: a biography*. Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1982, p.182.
- ¹³ See E. Sweetman et al., *A History of State Education in Victoria*, Education Department of Victoria, Melbourne, 1922, ch.xvii; Selleck, *Frank Tate*, chs 7 and 8.
- ¹⁴ VPRS 794, unit 997, 1903/3183.
- ¹⁵ The differences between the Public Service Commissioner and the Department surface occasionally, for example, over the meagre salaries the Department paid temporary teachers or the advertising of positions. The Department invariably replied that 'It would not be practicable to adopt the course indicated by the Public Service Commissioner, see VPRS 10059/p1, unit 317, 14.12.14.
- ¹⁶ A Department document reflecting back on the employment of temporary teachers, when it became a problem for the Department in the 1940s, notes that data on the number of 'married women and widows' is not readily available for the period.
- ¹⁷ W. Grassick, 'Memories of a Gippsland Childhood', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol.54, no.2, June 1983, p.44.
- ¹⁸ VPRS 794, unit 1052, file note headed temporary teachers.
- ¹⁹ K. Ashford, 'The status of women teachers in the Victorian Education Department at the turn of the century 1888 -1914, M.Ed. thesis, Monash University, 1981, p.143. See *The Woman Voter*, 10 February, 1914, p.3.
- ²⁰ VPRS 794, unit 1064, 1915/1229.
- ²¹ VPRS 794, unit 45, 1917/29.6.
- ²² VPRS 794, unit 1064, 1915/13956.
- ²³ J. Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: mourning, memory and wartime bereavement*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1999, p.68.
- ²⁴ L. Bryson, 'Two welfare states: one for women, one for men', in A. Edwards and S. Margarey (eds), *Women in a Restructuring Australia: work and welfare*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1995, p.63. Bryson offers an enlightening account of the 'decommodification' of married women's labour after the Harvester judgement which has parallels in this study of married women's teaching labour in Victoria.
- ²⁵ VPRS 10537/P, Teachers' Associations' Files unit C 1913-1919, Re widows, 21 November 1919.

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- ²⁶ VPRS 10537/P, unit C, 1913-1919, re widows 21 November 1919.
- ²⁷ VPRS 10537/p, unit C, 1913-1919, re widows 27 February 1919.
- ²⁸ VPRS 10059 p/1 Public Service Outward Letter Books, unit 43, 25 June 1914.
- ²⁹ VPRS 10059 p/1 Public Service Outward Letter Books, unit 45, 10 May 1920.
- ³⁰ See career records of Hannah Hastings no.14708, Florence Pearce no. 14761 and Evelyn Nicholls no. 140311.
- ³¹ See career record Ivy Fowler no. 14775, and Hannah Hastings no. 14708. Section 9, Public Service Act 2383.
- ³² VPRS 640,unit 2654, 10 July 1926.
- ³³ Statement showing the working of the ratio system of promotion of teachers: Teachers' Bill (1932), Ministry of Education Library, Melbourne.
- ³⁴ VPRS 10537/p, 8 November 1926.
- ³⁵ VPRS 10537/p, unit 62, 7 March 1927.
- ³⁶ VPRS 10537/p, unit 62, 7 March 1927..
- ³⁷ VPRS 10537/p 4474/1930.
- ³⁸ VPRS 794, unit 115,1927,14782
- ³⁹ VPRS 10537/p, unit 62, 3 December 1929.
- ⁴⁰ *VPD*, vol.187,1931,p.5382.
- ⁴¹ J. Rea, *Women in the Victorian Teaching Service: the struggle for her own rights*, Melbourne Federated Teachers' Union, 1991, p.8.
- ⁴² VPRS 774/ P0005, unit 1, Public Service Board Correspondence Files 1931-1937.
- ⁴³ VPRS 00774/P0005, Public Service Board Correspondence, unit 1, Folio 34/2477. Applications by unmarried officers to be termed as married. Section 8 of the Financial Emergency Act, 31/ Dec. 4, Charlotte Vaughan.
- ⁴⁴ VPRS 774/P0005, unit 1, G.N. Fletcher.

'OUTSIDERS', MARTHA GRACE NEVEN, ALICE JARDINE AND CHARLOTTE (LOTTIE) BARTLETT, MARRIED WOMEN TEMPORARY TEACHERS

Of the hundreds of career records of married women teaching in the Victorian Education Department held in the Education History Unit in Melbourne, why have I chosen to focus on the experiences of Martha Grace Neven, Alice Jardine and Charlotte (Lottie) Bartlett as case studies of the married woman temporary teacher? There are a number of reasons. Their stories are both ordinary and extraordinary. They represent a range of responses to temporary teaching at the mercy of the Victorian Education Department. Grace Neven went mad while teaching and was incarcerated in Kew Asylum. Alice Jardine struggled for years to support two children on a fragment of a salary, eventually retiring without any pension rights. Lottie Bartlett was forced to divorce her first husband in order to work for the Department, remarried and had to resign once again, only to be widowed and return to teaching. But their stories may not be uncommon – a glance at the career records suggests that there are many untold stories.

But the telling of these three women's stories is far from straightforward. Indeed from a methodological point of view it has proved disconcerting. Most obviously the stories are uneven in depth and length, and reflect not only the different nature of the sources from which they have been drawn, but different times and circumstances. Grace Neven and Alice Jardine were born in the 1860s, Lottie Bartlett was born a generation later in 1892, by which time the Department had learned to be far more discreet in its approach to married women temporary teachers. Grace Neven's life has provided a very rich source of public records on which to draw. Events in her life brought her to the attention of the nineteenth-century bureaucracies, the Victorian Education Department, the Judiciary and the Health Department, who duly recorded in detail their encounters with her. In contrast Alice Jardine has proved rather more elusive. Her story is told primarily through documents drawn from the Department's School Correspondence Files and her teacher career record. Finally Lottie Bartlett's story would not have come to light at all, had not her daughter, Margaret Benson, volunteered information in an interview she gave me on her mother's experiences of teaching in the Victorian Education Department.

Indeed the writing of Lottie's story presents additional methodological problems. Margaret Benson, Lottie's daughter, was a member of the Technical Teachers' Union and the Temporary Teachers' Club, the latter instrumental in the reinstatement of married women teachers in the Department in 1956. Margaret's pride in her mother's teaching career and her indignation at the treatment she received at the hands of the Department is clear in the account she wrote specifically for my research. And therein lies the problem. Margaret Benson's representation of her mother's life has been shaped to a particular purpose. And my account rests primarily on the accuracy of Margaret Benson's claims regarding her mother's divorce from her father – at the Department's insistence – before she would be permitted to teach. There is, however, evidence in transcripts held under Section 8 of the Financial Emergency Act 1931, indicating that this was Department practice¹ and I have no reason to disbelieve Margaret Benson's account. Although the Department correspondence records offer incidental material on Lottie's teaching life, which has proved useful, I am reliant on Margaret Benson's carefully crafted story for personal details and information on the latter period of her mother's life.

And there are other methodological problems. As post modernist feminists have been claiming, there are many ways to read the stories of peoples' lives and more than one story to tell.² Indeed there is no 'real' Grace Neven, Alice Jardine or Lottie Bartlett. At a material level, these stories can be read as the exploitation of the married woman temporary teacher by a Department that refused to recognise her right to work to support herself and her dependents. A Foucauldian reading would highlight the regulation of women's sexuality.³ Feminist historians, attempting to understand the meaning of teaching for women have explored both the local and personal operations of power in women teachers' lives and the impact of dominant discourses of the state. Kate Rousmaniere and Marjorie Theobald, for example, discuss the impact of conflicting discourses on women teachers' subjectivity at different times and in different cultures.⁴ Rousmaniere's American teachers in the early twentieth century urban classroom coped with conflicting discourses proclaiming women teachers as 'mothers made conscious'. This quote from Carolyn Steedman's article of the same name,⁵ is Rousmaniere's way of describing women teachers who were expected, among other things, to address horrendous discipline problems in the classroom.⁶ Theobald's subjects, nineteenth-century Australian

schoolteachers, were sometimes 'destroyed by the fact that they could be both women and teachers in the particular circumstances of their times'. For Grace Neven, Alice Jardine and Lottie Bartlett, the problem was that they were married women teachers in circumstances that were hostile to their having a career. Given the power of the Department to determine their lives, how might we understand their subjectivity? In many ways it is difficult to represent them as other than victims. But as Linda Neave has argued the discourses of power are both regulatory and productive.⁷ And the women teachers whose stories are explored in the following accounts variously appeased, manoeuvred around, deceived or challenged the Department as well as capitulating to it, as they struggled to make a living from teaching.

.....

Martha Grace Neven, or Grace, as she was known, was the second of twelve children (seven girls and five boys) born to William Duston Neven and Grace Thompson Neven, née Gillon, Scottish immigrants to Australia who married in Geelong in 1859.⁸ In 1881 William Neven, as a farmer/miner at Stony Creek, Daylesford, was attempting to earn a living for his family of twelve children, the youngest of whom was eleven months old. Despite his grim struggle to provide for his family in occupations variously listed as farmer, miner, gardener and stonemason, the family fortunes of the Nevens did not prosper.

Grace began her teaching life as a probationary teacher at Musk Vale in the Castlemaine Inspectorate in 1878, the school she had attended as a child.⁹ According to the date of birth on her teacher record, 1 June 1864, Grace was fourteen years of age. Grace's birth dates, however, were variously recorded as 1862, 1863, 1864 and 1867. As it has not been possible to locate either her birth certificate or death certificate, it appears likely that the date of her birth recorded on her parents' death certificates – 1862 – was accurate, indicating that Grace was sixteen years old when she began teaching. Perhaps this was considered a little old to begin as a probationer so Grace adjusted her birth date accordingly. Nevertheless, she had a four-year waiting period before she was appointed as a pupil teacher in 1882.¹⁰ The nineteenth-century teaching service was highly competitive as teaching was regarded

as one of the few 'respectable' occupations in which women could earn a living. Consequently, the Department had at its disposal a ready source of female labour to staff its schools. The lot of the pupil teacher was very difficult, teaching by day and studying for examinations by night. It took Grace Neven five years of satisfactory inspectors' reports and examinations before she met the Department's literary requirements for the qualification of Licence to Teach. This included an extra year incurred through failure at the examinations, a common occurrence at the time.

In 1887 Grace was appointed temporary head teacher of Brit Brit State School in the Coleraine district. Grace managed well at this school and several other appointments as a temporary teacher in a number of rural schools. In this respect her early teaching career in these schools is unusual. It was not until later in life that she would encounter the problems of isolation, poor accommodation and bullying tactics of some older pupils. This, as Noeline Williamson has shown in her account of bush teachers, was the 'normal' lot of women teachers in rural schools.¹¹ In April 1889, Grace received an appointment as a junior assistant at Clifton Hill State School. This was followed by an appointment as junior assistant at a larger urban school at Wangaratta. At this school Grace became ill, applying for sick leave on five occasions.¹² The Department at first responded favourably to Grace's applications for leave, reflecting what is referred to in its official history as the 'liberal provisions for sick leave in operation at this time'. A medical certificate was required for an absence of more than two days on sick leave but this certificate could allow leave of up to one month on full pay and thereafter on half-pay.¹³

Grace was clearly unhappy in this appointment. The Head teacher of Wangaratta State School reported very critically to the Department on 'her frequent absences on account of illnesses'. With the support of the Department medical officer, Grace applied for a month's sick leave. She was diagnosed as suffering from nervous mental exhaustion (on a pro-forma designed for male teachers, requiring five amendments in order to indicate her sex). An interdepartmental memo contained the following responses to her situation:

The last leave granted to this teacher was on a third pay ending 22nd June 1890.
Now applies for a month's leave on account of 'nervous depression'.

Her service now being over eight years, should the increased scale of leave on full pay be granted to her?

Her absences have been so frequent that I cannot recommend any indulgence being shown – Partial absence for the month of October might be allowed on third pay and she should be required to see the GMO before resuming duty.¹⁴

Grace explained to the Department that the noisy character of the Wangaratta School had aggravated a headache problem she had developed since a fall from a horse some years back. Inspector Shields wrote in support of her application:

Miss Neven cannot bear noise and feels the work of a larger school, like the one at Wangaratta, too much for her. She would be glad if the Department could let her have a trial of a small school in the country, and if she finds that she is not equal to light work, she will have to resign. I see no reason to doubt Miss Neven's statement about her head troubles. Perhaps the Department may be able to give her a trial of light work in the country; but if not, then it will be necessary for her to retire from the service as permanently unfit.¹⁵

Perhaps Grace's continual bouts of ill-health at the Wangaratta school had some basis in fact. It is equally possible that Grace used ill-health as a subterfuge. It may have allowed her to request a transfer to another school and escape from a situation which she found challenging, a large and noisy school. How women teachers were to maintain discipline in the classroom remained unclear. Inspector Fussell's report, written immediately prior to Grace's application for transfer from Wangaratta State School, reflected this confusion. His report claimed that Grace 'taught along effective lines and kept effective discipline but the tone of the class was somewhat harsh'.¹⁶ The situation Grace encountered at Wangaratta State School would have required considerable subtlety in its handling. The Education Act of 1888 contained a clause specifically concerned with dispensing with the services of staff who:

refused to accept an appointment to a junior assistantship or a fifth-class school, unless such junior assistant or pupil-teacher be a female and satisfy the Board that the vacancy is one which it would not be fit and proper for her to accept.¹⁷

Under the terms of the Act, as Selleck has shown, the Department claimed to have exempted twelve hundred women from teaching in the country in the two years prior to its passing.¹⁸ Concerned with staffing its schools the Department was likely to be sensitive to further complaints and requests for transfers. Grace may have found illness an acceptable excuse to leave the school, retain her position as a permanent teacher, and return to more isolated (and less popular) teaching appointments in the country.

The issue of ill-health, as researchers have noted, often arose in connection with nineteenth-century teachers. In 1913 the Victorian Lady Teachers' Association, in their submission to the Commission on Equal Pay for Equal Work, felt compelled to point out that extensive sick leave for women was a result of the difficult conditions in which they were forced to work.¹⁹ Lynda Nead has pointed to the relationship between nineteenth-century notions of female dependency, respectability and illness. Nead claims that physical (and mental) frailty was seen as proof of femininity.²⁰ In this context it was not surprising that ill-health was accepted as a natural condition of women teachers. The Department proved sympathetic to Grace's requests, and was probably pleased to offer her appointments to country schools which other teachers found unattractive. As a tactical measure, pleading ill-health was successful. Grace was able to move to another school and continue teaching. She was to use the excuse of ill health to good effect on other occasions throughout her career.

After some deliberation the Department agreed to offer her a trial of 'light work in the country'. Grace's next but one appointment was to Boho State School where she encountered John Stevenson, the son of a local farmer. This started the sequence of events which resulted in the establishment of the Special Case File on her case. Grace was in her late twenties at the time of their meeting; John Stevenson was twenty-nine years old. Grace explained later in the divorce depositions that she was accustomed to playing the harmonica at the church services which were held in the school building and that John Stevenson would attend and wait for her after the service. He would also arrive at the home of Mrs Pascoe with whom Grace boarded. Grace described one occasion when John Stevenson followed her to Three Mile

Creek Waterfall near Warrenbayne and threatened to throw her down the precipice if she did not marry him.²¹

Grace, on sick leave, returned to her parents' home in Brunswick in October 1891. According to the divorce depositions, John Stevenson followed her and forced her to accompany him to the Registry Office in Carlton where they were married. She claimed never to have seen John Stevenson again and a month later she learned that he had been committed to Beechworth Mental Asylum where he remained in 'a hopeless state of madness.'

Grace concealed her marriage from the Department and while in Brunswick requested an extension of sick leave from the Department. This was granted. When she returned to teach at Boho, it was to complain to the Department that she must leave because the situation had affected her health. Among her letters to the Department was one complaining about the nature of the food and lodgings at the home of her landlady, Mrs Pascoe.

Bread which forms the chief article of diet at Mrs Pascoe's, was by Mrs Pascoe improperly made and unfit for human consumption; as such when in the state of dough it was placed in a bed from which she had a short time previously arisen and this was the usual method of preparing all such food.²²

The Department, although concerned at having to arrange a transfer for Grace, unquestioningly accepted her word and the necessity to offer her a transfer to a school with lodgings attached. Grace changed schools a number of times in the next few years. On 23 March 1893, Inspector Fussell wrote to inform the Department that, 'Miss Neven is improperly in the service as she has been married for some two years to a Mr Stevenson'.²³ On 25 March 1893 the Department informed Grace that she had forfeited her position as a teacher and must at once cease duty. Under the Public Service Act of 1889 Grace, as a married woman, could have no legitimate claim to a teaching career.

Undeterred, Grace immediately applied to the Department for a personal interview. The Department accepted Grace's version of the marriage, subject to its confirmation. Their reaction to her situation was detailed in the following memorandum:

The Inspector General has drawn my attention to this very sad case. Mrs Stevenson lately Head teacher of Norong 2454 has lost her employment through a hasty and unfortunate marriage – a marriage which seems to some extent made under coercion.

Mrs Stevenson states that it was a joint undertaking that though bound to each other by marriage vows, they were in no way to live together, and evidence shows that they did not live together as man and wife.²⁴

In referring to the fact that Grace and John Stevenson did not live together as man and wife, the memorandum drew attention to the virginity test that Grace was required to take in order to validate her story. The Department memorandum concluded, 'her record as a teacher was always good and further she is believed to be a virtuous and well-conducted woman'.

In 1893, four years after the introduction of the marriage bar, Grace had retrieved a seemingly impossible situation, a marriage, disqualifying her from teaching in the Department. She played the one important card she had – she was 'unmarried', still a virgin and prepared to prove it. It was the Department's turn to capitulate. They could understand and applaud a woman who was sexually 'pure'. The divorce depositions drew attention to her frailty as a woman. Grace sued for a decree of nullity of marriage (the divorce petition is described as 'Neven falsely called Stevenson v Stevenson') but was granted a decree absolute. She was reinstated in the Department on the Classified Roll and received for a transfer in division i on 13 December 1894. The Department granted her, retrospectively, leave with pay for the period of her suspension.²⁵

Grace was never called to account over inconsistencies in her story. Nor was the unfortunate John Stevenson, who died in Beechworth Asylum, able to present his side of the story. For the circumstances of the marriage are unclear. Why was a

'forced' marriage unconsummated? Grace, as a 'virtuous' woman, was absolved of any complicity in her relationship with John Stevenson. No mention is made that John Stevenson, as the records of the Beechworth Asylum reveal, was the brother of Grace's landlady, Mrs Pascoe.²⁶ Nor is it suggested that this relationship might have been the reason that Grace could not board at Mrs Pascoe's after the marriage rather than the unhygienic food Mrs Pascoe provided. Grace's contention that John Stevenson threatened her with violence was never questioned. Nor were awkward questions raised about the arrangements surrounding her marriage, that it apparently occurred at such short notice and with the relevant documentation, which Grace would surely have had to supply. The correspondence in the Special Case File revealed several inconsistencies in Grace's story that went unquestioned.²⁷ On 6 October 1891, the day after her 'marriage', Grace wrote four letters to the Department from her parents' home in Melbourne, detailing the circumstances of her absence from Boho. She explained that an outbreak of influenza had forced her to close the school and notify the local health authorities. She claimed to have returned to Boho East on 5 October (the day of her marriage) but 'suffered a relapse and was compelled to return immediately'. Grace probably did return to Boho with John Stevenson, which contradicts her claim that she never saw him again after leaving the Registry Office. But this explanation afforded her the opportunity to explain her presence in the area, and to point out that 'the reason of delay in forwarding the medical certificate is that I took it on with me to forward it with "Returns" but was unable to reach the school'. In her final letter in this sequence, Grace applied for and received further sick leave. But as a 'virtuous' woman Grace turned an impossible situation around – no longer victim but victor.

On 23 January 1900, six years after her reinstatement in the Department, Grace applied for a month's leave of absence from Footscray State School on account of illness. On 25 January 1900 she married Herbert Knight, a forty-two-year-old Englishman, whose occupation was listed as gardener.²⁸ Grace, with many other married women at the time, did not notify the Department of her changed circumstances, and her head teacher wrote to the Department on 30 January:

I have the honor to report that Miss Martha G. Neven, Assistant in this school, has been absent from duty from the 23rd instant (inclusive).

I have received no communication from her in explanation for her absence. She has not yet resumed duty.²⁹

And once again, Grace claimed sick leave. On 27 February 1900, Grace forwarded her resignation to the Department, claiming ill-health 'on account of the consequent worry I was subjected to from 1891 to 1893 at Boho which is seriously telling on my health'.³⁰ The Department granted her three months leave with pay which was presumably her entitlement for the service she had given. Thus Grace Neven concealed her second marriage from the Department for as long as possible, and drew from them whatever meagre concessions she could extract.

Few details have emerged about Herbert Knight's life, but two years later in 1902, as Martha Grace Knight, Grace applied for and received permission to work as a temporary teacher. By this stage of her life Grace would have been in her early forties and her correspondence with the Department revealed that she had returned to teaching in order to support her invalid husband. As a married woman she was ineligible for employment as a permanent teacher. She was now in the category of an 'Outside teacher'. Grace was appointed as a relieving teacher to Buckley State School in the Colac Inspectorate in 1902 where the records suggest that she set out to prove her worth to the community. Grace's letter to the Department reveals her attempt to influence the Department:

I beg in justice to myself and the work done to state that portion of the school ground has been laid out in garden plots and plants for study grown, the quarters have been freshly painted and all repairs have been attended to, also that portion of the new programme has been introduced and has given general satisfaction, also that I've attended the classes held in Geelong for instruction in sloyd work and feel competent to carry out the instructions connected herewith.³¹

The parents petitioned the Department in a bid to retain her service. The Department responded by writing to the parents' committee, citing the provision of the Public Service Act.

[The] Request is one that the Department has not the power to comply with. The position must under the provisions of the Public Service Act be confirmed on the teacher next legally entitled to transfer on promotion as the case may be.³²

Grace responded apologetically.

I have the honour to beg that under the circumstances, the following information be received directly from myself, as I feel I am misunderstood by the Department and being quite aware that I cannot as Outsider (to the department) desire any consideration whatever in the matter of tenure and locality.³³

By 1908 Grace had been deserted by her husband and was teaching in the Department again, destined to spend the final seven years of her teaching career as an itinerant teacher in rural schools. Nevertheless, Grace tried once again to be allowed 'continuous service in the Department' and failing that to be given a position at Ballarat or Geelong in order for her to further studies. These pleas were to no avail for in January 1908 Grace received an appointment to Granite Flat State School, Charlton. By the end of that year she had taught at a total of eight schools. The years 1909 to 1912 followed in similar fashion.³⁴

In 1913 Grace received the following memorandum from the Department:

I have to point out that the lowest qualification for permanent employment as a teacher under this Department is the Second Class Certificate, particulars concerning which were published in the Supplement to the *Education Gazette*, 20 March 1909.

You are reminded that, under the terms of your employment as a temporary teacher, your services are liable to be dispensed with at any time that a qualified teacher becomes available.

I have to ask you to be good enough to state whether you are taking any steps to obtain the Second Class Certificate. If not, you may receive tuition by

correspondence, free of charge from the Melbourne High School. Applications for tuition should be made to this office addressed to the Chief inspector.³⁵

Many temporary women teachers, sensing an end to their livelihood, responded to this memorandum in panic. Grace, however, was delighted to avail herself of this opportunity. She wrote :

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of memo of 16th inst, and to state in reply my pleasure that I may be allowed to secure my position by the study of additional subjects. I have the honor to state that I shall endeavour to be prepared at an early date, to be examined in the subjects, and beg to be advised regarding method.

I beg to state that as I had begun a course in French, I should prefer to return to the study of it, as one of the subjects.³⁶

Some two weeks later the Department wrote on her file:

Inform Mrs Neven that the circular was sent to her in error. As she is a married woman she is not eligible for permanent employment. Further she is already recorded as possessing a 'Licence to Teach'.³⁷

Presumably Grace had already received the second memorandum sent by the Department to temporary teachers, pointing out that the previous memorandum was sent in error. Section 4 of this memo was directed to those teachers 'who are married women'. It contained the following:

Public Service regulations do not permit of a married woman obtaining a permanent position. The circular does not apply to their case. Point out however, the importance of some systematic form of study in the interests of their efficiency as teachers.³⁸

Grace took the Department at its word and responded eagerly to what she mistakenly believed to be encouragement to further study. She wrote to the Department on two

occasions acknowledging that it was her responsibility to further her education. She regretted 'the cause of correspondence in the matter of fuller study' but was prepared to pay for tuition for subjects in literature, as she realised that tuition through the source afforded would be thorough. She promised to obtain instruction in other subjects from another source. She concluded:

I beg to state therefore that I wish to withdraw my application for direct tuition, and I shall myself undertake to apply to the Training College, so as to fit myself as soon as possible for examination.

The Department wanted to bring discussion on the matter to an end. The comments on Grace's correspondence reflect their attitude to her eagerness to improve her qualifications. Inspector Fussell asked, 'What is this teacher's qualification?' To which the reply was 'Married woman. Not eligible for permanent appointment - already informed'.³⁹ This, as Grace well knew, was her last chance to escape her 'temporary' teaching appointment at Nurcoun State School. She was entirely at the Department's mercy and the Department chose to ignore her pleas for help.

When Grace was appointed to this school, she somehow offended the chairman of the School Committee, an influential member of the local community, who was determined to have her removed from her position. Grace claimed that she was in fear of his daughters, who had no interest in acquiring an education, and were encouraged in this by their father. She referred to a disturbance in the school grounds by members of this family who delivered the mail.

I regretted reporting the matter at all as I've lost prestige by so doing ... but had I not taken the matter in hand and ordered them off the premises I would have been responsible for any damage incurred. I felt it my duty as the teacher in charge.⁴⁰

The Sunday church service was held at the school. Grace wrote informing the Department that:

during the Summer vacation of 1914-15 the School was entered and the following named records removed. Maintenance Record, Private Record of Pupils' Examinations and Work Progress Book. The facts are that a number of young men either before or after the Sunday service on many occasions caused me trouble in the same way.⁴¹

Grace wrote to the Department regarding the treatment she was receiving from the community and seeking direction and support. The Department's response was to write cryptic memoranda asking each of the other: 'Do you know this case?'⁴²

Grace was aware that the Nurcounng community held her up to ridicule. Absent on sick leave in Melbourne, she was in a very distressed state when she wrote to the Department.

I am not obsessed about misrepresentation nor what people think or say, but I've been informed that persons collect any mannerism peculiar to myself and furnish them to low class theatres in the city. As a woman who abhors the impure in every sense of the word, I beg your protection in this matter, my Christian name to be deleted.⁴³

It must have been apparent to the Department that Grace's mental health was disintegrating. It is possible that she imagined that she was being publicly humiliated in a comedy theatre, but it is also possible that there was a comedy in Melbourne parodying female 'spinster' teachers and using material from her divorce case. Whatever prompted her action, Grace's request to have her Christian name, Martha, deleted from her teaching service record was a sad comment on her mental condition and the treatment she had received at Nurcounng. The Department duly struck out the name of Martha on her teaching service record, allowed sick leave and simply supplied a temporary replacement.

In Grace's absence a young woman, Eva Boatman, acted as a relieving temporary teacher at Nurcounng State School. Eva's father included his daughter's letter to her mother in his appeal to the Department querying the desirability of sending 'young

unprotected women to teach in such places'.⁴⁴ Through the observations of this independent witness, Eva Boatman, Grace's situation can be perceived.

Eva began her letter to her mother:

Behold me seated here before five cherubs in the most god-forsaken place on earth. It is two miles to the school and there is nothing but heavy sand with two long and fairly steep hills in it. Then there is slush, so that I couldn't walk but had to mount a pony. Its really too far to walk every morning.

Eva wrote of Grace's isolation.

Mrs Neven lives a very secluded life in the two rooms at the back; there is no place in sight of the school and I believe there is scarcely any furniture there and the result is that she is away on sick leave and shaping well for the Asylum. She has been saying some very queer things, thought everybody was against her and that boys came out in the middle of the night and threw rocks on the roof.⁴⁵

Eva too tried to escape this community. Her request for a transfer to another school met with the following response from the Department; 'The Department is unable to supply a male teacher, if the female teacher is unable to remain there is no option but to close the school'. Eva Boatman was correct in her assessment of Grace's mental health. On 30 August 1915, Grace was found wandering in Templestowe Road, Heidelberg and brought before the Heidelberg Court. Under Section 23 of the Lunacy Act of 1915 she was 'deemed insane and not under proper care and control' and remanded to the Royal Park Receiving House.⁴⁶ She was admitted to Kew Asylum in 1915 and diagnosed as suffering from acute mania.

Grace's diagnosis card on entry to Kew Asylum is a final comment on her sad and difficult life.

The family history in this case seems favourable, she has been a State School teacher since girlhood with intervals, she made an unfortunate marriage and had to maintain her husband until he left her many years ago, no offspring. For a long time past she has had schools in the back blocks, and lived by herself and

did her own housework and difficulty was experienced by her in obtaining a proper supply of provisions, often having to live on damper and such like. She is of self-sacrificing nature and benevolent and in order to provide a home for her sister and her mother she invested all of her savings, £200 in the purchase of a bee farm. She was apparently taken in over this transaction for she lost the money and the farm. She has neglected her health, and the combination caused her to have an attack of Acute Maniacal excitement. She was kept one day at the Receiving House and sent to Kew. At the end of the 6th day she had become quiet and composed and has continued so since, is occasionally apprehensive otherwise rational.⁴⁷

Grace was discharged from Kew Asylum in 1917. Her circumstances beyond this point remain unknown.

.....

Alice Jardine's situation was different. In 1899 we meet her in the records of the Department, as a thirty-nine-year-old widow with two children, determinedly lobbying for reinstatement. Alice wrote to the Department asking to have

the honour to apply to have my name placed on the list of candidates for permanent employment . . . There are several female teachers now in the service who joined at about the same time as I did and under the same conditions, who married long afterwards but were not compelled to retire on marriage Since my widowhood I have made several applications for permanent employment but without success although I repeatedly hear of cases of widows, who not only have been successful in obtaining permanent positions but who have been fortunate enough to have been promoted to the class in which they were when they resigned.⁴⁸

Alice put her finger on the contradictory outcomes of the amending legislation outlined in chapter two of the thesis. Alice is referring here to the situation the Department created in the 1890s with legislation amending the marriage bar, which favoured some married women teachers over others. Alice pointed out that some of her contemporaries had married long after she did, but had been allowed to remain in

the service.⁴⁹ And, as the Department knew, her accusation was accurate. Furthermore, Alice wanted to know why, as a widow, she was not entitled to reinstatement, when clearly others were. Alice Jardine was doubtless referring to women such as Alice Griffin, Norah Molloy, Jane Powell, Mary Davies and Mary Mathieson, all of whom had been retrenched in 1894 and subsequently widowed. They had won reinstatement in the Department under the Teachers Act 1895 in a highly selective definition of the category widow. Only those who had been retrenched by the Department in 1894 and subsequently widowed were eligible for reinstatement.

The Department was all too aware of the confusion and anger brewing over these selective rulings. It was currently dealing with a challenge from the widowed Mary Jelbart to gain reinstatement. And ominously for Alice Jardine, when Mary Jelbart was unsuccessful, the Department included in its terse memorandum: 'Inform Mrs Jelbart that the Attorney General has given his opinion that she is not eligible for reappointment. Inform Mrs Jardine.'⁵⁰

Alice Jardine had not been retrenched by the Department in 1894 and then widowed. Her career with the Department had begun in 1874 as a pupil teacher not quite fourteen years of age and she was to work for sixteen years until she forfeited her permanency with the Department on marriage in 1890. In 1898 her husband died and in 1899, widowed and with two children to support, she hoped to regain her teaching position.⁵¹ She was not successful.

In 1900 she was offered a temporary position at Patho State School, a very small rural school. She experienced the frustrations common to the temporary teacher, the difficulty associated with travelling to such isolated places, complaining: 'I found that the coach only goes out every other day and could not take charge till the ninth'. At Patho she requested 'permission to retain my present position till the end of the month (at least). My expenses before leaving Bendigo were heavy and I would like very much to be allowed to remain at Patho until I receive this month's salary'.⁵² Alice remained there for four months but was without work for two weeks until she received a transfer to Wanurp State School. She wrote to the Department complaining of receiving little encouragement in spite of pleasing the parents,

applying herself to the curriculum and being forced to live in a tumbledown building two miles from the school. The reason for her defensive reply soon becomes clear as she has received a most unfavourable report from Inspector Fussell. To one of his complaints she replied:

I beg to state that it is most difficult to state when you have the correct time. Warnup is 11 miles from the railway station and the post office is 5 miles further on. The people regulate their time by the sun and the almanac and I am obliged to keep mine by theirs, since Mr Fussell's visit I have purchased an 8 day clock.⁵³

It appears that the demanding Inspector Fussell had arrived at the school ahead of the pupils and Alice Jardine. She was swiftly punished. Fussell reported that she taught by rote to a large extent and the number of pupils in the school was beyond her capacity to manage. At her next rural school, her third appointment in 1902, Fussell maintained his criticisms, claiming that she was doing 'fair work only'.

Yet Alice remained undeterred and pressed for permanent reinstatement. The Department curtly replied: 'Inform Mrs Jardine that unless she can succeed in rendering herself much more efficient it is most probable that further employment will not be found for her.'⁵⁴ And indeed it wasn't. With two young children to care for, Alice Jardine was unemployed from 12 December 1902 (when she was required to finish at this school) until she began at another school on 30 January the following year. But there was worse in store. A memorandum reveals the Department discussing whether she would accept a temporary position at reduced rates. Alice had no choice but to accept. Her next appointment found her:

Driving around all day, trying to find accommodation... Although the parents are most anxious to have the school open they do not feel disposed to help. I asked the lady who had charge of the school key if she could let me have the use of two rooms attendant to the school but she would not as Mrs Johnson's furniture was still in there and she said Mrs Johnson had told her the Department was sending a male teacher as there was no accommodation for a female teacher.⁵⁵

Alice had her two children with her and had made arrangements to leave them at a farm while she found out if she could reside at the school and keep her children with her. She was, however, 'very much disappointed as I was put to a great deal of expense and inconvenience'. Nevertheless, she pressed her case on the Department, pointing out that she had only received one day's salary for January and drawing attention to Appendix V S13 of the regulations which stated that 'all appointments cease on the 31 December but should it be necessary to reappoint immediately after the holidays such appointments would date from 1 January 1901'.⁵⁶ The Department swiftly pointed out that her service had not been continuous and she was owed no more.

In early December 1905, after five months at Hayunna State School, she inquired of the Department whether she was likely to be employed during 1904 as she had a quantity of furniture and it was very expensive to remove it to Bendigo each time. She pointed out that she was not employed till the end of February and her salary since that time has only been £5 per month on which she had to keep herself and two children.⁵⁷ Not surprisingly Alice had not been able to save anything. Alice's career record contains Inspector Fussell's response: 'Inform that temporary work will continue to be given to her as it offers. Reports recently received would not warrant the Department offering her permanent work.'⁵⁸ The Department had not forgotten her claims to reinstatement.

Two weeks later she was appointed to Cochrane's Creek State School which had been closed for sometime for want of a teacher willing to teach there. A contributing factor may have been what visiting inspectors called 'the unusually high proportion of dullard families in the district'. Alice claimed that she found a coating of dust two or three inches deep on the walls and desks. It took all day sweeping the walls and desks to clean it and no children had yet appeared. She is concerned (with good reason) about her salary.

I do not know on what basis my salary is calculated. The Department informed me that the fixed salary would be £60 or £5 a month but it did not give me any instructions as to how the balance would be made up. Provisions are sold here at such rates that I can barely afford to keep myself let alone a girl of eleven and a

boy of ten. I know of several married ladies whose husbands are in business who have been given temporary work at much more than I am receiving. Trusting to receive £84 a year.⁵⁹

Alice did not receive this salary, or its equivalent, over the fourteen years she remained at this school as a temporary teacher. Part of the explanation lies in the considerable saving the Department intended to make in staffing such schools. In New South Wales, at this time, it cost around £10 per head to educate a child in a small school in the country compared to around £3 per head for a child in a city school.⁶⁰ No doubt the same rates prevailed in Victoria and Alice Jardine and her unfortunate colleagues were part of the solution to the Department's financial problems. Alice resigned without fanfare on 30 December 1925, at sixty-five years of age. Her final report from Inspector Johns is a tribute to her tenacity: 'Is reliable and hardworking. She is very earnest in her work and exercises a good influence over her pupils. Her manner is vigorous and eager. Management is well exercised.'⁶¹

After such dedicated and lengthy service, Alice, in company with many others in her situation, would retire without any pension entitlements. In offering a sympathetic accounting of her teaching experiences it does not seem possible to write of her as other than a 'victim', although a resilient one, of an oppressive system.

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Charlotte Bartlett, or Lottie Bartlett, as she was known, was born at Bacchus Marsh on the 26 September 1892. Lottie did well at school and in company with other bright girls then, and in generations to follow, chose teaching as one of the very few avenues open to young women. In 1907 Lottie obtained entry to the Melbourne Continuation School in Spring Street, opened just two years before in 1905.⁶² This school had been established to educate at secondary level teachers for the state system, and to replace the pupil teacher method of teacher preparation.⁶³ As a junior teacher, just eighteen years of age, however, Lottie received a critical report on her teaching capabilities. Inspector McCrae wrote: 'A young teacher, who shows very little skill in handling children. Does not yet make sufficient use of children. Taught geography lesson by good methods'. This was a typical comment on the career

records of many young women, and probably more a reflection of the number of excellent female candidates the Department had at its disposal than lack of ability.

Undeterred Lottie improved considerably in the following six months. McCrae commented that she took a 'better grip of her class, maintained effective supervision and managed the fourth class with considerable self control and skill'. But when it came to her first appointment, Lottie strongly resisted being appointed to Fitzroy State School. While training as a junior teacher at North Fitzroy State School, she had begun lobbying the Department and the head teacher, T. Hocking, at Bacchus Marsh State School for an appointment at her former school. Lottie was very persistent. She wrote lengthy indignant letters to the head teacher, pointing out that he had advised her father to write to the Department and her father had received a reply saying that she could have a position, providing there was a vacancy and no other candidate was placed ahead of her.⁶⁴ The problem for Lottie was the presence of a male teacher at Bacchus Marsh State School and when he sent in his resignation, Lottie's family were overjoyed. Unfortunately for Lottie, the young man was refused a position as a bank clerk because he was too young and he wanted his teaching position back. While the Department dithered over its course of action, unwilling to abandon the chance of employing a male teacher, the vacant position was filled by temporary appointments. Lottie continued to put her case very forcefully to the head teacher, T. Hocking, concluding, 'Don't you think in all fairness, I should be appointed at Bacchus Marsh, as it is my home and it would be extremely inconvenient to have to go elsewhere'.⁶⁵ Six days later she wrote to the Department Secretary and the Director, Frank Tate. Lottie began: 'I know you have a great interest in Continuation School students. I have just finished my course there, having passed the Junior Public examination and also gained a studentship for Teachers' College'. Lottie then outlined her case, knowing that Tate was also being lobbied on her behalf by George Leibler. Leibler claimed that:

Miss Burbidge (Lottie's maiden name) passed with great credit at her exams. It has been difficult for her parents to pay her board in Melbourne whilst she was in training, but having done so it would assist them and Miss Burbidge if she can have a year or so at the no. 28 school, as her parents reside nearby. As no appointment has been made I trust you can appoint her.⁶⁶

The Department capitulated and Lottie was appointed to Bacchus Marsh State School in 1910. She qualified in the first class and was appointed to the sixth class as female assistant at Spensley State School, Clifton Hill in 1911. There she remained, improving her teaching qualifications by gaining the Infant Teachers' Certificate with Second Class honours until her marriage on 30 November at the Trinity Church, Bacchus Marsh to Robert Bartlett, from Montrose, Scotland.⁶⁷ As a married woman Lottie was required to resign from the Department, which she duly did on 25 November 1921.

