

Between class and gender: Female activists in the Illawarra 1975–1980

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Attestations of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Frances Laneyrie

Date:

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Ethics Approval

Ethics number HEO03/154 (University of Wollongong).

Approval granted on 21 May 2003.

Abbreviations

ACOA	Administrative and Clerical Officers' Association
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AJA	Australian Journalists' Association
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AMWSU	Amalgamated Metal Workers' and Shipwrights' Union
AMWU	Australian Metal Workers' Union
ASU	Australian Services Union
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island
AWU	Australian Workers' Union
BLF	Builders' Labourers' Federation
BWIU	Building Workers' Industrial Union
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CFMEU	Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
DVAVO	Domestic Violence Apprehended Violence Order
DVCAS	Domestic Violence Court Assistant Scheme
ETU	Electrical Trades Union
FCU	Federated Clerks' Union
FEDFA	Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association
FIA	Federated Ironworkers' Association
HRCEU	Hotels, Caterers' and Restaurant Employees' Union
INSEC	Illawarra Non-Sexist Education Committee
ITLC	Illawarra Trades and Labour Council (SCLC name prior to 1949)
IWD	International Women's Day
IWY	International Women's Year
MATU	Meat and Allied Trades Union
MWU	Metal Workers' Union
MEU	Municipal Employees' Union
MWN	Multicultural Women's Network

NESB	Non-English Speaking Background
NSW CWS	New South Wales Co-operative Wholesale Society
NSW LC	New South Wales Labour Council
NSW TF	New South Wales Teachers' Federation
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
PSA	Public Service Association
SCLC	South Coast Trades and Labour Council
SWP	Socialist Workers' Party
UAW	Union of Australian Women
UOW	University of Wollongong
WAAC	Women's Abortion Action Campaign
WAG	Women's Action Group
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby
WISH	Women and Children's Incest Support House
WWAI	Wollongong Women Against Incest
WWC	Wollongong Women's Collective (Day and Evening Groups)
WWIC	Wollongong Women's Information Centre
WWWCC	Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee
YWFT	Young Women's Feminist Theatre

Abstract

This thesis examines the historical relationships between two peak bodies at critical moments in the emergence of a new form of feminist activism in the Illawarra region of New South Wales (NSW), Australia. The two organisations are the South Coast Labour Council (SCLC), the region's peak union body, and the Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC), the region's peak feminist body. The Illawarra is one of the most significant historical examples of Australian regional peak unionism (Markey & Nixon, 2004) with a rich history of union–community relationships. The WWIC claims to be the earliest feminist organisation of its kind in non-metropolitan regional Australia. The WWIC was originally proposed by an SCLC standing committee of female and male activists and when formed maintained a close relationship with the SCLC and its feminist activists.

Labour historians in Australia have ignored the relationships between trade unions and feminist organisations. The thesis argues that there are four trends in industrial relations and labour history literature that can benefit from this study: first, an ongoing concern by feminist labour historians about the invisibility of women activists and their agency in institutional studies (Brigden, 2003; Cooper, 2002); second, a renewed focus on the historically changing but creative tensions between class-based and gender-based theories in industrial relations (Cobble, 2007); third, a growing interest in relationships between peak union bodies and community organisations (Ellem, Markey & Shields, 2005); and fourth, increased attention to the role of spatial analysis in understanding the nature of institutional relationships in peak union literature (Ellem & Shields, 1999).

Two in-depth case studies are developed that acknowledge and describe a large number of regional female activists. Subsequently, the impact of class-based and gender-based theories on the reconstruction of stories about women's activism are analysed. While a range of frameworks are utilised, two currently relevant theories are prioritised. First, a class-based theory, Ellem & Shields's (2004) dimensions of peak union bodies, is applied to a broad history of the SCLC. Second, a gender-based theory, Connell's (2002) gender

regimes, is applied to explore the changes in women's activism in the region between 1975 and 1980.

The major theoretical contribution of the thesis is to argue that underlying assumptions about power within peak body relationships constrain the range of explanatory narratives possible about feminist activists and their organisations. Implicit in the current discussion of union–community relationships are notions of ‘power over’ and ‘power for’. Consequently, the organisational power of peak bodies is represented as agentic and instrumental. These underlying assumptions continue to reproduce homo-social patterns underlying theories about personal and organisational relationships and continue to reproduce celebratory or heroic histories. They fail to recognise the dynamic and reciprocal growth (or not) of all parties involved (Fletcher, 1999), they marginalise accounts of peak union relationships which feature women, and they reaffirm artificial divides between class and gender that are ideological, epistemological and material. What is missing is the crucial concept of ‘power with’.

In conclusion, I argue that future developments that combine a feminist standpoint epistemology with relational theory have the potential to constructively analyse the contributions of individual female trade union and feminist activists with the broader patterns of historical engagement of women in and with union organisations.

Chapter One: Introduction

Relationships between class analysis and feminist analysis in labour history literature have received considerable attention from feminist theorists since the early 1970s. Calls for a renewed focus on these relationships since 2003 have pointed to a need to reassess the direction of contributions by feminist theorists towards understanding and interpreting women's activism in both feminist history (Magarey, 2007; Scott, 2004) and labour history (Brigden, 2007; Cobble, 2007). Many of these authors advocate a return to class (Magarey, 2007; Ferrier, 2003; Crain, 2007; Cobble, 2007) and the renewal of attention to the dual concepts of patriarchy and capitalism. The tensions between class and gender have historically reproduced similar and different dissonances. Yet they continue to influence the literature despite the relatively easy alliances in this discipline compared to others, such as management. Labour history researchers, who tend to write from the left, have been empathetic towards feminist activists (Patmore, 2002). The 'unhappy marriage' (Hartmann, 1979) metaphor used to describe the relationship between class and gender continues to influence much of this discussion. The first objective of this thesis is to provide a greater understanding of the ongoing dissonance between class and gender that has implications for understanding women's activism in labour history.

This requires a re-evaluation of how class and gender theories have been used to research and represent women's activism in labour history. Contemporary labour history literature points to an ongoing invisibility of women and of their agency in studies about institutions such as trade unions and trade union peak bodies (see, for example, Brigden, 2007; Cooper, 2002). Therefore, a second objective of the study is to identify previously ignored feminist activism and demonstrate its agency (as called for by Brigden, 2003, 2005; Cooper, 2002; Matthews, 2003).

Demonstrating agency requires a focus on women activists that captures their influence on the strategies and direction of their institutions (Cooper, 2002). I argue that valuable insights into the contribution of women to the power and purpose of the organisations can be gained from a broader understanding of organisational relationships. The issue of

relationships between organisations has recently been reinvigorated by studies attempting to explore relationships between peak union bodies and community organisations (see, for example, Tattersall, 2006, 2008; Ellem & Shields, 2004). Labour historians have not examined relationships between peak union bodies and feminist or women's organisations. Literature examining peak union bodies and feminist organisations tends to sit in different disciplines – labour history or industrial relations and women's studies, respectively.

The Case Studies

The thesis focuses on women activists in Wollongong, the major city of the Illawarra region of New South Wales, Australia which is located 80 kilometres south of Sydney, the state's capital city. The women presented in this study were activists in two regional institutions. The first institution is the South Coast Labour Council (SCLC), the region's peak union body. In 1975 the SCLC provided a central platform for women activists in the region. The second institution is the Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC). The WWIC emerged as the key site for feminist activities in the region in 1980. The thesis will also examine the historical relationships between the two interacting institutions at critical moments in the emergence of a new form of feminist activism in the Illawarra region during 1975 and 1980.

The region's labour history is distinctive because of a high level of union membership and its strong peak union body, the SCLC. The relationships between union and community organisations are distinctive in a national sense, and in turn, this is based on the distinctive character of the region influenced by the strength of working-class community and organisational articulation including relatively high union membership. During and after the WWIC's birth, the relationship of the SCLC and the WWIC constituted a major expression of union–community alliances. These alliances consist of a range of relationships between union bodies and community groups or organisations formed to enable more effective action, be it on industrial, political or social issues.

The years of 1975 and 1980 provide a logical place to focus the analysis of women activists in this thesis. The SCLC and workers' organisations were major forums for women's industrial, social and political activism prior to 1980. International Women's Year was held in 1975 and the influence of women's liberation was beginning to be noticed in the region and at the SCLC. In 1980 the WWIC opened, the result of

collaboration between feminist and trade union women activists, and a new chapter in the relationships between women's organisations and the SCLC began in the region. Understanding how stories were shaped about the feminist activists who belonged to these institutions at this time, their various organisational and personal relationships, their desires for social and industrial justice and their ability to mobilise and achieve change can not only broaden our understanding of the concerns of working-class women within the region, but also offer a new way of thinking about the relationships between gender and class, and feminist and trade union activism.

The following two sections of this chapter provide the reader with a historical and contemporary overview of the key institutions in this study. They are the South Coast Labour Council (SCLC) and the Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC).

The South Coast Labour Council (SCLC)

The SCLC is the regional peak union body for the Illawarra region of New South Wales, Australia. It has been established for over 80 years. It acts as a co-ordinating body for 29¹ affiliated unions within the region (SCLC website, 20 April 2009) and provides a 'voice' for working-class interests within the region (Markey interview, 10 March 2003). Union membership in the Illawarra has traditionally been and remains high by national standards (Markey, Hodgkinson, Mylett, Pomfret, Murray & Zanko, 2001), and since all unions with a regional presence are affiliates, the SCLC has one of the largest affiliated memberships of a regional peak union body in Australia. It represents more than 50,000 workers (SCLC website, 20 April 2009). It covers an area bound by Helensburgh in the north, the Victorian border in the south and extends west into the Southern Highlands area and the adjacent tablelands.

Markey and Nixon (2004) claim that the SCLC is one of the 'most significant examples of regional union organisation in Australia' because of the large scale industrial infrastructure that the membership is drawn from, and also because of the strong sense of place felt by the labour movement of the Illawarra. They attribute the strong sense of place within the labour movement, and of the people of the Illawarra, more generally to the:

¹ This figure is deceptive given the union amalgamations in the 1990s. In 1993 the SCLC had 45 affiliates (Rittau 2001).

physical geographical distinctiveness, the heavy industry base which dominated the region for much of its modern history and produced the early unions, the peculiarities of regional labour movement politics and the strong sense of working-class community arising from a narrow base of industrial activity as well as the early isolation of mining villages and the absentee status of major mining and steel employers based in London, Sydney or Melbourne (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 125).

This regional distinctiveness has been partially shaped by a continuous unity between left political influences from both the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) established at a local level and often at odds with the political loyalties of state and/or national union head offices and the state union peak bodies. For example, the Labor Council of NSW has tended to be dominated by the right of the Australian Labor Party since 1945 (Markey & Wells, 1997). The regional union strength has been attributed originally to higher levels of miners' membership than steelworkers' membership (Markey & Nixon, 2004). The mining and steel industries also fostered left-wing labour organisations in Australia generally. The CPA maintained a strong regional branch until 1990 (Markey & Wells, 1997), and the leadership of the SCLC was in the hands of Communist secretaries, who were either miners or steelworkers, until 1987 (Markey & Nixon, 2004). The strong sense of regional independence from national and state labour structures also flowed into the organisation of white-collar union and professional unions in the region (Markey & Nixon, 2004). Under strong leadership, the SCLC has historically extended its reach beyond narrow industrial issues to play a strong mobilising role in a wide range of community building initiatives that included support for the unemployed, housing, education, the elderly, migrants and women (Laneyrie, 2003a).

The organisation has been described as less patriarchal and parochial than its counterparts in Broken Hill and Newcastle, the two other key regional peak bodies in NSW (Ellem, 2006). It boasts a higher than average involvement of women activists throughout its history. Despite these claims, the SCLC only elected its first woman president, Joanne Kowalczyk, from the National Tertiary Education Union – NTEU, in 2006. Other women on the 12-person executive committee in 2009 included: Naomi Arrowsmith (Australian Services Union – ASU), one of the three vice-presidents; Nicole Calnan (New South Wales Teachers' Federation – NSWTF), one of the three

assistant secretaries; and Helen Smith (New South Wales Nurses' Association), one of the four trustees.

There has been a small number of publications focusing on various periods of the SCLC's history. Women's participation as members of the SCLC has received very little attention, although some historical studies of women's auxiliaries related to individual unions within the region were instigated in the 1970s and 1980s (see Chapter Four). This thesis will provide an overview of women activists who were a key part of the region's relations with (and within) the SCLC until 1980. After 1980 the Wollongong Women's Information Centre provided a new focal point for both women and feminist activists in the region.

The Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC)

Members and workers at the WWIC define the centre as a feminist women's service organisation (WWIC *Annual General Reports*, 1980 to 2008). The WWIC is based in the city of Wollongong; however, its work extends into the broader Illawarra region through its various programmes. Like many other feminist organisations it is a non-governmental organisation, committed to collective decision-making processes in a non-hierarchical structure (Weeks, 1994, p. 36–39). Members of the WWIC claim that its 'feminist, collective' approach to organising is different to trade union organising, and after 28 years it has been successful in achieving its goals. The WWIC has a strong collective, feminist identity. Annette Hodgins, the WWIC's co-ordinator between 2001 and 2003, claimed that the centre is an organisation that has always had a 'strong sense of its own identity' despite the fact that very few published historical accounts exist (Hodgins interview, 23 January 2003). As we will see, workers and members at the WWIC also strongly believed that doing feminist activism in Wollongong was different to 'doing feminism' in other places.

A number of programmes for women are run under the auspices of the WWIC. It provides specialised services for marginalised women such as Australian and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) women, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD), previously labeled Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) women, lesbian women and 'working-class' women. A major component of the work at the WWIC has always consisted of phone-in information and referral services offering mainly crisis support and advocacy-based work. The number of enquiries from women of the region

accessing this service since its inception range from approximately 1,000 to 4,000 per annum. For example, in the 2007–2008 reporting period there were 3,191 phone contacts from women seeking help on issues that included domestic violence, sexual violence, rape, sexual harassment and discrimination, and health, legal and housing concerns. The number of women from the community assisted directly is significantly higher when the various other programmes managed by the WWIC are also considered, such as the Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme (DVCAS), cultural development projects such as the Multicultural Women’s Choir² and the Young Women’s Forum Theatre Programme,³ plus a range of other support group programmes and community and political networking. In 2007–08, the DVCAS staff directly supported 472 individual clients as well as running a number of training programmes for social workers in the local area and actively engaging with committees such as the Illawarra Domestic Violence Inter-agency Committee. They also participated in the ‘Apprehended Violence Order law reform process’ and were involved in a three-month trial project aimed at ‘improving information dissemination to women seeking to obtain a Domestic Violence Apprehended Violence Order (DVAVO) at Wollongong Local Court and helped to increase the number of women using the ‘safe room’ at local courts’ (WWIC *Annual General Report* 2008).

In the 2002 planning session the Working Group⁴ developed a visual representation of the organisational structure (see Appendix 1.1 WWIC structure 2008/9) that was still being used in 2009. When constructing this diagram participants described a ‘collective core’ that was ‘contained by relationships’. With this diagram participants defined the central relationship as the one existing between the Working Group and the membership, but emphasised that all aspects of the structure are linked in a complex network of relationships.

² In 2008 the multicultural choir included 22 regular members, women from a range of ethnic communities. The women bring songs from their community to the group to share, and then perform them at community events and functions. In 2008 they worked intermittently with community, youth and health workers from various community-based and government organisations, younger and older women from CALD and indigenous backgrounds, as well as community artists.

³ In 2008 the community worker collaborated with a number of community organisations including the Port Kembla Youth Project, Cringila Community Co-operative, Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council and Port Kembla Community Outreach Project to plan and facilitate a programme that included a series of workshops over a four-month period that were conducted in four local high schools to explore issues and concerns around racism, family relationships, violence, cultural identity, friendship and peer pressure, and sexuality.

⁴ Currently the Working Group consists of all workers and at least an equal number of non-workers elected from the membership base each year to support and manage the centre’s key activities articulated in Appendix 1.1.

The key activities areas indicated by the members in Appendix 1.1 include:

1. Feminist activities: political, social and cultural activism including but not limited to facilitation of International Women's Day (IWD), Reclaim the Night and Stop Domestic Violence Day activities, *She Waves* a feminist newsletter, dances, forums, campaigns and a feminist library.
2. Inter-agency work: including collaboration with and extensive networking with other organisations. Workers and members participate, often facilitating or chairing management committees such as the Women and Children's Incest Support House (WISH) and the Health Services Collective. They provide training for social welfare students through work experience and community development projects.
3. Service delivery: including the provision of a range of services to the female client base that includes advocacy, individual short-term case work, DVCAS court support and related training of volunteers and seconded workers, support groups for abused women, as well as the provision of information and referral to specialist services in areas such as sexuality and health, housing and social security.
4. Community activities: including working with women in the community by initiating and facilitating projects such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Violence Project (ATSI project), Young Women's Feminist Theatre (YWFT), the Multicultural Women's Network programme (MWN) and Ekosi, a multicultural women's choir.

In 2004 at a planning day, participants described the WWIC as an 'outstretched woman's body with stretch marks and laughter lines' (WWIC *planning meeting notes*, 18 June 2004). The organisation no longer had a 'mother' to refer to after the death of a number of its founding members and the closure of many of the region's earlier women's organisations that contributed to its opening, such as the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries. In some ways the WWIC had matured, becoming a 'mother' itself. It had given birth to a range of newer feminist and women's services in the region including the Illawarra Women's Health Centre, Wollongong Women's Refuge, WISH and Wollongong Women's Housing Service. The mother metaphor itself was a reminder of not only the maternal nature of an organisation that saw its 'being' grounded in

relational activity (see Fletcher, 1999), but was at the same time a stark reminder of the bodily materiality of the work at the WWIC.

Thesis Contribution

This thesis is the result of questions that emerged from an original fascination with the history of the WWIC following the discovery of powerful cross-institutional relations in its early history with the SCLC. The existing labour history and peak union body literature provided little guidance on how to understand these relationships. Despite an emerging literature on union–community alliances, no studies had focused on the relationships between union bodies and feminist organisations. Studies that focused on gender issues indicated that women were still missing from institutional studies (see, for example, Brigden, 2005, 2003), and debates about the direction of feminist theory for understanding and interpreting women’s activism were unresolved (Brigden, 2007; Magarey, 2007; Matthews, 2003; Nolan, 2002).