Lottie's first daughter was born in 1922 and her second in 1926. Shortly after her second confinement, Lottie's younger daughter, now Margaret Benson, relates that it became clear that Lottie's husband was unable to support his family. With no modern social security benefits available Lottie would have to become the breadwinner. No doubt recalling the success of her earlier lobbying of the Department, Lottie approached R. T. Hjorth, the local member of parliament, who approached the Minister of Education on her behalf inquiring as to Mrs Bartlett's prospects of reappointment as a permanent teacher. He was informed that married women were not eligible for permanent employment for the public service, but that Lottie would be found some temporary employment.⁶⁸

Something of the desperation of Lottie's position is evident in the letter she wrote thanking him for his assistance:

I received your letter and must thank you very much for doing what you could for me. I know the Department is very hard to move.

I have been ill in bed and unable to carry on teaching at Port Melbourne until the lady I was relieving returned. I am sufficiently recovered, but am out of a position again.

I would very much like to get a country school with a residence, where I could have my two children living with me.

Each time I approach the Department on this subject, they have offered me schools so very far away that it would be a such a risk taking the children. Also I really don't have the means to move my furniture all that distance.⁶⁹

But the Department did not in any of its correspondence reveal the nature of its dealing with Lottie. Her daughter contends that Lottie was told by a bureaucrat in the Department that she could be re-employed only if she divorced her husband. With rent to pay and mouths to fill, Lottie agreed to do this, with some bitterness. With divorce proceedings launched, she was permitted to teach at the Templestowe State School as a temporary teacher. Margaret Benson recalls that this involved Lottie leaving the new baby at a creche and taking Margaret with her by public transport to school, from East Melbourne, where the family was living.

Later in 1927, Lottie was transferred to Bacchus Marsh, her home town. She rented a house and employed a teenage girl to care for her baby out of the meagre wages she received. Her divorce was granted during 1927 and, the paper work completed, the Department began slowly to restore Lottie's status as a permanent classified teacher. (Margaret Benson's recollection may not be quite accurate at this point as Lottie was not reinstated in the Department until 1928, suggesting the divorce took longer to finalise.) In 1928, under clause 134 of the Public Service Act 1915, 'in the public interest' Lottie was posted to Bolton State School, in the Victorian Mallee as a reinstated permanent teacher.

As a temporary teacher, Lottie had tried to avoid such a remote appointment. Now she had no choice. Margaret Benson recalls Bolton as a soldier settlement township approximately four miles from Manangatang. At the time of Lottie's posting it consisted of a railway station, a general store, a private house which served as a Post Office, an empty 'doss house' known as the Dew Drop Inn and an RSL hall with a residence attached. This hall was rented as a school by the Education Department, with the attached house designated the teacher's residence.

Lottie, with her two small daughters, took up her duties there to teach fourteen students, children of the soldier settlers. She brought with her the Bacchus Marsh girl she had employed previously. The latter's duties were to care for the second child and to do the housework. Over the next few years, Lottie's enthusiasm and organising ability drew compliments from the inspectors and the school numbers

quickly grew to forty-eight, divided into eight grades.⁷⁰ In 1931 there was considerable correspondence between Lottie as head teacher and the Department regarding the employment of junior teachers and sewing mistresses. Ironically, Lottie as employer shows precisely the same preferences as her employer, the Department. She too would prefer to employ a male junior teacher, and she too has a complaint made against her choice of sewing mistress, lodged by an aggrieved aunt of one of the young girls she failed to employ.⁷¹ There is also a complaint from one of the mothers about the severe discipline in the school. In 1932 Mrs I. Chisholm complained:

Since writing there has been a marked difference in the conduct and my children are now allowed to come peacefully home. In the event of any more untoward happenings it is my intention to withdraw the children from the school. The teacher gave an explanation at the last meeting re the punishment of my small boy. She said it was entered in the punishment register and approved by the Inspector. The child had four cuts around the legs and for the next four days I kept him home from school because he was unable to walk. I am surprised at such an action being approved of. The teacher said it was truancy.⁷²

The reply was abrupt and bureaucratic:

It is difficult to answer the question. Repeated punishment on one hand would not receive Department approval. Distance from the school residence to the parents' residence by the nearest practicable route. (This was how the Department defined truancy in this situation.) Correspondence education is not granted when the children reside within four miles of the school.

But Lottie thrived at this school despite the difficulties she encountered. She organised school concerts, played tennis and entered enthusiastically into the social life of the little community. As a result of the Depression and the Premiers' Plan, her daughter recalls that Lottie took a salary cut. Out of her diminished wages she still had to pay rent, feed and clothe her household, and pay domestic help. Her other big worry came from the regular functions at the RSL branch, held in the hall which doubled as a school. The beer flowed freely at these functions, which became very

rowdy and the all-female household trembled as the drunken soldiers caroused. Doors and windows were firmly locked but the noise penetrated through the thin walls.

In 1933 Lottie remarried. Her daughter recalls her step-father as a very attractive man. He was an English migrant several years younger than Lottie, who was working in the district. Once again Lottie had to resign from the Education Department. And she was replaced at Bolton State School by a man with a higher teaching qualification than hers. Despite all those years at Spensley Street State School, Clifton Hill, she had resumed teaching at the bottom of the promotion ladder.

After many vicissitudes during the Depression years, Lottie and her husband ended up on a small farm in the Lancefield district. But Lottie's happiness would be short lived. With the outbreak of the Second World War, Lottie's husband enlisted, disturbed by the Nazi bombings of Britain where his family lived. The German planes frequently flew over the Isle of Wight, where his aged mother lived in Ryde. To Lottie's dismay he enlisted in the Second A.I.F and three weeks after his unit arrived in the Middle East, he was drowned while swimming at Gaza. Lottie, recalls her daughter, was devastated and was not her usual self for eighteen months. She and her teenage daughters could not run the farm and eventually Lottie decided to return to teaching. But this time Lottie had the advantage of the Department. With so many men teachers serving in the armed forces, the Department had been forced to permit married women to resume teaching. They were, however, 'temporary' teachers whatever their academic qualifications, professional experience and expertise. But on this occasion, Lottie could dictate the terms of her appointment. She could not be 'posted' to another remote situation.

As a widow, Margaret Benson says that Lottie was informed that she was eligible for permanency, but that she chose to apply for temporary status, so that she would not have to repeat a stint teaching in rural schools. By this time her elder daughter had become a youthful war-bride, and the younger, Margaret Benson, was destined for university.

Lottie began temporary teaching at Spring Hill in June 1943 and spent two years in charge of the rural school at Spring Hill, outside the town of Kyneton, while her daughter attended Kyneton High School. Inspector Pitcher wrote of her: 'Teaches earnestly, briskly and successfully. Applies suggestions thoughtfully. A very sincere teacher.' When Margaret Benson went on to the University of Melbourne, Lottie used her 'temporary' leverage to obtain a transfer to the Hartwell State School. But after about four years, constant back pain forced her resignation. As a war widow, she was admitted to the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital for treatment, and spinal injections 'cured her trouble'. Lottie then applied for re-employment near her new home, at the Yooralla School for crippled children. She remained as the sole teacher at the North Balwyn Yooralla hostel till she was compelled to retire at seventy years. The records of the Temporary Teachers' Club show that she became a member, while teaching at this school.

Because of her many years experience as a 'temporary' Lottie retired with no superannuation, and lived on her savings and her war widow's pension. Her later years were spent in a 'granny flat' attached to her younger daughter's home. She suffered a severe stroke in 1979, which deprived her of the ability to walk, talk or read, though her eyesight and hearing remained unimpaired. She survived in a nursing home until 1987, dying on 4 May of that year.

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The stories of the teaching lives of Grace Neven, Alice Jardine and Lottie Bartlett can tell us much about what it meant to be a married woman teacher. Grace's story is compelling and tragic. As a married woman teacher Grace managed her relationship with the Department with considerable diplomacy and skill. But circumstances were against her. Her illness, however, resolved a problem for the Education Department who did not know what to do with her, and at this time had less need of the services of married women temporary teachers. Alice Jardine spent twenty-five years as a widow with children to support and a temporary teacher on a fraction of the salary to which she would have been entitled as a classified teacher. This was surely a testament to an exploitative Department and the importance of cheap labour in maintaining the teaching service! Lottie Bartlett had the most

dislocated career of the three women, and paradoxically the most successful, but it, too, came at considerable personal cost.

These women's stories span a period of immense change in the status of married women teachers. Grace Neven and Alice Jardine, teaching in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, remembered when marriage and motherhood were not disqualifications from teaching. And we glimpse this in Alice's frank exchanges with the Department, as she struggled to come to terms with her changed situation and tried to make the Department accountable for its actions. One of the reasons for the 'success' of Lottie's career was the change in the balance of power between the Department and its married women teachers during and after the Second World War. In this latter period, with an expanding population of pupils and union support of their cause, Lottie finally had bargaining power when it came to deciding where she wanted to teach.

These women's teaching lives must be seen in a broader context. Certainly their teaching labour was in the hands of the Department and subject to the laws of supply and demand. But the Department's concern with their sexual status, the virginity test Grace Neven was forced to undergo if she were to retain her teaching position, and Lottie's divorce of her first husband at the insistence of the Department, suggests something more. The stories of the deprivations suffered by the married woman teacher in the Victorian Education Department served as a warning to other women. The financially independent married woman would not be tolerated. The lives of Grace Neven, Alice Jardine and Lottie Bartlett are testament to the discourses of the twentieth-century which compelled women to marry, relinquish their financial independence, and view their financial, emotional and sexual dependence on their husbands as the 'natural order of things'.

¹ VPRS 774/p5 Public Service Board Correspondence Files 1931-37, Box 1, folio 34/2477.

² See J.W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988; D. Riley 'Am I that name?' *Feminism and the category 'woman' in history*, Macmillan, London, 1988; K. Weiler, *Country Schoolwomen: teaching in rural California, 1850-1950*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1998.

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- ³ I. Diamond and L. Quinby (eds.) *Feminism and Foucault: reflections on resistance*, Northeastern University Press, Boston, 1988; J. Butler and J. Scott (eds.), *Feminists Theorise the Political*, Routledge, New York, 1992.
- ⁴ M. Theobald, 'Writing the lives of women teachers: problems and possibilities', in L. Yates (ed.), *Feminism and Education: Melbourne Studies in Education*, 1993. La Trobe University Press, Bundoora, 1993.
- ⁵ C. Steedman, "'The Mother Made Conscious": the historical development of a primary school pedagogy'. *History Workshop Journal*, no.2, 1985, p.150.
- ⁶ K. Rousmaniere, 'Losing patience and staying professional: women teachers and the problem of classroom discipline in New York city schools in the 1920s', in *History of Education Quarterly*, vol.34, no.1, 1994.
- ⁷ L. Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: representations of women in Victorian Britain*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1998, p.24.
- ⁸ Death certificate of William Duston Neven, 1927/5884.
- ⁹ Record of service no. 9738, Martha Grace Neven.
- ¹⁰ Record of service, Martha Grace Neven.
- ¹¹ N. Williamson, 'The employment of female teachers in the small bush schools of New South Wales: a case of stay bushed or stay home', in *Labour History*, no.43, November, 1982.
- ¹² VPRS 892, no.943, 90/39363, 90/47769, 90/47276, 90/49341, 90/51585.
- ¹³ L.J. Blake (ed.), *Vision and Realisation: a centenary history of state education in Victoria*. Education Department of Victoria, Melbourne, 1973, vol. 1, pp. 281-2.
- ¹⁴ VPRS 892, no.943, 90/50038.
- ¹⁵ VPRS 892, no.943, unnumbered memorandum dated 20 November 1980.
- ¹⁶ Record of service, Martha Grace Neven.
- ¹⁷ Education (Teachers) Act 1888, no.1001, clause 8.
- ¹⁸ R.J. Selleck, 'Mary Helena Stark: the troubles of a nineteenth-century school teacher', in Stephen Murray-Smith (ed.), *Melbourne Studies in Education*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1983, p.152.
- ¹⁹ Quoted in *VPP*, 1914, vol.2. Report on the question of equal pay for equal work in the Department of Education (Morrison Report), p.7.
- ²⁰ L. Nead, *Myths of Sexuality*, pp. 28-29.
- ²¹ VPRS 283, Divorce case files 1861-1917, unit 48.
- ²² VPRS 892, no.943, dated 12 November 1891.
- ²³ VPRS 892, no.943, 93/8636.
- ²⁴ VPRS 283, unit 48, 892, no.943, undated, unsigned memorandum.
- ²⁵ VPRS 892, no.943, 94/40082.
- ²⁶ VPRS 283, unit 48. 892, no.943, 91/51627; 91/51628; 91/51629.
- ²⁷ VPRS 892, no.943, 91/51627, 91/51628, 91/51629.
- ²⁸ Marriage certificate of Martha Grace Neven and Herbert Neven, 1900/1762.
- ²⁹ VPRS 640, unit 2088, 1900/935.

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- ³⁰ VPRS 640, unit 2088, 1900/5657.
- ³¹ VPRS 640, unit 1259, 02/37040.
- ³² VPRS 640, unit 1259, 02/36174.
- ³³ VPRS 640, unit 1259, 02/37040.
- ³⁴ VPRS 640, unit 2220, 08/2681.
- ³⁵ VPRS 794, unit 1052, 1913/8238.
- ³⁶ VPRS 794, unit 1052, 1913/9738.
- ³⁷ VPRS 794, unit 1052, 31 July, 1913.
- ³⁸ VPRS 794, unit 1052, file note headed 'Temporary teachers', section A4.
- ³⁹ VPRS 794, unit 1052, 19 August 1913.
- ⁴⁰ VPRS 640, unit 2399, 20 December 1914.
- ⁴¹ VPRS 640, unit 2399, 3 August 1915.
- ⁴² VPRS 640, unit 2399, 4 August 1915.
- ⁴³ VPRS 640, unit 2399, 12 August 1915.
- ⁴⁴ VPRS 640, unit 2399, 15 August 1915.
- ⁴⁵ VPRS 640, unit 2399, 16 August 1915.
- ⁴⁶ Martha G. Neven was found to be a person deemed insane and not under proper care and control under section 23 of the Lunacy Act 1915.
- ⁴⁷ Information from the summary notes of Grace's file released by the Health Department.
- ⁴⁸ VPRS 794, unit 997, 03/2431.
- ⁴⁹ See section 5, *1893 Teachers Act*.
- ⁵⁰ VPRS 794, unit 940, 99/2029.
- ⁵¹ Record of service, no. 7620, Alice Jardine.
- ⁵² VPRS 640, unit 2089, 20 July, 1900.
- ⁵³ VPRS 640, unit 2162, 9 December 1902.
- ⁵⁴ VPRS 640, unit 2162, 1902/36988.
- ⁵⁵ VPRS 640, unit 2165, 25 December 1902.
- ⁵⁶ VPRS 640, unit 2165, 25 December 1902.
- ⁵⁷ VPRS 640, unit 2157, 2 February 1903.
- ⁵⁸ Record of service, no. 7620, Alice Jardine.
- ⁵⁹ VPRS 640, unit 2157, 23 February 1903.
- ⁶⁰ N. Williamson, 'A case of stay bushed or stay home', p.8.
- ⁶¹ Record of service, no. 7620, Alice Jardine.
- ⁶² Record of service, no. 16577, Lottie Bartlett.
- ⁶³ *Vision and Realisation*, pp. 575-7.
- ⁶⁴ VPRS 640/P1, unit 1588, 1909/2269.
- ⁶⁵ VPRS 640/P1, unit 1588, 17 February, 1909.
- ⁶⁶ VPRS 640/P1, unit 1588, 23 February, 1909.
- ⁶⁷ Interview with Margaret Benson, Lottie's younger daughter.
- ⁶⁸ VPRS 640/P1, unit 1757, 14 July, 1927.

⁶⁹ VPRS 640/P1, unit 1757, 14 July, 1927.

⁷⁰ Record of service; interview with Margaret Benson.

⁷¹ VPRS 640/P1/4017, unit 1851, 5 February 1931; 24 February 1931, 27 July 1932,

⁷² VPRS 640/P1/4017, unit 1851, 7 April 1932.

THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE MARRIED WOMAN TEACHER IN THE VICTORIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN TEACHERS IN THE VTU FROM 1939-1950

Women teachers in the Victorian Teachers' Union (VTU) have been routinely dismissed as conservative, more interested in social activity than union politics, with marriage rather than promotion on their minds.¹ This generalisation has characterised, one might argue caricatured, women in all VTU branches, including the Women's Branch, the Technical Women's Branch and the High Schools' Branch. The only woman to escape this stigma was Doris McRae, whose membership of the Communist Party has attracted some attention.²

Our understandings of the political landscape of teacher unionism in Victoria have been shaped by stories of conflict: left wing teachers versus right wing teachers, primary teachers versus secondary teachers, country teachers versus metropolitan teachers, and male teachers versus female teachers. Typically women teachers' activities have come to light only when they intersected with male politics. In 1948 male high school teachers broke away from the VTU to set up the Victorian Secondary Masters Professional Association (VSMMPA) and pressed for retention of the salary margin between primary and secondary teachers. In their analysis of this crucial episode in union politics, Bob Bessant and Andrew Spaul argue that the predominantly female High Schools' Branch was reluctant to support disgruntled male teachers because 'it would alienate them from primary women teachers and the equal pay campaign'.³ Bessant and Spaul are right to identify feminist politics at work here, but the issues were more complex. In 1948 there were 588 permanent male teachers and 502 permanent female teachers on the secondary role. There were also 200 temporary female teachers, the majority of whom were married women.⁴ It is scarcely surprising that women in the High Schools' Branch were as concerned about the claims of married woman temporary teachers as they were about claims to equal pay.

The subtlety of women unionists' politics in the VTU has gone unnoticed. Mary Bluer in her work on women in the rival teacher organization, the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association which developed from the VSMMPA, has helped perpetuate the stereotype of conservative women in the VTU. Completely

misreading the situation in 1948, she claims 'that the women who dominated the high schools branch were more likely to follow a career path in the home rather than the Education Department'. They were 'not the stuff for a new and adventurous teachers' organization'.⁵ Not only is this dismissive of the work of single women such as Doris McRae and Helene McGarvin, who were coming to the end of their Union careers, but it completely misses the point in its judgement of younger married women taking their place. These women from the High Schools' Branch, in conjunction with women from the Women's Branch of the VTU, would be instrumental in establishing a sub-group of the union, the Temporary Teachers' Club (TTC). Within a few years, the TTC would pressure a reluctant Department to pass the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act of 1956 and reinstate married women teachers in the Victorian Education Department.⁶

Looking at Union politics through the lens of the married woman temporary teacher has proved very instructive. Women unionists were well informed and vocal, monitoring issues that affected their interests, positioning themselves astutely in Union policy. As Spauld has pointed out the period between 1938 and 1946 was a time when outward unity characterised the Union as teachers campaigned for better salaries, improved promotion opportunities and most particularly, the establishment of an independent tribunal.⁷ Women teachers took these campaigns very seriously. Their complex, sometimes conflicting, politics were important in shaping Union policy, as they struggled for a better deal for women teachers. The campaign for equal pay would serve to unify and politicise them. Indeed it is impossible to tease out the story of the married woman temporary teacher without understanding that women unionists' concerns sprang partly from a commitment to women's rights, in particular, equal pay.

Another significant feature of women unionists' politics in the VTU in this period is the strong and consistent support offered by single women unionists for married women teachers' claims to permanency in the Department. In this they differed radically from women unionists in South Australia, where Kay Whitehead has drawn attention to the Women Teachers' Guild's opposition in 1941 to the employment of married women, 'except in special circumstances'.⁸ In Western Australia, too, single women teachers opposed the admission of married women to the teaching service in

the 1930s.⁹ Similarly Sheila Cavanagh has noted that single women unionists' opposition to the 'marriage minded girl' is a consistent feature of all the formal histories of the Federation of Women Teachers' Association of Ontario (FWTAO).¹⁰ More recently Rebecca Coulter's paper on the FWTAO has noted that this phenomenon continued until the 1980s.¹¹

Fundamentally these single women unionists complained about married women teachers' lack of commitment and professionalism. They also complained that married women had to be placed in schools near their husbands, forcing single women into less desirable schools. In the 1920s the National Education Association in America was ambivalent about the married women teacher. But by the late 1930s it had reversed its negative view of married women teachers, in what Wayne Urban terms a 'commitment to professionalism and merit as total solutions for all the issues involved in the employment of married women teachers'.¹² This acceptance of the professionalism and expertise of married women teachers characterises the stance adopted by women unionists in the VTU to the employment of the married woman teacher.

Why did women unionists in the VTU react so differently from their counterparts in South Australia and Western Australia? We catch glimpses of the reasons in the following account. Leading union women such as the left-wing Doris McRae and the more conservative Helene McGarvin were unequivocal in their support of women teachers' rights, and this included the right of married women to permanency in the Department. It is important to note, however, that these women were the first women Unionists to take an interest in the married women teacher. Younger single women unionists were keen to marry and continue teaching. In interviews with me, two women unionists spoke in hushed tones about how they kept their marriages secret from the Department, rather than resign from teaching. Fundamentally, too, women unionists were motivated by a keen sense of self-preservation. They saw very clearly that women teachers would be the losers, never achieving equal pay while married women could be employed cheaply in a temporary capacity. Women unionists would need to support each other and stand up to a Department/state opposed in principle to married women teaching in its service. And it is the

operations of the Department and its impact on married women teachers that this chapter initially explores.

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In September 1939, with the outbreak of the Second World War and the subsequent enlistment of male teachers, the Victorian Education Department was faced with a staffing crisis. Married women teachers, normally precluded from teaching in the Department on account of the marriage bar, were the logical choice as temporary replacements. But the Minister of Public Instruction, Dr John Richards Harris (later Sir John Harris), had other ideas. On 28 February 1939, before the outbreak of war, the Minister issued an order in Cabinet that 'married women are not to be employed as temporary teachers unless, after exhaustive inquiry, no qualified unmarried applicants are forthcoming'.¹³ Why did the Minister move secretively to exclude married women as temporary teachers in February 1939 before the outbreak of war and when he knew that a Public Service Act already forbade their employment ?

The Minister probably anticipated that a crisis, namely the outbreak of war, would precipitate a call on married women as a reserve force of teaching labour. There is evidence to suggest this as a possibility. Although it has been commonly believed that Australians had no sense of impending war at the start of 1939,¹⁴ Kate Darian-Smith has recently challenged this. Referring to Melbourne, she claims that 'in 1939 the signs of war [had become] increasingly visible in the city'. There is also evidence that in London there were signs of impending war.¹⁵ It is probable that news of these preparations reached Melbourne. What reasons, other than misgivings about the future, would have prompted the Minister's resolution? And why was he so opposed to the employment of married women teachers?

Did he want to warn young women against marrying in haste during the war by making clear that marriage would still disqualify them from teaching? Was he simply opposed to the idea of married women working, which he saw as ushering in a new social order? Or did he foresee the opposition women unionists would offer the Department if they married and remained in the service? Perhaps it was all of these factors which prompted his decision. Clearly, too, John Harris was a very

difficult and cantankerous man, who consistently affronted teachers and saw nothing wrong in publicly opposing them. Even the official history of the Department, *Vision and Realisation*, notes Harris's rudeness on a number of occasions and this is supported by anecdotal evidence.¹⁶ Harris was prone to disagreement. Alvie Booth indignantly remembers his address to a group of women teachers when, in denying their claims, he told them to 'put that in their pipe and smoke it'.¹⁷ In 1939 Harris was also at loggerheads with the VTU over the proposed appointment of a Teachers' Tribunal. 'Hang the Tribunal', he is famously recorded as saying.¹⁸ It is clear, however, that he was personally opposed to the employment of married women teachers and would be a force to be reckoned with. As government correspondence shows, without his opposition married women would have been immediately employed as temporary teachers, as the need arose. Instead married women temporary teachers, banished from the Department during the 1930s Depression, were not welcome as temporary teachers in the Department until July 1940, eleven months after the start of the War.¹⁹

The Public Service Commissioner, F.G.Thorpe, knew nothing of the Minister of Public Instruction's decision banning married women temporary teachers. A month after the declaration of war, in October 1939, he wrote to John Arnold Seitz, Director of Education, giving approval for 'the employment of temporary teachers in primary schools in order to fill vacancies caused by the call up and enlistment of teachers for military service'.²⁰ But to no avail. The Director pointed out he had already submitted this recommendation and the Minister had made it clear that he was not prepared to approve the employment of temporary married women teachers at this stage. Clearly the Director was aware of the Minister's embargo on married women teachers as a source of labour, which he knew the Department would have to call on if it were to manage an impending staffing crisis. We get a sense of the Director's desperation in the six-page letter he penned to the Minister (and forwarded to the Public Service Commissioner) arguing for the immediate employment of any temporary teachers, which in practice meant married women teachers. His admissions on the staffing situation are revealing. In keeping rural schools open, he claimed 'we have had to do violence to the staffs of schools by transferring student teachers against their wishes'.²¹

And it is clear why he felt compelled to write. The numbers leaving the service were increasing daily. Of the 272 teachers already in the militia forces, 177 were classified elementary teachers, 23 were student teachers, 30 were secondary teachers, 40 were technical teachers and 2 were attending Teachers' College. According to *Vision and Realisation*, within a few days of war being declared, teachers had volunteered for active service. Others would have joined them had not the Reserved Occupation Act been rigorously applied in an attempt to ensure sufficient manpower remained for essential services in the schools. The Deputy Manpower Officer for Victoria, Don Cameron, refused enlistment permits to men over the age of thirty-five, and those over twenty-five were required to have a special permit. Specialist staff, such as teachers of mathematics, science and woodwork, and those teaching in technical schools often found their applications refused.²²

But these provisions would not resolve a developing crisis in staffing. The Director wanted action; it is equally clear why he was rebuffed. Attached to the letter is a list of 58 applicants for temporary teaching positions; 39 were married women ex-teachers, chiefly widows. And as many of these applicants were locals (and presumably unwilling to teach in other parts of the state) the Director suggested it would be necessary to call for qualified applicants through the press. Advertise for married women teachers! Anticipating the Minister's reaction to this, the Director attempted to placate him, assuring him that 'no one would be appointed who had not a very good previous teaching record or who did not possess suitable personality or qualification'. But the Minister was unmoved. The Director listed the categories he wanted to employ: ex temporary teachers, widows and married women with previous teaching experience and superannuated teachers. Ignoring the Director's suggestion that elementary schools should have the power to appoint any temporary teachers when the circumstances warranted it, the Minister asked him to wait until the schools re-opened in 1940.²³

The Union was initially unaware that the Minister had imposed a ban on married women temporary teachers prior to the outbreak of the war. It was preoccupied by the government's refusal to make up the difference between a teacher's rate of pay and that received by a member of the Commonwealth military service. In comparison to other states, the Department was making a considerable saving at the

expense of its enlisted teachers.²⁴ The issue of the married woman temporary teacher would first come to light in country schools. As male head teachers enlisted for military service, country branches spelt out their requirements in motions to the VTU council. They argued that a qualified married woman teacher be able to take over from her husband while he volunteered, and that the wife of an enlisted head teacher be allowed to remain in the teacher's residence.²⁵ This last issue was taken up in parliament by T.T. Hollway, MLA for Ballarat, and Leader of the Opposition.²⁶ Under this pressure the government caved in, but only partially. In a meeting held on 23 July 1940, Cabinet sanctioned the 'employment of married women teachers whose husbands had enlisted' and 'other married women', but this ruling was to apply only to women teachers in post-primary schools.²⁷

In the same month, July 1940, Helene McGarvin (High Schools' Branch) put to Council that the VTU now had the opportunity to right a wrong that had existed for too long – the denial to women teachers of the right to marry and remain in the Department. But she proposed a more cautiously worded resolution, 'that as a war measure marriage be no bar to the employment of women teachers in the Victorian Education Department'.²⁸ This was seconded by Marjorie Bennett (Women's Branch), who was shortly to marry. It was no accident that Marjorie Bennett would second the motion. She had proved a strong union member, an advocate of equal pay who would continue her political activities after her marriage as one of the foundation members of the Union of Australian Women (UAW).²⁹ Council accepted their resolution, but that was only the beginning of the matter. A month later, in August, as a result of pressure from the VTU, the Minister agreed to consider the union request regarding the employment of married women. But to the dismay of some of the women, the General Secretary of the VTU, Fred Thomas, suggested something quite different to the Council resolution, proposing that:

If a teacher enlists and his wife is qualified to teach, the Department accept her for temporary duty during the period of enlistment; that women teachers who are engaged to marry A.I.F volunteers be permitted to marry these soldiers and retain their present status with full rights to promotions and increments; that such women teachers retain their present positions and continue teaching until the return of their husbands from active service, and

that in the event of their husbands being killed on active service or permanently incapacitated they be retained permanently in the Department.³⁰

Here Thomas touched on a sensitive issue in Department practices and policies – the rights of the qualified teaching widow to a permanent position. The Department was influenced by Thomas's demands, as at this point there is a change in Department policy and war widows are offered permanency.³¹ Nevertheless I can find no actual regulation changing policy with respect to these women; doubtless the Department was too canny to relinquish its hold on which category of widow it was prepared to reinstate, presumably not civilian widows?

Helene McGarvin, however, immediately pointed out that Thomas's resolution did not accurately convey the opinion expressed in the resolution moved by her and passed by the Council at its July meeting. That resolution had been intended to cover women teachers who married civilians and recommended that these married women should also be allowed to remain in the Department. It should not come as a surprise that Helene McGarvin and Marjorie Bennett knew of several women teachers recently married to civilians, who were attempting to conceal their marriages and continue teaching.³² And no doubt they had in mind Marjorie Bennett's impending marriage! The VTU Secretary claimed that the executive had been given this interpretation by the Women's Branch. Although Helene McGarvin would prevail upon the executive to take a further submission to the Department, this episode is indicative of the differences of opinion, tactics and politics between individual women and between branches that lay beneath the surface.³³ The Women's Branch was not yet prepared to extend the general principle of permanency for married women to women who married civilians. When the Union presented its proposition on married women teachers to the government, it was rejected. The government remained adamant that a state of emergency did not prevail. It did not consider a change of policy warranted. It had, it argued, amended its legislation so that in certain special cases a well-qualified married woman could be employed in post primary schools.³⁴

And just how narrowly it defined the 'special case' would soon be revealed. A few months later in September 1940 Mary Hutton, headmistress of the prestigious

MacRobertson Girls' High School and a good unionist, attempted to strike a blow for married woman temporary teachers. On the basis of the Cabinet ruling she attempted to retain the services of one of her teachers after her marriage to an officer serving in the R.A.A.F. Edna Nurse (nee Power) was a teacher of Leaving honours in French, and Mary Hutton knew that she would not easily be replaced. But despite prolonged negotiations with the Department, Mary Hutton was forced to terminate Edna Nurse's services. She received a letter from the Department, reminding her that 'the employment of a married woman was contrary to the provisions of the Public Service Act and in conflict with Cabinet instructions'.³⁵ Six days after the decision to allow married women to teach in post-primary schools, Cabinet had hardened its stance. It would employ women whose husbands had enlisted and 'ex-temporary teachers, widows and deserted wives, but no teacher was to be employed who had married since 1 September 1939'. The Minister's influence held sway. But Mary Hutton had exposed the Minister's intransigence to newly married women teaching in the service. The Department was more pragmatic. Its records show that 'Mrs Nurse was one of the teachers the Department had intended to employ, prior to the prohibition on war marriages'.

By November 1940 the Women's Branch of the VTU would embrace the more inclusive proposal put forward by Helene McGarvin and Marjorie Bennett, that as a war measure marriage be no bar to permanency for all women. No doubt this change of heart was helped by behind-the-scenes discussions at meetings on the campaign for equal pay which remained a consistent concern.³⁶ But it remained necessary to convince the majority of union members of the efficacy of the women unionists' proposals. The attempt to do this would provoke a most illuminating debate, drawing the wrath of the conservatives and exposing differences of opinion and alliances between the women, and just as importantly, the prejudices of their male colleagues. This occurred in February 1941 when E. Williamson (Women's Branch) instructed by the Branch, opened the debate by declaring the Branch was acting 'in the interests of the children of the state'.

Williamson proposed that she was going to examine a much narrower issue than the 'vexed question' of the employment of married women teachers. She suggested that the 'seriously disorganised schools and the temporary loss of male teachers' were

inevitable, but there were some measures that would help overcome this problem. She argued that the government should 'retain the services of classified teachers who marry soldiers and employ as temporary teachers married women with teaching experience and the requisite qualifications'. Furthermore she suggested:

It was the desire of the Women's Branch that women teachers who marry soldiers should be permitted to remain in the service until their husbands return from active service, under the terms of employment at the time of their marriage. In the event of the husband being killed or permanently incapacitated, the wives [should] be retained permanently in the Department.³⁷

Here Williamson reaffirmed the necessity of granting permanency to women teachers whose husbands had been killed in the War. But she also argued in favour of keeping on all women who marry, as 'even if these women remained there would still be a shortage of teachers'. In a show of support, Marjorie Bennett, who emphasised that it was 'a wartime measure', seconded her motion.

Helene McGarvin slipped in an amendment seeking her original motion, 'that as a wartime measure there should be no bar to the employment of married women teachers in the Education Department'. She pointed out that this was a practical measure that many women unionists had been arguing for since July. This brought the conservatives out in force. J. Day (Bendigo) went on the attack immediately. The measure, he argued, was 'encouraging race suicide', women would be encouraged to work rather than have children. 'If a woman married a soldier, the husband had to keep his wife on his pay'. This measure would 'encourage women to earn a second salary for a married couple and that was not fair to the rest of the state'.

Day's argument encouraged similar responses. H. Evans (Head Teachers' Branch) considered the home to be the 'foundation of all society, and it was essential not to encourage the best types of mothers to go teaching and leave the worst types in the home'. N. McNichol, a conservative unionist who was usually supportive of women's interests, was provoked into congratulating Day on 'the extreme honesty of

his opinion as it was about time something like that had been said at Conference level'. This exchange prompted a rare dissenting voice among women teachers in all things to do with the employment of married women. Margaret Flynn (Women's Branch) an opponent of the married woman temporary teacher, volunteered the comment that 'She was very sorry that the matter was discussed at all as it was the executive's place to reject it'.³⁸

The most spirited and considered defence came, however, from Doris McRae (High Schools' Branch) whose commitment to women's issues and left wing politics was well known. She suggested that married women had particular qualities to offer teaching and she saw nothing wrong with two salaries for one family. She made the point she was to maintain throughout the debate on the married woman teacher: 'that it went against her sense of justice that on one day they [married women] should be doing some highly specialised work for a certain rate of pay and then after being married they should be considered as worth much less'. The key comment came at the end of the debate. 'If these women return to the service, lose their status and take a lower salary we are probably going to undermine all our salary rates'. Women teachers won the day, as the amendment 'that as a wartime measure there should be no bar to the employment of married women teachers in the Victorian Education Department' was passed.³⁹

Two months later Helene McGarvin raised the stakes. She directed attention to a press notice showing that the Department had decided to employ as temporary teachers, women who were married before November 1939. 'This was not', she pointed out, 'in accordance with the policy adopted at the Annual Conference'. She also noted that the professional status of teachers was threatened by the watering down of salaries indicated by the accompanying statement that temporary teachers were to be paid £180 a year. Helene McGarvin moved, seconded by Marjorie Bennett, 'that the Union protest against the low rates of pay of temporary teachers'. It was agreed that the resolution passed at the Annual Conference regarding the employment of married women be placed before the government at the earliest moment.⁴⁰

In response the Minister pointed out that the Director was dealing with the matter.

Finally on 1 September 1941, the Minister and the Director agreed to meet the Union.

But before the Union was given an opportunity of setting out the case for the employment of women who had married since the war began, the Minister drew attention to Cabinet rulings on the subject over the past two years. The rulings applied to women married prior to the war and were consistent with the categories of 'acceptable' temporary teachers with which the Union was familiar⁴¹, until the Minister slipped in a reference to a new ruling:

In August 1941 the government approved of women married since the beginning of the war provided they possessed a university degree, technical school diploma, trained manual arts or trained domestic arts certificate or equivalent specialist teachers' qualification for service in primary schools.⁴²

Henrietta (Hettie) Gilbert (High Schools' Branch) went on the attack. Hettie was the newly elected president of the VTU and its first woman president. Hettie had been a member of the Union executive and vice-president of the Union from 1934-40. She would hold the position of president for two consecutive years in 1941 and 1942, and as past president in 1943, 44 and 45.⁴³ Although considered a conservative force in Union politics, she was a rigorous practitioner of their policies.⁴⁴ Hettie immediately pointed out that the Union was unaware of the 1 August ruling and asked whether that meant women who had married since the war could be employed in primary schools. This produced an emphatic denial from both the Minister and the Director and when pushed to justify their refusal they argued that 'employing recently married women was a dangerous thing, grave problems [were] involved when you open the door to people married since September, 1939'. Finally women teachers had verbal confirmation, if they needed it, of the intransigence of their opposition. The Union appeal had fallen on very deaf ears.⁴⁵

Student teachers and elderly retired teachers, known as 'retreads', were being steadily moved into the schools and teaching positions were no longer advertised.⁴⁶ The Union could see its hard won conditions disappearing before its eyes. It was clear that younger, qualified married women teachers, who might also be union

members, were a much better option for schools than the teachers the Department was keen to employ.⁴⁷ Some of these 'retread' temporary teachers were aged from seventy to eighty years. Many could not cope and were dismissed. Others like sixty-seven-year-old sewing mistress Alice Hills would work as cheap labour and be a source of irritation to the Union until she retired at eighty-one years of age in 1956.⁴⁸

A few months later in January 1942 a new Minister for Public Instruction, A.E. Lind, took over from Harris who had served seven years in Albert Dunstan's ministry. Dunstan had the largest single party in parliament between 1937 and 1945, based on the support of Country Party voters and often drawing on the support of Labor voters.⁴⁹ His intransigent opposition to the VTU over the establishment of a Teachers' Tribunal would eventually prove his downfall but in this instance Lind announced that Cabinet had given permission to employ 'any qualified married woman teacher'. The Department would still have preferred its male teachers to remain teaching. It appealed successfully to the Deputy Man Power Officer for Victoria, Don Cameron, in June of that year, to exempt by agreement with the Southern Command, teachers aged between eighteen and thirty-five who were married before 1 January 1941.⁵⁰ Was this an attempt to retain the male head teacher rather than his wife within the service?

In 1943 the issue of the married woman temporary teacher would begin to attract a different kind of attention. In her presidential address, in a list of problems to be addressed by the Union, Hettie Gilbert referred to the concessions given to married women temporary teachers; among these were choice of location, which interfered with the rights of transfer of permanent teachers.⁵¹ This is one of a handful of references I have found of women unionists condemning the use of married women's teaching labour. (The response was much stronger in South Australia.) Hettie emphatically supported their claims to permanency – possibly because she too saw the temporary teacher as a threat to Union conditions. They were, however, expected to pay union subscriptions. Doris McRae opposed the proposal to introduce a lower subscription from married women temporary teachers because 'those who have married now have bigger cheques than they did previously because they no longer had to pay superannuation'.⁵²

Nevertheless married women temporary teachers continued to join the union in ever growing numbers. Women in the High Schools' Branch persisted with attempts to improve conditions, although teachers' attention would be focussed on the struggle of the VTU to establish a Teachers' Tribunal. And the indefatigable Helene McGarvin would be responsible for a motion urging that woman who married and continued teaching should be paid the same salary as they were receiving before marriage. She urged Council to set up a committee to review all aspects of the employment of temporary teachers and present the findings to the next annual conference.⁵³

In 1944 Doris McRae gave a typically far-sighted and diplomatic accounting of her view of married women teachers in the Victorian Education Department. She argued that the temporary teacher on poor wages and even poorer conditions was a menace to the [teaching] system, and she should be made permanent after the war. Doris McRae was at pains to indicate who might qualify for permanency, giving as examples, widows and wives supporting invalid husbands. Indeed McRae correctly predicted that many married women teachers would be happy to return to the home. But despite her radical suggestions, her resolution was more limited. She proposed that:

temporary teachers doing satisfactory work be granted a reasonable scale of increments, more generous sick leave; and those who had resigned to marry and continue their service in the Department be paid the salary they had attained prior to marriage.

Her position on the married woman temporary teacher was clearly linked with her philosophy on equal pay. She urged all women to play their part in the struggle to raise their status, linking the fight women had had to secure equality with men in the community with their fight for equal pay in the VTU.⁵⁴

In 1945, when the war ended, women temporary teachers still faced an uncertain future, as the Department would offer them no assurances of continuity of service. In the election of that year the VTU had shown the power of a teachers' organisation in running an effective campaign to defeat the Dunstan government and bring to an

end his ten year reign. The Dunstan government had been defeated because of its refusal to establish a Teachers' Tribunal. Women unionists who worked hard in support of the establishment of a Tribunal hoped for better outcomes with its establishment in 1946 under the Cain Labor government. They would soon be disappointed. In 1948 the Tribunal refused their equal pay claim. Doris McRae expressed disillusionment with the Union.⁵⁵ But Helene McGarvin and Doris McRae refused to give in and continued to pursue the issues of equal pay and of justice for the married woman teacher. Doris McRae's last report as Convenor of the Equal Pay Committee is juxtaposed with an article she wrote on the rights of married women teachers in a number of western countries.

In 1948 Helene McGarvin, supported by Hettie Gilbert, made one last attempt to have the legislation operating against the employment of married women repealed. She drew laughter from her audience when she argued that she was not proposing a new motion, and she knew people 'hardy enough to say that a woman's place is in the home'. But she believed that 'woman's complete status as a human being demanded that she be given the right to marry and remain in the service'. Helene McGarvin had thought through her propositions. Some women, she claimed, would choose to remain in the service, many others would leave, and some would move in and out of teaching. A scheme to cover these possibilities would need to be worked out with the Tribunal. But as things stood, she considered the Department and the Union were now at the mercy of the temporary teacher.⁵⁶

Helene McGarvin was correct in her prediction that the issue of the married woman temporary teacher would not go away and that it would have to be resolved if the VTU were going to move forward. But neither she nor Doris McRae would still be in the teaching service to witness it. Doris McRae would lose her standing in the union over her left wing sympathies. Her name was submitted to the 1949 Victorian Enquiry into Communism, which found no evidence of treason, espionage or illegality on her part. She was also falsely accused of teaching with a political bias, and although exonerated by the Department, retired from teaching in 1950.⁵⁷ Helene McGarvin faded from the Union after 1948.

Doris McRae was a Communist. Helene McGarvin was much more conservative in her politics. Both had lengthy and distinguished careers in the High Schools' Branch of the VTU. Together with other members of the Women's Branch they reshaped Union policy in the interests of women members, focussing particularly on the rights of women to equal pay and the rights of married women teachers to permanency. As single women they fostered a remarkably unified approach to the cause of the married woman teacher – an approach that differed markedly from that of their single sisters in South Australia and Western Australia. Yet their subtle politics has gone unnoticed and their contributions are overlooked, lost in understandings of the VTU as a conservative/ reactionary force in Union politics. But the legacy of these women lived on. In the 1950s new voices were heard in *The Teachers' Journal*, pressuring the Union and trying to make the Department accountable. These women were temporary, married women teachers, members of the High Schools' Branch and the Women's Branch of the VTU and they would take up from where their former colleagues left off.

¹ A number of sources contain references to this; see, for example, F. Merlino, 'The Victorian Teachers Unions, 1946-1975', M.Ed. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1979, pp.21-2; A.D. Spaul, 'Teachers and Politics: a comparative study of state teachers' organizations in Victoria and New South Wales since 1940', Ph.D. thesis, Monash University, 1972, p.294; B. Bessant and A.D. Spaul, *Teachers in Conflict*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1972, pp.97-98.

² Spaul, 'Teachers and Politics', pp.54-57.

³ Bessant and Spaul, *Teachers in Conflict*, p.29.

⁴ *VPP 1948-49*, Rep.Min. Pub.Inst., p.39.

⁵ M. Bluer, 'Women in the VSTA: where did they come from', *The Secondary Teacher*, no.189, September 1973, p.16.

⁶ Teaching Service (Married Women) Act, 1956.

⁷ A. Spaul, 'The origins and formation of the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association 1948-54', in S. Murray-Smith (ed.), *Melbourne Studies in Education 1975*, MUP, Melbourne, 1975.

⁸ K. Whitehead, 'Many industrial struggles are due to the presence of female labour: breakaway and the early years of the Women Teachers' Guild in South Australia, 1937-1942', in the proceedings of the *Australia and New Zealand History of Education Society, Annual Conference*, Perth, 22-25 September 1994, p.15.

⁹ *WA Teachers' Journal*, October 1936, pp.207-9.

¹⁰ S. Cavanagh, 'Teaching and marriage don't mix: the marriage bar in early twentieth-century Ontario', paper given at the Canadian History of Education Association, L' Association Canadienne

D' Histoire De L'education and ANZHES, joint conference at Ormond College in 1993, Melbourne, p.6.

¹¹ R. Coulter, 'Constrained by conformity?: women and their elementary teachers' federation in mid-twentieth-century Ontario', paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Seattle, Washington, April 2001.

¹² W. Urban, *Gender, Race and the National Education Association: professionalism and its limitations*, Routledge Falmer, New York, 2000, p.77.

¹³ VPRS Special Case File 1324, Temporary Teachers, Precis of the position of married women, 2 August 1940.

¹⁴ Bessant goes as far as to say that the war had been under way for nearly ten months before there was a realisation in Australia that the country was engaged in a serious struggle.

¹⁵ Trenches were being dug in Hyde Park. War, it was believed, was only averted by the Munich agreement, and this was viewed with suspicion by some. See J. Davidson, *Lyrebird Rising, Louise Hanson-Dyer of Oiseau-Lyre, 1884-1962*, Melbourne University Press, 1994, p.328.

¹⁶ See *Vision and Realisation: a centenary history of state education in Victoria*. Education Department of Victoria, Melbourne, 1973, pp. 375 and 1070 and for rudeness and opposition to teachers.

¹⁷ Interview with Alvie Booth, 1997.

¹⁸ See *Vision and Realisation*, p. 1144.

¹⁹ According to Department records there was only one married woman temporary teacher employed by the Department from 1932-1940. See VPRS Special Case File 1324, 29 July 1940.

²⁰ VPRS Special Case File 1324, 14 October 1939; 1940/9307.

²¹ VPRS Special Case File 1324, 10 October 1939.

²² *Vision and Realisation*, p. 1297; *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 June 1942, p. 146.

²³ VPRS Special Case File 1324, 5 December 1939.

²⁴ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 October 1939, p.406.

²⁵ Victorian Teachers' Union, Minutes of Council, held at the Noel Butlin Archives, N86/ 10-13, 25 June, 13 August, 24 September 1940; *The Teachers Journal*, 20 July 1940, p.260.

²⁶ *VPD*, 1940, vol.209, p.941.

²⁷ VPRS Special Case File 1324, 9438/1941.

²⁸ Minutes of the VTU Council, N86 10-13, 25 June 1940.

²⁹ Interview with Mrs Marjorie Oke (nee Bennett), 1997.

³⁰ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 August 1940, p.296.

³¹ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 February 1941, p.58.

³² Interview with Mrs Marjorie Oke, nee Bennett, 1997.

³³ For example, Miss McGarvin and Miss McCrae as members of the High Schools' branch had no hesitation in defeating (twice) a determined attempt by technical women teachers to increase their membership on Council as they jealously guarded their own representation.

³⁴ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 December 1940, p.480.

³⁵ VPRS 1046, High Schools Correspondence, unit 38, 16 September 1940.

³⁶ The campaign for equal pay was a cohesive factor throughout the period under discussion. For example, earlier in the year, in April and again in May, Miss Gilbert (High Schools) reminded the Union of its commitment to equal pay for its women teachers.

³⁷ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 February 1941, p.57

³⁸ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 February 1941, p.59.

³⁹ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 February 1941, pp.57-60.

⁴⁰ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 March 1941, p.84.

⁴¹ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 September 1941, p.271. July 1940, 'Ex-temporary teachers, single women, widows, deserted wives and superannuated officers and the like in all types of schools; September 1940, Women married prior to the beginning of the war providing they possessed special qualifications (university degree, technical school diploma, Trained Teachers' Certificate (domestic arts or manual arts) for employment in post-primary schools only; March 1941, Women married prior to the beginning of the war for employment in primary schools as well as in post primary schools; August, 1941 Women married since the beginning of the war, provided they possess a university degree, technical school diploma, trained manual arts or trained domestic arts certificate or equivalent specialist teacher's qualification for service in post-primary schools'.

⁴² *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 September 1941, p. 272.

⁴³ *The Teachers' Journal*, September 1948, p. 235.

⁴⁴ Hettie Gilbert has attracted little attention. *Vision and Realisation* has six references to her work in promoting union policies.

⁴⁵ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 September 1941, p.271.

⁴⁶ Some of the relieving teachers were aged from seventy to eighty years. See career records of Catherine Gillies no. 35343, Agnes Conn no. 35345 and others in this section.

⁴⁷ VPRS,10537 Teacher Association Files, unit 66, 1942/831.

⁴⁸ VPRS 10249, High Schools Correspondence, unit 214, July 1956.

⁴⁹ G.Blainey, *Our Side of the Country: the story of Victoria*, Methuen Haynes, Sydney, 1984, p.195.

⁵⁰ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 June 1942, p.146.

⁵¹ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 January 1943, p.2.

⁵² *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 January 1943, p.49.

⁵³ *The Teachers' Journal*, 20 February 1948, pp. 48-9.

⁵⁴ *The Teachers Journal*, 20 July 1944, p.113; 20 July 1945.

⁵⁵ Jeanie Rea, 'Women in the Victorian Teaching Service: the struggle for her own rights', Federated Teachers' Union, Melbourne, 1991, p. 8.

⁵⁶ *The Teachers' Journal*, 21 June 1948, p.159.

⁵⁷ S. Fabian and M. Loh, *Left Wing Ladies: the union of Australian women in Victoria, 1950-1998*, Hyland House, Melbourne, Victoria, 2000, p.26.

SUCCESS AT LAST: MARRIED WOMEN TEACHERS, THE VTU AND THE TEMPORARY TEACHERS' CLUB, 1951 - 1956

In the 1950s new voices made themselves heard in *The Teachers' Journal*, pressuring the Union and trying to make the Department accountable. They belonged to married women temporary teachers who were joining the High Schools' Branch and the Women's Branch of the VTU in increasing numbers. These women were no longer a wartime phenomenon; many had served the Department as temporaries for over a decade. They would continue their struggle for permanency in the teaching service in the different dynamics of post war Victoria.

In 1952 a Cain Labor Government would come to power again with E. Shepherd as Minister for Education. Perhaps the VTU hoped for a better deal from this government that in 1946 had delivered the long awaited Teachers' Tribunal. Certainly the Union would set great store in its dealings with the new Teachers' Tribunal. The Union expected that the Tribunal would provide a buffer between it and interfering governments and deliver improved salaries and conditions. The context of teaching would also be entirely different. Immigration and the post war baby boom had sent school populations soaring. Parents, alert to the value of education for their children in a technological era, demanded less crowded schoolrooms and qualified teachers. They put consistent pressure on governments, making it clear that a better deal for married women teachers would ease staff shortages.¹ Their influence was significant. Married women teachers would capitalise on these circumstances and use their bargaining power to advantage – in the face of considerable opposition.

The first of the women to speak out was Nancy (Nan) Melbourne, later Gallagher, (High Schools' Branch) who would become the public face of the married woman temporary teacher. With women such as Vivien (Viv) Reilly (Women's Branch), and other committed Unionists, Nan would provide a watching brief on the employment of married woman temporary teachers in the Victorian Education Department in the 1950s. In 1955 she and Viv Reilly, in company with other married women temporary teachers from the High Schools' Branch, the Women's Branch and the Technical Women's Branch of the VTU, would establish the

Temporary Teachers' Club (TTC). Not that this was the first time that women from across the branches of the VTU had met to campaign. As we have seen in the previous chapter, for many years, women in the VTU had worked together to gain equal pay and there was a committee established for this purpose. But the TTC would prove unique. It would be a tenacious pressure group that would eventually force the Department to lift the marriage bar from teaching in Victoria in 1956. Their story has never been told and their contribution to Union politics and feminist labour history has been entirely overlooked.

Anecdotal evidence has attributed the lifting of the bar to women in the more radical teacher union, the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association (VSTA). Rosemary Francis raises this issue in 'A Cooperative campaign? Permanency after marriage for women teachers', a chapter in her recent thesis on the history of women in the VSTA.² Francis interviewed Nan Gallagher about the role of the VSTA in the campaign to remove the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department. Nan replied: 'We set the stage for married women and the VSTA waltzed on to the stage and claimed they had attained it'. Nan was reflecting on concerns that Gwyn Dow had raised with her a few years before Gwyn's death in 1996. Nan, too, knew of instances of women in the VSTA claiming responsibility for the removal of the bar.³ Francis' thesis, however, compounds the confusion. Francis argues that the VSTA played a limited but cooperative role in the campaign to remove the marriage bar.⁴ In support of these claims Francis highlights the VSTA appeal over the 1954 salary award. Francis argues that in March 1955 Mary Cronin and Elizabeth Stainfort led a deputation from the VSTA to the Tribunal and established the case for the married woman temporary teacher.⁵ But, in fact, simultaneously the VTU was putting before the Tribunal a detailed case on married women temporary teachers derived from the material supplied by Nan Gallagher and her colleagues.⁶ Similarly the questionnaire which Cronin and Stainfort sent to married women secondary teachers replicated that sent out by married women temporary teachers in the VTU in the previous year.

At the crucial public meeting of married women temporary teachers at Kelvin Hall on 29 June 1955, a meeting that drew together all interested parties, representation from the VSTA was notably missing. Francis attempts to give a different reading to the murky politics of this period.⁷ My research, however, supports Andy Spaul's

contention that between 1950 and 1956 the VSTA and the VTU ignored each other.⁸ The VSTA was not represented in the executive of the TTC that was established after the June meeting of the Union. Nor did the VSTA take part in the campaigns the temporary women teachers pursued.

At one level the debate over the contribution of the VSTA to the lifting of the marriage bar may appear to be academic nit picking. But there is more at stake. We need to acknowledge that married women temporary teachers from the VTU campaigned successfully on their own behalf. It should be noted that the TTC did not 'limit their action to exhorting the union negotiators to speed up the process' or choose not to 'court further publicity for the cause'.⁹ Furthermore Francis' chapter negates the significant contribution of temporary women teachers from the primary division who were well represented in the TTC. Her work draws on comments of secondary teachers such as Gwyn Dow, Claire Finnis and Helen Gerstman who were all members of the executive of the TTC and had no connection with the VSTA.

Why have these misunderstandings arisen? In part the answer is straightforward. The traditional sources of teacher Union history, the minutes of meetings, the Annual Conferences and the *Journal* tell only part of the story. The work of the TTC is submerged in the operations of the VTU, which was intent on controlling it. Until recently the minutes and papers of the TTC have lain undisturbed in the Latrobe manuscript section of the State library of Victoria, where they were lodged by Viv Reilly in 1971. In 1999 Viv Reilly told me where I could locate them. The collection was classified under the name of Reilly, rather than the title of the TTC, (which no doubt contributed to their inaccessibility.) There are also other forces at play. As we have noted in the previous chapter orthodoxy has it that the VTU was a conventional force in union politics. Similarly the VSTA wore the mantle of radicalism. It is not surprising that a researcher, writing of the VSTA, has looked back and recast its contribution. This chapter explores the workings of the TTC and its achievements through the eyes of its protagonists. It draws on interviews with Viv Reilly, president of the TTC, and Nan Gallagher, its first secretary, in addition to the minutes of the TTC. Nan also made available her diary entries of the time. The TTC did indeed conduct a 'cooperative campaign' between women in different branches of the VTU and leading Union representatives. Yet this collective effort

has blurred our understandings of what happened. It may also have contributed to silencing the women who took part who, as loyal unionists, are reluctant to claim credit for what they regard as a 'team effort'.

In May 1952 *The Teachers' Journal* proclaimed a crisis in education in Victoria. The Union calculated that the school population had increased by 15,000 students in one year but that there were fewer staff to deal with them. There had been a loss of over 170 permanent teachers and an increase from 1,531 to 1,655 in temporary teachers, a trend that was set to continue.¹⁰ The majority of these temporary teachers were married women, who now comprised just on half the membership of the High Schools' Branch. The Branch continued to press their case. In the same month that year, the High Schools' Branch demanded that the VTU ask the Premier to reconsider his decision not to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the needs of education. This proposition was received very coolly by the Union, as was the High Schools' Branch's request that temporary teachers be given voting rights for the Teachers' Tribunal. The Union was quick to point out that this was not possible under the Teaching Service Act.¹¹ Voting rights for married women temporary teachers would not have been welcomed when the married woman temporary teacher now posed such a threat to the Union that it was discussing the 'whole problem of the permanent/temporary teacher in the teaching service'.¹²

The Department played on these fears, using deliberately divisive tactics. In 1953 the Director, Alan Ramsay, spoke at the VTU Annual Conference. Ramsay had been Director since 1948 and would remain in this position until he retired 1960. Ramsay referred to the extraordinary increase in school population that had occurred in the last three years, requiring 1,000 additional classrooms and 1,025 additional trained teachers. He deftly included a reference to temporary teachers, who had increased in number by 467 in the same period, commenting: 'God bless them, I do not know what we would do without them'.¹³ It was remarks like these that encouraged married women temporary teachers to consider negotiating directly with him. This was just what the Union feared.

But the Director did not let the sympathy he expressed for temporary teachers interfere with the power he exercised over them. On the one hand the Department

transferred or terminated temporary teachers' services at will, giving teachers scant notice of their decisions.¹⁴ On the other it had refused a number of Union requests to advertise temporary positions at least every two years. 'As far as possible', the Department claimed, 'all vacancies in the primary service are advertised'. When asked to advertise a bigger proportion of positions held temporarily in all divisions, the Director pointed out that:

staffing was very difficult and it [the Department] had no option but to use the services of temporary teachers to the best advantage; to advertise the positions held by them would result in the loss of many 'outsiders' who were available only in areas near their homes.¹⁵

The married woman temporary teacher was often caught in such cross fire.

Despite their invidious positions, married women temporary teachers were not intimidated. They continued to press for consideration of their salary claim. The High Schools' Branch cited *The Teachers' Journal* of October 1951, in which the Minister was reported as refusing a Union claim for married women temporary teachers on the grounds that they could now be paid the maximum of class iv, that is £500 per annum (primary), and £520 per annum (secondary and technical). Women teachers pointed to statements from the Accounts Branch showing that they could not receive more than £480, and the High Schools' Branch requested that the Minister see that temporary teachers were paid the rate set out in his statement. The Union, however, would pin its hopes of salary justice for all teachers on the Teachers' Tribunal. While the Union was preparing a submission to the Tribunal for a salary rise, married women temporary teachers' voices were being heard at Union meetings and reported in *The Teachers' Journal*. They were keen to demonstrate their professionalism and their commitment to Union politics. Nan Gallagher (High Schools' Branch) supported by her colleague, E. Hogg, spoke strongly against the use of the shift system in schools.¹⁶

In December 1954 the Teachers' Tribunal delivered the long-awaited salary award to Victorian teachers. This award would expose the tensions in the Union and ignite the cause of the married woman temporary teacher. At first the Union was pleased with

the award. H. E. Loader (Council) claimed that he thought that considerable progress had been made.¹⁷ This was a significant comment, confirming the Union's ambivalent commitment to women teachers, as the Tribunal had once again ignored women's claims for equal pay and offered a handful of temporary teachers a paltry rise of £20 per annum. But as Loader pointed out he had become aware, after the announcement of the Teachers' Tribunal award, that the Arbitration Court and the Public Service Board had given more favourable consideration to members under their jurisdiction. It was then that the Union became disenchanted with the Tribunal's award. Loader added that there were various aspects of the Award that should also be considered, 'including such things as temporary rates of pay and equal pay claims'.

In the Director's address in the following year, February 1955, Ramsay continued to compliment the work of the temporary teachers. He claimed that:

He recognised that many deplored the fact that there were around 2,300 temporary teachers in the service, but he didn't share their concern because most of the temporary teachers were qualified and trained teachers who had resigned on marriage. He could not see why a woman teacher had to resign on marriage, nor why she must accept a much lower salary as a temporary teacher, even though she continued teaching the same class. He promised to do something to alter the conditions as soon as possible.¹⁸

But the Union was preoccupied with its appeal to the Tribunal, once again proposing a very general motion that 'Council immediately proceed to the Tribunal in regard to this matter'. This was the main reason for the Union's inaction on the claims of married women temporary teachers at this juncture. It was not due, as Francis surmises, to the fact that the majority of temporary teachers were in the secondary division and secondary teachers were a minority within the Union. The faith that unionists had in the Tribunal is exemplified by the debate on equal pay.

In 1955 attempts to have the 'dormant' policy of equal pay formalised into a motion to be presented to the Premier, together with a request that the government representative on the Tribunal be directed to support this claim, were opposed by R.

M. Smith (Vice President). Describing herself as an ardent worker for equal pay, she thought such a motion might undermine what teachers had fought for for twenty years, namely an independent Tribunal.¹⁹ Such was the state of Union politics. In an addendum to the motion, Nan Gallagher (High Schools' Branch) suggested that 'the Union be requested to form a sub-committee of temporary women teachers to assist in the presentation of the forthcoming salary claim'. This was a reference to the Union's preparations in response to the unsatisfactory 1954 Award. She pointed out that 'even our own Union members do not appreciate the depth of feeling about the question of temporaries'. The frustration and anger of the temporary teachers had begun to seep through Union politics. Nan Gallagher put their strongest case to date, arguing that:

A tremendous saving is effected by the employment of married women; they are just cheap labour. Our maximum is still below class iv primary. Married women are being employed at a low rate. The Department is obtaining the equivalent of class iii and class ii at the same rate as a girl out of training. I do not like saving the Department hundreds of pounds just because I am married.²⁰

And there were scarcely veiled threats in her further comments that conditions were so poor that this would affect the recruitment of teachers and the suggestion that many married women would now consider teaching in non-government schools.²¹ At this point married women temporary teachers had become a cohesive group with a sense of their political power.

As Nan Gallagher pointed out, a petition asking the Union to take the matter to the Tribunal and resubmit their claims had obtained one thousand signatures in less than one week. She referred to the 'good statement from the Director' as she again offered to assist in providing evidence. E. Kelly (High Schools' Branch) made an impassioned plea in support of Gallagher's amendment, suggesting the Tribunal form a sub-committee of married women temporary teachers. Her none-too-subtle suggestion that 'temporary teachers could assist the council, on which no temporary teacher sits and the executive on which no temporary teacher sits', fell on deaf ears. Nan Gallagher's amendment seeking the establishment of a sub-committee of temporary teachers to assist the Union was lost. The Union was preoccupied with

the proper processes of dealing with the Tribunal and the fear of 'allowing one section of the Union a direct voice on Council'.

The Union was on notice. When it resubmitted the general salary claim to the Tribunal on 1 March 1955, it showed the influence of the material presented by the temporary teachers. Although the Union had rejected their offer to establish a sub-committee to assist in determining the award for temporary teachers, married women temporary teachers had established their own informal sub-committee. This was their first step to political independence within the Union. Led by Nan Gallagher they amassed considerable evidence for their claims. On their behalf the Union was able to point out that one third of the primary service and one half of the secondary and technical division were comprised of temporary teachers. They were overwhelmingly married women, doing the work normally performed by class iv teachers. Many held responsible positions, and all had extensive extra curricular responsibilities. A testimonial from Ruby Gainfort, the principal of MacRobertson Girls' High School, vouched for their outstanding professionalism. They were not, the Union put to the Tribunal, 'really temporary teachers, they were permanent temporaries'.

The Union drew on an impressive document provided by Nan Gallagher entitled, 'Equal Pay – Woman Teachers as Percentage of Total Classified Teachers, Victorian Education Department, 1934-1954'. The reference to equal pay in the title of this document confirms the interrelationship of women Unionists' concerns. (The High Schools' Branch continued to convene the Equal Pay Committee.) Gallagher argued that temporary teachers were not paid according to the work they did. Their previous service was only allowed for at one increment for every two years and these increments were smaller than those received by permanent teachers. Nor were they entitled to a degree allowance. The salary anomalies of temporary teachers were illustrated by case studies, including that of Nan Gallagher herself. In 1953 Nan was Convenor of geography at Mordialloc High School. Her salary was £560 per annum. Her similarly qualified and experienced single colleague, A.J. Rendall, who was Convenor of history in the same school, earned £730 per annum. Claire Finnis was a qualified teacher of Domestic Science who had permanent service from 1929-1937. After her marriage in 1937 she had taught temporarily from 1938-1955. Her salary

was £560 per annum. Her similarly qualified and experienced colleagues who were single earned between £820-£850 per annum. These case studies showed that temporary women teachers, with unbroken or practically unbroken records, were receiving up to £300 per annum less in salary than their single, less experienced colleagues.²²

In April 1955 the Tribunal's response was to deny their sought-after reclassification to class iv status and salary, and to offer instead meagre salary improvements according to a graduated scale. Immediately after this announcement, the High Schools' Branch asked the Union to hold a public meeting of all temporary teachers. The Union agreed to arrange a meeting early in the second term. The running was now in the hands of the highly energetic, organised and determined if informally constituted sub-committee of temporary teachers. A meeting of temporary teachers would be held in Kelvin Hall, Collins Place, Melbourne, at 8 pm on Thursday, 29 June 1955. The agenda for the meeting would include a report on the answers received to the questionnaires forwarded to schools by the temporary teachers' sub-committee; the position of married women teachers in other states and in England; and the implementation of Union policy that marriage be no bar to permanency. The Union had insisted on careful monitoring of the committee, vetting their agenda and their chosen speakers. Did it anticipate that the meeting would prove a huge public success, favourably reported in the press and on radio? The July edition of *The Teachers' Journal*, titled 'Packed Meeting Demands Improved Conditions', was devoted entirely to the meeting's proceedings.

Despite the Director's previous complimentary references to the work of married women temporary teachers, he was unable to accept the invitation to speak. Nevertheless the evening was a carefully planned diplomatic triumph for the women. The meeting was chaired by R. Norris, President of the VTU, whose lengthy defence of the gains the Union had managed for married women temporaries over the years can be read as a testament to the impact of the women's persistent lobbying. Ruby Gainfort, now retired as principal of MacRobertson Girls' High, drew on the reference she had already supplied in support of the temporary teacher. She also touched on the issue of the Department giving preference to temporary teachers, assuring the audience that when justice was given to temporary teachers, the 'matter

would sort itself out'. D.R. Brown from the Teachers' Tribunal spoke of how grateful every administrative officer in the Department was to the temporary teachers for keeping schools open. But there was a barb to his comments. Speaking on behalf of the Tribunal he made the point that 'he knew they [temporary teachers] would be willing to accept the disadvantages of permanent employment as well as the advantages'.

The most significant speakers were the women temporary teachers who had waited so long for this opportunity and were not about to waste it. Nan Gallagher pointed to the 1954 Salaries Award as the catalyst for the formation of the sub-committee of temporary teachers. This was initially drawn from the High Schools' Branch and later from the other women's branches. She presented impressive statistical evidence, drawing on the detailed information the committee had gathered from 652 women teachers in secondary schools and 1,004 women teachers in primary schools in metropolitan Melbourne, and all women teachers in girls' technical schools. Her figures showed that in secondary schools 45 per cent of women were temporaries, in primary schools 34.5 per cent were temporaries and in technical schools just over 50 per cent of women teachers were temporaries. Nan Gallagher demolished the myth that temporary teachers were unqualified and unreliable. And she dealt a significant blow to one of the Department's main arguments against the permanent employment of married women teachers; the claim that permanent women found it difficult to move from country positions back to the city because the city positions were held by temporary women. Astutely she argued:

We do not deny that more positions, particularly senior ones should be advertised. But it should be made known that 40% of all women secondary teachers in country schools are temporaries. If one wished to go to the other extreme, one could argue that temporary teachers are keeping permanent women out of country schools.

No point was left uncovered by D.P. Schubert, General Secretary of the Union and a sympathetic supporter of the temporary teachers' case. He read from a recent report of the International Labour Office, stating:

Although the practice to debar women from continuing a teaching career after marriage is decreasing, it is still usual in some countries, including Ireland, the Netherlands, Union of South Africa, some cantons of Switzerland and some states of Australia.²³

Schubert pointed out that this left Victoria among an unenlightened and very small group. The United States, France, Scandinavia and many other countries had less discriminatory practices regarding marriage and teaching. He delivered his parting shot that it was high time that Victoria became as enlightened as those north of the Murray. There, since 1947, married women teachers had been treated in the same way as single women. Two resolutions were passed unanimously by the meeting:

That marriage be no bar to the permanent employment of women teachers in the Victorian Education Department and the meeting pledges its support to the Victorian Teachers Union in any action taken to have the Government amend the necessary legislation to make this possible.

And that the meeting urges the VTU to continue its efforts to further improve salaries for temporary teachers.²⁴

In June 1955 a new government would take over from the Cain Labor government. The Labor Party had split with the formation of the Democratic Labor Party, bringing the Liberals to power with Henry Bolte as Premier and W.W.Leggatt as Minister for Education.

On 14 July 1955, a deputation consisting of the president of the VTU, R.S.Norris, the two vice presidents, R. Smith and J. Baker, the general secretary, D. Schubert and Nan Gallagher met with the Minister for Education, W.W. Leggatt, and the Director, A.J. Ramsay. The Union deputation sought the deletion of the clause pertaining to the bar on married women from the Teaching Service Act. The case was presented to the Minister that married women should become permanent on similar terms and under the same conditions as those existing for all other permanent teachers.

In discussion the Union overcame the Minister's initial reluctance to their proposal. At first he favoured, as an interim measure, instructing the Tribunal that 'this

{married women teachers] is a special case and change is warranted in the public interest'. Hence temporary teachers would gain permanency in this defacto capacity. D.S. Schubert, however, would not settle for anything less than an amendment to the Act. The Minister then admitted to being favourably disposed toward the matter and ready to discuss it with Cabinet, with the Director's advice. And here the Union struck real trouble. Although Ramsay indicated that he was 'in general agreement with all that had been said', he asked the Union to give consideration to the period of absence involved when women had families and raised them. More serious was his objection to married women's superannuation rights, an issue that was to bedevil the question of married women's return to the service. The Director did not know whether

the Superannuation Fund would be able to carry married women and give them superannuation at the end. If you have two in the family teaching, both a man and a woman, you would have the Government paying a double pension to one family. I do not know whether we can possibly carry on the existing superannuation rights without some recasting of the whole scheme.²⁵

The about face of the Director who had so publicly supported their cause stunned the women. The sub-committee of temporary teachers that had formed in 1955 around the issue of the salaries award decided it was time to show the strength of their numbers. The women now approached the Union for permission to establish a Temporary Teachers' Club (TTC). This proved an effective tactical move. The Union was relieved that the temporary teachers did not want to establish themselves as a separate branch and would clearly have opposed such a move. For their part the temporary teachers had Union support and the use of Union rooms for meetings. Only temporary teacher members of the Union would be eligible to attend and any decisions would have to be brought back to the women's individual branches, the Women's Branch, the High Schools' Branch and the Technical Women's Branch.²⁶ At the August 1955 meeting of the Union executive it was decided that the women members of the executive, Misses R. Smith, H. Cranley and I. McLennan, be appointed the executive representatives to discuss the formation of the Club with representatives from the temporary teachers' sub committee.

The Temporary Teachers' Club and its aftermath

The minutes of the inaugural meeting on 13 October 1955, confirm the inclusive nature of the TTC and its close connection with the VTU. In the chair was Miss Jean McLennan, a teacher at Glen Iris State School, representing the executive of the VTU. She moved that a Temporary Teachers' Club be formed within the Union with a committee to represent the three divisions of the service. The fifty-three members present elected Viv Reilly (Women's Branch) who was a teacher at Camberwell South State School as president, and Nan Gallagher (High Schools' Branch) a teacher at Mordialloc High School as secretary/treasurer. Gwyn Dow (High Schools' Branch) a teacher at MacRobertson Girls' High School was elected vice president to represent the High Schools' secondary division. Tess Vroland (Technical Women's Branch) from Prahran Technical School was elected vice president to represent the technical division. Viv Reilly's notes some years later document that monthly meetings of the Club were held 'to educate members, plan action and put pressure on appropriate people'.²⁷ As Theobald has pointed out women activists operating as a separate group risked marginalisation, while those working in conjunction with their male colleagues had difficulty in being taken seriously.²⁸ The TTC chose an effective 'middle road' strategy which should not be dismissed lightly.

There was one surprise in the membership of the Club – a male member. Viv was at pains to mention him in my first discussion with her on the role of the TTC.²⁹ Although he is discreetly identified in the records as Mr X, he was presumably a Mr Evans, (no initial supplied) from Glenroy High School, whose qualifications were not originally recognised by the Department. The Club intervened on his behalf. Following a meeting addressed by D. Brown, the teachers' representative on the Tribunal who interested himself in the case, Mr X was made permanent.³⁰ According to Viv Reilly he was so grateful for the Club's assistance that he remained a financial member from 1956-59.³¹

During an interview with me in 1999, Nan Gallagher was careful to point out that the story of the TTC, while seemingly dependent upon a handful of significant figures, was very much a collective effort across a wide section of women. Nevertheless both she and Viv Reilly read Union politics very skilfully. From the start they

carefully positioned the Club. In our conversations Viv Reilly made clear that she believed that married women teachers needed a separate pressure group if they were to be successful in their goal of reinstatement in the Department. But without affiliation with the VTU, the group would be powerless. In a handwritten account she states that she moved a motion through the Women's Branch that a Club be formed and lobbied the Union until Council gave its permission.³² Viv is married to Jack Reilly, who was influential in the VTU at the time, and she understood very clearly the dynamics of Union politics in the 1950s. Both the married women teachers and the Union were keen to distinguish the TTC from the other powerful and disgruntled lobby group, the Victorian Secondary Masters' Professional Association (VSMPA). This group of senior male teachers, dissatisfied with the salary differential between primary and secondary teachers, had broken away from the Union in 1948 and set up what would eventually become a powerful rival organisation, the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association.

A Club offered the possibility of the women meeting as a particular interest group and filtering their decisions through other Union branches, for example, the High Schools' Branch, the Women's Branch and country branches. A membership fee of 2/6 was charged in addition to Union dues. Members were urged to keep up both memberships.³³

The leadership of the TTC maintained a subtle strategy, pursuing their own affairs, yet committed to working through the Union to put pressure on the government. They were aware that 'not all members of the council [regarded us] with favour'.³⁴ The Union for its part was wary of the TTC. Indeed I was tempted to read the choice of both Viv Reilly as president and Tess Vroland as vice-president, representing married women teachers in the technical division, as in some way related to Union influence, as both women were married to active members of the VTU. A taken aback Nan Gallagher assured me that this was not the case. I stood corrected in my understanding that the TTC was dominated by women from the High Schools' Branch. Of the fifty-three original members twenty-eight were from the Women's Branch and twenty-three from the High Schools' Branch. There were two from the Technical Women's Branch, who were senior members of that Branch which numbered around twenty members in 1955. Viv would remain as an active and

determined president of the TTC until the Club achieved its final objective on 1 July 1975 when married women were eligible for full superannuation rights. In 1976, with considerable prescience, she lodged the files of the TTC, including minutes, correspondence and sundry miscellaneous material in the State Library (Latrobe section).

At the initial meeting of the TTC in October 1955 the women went on the attack. Nan Gallagher was well prepared to report on the issues that were crucial to married women teachers' reinstatement, namely, superannuation, classification and accouchement leave. Her organisational skills meant that she could combine campaigning for the temporary teachers' cause with holding a demanding teaching and supervisory position at Mordialloc High School. Her diary shows the time and energy the Club devoted to contacting teachers, schools and organisations such as mothers' clubs, and collating information on conditions for married women in other states and overseas.³⁵ Nan played a significant role in expanding numbers in the Club, which at its peak numbered around 220 subscriptions.³⁶

Nan was an excellent publicist responsible for the press releases and numerous articles, letters and reports appearing in the major press at the time. A confident public speaker who, to this day, broadcasts for the print handicapped, Nan spoke on 3AW radio in June 1955 a few days after the meeting in Kelvin Hall. She went to some trouble in explaining the different categories of married women who were teaching. This was another opportunity for her to flesh out her arguments with 'real life' cases of the desperate plight of women bringing up families on their own or with invalid husbands. So for the first time the radio public heard of the systematic exploitation of the married woman temporary teacher by the Victorian Education Department and people responded very sympathetically. It was at Nan Gallagher's insistence that the Department's temporary employment of widows was at last subjected to public scrutiny.

The Union continued negotiating with the Department and the Minister on the issue of permanency. By early December 1955, D.S. Schubert, secretary of the Union, wrote to Nan Gallagher suggesting that he thought Ramsay had come round to the

women's side. Schubert also indicated that this was against the opinions of the Chief Inspector of primary schools and the Chief Inspector of technical schools.³⁷

The women drew up a list of invited speakers for their meetings, which reads as a 'who's who' in the Department and the teaching service. Their first address was from W. Trudinger, a former president of the VTU, now the classifier for the primary division, who addressed the TTC meeting in the first week in November. He was closely questioned on issues of classification and the need for recognition of married women teachers' experience and qualifications when women applied for permanent positions. The TTC had the satisfaction of hearing him say that he thought many married women temporary teachers would obtain class iii positions on their first application, and that there were now up to 300 class iii primary vacancies. But Trudinger was not as supportive of women's reinstatement in the Department without loss of salary and promotion opportunities as he had indicated. He failed to say that he did not think that all of these positions should go to women teachers. For in the following year, he voted in favour of a decision that primary class iii women's positions could be advertised for men or women, supporting a male unionist's claim that the women were on 'clover'.³⁸ Trudinger feared that young, newly married women would benefit at the expense of men, who could not get promotion even with an outstanding mark. This shows something of the opposition facing the TTC and its support for married women temporary teachers.