The thesis engages with four current trends in industrial relations and labour history literature. These are:

1. an ongoing concern about the invisibility of women and their agency in institutional studies
2. an ongoing dissonance between theories about class and gender
3. an emergent interest in peak union and community relationships
4. a growing engagement in peak union literature with spatial and geographic awareness.

Engagement in these four debates resulted in contributions that included:

1. the excavation of new material about women activists
2. theory building
3. the use of new research tools.

Identification of Previously Unacknowledged Women’s Activism

The thesis identifies previously unidentified women activists and a number of campaigns in which these women were involved. These stories are presented in Chapters Four, Six and Seven.

Theoretical Contribution

The thesis analyses women's contribution to their institutions using existing class-based theory and gender-based theory as analytical tools. These theories are respectively, Ellem and Shields's (2004) 'Dimensions of Peak Union Agency' (see Chapter Five) and Connell's (2002) 'gender regimes' (see Chapter Eight). This approach provides a greater understanding of the ongoing dissonance between class and gender theories which have implications for understanding feminist activism in a regional space.

Gender and class narratives provide ongoing but changing tensions for academics to explore. Understanding how these tensions are embedded in particular notions of power provides a key to bridging the gaps between them. However, current definitions of power rely on an understanding that relationships occur within hierarchical frames. Union peak bodies are defined as agentic with *power for* and *power over* their membership and the community groups that they work with (Ellem & Shields, 2004). Such constructs tend to fail to acknowledge the mutual growth and transformation of all partners in relationship (Fletcher, 1999). What is missing is the concept of *power with*. The thesis applies feminist standpoint relational theory to address this gap in labour history and peak union literature (see Chapter Three).

Research Tools

The data available for the research towards this thesis included organisational archives, interviews and group discussions, as well as archived television news footage. This film material not only provided primary data for some of the campaigns presented in the thesis, but was also utilised to develop visual material that became a valuable research tool in interactions with interviewees in group discussions (see Chapter Three). The use of visual material has rarely been discussed in labour history as far as I am aware and has not been used in an interactive process with interviews. This reflective, interactive process turned the researcher into a participant observer in the research process. The thesis therefore contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics and use of visual material in research processes. Discussion in the thesis includes use of a metaphorical 'patchwork' to construct a film used during interviews, as well as contributing to the final production of the written thesis (see Chapter Three).

Research Questions

A key objective of this thesis was to research and evaluate theories and frameworks that would be useful in writing a regional labour history of feminist activity. A second key objective was to identify and write about feminist activism in the Illawarra region's labour history that both identifies previously unidentified key feminist activism and demonstrates feminist 'agency' (as called for by Brigden, 2005, 2003; Cooper, 2002; Matthews, 2003).

These objectives are achieved through an analysis of the histories of two different institutions focused on addressing social and industrial injustice. Two research questions were constructed to interrogate these histories. These were:

1. What were the key historical social and power relationships that influenced feminist activism in the SCLC and WWIC in 1975 and 1980?
2. In what ways do the concepts of class and gender shape narratives about feminist activism?

These two questions in turn prompted a series of further questions that would allow me to explore relevant issues:

- i. What are the key elements to be addressed when researching the history of organisations that are the sites of feminist activity and working-class activism such as the WWIC and the SCLC?
 - a) What does Australian labour history literature say are the key elements to be addressed?
 - b) How are 'class' and 'gender' understood from the perspectives of labour historians?
 - c) What can feminist standpoint theory contribute to identifying the key elements?
- ii. Who were the women activists involved with the WWIC and/or the SCLC in 1975 and 1980? What were their key concerns and strategies?
- iii. What is distinctive about the region according to existing literature?
 - a) What are the regional, historical, social, and political meta-trends?
 - b) How are they reflected in the histories of the two organisations?

- c) What are the implications of researching in this region? Does this shape the research in particular ways?
- iv. What difference does it make if relationships between institutions are the focus of inquiry rather than individual institutions? What are the implications for the research process?
- v. What ‘multiple geographies of power’ (Tonkin, 2000) are the most useful in understanding feminists’ multiple concerns within a region and explaining the actions (as multiple sets of relationships) towards social and industrial justice?

Empirically supported responses to these questions are presented in the thesis in the following structure.

Chapter Overview

Chapter Two is a literature review of labour history to establish an initial framework to guide the analysis and identify the gaps in the literature. The chapter addresses questions about how literature on labour history and peak union bodies theorise issues of class and gender. Labour history is, essentially, the history of ‘a class’ – the working class (Nairn, Nauze, Rawson, Irving & Fry, 1967). It explores how feminist and ‘new left’ social theorists within the field have debated and expanded our understanding of ‘class’ purpose and ‘labour’. The chapter then compares comparative models developed in the labour history literature and draws attention to the ongoing influence of the ‘unhappy marriage’ metaphor, coined by Hartmann in 1979. Further, this chapter introduces Connell’s structural approach to understanding changes in gender that will be utilised as an analytical device in Chapter Eight.

This chapter also includes a review of literature from labour geography to establish the relevance of region as a scale of analysis. Specifically, this section will draw attention to debates about spatial analysis in relation to ‘peak union bodies’ and their relationship to other community organisations.

During 2003 there were a number of interesting developments in theoretical debates emerging that are reflected in the questions listed above. These included: a stronger focus on peak union organisations in labour history and a resurgence of interest in union–community alliances that in the light of limitations of the existing literature

required a new examination of power in relation to peak union–community alliances. Particularly useful was the renewed interest in feminist standpoint epistemologies that underpin the epistemological approach taken in the thesis, plus a renewed interest in relationships between class-based and gender-based theories. An overview of this literature is also included in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three outlines the choices made regarding epistemology, methodology and methods chosen for this research. The chapter describes a materialist and embodied approach to the study that is influenced by feminist standpoint epistemology (Harding, 2004). The research design included both qualitative and quantitative research for two institutional case studies and biographical material. A description of methods employed in the research is provided. The sources of data include archival materials, individual interviews, group discussions, participant observation and reflection and case study development.

Further, two analytical tools – scales of analysis and patchwork – are introduced. These tools were developed to aid in the construction of a 15-minute documentary film on the history of the SCLC that was one of the tools used during the interview process. First, a chart of scales of analysis based on earlier collaborative work in employment relations (Mylett, Zanko, Boas, Gross & Laneyrie, 2000) is introduced as a starting point to capture the inter-connectiveness of the SCLC. A second analytical tool developed for the thesis built around the concept of ‘patchwork’ is described. Patchwork is a metaphorical tool developed to explain the relationship of the constituent parts to the whole, and that the whole was greater than the sum of its constituent parts. It will be demonstrated that the SCLC and the WWIC (as regional peak bodies) can be understood by examining the patterns of their relations within other scales of analysis which include, for example, international, national and state. Both these tools were useful in beginning to understand the interconnectedness and the interconstitutiveness of the various scales of analysis. The histories of the SCLC and WWIC reconstructed for the thesis demonstrate the significance of an ontology based on relationships as medium and outcome of space/place, just as space/place are a medium and outcome of relationships.

Chapter Four reconstructs a history of the SCLC that draws attention to the involvement of women in its history. The chapter will identify the regional meta-trends in the region’s labour history. The research and construction of the stories in the thesis is an

experiment in applying meta-analysis. As the peak union body for labour activism in the region, the SCLC provided an ideal vehicle for illustrating regional meta-trends that have provided a strong sense of identity for trade union and women activists. The chapter will focus on the nature of working-class activism in the region.

Chapter Five draws on class-based theory from recent literature on peak union bodies that specifically focuses on attempts to understand historical patterns of these institutions in Australia. It uses a class-based model of the 'dimensions of peak union bodies' developed by Ellem and Shields (2004) to extend the framework utilised in Chapter Four for the regional stories.

Chapter Six focuses on women who were delegates to the SCLC and presents new material on women activists who were a part of the SCLC. The chapter will continue to construct a history of women's activism using patchwork as a metaphoric tool. The chapter will draw on existing labour history literature and research data collected for this thesis to identify women activists who were part of the SCLC history, with a particular focus on the critical formative years 1975 and 1980.

Chapters Four and Six demonstrate that the stories about women activists were more effectively located spatially on a number of scales of analysis, including public and private spaces. They also provide a number of new stories about feminist activists and a clearer understanding of women activists within the region.

Chapter Seven presents a prehistory of the WWIC, followed by stories about 1980, its opening year. This chapter introduces stories about 'new' feminist activism that includes activists from some of the other women's organisations who were also deeply involved in the establishment of the WWIC.

Chapter Eight focuses on details of changes in the relations, the activism and the consciousness of regional women activists between 1975 and 1980 using gender-based theory. The analysis draws on the theoretical work on gender regimes by Connell (1987, 2002). This chapter will demonstrate the usefulness of both spatially and gender aware analysis that is of the history of these feminist activists.

Chapter Nine draws together the key findings in the thesis and discusses the theoretical, political and practical implications of defining feminist activism using a class or gender lens. Like some feminist theorists, Acker (2006) *Class Questions: Feminist Answers*;

Cobble (2007) *The Sex of Class*, I conclude that both are necessary. The chapter asserts that despite an empathetic relationship between feminist labour historians and labour history that focused on promoting gender awareness, the discipline has remained grounded on the study of masculine institutions that are guided by theories that still rely on masculinist epistemological perspectives and are based on a limited range of theories about power. Further, the conclusion argues that a broader understanding of feminist epistemologies, feminist activists, feminist workplaces and their various relationships are still required for a more complete understanding of the complexity of the relationships between gender, class and space in Australian labour history and labour history more broadly.

Chapter Two: Australian Labour History

Introduction

This thesis contributes to debates about the importance of feminist activism in the purpose and power of peak union bodies. This chapter provides an overview of the theoretical context for the study. It locates the research in an emerging specialist area within labour history that focuses on regional peak union bodies.

The historiography reconstructed in the first section of the chapter points to the ebbs and flows of the relevance and application of class analysis and feminist analysis within labour history as it confronted challenges of fragmentation, challenges to dominant intellectual models and loss of political purpose (Irving, 1994; Burgmann, 2002). This section of the chapter begins with arguments that distinguish Australian labour history as a separate field of study within a global context. These differences help re-evaluate important influences on how class and gender analysis have been utilised in Australian labour history. The chapter will present a broad overview of key historical phases as well as the debates relating to feminist intervention in the field identified in the journal *Labour History*, conferences held by the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History and related publications. This overview points to the dynamic nature of class analysis and feminist analysis as theorists responded to debates and challenges to labour history's epistemological, institutional and political focuses. Further, this section draws attention to the 'unhappy marriage' (Hartmann, 1979, p. 18) metaphor that characterises the relationship between class and gender and appears to continue to influence the representation of feminist activists within the discipline.

The second section of the chapter focuses on 'peak union bodies'. Specifically this section provides an understanding of peak union purpose and power as a framework of understanding union–community relationships, such as that between the SCLC and the WWIC and will point to important limitations in the literature. This chapter will argue next that the absence of studies that focus on alliances of peak union bodies with feminist institutions limits an understanding of union–community relationships. The chapter will argue that an understanding of union–community relationships, their

purpose and their power, requires a reconsideration of key debates impacting on class analysis and gender analysis in its broader discipline – labour history in Australia.

Australian Labour History as ‘Different’

The following section of this chapter presents a historiographical analysis of labour history in order to tease out some of the difficulties between class and gender analysis that might impact on an understanding of feminist activists involved with the SCLC and the WWIC.

The historiography of labour history is well documented.⁵ Patmore (1991) classifies the early stages of labour history in Australia as: ‘the origins’ (1891–1930), the ‘old left’ (1930–1970) and ‘new left and social history’ (1970–1980s). Since the 1980s terms used to categorise the discipline indicate a growing concern with epistemological debates over the cultural or linguistic turn, the feminist challenge, postmodernism and poststructuralism and identity politics (see, for example, Curthoys & Docker, 2006). The following section presents an overview of Australian labour history to draw attention to the differences between approaches to class-based and gender-based analysis prior to 1980.

Australian labour historians claim they have a different history to that of their United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand cousins. As part of the international labour history community, they continue to engage in ongoing debates about research methodology, epistemology and ontology. However, these Australian academics generally see themselves writing from spatial, economic and political margins (Burgmann, 1991; Taksa, 2008). In constructing their historiography, Australian labour historians have explored the nature and implications of these differences. They are citizens of a relatively minor political world power and along with New Zealand labour historians write from the ‘bottom of the world’ in what has been described as Antipodean labour history (see, for example, Burgmann, 1991; Markey, 2008; Taksa, 2006). Their marginal position is compounded by a lack of opportunity for employment in specialised labour history with few opportunities in history departments, given the

⁵ Key labour historians who have contributed to an overview of labour history’s historiography include Verity Burgmann (1991; 1999; 2003), Ann Curthoys (1970; 1975; 1994; 2000; 2002), R.W. Connell (1977), Joy Damousi (1991; 1999; 2001), Raelene Frances (1990), Terry Irving (1994; 2007), Marilyn Lake (1986; 1998; 1999; 2007), Susan Magarey (1981; 1993; Susan Magarey & Tom Sheridan 2002), Ray Markey (1980; 1988b) and Greg Patmore (1982, 1991; 1994, 1998; 2002).

relatively small academic sector in Australia (Burgmann, 1991, p. 71). Many labour historians in Australia are not employed in history departments and have found employment in departments of cultural studies, employment relations, industrial relations, management, political studies, sociology and women's studies. In a study of influences on material appearing in the Australian journal *Labour History*, Kerr (2004) lists general history, industrial relations, law, political science, social policy, politics and trade unions and gender studies.

Labour historians describe their political approach defined in a broad nonsectarian sense as distinctly socialist (see, for example, Brigden, 2005b; Patmore, 2002) focusing on 'capitalism' and the struggles of the working class for economic, industrial and social justice in the Australian context (see, for example, Macintyre, 1978; Markey, 1988b). Magarey (1981, p. 212) claims that Australian labour historians responded differently to their UK, German, Canadian and French counterparts in dealing with tensions between political goals to change the present and the future and historical radicalism. These tensions were raised amongst left-wing labour historians as social history began to influence the broader field of labour history. The same tensions, it would appear (see below), still influence the discipline today.

Other perceived influences on labour history's distinctiveness in Australia include a focus on issues relating to Australian nationality (see, for example, Curthoys, 1973); its history of relationships with indigenous people (see, for example, Frances & Scates, 1991); its history as a British penal colony and its later history as a settler country for waves of different immigrants (Taksa, 2006).

In a reading of Australian labour history one is immediately struck by two related themes. One is the political nature of labour history; the second is the institutional focus of the literature. Labour historians have consistently described themselves as having a political agenda, seeking lessons from the past to inform contemporary debates (Hyman, 1982 cited in Kerr, 2004) and to define the identity of the labour movement (Markey, 1996). The political agenda of the discipline is linked to the understanding of labour as class and the belief that labour as a class can potentially provide a way forward to a more equitable and democratic future (Connell, 1977; Burgmann, 2003). Secondly, the traditional institutional base of labour history saw an early focus on the histories of Labor parties, radical organisations (such as the Industrial Workers of the World, the Communist Party and One Big Union), trade unions (Patmore, 1991), and associated

biographies of key labour and social agitators (Damousi, 2001, p. 2; Irving, 1994). Both themes, i.e. the political nature of labour history and its institutional focus, are also evident in this thesis with the analysis of two institutions committed to a more equitable and democratic future for working-class people. The analysis of the case studies in this thesis are informed by debates and issues that are articulated in the discipline, predominantly from 1975.

This thesis keeps within trends outlined by Kerr (2004, p. 246) in *Labour History*. It draws on research interests that can be included in the category 'Trade Unions and Activism'. This thesis also takes account of the growing influence in the literature of community and geography (Kerr, 2004, p. 251), and commentary noting concern in the discipline with the marginality of 'class, race and gender, cooperation [and] ideology' (Kerr, 2004, p. 251).

Labour History as the History of a Social Class

Labour history is generally accepted as 'the history of a social class, particularly concerned with the structure of society and changes in work' (Nairn et al., 1967, but also see Damousi, 2001). For many labour historians the political intent is to pursue political change (Magarey, 1981) through the development of concepts and theories that contribute to an understanding of how socialism can be achieved (see, for example, Irving & Scalmer, 2005). It is 'history written by the left, for the left, and ... mostly about the left' (Connell, 1977, p. 10; see also Patmore, 2002). Connell (1977) claims that class analysis has been more explicitly utilised and developed by historians of the labour movement. Labour history has been described as the history of the working class, constructed in its relationships to other classes from the perspective of socialist theorists (Curthoys & Docker, 2006; Irving, 1994, p. 28; Patmore, 2002). Analysis of 'capitalists' or the 'ruling class' appears less frequently (see, for example, Connell, 1977).

The cyclical influence of the discipline and the wide appeal of class analysis are evident in a broad overview. Eric Fry claimed that by the late-1960s: 'labour history was a recognised and large part of Australian history and had had an effect on the writing of general history of the country, so much so that conservative historians resented its influence and their political allies attacked left-wing domination of university departments' (Fry, 1967 in Nairn et al., 1967). Labour history was described as a dynamic and confident sub-discipline at the forefront of attempts to widen the scope of

historical knowledge and develop new methods for analysing the past during the 1960s and for much of the 1970s (Connell, 1977; Burgmann, 1991). Connell asserts that, despite the fact that labour historians continued to 'carry the banner' for class analysis, it was not until the 1960s that significant class analysis reappeared in the work of Robin Gollan and Ian Turner. Class, Connell claimed, had previously not disappeared, but was transformed from 'centre stage to backdrop, and change[d] from a dynamic process to a system of categories or social perceptions' (1977, p. 23). In 1975 Connell believed a resurgence in class analysis was occurring in the 1970s that included the beginnings of an incorporation of women into the story (Connell, 1977, p. 37), triggered by 'a real ferment' and awareness of social issues substantially different to mainstream history and sociology produced in the 1950s and 1960s (Connell, 1977, p. 39).