That the women were well aware of this resentment is reflected in the care they took organising their case. As they farewelled Trudinger, the women planned their next meeting with D.R. Brown, the teachers' representative on the Tribunal. Among other things they sought information on the superannuation rights of their sisters in New South Wales and Tasmania. Schubert wrote to Mrs D.B. Fulton of the Tasmanian State School Teachers' Federation asking a number of questions. He wanted to know the percentage of married women teachers in the state and by what procedures married women obtained permanent employment. He also inquired whether their responsibilities were the same as those of single women or whether married women received any special consideration. Finally he asked how married women were employed who wanted to teach and yet 'were not prepared to assume

the responsibilities of permanency'. Schubert sent a similar letter to E.M. Mattick, research officer of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation.

Their replies must have come as a surprise, for the fervour surrounding the issue of the re-admission of married women into the teaching service in Victoria was completely absent in Tasmania and New South Wales. Both states had accommodated the married women teachers to the extent that neither had any information on the number employed in their respective departments. In Tasmania a regulation allowed a woman to continue teaching after marriage as long as she conformed to the requirements prescribed in the regulations. Married women teachers in Tasmania had exactly the same responsibilities as their single counterparts and were treated in the same way, except that they could be appointed near their homes when they had home responsibilities. Clearly the Tasmanian Education Department needed married women's teaching labour and was prepared to accommodate them. Similarly E.W. Mattick replied that the salaries and conditions of employment for married women teachers in New South Wales were exactly the same as those for single women since the repeal of the Married Women Teachers' and Lecturers' Act in 1947.³⁹

The minutes record that the meeting which discussed this information adjourned early so that 'members wishing to interview members of parliament regarding the failure to introduce legislation could proceed to the House of Parliament'.⁴⁰ The pressure that the women maintained on the Union and the government was intense. D.R. Brown, under close questioning, stated that the Tribunal did not appoint temporary teachers, but it did determine their salaries. He 'conceded that there were anomalies [for temporary teachers] in the payments of increments under the last award, as he and the accountant had failed to reach a solution on the matter'.⁴¹ It would take more than this admission to amend the salaries for temporary teachers.

Salient issues stand out in the dealings of the TTC. Of particular interest is the issue of reinstatement of widows in the Department. Widows were offered permanency in the Department during the War, but the circumstances surrounding their reinstatement were never made public. In 1951 the VTU would discover a Department change in policy regarding the treatment of widows during a deputation

to the Minister of Education, P.P. Inchbold. Inchbold told the deputation that he could see no reason to change the temporary status of married women and that widows were eligible for permanent employment.⁴² There are two other references in passing to the reinstatement of war widows in *The Teachers' Journal*, which I have mentioned in the previous chapter. There is also the testimony of Lottie Bartlett that she had the choice of permanency in the Department when her second husband was killed on active service. At the December 1955 meeting of the TTC, Nan Gallagher went into bat for Ivy Corey, who was a widow. Nan's notes show the dealings of the Department with this group of 'married' women who would be the first to be restored to permanency in the Department.

Mrs Corey had been teaching at MacRobertson Girls' High School as a temporary teacher since 1944. She had previously trained and worked as a teacher in South Australia. She was forty-three when she began temporary teaching and when her husband died in 1946, she was just outside the age limit for permanency for widows, which was forty-five years. On this basis Ivy Corey was debarred from permanency. In 1950 when the age limit was raised to include widows from forty-five to fifty-five years of age, Ivy Corey was again debarred. This time the provisions for permanency included ten years classified service before marriage. Ivy Corey had eight years teaching before marriage, twelve years during marriage and five years as a widow.⁴³ In 1955 the proviso was altered to read 'any approved service'. But this change came too late for Ivy Corey who was again debarred from permanency as, at fifty-six years of age, she had passed by a few weeks the age limit of permanency at fifty-five.

Nan Gallagher put Ivy Corey's case to the TTC, pointing out that Mrs Corey had approached the Union in July and again in September, when the matter was taken to the Director. She had received a letter from D.S. Schubert saying that the Director was unwilling to grant permanency for her in case it set a precedent. Nan Gallagher was unwilling to accept D.S. Schubert's decision that there was nothing that could be done for Ivy Corey. Instead the TTC had taken up a suggestion from MacRobertson Girls' School that a petition on her behalf be circulated through the schools and addressed to the Union for urgent action. The Union was displeased with this outcome and their minutes record that R. Norris, the president of the VTU, asked the

president and secretary of the TTC to discuss the matter with him and the general secretary of the Union. Norris 'stressed the inadvisability of sending out a circular containing incorrect information'.⁴⁴ Despite this rebuff to the TTC, Nan Gallagher had been successful in her objective. In February 1956, Ivy Corey reported to the Union that she had received a letter from the Director, waiving the age limit in her special case and outlining means by which she could apply for permanency.

In February 1956, Jack Reilly, member of the Male Assistants' Branch and husband of Viv Reilly, queried the serious consequences of the recent salaries award that 'gave either a very small increase, or no increase at all to large sections of the fourth class, to the temporary teachers and to the student teachers'. He wanted to know why there was no longer an automatic salary progression from third to fourth class as normally occurred in previous schedules. His colleague A. Hyett (Lilydale) spelt things out more bluntly, even if his conclusion seemed rather out of touch. He argued that temporary teachers and the lower sections of the teaching ranks had not received any increases for the past couple of awards because the Tribunal believed they were being adequately recompensed and the majority would marry and leave the service. It is more likely that those on the Tribunal were preparing for the very opposite.⁴⁵

After the outstanding success of the meeting at Kelvin Hall in 1955, it was clear that there was overwhelming support for the removal of the marriage bar in teaching. But the Director now saw the issue of superannuation as the chief obstacle to married women's reinstatement in the Department. H.E. Loader, the teachers' representative on the Superannuation Board, addressing the TTC in February 1956, struck an ominous note when he spoke of the cost of government contributions. He raised the perennial problem of the dual-income family. But this time the objection was directed at the dual-pension family. Loader pointed out that the most likely objection to the permanency of married women would come from a government unwilling to pay significant contributions to pensions for both husband and wife. Reflecting back on this debate, Nan Gallagher remembers asking what difference this made to the situation, as there would be cases of fathers and single daughters residing in the same household and receiving individual pensions.

The Union continued to lobby on behalf of the women to negotiate a reasonable superannuation scheme, trying to meet the Department's requirements with medical tests and varying age and service requirements. The Union hoped that requiring contributors to pay both the government and their own contributions while on leave might meet some of the government's objections. The Union proposals for superannuation entitlements for married women paralleled the normal provisions for medical examination including:

For those re-entering the permanent service the necessity for medical examination and the right to units according to salary and the proviso for those over 30 years of age of limiting the number of units taken to a minimum of two if they so elected.

For those in the permanent service who take more than six months' leave the necessity of meeting both the Government and their own contributions whilst on leave.

For those who resign from the permanent service the receipt of the actuarial reserve portion of their contributions.⁴⁶

But the Union's good intentions would prove difficult to implement.

In March 1956 Schubert reported to the TTC on his meeting with the Director, outlining the schemes that had been discussed with him. These included a form of limited superannuation contributions, where women retiring after less than four years due to ill health (presumably a polite reference to pregnancies), would draw a sum equivalent to three and a half times their contributions. If women retired after four years service, they would receive five-eighths of the normal pension and if reaching retiring age they would receive the normal pension. The alternative, which the Director favoured, was a Provident Fund. On retiring women would receive a lump sum consisting of their own contribution plus government contributions. The Union's suggestions regarding classification were also more generous than the government would eventually allow.⁴⁷ Their recommendations on confinement leave make for amusing reading to contemporary eyes. Regulation 4, clause 5 was to be

amended by the inclusion of words 'or for accouchement leave'. The clause would then read:

Where a member is continuously absent from duty on account of illness or for accouchement leave beyond a period of thirteen weeks, he shall not be permitted to return to duty until the Government Medical Officer shall have certified that he is fit to resume work.⁴⁸

But the women who listened to Schubert were not amused at the watering down of their claims. They requested that the VTU executive grant the president or secretary of the TTC the courtesy of an invitation to be present at any further discussion with the Minister or the Director.⁴⁹ They began to apply more pressure, working on a survey to be sent to every Cabinet member and issuing invitations to the Minister, John Bloomfield, who had replaced Legatt as Minister, and Director Ramsay to attend their meetings.⁵⁰ The Minister declined. He claimed that the issue of the permanency of married women teachers was currently before Cabinet and it would not be possible for him to discuss anything at the present time.⁵¹

Director Ramsay accepted the invitation and spoke at a packed April meeting of the TTC, discussing the difficulties in the way of the legislation. But he assured the women that the legislation would soon be passed and it would be possible for them to apply for positions even before the legislation was approved. The Director kept his word and forwarded the proposals to the Minister where they struck problems at Cabinet level. It was left to the Union president Jack Baker to explain this to the women and advise them not to approach any members of parliament at this stage as a favourable decision was anticipated.⁵²

The women felt now that the tide had turned in their favour. By mid 1956 there were approximately 2,571 married women temporary teachers.⁵³ Viv Reilly again produced a paper dealing with the misconceptions surrounding married women temporary teachers, pointing out that they were not unqualified as rumoured but that 88 per cent were trained teachers and 70 per cent had university degrees or the equivalent. Viv also dealt with the issue that married women would not teach in the country, arguing that 59 per cent of married women teaching in primary schools and

52 per cent of married women teaching in secondary schools had already given country service. She also argued that 40 per cent of married women were already teaching in country secondary schools and as they were temporary teachers it could reasonably be expected that many would apply for permanency. Finally her evidence showed that married women teachers were not 'birds of passage' as many of their critics claimed. 69 per cent had more than ten years' teaching experience. In secondary schools 54 per cent had more than seven years' teaching experience. And as for the claim that married women would only teach at schools near them, Viv pointed out that this was scarcely an issue given that there were so many new schools opening.

The press was by now publishing regular articles on the women's struggle. Feature articles in the *Herald* and the *Age* newspapers of the period were overwhelmingly supportive.⁵⁴ Occasionally a letter would be published, such as the following from David Black. Black claimed that:

Equality of opportunity should mean equality of sacrifice. If married women wish the same opportunity as single woman then they cannot expect at all times to be located near their homes, neither can they expect to give in return for their salary, only that energy that is left over from 'domestic chores'. Western Australia, I think, had permanency for married teachers, but a leading administrator there informed me that it met all sorts of difficulties in administration with regard to staffing of schools. Are those who are claiming permanency prepared to go where their services are most needed? I doubt it?⁵⁵

Despite a generally supportive press, the TTC was upset by speculation regarding the eligibility of married women for permanency. The TTC called on the Union to stop treating the press so timidly.⁵⁶ The Union responded with a circular entitled 'Permanent status for married women teachers', rebutting speculation that legislation might be introduced to offer permanency only to those women who had been permanent in the Department as single women and continued in the service following marriage. Schubert assured the women that no qualified married woman would be denied permanency. By June 1956 the legislation was still under discussion.

By this stage Nan Gallagher had resigned from the Department and left on a round-the-world trip via Indonesia to Britain. She was succeeded as secretary by Edina Opitz from Mentone Girls' High School, who would remain as secretary until the Club held its final meeting. In August 1956, Minister Bloomfield finally accepted an invitation from the TTC to speak at their meeting. The meeting was once again crowded. It was not a success. Bloomfield did not endear himself by declaring that he was not prepared to make any statement on the subject of the status of married women teachers. Rather he offered a lengthy address on the workings of the Department and his position as Minister, which he found 'fascinating, rewarding and particularly satisfying'.⁵⁷ He then spoke of the huge salary bill of the Department and the increasing problem of juvenile delinquency, which the women were quick to see as an implied criticism of working mothers. The thinly veiled anger of the women is apparent in the tart response from Gwyn Dow. She thanked the Director for his address 'from a trained mind', a pointed reference to his introductory address in which he stressed his training and qualifications, presumably in contrast to theirs. Dow pointed out that 'a number of women had trained at their own expense and had cost the Department nothing'.

The women were deeply depressed by the gloomy picture the Minister painted of their future, feeling that they may need to plan another public meeting to push the issue further. But they need not have worried. The Minister's prejudices could not hold up against the tide of public feeling and the shortage of teachers in schools. In early 1956, Viv Reilly would announce with great pleasure that 'the Permanency Bill had been approved by the party and that Bloomfield was awaiting the government's permission to introduce the Bill in the next week'. By 18 October 1956, under the banner 'Better deal for women teachers may ease staff shortages, the *Age* cited Bloomfield's introductory remarks on the first reading of the Teaching Service (Married Women) Bill to remove the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department.⁵⁸ The ever-watchful Viv Reilly urged all members to attend their Branch meetings because the prospect of many class iii positions was uncertain.

The Bill was given Royal assent on 7 November 1956. Gwyn Dow, Claire Finniss and Viv Reilly had the pleasure of being present during the debate, having been invited to attend by Bloomfield. The debate was couched in terms of considerable

foreboding over the possibility of married women choosing to have careers rather than families. Both the Liberal/Country Party government and a decidedly sceptical Labor Party voted in favour of the Bill on the basis that

the Bill was a concession to realities and an acceptance of the simple principle of equity that as married female teachers do or may be called upon to do the same work as unmarried female teachers they should be paid the same salary rates.⁵⁹

The heavy-handed paternalism of the lengthy debate around the Bill does make one wonder what just what was meant by the droll comment in the minutes of the next TTC meeting. Mrs Dow and Mrs Finniss gave some impressions of the debate on the Bill as it passed through various stages in the Assembly and Council. Were the women amused at or horrified by what G.S. Gibbs, MLA for Portland had to say? Gibbs had taken it upon himself to inquire of the newly married women teachers in his electorate whether they were going to 'forsake the principle purpose for which the Creator made them'. Gibbs ruefully volunteered that one woman informed him that 'he was interfering unduly in her private life'. On both sides of the House members of parliament were wary of employing married women teacher. But they supported the Bill as a concession to reality. A.E. Shepherd, former Minister of Education in the Labor government, cited the case of the New South Wales Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act. He drew attention to the fact that 'as the economic position righted itself, it was found in practice that all women teachers who wished to remain in employment after marriage were permitted to do so'. He wondered whether the Bill would lead to the 'overloading of the industrial system with married women'.

Members of Parliament were particularly concerned about the nature and operation of the superannuation scheme available to married women. They were aware that married women teachers enjoyed full superannuation entitlements in other states. But this was not to be the case for married women teachers in Victoria. As Nan Gallagher reminisced, 'superannuation rights, or more particularly, the denial of them had been the bargaining chip of the whole process'.⁶⁰ Members were interested

in the funding and operation of the scheme, particularly when women's pregnancies meant that they would probably have broken employment patterns.

The scheme that was now devised was a limited-contribution fund. Married women teachers would contribute five per cent of their salary to the fund and the Government would contribute on a pound for pound basis and this amount would be invested by the Superannuation Board. Women who subsequently resigned were to be repaid their contributions at three per cent interest. In the debate on the Bill A.E. Shepherd, the Labor MLA for Ascot Vale, noted that the pension for married women was not substantial and only younger contributors would appear to benefit. But he, too, was concerned whether women would be called upon to meet superannuation contributions while they were on special leave.⁶¹

With these reservations, members of parliament voted in favour of the Teaching Service (Married Women) Bill. The principle clauses of the Bill stated that:

(a) If any woman in permanent employment in the teaching service (not being a student-in-training) marries, she may, if before her marriage she so elects by notice in writing to the Tribunal continue in such permanent employment retaining subject to the Principal Act her existing classification.

Section (b) of the Bill finally removed the marriage bar from the Victorian Education Department. It read:

(b) any married woman (whether or not she is in temporary employment on the teaching service) who at any time has been in employment – in the teaching service of the Education Department of Victoria; or in some teaching service approved for the purposes of this section by the Tribunal may apply in writing to the Tribunal to be appointed or reappointed to permanent employment in the teaching service in the lowest class of the appropriate division with such seniority as the Committee of Classifiers determines, and the Tribunal, if it receives a satisfactory medical report by a school medical officer, may if it thinks fit appoint her subject to the Principal Act.⁶²

The medical examination required by the Act, however, provided an unexpected hurdle for many members of the TTC. Some women were asked questions of a personal rather than a medical nature, presumably to do with their plans for combining families with careers. A number, including Viv Reilly, failed the medical examination. There was an immediate outcry leading to protests from the TTC to the Union, whose president took up the matter with the Director. There was a swift reply. 'Steps have been taken so that no married woman can be failed medically without a second medical opinion'. Viv Reilly, among others, was re-x-rayed, and passed as fit for entry into the Provident Fund. The medical officers do appear to have over reacted. The irony was that married women teachers needed a successful medical examination to be passed as eligible for pennisancy but the Provident Fund for married women had no provisions for sickness benefits.⁶³ Indeed if a married woman was injured on the job, she was eligible only for workers compensation while other teachers, single women and all male teachers would be superannuated out of the service.

The Provident Fund, as the government no doubt intended, was a grave disappointment to married women. They were penalised with respect to the number of years service they could draw on prior to the passing of the Act, a maximum of five years. Their level of contribution was also exceedingly low. In 1959 the VTU and the Public Service Association had the maximum entitlement lifted from thirty-six to thirty-nine units.⁶⁴ Married women teachers' contributions started at around four units. Nevertheless J.S. Bloomfield told a rather different story when he offered parliament some examples of the various categories of pensions the women would be eligible to receive. For example, he cited the case of Mrs A, who was born in 1904 and had worked continuously since 1943 as a temporary teacher. She would be appointed at her present salary of £1030 as a Class iv teacher. As she was already over fifty years of age she would not have a considerable period to contribute to the Fund and her pension at sixty years of age would be £54-7-7. To avoid criticisms of this meagre outcome for the unfortunate Mrs A, Bloomfield was quick to point out that should she retire at sixty-five she would be eligible for a pension of £118-10-0. And of course there was always the possibility that she would get promotion and further increase her pension prospects. At the other end of the spectrum Bloomfield cited Mrs F. She was born in 1930 and had been in continuous employment since

1951. She would be eligible to join the Fund in 1957 as a twenty-seven-year-old class iv teacher. With promotions she could expect to retire at the age of sixty with a pension of £490-2-10.

Bloomfield painted such a glowing picture that Cain, Leader of the Opposition, was provoked to ask: 'Will married teachers who come under the scheme be forced to accept country posts?'⁶⁵ But Bloomfield inadvertently revealed the real value of the pension promised to married women teachers in his comment on the contributor who ceased to be married. She could remain a contributor to the Provident Fund or apply to the Superannuation Board to become an officer for the purposes of the Superannuation Act. Bloomfield thought it reasonable to give a teacher this choice. But he considered that 'the superannuation rates at the appropriate age would be very heavy and possibly beyond her resources'.⁶⁶

Hence, as the women in the TTC well knew, it was possible for a woman to retire with practically no pension. They cited the case of Mrs X who had forty-seven years of service at the time of the passing of the Act and would retire with a pension of about £3 per week, less than the old age pension.⁶⁷ Women such as Claire Finnis, who were the sole breadwinners for their families, were devastated, feeling that the Union had let them down.⁶⁸ In 1955 Finnis had written to the editor of the *Age*:

I would like to express my agreement with M.P.'s statement (27/9) that every teacher should, after a lifetime of service to education, be able to retire 'in reasonable comfort'.

However, M.P. is misguided in believing that all departmental teachers can do this. She overlooks that large group of departmental teachers- the married women- who are paid less than unmarried teachers and in addition can receive no superannuation at all.

In three years time I shall have served the education department as a temporary teacher for thirty years. I have domestic responsibilities that make it urgent for me to retire on an income above the old age pension. My case is one of many. I am acquainted with widows who support large families on a salary that is

below that paid to single women who live with their families. When they retire these widows will be entitled to nothing more than the old age pension.

...I am suggesting that a protest be made on behalf of married women who form so large a part of the service and are treated so inequitably.⁶⁹

Nor could older women in the service afford to marry as they would lose their superannuation rights. There is one case of a woman resigning from the Department after considerable years of service, accepting her superannuation and then marrying.⁷⁰ There was also a clause in the Act which initially tripped up at least one other woman. Women who married and opted to leave the service were entitled to money in lieu of furlough. But if women accepted permanency and then resigned, presumably on account of pregnancy, they were not entitled to anything.⁷¹ In the event only 200 women joined the Provident Fund.⁷²

By June 1957, however, 344 married women had been appointed to the permanent staff in the primary division, ninety-eight married women had been appointed in the secondary division and ten married women had been appointed in the technical division. Of these, eighty-four had been promoted to class iii, thirty in their own schools. Twenty-seven class iv women had received appointments, fourteen in their own schools. And newly married women probably benefited most of all, as they could now retain their classification and salary and remain in the service, even if they could only contribute to a very poor Provident Fund. The TTC still had work to do. Viv Reilly recognised that many married women preferred to remain temporary teachers, while those who chose permanency needed a greatly improved pension scheme. She renamed the Club, the Temporary and Permanent Teachers' Club, and continued her campaign for justice for women teachers. In 1958 *The Teachers' Journal* contained an article by the Minister for Education claiming that 'marriage was a factor which put all women in a special class'. 'Marriage', he claimed, 'is likely to cause invalidity'. And on this basis he defended the withholding of full superannuation rights to married women teachers.⁷³ The women promptly contacted a list of specialists seeking their opinions. The battle continued.

Over the ensuing decades Viv Reilly, Nan Gallagher, Gwyn Dow and doubtless other members of the TTC have watched with silent amusement and occasional impatience

as others laid claim to ‘removing the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department’. Francis may have found it curious that Jan Bassett in her study of the VSTA, *Matters of Conscience: a history of the VSTA*, published in 1995, made no reference to the campaign for permanency for married women. The members of the TTC understood. Their story had yet to be told. But it was in the interests of the VTU that the women’s efforts were subsumed within it. And it is the women’s diffidence which is difficult to characterise. This has meant that their loyalty to each other and the VTU, in addition to their reticence, has kept them silent on the matter. The TTC, however, achieved a wonderful victory for women teachers in the reinstatement of married woman teacher as permanent officers in the Victorian Education Department, after some six decades of absence. The TTC positioned married women teachers astutely in the discourses of the day, resisting narrow definitions of what it meant to be a married woman teacher, exploring its possibilities and ultimately changing its meanings.

¹ ‘Better deal for women teachers may ease staff shortage’, the *Age*, 18 October 1956, in TTC, MS. Box 17691/5, Teachers’ Union press cuttings and miscellaneous papers, Manuscript room, State Library of Victoria.

² R. Francis, *Of Secondary Concern? Women in the Victorian Teachers’ Association 1953-1995*, Ph.D thesis, University of Melbourne, 2000.

³ Interview with Nan Gallagher 1999.

⁴ R. Francis, ‘Of secondary concern’, p.253.

⁵ R. Francis, ‘Of secondary concern, p. 71.

⁶ *The Teachers’ Journal*, March 1955, pp. 43-49.

⁷ Francis quotes A. Rowan’s claim that the original letter offering to support the VTU in arguing for permanency for married women teachers wasn’t delivered. Its replacement was lost.

⁸ A. Spaul, ‘Teachers and Politics: a comparative study of state teachers’ organisations in Victoria and New South Wales since 1940’, Ph.D. thesis, Monash University, 1972, p.285.

⁹ R. Francis ‘Of secondary concern’, p.77.

¹⁰ *The Teachers’ Journal*, 20 May 1952, pp. 95-6.

¹¹ *The Teachers’ Journal*, 20 May 1952, p.84.

¹² *The Teachers’ Journal*, 18 February, 1953.

¹³ *The Teachers’ Journal*, 20 February 1953, p.7.

¹⁴ N86/10-13, Minutes of VTU Council, 5 June 1942, Noel Butlin Archives, ANU.

¹⁵ *The Teachers’ Journal*, August 1953, p.162.

¹⁶ *The Teachers’ Journal*, 20 February 1954, p.25

¹⁷ *The Teachers’ Journal*, February, 1955, p.19.

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- ¹⁸ *The Teachers Journal*, February, 1955, p.8.
- ¹⁹ *The Teachers' Journal*, February, 1955, p.20.
- ²⁰ *The Teachers' Journal*, February, 1955, p.20.
- ²¹ *The Teachers Journal*, February, 1955, p.20. Although there was no formal bar against married women teaching in independent schools, informal bars were in operation and practices varied from school to school.
- ²² Minutes of VTU Council, N86/38; *The Teachers' Journal*, February 1955, pp. 50-53.
- ²³ *The Teachers' Journal*, July 1955, p147.
- ²⁴ *The Teachers' Journal*, July 1955, pp. 143-148.
- ²⁵ *The Teachers Journal*, August 1944, pp. 183-185.
- ²⁶ N86/38, Minutes of the Executive meeting of VTU Council, 20 September 1955.
- ²⁷ TTC, MS Box 1769/3, Teachers' Union Correspondence, written on panty-hose inset.
- ²⁸ M.Theobald, *And gladly teach?:the making of a woman's profession*", *Fink Memorial Lecture*, 2000, Faculty of Education , University of Melbourne., pp. 34-5.
- ²⁹ Telephone interview with Viv Reilly, 1999.
- ³⁰ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 13 October 1955.
- ³¹ TTC, MS Box 1769/2, Teachers' Union Financial Records, Temporary Teachers' Club membership, no.63.
- ³² TTC, MSN 1458, MS Box 1769/5, Union press cuttings and miscellaneous papers, 12 April 1956.
- ³³ Teachers were never mandated to join unions in Australia.
- ³⁴ TTC, MS Box,1769/5, Annual report 1956, Teachers' Union Press Cuttings and miscellaneous.
- ³⁵ Diary entries from the period, supplied by Nan Gallagher.
- ³⁶ TTC, MS Box 1769/2, Teachers' Union Financial Records.
- ³⁷ TTC, MS 1769/3, 7 December 1955.
- ³⁸ *The Teachers' Journal*, October 1956, p.257.
- ³⁹ TTC, MS Box 1769/3, 1 November 1954.
- ⁴⁰ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 10 November 1955.
- ⁴¹ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 12 December 1955
- ⁴² VPRS 10537/P00, unit 70, 9 December 1951.
- ⁴³ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 8 December 1955; Teachers' Union Correspondence, MS Box1769/3; Reference to the relevant change in provisions can be found in *The Teachers' Gazette*, June 1955, although no reference is made to the term 'widow'.
- ⁴⁴ N86/38, Tuesday 7 February 1956,.
- ⁴⁵ *The Teachers' Journal*, February 1956, p.12.
- ⁴⁶ N86/191, 6 September, 1955.
- ⁴⁷ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 8 March 1956.
- ⁴⁸ N86/191, 6 September 1955.
- ⁴⁹ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 8 March 1956.
- ⁵⁰ Diary entry, Nan Gallagher.
- ⁵¹ TTC, MS Box 3, 29 May 1956.

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- ⁵² TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 10 May 1956.
- ⁵³ *VPD*, 1955-6, vol.250, p.5204.
- ⁵⁴ See *Age* 9 May 1956, *Age*, 15 May 1956, *Age*, 16 October 1956, *Herald*, 15 May 1956.
- ⁵⁵ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, May 1955.
- ⁵⁶ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 10 May 1956.
- ⁵⁷ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 9 August 1956.
- ⁵⁸ TTC, MS Box 5, *Age*, 18 October 1956.
- ⁵⁹ *VPD* 1955-6, vol. 250, p. 5210.
- ⁶⁰ Interview with Nan Gallagher, 1999.
- ⁶¹ *VPD* 24 October 1956, pp. 5208-9.
- ⁶² *The Teachers' Journal*, October 1956, p. 259.
- ⁶³ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, February 1957.
- ⁶⁴ *Vision and Realisation*, vol.1 p. 1177.
- ⁶⁵ *VPD* 1955-56, vol. 249, p. 4970
- ⁶⁶ *VPD* 1955-56, vol. 249, p. 4971.
- ⁶⁷ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 11 June 1959.
- ⁶⁸ Interview with Nan Gallagher, 1999.
- ⁶⁹ C.Finniss, 'Lack of superannuation', *Age*, 30 April 1955.
- ⁷⁰ TTC, MS Box 1769/1, 11 June 1959.
- ⁷¹ See profile of Mrs Audrey Dodson at the end of this section.
- ⁷² TTC, MS Box 3, written on panty-hose insert, p.3.
- ⁷³ *The Teachers' Journal*, 8 August 1956.

NOT SUCH BRILLIANT CAREERS? MARRIED WOMEN TEACHERS IN NEW SOUTH WALES AND THEIR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE MARRIAGE BAR(S) 1895 - 1947

Unlike their Victorian colleagues who were excluded from the teaching service after the passing of the 1889 Public Service act, married women teachers in New South Wales would survive the passing of the 1895 Public Service Act, introducing a marriage bar into the New South Wales Public Service. They would retain their careers and entitlements.

The good fortune of married women teachers in New South Wales, it seemed to me, stemmed from the debate on the 1895 Bill, which focussed on the rights of married women teachers to work. This had shaped the outcomes for married women teachers in New South Wales in a number of ways. At one level, the rights of teaching widows and other needy women seemed guaranteed – a very different situation to the treatment meted out to similar women by the Victorian Education Department. At another level, the New South Wales records show that some married women teachers had lengthy careers and were well known and highly regarded. They were Mistresses of Infant Departments and Headmistresses of Girls' Schools. Educating female pupils in separate departments was a consistent feature in public education in New South Wales long after their closure in Victoria. Hence, in spite of the implementation of a marriage bar in 1932 in the Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act, amended in 1935 and removed in 1947, married women teachers maintained a presence in the New South Wales teaching service. To a researcher accustomed to a teaching landscape in Victoria comprised almost entirely of men and single women, the visibility of married women in the New South Wales Education Department seemed very promising.

Hence I began my research on married women teachers in New South Wales with the simple premise that over decades they had fared much better than their sisters in the adjacent state of Victoria. Indeed the 1932 Act specifically exempted widows and divorcees. I wanted to explore the circumstances that had delivered such different outcomes for married women teachers. On closer examination a far more complex and less complimentary picture of the treatment of married women teachers in the New South Wales Education Department emerged. The following account explores

something of their experiences of teaching and the marriage bar(s) both formal and informal in the New South Wales Education Department.

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The 1895 Public Service Bill contained the first formal provisions limiting the employment of married women in the New South Wales Public Service. Designed and presented to parliament by T.A. Coghlan, the Bill was remarkably similar to the Public Service Amendment Act passed six years earlier in Victoria, excluding married women from the public workforce. Clause 36 of the 1895 Public Service Bill required women who married after its passing to resign, but exempted women who were matrons, female wardens or attendants in goals, hospitals and infirmaries, positions difficult to fill without the services of married women.¹

The Bill was intended as 'a charter for the merit principle' and the end of privilege and patronage in the public workplace.² It was the outcome of many years of public dissatisfaction with the unpredictable conditions of employment in the public sphere, including recruitment, promotion and retirement. In particular Clause 36 took aim at one form of patronage, the practice of husband and wife both holding well-paid jobs at the expense of the public purse.

But the response of New South Wales parliamentarians to this issue was not what the designers of the Bill had anticipated. Despite some consternation about well-known couples drawing two salaries, such as Sydney Maxted, who was head of the Charitable Institutions of New South Wales and whose wife Sophia was matron of the State Children's Relief Board, members of parliament were not disposed to do anything about it.³ Conversely in Victoria, parliamentarians seethed with anger at the state supporting one family with two salaries, citing several cases of women teachers and their public servant husbands, and giving unanimous support for the implementation of the marriage bar. It would be, as Desley Deacon notes, another decade before the concept of the family wage would hold sway in New South Wales parliamentary debate.⁴ Indeed debate on the Bill in the New South Wales parliament had such important ramifications for married women teachers in New South Wales that it merits close consideration.

The central issue of the debate on the 1895 Bill in the New South Wales parliament was the right of married women teachers to work. A. B. Piddington, member for Tamworth and a young lawyer, was the first to defend their rights, claiming:

If the service is in the future to be open to women, why should married women be picked out as if they were some inferior caste of females to be thrust out of the public service?

Surely it can be left to the Board to see whether individual married women are desirable or undesirable civil servants?

He argued further:

According to the interpretative clause the term 'married woman' is not to include a widow. Therefore every married woman who is not a widow is in future to be excluded from the civil service. Secondly all women who are at present in the civil service are to be turned out when they marry. It neither accords with the highest efficiency nor principles of justice.⁵

Piddington was not to change his views on these matters over many years. As a KC some three decades later, Piddington would champion in parliament the cause of married women teachers, defending their right to work in the face of concerted opposition and the implementation of the marriage bar in 1932.⁶ In 1895 his views were well received. His question, 'What about the woman who makes an unfortunate marriage?' provoked considerable comment.

E.W. Molesworth immediately responded that 'the law would operate with exceeding harshness if it operated in instances where married women are the sole support of the family, many have invalid husbands or have been deserted.' W.J. Lyne, member for Hume, wanted to know 'Why should someone who is trying to earn something for her starving children be prevented from taking any position for which she is competent, simply because she is married?'. Lyne went so far as to say that 'married women should be allowed more opportunities for employment than

single women'. When asked why their husbands shouldn't be made to keep them, he replied that: 'Their husbands cannot always get work. I can't understand the force of this clause at all. It is an absurdity, a hardship, and a cruelty to women who are willing to provide for their children.'⁷ This was powerful support for married women teaching, particularly significant given that Lyne would be premier of New South Wales in mid-1899.

J. Garrard, Minister of Public Instruction, trying to reclaim ground in the debate suggested that 'deserving widows should get employment in places which were filled by married women'. But his comment that a woman ought to be dependent upon her husband, as it was positively indecent for big boys and girls in our schools to be taught by married women, provoked further outrage at the Bill and more support for married women teachers.

Finally G.H. Reid, member for Sydney and the premier, intervened with a solution which would have a significant effect on the future of married women teachers in New South Wales. Admitting that a great deal of what had been said against the clause had made a considerable impression upon him, and no doubt realising that the Bill in its present form was not going to be successful, Reid offered a compromise. Claiming that he and his friend, the Minister of Public Instruction, had really wanted to amend the abuses associated with the practice of employing married women, he proposed that the clause should read: 'Except in the Department of Public Instruction, no married woman should be eligible for employment in any office while her husband is employed in the Public Service'.⁸

Questioned regarding the reasons for exempting married women in the Department of Public Instruction, Reid identified one of the practical problems for the Department in excluding married women teachers. He replied that:

In small public schools in the bush, where they have one male and one female class and perhaps an infant class, it is desirable that the instruction in such cases should be given not by a single man and a single woman but by a married couple.

In this remark Reid encapsulates why married women teachers would be exempted from the marriage bar implemented in the 1895 Public Service Act in New South Wales. Firstly, there was the need to accommodate the country lobby. Parents in country towns may well have preferred the teaching couple, as Reid argued, but there was another significant factor. The wives of farmers were often teaching in local schools, providing a much-needed source of income. Secondly, the dictates of moral propriety which meant that parents preferred their daughters taught in separate departments by women was a policy which prevailed in New South Wales for a much lengthier period of time than in Victoria. This gave married women teachers much needed political clout. Finally, George Reid had already demonstrated his commitment to the teaching of female pupils in his support for the development of Sydney Girls' High School, whose first head, Lucy Garvin, was a married woman who combined her career with raising a family.⁹

Thus in 1895, just after the Victorian Education Department had expelled married women teachers from the service, married women teachers in New South Wales would continue to prosper. They would pursue their careers at a time of considerable economic hardship in New South Wales, as in the other states. Probably many more married women stayed on in the service during pregnancy than was customary. From 1894 to 1895 ninety-five married women teachers applied for 'accouchement' leave. The matter so troubled Inspector Bridges that he was prompted to complain that there had been so many cases, and in some cases extended leave applied for, that he recommended that these teachers should receive no pay after their first month of leave.¹⁰ He need not have worried; the tide was already turning against the married woman teacher. Within a few years of the passing of the 1895 Public Service Bill, disapproval of married women teachers was voiced in parliament.

In 1899 J.C.L. Fitzpatrick asked John Perry, Minister of Public Instruction in the Lyne ministry, 'whether he was aware that a number of lady teachers in his Department had married and had husbands who were businessmen in country towns in New South Wales'. The Minister responded that it was not compulsory for women to resign from teaching upon their marriage and he had not yet considered the matter.¹¹

During debate on the 1902 Public Service Act the matter was raised again. John Perry was asked to state the number of married female teachers employed by the Department whose husbands were also so employed or were otherwise connected with some branch of the public service.¹² And Fitzpatrick also aired the other perennial argument against the employment of married women, that married women teachers were keeping unemployed single women out of the service. He asked the Minister if he was aware of the fact that ‘considerable complaint is made by ladies who have passed the necessary examination, and are eligible for appointment, but are not able to secure a school’. The Minister replied that the information was not available as no record was kept of the occupations of husbands of married women teachers. But he agreed that the information would be furnished as soon as possible.¹³

Given the growing anxiety about married women teaching, it is scarcely surprising that clause 44 of the 1902 Public Service Act dealing with the temporary employment of public servants would be used against women teachers as an informal, but very powerful marriage bar. After the passing of this Act, women teachers who resigned to be married and later wished to return were routinely re-admitted as temporary officers under clause 44. Nevertheless the Department could not legally compel women to retire on marriage and there are instances to support this. In 1905 Inspector Murray wrote of Ellen Daish, nee Perry: ‘It is unfortunate that Mrs Daish did not resign when she married as I feel sure that she will never do satisfactory work’.¹⁴ Clause 44, however, did give the Department discretionary power, which it would use very effectively in the following decades.

Just how significant this was in influencing married women not to return to teaching after marriage is difficult to estimate, given that there were other insidious forces at work. Indeed by the 1920s attitudes to married women teaching had changed, not only in New South Wales, but within the Western world, where a consistent pattern of introducing marriage bars in teaching is clearly evident. How then did the married women teachers whose lengthy careers I mentioned at the outset fare in this climate?

These women were heads of infant departments or separate girls departments in large secondary schools. Many of them were married with families. May Fitzpatrick (nee Thornbury) and Vera Norman (nee Ponton) had long careers as assistants and then as Mistresses of Infant schools.¹⁵ May retired at sixty-three years of age in 1944 and

Vera at sixty years of age in 1954. Mary Byrne (nee O'Brien) had an outstanding career as Head of a Girls' Department of a public school, and she retired at sixty-five in 1954.¹⁶ Between them they weathered, with varying degrees of success, the marriage bar in the various guises in which it operated in the New South Wales Department of Education.

May Thornbury was born in 1881. In 1898 she became a pupil teacher on probation. May was a bright student and in 1902 she gained a full scholarship at the examination for admission to the Training school and was awarded a class ii B training certificate. Thereafter followed a temporary appointment at Lambton Infants School, at Carrington Public School and at Jesmond Public School until in 1908 her classification of a class ii B appointment was confirmed. May was now twenty-seven years of age and on 7 January 1911 she married John Fitzpatrick. May did not resign and presumably the Department did not try to deter her, prepared to retain the services of such an experienced and capable teacher. Indeed in 1917 she was given a promotion to a class ii A classification as Infant Mistress at Waratah Public School, with the approval of the Public Service Board.¹⁷

May went on to become first assistant mistress at Adamstown and then Mistress at Stanford Merthyr Infant School where we get a brief glimpse into what her life was like in the correspondence records of the Department. At this school she had an assistant, Miss Carey, under her supervision, although it is clear from the correspondence that Miss Carey is not always capable of arriving at the school on Monday mornings. One wonders if she was left to manage when May Fitzpatrick was granted six weeks leave with pay in order to have an operation for 'removal of the breasts for chronic mastitis'.¹⁸ May Fitzpatrick's early teaching career was not handicapped by the informal marriage bar operating in the Department, possibly because the Department needed experienced women who could manage Infant Departments; her problems with the marriage bar would be experienced later in life.