By 1991 Burgmann was describing *The Strange Death of Labour History* that she attributed to the dissipation of social movement radicalism and a rise in 'apolitical and individualist identity politics' (Burgmann, 1991). In 1994 Terry Irving described the crisis confronting labour history as existing on three fronts: 'the fragmentation of the field, challenges to the ruling intellectual models and the loss of political purpose' (Irving, 1994, p. 2). At a time of widening socio-economic inequalities worldwide and a lessening of power within traditional institutions of class struggle in Australia, class analysis became less fashionable.

More recently, Burgmann (2006) has claimed it is time to re-examine class again:

In the burgeoning of 'identity politics' from the 1980s onwards, it was assumed that the principal identities underpinning progressive action were gender, race or ethnicity, and sexuality. Class went missing. Yet, as we survey the historical record, including the very recent past, it is not difficult to find instances where Australians have resolutely identified themselves as working-class or economically disadvantaged and mobilised effectively upon such a basis (p. 91).

Agreeing with Burgmann, Irving (2007) concludes that the impact of the 'history wars' about the uses of history during the 1990s and early 2000s have polarised 'around questions of achievement and status on the one side, and of recognition of difference and justice on the other' (p. 5–6). Such debates, he claims, ignore 'the central questions of labour history, questions about the distribution of power, unequal life changes, economic exploitation, and about the politics of struggle by working people to

overcome these disadvantages' (Irving, 2007, p. 5). Irving (2007) reminds his audience that 'recognition of difference and differentiation, and the politics they give rise to in the working class and across classes, are not ignored by labour historians, but ... they add complexity instead of heralding a new paradigm' (p. 6). Burgmann and Irving's call for a reconsideration of class is only one of a number of recent articles refocusing on the relationships of the working class (see, for example, Hollier, 2004, p. xxiii; Kerr, 2004, p. 251).

Origins of Australian Labour History

Greg Patmore⁶ (1991) claims that the origins of Australian labour history are 'linked to the strength of the Australian labour movement before the outbreak of the First World War' (p. 2). However, it was not until the rise of the 'old left' in the late 1920s that labour history began to develop as serious academic endeavour. Prior to this, much of the writing in the field emerged from activists outside academia who believed that the labour movement had played an important role in Australian history, but argued that labour should 'use its power responsibly and curb militancy' that was being advocated by radical groups including the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and later the Communist Party (Patmore, 1991, p. 2–3). These authors sought lessons from their recent experience for the building of the movement which they believed could transform the society in which they existed. Connell (1977, p. 8) argues that Vere Gordon Childe (see, for example, 1923) and later Brian Fitzpatrick (see, for example, 1939; 1946), influenced the next generations of labour historians with socialist arguments about 'class relations and social change', and they remain significant contributions. Childe argued that the early Australian Labor Party (ALP) developed a new theory of democracy as class power, based on its organic links with a broader movement and the notions of solidarity inherited from trade unions (Childe, 1923, Chapter One; but also see Irving & Seager, 1996, pp. 259–260). The class discipline learned in industrial organisation, or the 'principles of unionism', were intended to maintain the party (the Australian Labor Party) as an independent working-class force (Markey, 1988, pp. 175–176). The first generation of labour historians (between the 1880s and 1920s) have been

⁶ For a more complete overview of publications and writers on early Australian labour history see Patmore (1991) Chapter One – Australian Labour History and, Connell (1977) Chapter Two – The idea of class in Australian social science.

criticised for being under-theorised but are acknowledged for their political commitment.

According to Patmore (1991), the next wave of labour historians, the 'old left', were nationalists who believed in 'Marxism not only as an ideology, but also (as) a methodology' and 'generally endorsed the view that socialism would inevitably replace capitalism' (p. 4). Gollan, Fitzpatrick, as well as Russell Ward and Ian Turner, are examples of writers of this period. Fitzpatrick's work, produced from 1939 and throughout the 1940s, directly challenged the importance of British imperialism in Australian history. His work instead focused on the importance of the struggle between the 'organised rich and the organised poor' with Labor as the agent of change and the conservative parties as reactive opponents of the advancement of society. His writing was utilised by Communist Party activists to argue that the foundation of the Communist Party was the most significant event in the history of the Australian labour movement. His work also influenced a growing group of returned soldiers who became labour historians during the 1950s and 1960s, including Ward and Gollan (Patmore, 1991). Ward's (1958) *Australia Legend* explored the social roots of Australian nationalist egalitarianism. Gollan's (1960) *Radical and Working Class Politics* defined the class nature of Australian labour politics.

According to Macintyre (1978), the 'old left' approaches to class were typified by Ian Turner (1965) in his introduction to *Industrial Labour and Politics* when he stated that 'the concept of working class was an objective social category; the class of men and women who work for wages, as distinct from the employers of labour and self-employed' (Turner, 1965 cited in Macintyre, 1978, p. 234). Significantly, these authors focus on Marx's notion of class *in itself* (the objective basis of class interests), rather than *for itself* (the collective consciousness of those interests) entailing consideration of consciousness and ideology. These studies tended to treat the working class itself as unproblematic and relatively homogenous.

Australian Society for the Study of Labour History

In 1961 Fry and Gollan established The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History to provide a new focal point for labour historians, drawing on past experience with the British Society for the Study of Labour History. This Australian group, who were described by Burgmann (1991) as Marxist and 'academic fringe dwellers' (p. 77),

were based at the Australian National University. They published their first edition of the *Bulletin* (later titled *Labour History*) in 1962. In the first issue Gollan called for 'suitable biographies of trade union leaders' as well as 'a broader approach that included the social history of the working class, class relations, the history of popular culture, the history of ideas and histories of major trade unions' (cited in Patmore 1991, p. 7). Garton (1991) argues that this broad agenda was not realised, with approximately 79 per cent of articles focused on 'unions, union leaders, the Labor parties, labour ideologies, strikes and industrial disputes' (p. 47), and in the 1970s this figure was still 65 per cent with most attention focused on the leadership of the organised working class, the strongest unions and skilled workers, at the expense of the rank and file, weaker unions and the non-unionised.

Turner, regarded as one of the iconic figures in 'old left' phase of labour history, argued that the 'masses rather than elites' were the moving forces in the historical process and the labour movement was 'the institutional method by which the masses transform themselves from passive to active elements in society' (Turner, 1965, cited in Patmore, 1991, p. xvii). However, he saw no place in writing about the movement for anyone other than key players and institutions. For example, he claimed that domestics and shop assistants (who were mostly women) were 'not relevant to a study of the labour movement since they have given rise to no significant trade unions', sharing the general view of most historians at the time that women's history was trivial (cited in Patmore, 1991, p. 161; see also Connell, 1977; Curthoys & Docker, 2006). At this time, 'mateship' was believed to be one of the keys to understanding 'the strength of our democracy and our unionism' (Dixon, 1976, p. 81). It was Turner who was responsible for developing ideas of mateship. The issue of mateship will be discussed further in the section on feminist interventions into labour history.

In a bibliography for the first twenty editions of *Labour History* produced up to 1971, Lyndall Ryan (1972) compiled subject listings for articles in a list that clearly points to the Australian focus of topics in the discipline. The topics reflected an overwhelming socialist and labour political perspective on key organisations (political parties and unions) and critical conflict events related to struggles (strikes, riots and the depression) to achieve economic, social and industrial justice at state, national and institutional scales of analysis.

Only two articles on women were included in nine years of production, and both these focused on Great Britain:

1. McCalman, J. (1971). The Impact of the First World War on Female Employment in England (Volume 21, pp. 36–47).
2. Neale, R.S. (1967). Working-class Women and Women's Suffrage (Volume 12, pp. 16–35).

No review articles examined feminist histories or books relevant to women's participation in the movement; however, there were a number of women who contributed. Out of approximately 130 articles, 14 had obviously been written by women.⁷ Articles by women focused on more traditional labour history interests. By volume 41 to 50 (1981–1986) there were 23 articles of feminist interest and 31 contributions from women published in the journal (Burgmann, 1991, p. 77) out of a total of 64. The 10-year gap between 1971 and 1981 had seen significant changes in the journal.

These changes within the study of labour history were influenced by two new groups:

1. the 'new left', which utilised class-based analysis informed by cultural and Gramscian forms of Marxism and sociology
2. feminists, who were concerned about the position of women within history more generally (Magarey, 1983; Patmore, 1991).

By 1981 the effects of these two new approaches were acknowledged with a change in the title of the discipline's journal from *Labour History* to *Labour History: a journal of labour and social history* (see Magarey, 1981). The impact of this 'social turn' on labour history is debated; however, this period of labour history is important for the thesis as it provides the foundation which informs the relationship between 'class' and 'gender' analysis.

The 'New Left'

The 'new left' claimed the 'old left' did not have theories capable of analysing 'the workings of Australian capitalism and its distinctive characteristics', nor could it propose 'successful socialist strategy' (Sampson, 1979, p. 85; Magarey, 1981). It failed

⁷ Based on authors' first names.

‘to define class structures and to show the relationship between industrial, political and ideological practice’ (Markey, 1996, p. 86). This failure occurred because it focused on class as an empirical group of people, rather than relations within and between classes (Connell & Irving, 1980, p. 5). It was seen as history ‘with the politics left out’ (Eade, 1976, p. 38). While largely ignoring the obvious restrictions imposed on the ‘old left’ by the cold war (Magarey, 1981; Patmore, 1991), the ‘new left’ and social historians critiqued the economic base of the ‘old left’ Marxism. In a controversial argument McQueen claimed there was no working class in Australia at the end of the nineteenth century. The ALP was not the representative of a working class but rather ‘the highest expression of a peculiarly Australian petit-bourgeois (McQueen, 1970, p. 26). While his argument effectively asserted the primacy of class consciousness over objective material conditions in determining class (Macintyre, 1978, pp. 235–239), he also suggested that Australian workers’ prosperous material conditions led them to develop a petit-bourgeois ideology – ‘a working class that could afford such luxuries [as pianos] wanted nothing to do with revolution’ (McQueen, 1970, p. 118). The ‘new left’ also critiqued Turner’s approach to class (discussed earlier) for failing to deal with issues of power, imperialism, race and gender, arguing that it did not define concepts nor ‘develop an alternative historical methodology’ (Merritt, 1982, cited in Patmore, 1991).

The ‘new left’ preferred definitions that included references to class as ‘a class for itself and in itself’ (Connell & Irving, 1980; Garton, 1991; Macintyre, 1978). ‘The working class did not become an active historical subject until it became conscious of its own interests’ (Garton, 1991, p. 48). Macintyre described it as an ‘economic ensemble’ that became a class when ‘they developed customs, ideology and organisations’. Connell and Irving (1980) point out: ‘It is necessary to see the way class relations come to dominate other patterns of relations’ and these relations are constructed both historically and spatially (p.15). Australian labour historians drawing on literature emerging from the UK were now focused on ‘history from below’ including work by Thompson (1963) and Rude (1964) that focused not just on ‘trade unions and Labor parliamentarians, but also on workers and common men and women who were not organised’ (Markey, 1996, p. 86).

Most labour historians, either explicitly or implicitly, utilise a Marxist definition of class. According to Jary and Jary (1995, p. 79) such an analytical model includes the following key elements:

1. Class differences begin when one group of people claim resources that are not consumed for immediate survival (surplus) as their private property.
2. Classes are defined in terms of their ownership (or non-ownership) of productive property which makes the taking of surplus possible.
3. Conflict is inevitable as one class exploits and oppresses the other through appropriation of the surplus. These conflicts 'are the most important factor in social change ... underlying social and economic contradictions' which ultimately transform societies.
4. There is a distinction between objective and subjective aspects of class. Objective factors are ownership or non-ownership of productive property. Subjective aspects point to the fact that one can only talk about a 'social class' when the members of that class 'realise their common interests and act together to gain them'.

However, much of the literature in labour history has implicitly drawn on this analytical framework without clearly defining the concepts. The literature has also largely avoided the complications that arise in the tension between a Marxist definition, based on relationship to the means of production, and sociological definitions of class, which are based on status hierarchies. Sociological status hierarchies ignore class relationships whereas Marxist analysis is based on the relationship between classes. According to Marxist theory, the relationship between classes is antagonistic, and economic inequalities that arise from this relationship are a key to understanding capitalism.

Sociological definitions of class have been described as descriptive and concerned with measurement, rather than analysis and synthesis (Connell, 1977, p. 23). Macintyre (1978) critiques Lawson (1973) in *Brisbane in the 1890s: A Study of an Australian Urban Society* on this basis for employing Weberian sociology. Rickard's (1976) *Class and Politics* and Connell and Irving's (1980) *Class Structure in Australian History* were also critiqued for not providing clearly articulated frameworks of class. For example, Rickard's work began with a clear definition of approaches including E. P. Thompson's cultural Marxist focus on class consciousness and an understanding that class was a relationship, yet later in the text employed Weber to analyse the middle class, without addressing the inconsistencies between the approaches (Magarey, 1983, p. 215; Markey, 1988). The publication of Connell and Irving's *Class Structure in Australian History* in 1980 is described as one of the last major systemic efforts (albeit only partially

successful) to define and analyse class within the discipline (see, for example, Gollan, 1981 and McQueen, 1981, cited in Magarey, 1983). It is also noteworthy, together with Rickards book, for attempting to incorporate concepts of gender into their class analysis (Saunders, 1990).

Of particular interest in this thesis is Connell's subsequent work, first focusing on class (1977, 1982, 1983; Connell & Irving, 1980) and later on gender (Connell, 1985, 1987, 1995, 2002). I approached this work as a historical development of ideas (albeit changing) that has rarely been considered in labour history. Labour historians tend to draw attention to Connell's work on class, rarely considering the overlap with his approach to gender, and feminist theorists tend to draw attention to later work on gender, rarely considering Connell's work on class. Connell and Irving's work was supposed to be the 'definitive' answer to class; however, it has since been exposed to much criticism for its confused approach to class (see, for example, Magarey, 1981). However, I agree with Demetriou (2004), who claims that an understanding of Connell's work on gender requires an understanding of his structural approach to class.

These arguments will be further explained in the final section of this chapter after some discussion of feminist contributions to labour history.

Feminists in Australian Labour History

Curthoys and Docker (2006) argue that in 1970 historical work in Australia was characterised by 'male-centred assumptions, practices, and exclusion' (p. 135). Curthoys (who became review editor of *Labour History* in the mid-1970s) had published an influential paper in 1970 challenging feminists to contribute to understanding 'why historians have been preoccupied with public life and why men have dominated public life' (Curthoys, 1970, p. 37). Curthoys and her female contemporaries were involved in the first Women's Liberation group in Sydney and the feminist journal *Refractory Girl*, established in 1973. The group included Lyndall Ryan (daughter of Edna Ryan), Sue Bellamy and Mary Murnane. Curthoys lists other emerging feminist historians in Australia at this time as Anne Summers, Beverley Kingston, Marilyn Lake, Jill Roe, Kay Saunders, Jill Matthews, Carmel Shute, Patricia Grimshaw and Susan Magarey.⁸ Prior to the involvement of Magarey, Curthoys and

⁸ Magarey later became co-founder of *Australian Feminist Studies*.

Daphne Gollan with *Labour History* in the mid- to late-1970s' *Refractory Girl*,⁹ along with *Hecate*,¹⁰ provided an outlet for feminist historians (see Bulbeck 2001 for an excellent overview of the history of feminist journals; also see Reed et al., 1975). Early editions of the journals developed a Marxist–feminist analysis of women's work, and the journals continued through the 1970s and 1980s to develop critiques on the limitations of affirmative action, arguing that 'inequality was enshrined in covert factors' (Reilly, 1993, p. 140). Many of these early feminist theorists still contribute to labour history and feminist history.

International Women's Year (IWY) in 1975 saw the first consolidated contributions of feminists to Australian labour history that began to challenge the narrow institutional perspective and pointed to a need to research women's work and women's worth (Patmore, 1991) from a feminist perspective. These publications are also relevant in this thesis as historians writing about the Illawarra region provided an alternative to the largely metropolitan focus of the majority of work by feminists at the time (see, for example, Winifred Mitchell [1975] on miner's wives in the Illawarra, and Mavis Robertson [1980] on a regional communist activist, Sally Bowen). These women (the academics as well as their subjects) also are part of the story of feminist activism that is the subject of this thesis.

The initial entry of feminist perspectives (including women's liberation) to the discipline of labour history includes a range of publications produced between 1975 and 1981 addressing 'women's oppression, sex role differentiation, male domination and patriarchy' (Curthoys & Docker, 2006, p. 171). These publications reflected the social science and textual approaches that were prevalent during this period in *Refractory Girl* and *Hecate* (Bulbeck, 2001; Irving, 1975), with a demonstrated preference for Marxist and socialist perspectives. These publications included:

1. A special edition of *Labour History* in 1975, edited by Curthoys, Eade (later Magarey) and Spearritt, entitled 'Women and Work'. This was the 'first major Australian journal to produce a special volume devoted to women at work' (Reed et al., 1975, p. 147).

⁹ *Refractory Girls* began in Sydney in 1973 (see Ferrier in Caine et al. 1998 and Bulbeck 2001).

¹⁰ *Hecate: A Woman's Interdisciplinary Journal* began in 1975.

2. Four landmark books that are mostly likely to be referred to in early historiographies of labour history. They are:
 - i. Dixon, M. (1976). *The Real Matilda: Woman and Identity in Australia 1788 to 1975*. Ringwood, Penguin Books Limited
 - ii. Summers, A. (1975). *Damned Whores and God's Police*. Ringwood, Penguin Books Limited
 - iii. Kingston, B. (1975). *My Wife, My Daughter, and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia*. Sydney, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Limited
 - iv. Ryan, E. and Conlon A. (1975). *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work 1988–1974*. Sydney, Thomas Nelson (Australia) Limited.
3. An edited book, containing papers drawn from the 1978 Women and Labour Conference¹¹ held at Macquarie University. The resulting book, *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788–1978* was edited by Elizabeth Windschuttle.