Mary Byrne (nee O'Brien) was born in 1891. On completion of her training she was appointed to Plunkett Steet Primary School in 1914. Mary's series of appointments to schools would see her proceed up the ladder to a position as first assistant at a Girls' Department of several public schools. She did not marry until late in life and

thus her career was untroubled by the informal marriage bar.¹⁹ Vera Norman (nee Ponton) was born in 1894, thirteen years after May Thornton and three years after Mary Byrne. Vera, too, trained as an infant teacher. But she was not so fortunate when it came to her experiences of the informal marriage bar. In 1918 Vera was on the promotions list when she married. But in the same year the Department was explicit in its communication to women who wished to continue after marriage:

You are requested to note that there is no regulation to prevent women teachers from continuing in the service after marriage, but for various reasons the Department prefers their resignation. No guarantee can be given that the locality of their employment would suit their domestic requirements, and private considerations must always give way to the needs of the Department.²⁰

Not surprisingly, Vera resigned. Presumably she had to choose between marriage and a teaching position at a remote location far from her husband's area of employment. In 1923 Vera was re-employed as an assistant on probation, and then reinstated in the Department and appointed as Infant Mistress at a succession of schools from 1923 to 1926. Vera's reinstatement came at considerable personal cost; aside from the fact that she lost her promotion and several years of seniority, she was now a widow.²¹

Though the Department could not stop women marrying and remaining in the service, it could threaten and possibly carry out the threat, to post them to distant locations. It was, however, very direct in its approach to 'needy' married women teachers who were not widows. In 1918 Madeline Everett applied for permanent employment. Her application prompted the following decision from the Department:

Mrs Everett was appointed under section 44 of the Public Service Act, 1902, in June, 1917. She had formerly been employed in the Department's service as a teacher. She is not a widow, her husband being on military service. Inform that it is not the practice of this Department to admit married women to its permanent ranks and that her application cannot, therefore, be recommended.²²

Similarly in 1920 when Mrs A. Gollan, who had taught with the Department for ten years prior to her marriage, applied for a transfer from the temporary staff to the permanent staff at Dumbleton Public School, she received a similar response to Madeline Everett. Mrs Gollan pointed out that she had resigned to be married, and when her husband returned from the war, 'he was (and still is) unable to support myself and children and I have to work to do so'. Her Principal wrote in support of her case, declaring that she was the type of woman, in his opinion, that the Department required – 'a serious, thoughtful and earnest worker'. This was supported by Inspector Riley's comment that: 'she [was] one of the most useful members of the staff, who might well be placed on the permanent staff if a report from the military authorities showed that her husband's health is as represented'.

But on 31 January 1920, Chief Inspector H.D. McLelland, in a reply reminiscent of his colleagues in the Victorian Education Department, wrote: 'I have to inform you that as you are a married woman you are ineligible for permanent employment as a teacher.'²³ This was an expedient decision on the part of the Department that no doubt had many cases of married women teachers in situations like Mrs Gollan in post-war New South Wales. Permitting her reinstatement in the teaching service would open the floodgates to many others, and remove an excellent source of temporary labour. Although individual inspectors could be more sympathetic, in 1928 Inspector Harvey wrote of the unfortunate Mrs Atkins:

Miss Johnson is an ex- student qualified by examination for 3A. She was appointed here to relieve Mrs Atkin during the period the latter was away for accouchement. From what I can gather Mrs Atkin's marriage was a forced one. Her husband has not made a home for her and the people at Hannam Vale are unwilling to provide accommodation for her if she returns to Hannam Vale. Under the circumstances it is advisable to appoint her elsewhere when her leave expires on 3 April and Miss Johnson should be appointed permanently to this school where she is doing very satisfactory work.²⁴

In this glimpse of married women's experiences of teaching in New South Wales at this time, it is clear that needy women, widows aside, received much the same

treatment as their Victorian colleagues. Married women teachers' 'right to work' was in the hands of the New South Wales Department of Education and its treatment of 'needy' women was a mixture of self-serving pragmatism and individual acts of kindness – patronage?

In 1922, the first year in which statistics are available, only thirty-four women had stayed on after marriage, of whom twenty-one left within three years.²⁵ But within a decade economic circumstances would change. Women like May Fitzpatrick who was permanently employed in the Department with a husband to support her; women temporarily employed on a long term basis; and women such as Mary Byrne, who would marry in 1929 after many years of heading up separate Girls' Departments in several prestigious public schools, would face a more serious challenge to their right to teach.

The delicate balance that meant that the New South Wales Education Department could rely on women resigning on marriage without recourse to legislation was destabilised by the 1930s Depression. Women teachers conformed to the demographic patterns of the Depression era. They delayed marriage and delayed childbearing; those who did marry did not wish to resign. Disapproval again began to mount. In 1932 this was compounded by the plight of the exit students from Sydney Teachers' College, who had entered into a bond with the Department and could not be placed in employment. This was the issue that would put the rights of married women teachers back on the public agenda in New South Wales, pitting them against the beginning students in the Department.

The students organised and things came to a head in January 1932 when the college exit students received letters informing them that their entry into the service would be delayed.²⁶ There were other factors involved. As the Department was unable to meet its obligation to provide them with positions, there was the possibility of litigation. And significantly, in the absence of other employment, a greater number of young men were seeking entry to Sydney Teachers' College – a most unusual state of affairs for the Department and one on which it was determined to capitalise. Letters to the press regularly scapegoated the married women.

By this stage a dismissal Act was in the pipeline. Indeed, it seems, the Bill in draft form had been in existence for some time, presented to incoming ministries by permanent heads.²⁷ In 1930, the year the Lang Labor government came into office, the Minister of Education William Davies announced his intention to dismiss married women from the service at the New South Wales Teachers' Federation annual conference. Davies eventually backed off, perhaps because of pressure from the Federation and undoubtedly because of the cost of redundancy payments. The Lang government, however, was sacked by the Governor Sir Philip Game on 12 May 1932. The incoming conservative Stevens government proceeded against the married women.

In August 1932 married women teachers received a letter from the New South Wales Education Department warning them of their impending dismissal. They would not give in without a fight. Leading New South Wales feminist Jessie Street went into battle on behalf of the married women. In the same month she wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, as president of the United Associations of Women (UAW), protesting at impending legislation to dismiss married women teachers.²⁸ To Jessie Street a principle was involved: the rights of a 'woman as a citizen'. 'Women,' she insisted, 'should have the same rights as any other citizen to own money or to own property'. All discriminations against women should be eliminated as they were 'not in keeping with the modern viewpoint ... that men and women should have equal rights'.

Jessie Street's spirited defence of the rights of married women teachers provoked the conservative *Sydney Morning Herald* into congratulating Minister Davies on his decision and wondered editorially if he knew what he was taking on. Married women teachers, the editorial suggested, could be expected to mount a spirited attack on the proposal, fearful of losing 'what is called their "economic independence"', but 'hovering on both flank and rear moves the great army of the feminists, fearful of any encroachment upon the many freedoms which the present generation of women has so rapidly won'.²⁹ The *Sydney Morning Herald* had made some intriguing observations.

This 'great army of feminists' in the 1930s confirms recent revisionist scholarship by Marilyn Lake and others that women were politically active between the first and second wave feminist movement.³⁰ It also confirms the importance of the struggle for married women teachers' rights in New South Wales. The UAW case against the dismissal was set out in a pamphlet entitled 'Should Women Teachers be Dismissed When They Marry?'³¹

Feminist responses to Minister Davies' announcement in 1930 produced an alliance between Jessie Street's UAW and the powerful women activists within the New South Wales Teachers' Federation. The UAW characterised the proposed dismissal Act as part of a 'deliberate war waged against the woman wage earner...the thin edge of the wedge...inserted by dismissing married women teachers by an Act of Parliament' and 'taking away one of the fundamental rights of human beings, ie the right to marry'. The proposed legislation brought together powerful women activists from the New South Wales Teachers' Federation and women from the UAW with the formation of the Married Women Teachers' Propaganda Sub-Committee. (The detailed campaign around the dismissal of the married women is not the substance of this chapter and has been told elsewhere.)³²

On the question of how the married women should respond to the letter of dismissal in August 1932, there can be no doubt that the Federation and its legal counsel swung in behind the women, though the hand of the UAW Married Women Teachers' Committee is again apparent.³³ The Department's letter to the women proved to be a fishing expedition for information on which to base the draft of the Bill and calculate the cost of mass dismissals. In September the Federation advised the women that they could not be dismissed under existing legislation and they should wait until legal advice that they must do so. At the same time, however, the Stevens Government with David Drummond as Minister of Education had the Bill before the House. The Federation then successfully petitioned to be heard on the issue.³⁴

The Federation briefed A. B. Piddington, now a KC, who had defended the married women teachers in the 1895 debate on the Public Service Bill. Once again he defended their case in the Legislative Council. At one level his speech is

remembered for the inordinate time it took to deliver and the fact that there were only nine members left listening when he finished.³⁵ This was a clear indication that this time he was not going to achieve the support he sought. But his speech, challenging the legislation on moral, legal and constitutional grounds, was of some significance. Published in a pamphlet, the *Martyrdom of Women*, became an important contribution to feminist literature of the period. It also helped to hold the government accountable for their actions. The debate that followed, rather than being perfunctory as Judith Mackinolty has claimed, was lengthy, detailed and defensive on the part of the government.³⁶ Nevertheless, the Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act 1932 was assented to on 28 October 1932.

The Bill provided that all married women currently employed, and all those who subsequently married, should be dismissed. It also provided for two categories under which married women could be re-employed; 'in the public interest', and on the grounds of financial hardship. Both categories of women were to be employed under Clause 44 of the Public Service Act of 1902, that is, as temporary teachers under yearly certificates, with reduced classification and salary. The first category included a handful of women with specialist qualifications such as the lecturers at Sydney Teachers' College, while the second category included the vast majority of women whose combined family income was less than £5 per week. There was provision to retain the services of women who married while under bond to the Department until the period of the bond had expired.³⁷

There were some bright notes. Divorced women, widows and sewing mistresses were exempt. Importantly, too, the legislation also safeguarded superannuation, long-service leave and other entitlements. Women who had served over ten years were granted a payout of double their super entitlements and three weeks pay for every year of service. There is no doubt that married women teachers had Jessie Street and the UAW, the Teachers' Federation and in particular, A.B. Piddington, who specifically addressed these issues, to thank for this.

But what did the exemptions on the basis of hardship really amount to? At the outset these qualifications to the Bill offered tangible evidence that New South Wales handled the implementation of the marriage bar more compassionately and humanely

than it was handled in Victoria. Significantly, in 1932 in Victoria married women temporary teachers were required to submit statutory declarations, as they did in New South Wales under the Act, giving evidence that they had dependants to support or take a cut in their already meagre salaries. (See chapter three.) What the Department of Public Instruction in New South Wales had to offer its married women teachers seemed far more generous.

But I was misled. There was a hint of what the Act meant for married women in the Attorney General, H. E. Manning's defensive comment during the debate in the Legislative Council. He was forced to admit that 'some hardship would be suffered to be sure, but that is due to the unfortunate circumstances of the moment'.³⁸ The hardship showed up in the statutory declarations that the women were required to supply. They survive in the New South Wales Archives. The questionnaire that the women had to respond to yearly, was not only intrusive, it was humiliating. Awaiting the outcome of a decision, which would affect their survival and that of their families, was clearly harrowing for some women. Pleading to the Public Service Commissioner, the women gave intimate details of their circumstances. Amanda X, who gave her husband's occupation as real estate agent and dealer, wrote:

My parents are, and always have been in poor circumstances. I have two younger sisters, and a brother, who are unemployed, one of the former being extremely delicate. Although I do not pay a regular weekly sum, I contribute in great measure to their support. As long as I retain my position in the Department, I am able to give them financial assistance, but this would be impossible if I were dismissed as my husband has no employment and no regular income.³⁹

Many women were supporting husbands incapacitated in the First World War. (We have already met Mrs Gollan whose claim for reinstatement in the Department on account of her husband's inability to work after his return from the war, was dismissed in 1920.)

Parthenia X, a teacher at the Woonona Girls' Public School, had three teenage children. The sole means of support from her husband was a war pension for partial blindness contracted while serving in the AIF. From her teacher's salary she was paying off a home. Mary X's unemployed husband had been in sugar farming before enlisting. His experience as a prisoner of war had caused a 'serious nervous derangement ... which takes the form of great depression and uncontrollable weeping... aggravated by the position of dependence into which circumstances and economic conditions have forced him'. (This is reminiscent of the stories some married women teachers in Victoria told me of their husbands' experiences of the Second World War, which prompted their return to the teaching service.)

Some would feel the hardship that Manning spoke of even more keenly. Isabella Squance was among them. Her story appears in Reg Stitt's account of his teaching career, which began during the Depression of the 1930s. Ironically Reg Stitt was one of the young men that the Department was so keen to attract in the 1930s. His first appointment was to a subsidised school in the hills of Gloucester. His description of the Squances, with whom he boarded, appears in a section of his memoirs entitled 'indescribable poverty'.

The people I was living with – Mr and Mrs Alf Squance and their three children – were lovely folk. She [Isabella Squance (nee Roberts)] had been a teacher at Taree School and he had been a train driver working on the railway. When the Great Depression struck the land all married women teachers were sacked and a great many railway men were retrenched so they both found themselves unemployed with no prospects whatever in view. In desperation they had taken on this farm on a share basis. The owner was to get two thirds of the cream cheque and they were to get the other third. It was a terribly poor farm – steep hills, rocky ground and almost smothered in bracken fern and stinking roger. At the time the factory was paying farms 6 pence a pound of butter. To make matters worse, while I was there the dairy herd was smitten with a mysterious disease which resulted in the cream being downgraded by the factory to second class. They literally had nothing and lived on the edge of subsistence.⁴⁰

Reg Stitt was forced to remain teaching at this school for eighteen months before he acquired a transfer to another subsidised school at Upper Kalang. His description of his difficult and often hazardous journey on horseback to Taree, testament to the isolation of the subsidised school near where the Squances lived. Although I have no evidence that Isabella Squance applied for and was refused this position, it beggars belief that the forlorn Isabella would not have gratefully accepted a position, no matter how marginal, at this school.

Possibly there were two reasons why Isabella was denied the opportunity to teach at the isolated school near her impoverished farm. Firstly, of course, it gave the New South Wales Department of Education a teaching position, no matter how inconsequential, to offer one of the young men it aspired to keep in its ranks. And secondly, it would have cost the Department little to remove Isabella Squance. Isabella was a young woman who did not have the ten years' experience the Act stipulated which would have required a payout of double her superannuation entitlements and three weeks pay for every year of service. (In fact, there is an unsigned memo from within the Department, suggesting that the Department was targetting women with under ten years' service as women with longer service would be costly to dispense with.⁴¹)

What did the operation of the 1932 Act mean for the women we have previously met such as May Thornbury and Vera Norman? In 1932 May Thornbury was fifty-one years old with a career spanning some thirty years in teaching. She was now Mistress at Stanford Merthyr Infant School. Perhaps the cost of paying her out would have been prohibitive. Perhaps her family was dependent on her income. Whatever the reason May's services, in keeping with many others, were retained on a temporary basis. May's record shows that she was retained under clause 2 (3) (ii), the hardship clause – but with considerable loss of salary and status. May would retire at sixty-three years of age in 1944. Her final salary was £378-11-11. Ten years later in 1954 Vera Norman retired at sixty years of age. Vera lost five years of service owing to her resignation on marriage but as a widow she was reinstated in the Department in 1924. Her final salary statement from the Department shows a sum of £937 + £22.⁴² This would amount to nearly three times the salary of other married

women handicapped by the provisions of the 1932 Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act.

But as Piddington had argued at the outset, the implementation of the Act would soon expose its weaknesses.⁴³ Of the 854 married women employed in November 1932, 725 obtained certificates of exemption, the majority under the hardship provisions. Ironically, as 307 of these were already employed as temporary teachers under clause 44, their services could have been discontinued to make way for the college students without the new legislation. But there were further problems in store for the Department. As the Depression receded, and more of the women's husbands became employed, the Public Service Commissioner began to refuse the renewal of the certificates under the hardship clause. When the Department sought to have the Public Service Commissioner transfer the women to the 'public interest' category, this was declared to be illegal. The Department faced massive blow-out in costs as women were retrenched or opted to be retrenched once their circumstances had improved, tempted by the generous compensation to which they were entitled. There was another category of woman who could claim compensation that the Department had never intended. This was the single woman who decided to marry after the Act and chose not to resign. They came under the category of 'retrenched under the Act'. And then there were the women employed under the hardship clause. These women were supporting incapacitated returned soldier husbands and the Department could see that they were permanent fixtures.

These were the reasons which led to the amending of the Act in 1935, not as Minister Drummond claimed, that as times were better 'they should be restored to their former status'.⁴⁴ The amended Act exempted all married women who had been employed at the time of the original Act and who had been teaching continuously on yearly certificates since. They would be on the same footing as their single colleagues, but would not be eligible for compensation should they resign (this ruling does not seem to have altered the reduced salaries of the three women mentioned in this study). The marriage bar remained for all single women; upon marriage they could only be re-employed as temporary under clause 44.

For Mary Byrne, the third woman in the trio of cases cited earlier, there would be one more problem. In 1932 Mary was retained in the service under Section 2 (1) of the MWLTA, which meant that her services were required 'in the public interest'. This presumably meant that as Head of a Girls Department she was difficult to replace. In January 1946 her husband died. Across her record in bold is the comment: 'Agreed in writing to serve wherever required, August '46'. Was this pressure the Department applied once she became a widow? Nevertheless Mary, now reinstated in the Department, would find that her salary of £339 per annum in 1946, when she was retained under the MWLTA, would increase to £550 per annum in 1950. Mary retired at sixty-five years of age in 1956, her last salary statement showed a payout of £1215+ £83.

In 1939 when war broke out the Department of Education in New South Wales was faced with the problem of what to do with women teachers who married men who were engaged on active service. The Department responded very differently to its counterpart in Victoria. As we have seen, Richard Harris, the Minister for Education, was implacably opposed to married women teaching even in a temporary capacity in the Victorian Education Department. In New South Wales Minister James Drummond was particularly sympathetic to the claims of women teachers about to marry men on active service. He made it clear that in his opinion 'the wife should be retained in the Service, if she so desires "in the public interest"'.⁴⁵ Drummond argued that 'this would give encouragement to the men concerned to enlist. It would also make available the services of these married women teachers to carry on during the absence of teachers who had enlisted'.⁴⁶ The Public Service Board agreed to authorise the continued employment of women who married men accepted for active service at home and abroad. The Board made it clear that this decision was to apply only where the husbands of the teachers concerned had: 'been accepted for unrestricted service at home and abroad with one of the fighting units, viz A.I.F., R.A.A.F., or R.A.N.; and actually taken up duty with such unit at the date of marriage'.⁴⁷ Despite pressure from the Teachers' Federation, the government nevertheless refused to repeal the Act. By now other married women had volunteered their services along with retired teachers and the Department could see the advantages of a temporary source of cheap teaching labour.

In the lead up to the New South Wales election in May 1947, the Temporary Teachers' Association, led by Evelyn Thorpe, orchestrated a massive repeal campaign. Although Evelyn Thorpe was a widow with three children to support, she was not entitled to the compassionate treatment accorded other teaching widows in the New South Wales Department of Education. Evelyn was an outsider, whose record of 'casual' employment is presumably due to the fact that she trained in England.⁴⁸ Indeed the Department correspondence files of New South Wales and Victoria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century bear testimony to the concern of bureaucrats with the marital status of women teachers. As early as 1895 the Department had a stated policy of treating married women who were not trained within New South Wales as temporary teachers. (This no doubt explains the absence from its career records of married women teachers expelled from service in Victoria.) On 16 September 1947, Cabinet finally agreed to the repeal of the Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act. The Repeal Act was passed without controversy on 19 December 1947. Of the 1,200 married women in the service, just over half opted to become permanent; perhaps many were deterred by the regulation that they be prepared to 'serve wherever required by the Department'.

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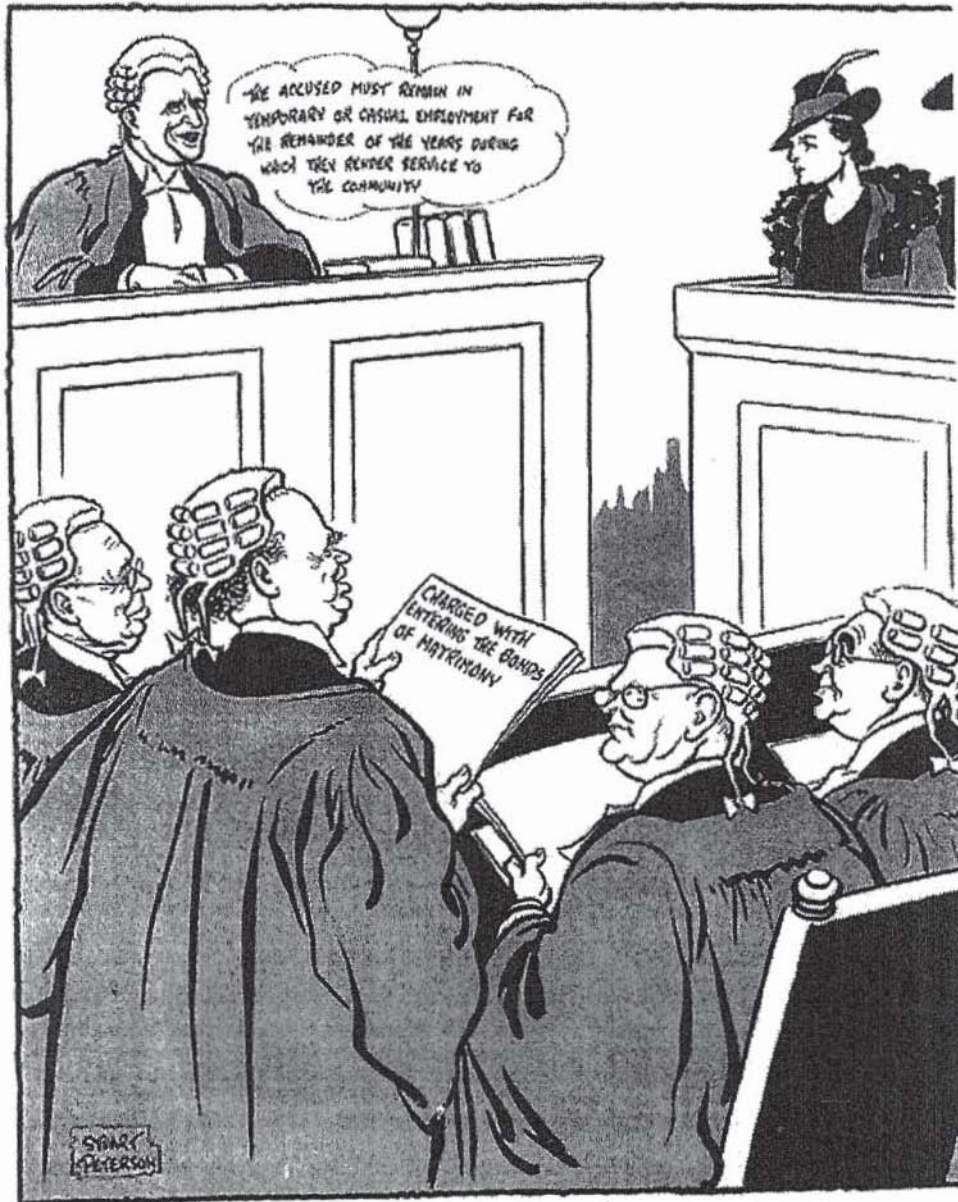
My understandings that married women teachers in New South Wales had a better deal than their colleagues received in Victoria were clearly over optimistic. Powerful support may have served them well in the late nineteenth-century, but before long informal marriage bars made their presence felt. At best perhaps some married women teachers prospered, but even well-known and respected Mistresses of Infant Schools and Heads of Separate Departments in Girls' Schools fell foul of the 1932 Act with consequent loss of salary and status. Indeed widows were the only needy women to benefit under the strict interpretation of the Act that the Department maintained.

It can be argued, however, that emphasis on the rights of married women to work, by Piddington, Jessie Street and the UAW and the New South Wales Teachers' Federation resulted in financially better arrangements for married women. For example, the payouts to women retrenched during the Depression were generous, and

their superannuation rights would be the envy of married women teachers in Victoria. But generalisations about this must be made with caution. Older women with lower salaries on account of the operation of the Act would have limited benefits on which to draw. This is presumably why women such as May Thornbury, Vera Norman and Mary Byrne retired at ages sixty-three, sixty and sixty-five respectively. Only Vera, who had been reinstated in the Department as a widow in 1923, could afford to retire in relative comfort. Both May and Maria worked for as long as possible. Newly married women would reap the benefits of being able to contribute to a standard superannuation scheme. And even here the situation was not as it appears. Eligibility for superannuation was subject to: 'the applicant passing a rigid medical examination'. Women over forty were clearly encouraged to seek exemption from contributing to the Fund.⁴⁹

This chapter has reviewed married women teachers' experiences of the marriage bars, both informal and formal, in New South Wales. I had anticipated that a clear picture would emerge of how much better off married women teachers were in comparison to their Victorian sisters. But this has not been the case. Married women teachers were discriminated against and some suffered considerable hardship. This chapter, however, has demonstrated one important methodological point, that women's experiences of marriage bars are specific to time and place; comparisons may be very misleading if they are not grounded in the material circumstances of individual women's lives.

THE SENTENCE



Counsel for the defence gives notice of appeal to the High Court of Public Opinion.

Public support for the reinstatement of married women teachers in the New South Wales Department of Education at the outset of the Second World War. *Education Journal*, 1939

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- ¹ Public Service Act 1895, No. 25, Section 36.
- ² D. Deacon, *The State, the New Middle Class and Women Workers, 1830-1930*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1989, ch.5.
- ³ *NSWPD*, 1895, pp. 1821-27.
- ⁴ D. Deacon, ch.5.
- ⁵ *NSW PD*, Council, 17 October 1895, p.1821.
- ⁶ *NSW PD*, Council, 29 September 1895, pp. 638-65.
- ⁷ *NSW PD*, Council, 14 October 1895, p.1823.
- ⁸ *NSW PD*, Council, 22 October 1932, p.1877.
- ⁹ M. Theobald, *Knowing Women: origins of women's education in nineteenth-century Australia*. Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1996, pp.113-8.
- ¹⁰ Chief Inspector's Files, 794, 23 February 1895, 20/12558, State Archive Office NSW (Kingswood).
- ¹¹ *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, NSW*, vol.1, 1899, p.304.
- ¹² *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, NSW*, vol.1, 1902, p.427.
- ¹³ *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly NSW*, vol. 1, 1902, p.171, p. 427.
- ¹⁴ SA NSW, Wandock School file ref: 5/18014.
- ¹⁵ Teacher career records, NSW Department of School Education, May Fitzpatrick, (nee Thornbury), Roll 7, folio 223; Vera Norman, (nee Ponton), serial no. 146058; Mary Byrne, (nee O'Brien), serial no. 146123.
- ¹⁶ Teacher career records, NSW Department of School Education, no.146123.
- ¹⁷ Teacher career records, NSW Department of School Education, May Thornbury, Roll 7, Folio 223.
- ¹⁸ SA NSW, Standford Merthyr School File, ref. 61955, 9 July 1926.
- ¹⁹ Teacher career records, NSW Department of Education, Folio 6123.
- ²⁰ SA NSW, NSW Education Department Correspondence, Chief Inspector Dawson to Flora Casey, 9 January 1918. 5/15703A, Dorrigo Public School File 1912-1937, Bundle A.
- ²¹ Teacher career records, NSW Department of Education, Vera Norman.
- ²² SA NSW Dumbleton School File, Ref:79259, 2 September 1918.
- ²³ SA NSW Dumbleton School file, Ref. 89386, 30 October 1920.
- ²⁴ SA NSW Hannan Vale School file, Inspection ~ 3 April 1928.
- ²⁵ Married Women's Teachers' Statuary Declaration File, SAO, NSW.
- ²⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*, 16 January 1932, letter from a parent of an ex student.
- ²⁷ *NSWPD*, Assembly, 14 September 1932, p.225.
- ²⁸ *SMH*, 27 August 1932.
- ²⁹ *SMH*, 23 December 1930.
- ³⁰ See M. Theobald and D. Dwyer, 'An Episode in Feminist Politics: The Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act, 1932 -47, in *Labour History*, no. 76, May 1999, for further discussion on this issue.

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- ³¹ Copy appended to letter from Street, 15 November 1934, Married Women Teacher's (Dismissal) Act file 1937-48, hereafter MWT(Dismissal) Act File, 20/13375, Department of Education Subject Files, SA (NSW) Kingswood.
- ³² See Theobald and Dwyer, 'An Episode in Feminist Politics' for further discussion on this issue.
- ³³ Copy of press release in United Association of Women papers, Mitchell Library, NSW.
- ³⁴ J. Mackinolty, 'To stay or to go: sacking married women teachers' in J. Mackinolty and H. Radi (eds), *In Pursuit of Justice: Australian women and the law 1788-1979*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1979, p. 142.
- ³⁵ *NSW PD*, Council, 29 September 1932, pp. 638-65; a copy of *The Martyrdom of Women* is in the State Library of Victoria.
- ³⁶ J. Mackinolty, 'To stay or to go', p. 142; *NSW PD*, Council, 2nd session 1932, vol. 134, pp.742-760.
- ³⁷ Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act, 1932, no. 28, George V.
- ³⁸ *NSW PD*, vol. 134, p.745.
- ³⁹ From MWT Statutory Declaration File, SA NSW.
- ⁴⁰ M.McPherson, *It happened at School*. Kangaroo Press, Roseville, pp.144-6.
- ⁴¹ Unsigned but dated 26 August 1932, MWT Statutory. Declaration. File, SA, NSW.
- ⁴² Teacher career records, NSW Department of School Education, May Fitzpatrick, (nee Thornbury), Roll 7, folio 223, Vera Norman, (nee Ponton), serial no. 146058, Mary Byrne, (nee O'Brien), serial no. 146123.
- ⁴² Teacher career record, Vera Norman.
- ⁴³ See A.B. Piddington, 'The Martyrdom of women', Speech at the bar of the Legislative Council of New South Wales, 20 September, 1932..
- ⁴⁴ M. Theobald and D. Dwyer, 'An episode in feminist politics'.
- ⁴⁵ MWT (Dismissal) Act file, internal memo, 8 December 1939, SA NSW.
- ⁴⁶ MWT (Dismissal) Act file, 14 June 1940, forwarded for publication to the News Editor of The *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sun*, *Century*, *Truth* and *Daily News*, SA NSW.
- ⁴⁷ MWT(Dismissal) Act file, Retention of services of women teachers who marry men engaged on active service, 40/m52x/13812.
- ⁴⁸ Teacher career record, Evelyn Thorpe, NSW Department of Education.
- ⁴⁹ *Education Gazette*, NSW, 1 November 1948, p.369.

MAKING SENSE OF THE MARRIAGE BAR IN MARRIED TEACHERS' LIVES: REFLECTIONS ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF ORAL HISTORY

It was with a sense of relief and anticipation that I reached the point in my research when my project was no longer about the pursuit of a barely visible quarry, the exploited and forgotten married woman temporary teacher, whose life I had prised from the archives. The outbreak of the Second World War heralded the return of the married woman teacher to the Victorian Education Department in droves. I could now look forward to writing about events that had happened in living memory. Mentioning the term 'marriage bar', whether at a formal conference or in general conversation often provoked an immediate response. There are many, it seems, who have a mother, an aunt or a friend whose life was affected by the marriage bar in teaching – enough to elicit offers of assistance with names of women I was assured would be prepared to speak to me. Clearly the term 'marriage bar' taps into the collective consciousness of generations of women. I looked forward to learning about what the marriage bar meant in women teachers' lives. And as chapter seven indicates, I was fortunate to meet leading women in the TTC who told me the stories of lobbying and union activity that led to its removal.

I considered myself reasonably well prepared for such encounters. As a feminist historian, I am familiar with the path-breaking research of the Personal Narratives Group. Their work on the problematics of 'whose voice' is heard in the interview and in the production of the narrative and its translation into text, strengthened my resolve to validate the experiences of my interviewees.¹ More recent work, *Women's Words, the Feminist Practice of Oral History*, further challenging the notion of oral history as a transparent representation of the past, spurred me on.² I had no inkling at this stage of how difficult it would prove translating such ideals into practice. I did not imagine then the stories some women would tell me in the strictest of confidence. They have important stories to tell, but I wrestled with ways of doing this while maintaining their anonymity. All of the women made me very welcome but, with a few notable exceptions, they were guarded, for a variety of reasons, about what they were going to allow into the public domain. My scruples about using women's words, already on high alert, were further tested by the

rigorous requirements of The University of Melbourne ethics committee which compounded my problems.³

The following account traces my painful, but always challenging, journey through the processes of talking with thirty-five women.⁴ After telephone conversations with six women, during which they told me their stories, I was disappointed when they withdrew from the project. Other women had stories which demanded a level of confidentiality making it unwise to include their names in the research. All told nineteen women agreed to some involvement in the study, including forwarding stories they had written and had published. Thirteen women gave me lengthy interviews. Three of whom gave me several interviews.

I began interviewing shortly after reading Penny Summerfield's recent work, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*. This British-based study draws on women's wartime experiences of work during and after the Second World War, paralleling my interest in women of similar age whose lives/careers were changed by the advent of war. Summerfield makes it very clear that she considers oral history a demanding methodology and she draws particular attention to the significant role the interviewer plays in the construction of oral history narratives and how this implicates his/her subjectivity.⁵ I was soon to learn the significance of this.

For in the first flush of enthusiasm, I telephoned the women recommended to me and was warmly received. They seemed to be delighted to be reminded of past teaching careers and reminisced at length over the phone. Clearly teaching had been very important in their lives. Following the instructions of the young woman representing the university ethics committee, I foreshadowed in our discussion the letter I would send them. It was the standard letter on University of Melbourne letterhead, as required by the ethics committee, and it contained a carefully worded statement giving the women interviewees a clear idea of the project and the purpose of my research. It was also recommended that this letter be accompanied by a questionnaire asking both general and specific questions of the impact of the marriage bar on their lives and careers. The ethics committee specified this because of the age of my interviewees and the personal nature of my inquiries.

Much to my disappointment and growing concern, my follow up phone calls intending to make appointments with these women met with polite refusals. A few made the comment that they did not have anything to say to me. Summerfield had encountered this response in her research, describing it in gendered terms as a response from women who typically undervalue their contributions and feel they have nothing of importance to offer.⁶ And if this was the case, no doubt the formality of my proposal compounded the problem. But I sensed that there was more to their refusals than this. And at a much later point in my work, discussions with women would confirm my suspicions. Did these women feel they were at odds with my views – or more importantly – was I at odds with them? Was I, like Petra Munro in her work on American women teachers' life history narratives, looking for resistance in women where it did not exist?⁷ Did they think they would meet a rabid feminist academic who would expect them to rail against the Victorian Education Department at the loss of their careers and salaries on account of the marriage bar? And were they right? Had I really taken into account that they belonged to generations of women who found marriage and child rearing incompatible with a career, and that if they had to choose between the two, family would win. Had I forgotten that I had shared their misgivings? As a woman who married, had a child and became what was termed a 'deserted wife' in the early 1970s, I had agonised about having to leave my baby. As there were no crèches available in the 1970s in Melbourne, my long-suffering mother took over my baby's care in order for me to return to teaching and earn a living. I wondered if these women would have made a different decision about participating in the project had I been able to meet them?

Finally, through a friend, I was introduced to a leading woman in left wing politics, to whom I am immensely grateful, not only for her personal account which she eventually gave me, but also for providing me with introductions to and addresses of a number of women, including leading figures active in the union campaign resulting in the removal of the marriage bar. It would be these women's narratives that would form the substance of my research. The woman who gave me my first breakthrough was the late Ruth Crow, well known community activist, Communist and wife of Maurie Crow, also a well known Communist. Ruth told me that she was happy for me to make her contribution public.

Not that my initial interview with Ruth was an immediate success.⁸ I met her in the special collection room of the library of the Victoria University of Technology, as it was then known, surrounded by the extensive collection she and her late husband Maurie had donated. As I turned on the tape recorder with her permission, she talked at length about her work as a temporary teacher of domestic science in a North Melbourne High School in the 1950s; her life with her husband and children; and her commitment to community planning and health issues. Ruth was, after all, a practised public speaker. After a few minutes of this, in despair, I realised that she was not going to refer to the subject that I had come to discuss with her – her experiences of the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department. But after I switched off the tape she suddenly chuckled and said:

You know, in those days a lot of women concealed their marriages and remained as teachers in the Department. You would be surprised how many women turned up with wedding rings on in staffrooms round Victoria in the week after the passing of the Act [the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act].⁹

She then told me with great amusement the story of an annual holiday (the location deliberately withheld) that she and her husband regularly spent with two of their friends. This couple had gone to such trouble to conceal their relationship that the Crows were sure they were living in a de facto relationship. Not, as Ruth hastened to tell me, that this was of any concern, but the point of the humour was that they were actually married but concealing it from the Department as the wife wanted to continue to teach. I was to receive a lengthy follow-up letter, in which Ruth gave her (very valuable) impressions of marriage, motherhood and teaching over a number of generations in the Department and supplied me with information that she authorised me to use. By then I was aware of the political canniness of a woman whose Communist affiliations had cost her dearly. In 1948 she had been driven from her vocation as secretary of the Day Nursery Development Association because the Minister for Health, Albert Dunstan, refused to meet the Association while she served on it.¹⁰ She and her family and friends experienced first hand the repression and discrimination handed out to fifth columnists, as Communists were

perceived by many in Australia in the Cold War period. Ruth, like many who suffered in this way, never forgot. Hence her guarded response to my inquiries and her automatic response in concealing the names of friends who had deceived the Department.

I was left in no doubt she accepted me as a responsible interviewer who could be trusted with her friends and associates. In this way I was introduced to a particular group of women. Varying in age from early seventies to early nineties, they belong to a generation of intensely private women. Educated, astute, most with left wing backgrounds and all still actively engaged in community activities, they felt an important community responsibility to tell their stories, but equally important was to be scrupulously moral in the telling. In particular they did not wish to betray confidences, a legacy of dangerous political times spent in left wing politics. 'Telling tales' as one woman put it, was not the done thing in their generation as she made an amused reference to contemporary 'confessional' style. They are highly informed women, well aware of the nature of my project and its implications for them. They understood that I had come to record their stories and, with their permission, to identify them in my research.

This is in contrast to the standard research response in oral history, to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees. As Summerfield points out this protects them from the use you as an interviewer might make of their narratives. But for the moment I was not unduly troubled; it seemed to me that these women knew exactly what they wanted to tell me. And as many are well known in the community, what they have to say will immediately engage the listener and offer a context for the interview. Indeed I wondered how successful I might be trying to maintain their anonymity when the details I reveal would make them identifiable amongst themselves and probably in the community at large.