The publications challenged masculine perspectives in the field in important ways and provide a number of insights relevant to this thesis. Key concerns not only included how to improve socialist/Marxist theories of class but also focused on how to analyse and write women's history (Summers, 1975b). Magarey (2007) describes the 'pioneering' histories produced by Dixon, Summers and Kingston as oppositional works that challenged the dominant masculine accounts of history and recovered and celebrated women. Yet she agrees with Lake who prefers to refer to them as a 'critique of inherited narratives' (Lake, 1996), with an emphasis on national history that provides both a strength and weakness of the work.

A Special Edition of *Labour History*

The special edition of *Labour History* published in 1975 features as much for the historiography of labour history and feminist history for the support given by the male editorial team and the inclusion of some male contributors, as for the new focus in content on labour history (Burgmann, 1991; Magarey, 1983; Patmore, 1991). *Women and Work* was a substantial edition with six specialised historical case studies (see

¹¹ Attendance at the conference was over 2,000 and 70 papers were presented.

contributions by Mitchell, Ryan and Rowse, Spearritt, Lamour, Auchmuty, Hooper); two biographies (Wright, Kingston); an article examining writing on women in disciplines of history (Curthoys), politics (Irving, previously Berzins) and sociology (Goot); an overview of overseas literature on debates about women's work (Thornton); and an extensive archival guide to sources on women and recent journal articles about working women (Reed et al.). A number of the contributors were from the University of Wollongong (Rosemary Auchmuty from Social Science; Baiba Irving, archivist from the university library; and Josie Castle from History). Mitchell, who was a prominent active Communist Party member in the Illawarra region (Penson, 1992, p. 32) provided an alternative to metropolitan perspectives by focusing on relationships between men and women in mining communities, in the Communist Party and in trade unions. Her work provides useful political comment on working-class women and relationships between men and women in key institutions that contribute to the labour history of the Illawarra.

Other contributions of particular interest to this thesis in this edition of *Labour History* are provided by Ann Curthoys and Baiba Irving. Curthoys's article calls for more interpretation that clearly points to the ways that women were oppressed and articulates women's social roles. The article summarises and critiques a number of books including Ryan and Conlan (1975) and Kingston (1975) and draws attention to the work of Margaret Power (1975) on sex segregation at work that had recently been published in *Hecate*. Power's work was considered analytically rigorous, if somewhat weak on recommendations that are critiqued for not calling for 'fundamental changes in attitudes and economic and social institutions' (Curthoys, 1975 p. 95). In the last paragraph Curthoys calls for the field to take on more Marxist and non-Australian theoretical work, emphasising the point that 'clear analysis does not necessarily yield the best proposals for change' (Curthoys, 1975 p. 95). She recommends that useful categories of analysis could be urban and country; domestic work, factory work and middle-class domestic work; married and unmarried (see Table 2.1: Comparative models of feminist work 1975–1980).

Baiba Irving's article reiterates this call for consideration of the purpose of feminist work. She argues for political analysis and ideological development (1975, p. 75) that does not see a necessary separation between political analysis and practice. Further, she

argues that the work of feminist standpoint theorists such as Hartsock (1974) can contribute to this agenda:

Hartsock retains the definition of politics as 'about power' but argues that, alongside the traditional association of power with control and domination, there is a concept of power which emphasises energy and accomplishment. The implementation of this latter concept is, for her, the goal of political change. Thus, she recognises that 'changing the definition of the political' is not merely a conceptual task but also a concrete political objective. Moreover, political change for Hartsock involves more than increased participation in traditional institutions or an unmasking of their sexist biases; in her interpretation, it includes self-transformation, the development of new forms of organisation, and the challenging of the dominant structures of patriarchy, capitalism and white supremacy. For her, political change entails a radical re-structuring of society, not merely the admission of women to the existing competition for power (Irving, 1975, pp. 75–76).

Irving presents three options in her conclusion that move beyond 'just correcting bias' in labour history about women. These are to develop strategies for the movement, arouse curiosity and enhance an understanding of society.

Four Landmark Books

Dixson's *The Real Matilda* and Anne Summers's *Damned Whores and God's Police* directly challenged the concept of mateship that was embedded in the 'Australian national character'. Dixson proposed that Australian women in the land of mateship, the 'Ocker' keg culture, come pretty close to top rating as the 'doormats of the western world' (Dixson, 1976, p. 11). Summers (1975a) explored the impact of the 'damned whore' stereotype that dominated Australia's convict past and its opposite, the 'God's police' stereotype established later during Australia's settler period. She claimed these two stereotypes influenced the thinking and behaviour of women as well as perceptions about women. In her conclusion she states: 'Women have to be seen as individuals, and as human beings, not as stereotyped representations within a moral dualism devised to perpetuate the patriarchy' (Summers, 1975, p. 472). Summers's work included a critique of the earlier work by male labour historians, claiming, for example, that Gollan's (1960) *Radical and Working-Class Politics* was one of the few exceptions – a labour historian who had attempted to include the women's movement. Turner was taken to task for perpetuating incorrect myths about the suffragette movement in

Australia in his 'Prisoners in Petticoats: A Shocking History of Female Emancipation' in Julie Rigg's (Ed.) (1969) *In Her Own Right* (Summers, 1975a, p. 20).

Kingston looked at the historical period between the 1860s and 1930s, examining factory workers, domestic servants, nurses and teachers, as well as sales and clerical staff. She addressed the unpaid work of middle-class and working-class wives, and single daughters, which she claims constitutes a different version of 'slavery' that emerged with changing industrial and social conditions. Kingston's work pointed to a tendency of Australian labour history to celebrate the 'triumph of egalitarianism and classlessness' (Kingston, 1975, cited in Lake, 1996, p. 1). Ryan and Conlon teased out relationships between women (as perceived invaders of the workforce), prejudice, discrimination and the 'false promise' of 'equal pay' (1975, p. 175). Ryan and Conlon's book was a result of their experiences engaging with the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) and activism around equal pay. Unlike the authors of the other three texts, Ryan did not consider herself a 'women's libber' (Ryan, 2004). Recently Lyndall Ryan (Edna Ryan's daughter) pointed to the complexities feminists were working through at the time. Issues of 'class, gender, age and race', intersected with 'paid work and political experiences, feminist beliefs, economic circumstances and the rapidly changing social and political landscape' (Ryan, 2004, p. 84) in different ways. Ryan and Conlon's work was politically inspired and institutionally based in the tradition of labour history, since it provided a feminist critique of the institutions contributing to the inequities in women's pay.

According to Patmore (1991), all of the authors of these foundational books were critiqued for their work, both locally and overseas: 'Kingston, Ryan and Conlon for failing to conceptualise the role of childbearing, marriage and the family; Ryan and Conlon for reinforcing the notion that while paid work is real and valuable, childcare and housework is of little economic importance' (p. 164); Dixon and Summers for assuming that 'the ideology of the earlier generations of white Australians was transmitted to later generations with little change' (p. 163). Later critiques targeted this literature for being too embedded in the masculine nationalist agenda of historians (Lake, 1996).

Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788–1978

This edited book provided one of the first attempts to classify feminist writing in Australia arguing that overseas categories of feminist histories, such as those proposed by American feminist Gerda Lerner in 1975, would not work in Australia (Windschuttle, 1980, pp. 25–31). Windschuttle proposed a different set of categories in which to describe the contributions of Australian feminists – Biographies, Labour History, Modern Radical Feminist Theory, Institutional History and New Social History.

‘Biographies’ were considered important, particularly if they moved beyond ‘simple heroine worship’ and were used as a tool for understanding women, the wider society in which they live and ‘the complex interactions between feminine sex roles, workforce participation and activism with the Australian labour movement and show the real choices, blind alleys and dilemmas confronted by individuals’ (1975, p. 25). Mavis Robertson’s article on Sally Bowen (Communist Party of Australia (CPA) activist from the Illawarra) was included in this section. Other contributions also addressed activists’ links with the CPA.

Contributions classified as ‘Labour History’ dominated the book. Kingston’s early publication was noted as an example that was challenging definitions of work. Two articles, Ray Markey’s ‘Women and labour, 1880–1900’ and Margaret Power’s ‘Women and economic crises: the Great Depression and the present crisis’ ‘established broad outlines ... of a historical analysis of the differentiated relationships to capital of women and men’ (Magarey, 1983, p. 221). Winifred Mitchells’s article on women in mining communities was included in this category.

‘Modern Radical Feminist History’ was seen as a ‘political response produced by the feminist revival’ that ‘holds the struggles or contradictions between the sexes are primary: class, racial and national contradictions are secondary’ (Windschuttle, 1975, p. 27–28). Dixon and Summers’s books were placed in this category. The two key concepts were ‘oppression’ and ‘patriarchy’.

‘Institutional History’ was seen as another emerging category. It included archival research sponsored during International Women’s Year (IWY) that had revealed considerable archival material about ‘several hundred organisations and institutions which Australian women had founded and run since 1826’.

The category 'new social history', clearly fitted the 'new left' history from the bottom approach. The explanation of this category is very vague but identified the need for class analysis and an analysis of patriarchy. No examples were provided for this section although Magarey claims that both Markey and Power's contributions could be placed here (Magarey, 1983, p. 221).

According to Windschuttle all contributors to the Women and Labour Conference, from which the book drew, argued 'the need for a sounder analysis of the position of women based on the concept of *class*'. The Marxist approach to understanding these issues was evident; only one category allowed for different interpretations – 'radical feminist perspectives'. All the categories were described as 'useful means of approach provided they are informed by perspectives informed by feminist, racial and class analysis' (Windschuttle, 1980, p. 31).

Windschuttle's claim to a distinct Australian feminist history mirrored the arguments of Australian labour history's claim to be a distinctive field more generally. For example, Miriam Dixon, claimed 'our history was not the history of America' (Dixon, 1977, p. 86), but what was also important was the struggle to understand how to go about writing feminist labour history in order to achieve feminist political purposes. The attempt to tease out useful categories illustrated the position of feminist labour historians, situated as they were within both the broader labour history discipline and feminist ideologies at the time in Australia. The various categories considered by feminist labour historians during this period are presented in Table 2.1. Dixon argued that an androgynous approach to history had more revolutionary potential for its rejection of polarised sex role ascriptions. It should be noted that neither Dixon or Windschuttle's categories have since been employed by Australian academics. References to Lerner's categories begin to appear in later feminist work (see, for example, Jill Matthews, 1986, p. 147; Marilyn Lake, 1996 critique of nationalism in early feminist work).

In Connell's (1987) explanation of feminist attempts to incorporate gender and class analysis, he claims that Marxist feminists of this time who were looking at gendered subjectivities were heading in the right direction (p. 140). He argues that their research and theory were not as 'novel' as some believed with many themes already debated. However, they did reconfigure 'a wide intellectual field around the themes of power and inequality' (Connell, 1987, p. 33). Connell's work identifying the complexities of this

Table 2.1: Comparative Models of Feminist Work (1975–1980)

Lerner Categories	Curthoys Categories	Dixson Categories	Windschuttle Categories	Windschuttle Examples
Compensatory history: finding the missing women	Urban/country (pioneering women)	Feminist paradigm: Women are equal to men but exist in male-defined structures (e.g. work and education)	Biographies	Robertson (1980)
Contributory history	Domestic work, Factory work, Middle-class domestic	Women's liberationist paradigm: Pro-women, anti-masculine	Labour History	Markey (1980) Power (1980) Mitchell (1980)
History of women's oppression	Married Unmarried	Androgynous paradigm: Sharing and blurring culturally designated qualities of masculine and feminine	Modern Radical Feminist History	Dixson (1976) Summers (1975)
Study of women's sphere		Man irrelevant to woman paradigm: I don't dislike men but they are just not relevant to me	Institutional History	E.g. archival research
			New Social History	

Sources: Lerner, G. (1969). New Approaches to the Study of Women in American History. *Journal of Social History*, 3(1), pp. 53–62; Lerner, G. (1975). Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges. *Feminist Studies*, 3(1/2), pp. 5–14; Curthoys, A. (1975). Towards a feminist Labour History. In A. Curthoys, S. Eade & P. Spearritt (Eds.), *Women at Work* Canberra: The Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, pp. 88–87; Dixson, M. (1977). Some comparative constructs for analysis of the Australian Women's Movement. *Melbourne Journal of Politics*, pp. 80–92; Windschuttle, E. (Ed.). (1980). *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788–1978*. Melbourne: Fontana/Collins, pp. 19–36.

foundational feminist work was useful in helping me understand a range of theories which included ‘class first’, ‘social reproductive’, ‘dual systems’, ‘sex role theory’, ‘categorical theory’ and ‘practice-based theory’. In this discussion he refers to the work of Heidi Hartmann (1979) and Zillah Eisenstein (1979) as foundational works in understanding the importance of capitalism and patriarchy as a dual system.

Considerable attention had been paid to theorising the relationship between class analysis and gender analysis. Both labour history (including the focus on peak unions) and industrial relations disciplines continue to be influenced by the ‘unhappy marriage’ metaphor used by Hartmann in 1979.

The ‘Unhappy Marriage’ Metaphor

Hartmann argued in 1979 that all relationships between Marxism and feminism had been unequal, with feminists and feminist theory consistently coming in second best. Her paper represented a challenge to both Marxist and radical feminists to work on the ‘woman question’ and proposed that analysis of both patriarchy and capitalism was essential. Her use of the ‘unhappy marriage’ metaphor provided a powerful and evocative metaphor that resonated with socialist theorists of the time. Hartmann’s (1979) discussion pointed to the fact that it was not clear in 1979 that ‘the “socialism” being struggled for [was] the same for both men and women’ (p. 24).

It seems that despite the increasing complexity and sophistication of feminist theories (Winn, 2003; Cobble, 2007; Calás & Smircich, 2006), this metaphor still haunts the literatures. Evidence of the ongoing appeal of this metaphor is reflected in the titles of a number of publications since 1979 including: Ehrlich’s (1981) *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Can it be Saved*; Sargent’s (1981) *New Left Women and Men: The Honeymoon is Over*; Baxter’s (1994) *Is Husband’s Class Enough? Class location and class identity in the United States, Sweden, Norway, and Australia*; Bryson’s (2004) *Marxism and feminism: Can the ‘unhappy marriage’ be saved?* and Cobble’s (2007) *The Sex of Class*. Debates about approaches to the questions of class and gender continue amongst socialist and feminist theorists haunted by the vision of ‘unhappy marriage’.

Similarities between Marxist theories and socialist feminist theories have not gone unremarked. Both approaches have systemic social change at their heart but there are some ongoing problems in attempting to combine the two types of analysis. Patriarchy,

as a system of male power over women, can be seen as similar to Marxists' references to capitalism as an economic system with capital owners (and their representatives) who are involved in a hegemonic relationship with labour. Both represent something that has to be overthrown. Connell claims that they are not just in relationships that reproduced gendered or class systems, but that they are constitutive (Connell, 1987, p. 46–7) elements of the current form of capitalism – capitalist patriarchy (Eisenstein, 1970, cited in Connell, 1987). He claims:

The connection between structures of inequality is not a logical connection: theorists who have assumed that have been seduced by another kind of Hegelianism. The connection is empirical and practical. As a matter of fact the core institutions of the contemporary structure of gender power cannot be torn down without a class politics because those institutions fuse gender and class domination. As a matter of practice, equality is difficult to contain; the origins of modern feminist radicalism in the 'new left' show that. The historic association between socialism and feminism, however tense and ragged it has been, expresses a basic truth about the global structure of inequality and what social forces might dismantle it (Connell, 1987, p. 292).

Connell presents three problems. The first is seeing capitalism and patriarchy as systems; the second is in what sense are they 'the same kind of thing' and third, how we can understand the relationship between them (Connell, 1987, p. 47). Connell developed a class- and gender-based model for analysis that attempts to address these problems and to avoid the uneasy relationships of class and gender. Drawing on the work of socialist feminist theorists, such as Juliet Mitchell (1971) on patriarchy, he recommends that four sets of patterns and their relations to each other require attention. These are: power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations (Connell, 1987). These, he claims, will reveal the structural constraints and possibilities that contribute to social change that this thesis attempts to explore between the period of 1975 and 1980 as a new feminism emerged in the region. Connell's work provides the basis for analysis of gender that will be applied in Chapter Eight. The following paragraph indicates the range of feminist work that I have utilised in Chapters Six and Seven.

Feminist labour historians have explored women activists focusing on voluntary women's groups such as the International Women's Day Committees (IWD C'tees) (see, for example, Curthoys, 1994; Stevens, 1985); the Union of Australian Women

(Mitchell, n.d.); women's auxiliaries (Mitchell, 1980); as well as work on women in political parties such as the Communist Party (Penson, 1992; Robertson, 1980; Stevens, 1987) and the Labor Party (Magarey, 1994); and women's separate organising within peak union bodies (see, for example, Brigden, 2003). Industrial relations feminists have explored women's roles in trade unions (see, for example, Forrest, 1993; Hansen, 2002; Muir & Franzway, 2000; Parker, 2002, 2003; Pocock, 1995), focusing on women's groups. For example, Jane Parker's work on British unions listed types of women's groups as: women's conferences; women's committees; women's schools; course/training and workshops; women's pre-meetings; meetings and seminars; women only branches; women's sections and departments; women-only campaigns and events; and informal women's networks, working groups, caucuses, 'get-togethers', socials and discussion circles (Parker, 2002, p. 26). This work provided a way forward for thinking about women in peak union bodies, provided there was some analysis of the differences between processes and objectives in individual trade unions and peak union organising.

One type of organisation not explored in peak union literature is that which deals with sexual and family violence, women's collectives and women's services. The WWIC still exists largely because activists have increasingly constructed sexual and family violence as a public problem. The space within these organisations was initially inhabited by voluntary activists who combined unionism and women's liberation, socialist and radical feminist ideas. Currently this space is inhabited by paid women workers, within an extended network of women's services in the region. Volunteers and activists have been replaced by workers in a new area of employment.