I am reminded here of Janet McCalman's comment on her concealing of the identities of the women she identified for her book, *Journeying: the biography of a middle-class generation 1920-1990*.¹¹ It took, she said, a half-day for the 'Genezzano girls to break the code'. And as I pursued this line of thinking, I could see significant differences in what I was asking these women in comparison to, for

example, the work of Penny Summerfield and Janet McCalman. I was not asking my interviewees for their recollections of work or workplaces during the war, or interviewing them about their experiences of being at a certain school or their membership of a particular group. Indeed I was asking more personal questions about their teaching lives than Kate Rousmaniere in her work on women who taught in New York City schools in the 1920s. Rousmaniere asked her subjects to draw on 'the recurring themes and the meaning that teaching held for them, for the average problems and joys, and the exceptional moments of the job'.¹² These are accounts that feed into and can be measured against a recognised body of research. I am asking a far more personal question – what did the marriage bar mean in their lives? They hold crucial accounts of what it 'really meant' in their relationship with the Victorian Education Department, their marriages and their union activities. I would like to think that they could in feminist parlance 'own their own accounts'.

And this was the right decision to make in interviewing Marjorie Oke at the Rushall Court Old Colonists' Home. Although a car accident reduced her mobility some years ago, and aged in her nineties, she has not let a wheelchair impede her activities. A practiced interviewee, she shaped her information according to my interests, commenting freely on her early years in the Women's Branch of the VTU and instructing me to turn off the tape recorder at pertinent points. Alvie Booth, a life long peace activist, reluctantly allowed me to record her participation in a recent demonstration. 'Grandmother arrested in protest over Jabiluka mining', was the headline in an edition of the *Herald/Sun*, shortly after our interview. Ninety-two year old Alvie described this as putting her views into practice. During the interview in her scrupulously tidy home, she plied me with tea and biscuits and took firm control of the interview, positioning me accordingly. I was, as Kathryn Anderson has said, using interview strategies that were bound by the conventions of social discourse, the unwritten rules of conversation about appropriate questions and topics, especially the ones that say 'don't pry'.¹³

Alvie had very carefully prepared for the interview, which was not taped. It proved a lengthy, detailed account of her teaching career, her union activities on behalf of equal pay up until her marriage and her brief, unsuccessful attempt at temporary teaching, abandoned because of the illness of her child. At one point in Alvie's

career in 1939, there is a comment on her record that she is on leave from the Department on account of illness. The period is quite extensive, amounting to about eleven months. It is a comment that I have seen occasionally on women teachers' career records. When it occurs, as it does with Alvie's record in 1939, I had theorised (romanticised?) that it may be related to a secret marriage and perhaps a pregnancy linked to a young man who had gone off to war and not returned. Not daring to suggest this at the interview, I simply put a question mark at the appropriate point of the transcript. The transcript was returned, meticulously corrected with a comment: 'I left this period blank for a reason; it was not intended to invite your speculation'.

Alvie's comment brings to mind Munro's interview with 'Cleo'. Cleo began her career as a social studies teacher in a secondary school in the Pacific North West of America. In the 1950s when asked about her family Cleo replied: 'You don't want to know about that, it doesn't have anything to do with my work'. Munro sees this as Cleo's careful separation of the public and the private, a necessity if women's work was to be taken seriously.¹⁴ This explanation resonates with my problems in teaching with a new baby in the seventies. But I not sure that this explanation is applicable to Alvie's comment. My speculations about her situation were wide of the mark. In her matter-of-fact manner, she later told me she had developed a spot on her lung and needed time off from teaching to recover. Teaching was a health hazard. The problems associated with the dust in unlined schoolrooms with bare floorboards or no floorboards regularly surfaced in Department correspondence, see for example, Alice Jardine's complaint in chapter four. There was also the problem of the extreme climates teachers endured. Alvie could name a number of her colleagues who died of tuberculosis in the teaching service. I learnt a lot from my interview from Alvie. Her story, an account of a married woman who found a life of community service in the Peace Movement, apart from teaching, is part of chapter nine.

There were several other interviews with women Ruth Crow recommended, whose insights into life in the Department I draw on in following chapters. And at last, other women were offering to be interviewed. Britta Evans, at approximately ninety years of age, gave a wonderfully subversive account of her incarceration in primary

teaching and her delight to escape into marriage; to the disappointment of her daughter, who told me of her mother's professional commitment to teaching. Britta died shortly after the interview and parts of the tape were played at her memorial service. Pat Campitelli gave an equally instructive account of a highly productive life in primary teaching, successfully combining a family with periods of temporary teaching. I was beginning to enjoy interviewing.

But my pleasure was short-lived. Another two women demanded anonymity. My interviews with them were punctuated with requests to turn off the tape. The interviewing process revealed enormous trauma, as both these women indicated that they had not spoken about their experiences to anyone including their families. Both married men who served in the Second World War and returned home, suffering what we would now call post traumatic stress syndrome. In one case the husband was an airforce pilot who was shot down in France, while serving in the Royal Air Force. Hidden by the French Underground, he was eventually returned to England. He, like many of his generation, returned home so disturbed that ordinary living was beyond his capacity. And the young wife waiting at the dock with their new baby and his family had no idea of what lay in store, let alone how to deal with it. She still recalls the embarrassment and pain she felt when he was found to be playing cards below decks, not on deck scanning the crowd for his family. Not surprisingly he was unable to finish what had been a successful university career, and after one particular attack on her which caused her to miscarry, she took her young children and left him. My other interviewee spoke of herself and her children finding her husband's body after he had committed suicide. As we now know these were not isolated incidents. The impact of wars has been felt on families over many generations.

Marjorie Theobald has shown in her archival work on women teachers in New South Wales that men returning from the First World War suffered similarly. Their problems coming to light in correspondence to the New South Wales Department of Education, as their teacher wives appealed under the 1932 Act for continuing employment to support their families. But such things were never discussed. Only now are some men beginning to tell these stories; women, it seems, are obliged to keep their suffering to themselves. Although both women went on to have very

successful careers in the Victorian Education Department, I cannot include their names or transcripts in any form in case it might reveal their identities. It is not mere curiosity or sympathy which draws me to this issue. There are important reasons for putting this material on record – the sad lives of these men and their distraught families have important implications for married women’s teaching labour. A number of married women returned to teaching in the Victorian Education Department in order to support their families. The growth in the number of temporary teachers would eventually pressure the Department to remove the marriage bar.

It was with a certain amount of relief that I came to interviewing two of the leading figures active in the formation of the Temporary Teachers’ Club (TTC) and the driving force behind its success. Interviewing is probably not the correct term to apply to the telephone conversations that I had with Viv Reilly, its first president. Viv, now in her nineties, was most forthcoming in two brief conversations, but her recent illness made me hesitant to press the issue. Nan Gallagher, previously Nan Melbourne, was the original secretary of the TTC, one of those rare women who has always kept a diary. In her concern to get the story of the activities of the union women and the Department ‘right’ she cross checked her diaries against the detailed notes I made from the union minutes, and with the exception of a small amount of personal material, made them available to me. My first meeting with Nan was exciting. I had become accustomed by now to highly energetic, youthful women whose lives were still devoted to community causes, many still teaching in a voluntary capacity. And Nan was no exception. Our discussion was most unusual, taking the form of what Kathryn Anderson and Dana Clark have termed meta statements, ‘an awareness of discrepancy within the self – or between what is expected and what is said’.¹⁵

We cross-compared material we each had on the TTC and she could fill in the gaps in my knowledge in many instances. I left encouraged and heartened by her interest. But my return visit with the transcripts was not as successful. Reviewing her transcripts, she was (as we all tend to be) unhappy at the way the interview rambles. But there was more than this; she had shifted her perspective. Perhaps reading the minutes of the TTC, which I left at her request, led to her change of heart. She was

now most concerned to deny her pivotal role in the organization and operation of the Club, insisting that it was a team effort. And perhaps it was. Her diary, the minutes of the TTC and the minutes of the VTU meetings would seem to support my proposition, but more important than this was that I had now reached an impasse. Narrative had turned into text. Whose story was to be told? And who was to do the telling? In fact there were difficulties of another kind. Knowing that I am writing the first researched account of the TTC, I am very aware of how much the 'truth' of the telling means to the women involved. Nan Gallagher, it was interesting to note, was far less concerned with the details of her profile which are in chapter nine of the thesis.

And that was to give me a clue as to what might have been happening in my interviews. It was confirmed in my final interview. I was looking forward to talking with Audrey Dodson whom I had previously met and who had proved to be relaxed and gregarious. Audrey had spent a lifetime teaching in country schools both before and after the lifting of the marriage bar, while raising five children. Aside from Audrey's varied teaching career, I was particularly interested in the way that she had fallen foul of the Department's ruling on women resigning on pregnancy. With assurances from the Union and encouragement from the principal of the school at which she was teaching, Audrey was misled into believing that she could marry, return to teaching and leave when pregnant without penalty. But this was not the case. Despite the peaceful surroundings of her farm, some sixty kilometers from Melbourne, it was clear that the formal interview with a tape recorder and the requisite ethics forms to be signed, posed some strain on Audrey. Gone was the outgoing, somewhat cynical conversationalist. In its place was the highly successful infant mistress and librarian employed by the Department over many years. Audrey had assumed her professional persona, a dutiful daughter of the Department, uncritical, uncomplaining and unassuming. Audrey was keen to be accurate in everything she said and she was careful to protect peoples' reputations. And I, to my shame, became nervous and responded in my teaching persona, equally careful not to ask intrusive questions. It was with difficulty that I focussed on the things we had agreed to discuss. As it turned out, I was not operating the tape recorder correctly and lost much of her information. Subsequent interviews were more

profitable, revealing a highly organised and astute woman who took her career very seriously.

Now as I grapple with the problems of writing these women's stories, I am very aware of how difficult it is to translate feminist theories of oral history into practice. And these problems are compounded by well-intentioned but overly bureaucratic ethical practices which are particularly difficult for historians to negotiate. I do indeed have a much clearer idea of what Summerfield meant by the significant role the interviewer plays in the construction of oral history narratives and how this has implicated my subjectivity. As Madeleine Grunet has argued, the 'ways in which we tell stories are negotiations in 'power relations'.¹⁶ It is also true that I have been temporarily immobilised by an awareness of serious problems in the oral history process.¹⁷ It is important to recognise that some problems are irresolvable. The procedures of The University of Melbourne ethics committee are designed to protect the women - and the university- from the intrusions of an unethical researcher. But how that researcher chooses to use the material is her ethical responsibility. In the previous chapter on the union, I have identified the women concerned and their contributions to their satisfaction. In this chapter I have, of necessity, maintained the anonymity of others. The detailed profiles of Nan, Alvie and Audrey were developed in collaboration with them. But there still remains some sleight of hand in my attempts to be open and accountable in using other people's stories. What, I wonder, will they make of my analysis of the interview process? This is something they did not give me permission to write.¹⁸

¹ Personal Narratives Group (eds), *Interpreting Women's Lives: feminist theory and personal narratives*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989, pp. 201-203.

² S. Gluck and D. Patai, (eds), *Women's Words: the feminist practice of oral history*, Routledge, New York, 1991.

³ It has not escaped me that someone as preoccupied with protecting the rights of individuals as I purport to be should find so many problems with procedures designed to do this. I would argue that the ethics requirements and procedures are designed to spell out and quantify research goals appropriate for social science/science projects. In historical research, they may actually impede research.

⁴ I drew these women from a number of sources: a handful on the recommendation of mutual friends, a few more in response to a newspaper advertisement placed in the *Age* newspaper and the majority on the recommendation of Ruth Crow.

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- ⁵ P. Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1998, preface and acknowledgements.
- ⁶ P. Summerfield, p.23.
- ⁷ P. Munro, *Subject to Fiction: women teachers' life history narratives and the cultural politics of resistance*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1998, pp.101-110.
- ⁸ All interviews were conducted strictly in accordance with the protocols of the University of Melbourne Ethics Committee
- ⁹ Interview with Ruth Crow.
- ¹⁰ S. Fabian and M. Loh, *Left-wing Ladies: the Union of Australian Women in Victoria, 1950-1998*, Hyland House, Melbourne, Victoria, 2000, p.8.
- ¹¹ J. McCalman, *Journeyings: the biography of a middle class generation, 1920-90*, MUP, Melbourne, 1993.
- ¹² K. Rousmaniere, *City Teachers: teaching and school reform in historical perspective*, Teachers' College Press, New York, 1997, p.8.
- ¹³ Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack, 'Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses', in Gluck and Patai, p.13.
- ¹⁴ P. Munro, *Subject to Fiction*, p.122.
- ¹⁵ Kathryn Anderson and Dana Jack, 'Learning to Listen', in Gluck and Patai, p.22.
- ¹⁶ M. Grumet, 'The politics of personal knowledge', in C. Withereil and N. Noddings (eds), *Stories lives tell: narrative and dialogue in education*, Teachers' College Press Columbia University, New York, 1991, p. 68.
- ¹⁷ 'Afterword', in Gluck and Patai, p.222.
- ¹⁸ All tapes and transcripts remain in the possession of the author.

**PARTIAL PROFILES: MARRIED WOMEN TEACHERS, ALFRIEDA
(ALVIE) BOOTH, NANCY (NAN) GALLAGHER AND AUDREY DODSON,
SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES**

The publication in 1991 of an edited collection of essays by feminist historians from across the western world, *Women Who Taught: perspectives on the history of women and teaching*, brought together an important collection of seminal essays on women in education at all levels.¹ In essence the collection was a study of the teaching profession as a hierarchical system of gendered labour and women's subordination in the workplace. Those who held power were men; those who were 'inspected and reported on' were women. The collection foreshadowed further research on inequality in the teaching profession, drawing attention to the importance of exploring the history of women teachers from the point of view of those who taught and grounding such research in the material conditions of teachers' lives. It is in this spirit that I have included the following personal accounts of women who experienced the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department in different times and in different ways. I am particularly keen that they are involved in the telling, not only because this reflects 'good' research practice, but also because their accounts will provide a counterbalance to my interpretations.

To date my research has traced the story of the married woman teacher from a period of power and prestige in the nineteenth-century, through exploitation and misery as temporary teachers supporting families, to successful reinstatement in the Department. At several pertinent points in my research I have constructed portraits/profiles of the women concerned. Anne Drake was among a number of women who were highly successful in combining motherhood and head teaching positions in the competitive teaching world of late nineteenth-century Victoria. And women such as fifty-year-old Jane Jagoe appear to have taken advantage of the Department's attempts to get rid of its married women teachers. In 1889 she took up their offer of early retirement, offered on the basis of her age and thirty years service. Jane retained her considerable pension, marrying a widow and grazier from Dimboola. After the implementation of the marriage bar, many widows and deserted wives, such as Alice Jardine and Lottie Bartlett, were completely at the mercy of the Department as temporary teachers. The unfortunate Martha Grace Neven was

unlucky in many respects in her life and in her teaching career. Mary Mattingley, among other married women teachers, was forced out of teaching and constantly thwarted in her attempts to claim a pension from the Department which was her rightful entitlement. But how accurate are my representations of their lives? Have I understood them primarily in the light of the themes I have been pursuing? If these women were alive today would they recognise themselves in my stories?

The title of this chapter reflects my attempts to come to grips with these problems, but with certain reservations. The term 'partial profiles' suggests that we are hearing only a part of these women's lives, and in the strictest use of the word partial, the stories are biased. After all, not only did my questions on the marriage bar shape the interview, the women themselves have been selective in the nature of their replies! I am also aware that requiring them to read this introduction and comment on (and adjust) the appended interviews is yet another call on already busy lives. Of a range of intriguing interviews, I have chosen three, which illustrate something of the subtlety of the choices women made in their lives and professional careers, as they took up other commitments, maneuvered around the marriage bar, or indeed, confronted it.

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Alfrieda (Alvie) Booth (nee Stewart) taught for thirty-four years in the Victorian Education Department, playing an active role in the VTU. Yet it is as a communist and community activist with a long-term commitment to peace and disarmament that she will be remembered. Her story is testimony to the validity of Marilyn Lake's work on the interests and involvement of women between the wars. Alvie's story offers an important correction to our misunderstandings of women's history as two peaks of activity: the suffrage movement, culminating in the vote for women, followed by a lull in activity until the women's liberation movement of the sixties and seventies.²

Nancy (Nan) Gallagher was secretary of the Temporary Teachers' Club, a subsection of the VTU, which was instrumental in the removal of the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department in the period after the Second World War. The

War left many returned servicemen physically and psychologically damaged and unable to cope with the demands of everyday life. But what has yet to be recognized is the significance of the disabled breadwinner for married women's paid labour. Indeed it is clear from the interviews I had with married women teaching in this period that a number of married women temporary teachers were supporting families because their husbands were unable to work. (I have chosen not to include the accounts of several women, whose lives spent with mentally and physically ill husbands deserves to be told but whose anonymity I want to maintain.) As a member of the temporary teaching staff at Mordialloc High School, Nan remembers a number of married women temporary teachers with children to support who shared her anger and frustration at their exploitation by a Department increasingly dependent on their services. In her life and career, Nan pioneered the reshaping of the teaching service in the Victorian Education Department in the 1950s to accommodate motherhood and a career. But it came at a cost which women still experience. As Nan pointed out 'It was too hard to be full time, have a family, run a house and be in the forefront of academic development'.³ Nan's career is also significant in that she is representative of women teachers' professional commitment to the teaching of specific disciplines, in Nan's case, the teaching of geography. Nan is author of a number of highly regarded school texts on geography. An avid traveller, as I write, she and her husband are in London visiting their son and his family. Interviews with Nan were punctuated by her overseas and interstate excursions.

The final interview is with Audrey Dodson. Indeed Audrey's story is a fitting conclusion to a thesis on the impact of the marriage bar on women teachers' lives. In responding to an advertisement I placed in a Melbourne newspaper, she described how in early 1957 she had been wrongly advised regarding the operation of the Married Women Teachers' Act, losing her entitlement in lieu of long service leave in the process. But Audrey's story was far more than this unfortunate episode. Until she retired at sixty-two years of age, Audrey successfully combined family responsibilities, teaching full time and studying at a college and then at university some distance from the farm on which she lived. The words of the young woman typing our interview reflect the admiration and awe of another generation: 'I thought

perhaps I could manage to juggle all that with four children, but when Audrey casually mentioned that she was pregnant for the fifth time, I thought not’.

Reading the biographical accounts these women wrote made several points clear. In particular, I became aware of my one-dimensional focus on teaching and the marriage bar in the richness of their lives. And in recounting, contextualising and commenting on their experiences, my presence is an unavoidable intrusion.

Alfrieda (Alvie) Booth (nee Stewart)

Alfrieda Booth was born in Malvern on 22 November 1907, the eldest of four children of Harriet Julia (nee Hamel) and Alfred Henry Alexander Stewart. Alvie’s father was a clerk in the Victorian Public Service and her mother had been a seamstress and later a saleswoman for Kitchens’ Velvet Soap. As Alvie says simply:

My mother worked full time at home. Much overtime, actually. She worked constantly, made most of our clothes until we girls left home and most of our brother’s until he needed long’uns. She also gardened, made jams, sauces, crystallised fruit, chutney, all our cakes and puddings, and scarcely ever had a meal cooked by anyone but herself.⁴

Alvie’s mother’s story is a poignant reminder of an era when married women were not expected to work in paid employment, their time consumed in looking after families in ways contemporary women find hard to imagine. And nor was Alvie’s father’s life easy, leaving school at the age of twelve when his father died, and earning a living sweeping the carpet in the Exhibition Building. He once told Alvie he never smelt dust without thinking of it. But he continued his education entering various public service exams, first for a job in the Post Office, and later for a position as a clerk. When Alvie was three, Alfred Stewart was appointed as Clerk of Courts at Bright, and after five years was promoted to Colac where he remained until the age of seventy, when he retired to the seaside town of Torquay. He was a man who always read widely and took a great interest in the law and community affairs. Clearly he had a formative influence on Alvie who shows a rare display of pride in

describing him as a wonderful father and a highly respected citizen who became a local councillor and was mayor of Colac from 1943-45.

Alvie was six when the First World War began. She recalls that everything had seemed different that day with a lot of talk of war and great deal of tension. School had begun 'that cold August morning with a special ceremony to farewell one of the teachers'. That evening, when Alvie questioned her father about what a war was, she was horrified when he told her that it was about men killing each other. Her childlike reply that he should stop it provoked a response that would have lasting implications for Alvie. Her father told her 'It would take many, many people to stop a war. When you grow up perhaps you'll be able to help'. Indeed the War left an indelible impression on her. Alvie had 'four years of war to think about, with many wartime nightmares. A cousin returned with only one leg, and another with shell shock'. And when Alfred Stewart was unable to enlist because of a faulty heart, he worked constantly to help the war effort, as secretary of the Bright Patriotic Committee, through raising donations, preparing rabbit skins and encouraging Alvie to knit socks for the soldiers. No doubt this was excellent training for Alvie's future community service.

In this close-knit, almost mid-Victorian family, Alvie remembers being brought up 'to love God and our country, honour the flag and cheerfully obey our parents, teachers and the laws'. The family were Protestants, but of no particular church. Alfred Stewart's family had been Calvinist, puritanical and not allowed to work, or play, or whistle, on the Sabbath. And the eight children in the family went to Sunday School, church twice and read the Bible and sang hymns round the piano on Sundays. Alvie remembers with relief that her father did not enforce this regime on his own family. Sunday was a family day for the Stewarts, sometimes a picnic or other outing, usually a working day in the garden. Occasionally they went to church, attending either the Church of England, or the Presbyterian Church.

Although one of the children attended Sunday School, the first three children never attended and Alvie's formal religious education began when she was nine and a half, when 'three of us attended a small religious school for young ladies and gentlemen'. The school was held in the Church of England with a missionary (Miss Fraser) in

charge, and a part-time art teacher. In this school she experienced a daily religious service, learnt the Sermon on the Mount and a few hymns by heart, some English grammar and practically no mathematics. There was plenty of free time and Alvie read most of the books from the library, wryly remembering that they were about 'good little girls who did good works'. If her brother resented this period as a waste of time, Alvie did not. It gave her 'time to think' and to begin questioning, particularly why it was wrong to work or play on Sunday. The thinking, questioning, critical child foreshadowed the future adult.

And there was much room for her development in a family that valued education and did not favour boys over girls. As Alvie makes clear she and her siblings had every opportunity to gain a good education, given time, a place to study, and receiving special home prizes for outstanding achievements such as coming first in class or winning a scholarship. Concerned about what to do with her life after completing leaving honours, Alvie sought the answer in prayer, but there was none forthcoming. She contemplated becoming a missionary but decided against it, believing that 'a missionary should be a doctor able to heal physical pains as well as those of the spirit'.

When asked why she became a teacher, Alvie replied that opportunities for women were limited to nursing, working as shop assistants, domestic servants or clerical assistants, and her attempt at clerical work had amounted to addressing envelopes. But teaching did not escape her critical gaze. We get some inkling of what teaching meant in the 1920s classroom in the Victorian Education Department in her reply: 'A crabby teacher of a very large grade v, and later too many incompetent teachers who couldn't control classes put me off'. But on her father's gentle advice, she agreed to try out the vacant position as junior teacher at the high school. Hence in 1925, at the age of seventeen, Alvie became a junior teacher at the school she had attended the previous year and 'tried to teach, among others, a boy older than myself and my own younger sister'. And despite Alvie's fears, her sister proved the perfect pupil.

Alvie was very much aware of the strains inherent in being a 'good teacher'. Underlined in her autobiographical outline is the comment: 'I tried to attain what was expected of a good teacher at that time, a silent classroom'. Ironically Alvie began

as a student teacher in 1925, regarded as a high point of an innovative regime in Department historiography. And this held true for improved student teacher training but the reality in the classroom was rather different.⁵ Class sizes were large and harsh punishments the order of the day. (Alvie told me that she had used corporal punishment – the strap – on one occasion during her teaching career and then vowed never to use it again.) Alvie gained a studentship to Melbourne Teachers' College and her four years here, she claims, was the highlight of her life at the time. The prerequisite for the studentship included obtaining leaving or leaving honours (approximately level 12 standard) and one or two years experience as a junior teacher. The studentship was as attractive then as it was for generations of students to come. It included free board and lodging plus a small allowance and free education at the college and university. On obtaining at least two years towards a university degree in addition to the Diploma of Education, studentship holders were appointed as permanent, trained secondary teachers. They were put into class v, the lowest classification in the service, and had to teach for three years to pay off the bond. As Alvie points out, 'the catch for women teachers, was that married women teachers were not employed by the Department'. And any woman teacher marrying before the end of the three years had to pay off her bond to the Department.⁶

Alvie had no such problem. During the period from 1926-29, she had engaged enthusiastically in college and university activities, as she was to do during her teaching career. In her search for the 'truth' she attended as many different religious services as she could, including Christian camps at Toc H meetings⁷ and time spent with the Theosophists, but to no avail. Somewhat apologetically Alvie notes that she didn't come into contact with any working-class movement during this period, but she was all too aware of the signs of the Depression in many aspects of Carlton at the time. She did, however, take considerable interest in the last College assembly. When a representative from the Victorian Teachers' Union explained the purpose of the union to the assembly, Alvie decided to join. The union had recently won a pay rise for her year level, a rise ranging from 4s 7d a week to 5s 10d a week for women. And Alvie notes 'men got a little more'. The union and particularly women unionists had quite a coup that day in attracting Alvie's attention for she would go on to play her part in the campaign for equal pay for women teachers even after her resignation from the service.⁸

It would seem that Alvie was on track to be a career teacher. While completing her Diploma of Education, she had already come to terms with how she would teach using 'the opportunities presented by history and literature to present the terrible, tragic realities of war, not the glory'. In 1930 Alvie's first appointment as a trained permanent teacher was to her hometown of Colac, where she taught for the next five years. Her involvement with community activities was extensive: including joining the local branch of the VTU; taking the Presbyterian Girls' Fellowship for keep fit classes – although she did not join the church, partly because it opposed dancing as a sin – and becoming the Akela for the Church of England Wolf Cub Pack. She also formed an ex students' hockey club and a local hockey association of four clubs. It is not surprising that such intense activity took its toll. Alvie admits that 'she probably tried to do too much, and when she caught the flu, she couldn't shake it off for months'. In addition she was now deeply troubled by the effects of the Depression, 'praying nightly about unemployment and poverty', but her prayers made no difference. After her long illness, the Department would only employ her again if she was prepared to accept a position in a warmer climate. Alvie was sent to Benalla and in 1936 promoted to Donald and from there in 1939 to Kyabram.

The beginning of the Second World War proved a turning point in Alvie's life. In a short memorable passage she traces her conversion to Communism:

The outbreak of World War 2 shattered me. Boys I'd tried to teach French, although they could see no point in it, enlisted, and one of them was soon missing; my dancing partners joined up. Hitler took the Maginot Line and Russia invaded Finland.

'Don't worry,' said Menzies and the media. 'Russia couldn't fight its way out of a paper bag. Their soldiers haven't even got winter boots'. I donated money I'd saved for an evening dress to the Finns to help them fight off the wicked Russians.

Imagine my surprise when the Russians captured the Mannerheim Line. (They had previously offered to exchange Russian territory for it, to enable them to

better defend Leningrad.) I was sent a receipt from a children's fund instead of from the Finnish government.

On 22 June 1941, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union and the newspapers carried pictures of Russian people streaming to church. Until that time I believed what I'd read and heard about the Communists destroying all the churches. It was obviously important for me to read some actual Communist material for myself.

Nor was that difficult to obtain, Alvie already knew four Communists with whom she argued fiercely, although she regarded them as particularly intelligent, vital people whose views were worthy of consideration. They included her youngest sister Rae, Hyrell Ross (later Waten) with whom she taught for two years; one of Hyrell's friends (name unknown) and Elsie Benson (later Pearce), a friend from Teachers' College. It was not long before Alvie reached the conclusion that she had at last found an organisation that pointed the way and worked to eliminate poverty and war. And during a furious thunderstorm in late 1941, in a car parked in a Kyabram street, in company with another sister, Elma, Alvie joined the Communist Party. The reason for the secrecy of course was that the Communist Party and communist activity had been declared illegal under the 1940 National Security Act.⁹

Alvie continued to devote much time to teaching and in 1942 was promoted to Shepparton High School as senior mistress. There she continued to work very hard both at the school and in the community, mainly in some aspect of the war effort, growing vegetables to raise funds for a school canteen. Alvie remembers the war years as a difficult time for teachers, particularly women teachers. Many male teachers had enlisted and the schools were short-staffed. Once a week she 'taught, well entertained, a class of ninety students for a double period while one of our staff filled-in at a neighbouring school'. She gives a very clear picture of the impact of wartime school life. Many mothers, she points out, joined the workforce and with husbands away at the war had difficulty coping. Children came to school too early and some came without breakfast. The VTU focussed on maintaining reasonable conditions for teachers and health care for children. Schools were understaffed and teachers overworked. The intensity of these activities combined with the three weeks

Alvie and her sister Elma gave of their Christmas vacation doing 'essential work' contributed to Alvie's poor health at this time.

Transferred to Colac, she was able to recuperate from what the doctor called 'nervous exhaustion'. With the wonderful nursing of her mother she was able to return to teaching before the end of the war. Despite Alvie's improved health there was further reason for concern. Much to Alvie's dismay her father was defeated in his bid for another term as mayor of Colac, by one vote. It was not just the defeat of a man who had worked tirelessly for the community that bothered Alvie, it was guilt that her communist allegiance may have cost him the election. This is the only occasion on which Alvie refers to the risks of being a communist in Australia at the time. Yet they were considerable. Stuart Macintyre's work on the Communist party has shown that, in 1940, after the party was banned, police raided party offices and the homes of all known members and at various times prominent communists were prosecuted or forced underground. Nevertheless party membership continued to grow. By the end of 1942, the party's legality was restored and its membership exceeded 20,000.¹⁰ The stage was set for Alvie's next career.

At the beginning of 1946 she resigned from teaching, not on account of marriage but on account of the ill-health which had dogged her teaching career. No doubt, given her commitment to social justice and her involvement in community affairs, she had contemplated working for the Communist Party. When she was well enough Alvie began work at Marx School, the educational arm of the Communist Party in Victoria. She became a 'sort of receptionist, cleaner, librarian, organiser of classes and secretary under the guidance of Bernie Taft'.¹¹ Alvie gives an incisive account of her view of the Party:

Whatever its shortcomings, the Communist Party classes and activities provided many of us with the most valuable, educational experiences of our lives. Leading comrades took classes there and many very interesting people came for information, to borrow books, to attend classes or just for a quiet place to study. There was an occasional scoundrel, like Cecil Sharpley, a few power or fame seekers, one police spy we knew about; but mainly sincere, self-sacrificing folk dedicated to creating a better society.

Alvie's activities in this period, after the granting of suffrage to women in Victoria (at a Federal level in 1901 and at a state level in 1908) and prior to the rise of the women's movement in the 1970s, are very significant in our understanding of women's history. Her work is evidence of women's political commitment and engagement, which has been overlooked and is only now receiving belated recognition and tentative documentation. Although Alvie never used the term feminist to describe her politics, she qualifies as one of Marilyn Lake's maternal feminists.¹² Her engagement with women's issues was considerable. Her contribution to the equal pay case for the VTU can be found in its records. And as she points out she did not join the New Housewives Association, which was more progressive than the Housewives Association, but she supported its fight against price rises, its campaign for equal pay and extension of childcare. Although uncertain whether she was a founding member of the Union of Australian Women in 1950 which was to take up much wider issues, she points out that she has certainly been a member and always supported it. She notes that

my main work has been in the peace movement, I've been unable to attend its meetings (the UAW) regularly or take an active part in it. Since its formation, it has always actively supported or initiated campaigns in the interests of women and children, such as, peace, childcare, equal pay and rights for all women locally and internationally.

Alvie's employment by the Communist Party would be short-lived. In the late forties, when illegality seemed likely again, the Marx School closed down and Alvie was unemployed.¹³ For a short time she worked in a clothing factory sewing on buttons. In September 1949 she married Rod Booth. Alvie was sacked from the clothing factory when she had to take sick leave. It proved an advantage, she reflects, because it gave her the wonderful opportunity to become the organiser for the Frank Hardy Defence Committee from October 1950 until he was acquitted about a year later.¹⁴

Alvie's dedication to the peace movement came about when her first son, Stewart, was three and half years old in the mid fifties. The death of a child of a similar age

after suffering for nine months alerted the Booths to the problems associated with atomic testing as the doctor had described the child's death as 'most likely due to radioactivity caused by the fallout from the Maralinga testing'.

As the results of nuclear testing were well known, yet the testing continued, Alvie scrutinised her priorities. She was now the mother of two small boys and she decided that finishing the unlined house in which they were living, or buying all the toys she would have liked, would be no compensation for allowing such things to happen. Instead she and her husband had an emergency meeting and decided that she should try to build a local peace group and do more to help the Victorian Peace Committee led by the 'gallant ministers, Alf Dickie, Frank Hartley and Victor James'.

The next morning Alvie set out with 'Master 3½ and Baby 18 months old' to visit her first prospect for a peace committee, the local Presbyterian minister. She was well received, but asked if she was a Communist. The minister would not, it ensued, help form a peace committee, but he would speak at a meeting if Alvie managed to form one. After considerable effort and help from 'Mrs Maurice Blackburn, the Gillies family, and Pam Ellis', Alvie succeeded in forming the small, but active, Coburg-Broadmeadows Peace Discussion Group. Alvie's concerns as a young girl about the horror of war had found tangible expression. The group held regular organisational and public meetings, collected signatures and held banner parades in Sydney Road Coburg. With the help of Lilian Miller, the Victorian President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the group held their most successful public venture, an International Children's Art Exhibition.

The Coburg-Broadmeadows Peace Group kept in touch with the Victorian Peace Council and joined in its campaigns. One of these was to prepare for the Australian-New Zealand Congress for International Co-operation and Disarmament. The Peace Group helped form the Coburg Congress to sponsor and work for the Conference. The Australian Labor Party member for Wills, Gordon Bryant, and Councillor Cliff Jepson who had assisted the group since formation, agreed to co-chair the Conference. The result Alvie describes as immensely pleasing, as they were able to send five delegates to the International Congress from their small group. The



THE CHILDREN
AND THE
NURSERY SCHOOL



MS. ALVIE BOOTH

Dr. Alvie Booth, author and editor, Labor Hour
on May 15, 1942

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Alvie Booth: Top left. On graduation in 1932.

Top right. Campaigning for kindergartens during the Second World War: broadcast address over 3KZ during Labor Hour.

Above. Arrested at a demonstration in the 1980s.

Source of photographs: Alvie Booth.

Conference was an enormous success, building the peace movement and putting it into a better position to cope with the various campaigns against the Vietnam War. The Coburg-Broadmeadows group decided to dissolve and merge into the much broader Coburg Peace Committee with Gordon Bryant as president.

In 1960 there were two major changes to Alvie's life. Her younger son started school and, relieved of the peace secretarial work, Alvie resumed teaching for financial reasons. As Alvie wryly points out: 'despite my radical activities, my application was readily accepted. The Education Department was obviously short of trained teachers and I was appointed to Pascoe Vale Girls' School, the school nearest my home'.

In this school, where the 'less well-performing students were shepherded', Alvie encountered a very different learning and teaching environment from the high schools in which she had taught, but one which left her with considerable respect for girls' technical schools. Although most of the staff were untrained, or untrained as secondary teachers, she was very impressed by their dedication and the high quality of their work. She found the high standard of the cooking, dressmaking, art and singing to be 'amazing'. And the students showed such interest in Alvie's subject that it was the only school where she was asked to 'please go on, we're interested', when the lunch bell rang. We discover one of the reasons for Alvie's continued ill-health in her early teaching career as she notes with surprise:

For the first time ever I was in a completely dust free school with polished floors. My previous schools, both as pupil and teacher, all had apparently untreated wooden floors and the dust from sweeping in some of these schools had been appalling. It was no wonder that some teachers developed T.B.

Although Alvie enjoyed this teaching experience, she made time for the major peace initiatives of the time which as she points out, were considerable:

We opposed conscription, before and after the marble ballot was introduced, and campaigned vigorously against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. We supported the Save Our Sons Movement and the Draft resisters, and

took part in many small demonstrations in Sydney Road and two huge moratorium rallies.

In 1970, to her joy and trepidation, Alvie's son, Stewart, told his parents that he was not going to register for conscription. They urged him to consider his decision carefully as it might cost him his university scholarship, and he could be lucky in the ballot.

When Alvie was arrested for handing out 'Don't Register' leaflets outside the GPO and spent a 'couple of hours too many' in the city watch house, she heard that the arrest had been televised and was 'quite jittery' about turning up at school on the following Monday. As she approached the principal's office where she was 'determined to report her crime before others did', she was delighted to find that a group of staff chatting in the office greeted her with laughter and approval. Not everyone approved, however, as a few staff avoided her or kept very quiet. There was little reaction from the students. But a couple of girls asked for badges to sell. An older group of students clapped when she played Glen Tomasetti's record of 'The Ballad of Bill White' as one item in a series on the history of war poetry showing the progression from glorification to condemnation. (We catch a glimpse of the innovative history teacher!) This account also offers a rare insight into the price of activism for Alvie. It cost her dearly, for aside from her conscientious objection to the operations of the state, including her communism, she was at heart still the child of a loyal and conservative upbringing.

The 1972 election of the Whitlam Labor government, saved Alvie's son, Stewart, from being gaoled, and Alvie's appeal against the five dollar fine for allegedly handing out subversive leaflets was successful. But the lawyer who had defended her (without charge) forgot to ask for costs. The withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam and the eventual ending of the war meant that peace activity declined for a time and attention was again turned to the threat posed by nuclear weapons. The broader movements, People for Nuclear Disarmament (PND) and Movement Against Uranium Mining (MAUM), were formed.¹⁵ In Alvie's judgement 'these separate movements had become intertwined', as had several others: the Anti-Foreign Bases and Anti-Nuclear Warship Movements. But 'peace works was at the

heart of all of them'. These groups took part in the great marches from Frankston to Melbourne (this was the distance over which the Hiroshima bomb dropped on the GPO would have destroyed life), in the Palm Sunday Rallies, and in protests at Roxby Downs, Pine Gap and Canberra.

Ironically, Alvie, whose early teaching career was punctuated by bouts of serious illness, was able to work on past retirement age. She retired in 1977 at seventy years of age. With her husband, Rod, Alvie enjoyed an active social and political life, taking part in what she describes as 'most-working class and peace activities including the rallies in Sale against the Omega missile station and against the possibly nuclear-armed American warships'. There was also the long trek from Frankston to Melbourne that the Booth family managed at least twice as a complete family. Alvie notes that at one of the anti-warship protests she, along with others, was removed and told not to come back.

Towards the end of the 1980s when the Gulf War brought the many strands of the peace movement together, Alvie was 'fortunate to be involved for a time with the extra non-violent friends of the Gulf War Team, which had taken up a position between the opposing forces in Iraq'. She was among a group arrested for blockading the Defence Barracks in St Kilda Road and bailed to appear at the Prahran Magistrates Court on 11 June 1991, where all had their charges struck out. Alvie suspects this occurred because the Government wanted to avoid the publicity the cases would have gained. The only slackening of pace in her commitment to community work occurred between 1994 and 1996. The intensely private Alvie makes the simple statement: 'My community work ceased, except for keeping in touch with the local MAUM group owing to the death of my husband Rod'.