In a recent call to all feminisms to work together, Magarey (2007a) emphasises that unified political interests rather than common experiences have been the core of feminism and that a unified political interest might revitalise feminist work. Cobble argues that moving beyond images of 'working class as blue-collar men' as well as 'the realities of class and of class difference as women experience them' (2007, p. 2) is important. For Cobble it is also about 'reinventing worker movements and the class politics they embrace'. Cobble argues that work and the working class are becoming increasingly feminised, that in fact the 'sex' of the working class has undergone an unnoticed 'sex change'. Her argument is that not only are more women working, but 'women's substandard working conditions, such as casualisation, the growth of low-paid, 'dead-end, contingent jobs', and the growth of 'low-level, white-collar and service

occupations' are becoming the norm' for men and women who are not part of the new knowledge economy (i.e. lack higher education).

The relationships between the two categories of theorists, the 'new left' and the feminists, pose questions for labour history that remain unresolved. If a return to using class as proposed by Magarey (2007a), Ferrier (2003), Crain (2007) and Cobble (2007) is to be considered, issues raised in this chapter need to be explored.

The last five years have seen a significant reappraisal of some of this literature. This newer literature raises new possibilities for the reconsideration of some of the dilemmas posed after significant work had been done on both the history of the SCLC and WWIC and on feminist activism. Class theories have undergone a revival. For example, Connell's early work on class (Connell, 1977, 1982; Connell & Irving, 1980) has received renewed attention (see, for example, in Hollier, 2004), as has Rickard's (1976) book on class (see Olssen & Scates, 2008, pp. 15–16). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) have revised Connell's work on hegemonic masculinity. Judith Bennett has argued for the reintroduction of the term patriarchy (Bennett, 2006, pp. 21–22) in light of what she claims is an erosion of the relationship between feminism and history (Bennett, 2006, p. 2). New arguments about the direction of feminist history (Magarey, 2007b; Scott, 2004) and feminist labour history (Brigden, 2007; Cobble, 2007) have emerged. Further, feminist standpoint theories re-emerged as significant literature, with new appraisals of its strengths and weaknesses (Brooks, 2007; Harding, 2004a, 2004b; Harding & Norberg, 2005; Hartsock, 2006). They have been debated by some industrial relations feminists (see, for example, in Healy, Hansen, & Ledwith, 2006) and applied to an understanding of women's groups within trade unions (Parker, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2008). Peak union literature began to note an intersection between feminist concerns and historical issues (Brigden, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Forbes-Mewitt & Snell, 2006), and a stronger theoretical approach to both union–community alliances (Tattersall, 2006, 2008) and peak union bodies has emerged (Bailey, 2006; Ellem et al., 2004).

Peak Union Bodies

Within the literature on peak union bodies there are three strands of theory that are particularly relevant to this thesis. The first strand focuses on purpose and power in relation to peak union bodies; the second strand involves a focus on spatial awareness;

and the third strand acknowledges a call for gender awareness within the literature. Before outlining these strands it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the relevant literature on peak union bodies.

Peak union bodies are defined by Ellem, Markey and Shields as 'inter-union organisations, which are directed towards furthering the common interests of unions by jointly-determined strategies'. Further, they claim that 'in the Anglophone tradition, they operate on a voluntary basis, with affiliated unions retaining their separate organisational identity, rather than losing it in some new kind of union'. (Ellem et al., 2004, p. 1). Ellem et al. claim that these bodies are the voice for organised labour and workers within the scale of their focus (for example, national, state or regional) and that the influence of peak union bodies extends beyond addressing specific industrial issues to embrace wider social and political issues.

Peak union bodies have recently recaptured the attention of labour historians. These institutions are regarded as having the potential to revitalise unions and provide a vehicle for activism that extends beyond industrial injustice (Ellem et al., 2004, p. 1; Laneyrie, 2003a). Prior to 2003 there were very few extensive studies of peak union bodies in Australia. Exceptions to this were Jim Hagan's (1981) *The History of ACTU* and Ray Markey's (1994) *In Case of Oppression: The Life and Times of the Labor Council of New South Wales*. These books were supplemented with journal articles and a range of conference papers to provide the basis for an understanding of peak union formation, roles and relationships with affiliates. Since 2003 there has been an increasing interest in theory about the purpose and role of peak unions as a significant party, alongside individual unions and the state, in class analysis undertaken in labour history. Peak union bodies have distinctive capacities that allow them to mobilise their affiliates into a 'movement' (Briggs, 2004, p.10). Briggs (2004) claims that 'inter-union coordination and collective mobilisation involve identifying, selecting and privileging the common interests of trade unions from the heterogeneous interest of unions as sectional organisations' (p. 10). Peak union bodies, therefore, represent the negotiated 'general interests' of their affiliates. They are class-based institutions that occupy a unique place in the broader class movement. In 2004 Ellem, Markey and Shields published *Peak Unions in Australia* contributing to this renewed interest in peak union bodies. The book drew attention to a range of peak body studies at a range of scales of analyses (Ellem & Shields, 2004) at the national, state, industry and regional

levels. Other recent work includes that of Bailey, 2006; Brigden, 2003, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Forbes-Mewitt & Snell, 2006; Rittau, 2003.

Ellem and Shields (2004) also presented a model for understanding peak union purpose and power. The model included three types of agency and three modes of agency. The modes of agency are listed as industrial, political and social; and the types of agency presented are: agents of worker mobilisation; agents of exchange and agents of regulation (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 44). These dimensions and their relationships are reproduced in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Dimensions of Peak Union Agency

Types	Industrial mode	Political mode	Social mode
Agent of Mobilisation	Union organising and renewal Making 'common cause' between sectional unions Coordination of inter-union campaigns	Propagandising Consciousness-raising Sponsoring electoral candidates Political campaigning	Labour–community alliances Social and environmental issues Human rights
Agent of external exchange/representation	With: Employers Industrial tribunals Other union bodies	With: The state Political parties	With: Wider working class Broad-based social movements
Agent of regulation	Union rules, demarcation and inter-union dispute resolution Award and collective agreement co-determination Co-enforcement of award and agreement provisions	Influencing statutory provisions regarding union rights, bargaining regimes, minimum wages and conditions Co-regulation of training, trade, immigration, social welfare, taxation policy	Labour market regulation Division of labour Commodity market regulation Social relations

Source: Ellem & Shields, (2004, p. 44).

The model provides a starting point for analysis of purpose and power in peak union bodies. Chapter Five presents an analysis of the history of the SCLC that is highly influenced by the work of Ellem, Markey and Shields and contains many of the elements of their model presented in Table 2.2: Dimensions of Peak Union Agency. The application of the model is clearly evident in diagrams constructed for explaining the links between stories in the film *Promise of Struggle*, which is a history of the SCLC. This film was produced as part of the work for the thesis. The film will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

In theorising peak union purpose and power, academics need to include ways of incorporating both fractionalising and unifying aspects of types of power that are capable of mobilising and coordinating individual goals represented by the various autonomous affiliated unions. Markey (1994) draws on Flanders (1970) to explain that within the union movement, peak bodies consist of two essential elements, ‘movement’ and ‘organisation’. He claims that ‘... the relationship between these two holds “the key to an understanding of the dynamics” of the organisation of trade union growth and development’ (Markey, 1994, p. 6). Bridgen extends these categories by combining Hyman’s ‘power for’ and ‘power over’ with Flanders’s ‘movement’ and ‘organisation’ into *collective movement power* and *organisational power* (2004, p. 38) as a way of attempting to understand the power and politics involved in a peak body. In the case of the WWIC the impetus towards ‘movement’ that binds the group together is feminism; however, their different commitments to CPA, Socialist Workers’ Party (SWP), Australian Labor Party (ALP), trade unionism and women’s liberation are ideological commitments to other organisations. Many of the dynamics during the early phase of the WWIC’s history require an understanding of power to help understand struggles between factional organisations rather than individuals.

Peak union literature like other areas of labour history tends to focus on institutional histories. The implications for analysis of these institutions at each of the scales of analysis are clearly different. Peak union bodies in Australia exist at the national, state, regional and industry levels. Much of the power of state and national peak union bodies has previously been attributed to their role in industrial tribunals. However, regional peak union bodies do not enjoy a formal role in industrial tribunals. Understanding the power relationship between individual unions and regional peak union bodies, unions and their state and national bodies in Australia is complex, because of the institutional

parameters of federalism, affecting not only the structure of the state apparatus and its agencies but also political and union organisations. This complexity is further complicated by historical patterns of factional political loyalties and power dynamics within and between unions and peak union bodies and their spatial locations.

In Australia national union bodies have usually been federations of state bodies. These federally administered unions active in the Illawarra, at the time covered by this thesis included the Metal Workers' Union (MWU), Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU) and Builders' Labourers' Federation (BLF) which have state branches and regional sub-branches. Sub-branches of these unions are usually affiliated to a regional peak union body such as the SCLC as well as having access to national and state peak bodies through their state branches. State registered unions such as the Public Service Association (PSA) and NSW Nurses Union are usually affiliated with their state peak union body and have regional branches that are affiliated to regional peak union bodies.

Ellem argues that British geographers have demonstrated 'the spatial differences in unions are persistent, surviving changes in industry; and unionism is shaped by divisions in labour and forms of political culture which are themselves spatially specific' (2006, p. 160). 'In the Illawarra, a powerful and militant local labour movement remained capable of forming alliances with some employers and other non-local capital factions to attempt to moderate national policies, attract investment and secure new uses for local economic spaces' (Ellem, 2006, p. 165). Ellem claims that emphasising 'local and regional variations is not to privilege these scales above others but to reinstate and situate them in relation to other scales and places' (2006, p. 165). According to Mylett this is moving beyond the notion that a particular level is just a container for social processes but seeing social life as practice across interrelated, interconnected and interconstitutive scales (Mylett, 2003, p. 102).

Generally regional peak union councils are affiliated to the state labour councils, and state labour councils represent them at the national level. Regional councils generally do not play a role in negotiation of industrial awards, and these bodies operate with different power bases to the state and peak union bodies. Historically, the SCLC, the Broken Hill Barrier Industrial Council and the Newcastle Labour Council have been exceptions. These regional bodies have direct representation to both the NSW Labor Council (NSWLC) and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) based on their

substantial regional union base and industrial infrastructures. They were formed independently rather than by the NSWLC (Markey interview, 18 October, 2007).

Such considerations lead to the second theme, relevant to theory in the thesis, namely an increasing engagement in labour history and industrial relations with studies of regional distinctiveness and associated engagement with concepts of geography, scale and space (Ellem & Shields, 1999) to understand community mobilisation. Peak union purpose and power must be understood as 'multi-dimensional, historically contingent and spatially specific' (Ellem & Shields, 2002, p. 62; also see Brigden, 2003). This work on peak unions has been strongly influenced by labour geography. In Australian labour history the importance of location was first alluded to by Connell and Irving in their book *Class Structure in Australian History* (1980, p. 202), although internationally it was dealt with a little earlier. The significance of location has increasingly become more clearly articulated in the Australian literature. Examples include Eklund's (1994) study of the relationship between class, locality and region at Port Kembla (in the Illawarra Region); Patmore's work on Lithgow in NSW (1998, 2000); Strachan, Sullivan and Burgess's (2002) examination of links between gender, region and labour markets; and Taksa's study of the Eveleigh Train Workshop (1999, 2000, 2003) in Sydney. These authors have drawn on work of a range of geographers that includes, but is not limited to Harvey (1985); Massey (1985, 1992, 1994, 1995a, 1995b); Massey & Jess (1995a, 1995b); Murphy (1991); Savage (1996); and Urry (1981).

The work of a number of these theorists was particularly useful during the early stages of the thesis when I was trying to find a way to understand the nature of the Illawarra region and what types of organisations the region nurtured. Early questions included: Is spatial analysis useful when attempting to understand an organisation? In what way is the scale of 'region' a useful lens for analysis? This chapter argues that space is an important player in contextualising the WWIC and the SCLC as they are embedded in their regional context. Murphy (1991) claims that there is value in articulating a region as a multiple and changing, contested, 'socially significant spatial unit'. Mylett et al. (2000) claim that location is embedded in particular social relations and power relations that reflect regional uniqueness. In this way spatial location is not only concerned with physical geography but with a particular bundle of social relations, institutional infrastructures and sense of place or community (see also Markey et al., 2001). This sense of place or community may be contested as a result of the multiple and shifting

balance of social relations over time and in the same region (Urry, 1987; Mylett, 2003). Regions and places are 'aspects of the spatial environment [that] are themselves humanly produced and humanly changeable' (Urry, 1987, p. 437, cited in Murphy, 1991, p. 25). Savage provides an excellent explanation of the relationship between place and class. His approach treated place 'as a constituent of class formation' rather than just a place where class formation occurred (1996, p. 70). That is, space was seen 'as playing a vital role in determining the extent, nature and form of class formation' (1996, p. 70).

Capital and labour have different relationships to space. Ellem and Shields claim:

As the well-worn term 'contested terrain' implies, what is at issue in capital-labour relations is space itself – its delimitation, definition, control and significance ... space is not an objective given, but rather is constructed in different ways by different social agents and assumes different and often competing meanings for different social agents (Ellem & Shields, 1999, pp. 537 and 554)

Their competing interests result in different understandings of the meanings of space.

For Mylett et al. 'the past of a place combines with a variety of contemporary factors in a place to produce a new place ... location is likely to be significant because of the significant differences between places accumulating over time' (2000, p. 14; see also Ellem & Shields, 1999; Hanson & Pratt, 1995). These ideas are illustrated in Janis Bailey's (1999) analysis of the creation of a people's park in Western Australia. Bailey symbolically juxtaposes the symbolic meanings of 'blue singlets' and 'broccoli' to demonstrate the emergence of a new public space and a sense of trade union community that is specific to Perth. She describes the park as an outcome of the process and relationships of the multiple trade union cultures (pink-, blue-, white- and gold-collar unions) in a campaign responding to efforts to deregulate the industrial relations system in Western Australia in 1997. These authors recommend an exploration of how the region and the spaces within it are understood by those who inhabit it, and how and why that understanding has changed over time.

Region is also a useful level or unit of analysis, given its 'interrelatedness, interconnection and interconstitutiveness' (Mylett, 2003) with other scales that include international, national, state, organisation, workplace, household and the individual (Ellem & Shields, 1999; Mylett, 2003; Mylett et al., 2000; Markey et al., 2001). One of

the advantages of spatial analysis is its ability to explore the interconstituency of multiple levels of space, place and scale to avoid interpretations shaped by spatial blindness (McGrath-Champ, 1993; Ellem & Shields, 1999; Brigden, 2003). For example, Mylett et al. (2000) use a mosaic metaphor to demonstrate that the meaning of 'national' industrial relations is more than an aggregate of regions. They claim: 'Whilst 'Australian industrial relations' is a common phrase, less common is an explanation of how activity from individual and local levels through to global and social levels are bound together to make this term empirically meaningful' (Mylett et al., 2000, p. 8). A spatial awareness focusing on region does not prioritise the scale of region; rather it allows exploration of key causal or enabling relations that are not bounded by regional borders; that is, a region is also located in relation with other places and scales of analysis. A region takes meaning from other scales and also gives meaning to other scales.

In order to assist their readers understand the complexity of the concepts under discussion a number of theorists have evoked strong visual images such as layers of sediment (Massey, 1984, cited in McGrath Champ, 1996), marble cake (McGrath-Champ, 1996, p. 23) and mosaic (Mylett et al., 2000, p. 18) to articulate the local parts as well as the relationship of the parts to the state, national or international whole. Explaining how the parts relate to the whole is both messy and complex, particularly if each part's embeddedness in relation to other scales of analysis, including international, national, state, organisation and individual (Mylett et al., 2000, p.17; Ellem, 1999). The patchwork metaphor, based on this material, and developed in the next chapter, is a fruitful conception. Chapters Four and Five the individual relations across various scales of analysis that constitute the SCLC will be demonstrated, and the notion that SCLC is greater than the sum of its parts will be articulated.

Chapters Four and Six present the SCLC in its regional context as a necessary precursor to explaining the birth or creation of the WWIC in Chapter Seven. The creation of the WWIC as a separate space for women's organisation indicated a changed understanding of the relationship between men and women in the activist movements of the region by 1980. These women were aware that they were making history, but they were also making space.

Gendered Nature of Peak Union Organisations

Brigden's thesis (2003) points to gaps in 'peak union' literature in addressing the gendered nature of the 'spaces' within peak union bodies. More recently, Brigden (2006, 2007) has begun the work of engaging in gender-aware study where issues of masculinity are examined alongside the role of women. She is contributing to the project of uncovering women's agency and the gendered nature of power in the Victorian Trades Hall Council, another peak union organisation. Brigden (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007) is concerned that attempts to explore the gendered nature of peak union bodies is hampered by two major problems. The first is that literature on peak unions is in emergent state; it requires more empirical and theoretical studies. The second is that, as noted by feminist historians, the exclusion of women from stories about a peak union does not always mean that they were not there. There is still considerable work to be done 'excavating' their presence and their contribution to peak union and union histories. Such an excavation, Brigden claims, must be seen in the light of historical patterns of engagement. Women's 'space' needs to be understood as fluid and impermanent change which is shaped differently by the participation of different cohorts of women (see also Nolan, 2002). Both Brigden and Nolan demonstrate that assumptions of linear progress for women within trade unions or peak union bodies cannot necessarily be implied, that historical shifts have occurred in 'how it had to be made and remade as a gender-inclusive place by different generations of women activists' (Brigden, 2007, p. 269).

While the literature outlined above offers a way to advance spatially aware research on peak unions, the way forward for a gender aware is more difficult. There is debate about how to move forward with such a project (Brigden, 2003; Magarey, 2007; Matthews, 2003). While the literature is beginning to address the development of gendered spaces within the peak union bodies, there are no studies that include feminist organisations. The immediate question for this thesis is: What was the most effective way to explore feminist activism within the SCLC and the WWIC, given the SCLC was a trade union body and the WWIC was a feminist organisation?

Literature examining trade union bodies and feminist organisations is drawn from different disciplines. This is important because approaches to peak union literature were influenced by industrial relations theory and trade union feminists who claim that gender analysis is still marginalised in the literature. Franzway (2000a) accuses feminist

historians of ignoring trade union women in their construction of a historiography of women's liberation and perpetuating a split between the women's movement and trade unions. Muir and Franzway's (2000) critique of feminist literature for ignoring women's trade union activism and the labour movement targeted Lake's (1999) *Getting Equal: The story of Australian feminism*, for focusing on the women's movement and not including trade union feminists and Eveline and Hayden's (2000) *Women, Leadership and Activism*, for including only two women with trade union experience in their discussion of leadership. Industrial relations feminists (Forrest, 1993; Pocock, 1997; Franzway, 1999, 2000, 2000a; Muir & Franzway, 2000; Muir, 2000; Hansen, 2002) firmly believe that socialist feminists still regard trade unions as an important site of feminist struggle.