In 1997 Alvie agreed to an enlarged birthday celebration for her 90th birthday, provided it was for a cause. Not surprisingly she chose the Peace Movement. It was a great party (which I can vouch for), raising over \$1400 for the Peace Movement. This was a substantial sum of money to raise at a ninetieth birthday, particularly when no attempt was made to raise big donations. But this was not to be Alvie's only contribution. Although Alvie's MAUM group was supportive of the anti-uranium cause and well aware of the opposition to the Jabiluka mine, its distance was

daunting. (The Jabiluka uranium mine in the Northern Territory faced considerable opposition from environmentalists and supporters of nuclear disarmament in the 1980s.) Somewhat halfheartedly, Alvie claims she attended the send off for the Cyclists against Nuclear Power, and found herself really inspired by 'all those young people willing to ride for fifty-five days in all sorts of weather for their beliefs'. Then she read in the *Age* of a bus that periodically took people to the protest camp. What followed was to make the news. While Alvie was inquiring about the possibility of travelling to the protest camp, Phillip Shirvington, chief executive of Energy Resources Australia, admitted breaching the strict guidelines advocated by the Minister for the Environment, Senator Robert Hill, which were not yet in place. As Alvie angrily recounts:

Senator Hill's recommendation, endorsed by the 'action Minister', Senator Warren Parer, for a cultural heritage plan to preserve rock art and sacred sites to be agreed upon by the concerned parties had not even been drawn up. But the bull-dozing had been going on for a week. The bull-dozing still went on, the government did nothing to prevent it. Questions asked in the House of Representatives by the member for Wills, Kevin Thomson, were not answered within the stipulated fifty-five days.

Galvanised into action by the 'perfidy' of this, Alvie attended a mandatory training session, and received a great deal of help to make the journey to Jabiluka with messages of support for the local aboriginal Mirrar people. It was to be a triumphant moment for Alvie, when with two others, she crossed the line onto Mirrar land at the invitation of its Indigenous owners. The ever astute Alvie remarks:

We were arrested and bailed to appear in Court on 11 June 1991. But owing to the help I received to plead not guilty, the charge against me was struck out as 'not in the public interest'. The uranium mine is certainly not in the public interest nor in the interest of Kakadu Park or the rest of the World.

Alvie had continued to teach until 1977 when she turned seventy and had to resign. She had been reinstated in 1960 when she returned to teaching as 'Nan had won the battle for permanency for married women teachers by then'. But Alvie had an

important point to make about married women teachers and permanency. She, in company with many other married women teachers, had returned to work when her youngest child began school. Even so the process was fraught with difficulty when her children became ill. 'Why?' asks Alvie 'was it not possible for married women teachers to become permanent on fractional time, perhaps three or four days a week?' This possibility, Alvie believes, would have reshaped the teaching workforce, many preferring fractional employment to full time work. This was a solution which may have met the teacher shortage problem, but it was not one a conservative government fearful of changing the 'natural order of things', would have contemplated.

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Nancy (Nan) Gallagher

Nan Gallagher was born in Sandringham, Victoria on 13 October 1924, the only child of Ethel (nee Blain) and Stanley Harold Fletcher. Times were too hard, Nan's mother once told her, for them to have any more children. Nan's father was a photographer but on return from service in the First World War, including Gallipoli and the Somme, he found it impossible to make a living from photography. At one time he worked in his brother's small textile factory but when that collapsed during the Depression of the 1930 he was once more looking for work. Nan's mother was from the Western district, one of a large farm family. Nan recalls that she was an excellent cook and eventually her skills in cake making, combined with her husband's innovative mixing machines, enabled the family to build up a homemade cake shop business in Hampton.

In 1931 Nan was a foundation pupil of Sandringham East Primary School. She participated each year in a ceremony observing Anzac Day, proudly wearing her father's medals including his military medal, awarded for bravery under fire as a stretcher bearer during the war. She recalls: 'The speeches our headmaster made on these occasions and the rare comments from my Dad ensured that I would be anti-war all my life'.¹⁶ By the time she had commenced secondary schooling at Hampton High School in 1936, the family had established a cake business in a lock-up shop

and every evening Nan rode her bike home to Sandringham. Did these solitary trips as a young child foster the independent-spirited young woman who would later travel the world alone? Later the family rented a residential shop. Nan remembers helping in the shop dipping lamingtons, adding wryly that she 'never eats them'.

At age fourteen, independent and outgoing, Nan 'enjoyed brief fame as a junior radio personality', rushing to the radio station 3DB to take part in plays aired after school. Although it proved too much work to combine with her school studies and she reluctantly gave it away, Nan suggests that it was probably frustration over loss of her radio career that led to her becoming a current 3RPH (Radio for the Print Handicapped) volunteer. It also familiarised her with radio broadcasting, a media skill which she would use to good effect at several points in her life.

After attaining the Leaving Certificate Nan chose her own path to higher education. Reluctant to cause her parents extra expense, she decided to forgo the traditional route of attending MacRobertson Girls' High to study for Leaving Honours (equivalent to matriculation or the current VCE). Encouraged by her Economics teacher to attain a university degree, majoring in Economics, Nan signed the Matriculation book and entered the University of Melbourne at sixteen years of age as an evening part-time student. In this respect she stands apart from other women interviewed for this project. Nan made a deliberate choice against teaching with its financially secure pathway to an education at Teachers' College and the possibility of university studies. Instead she worked at a local factory with a view to becoming 'some kind of liaison officer'. But the travel and long hours eventually drove her into teaching – 'an easier way to attain an education'. Nan's decisions to date were a clear indication of what was to follow. She would prove an independent spirit who would question the options open to women.

But for the moment Nan had to accommodate herself to a career as a student teacher at State School No.583 Punt Road, South Yarra, where she worked for two years under a very kind and progressive head teacher. In this school Nan notes that 'sometimes the student teachers taught and sometimes they sharpened pencils'. But there were always regular classes in Prahran with other junior teachers in subjects such as music. The head teacher also tutored them regularly in English grammar.

Nan continued with her university lectures, as well as art classes at Brighton Technical College. During this period she joined the Part-timers' Association and the Melbourne University Labor Club, which would prove very influential. And during the war, in company with many others, she gave up much of the school holidays to work – first in the Rosella Jam Factory in Richmond and then two stints in mental hospitals – in Ballarat and in Mont Park. The factory experience, in particular, made her determined to attain tertiary qualifications.

By 1943 Nan's parents had retired from business and lived in Montrose so she became a resident at Melbourne Teachers' College while she studied for the Trained Primary Teachers' Certificate (TPTC). After experiencing the freedom of university life, Nan found the discipline restrictive. Her radical contacts at the university had made her something of a rebel, 'always trying to beat the system'. Looking back she feels more tolerant of the College authorities, wryly noting that there were:

Three hundred young primary teachers and twelve primary men. A huge American Army Camp at Camp Pell. War hysteria in the air. No wonder they were nervous! Miss Clarke's (Infant Teaching Lecturer) advice on sexual matters was probably the most useful information we heard.

It is not hard to guess what that advice might have been!

Nan considered she had proved too troublesome by the Department to be offered an extension to complete her degree and did not bother to apply for this. Instead in 1944 she was appointed to Camperdown Higher Elementary School. She was then nineteen years old and qualified with the TPTC and four university subjects.¹⁷ There were sixty-six students in the first class she taught which had a wide range of abilities, the brightest Claude Forell (later an *Age* journalist). Her salary, she notes, was £7 per fortnight, four fifths of the male rate. Nan found Camperdown an unfriendly, class-ridden town, with teachers at the bottom of the scale. Joining the Labor Party was 'tantamount to being in the Communist Party anywhere else'. After experiencing board in two hotels (one deliberately housed next door to the Gent's toilet) and private board, Nan finished up in the home of a fellow Party member, noting that it was 'quite interesting that one's hot bath was heated by Hansard'.

Teaching in Sealake in 1945-46 was infinitely more to her liking. Although the Mallee was experiencing a disastrous drought, people were very friendly and there were many social activities. And as an indication of the staffing crisis at the time, Nan notes that in 1945 there were four on the secondary staff of the Higher Elementary School with a total teaching experience of three years. Only when Nan contemplated enlisting to serve in Malaya did her 'pleasant' head teacher lambast her, reminding her that 'there was a war on' and her teaching skills were needed in Australia. In 1947 when the war was over Nan managed to get a transfer to Camberwell High School so that she might continue her university work but, as ex-servicemen were given preference over other candidates, she was to be a part-time student 'yet again'. The appointment would prove formative for Nan. The principal of Camberwell High School was Dr. A.V. James, the author of the few available geography texts at the time. Nan may have found it daunting taking parallel senior classes with him, but the experience influenced the writing of the highly acclaimed geography texts she would produce a decade or so later.

In May 1948 Nan married Robert Melbourne. The couple had moved to a small flat in Parkville and Nan, now a temporary teacher on account of marriage, was transferred to Coburg High School in 1949. Robert had served in the Navy and when he entered the Commonwealth Retraining Scheme it was on the basis of leaving school aged fourteen. He matriculated and completed a Law Degree at the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1952. During this time Nan experienced what it meant to be a married woman temporary teacher. The principal explained that 'as she had no future, senior classes were not to come her way, rather they would be given to single women'. In that one comment Nan encapsulates the disillusionment of the professional teacher sidelined for less experienced but unmarried women. She was left to teach 'the juniors, non-academic classes and oddments like craft in the shelter shed'. In 1953 Nan and her husband put a deposit on a house in Bonbeach and she began teaching at Mordialloc High School. There she would meet a number of married women temporary teachers: Mrs Drake, Mrs Watson, Mrs Meadows, Mrs O'Malley and Mrs Cramp. (These women would all be members in the soon-to-be-formed Temporary Teachers' Club). Their anger was revealed in Nan's comment that: 'We must have taken to expressing our resentment at having to sign on each

morning at the bottom of the time book, not to mention the differences in salary compared with our unmarried contemporaries’.

And there was another important change in Nan’s life. She says simply that ‘her marriage was working’, and ‘Bob and I separated’. Although this must have been the cause of much sadness for Nan, it was fortuitous for the cause of the married woman temporary teacher! Nan now had the time, and even more reason, to fight for the reinstatement of married women teachers in the Department. She was childless at this stage in her life, but many of her colleagues had children. In an era when married women with children did not work and the Director of Education, A.H. Ramsay, could claim that married women teachers were lost to the profession when they brought up families, Nan set about reshaping public opinion in radio interviews and headline articles in the major newspapers. Her media skills would prove invaluable to the cause of the married woman temporary teacher. Nan’s approach was tactically astute. ‘Teaching’, she claimed, ‘was the one job that could be successfully combined with rearing children’. It was probably ‘the only job that a mother can do without neglecting her children, for her hours are the same as the children’s’. She then pointed out that many of her teaching colleagues brought their children to school with them. The children, she argued, were never left alone. ‘There was no possibility of neglect’. Nan claimed that ‘many of these women would have thirty-five teaching years ahead of them, on a salary of the lowest class of permanent teacher – for all time’.¹⁸ The argument that ‘devoted teachers could be devoted mothers’ changed the nature of the debate on the married woman teacher. In parliament the married woman teacher was now described in varying categories, among them newly married women and older women returning to teaching. Nan had provided the necessary ammunition to combat the prejudices against married women teaching and alerted the public, desirous of retaining the services of these women to teach their children, to the inequity of their situation.

Not surprisingly, Nan sought escape from the intensity of the temporary teachers’ campaign. She describes this period as a time when the ‘travel bug’ entered her life. In May 1955 she travelled overland on the ‘Ghan’ railway and in a van around Central Australia with her friend Jean Gardiner. She then went by coastal ship to Port Hedland, Broome and Derby and arrived home late for the VTU Conference

(she thinks). Around this time she was appointed to the senior woman's position at Nauru Secondary School, but this was abruptly terminated. Nan blames her left-wing activities, imagining that 'they' (ASIO?) 'had a film of Melbourne University Labor Club members clad in gowns marching past Russell Street Police Station on May Day'. No doubt Nan's work on behalf of married women temporary teachers could have posed problems for her too! When the campaign to remove the marriage bar appeared successful, Nan resigned to plan an overseas trip.

In June 1955 Nan commenced the big adventure in a small Dutch cargo ship, sailing round (then) Dutch New Guinea, the Halmaheras, Sandakan and up the river to Saigon. From there she travelled to Bangkok and Singapore and changed to another KPM ship to travel around Sumatra, sometimes overland, then catching the ship at the next port. By September she had reached Djakarta, a city she remembers fondly cycling around. And then there was the return trip, travelling by train in Java, flying to Bali, travelling by ship to Singapore, by train to Kuala Lumpur and air to Bangkok. There she was greeted by the news that the Bill to remove the marriage bar had passed. As Nan was well aware, all this was rather unusual for a woman to do alone and as she says: 'Mostly I got away with it by saying, I am a geography teacher'. By the time she had returned to Singapore, she was ready to return to Melbourne. But her mother urged her to continue, claiming that she had told everyone that 'you are going home'. And in this reference of course she meant England. As Nan notes: 'this is how she and others talked in those days, and yet she was a second generation Australian who had never left Victoria'. And that is how Nan found herself in England. Armed with credentials she found it easy to get 'supply' teaching. Later a friend who had been on exchange to Coburg High School recommended her for a term appointment at Kidbrooke Comprehensive School, then considered a pioneer establishment. Although broke and always cabling home for money, Nan travelled extensively in Britain and Europe until her father's ill health made it imperative to return by sea. On board she received a cable from her colleagues announcing: 'Watson, Meadows, Drake permanent third Mordialloc, Thank you'. Not only had Nan's colleagues been made permanent, they had been promoted to class iii positions!



Nan Gallagher: Top left. From Sunshine High School magazine 1958, at Mt Donna Buang.
 Top right. En route to Mexico, 1981
 Above. Photo accompanying article in the *Sun*, 'Have Pen will Travel', 5 March 1980.

Source of photographs: Nan Gallagher.

When she returned in October 1957, Nan was immediately employed. Although it was close to the end of the school year she received holiday pay, prompting her to reflect on how welcome married women were then made to feel in the service. In 1958 Nan went straight into class iii at Sunshine High School and in 1960 was appointed to a class iii position at Essendon High School. It was there that Nan shocked the staff by marrying another member of staff, Hec Gallagher, over the vacation. They had met at a geography seminar sometime earlier and decided to marry in late January. Ironically Nan resigned once more to become a temporary teacher. It was, she points out, a purely pragmatic decision as she wanted the payment in lieu of long service leave which the Department offered married women to encourage them to resign on marriage rather than remain permanent. Nan wanted the money to help with the deposit on a house. Her resignation was a typically independent response from a woman who had campaigned so publicly for married women's rights to permanency. It was also wise. (The proof of this lies in Audrey Dodson's experience of remaining permanent after marriage in the following interview.) Nan was well aware teaching was not the province of the mother-to-be, and she now wanted a family as soon as possible. A pregnant woman was required to resign from teaching at least four months prior to the birth of her child. Shortly after, Nan informed the dismayed principal of Essendon High School that she was pregnant and would be leaving in November. As she points out: 'It was not easy to find a replacement for a form six teacher who was also the teacher of senior geography classes'. Nan's replacement was 'an utter disaster who was later involved in a shooting incident in the Arts theatre'.

Nan's eldest son, Stanley, was born in November 1960 and in January 1961 the Gallaghers sailed for England. Hec Gallagher had a teaching scholarship for postgraduate study at London University. As the money was slow to arrive and supply teaching easy to acquire, Nan started teaching again. A friend looked after Stan after Nan had fed and bathed him and Nan was free to teach between 10.30am and 3pm. The Gallaghers travelled extensively between the Field Study Centres where Hec was studying and in 1962 they returned to Australia. Their daughter Kate was born in October 1962 and Donald in January 1965.

In 1967 Nan started to do some emergency teaching in primary schools, but was persuaded by the deputy principal at Kew High School to fill a geography vacancy with the promise of flexible hours. Nan later discovered that he had lured back several other experienced married women by using these tactics. This was to be the start of a new career. As a .6 temporary geography teacher, Nan was at first a little daunted by the 'new quantitative' methodology. With encouragement from her husband she began to realise that much of this new curriculum held little interest for the children. So, drawing on her travels in the late 1950s, Nan began teaching children about 'themselves as citizens of the world'. This would provide the theme of a highly successful geography series. But the part-time status, which gave Nan time to prepare well, would soon change under pressure from the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA) and the 'need for teachers to count every minute that they taught'. Three temporary teachers, including Nan, found themselves form level coordinators responsible for welfare, attendance and reports. Eventually, Nan considered it was obvious that she might as well be full-time and permanent.

By the 1970s Nan's interest in the teaching of geography had led to her concern with its theoretical basis as a discipline, particularly as the subject was under threat from general studies, which had been recently introduced at Kew High School. Nan's diaries which had once been filled with 'stats about temporary teachers in 1954-56, now overflowed with information about geography committees, school camps, field work and cartography competitions'. All of this was complicated by the lifestyle of her husband, Hec, who, as an inspector in the Department, travelled to the country every other week. In 1975 Nan was appointed as a geography consultant, which included part-teaching and part-visiting schools on request. Despite her obvious commitment to the teaching of geography Nan states that she 'felt awkward in view of her husband's position as inspector' and, in order to 'avoid the term nepotism, probably worked twice as hard as was necessary'. This was not a surprising response from a person who had been marginalised for a good deal of her teaching life as the 'invisible' married woman teacher. But the workload was extremely heavy. Nan's first year in this position included responsibility for the Preston and Prahran regions where 'first year teachers were floundering in difficult schools with large unmotivated classes'.

It was her interest in geography teaching that led Nan into what she describes as 'a big mistake' in applying for a senior teaching position at Fitzroy High School. In 1976, the incumbent, the geography co-ordinator, had told her he would be leaving. But instead of geography Nan found herself as senior mistress in charge of the senior girls. She was, it emerged, the first senior woman teacher who had been appointed there for many years. This brought Nan directly into conflict with the VSTA members led by Caroline Hogg, later Labour Minister of Education, who were ideologically opposed to the role of senior mistress. Even more problematical for Nan was her decision to apply for a Professional Assessment, - anathema to the Union - thereby precipitating a teacher strike at the school. The indomitable Nan retaliated by obtaining newspaper and television coverage.¹⁹

The VSTA could not have known what a seasoned campaigner they had in Nan. From a contemporary perspective it would appear that she had the lion's share of the publicity, and it was all positive. A lengthy feature article in the *Sun* newspaper on 9 April 1978 contains a photo of a smiling, poised Nan, above a caption entitled 'Nan Gallagher . . . militant with a cause'. The article, entitled 'Why school may be out for your child today', details Nan's background as a union activist, quoting her as proud of her union record in working towards equal pay for women teachers and permanency for married women. The article describes Nan as handing out leaflets, which she had printed at her own cost, outside Fitzroy High School.²⁰ The leaflet pointed out to parents that all state secondary teachers had the right to choose from three methods of assessment: the first form of assessment consisted of a panel including the school principal, an elected member of the teaching staff, and an Education Department representative; the second consisted of a panel made up of the school principal and two Education Department inspectors; and the third method involved assessment by two Education Inspectors alone.²¹ Nan chose the final form of assessment as she regarded it as the most useful for her personally. It was the only assessment which would be recorded on her file in the Department. It was this decision which brought her into direct conflict with the VSTA. Having declared her previous union credentials, and put on record her strong feminist and anti-uranium views, Nan agreed that her confrontation with the VSTA was ironic and distasteful. She felt sure that 'some of my friends won't agree with what I'm doing. But I cannot stand intimidation, I have to make a stand on this issue'. And she pre-empted any

attempt by the VSTA to accuse her of bias in her views because her husband Hec Gallagher was now an Assistant Director of Secondary Education in Victoria, arguing that: 'My husband now doesn't even know about the pamphlets or that I'm talking to the newspapers. I'm a professional teacher and I believe I've had enough experience in my area to be treated as my own person'.

Despite these clashes with some VSTA members, Nan recalls this time as one of many friendships and much good teaching in geography. As a co-author of the text book series 'A Geographer's World', she was given an award by the Australian Geography Teachers' Association (AGTA) for the best secondary geography text books of the period.²² Other series followed. In one text, Aboriginal authors were involved for the first time in a mainstream geography text. Book one of this series received an AGTA award for which Nan thinks this chapter was primarily responsible. In all, Nan was author, or co-author, of fifteen text books. But exhaustion began to set in and Nan felt that the strain on her family was all too obvious. In 1981 she transferred to Gardiner Central School and was in charge of the secondary section. She found this very enjoyable, reminiscent of her days spent at Sealake Higher Elementary School with a small secondary staff. At this school Nan took two segments of leave for field work, in Australia and Mexico, before her retirement in 1984.

After retirement she continued travelling in Australia, India and China for more text book material. Cambridge University Press commissioned her to collect/edit the stories of Aboriginal working lives (*A Story to Tell*) and she went round much of the continent to find these authors. Later she returned to the tip of Cape York to stay in the village of Injinoo where she wrote down the stories of the elders, as voluntary work for their community research. As Nan reflects on her teaching career she has no regrets, although, as she points out:

Having been relegated to the bottom of the ladder twice, I never became a principal, but then I never wanted to be one – it was too difficult for a woman with a family. My generation of teachers was always on the way up. Many of us had come from struggling families and teaching was an opportunity for us. The war and then a growing population meant that we were always in demand. As a

temporary I did get schools close to my home, albeit on lower pay. How different from the Kennett era with the constant push to shed staff.

In retirement Nan at first continued to write. And as a frustrated radio actress she returned to broadcast at 3RPH for the print handicapped. She continues to help in the after school program at Collingwood College. Hec Gallagher goes to Yarra Park Primary, helping in the reading program. As she puts it: 'Of course, once a teacher, always a teacher'. She observes that: 'the Collingwood students (of Turkish and Vietnamese origin) where I tutored until VCE now return for help with their TAFE tourism course. Believe me it's much easier than tutoring VCE Cats'!

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Audrey Dodson was born in Oakleigh, Victoria, on 7 January 1932 into a teaching family. Audrey's mother had been a teacher and her father would continue to teach as she grew up. As Audrey explains, her father, always keen for promotion, shifted the family around Victoria. Audrey lived in Wallacedale in the Western District of Victoria, from 1935-38, and in Geelong from 1939-42. This was followed by six months at St Arnaud, and from late 1947 at Macarthur (again in the Western District). These moves did not seem to disrupt Audrey's educational progress for in 1948, when the family moved back to Oakleigh, she made a successful transition from Hamilton High School to the prestigious University High School, the first secondary practising school in Melbourne and highly competitive in entry.²³ Audrey was then confronted by the problem common to generations of educated women – limited career options. The choices for women who opted for the professional stream over the commercial stream at high school amounted to teaching or nursing. Audrey concluded, as did many other women, that she 'drifted into teaching'. What Audrey could not have known as she began the process of being selected as a student teacher was that discussions were underway which would end this training for student teachers.²⁴ Audrey would be among the last student to be trained as student teachers in schools for one year followed by a year at Melbourne Teachers' College.

Something of the rigour and exploitation of student teaching can be seen in Audrey's experiences teaching classes of sixty pupils at Hughesdale State School, combined

with attendance at courses in physical education, sewing, music, speech training and art. Student teachers were regarded as a reliable supply of temporary staff to take over classes in the absence of the classroom teacher. Audrey was keenly aware of how shortchanged her cohort had been. In 1951 on entry to Melbourne Teachers' College, Audrey noted at the time that 'of all the subjects studied, only music would constitute a qualification, an elementary singing certificate'. Indeed in that year she notes 'the two-year course commenced – no teacher training for them and they came out better qualified'

But Audrey enjoyed her time at Melbourne Teachers' College enough to comment that the 'social life was wonderful'. It comes as a surprise to learn that two of the lecturers at Melbourne Teachers' College were well-known callers at square dancing, popular at the time. Despite the attractions of college life, Audrey did not take up the possibility of extending her training by studying for the Infant Teachers' Certificate or the Special Teacher' Certificate. Audrey is too polite to explain why the classes she had experienced during her coursework at the college had 'put her off' infant teaching. In conversation she recalls that she found the approach to the work childish and the female lecturers, strict and 'spinsterish'.

Indeed, Audrey had an astute eye on her career; after all she was the daughter of a head teacher, who understood the importance of applying for schools which would offer promotion. Halfway through her year at college, and before most of the other students had even thought about it, Audrey applied to teach at Pakenham and was appointed to start duty early in 1952. Pakenham State School was not only one of the new consolidated schools, but one of the Department's showcase schools. During her course Audrey had often heard Professor Browne's references to Tasmanian Area schools, Red Hill Consolidated State School and Pakenham Consolidated School.

It proved an excellent choice. Audrey shared the 'practice flat' with the domestic arts teacher. This was where students learned how to clean house and, as the Department had yet to decide how much rent to charge, Audrey's first year in this accommodation was rent-free. In May 1956 Audrey was promoted to Infant Mistress class iii at Beaconsfield State School.²⁵ After teaching for two terms, she married Graeme Dodson of Officer on 26 January 1957. As Audrey describes it, she married

at exactly the same time as the new regulation – the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act 1956 – came in allowing women teachers to marry, remain in the service and keep their seniority. The Principal at Pakenham State School suggested that Audrey contact the Teachers' Union and she was advised not to resign but to retain her position as a class iii teacher. But as Audrey explains: 'It later transpired that they had given me the wrong advice for when I was forced to resign because I was five months pregnant, I found I was no longer eligible for pay in lieu of Long Service Leave'.

Audrey was the first married woman to test the 1956 legislation and discover what it meant for married women teachers. Its discriminatory operation showed the continuing reluctance of the Department to retain the married woman as a permanent teacher. Under the new legislation when women teachers resigned on marriage, they could claim pay in lieu of their long-service leave entitlements. If, however, they continued in the service, retaining their permanency and classification and became pregnant, they were required to resign or take leave five months into their pregnancy. (This was established by a Teachers' Tribunal regulation stating that married women were required to take leave of absence without pay for the period commencing four months before their expected time of confinement and ending six months after their confinement.)²⁶ Furthermore the 1956 Tribunal report included precise instructions that women notify the Tribunal in advance of their marriage. It also determined that their election to permanency made them ineligible for pay in lieu of furlough, should they become pregnant.²⁷ Audrey was informed that she was now ineligible for payment in lieu of long-service leave. In the letter D. Schubert, General Secretary of the VTU, wrote to Audrey, apologising for misinforming her. It is possible to glimpse the politics that determined the decision. He noted that the misunderstanding had occurred because it was:

based on advice given to the Department when negotiations were proceeding on the Bill and based on our belief at that time. At the December Council Meeting (Dec 7) Doug Brown had a statement in his report that payment in lieu of long service leave would not be made to those electing to remain permanent. I queried this with him in the light of our advice and he agreed to bring it up at

the Tribunal. Subsequently a Crown Law opinion was obtained, ruling that payment could not be made in such cases.²⁸

As we examined the correspondence, I asked her how she felt about the situation at the time. After a moment she replied: 'I was angry and disappointed about it, particularly when women around me were marrying, resigning and receiving their money but then I accepted that I was simply on the wrong side of a Department regulation'.²⁹

Audrey's first child, a daughter, Alison, was born on 28 December 1957, a son, Malcolm in July 1959, and another daughter, Heather, in September 1960. Not surprisingly, with three children under seven, Audrey describes herself as quite busy and not entertaining the idea of teaching. But in 1964 she received a call from Officer State School offering her emergency teaching, and thereafter she taught at several schools until her son, Stewart, was born in 1967. Between 1967 and 1971 Audrey 'didn't teach at all—just milked cows'. (And looked after four children!)

It was a Department edict that spurred Audrey into returning to teaching. In 1975 the Department issued a statement to the effect that ex-teachers must return to the service by a certain date or their qualifications would not be recognised.³⁰ Audrey again became an emergency teacher, working nearly every school day of 1975. She states simply that Graeme (her husband) looked after Bronwyn (the youngest child). At this point there is a parallel with Audrey's nineteenth-century teaching predecessors, who combined teaching careers, running households and childbearing, made possible, in the main, by the cooperation of sympathetic husbands.

While emergency teaching at Cranbourne North State School, Audrey was asked by the principal if she would like to open up a new library which would be developed through Commonwealth Grant funding.³¹ Audrey's first reaction was to refuse the offer, but during the school holidays she approached the Library Branch seeking information on training as a librarian. She was informed that she would have to be nominated by a particular school for this to be possible. As Audrey diplomatically puts it,

'The principal, fortunately, must have forgotten about my refusal and offered me the opportunity once again. This time he proposed that I might want to work on three, four or perhaps five days. I accepted the offer of a five-day week'.

Audrey had some idea of the huge task that lay ahead as cataloguing the collection took considerable time. As the school had over 1000 pupils, the library periods for classes were relatively short and an assistant had to be appointed. It was all worthwhile; by the middle of 1976 Audrey was made permanent once again. She started paying into the Superannuation Fund at 8 per cent. Her previous service years were 'divided by three or four to give her a position on the roll'. The Department, of course, still had her medical examination results from the 1950s.

Unfortunately for Audrey, at the end of the year she lost the job to a qualified librarian. She then transferred to Hampton Park East which had a smaller, but very nice library, but as she had grown to expect by now 'another librarian took a fancy to it'. Knowing that she would lose the position at this school, however, she applied for study leave to train as a librarian. This was granted. But, as Audrey puts it, 'the people at the Library branch were not so sure and I was asked to come in and sit by myself at Melbourne Teachers' College and write an essay on why I wanted to do the library course'. Knowing that she was the only one required to do this, Audrey was furious. But as she said with some irony, her essay must have 'passed muster' and she was accepted into the course.

Audrey enjoyed the year-long course. Once again, her husband was helpful, cooking the evening meal each night while Audrey joined their third child, Heather, who was sitting for the Higher School Certificate at the time, in studying of an evening. But again there was a problem for a woman of Audrey's age and background. At the end of the year's study at Melbourne Teachers' College, those students with three-year training obtained a Graduate Diploma in Librarianship and those, such as Audrey, with one or two year training received a Trained Teachers' Librarian Certificate. As Audrey remarked, 'The Grad. Dip. Students had to do one extra subject to justify the difference in the award. Any of we inferior beings could have done that'. On her appointment as librarian at Doveton West, Audrey found that she was still one point short of the Department's requirement for Certificate B. She discovered that none of

the Department's Teachers' Colleges were interested in enrolling a student to complete one subject. Only Monash University offered her the possibility of enrolling in a year-long unit in Spanish or Linguistics. Finally, however, the Department relented, allowing her to complete one more library subject for the required point assessment. So Audrey taught school and then travelled to Melbourne Teachers' College to study World Literature. It obviously cost her some effort. She would leave lectures and work in the State Library. By the time she caught the train to Dandenong and then drove home to Officer, it was, she says, quite late. And no doubt Audrey was very tired, with an early start for school the next day, not to mention the domestic responsibilities of a family of five children.

Having obtained Certificate B and the resulting increase in salary, however, Audrey determined to continue her studies and decided Victoria College, Toorak, was her best choice. And here she met further complications in attempting to update her qualifications. When she first entered the College, she was told that passing thirteen subjects would entitle her to graduate with a Bachelor of Education. Audrey understood this to mean that acquiring a further eight subjects would allow her to upgrade her qualification from Certificate B to Certificate A. The completion of a further five subjects would entitle her to obtain a Bachelor of Education. But Audrey received a call from a staff member who informed her that she was required to complete more than five subjects in order to be eligible for the Bachelor of Education. The three-quarters of an hour she spent arguing on a long distance phone call remains in Audrey's mind. She reached an agreement that if she could produce the relevant documentation proving she had been given this advice, the College would allow her to complete thirteen subjects. Audrey could produce it. She started at Toorak, a very keen student, studying on the beach, while the rest of the family had a good time, completing two subjects each half year, slowing later to two subjects per year. Finally Audrey graduated. Her qualifications: Bachelor of Education, Trained Primary Teachers' Certificate, Trained Teacher Librarian Certificate and Elementary Music.

Audrey's career prospered. After three years teaching at Doveton West State School she was given a promotable mark and transferred to Pakenham for two years from 1982-83, then received further promotion to Beaconsfield. By this stage Audrey

notes that when Mr Kennett (State Premier) was elected in 1992, 'he had decided that there were too many teachers'. At Beaconsfield there were three staff, including Audrey, with the same qualifications. Audrey was chosen as the one required to leave. She explains that she 'likes to think that it was because she had the least family responsibilities', adding that 'both my colleagues were single supporting parents'. Audrey, of course, had a husband to provide for her. Audrey was by now sixty years of age, and doubtless this told against her too. It is sobering to note that the older married and 'supported' woman is still the target when teaching staff are 'reduced'. Do times ever change?

But Audrey did not retire, and having a choice of schools was happily appointed to Koo Wee Rup State School. But once again, after a year and a term, the problem of oversupply of teachers recurred. Audrey volunteered to shift but the Acting Principal made it clear that Audrey was not going anywhere 'without a package' (an inducement for teachers in excess to take retirement). Hence in 1994 on the Wednesday before Easter Audrey's package was approved and she retired at sixty-two years of age. Audrey remembers that she told the children half-hour before her retirement. 'They were stunned. They were a great bunch of children and my last memories of teaching were very happy ones.'

Upon retirement Audrey had the choice of a lump sum of just over \$90,000 or a fortnightly payment. She chose the fortnightly payment. To date she has received more than that amount in fortnightly payments. As Audrey points out: 'My father is ninety-six and still receiving his regular superannuation. Perhaps I might be fortunate to do the same.' This outcome is doubtless what generations of Department decision makers feared. It is a salutary reminder of the significance of superannuation, or the lack of it, in the lives of so many married women teachers who have been denied it. Audrey permits herself a small chuckle when she says: 'On this occasion I did receive pay in lieu of long service leave and also a half-package'.



Audrey Dodson:

Above left. On her wedding day in January 1957.

Above right. Audrey today.

Top left. Pakenham Consolidated School, 1983.

Top right. Beaconsfield Primary School, 1991.

Source of photographs: Audrey Dodson.

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In writing these women's lives I have been guided by the research agenda foreshadowed in *Women Who Taught: perspectives on the history of women and teaching*. I have also tried to remain 'true' to the multiple meanings Alvie, Nan and Audrey have given to their experiences as they reflect on the marriage bar and teaching – and to convey something of the spontaneity of their stories. Inevitably, I am drawn to compare them with the stories of the nineteenth-century teaching matriarchs whose lives feature in the early chapters of this thesis. There are striking parallels between them, as there are important commonalities between the three women interviewed. But any impression of commonality is overlaid by their highly individualistic accounts.

Despite Alvie's lengthy teaching career of thirty-four years, it is significant that she sees herself as, in Lake's terms, a community activist with a long-term commitment to the peace movement, not to teaching. She, like many nineteenth-century married women teachers, saw teaching as a means of financial independence and a way of supporting a family. Perhaps Alvie would have considered teaching as a career had it been the 'dust-free' teaching environment of her later life, and then perhaps not. Alvie did not resign from teaching on account of the marriage bar – as was the case for most women teachers of her generation – rather she chose to work at Marx House with like-minded Communists. But in the glimpse we get of Alvie in her understated account of her life and career, it is not her persona as teacher or even as peace activist that remains in the memory; rather it is Alvie, the calculated risk-taker, who captures our imagination.

In company with the nineteenth-century women teachers who challenged the Department Nan Gallagher was more overtly political in her teaching career. She was an independent-minded teacher-unionist, not that this precluded her defiant public stand (later in life) against a teacher union she perceived as bloody-minded. Nan played a very significant part in the successful campaign to lift the marriage bar, reshaping our understandings of teaching and motherhood in the process. But again she was not afraid to do things differently. When she remarried after the lifting of the marriage bar, she rejected the offer of permanency for married women teachers in the Victorian Education Department which she had fought so hard to achieve in favour of a more pragmatic choice. By opting to resign and return as a temporary

teacher, Nan could receive a payment in lieu of her long service leave. In this respect her choice reflects the pragmatic decisions of the nineteenth-century teaching matriarchs such as Jane Jagoe, who happily took early retirement (and a substantial pension) and married at fifty years of age. Nan, however, was much younger than Jane. In combining child-bearing and teaching, Nan moved from temporary status to permanency once again. She demonstrated once again that teaching was a flexible source of income and independence for qualified married women teachers. But Nan's commitment to the teaching of geography and a publishing career in classroom texts meant that her career took a heavy toll on family and herself. Nor, as she points out without regret, could she overcome the hurdle of two marriages and reach the top as principal of a school. With or without the marriage bar, teaching as a career would not have the same meaning for married women as it would for their single sisters or their male colleagues.

Audrey Dodson's life and career in many ways more closely resembled the nineteenth-century teaching matriarchs as she doggedly combined a career and by the birth of five children. Indeed her attempt to remain permanent after the marriage bar was lifted tripped the wire the Department had left in place to discourage married women from remaining in the service. Audrey's pregnancy shortly after her permanency in the Department meant she forfeited her monetary entitlement in lieu of long service leave. Not only was this a mean act on the part of the Department, it was also a sure sign that the Department did not intend to let married women treat their pregnancies as matter-of-factly as did nineteenth-century women who took 'accouchement' leave as they continued with their careers. But Audrey cannot be considered a victim in the same way manner as, for example, Mary Mattingley who was denied her pension entitlement. Audrey may well have been a 'dutiful' daughter of the Department who accepted its decisions but she challenged it in her own way, upgrading her qualifications and successfully collecting on retirement not only a package but a pension as well.

Indeed despite their chequered careers none of the three women qualify simply as victims of the marriage bar or even of Department policy. Although their careers began decades apart they faced common problems, in particular limited career options for women. For Alvie teaching was an improvement on clerical work, Nan

tried to choose against it and Audrey drifted into teaching – but they all used teaching as an opportunity to gain a university education. And in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s when teachers were in demand, they successfully combined marriage, child care and careers for considerable periods of time with the help of supportive husbands. Perhaps one of the reasons the state so rigorously pursued the ‘two-income’ family for so long was the recognition of how successful such a partnership could be.

Alvie, Nan and Audrey are unassuming women. They persisted in helping me write this chapter, both to help me complete the thesis and ensure an accurate account of their careers is recorded. Not only have they made a significant contribution to teaching, and in different ways to the wider community; they have helped change the way the community view married women teachers (and married women working) and, just as importantly, how married women teachers viewed themselves.

¹ A. Prentice and M. Theobald (eds), *Women Who Taught: perspectives on the history of women and teaching*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1991.

² M. Lake, *Getting Equal: the history of Australian feminism*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999, pp. 6-16. Lake makes the point that prior to the 1970s Australian historians had not acknowledged women as political or historical actors. And when women’s liberationists began researching, they tended to regard their predecessors as embarrassingly sexually conservative and tended to ignore them.

³ Interview with Nan Gallagher, 2000.

⁴ Interview with Alvie Booth, 2000.

⁵ In 1919 Professor John Smyth was appointed to the first Australian Chair of Education in the University of Melbourne. Smyth’s emphasis on scholarship and the professionalism of teachers resulted in significant growth in the numbers attracted to teacher education in the mid 1920s. See L.J. Blake, *Vision and Realisation: a centenary history of stated education in Victoria*. Education Department of Victoria, Melbourne, 1973, vol. 1, pp.883-5.