Ferrier (2003) has argued that working-class feminists did not fight hard enough, as middle-class feminisms gained control of feminism. Socialist and Marxist feminism, it is claimed, 'collapsed and more or less died' in the late 1980s (Curthoys, 1994). More recently, a return to studies of women using class and an economic base have been advocated (Ferrier, 2003). Evoking Virginia Woolf, Ferrier claims that middle class or liberal feminism could never create change by itself, it was the weakest feminism:

Woolf's *Three Guineas* (1938) centres upon the inability of middle class women, in the shadow of looming World War Two, to prevent war, which she attributes mainly to their economic powerlessness. They are 'weaker than the women of the working class' who have the ability to say: 'If you go to war we will refuse to make munitions or to help in the production of goods'. Woolf sees middle class women as 'the weakest of all the classes in the state. We have no weapon with which to enforce our will,' (page 24) insisting on an importance of economics over ideology. And as well, the importance of the ability to act and organise together (Ferrier, 2003, p. 19).

Franzway (2000a) argues that despite the fact that many people claim that socialist feminism faded from view in the late 1980s, it has not disappeared. One of the problems, Franzway argues, is that the materialist political concerns of the 1970s and 1980s have blurred the focus on the difference in standpoint between union and feminist politics (2000a, p. 31).

These concerns reveal as much about the political tensions between feminists as they do about the relationships within approaches to gender and class analysis. The resurfacing

of tension between feminist activism and trade union activism, and gender and class analysis, must be considered in the light of some of the mistakes of the past.

The following chapter (three), on epistemology and methodology, outlines how I went about gender and class analysis in relation to the two spatially defined case organisations, the SCLC and the WWIC, and their relationship with each other.

Chapter Three: Epistemology and Methodology

Introduction

Chapter Three provides an overview of the epistemology and the methodology used in the thesis. The chapter begins with an explanation of the feminist approach utilised and identifies the potential difficulties associated with the multidisciplinary approach. The second section of the chapter addresses how the research focus was developed. It provides a description of the research methods used, the data sourced and the tools developed during the research.

In this research a feminist epistemological approach was selected to guide the research. The thesis proposes that feminist standpoint theories will be useful within the broader discipline of labour history and in further understanding peak union bodies. To date there has been limited use of feminist standpoint theories in labour history and specific peak union literature.

Key concerns that contributed to the choice of this epistemological perspective were that:

1. the study should focus on stories of participants and value their understanding of the experiences they shared with the researcher during the research process
2. the participants' experiences and knowledge expressed in the thesis should be recognisable to them as their experiences
3. a materialist and embodied approach to the conditions of women's experiences should be central for feminists in both organisations, albeit in different ways.

Feminist perspectives were important to women members of the WWIC and the SCLC. There were multiple expressions of feminism located both in the interviews and in the archival data. For example, one source referred to socialist versus corporate feminists; radical versus liberal feminists; oogie boogie feminists;¹² eco-feminists; cyber/tech and

¹² Defined as having an involvement with arts and/or music.

therapist feminists;¹³ queer feminists and heterosexuals; post-modern feminists¹⁴ versus forensic feminists;¹⁵ political feminists;¹⁶ spiritual/goddess feminists; Aboriginal feminists; and multicultural feminists (WWIC *Digging Up Herstory Lines*, 1999). Any history about women's activism within the region therefore requires the flexible use of multiple feminist perspectives (see, for example, in the work of Naples, 1998) in order to empathetically tease out the various perspectives of participants.

The focus in this thesis is on the period 1975 and 1980, when activists, including feminist activist from the Illawarra region firmly believed that the support of the SCLC was essential in achieving their goals. The labour history literature review presented in chapter two established that labour historians tend to assert that the labour movement was seen as a major force in a more equitable future during the 1970s and 1980s. It is therefore appropriate to locate the theoretical framework of this thesis within labour history framework rather than social movement theory, which is based in an underlying assumption that new social movements have replaced the labour movement as the principle force for social change (Bergmann, 2003). Nevertheless, I would like to note that social movement theory will provide a useful framework for analysis of the relationships between the SCLC and the WWIC as they evolved subsequent to the establishment phase of the WWIC. In particular, literature from the social movement literature that focuses on the transformation, growth and changes in feminist social movement organisations (see for example in Taylor [2001] and, Taylor and Whittier [1992]) will provide a valuable theoretical basis for analysis in future work.

Further, while the discipline in which this study is located is generally labour history, the thesis draws on a variety of theoretical discourses including peak union literature, which in turn draws on labour geography, regional studies of industrial relations and feminist studies of industrial relations. Feminist industrial relations and labour history feminist theorists take very different stances on the relationship between epistemology and theory building within their disciplines. Feminists in both disciplines, however,

¹³ Defined as representing various professions and services.

¹⁴ Defined as concerned with questions such as – are we a community or individuals? and, do we have anything in common or is it all just fragments? Also included were various issues raised around differences between members and workers.

¹⁵ Concerned with struggles and battles and searching for clues to regain history.

¹⁶ Including non-political, Labor, Socialist and Communist Party feminists and working class versus women's liberation versus intellectual feminists

acknowledge that feminist debates have made a difference within their disciplines. The methodological perspective selected for this research needs to offer the possibility of identifying and linking these theoretical disciplines and their different, sometimes contradictory, and sometimes overlapping research design perspectives (following Fletcher, 1999). The thesis will argue that feminist standpoint epistemology can assist in dealing with both the similarities and the contradictions that occur when constructing knowledge about class and gender analysis in peak union literature.

This discussion has identified three epistemological problems for consideration. First, the difference between disciplines; second, the differences between approaches to class and gender within the disciplines; and third, differences between multiple feminist positions both within and between disciplines. Feminist standpoint theory provides a way to navigate amongst these concerns.

Feminist Standpoints

Feminist standpoint theory is highly debated, and there is significant confusion around it (Calás & Smircich, 2006; Harding, 2004a). Feminist standpoint theory is defined by Collins (1997) as ‘an interpretive framework dedicated to explicating how knowledge remains central to maintaining and changing unjust systems of power’ (reprinted in Harding, 2004b, p. 247). Olesen (2005) describes feminist standpoint research as ‘building on a loosely related set of theoretical positions by feminist scholars from several disciplines’, with the key concern being to deal with ‘the absence of women from, or the marginalization of women in research accounts and foregrounded women’s knowledge as emergent from women’s situated experiences’ (Harding, 1987 cited in Olesen, 2005, p. 243).

Feminist standpoint theory requires an awareness of the social and political implications of academic work. According to Calás and Smircich (2006), socialist feminists using standpoint theory have focused on epistemological issues that include ‘how knowledge is constituted and for what purpose’ (p. 304). Questions are not ‘how to eliminate politics’, but rather how to gain a broader understanding of ‘which politics advance and which obstruct the growth of knowledge’; and ‘for which groups does such politics advance or obstruct knowledge’ (Harding, 2004b, pp. 20–21). An important question for this thesis was: Does the politics of ‘class’ and/or the politics of ‘gender’ currently

depicted in labour history obstruct or assist the growth of a collective voice for women activists in the Illawarra region?

Harding claimed that feminist standpoint epistemology provides ‘a site for reflection and debate about difficult to resolve contemporary debates’ (Harding, 2001, 2004). My concern was how would these unresolved dilemmas between class and gender discussed in the previous chapter impact on understanding women’s activism. Hartsock (1997) sees the central question for feminist standpoint theorists as ‘how we can use theoretical tools and insights to create theories of justice and social change that address the concerns of the present’ (reprinted in Harding, 2004a, p. 245).

Feminist standpoint writers acknowledge that there is value in starting the research process with women’s stories and honouring/respecting the issues they raise from their experiences of the world (Narayan, 1988). It does not, as some industrial relations feminists (for example Briskin, 2006) claim, mean engaging only with women’s stories or that men’s stories or masculinity cannot be engaged with (Harding, 2001). It sees value in having a position from which to further engage with other standpoints on the issues raised (Pohihaus, 2002).

Sandra Harding claims:

We need to learn to see our theorizing projects as illuminating, ‘riffing’ between and over the beats of patriarchal theories, rather than as rewriting the tunes of any particular one (Marxism, psychoanalysis, empiricism, hermeneutic, deconstructionism, to name a few) so that it perfectly expresses *what we think at the moment we want to say* (Harding, 1986a, p. 649) [her italics].

Harding and other standpoint feminists do not require epistemological purity, instead they opt for a conscious application of method and theory, and these may be drawn from multiple sources (disciplines or epistemologies) as required.

Despite differences about methodologies, feminist theorists agree that there are common elements that underpin feminist standpoint perspectives to conducting research. These are: first, feminist standpoints recognise the gendered nature of knowledge and its construction; second, they encourage collaboration, co-operation and mutual respect between the researcher and the researched, treating both as complex and multiple selves; third, they privilege women’s embodied experience as a starting point for

research; fourth, they have conscious political agendas; and fifth, feminist standpoints understand that a researcher's understanding is only partial. Each of these elements is discussed below.

1. Feminist standpoints recognise the gendered nature of knowledge and knowledge construction (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1986b; Rose, 1983). The research process itself and theories used are often gender biased or gender blind while they claim to be gender neutral and rational (Harding, 2004b; Jacobson & Jacques, 1990; Jacques, 1996). Feminist standpoint theorists critique these male-centred epistemologies, and the social construction of gender.
2. Feminist standpoints allow for collaboration, co-operation and mutual respect (Jülich, 2001, p. 2) recognising that the researcher is part of the process and participating in a power relationship between the researcher and the researched (Harding, 1993; Jacobson & Jacques, 1990). Further, they position both the 'researched' and the 'researcher' as complex and multiple selves created in shifting relationships and dialogues (Collins, 1997; Jacobson & Jacques, 1990). Here the researchers' perspectives are always partial representations – and they should offer the opportunity to create dialogue with other perspectives that can broaden our understanding (Haraway, 1991; Collins, 1986; Hartsock, 1983).
3. Feminist standpoint research places women's concrete experience as the starting point for research that represents and reflects women's understanding of their organisations and organisational relationships. Haraway (1997) claims 'standpoints are cognitive–emotional–political achievements, crafted out of located social–historical–bodily experience – itself always constituted through fraught, non-innocent, discursive, material collective practices' (p. 304). In privileging women's embodied/concrete experience as the starting point for research, such approaches do not essentialise women as one homogenous group but seek to create solidarity amongst women (Hartsock, 1983).
4. Like labour history, feminist standpoints are grounded in Marxist thought (Harding, 2004b; Hartsock, 1998). Feminist standpoint theorists were influenced by Marx and Engels's belief that the working class can be society's ideal knowers. The assumption is that research should start from the lives of those who are marginalised, and this includes women (Harding, 2004a; Hartsock, 1998) and/or women of colour (Collins, 1986; hooks, 1990). The perspectives of these

‘communities’ are seen as less partial than those in positions of power, such as white males, because they need to negotiate and make sense of the ruptures between their own world and the world of those in dominant groups (see, for example, Collins, 1986; hooks, 1990; Smith, 1997) who have ‘weak objectivity’ (Harding, 2004a). Marginalised groups are seen to have at least ‘double vision’ (Jagger, 1983). This is the key to ‘strong objectivity’ (Harding, 1993).

5. Researchers using feminist standpoints have conscious political agendas (Harding, 2004a). These political agendas are seen as a way of empowering oppressed groups, particularly in developing ‘oppositional consciousness’ (Collins, 1986; Sandoval, 2004). Further, they challenge the assumption that a political standpoint ‘can only obstruct the production of scientific knowledge’ (Harding, 2004b, p. 1). Harding claims that this perspective challenges the assumption that feminist issues are just ‘women’s social and political issues but also had a role in informing theoretical, methodological and political thought about the production of knowledge (Harding, 2004a, p. 32). According to Harding (2004b), this understanding recognises that ‘some kinds of social locations and political struggles advance the growth of knowledge’ (p. 26). Feminist standpoint theories should not be confused with ‘women’s standpoint’ (Harding, 2004a). Women’s standpoint does not involve the ‘hard-won product of consciousness raising and social-political engagement. Such engagement exposes the false assumptions upon which gendered patterns of domination and subordination are built and sustained’ (Calás & Smircich, 2006 citing Harding, 1998, p. 180). Hartsock (1983) makes the point that feminist standpoint is a ‘mediated’ form of knowledge. It is an ‘active intervention, a conscious and concerted effort to reinterpret and restructure our lives ... A standpoint is a project, not an inheritance; it is achieved, not given’ (citing Weeks, 1996, p. 101).

Some theorists claim that feminist standpoint methodology has been useful as a resource for social justice movements (Harding, 2004a) and understanding women’s work (Rose, 1983). Such a methodology offers the opportunity ‘to create oppressed peoples as collective “subjects” of research rather than only as objects of others’ ‘observations’ (Harding, 2004b, p. 3). Fletcher (1999) claims that:

groups have a distinguishable experience that exists but also that this experience has not been listened to or valued. One goal of standpoint research is to generate data that allows a marginalized group as a

collective, allowing it to constitute 'one voice'. Here it is possible to infer a general belief system by observing patterns of behaviour and listening to how subjects explain or make sense of their actions (p. 39).

It is not an understanding of shifts in individual consciousness that I am concerned with in this thesis, but a collective shift to a new form of women's activism. Standpoint theories are more about the creation of groups' consciousness. Here I am concerned to tease out explicitly multiple feminist consciousnesses that contribute to feminist activism at a regional level.

Feminist standpoint theory allows me the possibility of articulating a more flexible feminist approach that incorporates a variety of feminisms and allows the option of shifting from one feminist perspective to another, consciously, in an attempt to create a regional story about feminist activists that they felt had some relevance to their experience. More importantly, a feminist standpoint approach allows me as a researcher to express my belief in a material reality where women's bodies are different to men's, in that women carry children, give birth, lactate, menstruate (Hartsock 1983 reprinted in Harding, 2004a), and where their reality includes domestic violence, rape and incest that have material bodily consequences affecting women significantly more than men. Violence is one material effect that tends to be embodied in women (Harding, 2004a, p. 5). Further, this violence is dealt with through many of the social institutions including legal courts (see MacKinnon, 1983, reprinted in Harding, 2004a on legal responses to rape), social security, police and trade unions. These issues are also dealt with by the organisations that are at the centre of this research.

Shaping the Research

The thesis takes a feminist standpoint perspective on objectivity (Haraway, 1998 in Harding, 2004a) in the research process. It takes the position that the stories of women include 'strong objectivity' (this was discussed in item 4 in section on feminist standpoints above). It includes an awareness that the choices I made about the literature utilised, the questions I selected to study, the methodology I employed to address the questions and the responsibility for choices about inclusion and exclusion of possible stories and data are mine. These choices, which are a mix of subjective and objective choices, are, however, made in the context of complex sets of shifting relationships that were shaped by both 'academic' and personal relationships with individuals, groups,

texts and a range of institutions. Most choices were the result of iterative, messy and complex processes but reflected the three key concerns discussed in the first section of this chapter. Metaphorically the trajectory of the process could be described as a three-dimensional cyclical spiral. Each cycle of the spiral involved recycling through a range of relationships between myself, the various literatures, epistemologies and ontologies as my understanding changed. A number of cycles saw different opportunities generate different possible choices that I was not aware of at the time of my original thesis proposal. An example of this is provided below in my discussion about the changing role of the film *Power of Struggle*, that I originally constructed as a case study but which became a research tool. This will be discussed in the sections in this chapter on participant observation and reflections and analysis.

In attempting to understand my position in relation to the thesis I found Donna Haraway's writing useful. Haraway's (2004) claim that knowledge was '... partial sight and limited vision ... for the sake of the connections and unexpected openings situated knowledges make possible. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular' (p. 93). My initial attempts to create stories about the activists at the WWIC convinced me that my understanding of the Women's Centre would always be shifting and changing (see Laneyrie, 2002). Any stories I created would only be partial and offer a limited vision. It made it easier to understand my history projects and data gathering as always unfinished projects. A collated list or a finished story became useful as a trigger for more stories as well as a very useful prompt when people could not remember details about events. This insight allowed me to be able to treat each document generated, each articulation of the story, as a position from which to generate more dialogue, more data for more understanding, rather than as a finished story.

Method

In the previous chapter I pointed to the prevalence of institutional histories and biographies in labour history. The thesis will construct two case studies drawing on biographical and institutional historical data collected through six key methods. These methods are:

1. archival research
2. document analysis

3. individual interviews
4. group discussions
5. participant observation and reflection
6. case study development.

None of the methods employed can be classified as specifically feminist methods. Archival research, document analysis, individual interviews, group interviews and case studies are traditionally employed by labour historians and most researchers taking a qualitative approach. The following section discusses the application of these six methods.

Archival Research

Archival research was identified as essential to identify women who might have been involved with the SCLC and the WWIC after an initial literature review had identified a very limited range of existing material on feminists and women activists in the region. Initial enquiries had established that neither the WWIC or the SCLC had complete lists of women who had been involved in their history. Initial searches to identify relevant sources of data were carried out at the WWIC, the University of Wollongong (UOW) archives, the feminist archives in Sydney and the Wollongong City Library. The Sydney Feminist archives contained very little information on women from the Illawarra region; archival data at the UOW was more extensive than that available at the Wollongong City Library.

The archival research for this thesis was carried out in a number of stages. The first stage, at the WWIC archives, was to gain a broad overview of the history of the WWIC and the women who were involved. The archives at WWIC consisted of primary documents such as meeting minutes and newsletters. It also contained historical data on some other women's groups that were involved in its establishment, as well as a range of visual and oral materials. At the WWIC an archival committee was formed in 1990 (reconvened in 1998 and 2003) to plan, organise and store the WWIC's records. While the work of this committee is incomplete, due to unavailability of funding, the archives are reasonably accessible and provide an 'official' and relatively complete set of written records which include minutes of committees and groups, newsletters, annual general reports and some audio and visual materials. The archives contain extensive information on a number of other associated politically active women's groups such as the

Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee (WWWCC 1978 to 1984); the 1975 International Women's Year (IWY) Committee and the 1978 the Free Judith Mitchell¹⁷ Campaign. Also included in the archives are a number of unpublished articles and stories about the history of the centre. The most recent history event emerged during preparations to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the WWIC in 2000. An 'Anniversary Stories Committee' was convened in 1998 to work towards a performance-based celebration of the centre's history.¹⁸ This committee organised a series of taped events aimed at gathering stories from past members. The broad script for the final performance entitled *Anniversary Stories* was loosely based around some of the political issues and four distinct phases in the history of the centre that the Stories Committee claimed emerged from their research. These four phases were also evident in work on the history by the archival committee.

These combined sources indicated that past and present members of the WWIC saw the history as having four distinct phases. They were:

- 1979–82 - the establishment, coalition phase
- 1982–86 - Union/political party involvement and membership involvement
- 1986–early 1990s - Working Group focused era
- 1990s - the 90s 'Roller Coaster'.

These phases appeared to represent an evolution¹⁹ – from a service that was formed and driven by trade union and feminist activist members in 1980, to an organisation that is currently shaped and driven by feminist workers, who have become increasingly professionalised, and receives little input from the membership. In line with feminist philosophy, these self-defined historical phases along with the organisational structure (see Appendix 1.1) articulated by members would be used to shape written stories about the WWIC. This initial research identified the strong links between the WWIC and the

¹⁷ Judith Mitchell was a young woman who was imprisoned after she was accused of murdering her newborn baby. The campaign is discussed on p160.

¹⁸ The performance was not recorded and no final versions of the full script are held in the archives. The performance itself involved a number of participants who prepared their own 'stories' for use within the broader script. Only the broad script or meta-narrative is currently stored in the archives.

¹⁹ Here evolution means change to a new and different form as a result of change in genetic material, rather than change into a better or more complex form that assumes progress.

SCLC. This finding prompted a second phase of archival research in order to explore these links more closely in the establishment phase of its history.

The second stage of archival research was conducted at the University of Wollongong (UOW) library archives. The archives contained both primary and secondary sources that included visual, oral and documentary records about the SCLC. Key relevant sources identified at the UOW library included three collections that were useful for this study. The key primary source for this study included SCLC meeting minutes. Minutes and meeting attendance records from the SCLC for 1975 and 1980 were investigated in detail. 1975 was International Women's Year (IWY), and in 1980 the WWIC opened. Both years had been identified as significant years in WWIC archives and by participants who had been involved with the WWIC's history. Other sources identified included the original film footage and running scripts for WIN TV (a regional television station), news reports for the period between 1967 and 1983 and a complete collection of local newspapers, including the *Illawarra Mercury* (the daily newspaper).

The option of using film sources was one of the fascinating elements of this research. The UOW housed the newsreel footage and 'running sheets' for WIN TV local television news station between the years 1967 and 1983. Access to and use of the film footage was restricted to 'academic purposes'. However, as the archives had never been used by academics it promised a potentially new way of researching the two organisations. There were two key problems. The first problem - the original film was not compatible with computer technology and the processes for transposing any footage into a usable format was very expensive. The 75th Anniversary of the SCLC was approaching and sponsorship was gained from them to transpose footage into a format that would allow me to construct a 15-minute history of the SCLC and collect material on women activists for a second short film. The second problem was that the film archives were not only uncatalogued and stored in a relatively random order, but the running sheets did not often indicate who appeared in film clips. Further, some of the earlier film was unstable, often exploding into tiny bits when I attempted to run it through the viewing machine. As a result, the search for relevant film footage was narrowed to focus on 1975 and 1980. Other searches targeted specific dates around important campaigns that were identified by members of the Illawarra Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (hereafter referred to as the Labour History Society) and the secretary of the SCLC, Arthur Rorris, in relation to the SCLC,

but also included dates relevant to women's activism identified in the first phase of this research. Val Dolan (a member of the Labour History Society and one of the original activists from the WWIC) helped me identify potential footage for the study. A two-hour selection of scenes about activism in the region was transposed to be used for this research (Laneyrie, 2003b).

From this two-hour selection of film, a 15-minute documentary film on the history of the SCLC was produced (Laneyrie, 2003a). The two hours selection and the shorter documentary film were used as tools with groups to collect qualitative information about the stories on the SCLC and the WWIC (see description below in the section on group interviews). The attempt to construct a second film on women activists was abandoned when it became clear that there were insufficient stories about women activists in the local WIN TV news. While this is interesting in itself, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to develop this finding further.

Document Analysis

The WWIC archives were searched to identify and record all participants and key events for feminist women for the period between 1975 and 2003. Data relating to the WWIC for the period between 1980 and 2003 was collated on membership, workers, members of the working group and other key committees, changes in the constitution, funding sources, client service statistics, community networking (including groups using centre premises and other regional groups where members served as representatives), union membership and relationships with the SCLC. Where possible multiple sources were identified to reduce any possible 'unreliability' within the sources.

A second round of analysis was then conducted linking this information to the six key areas that members described as constituting the structure of the organisation in order to identify groups of cohorts and identify potential interviewees. The six key areas, which were introduced in Chapter One, include the four key activities areas: feminist activities, inter-agency work, service delivery and community activities; as well as the working group and the membership. Brief descriptions of organisations involved in the establishment of the centre were constructed. Key campaigns were also noted and files on each campaign and key events were constructed. Biographical data was collated on

key individuals. A timeline for key events was constructed (see Appendix 2.1). The timeline was continuously updated during the research process.

Later, as the objectives for this thesis were clarified, SCLC minutes for the years relevant to the thesis were examined to identify women involved with the SCLC. Lists were constructed of all delegates (male and female) as well as their trade union membership and committee membership. Notes were taken on all campaigns and agenda items and summarised for these two years (see Appendix 2.2 1975: SCLC Summary of Issues from Labour Council Minutes, and Appendix 2.3 1980: SCLC Summary of Issues from Labour Council Minutes).

Women delegates were identified, and all references in the minutes to the issues that they were involved in during 1975 and between 1979 and 1980 were noted. These were cross-referenced with membership lists of campaigns and organisations available in the WWIC archives.

Individual Interviews

Thirty individual interviews were conducted as part of this study. Potential interviewees included all members of the WWIC and women involved in the SCLC; however, the list of potential interviews was subject to number of constraints. Pragmatic constraints included the fact that a number of key activists had passed away, including Sally Bowen, Ruby Makula, Peggy Errey and Bev Mielczarek. Further, a number of participants had expressed the desire not to talk about their activities with the WWIC or SCLC. The WWIC workers who had been involved with preparations for the 20th anniversary provided me with a list of people who did not want to be contacted about the Women's Centre. Other participants had left the region and their addresses were unknown, or they did not respond to written requests for interviews. Some men from the SCLC were also personally interviewed for added information on the broader regional historical context, and they also took part in some of the large group sessions later in the project.

The final selection for a first round of interviews included a representative sample from the key groups identified in archival research. Groups represented through interviews included female and male delegates to the SCLC and female members of the Campaign Against Rising Prices (CARP), IWY Committee and the IWD Committee. For 1980, members of the Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee (WWWCC), the

SCLC, the Women's Collective at the Wollongong University (WWC) and the original steering committee for the WWIC were included. The selection also included individuals who were active in the key areas of committed activism during 1980 that included the Health Collective, the Jobs for Women Campaign, and the Chicken Shop Campaign.

Semi-structured interviews were used to explore key incidents and involvement in activism. Each interview was individually structured to suit the known activities of each of the interviewees. Questions in these individual interviews were informed by archival research collated prior to the interviews. Questions were mostly open-ended and flexible in order to elicit the respondent's views. This allowed different interpretations and sometimes questioning of the validity of information I had previously constructed from the archival material. In all cases interviews became free-flowing conversations after the women had ascertained and corroborated or altered information gathered prior to the interview.

Interview protocol was guided by ethics guidelines for research. All interviewees, including those in groups, were provided with information about the intended use of interview material and provided explicit consent before the interview. Participants were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any time, and after each interview participants were asked if there was anything discussed they did not want included in the study. Drafts of all materials were made available to participants to view if they requested.

All interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and analysed for key themes and the relationships between them. Transcription of the individual interviews and the group discussions was carried out by the researcher to begin the process of immersion in the data (Mostyn, 1985). Information relevant to each of the data sets constructed during archival and document research were elicited from the data and filed in a series of folders. A summary for each data set was constructed and continually updated as new information on campaigns, groups and individuals emerged. A series of conceptual drawings were utilised to map the relationships between the various campaigns, groups and individuals. These diagrams formed the basis for a series of journal reflections about 1) the patterns of relationships, and 2) the nature of the relationships.

Group Interviews and Discussions

Group interviews were not part of the original design but emerged from the ongoing process of data collection as another way of enriching data gained from archives and eliciting new stories. Group interviews are described below.

1. One set of group interviews were held when a group of retired women activists who had been participants in individual, semi-structured interviews requested a series of interviews in a group. Apart from the fact that they really liked each other and enjoyed sharing their stories, they believed that together their memories sparked each other and I would obtain richer stories with multiple views. They were right; the data gathered at these sessions was incredibly textured. Three sessions were held in this series.
2. A second set of group discussions about campaigns was obtained from three taped meetings of the WWIC archival committee during 2004. This committee consisted of a number of older feminist activists who had volunteered to help organise archival material. During these sessions members randomly shared their experiences with the group as the discussion about archives proceeded. Questions probing for clarification were sought; however, beyond this there was no attempt to shape the direction of the discussion.

Participant Observation and Reflection

An awareness of the way my research was influenced by others, but also how I influenced others, provided another method for understanding the region's relational patterns. This awareness was particularly relevant to a study of a region where there is a high degree of organisational articulation (see Chapters Four and Five). During the course of this thesis my engagement with the data, the institutions and the people, and therefore my stance as participant observer, changed significantly. These changes were recorded as part of my reflective practice and are described in the following section of this chapter.

After enrolling in the PhD my status as a marginal member of three separate but overlapping institutions²⁰ – the Labour History Society, the WWIC and the SCLC –

²⁰ Prior to this period I had only had one contact with the WWIC in its formative phases. This occurred in the late-1970s, again by invitation to participate in feminist activities. At the time I was a young single mother who had returned to study relatively late and felt that the activities of the groups I was introduced to were too radical.

changed to that of an insider very rapidly. The opportunity to become an insider rather than a marginal and 'objective' researcher occurred through a series of conscious decisions, but sometimes had some unintended consequences that provided me with a range of new opportunities that were not envisaged at the outset of the PhD. Issues of insider/outsider status are relevant to the choice of disciplines in which to locate my research, the choice of methodologies and the institutions I chose as vehicles for my research for the PhD.

The choice of labour history as a discipline base was influenced by my growing relationship with local labour historians and attempts to engage with the literature. By the time this thesis was being written I had interacted at the national level as an organiser of an Australian National Labour History Conference and a Trans-Tasman Labour History Conference, and attended several other national conferences as a participant. I had a paper accepted at one international labour history conference (North American Labour History Conference 2004, see Laneyrie & Markey, 2004). At a regional level I had organised several forums, acted as secretary for the local group, produced two films on the South Coast Labour Council, guest edited two editions of the region's journal *Illawarra Unity* (2002, Vol. 2/5 and 2003, Vol. 3/1) and was invited to submit a life history on Irene Arrowsmith, one of the feminist activists at the WWIC and vice-president of the local Labour History Society (Laneyrie, 2006). The nature of my acceptance as a researcher by potential participants of the project had also been radically altered (see, for example, the discussion on the construction of a film below).

During this period, my relationships with the WWIC also changed rapidly. My introduction to the WWIC occurred just prior to their 20th anniversary in 2000. Val Dolan, who was also an old friend from university in the late 1970s, invited me to attend an afternoon tea held at the WWIC that had been organised by the current workers in an attempt to begin to rediscover their organisation's history, and over the course of the afternoon I listened to a fascinating set of stories about this organisation that I knew very little about. One year later I wrote to the Working Group of the WWIC requesting permission to access their archives and write a history of the WWIC as part of a PhD. The Working Group was the management committee of the WWIC. Their positive response to my request was accompanied by a request to become a member of

Ironically, it is the radical feminist literature that provides a basis for my current beliefs and interest in feminist activism.

the organisation, and I quickly became a familiar if somewhat curious figure who had her head buried in the archives at every possible opportunity. At the first Annual General Meeting I attended in 2001 I was invited to become a member of the Working Group. I served as an active member of the Working Group, the archives committee and the employee relations committee until I relocated to New Zealand in 2005.

My relationships with key members of the SCLC, including the current secretary Arthur Rorris and current president Jo Kowalczyk, were also developed during this time. These relationships were enhanced during the production of the film on the SCLC. The film *Power of Struggle*, as bearer of knowledge about the SCLC, was a politically and socially constructed history. It was as much constructed by interplay between those involved in the process and current political influences surrounding the SCLC, as it was by theoretical considerations, artistic judgements and availability of resources. While the original idea for the film was centred on the goals of the PhD, decisions about film content were produced in collaboration with a committee from the SCLC and input from the regional labour history group. It is important to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Val Dolan who spent several weeks helping me locate individual stories from the WIN TV film archives. Val was one of the feminist activists involved in the establishment of the WWIC and is currently a member of the local Labour History Society. She understood what I wanted to achieve with the footage we were viewing; however, these images actually spoke to Val at a deeper level because she was actively involved with this struggle at the time the footage was recorded. She knew who was with whom, who slept with whom, and who did what. Viewing and processing the images released a multidimensional set of memories that became another rich source of intimate stories about activists from the region. Technical assistance for editing and sound were provided by CEDIR (Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources at the University of Wollongong). The film is subject to copyright restrictions imposed by WIN TV as a major portion of the film utilises footage constructed for a different purpose, which was the business of daily news reporting within the region. Permission was granted for the finished film to be used for the thesis, with the provision that each film segment used was fully referenced (see Appendix 2.4 WIN TV news reports).

Selection and cutting into bits of the material for the film was carried out in a four-layered process that was complex and recursive. These layers included:

- selection of key issues by the SCLC 75th Anniversary Committee and members of the Illawarra Branch of the Labour History Society
- selection of footage by researcher and research assistant
- viewing by key members of the committee, including the secretary of the SCLC
- final shaping of pieces cut by the visual editor and director. (I was the writer and director for the film).

Each of these layers required a weaving of political, social and theoretical influences into the final artefact, by means of processes whose details are beyond the scope of this thesis. However, these experiences provided critical insights into the social and political construction of a powerful research tool that unexpectedly provided rich sources of data about the history of both organisations and raised a new set of questions that resulted in a change of direction for the thesis.

The film design incorporated stories that focused on the critical role of the SCLC as agents of social mobilisation and regulation (Ellem, Markey & Shields, 2004). Further, it was hoped that by concentrating a gender and spatially aware depiction of regional meta-trends I could avoid representing regional labour activism in a stereotypical and gendered depiction of white male unionists ‘in angry poses’ (Muir, 1997, p. 178) that had a narrow focus on masculine workplace issues. The regional meta-trends utilised in the film are listed and discussed in Chapter Four (but also see Appendix 2.5 *Promise of Struggle* Plan and Appendix 2.6 *Promise of Struggle* Running Sheet).

The incorporation of visual method was inspired by the work of Bailey and McAtee, whose 1997 participant observer ethnographic study of a multi-union campaign in Western Australia utilised photographic tools (Bailey, 1999; Bailey & McAtee, 2004). Like Bailey and McAtee, the use of visual material as stimuli for interview participants’ stories was a rewarding experience and elicited a rich set of new stories about activism in the region.

For example, one group discussion involved the participation of ten members of the Illawarra Branch of the Society for the Study of Labour History, who had all been activists with the SCLC and/or the WWIC. They attended a showing of the film with the intention of talking about their history. The group consisted of equal numbers of male and female participants. Also in attendance was a research assistant whose

instructions were to take notes of key issues and keep the tape recorder going. The session, which extended over a six-hour period, was stopped by the interviewer despite the fact that all participants expressed a desire to continue. The session was audio-taped and transcribed. During the session we stepped through the 15-minute film, pausing the film at the end of each film bite. Participants were asked, each time the film stopped, what did they remember? – who did they know? – what other memories did they have that were triggered by that bit of film? Immediately after the session I also wrote a diary entry on the session, to note down bits of the focus group that were memorable for me. I asked the research assistant to do the same.

These reflections included notes on the gender dynamics that emerged during the session, which included males talking over the top of women, particularly when they tried to clarify stories by using ‘private’ information. One example of this was in a discussion about the need for activists to avoid media exposure during the ‘cold war’ after viewing rare footage of a miner’s ‘pit top’ meeting. One female participant stated that it was also because some of these men were avoiding paying alimony to families, and she was quickly admonished for including ‘private’ information that should not be included in stories about the region’s labour movement because it was not part of the ‘real’ story.

A second showing of the film was organised by the Labour History Society not long after the film was completed. Key activists who were present at events depicted in the film were invited to attend, and a competition was organised to identify as many participants as possible in scenes in the film. The film contained many group scenes, for example, of marches and demonstrations. The collective memory of this group identified over 50 activists who had previously been unidentified and, during the supper that followed, stimulated a range of discussions about the events and people depicted. Journalising my impressions after events such as these was one way to capture some of the new information.

However, also appearing more in my journals were notes about the changing relationships with many of the participants. As a result of the production of the film and earlier efforts to write about the WWIC (Laneyrie, 2002, 2003, 2004) as well as my participation in the Labour History Society and my involvement with the Working Group of the WWIC, I was now being increasingly regarded as a serious labour history researcher who was now a participant in the region’s activist family. This triggered new

questions about how I was constructing knowledge and for what purpose. The questions were directed towards my PhD at this stage.