⁶ Both male and female students were ‘bonded’ to the Department and required to serve as teachers for a stipulated time, which varied over the years. Men were able to marry and fulfill the Department’s requirements. Women were required to resign on marriage and repay the Department. There appears to be no correspondence on this matter in the files of the Teachers’ Colleges in the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1940s and 50s this had changed with a number of women attempting to negotiate with the Department, see VPRS 10537, unit 62, Breach of agreement.

⁷ Toc H is a community service organisation, with its origins in the First World War, founded on Christian principles.

⁸ As a delegate from her local branch, Shepparton, Alvie spoke in favour of equal pay at the 1945 Annual Conference of the VTU; A. Spaul in 'Teachers and Politics: A comparative study of state teachers' organizations in Victoria and New South Wales since 1940', Ph.D. thesis, Monash University, 1972, p.82, notes Alvie's support of the left-wing's proposal for the VTU to affiliate with the Victorian Trades Hall Council.

⁹ S. Macintyre, *The Reds: the Communist Party of Australia from origins to illegality*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, pp. 395-6.

¹⁰ S. Macintyre, *The Reds*, p.412.

¹¹ Bernie Taft was considered a significant figure in the Communist Party; see Brad Norrington, *Jennie George*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998, p.71.

¹² M. Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp.5-10.

¹³ In April 1950 Menzies presented the Communist Party Dissolution Bill to parliament. The Bill aimed to dissolve the Communist Party and jail all communists for life. The definition of a communist was very broad, encompassing anyone who had supported the teachings of Lenin and Marx; see Suzane Fabian and Morag Loh, *Left-Wing Ladies, The Union of Australian Women in Victoria, 1950-1998*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 2000, p.7. Post war the onset of the Cold War left communism in a beleaguered state from which it never recovered; see Macintyre, pp.412-413.

¹⁴ Frank Hardy is one of Australia's most well-known communist writers. In 1950 he wrote *Power Without Glory* and was arrested on a criminal libel charge. After a six-day trial, Hardy was found not guilty. See Paul Adams, *The Stranger from Melbourne, Frank Hardy a Literary Biography 1944-1975*, University of Western Australia, Perth, 1999, p.51 for Alvie's involvement as organiser.

¹⁵ M. Saunders and R. Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement: A short history*, Peace Research Centre, ANU, Canberra, 1986, pp.44-6.

¹⁶ Interview with Nan Gallagher, 2001.

¹⁷ Nan notes that her appointment to this school at nineteen years of age was no problem. As a seventeen-year-old she had been head teacher at Doomburrin Primary School, among other unqualified young women sent out to rural schools during the war.

¹⁸ N. Melbourne, 'Teachers can be good mothers', *Herald*, 1 July, 1955.

¹⁹ Entries in Nan's diary detail her radio broadcasts. For newspaper coverage see 'The Woman Teachers' Case', *Age*, 28 April 1956.

²⁰ Michael Gawenda, 'Why school may be out for your child today', *Sun*, Wednesday, 5 April 1978, p.8.

²¹ Leaflet entitled 'Why the stop work here?', in possession of Nan Gallagher.

²² D. Sinclair, 'Profile', *Interaction*, December 1993, vol. 21, no.4. pp.10-12.

²³ L. J. Blake, *Vision and Realisation*, vol.1, pp.470,479; A. Hoy, *A City Built to Music, the story of University High School 1910-1960*, University High School, Melbourne, 1961.

²⁴ L. J. Blake, *Vision and Realisation*, vol.1, pp.912,

²⁵ VPRS 640/P001, Primary Schools Correspondence Files 1872-1962, 29 May 1956.

²⁶ Minutes of the VTU Council Executive, N86/38, Tribunal Report, 5 April 1957, Amendment to Regulation 4. The original legislation was amended as follows: 'After clause 13 insert the following

sub-heading and new clause, Leave for Married women: If the pregnancy does not result in the birth of a living child, or the child dies, the teacher may return to duty before the expiration of the six month period’.

²⁷ Minutes of the VTU Council Executive, N86/38, Report by Doug Brown, teachers’ representative on the Tribunal Board.

²⁸ Undated correspondence from the VTU to C. Hicks, Principal, Consolidated School, Pakenham, in the possession of Audrey Dodson.

²⁹ VPRS 640/ P001, Teaching Service Act 1946, section 60, (56/329). There is considerable evidence in the correspondence of the Beaconsfield State School’s file to support Audrey’s contention that many married women around her were receiving pay in lieu of long service; for example, the case of Mrs X, who received pay in lieu of seven years of completed service.

³⁰ Interview Audrey Dodson, 2000.

³¹ Audrey was able to capitalise on the education policies of Gough Whitlam’s reform government which, among other things, offered funding for school libraries and teachers’ colleges libraries. The Whitlam government’s policies of funding higher education and opening up access to higher education offered women like Audrey, who had the courage and determination to take up the offer, possibilities they had been denied in the past. See G. Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1985, pp.291-328.

IN THE GRIP OF MATERNITY? ANOTHER LOOK AT THE MARRIED WOMAN TEACHER

The married women teacher's reinstatement in the Department is a success story in the face of considerable odds. But it is only one story among others equally important in understanding married women's teaching labour. Most pertinently it does not explain why, after 1956, so many women chose to remain as temporary teachers after marriage or to resign and not teach again. Department figures show that 1,300 married women primary teachers and 700 married women secondary teachers chose to remain temporary after the passing of the Act in 1956.¹ In recognition of this, Viv Reilly retained the term 'temporary' in the title of the club she renamed the Permanent and Temporary Teachers' Club, dealing with grievances from temporary married women teachers while working for full superannuation rights for married women teachers.²

It does not require a historian, let alone a feminist historian, to analyse the causes of women's rejection of a lifelong teaching career. The 1950s is recognised as a period of significant conservatism, when the virtues of domesticity were enshrined in our culture and motherhood was singled out for particular attention.³ The feminist historian, Alison Mackinnon, frankly acknowledges in the preface of her work, *Love and Freedom: professional women and the reshaping of personal life*: 'I began my career by chance, like many women of my generation. I had not planned for it, having grown up in the 1950s expecting marriage, motherhood, perhaps some school teaching, to provide fulfillment'.⁴ Similarly, a Canadian feminist historian, Alison Prentice, in her biographical account of the Canadian physicist, Elizabeth Allin, notes that: 'Coming of age in the 1950s may also have had something to do with my major interests when I first met Professor Allin. Apart from teaching high school history, these were largely domestic'.⁵ Both historians, however, have recognised the ambiguity in post war women's lives, which ran counter to this conservatism. In their work on aspects of Australian culture in the 1950s, John Murphy and Judith Smart have also drawn attention to the 'dynamic and disparate' elements in this otherwise flattened period, which have questioned our stereotyped understandings.⁶

It is in the contested meanings of 1950s culture that we can understand the opposition of women in the TTC to the Victorian Education Department.

But the question remains. How, in a culture of conservatism, was it possible to push through legislation reinstating married women in the Victorian Education Department? Viv Reilly says simply: 'The time was ripe'. She is referring to the situation prevailing in the Victorian Education Department in the 1950s when the government, faced with extraordinary growth in the post war school population, was desperate for trained experienced teachers.⁷ The other important element for success was the sustained lobbying by well-qualified and experienced married women teachers determined to have professional recognition and proper recompense for the job they were doing.

To this conjunction of need and desire I would add one very significant factor. The leadership of the Temporary Teachers' Club, including Viv Reilly, the president, Nan Gallagher, the first secretary of the Club, and Gwyn Dow, the vice-president, were childless. Free from the controlling discourses of motherhood, though no doubt subject to different pressure because of their childlessness, they were able to put in the necessary time and energy that made the Temporary Teachers' Club a force to be reckoned with. Another senior member, Claire Finnis, did have children, but as the sole breadwinner for a family and an invalid husband, she had no option but to support the temporary teachers' cause. Indeed if proof is needed of the disruptive effects of maternity on women's careers, it is evident in Nan Gallagher's remarriage in 1958, a year after the passing of the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act. She, too, chose to become a temporary teacher for a period. During this time she had four children before returning to a permanent position in the Department.

This chapter explores the idea that focussing on the marriage bar as the sole determining factor in women teachers' lives/careers is looking in only one direction – equally as important is what generally followed marriage – maternity. Married women could conceal their marriages, even if this were a risky business, and they could try and resist the discourses of motherhood by not having children or having them minded while they worked. This was a theoretical option for most women in an era that predated reliable, easily available contraception and did not provide

childcare. It was not until the pressures against the married woman teacher as mother changed, that astute married women could press home the advantage and overturn the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department. This chapter revisits the thirty-interviews I had with married women teachers, but from a different perspective.⁸ It explores the rich diversity of women's understandings of their personal lives and their teaching careers in the context of feminist historians' understandings of maternity in Australian culture.

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When I first listened to the women, I failed entirely to hear the significance of what they were saying. Perhaps this was because it was so unexpected. (Were the women who politely declined an interview with me right after all?) Or perhaps it was because such finely grained work as this is specific to time and place in women's lives? Certainly their stories were far more complex than I had anticipated. They took me to a past I faintly recognized in memories of the lives of my grandmother and my mother. Through the lens of their experiences I learnt what it was like to grow up knowing that a teaching career finished on marriage. And I understood a little how it felt to be constrained as a daughter, wife and mother in ways that are difficult for contemporary women to imagine. Many came into teaching by default as it offered a way of earning a living while waiting for marriage. Not that teaching afforded women significant status. Many women saw themselves as dutiful daughters in the home and humble servants of the Department at work. And as pupil teachers they were just that. Even if they left home to study at Teachers' College, they were transferred from the authority of the father to the authority of a patriarchal Department. The term that recurred in our conversations was respectability. The women had to be careful to guard their reputations as virtuous young women and this was achieved not by working in a public place, but by marrying and raising a family. From their perspective, then, it is not surprising that they passed lightly over the issue of the marriage bar, embracing marriage as the start of a new adventure and a real career, as a mother.

How had circumstances for married women changed so radically since the era of the teaching matriarchs in the mid-to-late nineteenth century? Then married women

teachers not only wanted to teach but they could also cross successfully from the private to the public domain. As feminist historians Jill Matthews and Marilyn Lake argue, 'white maternity', the ideology of population growth, was a dominant discourse in Australia from the 1890s to the 1930s.⁹ The teaching matriarchs, Anne Drake, who had nine children, Maria Hadfield, who had twelve children and Jane Whyte, who had eight children, could not have been accused of neglecting their patriotic duty to populate the colonies of Australia with white children. No doubt one of the reasons that these career women escaped criticism was that they were respectably cloaked in maternity, conspicuously fulfilling their 'duties' on all counts. In fact their maternity compared well with other women in the colony. For in the three decades from the 1860s to the 1890s white women continued to bear children in considerable numbers.¹⁰

But these women would be the last generation to bear such large families. In the decade of the 1890s the fertility of women aged thirty-five to thirty-nine years was halved.¹¹ And the average of seven children per family in 1881 declined to four children per family in 1911.¹² Australian women's prolific pregnancies, with their attendant dangers, were not a result of women's eagerness to bear children, but of the limited knowledge and availability of contraception.¹³ By the turn of the century married couples had resisted the pressure to breed prolifically as women had more information and more capacity to control their fertility. Federation marked a low point in the nation's birthrate. Indeed the state of New South Wales was so concerned over the steadily falling birth rate that it established a royal commission to investigate this 'apparent race suicide'. The Commissioners pointed the finger at women and set about banning the sale of contraceptives.¹⁴

The tide had turned against prodigious maternity. In retrospect Australian women's lower fertility was part of a demographic change occurring in all modernising societies, which moved from a high birth rate and a high death rate to a low birth rate and a low death rate in this era. This had very important implications for married women, including the married women teachers I interviewed, the oldest of whom was born in the first decade of the twentieth century and the others in the 1920s and 1930s. Yet while married women could now expect to have far fewer children, they would be subjected to the seductive discourses of 'properly' rearing and caring for

them. In 1901 infant mortality – deaths of children under twelve months of age – was 101.61 per thousand registered births in Australia, compared with a ratio of 76.28 deaths per thousand in New Zealand.¹⁵ Howe and Swain argue that the Australian government's immediate response was to focus on child saving.¹⁶ And who better to focus on than mothers? If women were having fewer children, they would be held accountable for rearing those they had.

It was these powerful discourses of marriage and the importance of motherhood that I was hearing through the muted discourses of teaching. The ground rules for dependent motherhood were established in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1907 the Harvester Case judgement by Justice Higgins in the Commonwealth Industrial and Arbitration Court determined a living wage for a working man, his dependent wife and three children. Viewed as a landmark decision in Australian labour history, it was also a turning point for married women. Their labour was deemed significant only in childbirth. The state's pro-natalism, aimed at encouraging mothers to produce healthy babies, saw the introduction of the Maternity Allowance Act of 1912.¹⁷ These years also saw the development of what Matthews has described as the 'control of women's work' within their families, with the 'Ideal Mother' as the central icon. Mothers and babies became the centre of a many pronged attack. Lake terms this the reform of the environment of mothering. Liberals and unionists agreed that working-class mothers were better off caring for their children at home rather than being in the workforce. In 1913 even the conservative Jessie Ackermann, writing of mothers, children and the birth rate in Australia, claimed:

We may sum up the shortcomings of the women of Australia in regard to their citizenship, point out their weaknesses as a whole, run up against their points and angles with evidences of the collision, but it must be said that they are royal mothers.¹⁸

Ackermann, an American journalist, traveller and 'do gooder' visited Australia on four lengthy occasions and describes in detail how women in Australia had advanced knowledge of scientific motherhood.¹⁹

In the 1940s, four decades after the Harvester Judgement, my working-class, politically left-wing mother agreed. She rightly identified escape from working in the local factory as a privilege. As testament to her belief that all children deserve the best possible start in life, my sister and I were the chubbiest children in the 'slums' of working-class Collingwood on her painfully budgeted Oslo school lunches.²⁰ Better housing, pure milk campaigns, and the provision of parks and gardens where mothers and children could spend time together became important goals for communities to achieve. Feminists, Lake argues, had always stressed motherhood even more than wifehood, but now they found their feminist ideals subsumed by welfare concerns.²¹

The 1930s Depression hit Australia hard with higher unemployment than most industrial countries.²² Households collapsed under financial pressures, evictions were common and people were reduced to begging and living off welfare. The Depression effectively came to an end with the start of the Second World War.²³ By 1943 a Labor government had instituted a welfare agenda, funding child care centres and other community initiatives. The women I interviewed followed up these initiatives. As founding members of the United Association of Women, Ruth Crow, Alvie Booth and Marjorie Bennett were in the forefront in improving the lot of working-class women and rightly proud of their achievements in developing child care centres and infant welfare centres in their respective communities.²⁴ The part these women played in reforming their communities surely qualifies them as the 'technical experts' central to Reiger's work on the modernizing of the Australian family.²⁵ I remember their enthusiasm for various projects. I remember Ruth Crow's commitment to improved housing – a lifelong commitment – and her passionate interest in teaching domestic science to working-class girls. During our interview, I think now she was trying to point out to me that these were the issues of importance, not the removal of the marriage bar, to which I persistently kept returning.

The women I interviewed were highly educated. They drew on extensive contemporary scientific research in support of their views to which they would often refer. My interview with Marjorie Oke was punctuated with references to the appalling consequences of child deprivation and the importance of John Bowlby's

work in establishing the connection between effective mothering and the successful rearing of children. She spoke of her concern for the families in her area. Her interest in neglected children would influence her lifelong commitment to community childcare. In the light of her union commitment to the removal of the marriage bar, which I documented in an earlier chapter, I asked her how she thought women might be able to combine marriage and a career. Her response should not have surprised me:

I was determined that I wasn't going to go back to work until they [her two children] were both at school. I said to Brian [her husband] at the start that I wouldn't be able to look after them properly if I went back to work straight away.²⁶

Alvie Booth, a contemporary of Marjorie Oke, echoed this sentiment. She attempted to return to teaching when her youngest child was small. But on the day she began temporary teaching at a school nearby, her child became seriously ill. She was only at work for half a day before she was forced to return home and look after him. She never returned. What, she asked me, was she supposed to do with a sick child? What indeed! Her comments on pregnancy are also enlightening. Alvie, of course, belongs to the generations of women whose pregnancies predated the introduction of the contraceptive pill to Australia in 1961. The birth rate might have been lower than the pro-natalists would have liked, but there was still no reliable form of contraception. Witness the loss of life in maternal deaths in the decade between 1920 and 1930 when over 7,000 Australian women died in childbirth. Ominously for women, the maternal mortality rate climbed with the incidence of fatal abortion, higher in Australia between 1919 and 1928 than in England and Wales.²⁷ Even in the 1930s there were still no birth control clinics in Australia.²⁸ (Grimshaw et al., however, argue that family planning, called Racial Hygiene Clinics, appeared in capital cities in the 1930s.)²⁹ Alvie made the point, reiterated by a number of women, that it was barely respectable to venture outdoors when pregnant. It certainly was not the 'done thing' to appear before a class in 'that condition'. Alvie offered an excellent explanation of why so many women did not take up the offer of permanency in the Victorian Education Department in 1956. Without the option of contraception, women in the 1950s believed it to be scarcely worthwhile for married

women to go to the trouble of applying for permanent teaching and preparing classwork, only to find that they could no longer continue teaching because they were pregnant.

I am indebted to Ruth Crow for clarifying many of these issues for me. She must have sensed my bewilderment as, without prompting from me, she sent me a letter explaining what marriage and motherhood meant to the women of her generation. She drew on the story of Doris McRae's life as an illustration. Nominating her as an outstanding representative of a generation of women teachers who had preceded her own cohort, she described Doris as a dedicated teacher for whom the 'Department *Gazette* was the Bible'.

Admired for her professionalism in her teaching and respected by the Union movement, Doris McRae reached the pinnacle of her profession, principal of a girls' high school. As Ruth Crow pointed out women teachers may have admired and liked Doris McRae, but they certainly did not want to be like her. Doris had been forced to deny herself many things, including teaching exchange positions overseas, as her single status meant that she was the family member responsible for the upkeep of her sister and family, given that her brother-in-law was an invalid. She had 'missed out' on life. Without putting it into words and demeaning a woman she admired, Ruth made it clear that younger women saw Doris McRae as a lonely spinster. She was not alone in thinking this. Ruth claimed, 'women teachers had an eye out for marriage'.

Ruth's descriptions of what befell spinsters in the Department support Sheila Jeffreys' work, *The Spinster and Her Enemies*. Jeffreys sees the spinster as changing status from an independent, respected figure at the turn of the century to the pathologised figure of fun some years later. She lays the blame for this on the work of Freud and the sexologists, Havelock Ellis in particular.³⁰ Pointing out that Havelock Ellis is one of the seminal figures of the sexual revolution, Jeffreys claims that he is responsible for three crucial ideas in the debate around sexuality in the early twentieth century. She describes these as Ellis's assertions that there were immutable biological differences between the sexes, particularly in the area of sexuality; that sexual relations between men and women should take the form of

male dominance and female submission, and that the 'ideal' woman was a mother.³¹ Educated women were influenced by the writings of Havelock Ellis and others. At one stage Marjorie Oke, who welcomed Ellis's liberation of female sexuality, remembers with amusement that she presented all her newly married women friends with copies of his work.

It was not until the Second World War that women would be able to show some resistance to the discourses of marriage and motherhood. They concealed their marriages from the Department and continued to teach. Not that this was new; there are occasional examples of this, such the case of Grace Neven in chapter 4, which come to light in Department records. There is anecdotal evidence that it was more routinely practised during the Second World War. Pregnancy in the classroom presented a quite different problem. One woman was undaunted by the thought of teaching a class while pregnant. Having concealed her marriage from the Department, she resigned when she discovered she was pregnant, but taught for her entire pregnancy at a newly opened 'alternative school' which offered her accommodation. Other married women teachers may not have this determination to continue teaching while pregnant, or perhaps an opportunity to teach in an alternative school did not present itself.

Post war women were required to take their part in rebuilding the nation. And once again there was a baby boom. The home and family had a strong hold on women. The Schools' Correspondence File of MacRobertson Girls' High School contains a letter from a young married woman who had just returned to teaching. Grace Myles thanks the school for offering her an opportunity to teach but writes to say that she will not be able to continue:

In mid July I applied for employment as a temporary teacher, and following an interview was sent as a relieving teacher to MacRobertson Girls' High School.

However, by the end of August, it was apparent that my absence from my home was having a serious psychological effect on my young daughter. She is asthmatic and emotional disturbances can react very adversely on the health of

this type of child, as I am sure you know from your own experiences of dealing with children.

Our doctor has told me that if I wish to avoid further trouble with her, I have no choice but to give up my work and help to provide her with a stable home background. My all-too-short stint at MacRobertson Girls' High school was very stimulating and enjoyable and I leave with great regret.³²

Maternal commitments took precedence over careers.

The powerful, controlling discourses of maternity and infant-centred motherhood had to be confronted if married women were to be redefined as 'professional'. This was quite a challenge given that the Department feared upsetting the 'natural order of things'. The Minister, John Bloomfield, played on the issue of rising delinquency in the community in a none-too-subtle message that married women teaching would increase the problem. Nan Gallagher and others in the Temporary Teachers' Club set out to counter these discourses. Under the heading of 'Good teachers make good mothers', she systematically attacked the prejudices surrounding mothers who taught. She argued that there were two categories of teaching mothers. There were those who returned to teaching after they had raised their families and there were those who returned when their children started school. The latter category of married women did not cause any deprivation because their working hours paralleled those of their children.³³ Nan Gallagher's arguments were very well received by a community anxious to employ qualified teachers. And when the Department chose to promote the idea that mothers who were teachers were 'naturally' better than spinsters, because they were experienced with children, it was clearing the way for married women teachers' reinstatement.³⁴

But looking forward the problem of maternity remained. Women were required to discreetly leave the Department before their pregnancy showed. In 1971, I was asked if I would wear concealing garments if I continued to teach. New mothers were not allowed to return before a reasonable time had elapsed. Initially women were granted eighteen months maternity leave without pay. In 2002 the issue of paid maternity leave again preoccupies the media. In 1956 the Department was so

stringent in this regard that within a year it had to amend its legislation to include the phrase 'delivered of a live birth'; presumably some unfortunate woman had been precluded from returning to teach after a stillbirth by a poorly written Act.³⁵ And just in case young women teachers had not got the point, the Department offered them a sum of money in lieu of their long service leave, if they resigned on marriage. If they returned after marriage, as did Audrey Dodson and then became pregnant, they received nothing.

In this brief account I have intended to disturb the notion that the marriage bar was all that stood between women teachers and their right to professional careers. Indeed given the powerful discourses of maternity and motherhood which positioned married women out of the profession of teaching for sixty-seven years, it is remarkable that the bar was lifted in the Victorian Education Department in 1956. There were, however, a number of reasons for the success of the TTC campaign that were canvassed in the previous chapter. The culture of the 50s was both conservative and ambivalent – some women campaigned against the prejudices arrayed against married women teachers and took up the offer of permanency in the Department; others conformed and chose to resign on marriage. The complexity of married women's teaching lives is exemplified in Nan Gallagher. As secretary of the TTC, she campaigned vigorously for the rights of married women temporary teachers. Yet as mother of four children born later in her life, she chose to resign – an act that cost her the chance of promotion to headmistress, a status reached by some of her similarly qualified and experienced married women colleagues.

¹ *VPP 1956-7*, Report of the Minister of Education, p.17.

² Temporary Teachers' Club, VTU, 13 October 1955 – September 1960, MSN 458, Box 1769/1, loose inset, SLV.

³ See B. Freidan, *The Feminine Mystique*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1963; J.J. Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: the historical construction of femininity in twentieth-century*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984.

⁴ Alison Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom: professional women and the reshaping of personal life*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p ix.

⁵ A. Prentice, 'Elizabeth Allin: physicist', typescript in possession of the author.

⁶ J. Murphy and J. Smart, 'The Forgotten Fifties: aspects of Australian society and culture in the 1950s', in *Australian Historical Studies*, no. 109, October 1997, pp. 1-5.

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- ⁷ The marriage bar remained for other divisions of the Public Service in Victoria until 1974 and in the Commonwealth Public Service until 1966.
- ⁸ I interviewed more women than those whose names are listed in the biography: some withdrew from the project, the names of others have been omitted to guarantee their anonymity.
- ⁹ J.J. Matthews, *Good and Mad Women: the historical construction of femininity in twentieth century Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1984; M. Lake, *Getting Equal: the history of Australian feminism*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1999.
- ¹⁰ P. Grimshaw, M. Lake, A. McGrath and M. Quartly, *Creating a nation: 1788-1900*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1994.
- ¹¹ P. Grimshaw et al., *Creating a nation*, p. 195.
- ¹² R. Howe and S. Swain, 'Fertile grounds for divorce: sexuality and reproductive imperatives', in K. Saunders and R. Evans (EDS), *Gender relations in Australia: domination and negotiation*. Harcourt Brace, Marrickville, 1994, p.168.
- ¹³ P. Grimshaw et al., (eds), *Creating a Nation*, p. 192.
- ¹⁴ P. Grimshaw et al., (eds), *Creating a Nation*, p. 193.
- ¹⁵ R. Howe and S. Swain, 'Sexuality and reproductive imperatives', in K. Saunders and R. Evans (eds) *Gender Relations in Australia*, p.168.
- ¹⁶ R. Howe and S. Swain, 'Sexuality and reproductive imperatives', p.168.
- ¹⁷ R. Howe and S. Swain, 'Sexuality and reproductive imperatives', p.171.
- ¹⁸ J. Ackermann, *Australia from a Woman's Point of View*, Cassell, Melbourne, 1913, reprinted, Cassell, 1981, p.86.
- ¹⁹ J. Ackermann, *Australia from a woman's point of view*, p.97.
- ²⁰ An Oslo lunch was wholesome simple meal. Its name was drawn from the Norwegian city of Oslo.
- ²¹ M. Lake, *Getting Equal*, p.195.
- ²² S. Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1999, p.176.
- ²³ P. Grimshaw et al, *Creating a Nation*, pp. 241-253.
- ²⁴ S. Fabian and M. Loh, *Left-wing ladies: the Union of Australian Women in Victoria, 1950-1998*, Hyland House, Flemington, 2000.
- ²⁵ K.Reiger, *The Disenchantment of the Home: modernising the Australian family 1880-1940*, OUP, Melbourne, 1984.
- ²⁶ Interview with Marjorie Oke, nee Bennett.
- ²⁷ P. Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, p.235.
- ²⁸ R. Howe and S. Swain, 'Sexuality and Reproductive Imperatives', p.168.
- ²⁹ P. Grimshaw et al., *Creating a Nation*, p.246.
- ³⁰ S. Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies: feminism and sexuality 1880-1930*, Pandora Press, London, 1985, pp. 128-138.
- ³¹ S. Jeffreys, *The Spinster and her Enemies*, p.129.
- ³² VPRS 10249, High Schools Correspondence Files, unit 213, Sept 29/56.
- ³³ 'Teachers can be good mothers', *Herald*, 1 July 1955.
- ³⁴ See the arguments of the Minister of Education, John Bloomfield in *VPD 1955-6*, vol.249, p.4969.

³⁵ Teachers' Tribunal Report, 5 April 1957. Amendment to regulation 4. Leave of absence. 'If the pregnancy of such teacher does not result in the birth of a living child, or the child dies, the teacher may return to duty before the expiration of six months'.

CONCLUSION

Nineteenth-century administrators in the Victorian Education Department dispensed with married women teachers: their twentieth-century counterparts needed their services and legislated for their return. Nevertheless the discourses of disapproval surrounding the married woman teacher in the nineteenth-century Department were replicated in the debate on her reinstatement in the Teaching Service (Married Women) Act 1956.

The Rogers Templeton commissioners were frank in their gendered blueprint for the teaching service. They justified the exclusion of married women teachers on the grounds that all women were physically and mentally more fragile than men and should not be doing the same tasks. Married women teachers were even more professionally suspect, given that their pregnancies and their domestic duties left them 'too exhausted for proper performances at work'. In 1956 members of parliament did not concern themselves with the professional capabilities of married women teachers whose services were sorely needed, but they, too, were concerned that married women could not manage teaching and a family. A married woman might 'have a little tiff with the breadwinner before she leaves home' or, worse still, 'neglect her natural destiny', 'break up her household' and 'breed delinquency'.

There is another important parallel. Liberal reformers in the 1880s, a decade before the Harvester judgement that constituted a family wage around a male breadwinner, specifically opposed a two-salaried family, exemplified in the circumstances of many of the teaching matriarchs. The Rogers Templeton Commissioners went further targeting women teachers who were supporting unemployed men. In this accounting there could be no sympathy for the married woman as breadwinner. In 1956 both sides of parliament focussed on the proposed superannuation scheme for married women. The Liberal Minister Bloomfield put it bluntly. He was opposed to a husband and wife qualifying for superannuation and bringing in two pensions to the household.¹ Labor members of parliament concerned with protecting the 'interests of male persons in long term employment' were prepared to accept an inferior superannuation scheme for married women. So married women teachers' superannuation became a 'special' category. Their maternity was invoked, deeming

them too fragile for full superannuation entitlements. Hence the needs of women like Claire Firmis, the breadwinner supporting an invalid husband and family, were passed over. Across seven decades male administrators and members of parliament were in agreement. The married woman was a procreative dependent wife not a teacher and a breadwinner. Yet against these insistent voices and a Department reluctant to admit married women teachers, they reclaimed their professional lives.

Married women teachers were not always regarded negatively. In the quasi-free market economy of colonial Victoria, married women teachers positioned themselves advantageously. Considered naturally suited to the teaching of children and preferred by parents for the moral propriety they brought to the teaching of girls in separate departments, women such as Mary Jenvey, Anne Drake, Maria Hadfield, Jane Whyte and Lucy Tisdall represented a significant proportion of women teachers. Well qualified and experienced, they maintained a consistent presence in the Department, often managing growing families as well as well as large departments in city and regional schools. Their powerful influence and entrepreneurial successes were evidence that colonial administrations were far less discriminatory in their dealings with married women teachers than future administrations would prove to be.

In 1872 the newly established Victorian Education Department set out to regulate married women's teaching and transform teaching into a public service domain for men. The Rogers Templeton commissioners' recommendations were implemented in the 1889 Public Service Act that would exclude married women from the teaching service. Thereafter teaching was a revolving door rather than a career path for women. Women retired on marriage and spinsters remained, many to be confined to working in Infant departments, the 'pinnacle' of their career structure. The legacy of the marriage bar on the structure of the teaching service is still with us. This is apparent in the recent Senate inquiry into the status of teachers, published under the title, *A Class Act*.² The inquiry points out that within the teaching profession women are under-represented in positions of leadership and power across the board.

Across the decades, some of the Department's legal manoeuvres defy explanation but clearly it did everything possible to push married women out of the service. In

1894, as a Depression measure, the Department seized the opportunity to expel most of the remaining married women from the Department. Married women stood their ground when it came to the denial of their pension rights. Mary Jane Mattingley, on behalf of these women, took the Department to court, but her claims to a pension were denied on more than one occasion. The Department wanted to control its married women teachers and be seen to be in control. Its official line was that the women were ineligible and that it was not going to create a two-pension family.

In 1895 the Department faced a challenge over what should be the fate of the teaching widow. When women who were expelled from the Department were widowed, there was considerable pressure on the Department to reinstate them. The Department's grudging response was to amend the legislation, which in its original form exempted widows from the marriage bar, and readmit only those widowed teachers who had been retrenched. In 1895 when the legal challenge from the widowed Mary Jelbart was dismissed, married women lost their chance to define the category of widowed teacher as a permanent member of the Department. The Department's narrow definition of a needy woman deserving of reinstatement would remain in operation until the 1950s.

The Department's draconian rulings on married women's entitlement to reinstatement left a terrible legacy for generations of women who had no option but teaching as a means of survival for themselves and their dependants. Widows, deserted wives, and women who were clearly married in name only and without any means of financial support, would be employed only as temporary teachers. Their teacher career records were stamped with 'O' designating their outside, marginalised status. The stories of Grace Neven, Alice Jardine and Lottie Bartlett have important moral and ethical – not to mention economic – implications. Their teaching labour underpinned a bureaucracy's attempts to eke out its ailing finances and staff its far-flung schools. The irony was that this exploitation of a reserve army of temporary labour operated under the auspices of the highly regarded reformists, Alexander Peacock and Frank Tate.

During the Second World War married women returned in droves as temporary teachers to replace enlisted men. This occurred despite a bizarre ruling by the

Minister, John Harris, who tried to exclude married women temporary teachers' reentry into the service. Single women Unionists have not been recognised for the support they gave the married woman temporary teacher. Accustomed to lobbying together over the issue of equal pay, women such as Doris McCrae and Helene McGarvin pushed for the reinstatement of married women teachers in the Department, partly from self-interest, and partly because they could see no reason for denying a woman a permanent teaching position because of her marital status.

Their lead was followed by the married women temporary teachers who formed the TTC and pressured the Union and the Department until the bar was lifted with the passing of the Married Woman (Teachers) Act 1956. The efforts of these women, too, have gone unrecognised. In fact members of the more radical VSTA have been given credit for the lifting of the bar. Nan Gallagher and Viv Reilly's campaign in co-operating with the women's branches and the leadership of the VTU warrants close examination. Their efforts should not be dismissed because they worked within the Union. Choosing not to adopt a separate women's politics outside the Union did not mean that their views were subsumed within it. On the contrary the TTC proved a very successful pressure group. Doubtless the post war rise in population and parental pressure contributed to the Department's capitulation over the issue of the marriage bar, but it should be noted that the bar was not lifted in the State Public Service in Victoria until 1974.³

Interviewing married women teachers has proved a double-edged sword. The pleasure of listening to their fascinating stories was balanced by the problems both methodological and ethical of writing about them. Their complex stories of the marriage bar in their lives sometimes included accounts of their hidden suffering. Some of these women were coping with partners traumatised by their experiences of the Second World War. Feminist theorists' concern with ownership of the narrative, coupled with the University of Melbourne's ethics committee requirements, prompted me to engage the women in careful cross examination of their stories. But the problem of ownership of the narrative is not resolved so easily. What, I wonder, will Alvie Booth, Nan Gallagher and Audrey Dodson make of my analysis of the interview process when they read the thesis, as all three women have expressed a desire to do?

The stories of Alvie Booth, Nan Gallagher and Audrey Dodson are the stories of ordinary – yet not so ordinary – married women teachers, spanning the past seventy years. Their accounts show the multiple meanings of the marriage bar in their lives. Alvie left teaching not because of the marriage bar but because of ill-health and a commitment to the peace movement. But teaching was an important sub text in Alvie's life and important financially for her family. Alvie would return as a permanent married woman teacher and then as temporary teacher in the Department until she was seventy years of age. Nan also had a lengthy career in the Department. In an ironic twist Nan chose to resign after the lifting of the bar as it suited her circumstances at the time. When she returned she would wrestle with the problems of juggling teaching and writing with the raising of a young family. Audrey was one of the first women to benefit from the lifting of the bar in 1956. She was also the first to fall foul of the regulation that married women who returned in a permanent capacity after marriage and left because of pregnancy, forfeited their retiring allowance.

Maternity mattered in the lives of Australian women. It was inescapable for most married women without reliable contraception and governments encouraged high birth rates. The same discourses that positioned the once respected spinster as the rejected sexless caricature, positioned marriage and motherhood as essential for women. The discourses controlling maternity defined what could and could not be done. Without their mother's constant attention, children could not flourish. It was no accident that the leadership of the TTC was childless. But all were aware that some of their members with children had to work to support men who were traumatised from the Second World War. It was not until women in the TTC analysed and reconfigured the category of the 'good mother' to include a mother who worked when her children were at school, that 'good mothers' could make 'good teachers'. Only then would the discourses of the time support the return of the married woman teacher to the Department in 1956.

There remains one important theme for discussion. In chapter seven, I explored how married women teachers in New South Wales had escaped the marriage bar implemented in the 1895 Public Service Act in that state. In the debate on the Act

voices supporting the rights of married women, taken up at a later date by Jessie Street and the United Associations of Women, established a different context for discussion than that prevailing in Victoria. In 1932 the Married Women (Lecturers and Teachers) Act introduced a formal bar into the teaching service in New South Wales. This Act was amended in 1935 and finally removed in 1947. But at each stage there were exemptions for widows and other needy women with dependants – the very women who were refused permanency by the Victorian Education Department. There were also a number of highly visible, successful married women teachers in the New South Wales Department. It seemed clear cut that married women in the hands of a bureaucracy enforcing a public service act in Victoria were very much worse off than their colleagues in New South Wales. But the career records of married women teachers in New South Wales told another story. Their records showed that most of them had suffered significant discrimination from informal as well as formal bars. Nor was the New South Wales Department consistent, even-handed and humane in its approach to ‘needy’ women as its legislation would have us believe.

With good reason I am now wary of making generalisations about the relative suffering of married women teachers under the marriage bar(s). And this caveat must also operate across cultures. Once I would have argued that the Victorian Education Department implemented the earliest and most stringent marriage bar in operation in the Western world. I am now more tentative, suggesting that married teachers in Victoria suffered the lengthiest continuous exclusion from the teaching service in comparison with married women teachers elsewhere.

Recently Lois Bryson in the *Barton Lectures* has drawn attention to two elements in Australian culture that contribute to a strong male bias impinging on women’s rights. One is the defining of women as dependents, not breadwinners. The other is the ‘systematic attempt to minimise women’s capacity to compete with men in the workforce’.⁴ In this latter category Bryson nominates the marriage bar in the Victorian Public Service, drawing on anecdotal evidence from the lives of her mother’s and her own experiences. As Bryson points out, we know how the restrictions protected men. But anecdotal evidence aside, we know far less about the effects on women. This thesis, however, makes an important contribution to our

understanding of how the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department worked against all women teachers as it reshaped their lives and teaching careers, and the service in which they taught.

I began this project acknowledging that its inspiration had been a 'personal trouble' as I pondered how I would have managed as a single mother in the 1970s if the marriage bar had still been in place in the Victorian Education Department. I will conclude in the same vein. As Viv Reilly realised, the story of the married woman teacher was only partly completed in 1956. Viv and members of the Temporary and Permanent Teachers Club fought on for married women's superannuation rights until married women teachers in Victoria were admitted to the superannuation fund in July 1975.⁵ It was not, however, until 1982 that a common superannuation fund was established which required equal payments from male and female employees. Married women who were teaching before 1982 and contributing to superannuation, face the prospect of buying back years of prior service or retiring on a small pension after decades of unbroken service. I am in this situation. In the meantime our male colleagues with identical service take early retirement at fifty-five years of age, which provides significant taxation advantages and generous superannuation. My story is one of the many legacies of the marriage bar in the Victorian Education Department and the culture of the dependent wife.

¹ Interview with Nan Gallagher, 1999.

² See *A Class Act: Senate Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession*, AGPS, Canberra, 1996, in M. Theobald, 'And gladly teach? The making of a woman's profession', *Fink Memorial Lecture 2000*, Faculty of Education, the University of Melbourne, p.11.

³ See 'Women in the Public Service of Victoria: a discussion paper', Public Service Board, Melbourne, August 1983.

⁴ L. Bryson, 'The new differences between women', in H. Irving ed. *Unity in Diversity: a national conversation*, Barton Lectures, Sydney, ABC Books, 2001, pp. 92-5.

⁵ TTC, correspondence, MS Box 1769/3, panty-hose insert.

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5. UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS

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