Case Study Development

The research methods of the thesis, as originally designed, were to produce two case studies in the form of short experimental documentary films; the first on the history of the SCLC and the second on feminist activism within the region. Instead, this thesis develops two written case studies. The development of case studies can provide rich information about complex and changing issues that are difficult to capture in any other way. While case studies cannot provide a complete description of the institutions or the events that participants were involved in, they can provide a context from which we can, with careful construction, present institutional histories. Further, these case studies provided the opportunity to reflect on the experiences of feminist activists: how they dealt with issues, how they perceived issues and an understanding of their successes and failures.

Case studies are limited by their lack of generalisability to other organisations and different regions; however, generalisability is not the objective of this study. The purpose of the case study construction is also to explore how theoretical concerns and frameworks might shape case study data (instrumental case study Stake, 2005, p. 445) and the writing of a history of women activists. Validation of data was sought in a number of ways. This included the circulation of draft material to key individuals who were involved and use of summaries of the archival documents and other sources during interviews to check for accuracy. In the research process triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources in this research. According to Flick (2002, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 5) triangulation is used to gain: 1) rigour 2) breadth 3) complexity 4) richness and 5) depth.

In summary, each of these methods contributes to a goal of understanding feminist activism within the region, and together they help build a broader picture of feminist activism within the region between 1975 and 1980 than is possible using the perspective offered by one approach (Ellem, 1999). This approach allows me to represent shifting kaleidoscopic views of feminist thought (following Tong, 1998, p. 238) and practice. The metaphoric use of a kaleidoscope to describe these chapters perfectly expresses the idea of the shifting patterns that can provide different and unexpected views that can be

exposed with a small shift in perspective; however, in the construction of writing they become fixed sets of patterns that I prefer to characterise as patchwork (see description of patchwork below).

Analysis

In writing about class, Connell argued that the analysis of a specific event (such as incidents in the case studies) could be understood as a ‘crystallization of patterns and a realization of the restraints and possibilities’ (Connell, 1977, p. 3) or, using my term, a patch that can be recognised in other events at other places and times. He asserts that class is an event (following Thompson); and class analysis is not the analysis of a single pattern, rather the analysis of the restraining factors and the possibilities emerging from the relationship between multiple patterns. Demetriou (2004) explains Connell’s intention:

... the main objective of class analysis is to offer an account of the generative historical processes through which structures are produced out of previous structures; to incorporate notions of ‘incompleteness’ and ‘historical dynamics’ into class analysis; and thus to offer a way for thinking about the possibility of historical change (p. 36).

For Connell the political objective of a generative approach was not to compare two events and their differences, but to understand how the latter event emerged (changed) from the constraining forces and the potential emerging from multiple patterns that exist in a particular place and time. A generative theory is not about reproduced identity but understanding ‘intelligible succession’ of the similarities between structures today and yesterday (Connell, 1980, p. 42). The case study chapters in the thesis attempt to capture ‘intelligible succession’ in ways that foreground the interconstituency and the spatial dimensions of class and gender in the application of theory to case studies and the weaving of new and old stories into the thesis structure.

A number of theoretical tools have provided the basis for analysis. These are Ellem and Shields’s (2004) ‘dimensions of peak union analysis’; Connell’s (2002) ‘gender regimes’; Ellem and Shields’s (1999) ‘scales of analysis’; Mylett et al. (2000) ‘chart of employment relations perspectives’; and Fletcher’s (1998) ‘relational practice’. Each of these tools is described in detail in the relevant chapters. Class awareness is the focus of Chapters Four and Five, with particular attention to the ‘Dimensions of Peak Union

Analysis’ in Chapter Five. Gender awareness is the focus of Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, with a particular focus on ‘Gender Regimes’ and ‘Relational Practice’ in Chapter Eight. Spatial awareness in the thesis is embedded in Chapters Two, Three and Four with a particular focus on ‘Scales of Analysis’ and a ‘Chart of Regional Perspectives’ in this chapter – where the complex relationships between theories and data can be understood using a metaphoric tool that I have called ‘patchwork’.

There were three reasons for selecting patchwork as a metaphoric tool for analysis and a style of presentation in this thesis. The first is my own personal history, in terms of the storytelling processes that I have been exposed to and the opportunities this provided. The artistic style and format of the thesis and the research tools (including the film), were heavily influenced by my previous work with Theatre South. Theatre South was the Illawarra region’s professional theatre company. One of its major strengths was telling regional and community stories in a ‘patchwork’ style. These regional stories, included plays that became nationally acclaimed, such as *Windy Gully* and *The Last Voyage of the Gracie Anne* by Wendy Richardson and *Once We Anchor in Twofold Bay* by Katherine Thompson. I had previously successfully incorporated this artistic style into my academic work: for example, in 1996 I co-wrote and directed a performance paper entitled *The Flames and Waves: A Paper on Cultural Diversity* (Linstead & Laneyrie, 1996) presented at an ANZAM (Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management) conference using representatives from a number of diverse cultural groups to retell the history of the region.

Secondly, I did not want to focus on individual or personal stories, despite the fact that I conducted a number of individual interviews. I wanted to focus on the bigger ‘meta picture’ that emerged in the patterns of stories. I wanted to communicate key changes and key influences – such as the influence of the CPA and the left of the ALP on regional politics. This decision was highly influenced by advice from labour historian Ray Markey, whose recommendations were sought when constructing the film script. The decision to focus the film around meta-trends allowed me to avoid a number of obvious political problems. One example of this is pressure from some union officials to include a large number of key disputes which would probably result in presenting a stereotypical and gendered depiction of unionists as white and male. The third reason was to take advantage of the strengths and minimise the limitations of the available resources, including time constraints. Each source of stories provided both limitations

and advantages that affected the research. For example, when making the film we did not have footage of a number of key individuals and major campaigns. In addition, the university archives only held footage from 1967 to 1983.

The film attempted to capture through the notion of a patchwork, the relationships and the perspectives of individuals, of groups, of regions, of industry, of a nation and of the world. The region is at the same time part of all those things, affected by national and international currents but also influencing those national and international currents, while at the same time it is still personal. (see Appendix 2.3 1980: SCLC Summary of Issues from Labour Council minutes for an illustration of this).

What is Patchwork?

The patchwork metaphor was originally developed to provide a conscious focus on elements contributing to the construction of the film, with particular reference to understanding how spatial awareness was embedded in the images and sounds utilised. Patchwork is generally the joining of pieces of fabric to form a larger unit of fabric, for example, in a patchwork quilt. Work such as patchwork can consist of different textures, colours and designs, yet each completed work relies for its integrity on the overall design and repetition of one or more of the elements and the method of construction. Each completed piece of work relies on patterns coming together in (at least) visual bundles of meaning. Pieces are selected from a range of sources, such as favourite old items of clothing, and are sometimes combined with new pieces of fabric. For example, all of the images used in the film were images created for another purpose. Each piece of the film used was cut into a meaningful shape from a pre-existing visual source in a way that selectively targeted individual stories to symbolically represent larger patterns of regional meta-trends. Images were often used a number of times, each time cut into slightly different bits.

Patchwork creates an overall pattern out of the repeated bits that need not be uniform in shape or texture. Deciding on the shape of the fragments and the fabrics to be used, understanding how they contribute to the overall design, was an important part of the process of constructing the film and attempting to represent the regional context and its interconstituency and embeddedness in defining relations that occurred on multiple scales.

The choice of a patchwork style of presentation allowed an easier incorporation of diversity and inconsistencies into the final construction of both the film and the thesis. In the film it allowed some contradictions of linear time to exist and more importantly the opportunity to use individual stories in such a way that they were representative of patterns of relationships in the region. Discourse by its nature is linear, one word after the other, developing and linking ideas as the rational mind needs. Yet the development of the various relationship patterns and themes depended on the repeat cycles to establish the regional meta-trends. The meta-trends in the film were articulated in the voice-over in order to stitch the images and songs together. The regional meta-trends discussed in the following chapters help stitch together the partial data about the institutions and the people, with class- and gender-based theories that were introduced in Chapter Two.

The embeddedness of parts in the whole across a range of scales of analysis (following Ellem & Shields, 1999) includes a variety of levels and units. One example of this range which was developed in collaboration with colleagues is represented in Table 3.1. The table is a two-dimensional representation of scales of analysis identified by Mylett et al. (2000) that were articulated in a range of studies in their book on perspectives on globalisation and regionalism. The vertical axis of this table we labelled 'levels' of analysis and the horizontal axis was labelled 'units' of analysis.

Table 3.1: A Chart of Regional Perspectives

Unit Level	Individual	House- hold	Work- group	Work- place	Org. or Institution	Industry	Society
Global							
Macro-regional							
International							
National							
State							
Local							
Body							

Adapted from: T. Mylett, C. Boas, M. Gross, F. Laneyrie & M. Zanko (2000). *Employment Relations Perspectives: Globalisation and Regionalism*, Wollongong, University of Wollongong Press, page 17.

While the editors acknowledged the limitations of the two-dimensional form in representing the fluid and changing nature of relations between units and levels of analysis, it does provide a blueprint or map that is visually reminiscent of a patchwork, while attempting to articulate the importance of understanding and focusing on the relationships between the various scales of analysis that were articulated.

The chart was a starting point for capturing interconstitutiveness. For example, the Illawarra (micro-region) was, via the SCLC, site of struggle against war in Vietnam and for human rights in Chile (society). The institution of the SCLC was also concerned with the cost of bread and struggles for housing (micro-regional) and campaigned for redundancy protection at one mine (workplace) which influenced standards set nationally for mining and other industries (See Appendix 2.2 1975: SCLC Summary of Issues from Labour Council). That is, understanding the SCLC cannot be achieved by isolating it from relations of other organisations, institutions, industries, society and local communities, households and individuals; and these connections are scalar by nature. The argument made here was illustrated in *Promise of Struggle*. This film also engaged directly with the use of, and contests over, places.

The film *Power of Struggle* is a 15-minute documentary history of the SCLC that was designed to highlight regional distinctiveness using a patchwork of images and sounds. The patchwork of images and sounds used in the film is represented in Appendix 2.6. (*Promise of Struggle* Plan). The plan depicts the three major elements of the film. These were the images; voice-over and music. Each patch consisted of images and sounds that were drawn from incidents and stories to emphasise the regional meta-trends and themes of industrial and social justice. Patches were used to emphasise meta-trends in the regional story and demonstrate the relations.

The construction of the film allowed the researcher to explore how personal stories about day-to-day activities contributed to the ongoing reconstruction of historically accumulated patterns of 'region'. The use of stories about individuals, groups and campaigns created a need for careful consideration of issues of 'partial representation'. It was impossible to tell every significant story which occurred across the SCLC's 75-year history in a 15-minute film. One of the first issues to resolve was how to utilise the constituent parts effectively to represent a 'whole'. The use of a 'patchwork' metaphor provided useful insights into the underlying theoretical approach and the

practical problem in the construction of the story. The careful selection of patches of image, 'sound on film' and trade union songs allowed a focus on the accumulated historical patterns (meta-trends) of the 'region' that were articulated in the voice-over by a well-known local actress (see Appendix 2.5 *Promise of Struggle* Running Sheets). Further, this approach allowed me to take advantage of the strengths of strong visual images and voices of activists and minimise the limits created by truncated news film footage, plus its length of only 15 minutes. Three different types of images were used to support the loose chronological structure. These were photos of early May Day marches and key individuals, representing the early history, WIN TV newsreel footage to represent the middle and some later history and handheld home-video footage of a post 1980s anti-war demonstration, recorded privately by a local union member, was used to represent the present. The original constituent parts used to construct the film all came from regional sources. Whilst the major source was the University of Wollongong library archives which contained WIN TV newsreel footage and photos found in SCLC files, other bits came from a variety of sources including recordings of local folk music and iconic trade union songs, personal interviews, newspaper articles and previous studies on the Illawarra region.

Conclusion

In the ways described in this chapter a multi-faceted, interactive and reflexive research methodology was employed to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter One. This methodology was utilised within a predominantly labour history framework informed by a feminist standpoint epistemology. This approach allowed the analysis of the generative processes and interconstituency of class and gender involved in the patterns of female activism embedded in a regional spatial structure of social and organisational relationships. Chapter Four examines one of the key organisational bearers of the relationships of historical focal points of female activism, the SCLC.

Chapter Four: The South Coast Labour Council (SCLC)

Introduction

Chapter Four focuses on the history of the South Coast Labour Council (SCLC) and its variously named predecessors. The chapter provides an overview of main phases of the history of the SCLC and the environment in which it was established. This chapter, along with Chapter Five, provides a context for feminist activism within the Illawarra region that will be explored in Chapters Six and Seven.

History of the SCLC

The history of peak unionism and the SCLC in the Illawarra can be divided into four main periods corresponding with major phases of industrial development and associated employment patterns. The first three of these phases were based on coal mining and steel manufacture, which largely determined the social and economic relations of the region. The first phase occurred from 1896 to 1925, when a number of attempts to mobilise peak unionism occurred and the industrial character of the region was determined largely by coal mining. During the second phase, from 1926 to 1945, the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council²¹ was formed and peak unionism consolidated in the region, as the industrial base broadened with the development of the steel industry. In the third phase, from 1946 to 1975, the region experienced major industrial growth as manufacturing and demand for coal and steel boomed in Australia after the Second World War. The final period from 1976 saw a broadening of the regional economy as the service sector grew in importance and employment in mining and steel declined. This chapter focuses on the first three periods.

²¹ The SCLC was known as the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council prior to 1949; however, in the thesis I use the name SCLC throughout this history.

SCLC 1896–1925

The first period of peak unionism occurred during the dominance of the mining industry from the mid-1880s until the mid-1920s. Industrial activities shifted from dairying and timber felling to mining as it emerged as the major industry sector in the regional economy. Numbers of miners in the region grew from 660 in 1878 (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 153) to 3,889 in 1911 and peaked at 5,293 in 1926 (Castle, n.d. 2002, pp. 16–17). The total population of the region in 1885 was approximately 8,000, and by 1921 it had grown to 33,908. Much of the growth was due to the development of mining. In 1921 mining and quarrying had the highest level of employment in the region with about one-third of the total workforce.

Early mining history of the region had been characterised by appalling working and living conditions, strong resistance to unionism and a series of major industrial disputes and accidents. Three bitter and protracted industrial disputes in 1886, 1890 and 1909–10 involved serious confrontations with mine management, police and non-unionised labour (Gibbs & Warne, 1995, pp. 82–85; Markey & Wells, 1997; Mitchell, 1980, pp. 164–165). An explosion at the Bulli mine in 1887 killed 81 miners, created 50 widows and left 155 children fatherless. The Mount Kembla mine explosion in 1902, which killed 96 men and boys, and left 32 widows and 122 fatherless children, remains the greatest mine disaster in Australian history (Markey, 1988b, 2003; Mitchell, 1980, p. 165; Ross, 1970, p. 54–55). These two accidents are a reminder that whole families were affected by unsafe work environments.

It is worth noting that the Bulli mine disaster occurred only two months after ‘the battle of Bulli’ when a crowd of over 400 led by 150 miners’ wives stood in front of a train carrying ‘blacklegs’ to the mine (Organ, 2001, p. 35; Ross, 1970, p. 54). Prior to the Mount Kembla mine disaster five women were gaoled for non-payment of fines after they were convicted of assaulting blacklegs (Mitchell, 1980, p. 165).

The historical background of poor and unsafe working conditions and industrial disputation imbued regional miners and their wives with a strong commitment to collectivism and an awareness of the need to struggle for industrial justice. Working class mobilisation began with pit-based Miners’ Lodges, which appeared in the region in 1878. A district miners’ union emerged in 1879 (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 153; Nixon, 2000, p. 8; Rittau, 2001). This union led the first attempt to mobilise a regional peak union council in 1896, the same year that a workers’ co-operative was established.

While the peak union council initiative was short-lived, the Woonona Co-operative Society became a successful site of collectivism for workers in the region (Arrowsmith & Markey, 1999; Balnave & Patmore, 2005, 2006; Lee, n.d. 2002; Markey & Wells, 1997). Further discussion of the Woonona Industrial Co-operative Society will be presented below.

The social and industrial conditions of mining, together with miners' strong collective organisation, provided a substantial base for organisational consolidation. Illawarra miners joined with western NSW and northern NSW coal miners to form a federation in 1915. The Australian Miners' Federation leadership was associated with the revolutionary syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and subsequently the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). By 1921 the Australian Miners' Federation emerged as 'one of the nation's most powerful left unions', and local miners and their wives 'left a powerful imprint on the region's industrial and social character' (Blackley, 1998; Markey & Wells, 1997, p. 87). The imprint can be seen still in the work of nationally acclaimed artists; for example, Wendy Richardson's play *Windy Gully* on the Mount Kembla mine disaster, and Maurie Mulheron's song *The Day the Coal Blew Away* on activism during a mining dispute. Richardson is a playwright, and Mulheron is a songwriter and musician, but also headmaster of a major regional high school (Keira High School), as well as a longstanding activist and current vice-president of the NSW Teachers' Federation. Their work continues to commemorate the mining history (and other labour history events) of the region, as well as demonstrating the embeddedness of cultural workers in the region's working-class community organisations.

The mining communities of the Illawarra also provided an early substantial base for working-class political organisations. Between 1891 and 1917 John Nicholson was the first regional Labor Party Member of State Parliament (first in the seat of Illawarra, later the seat of Wollongong), followed by Billy Davis (1917), Andrew Lysaght (1925) and John Sweeney (1933). Unlike Nicholson, Davis and Sweeney, Lysaght was not a miner, but the union's solicitor. Nicholson, the first regional miners' political representative, lost his seat after refusing to support an extension of the miners' pension that would cover illness and supported conscription for World War I. His replacement Davies became a strong advocate for miners. Sweeney was elected after intervention in his pre-selection by Jack Lang, the leader of the NSW Labor Party. The intervention was resented by local communities and resulted in the collapse of a number of ALP

branches and the rise in the popularity of the CPA, particularly in the mining communities. By the late 1930s some local mining communities consistently voted in greater numbers for the CPA than anywhere else in Australia (Hagan & Castle, n.d. 2002, pp. 53–56).

In the late nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century, the industrial base of the region expanded. Much of it was centred at Port Kembla, which is located approximately five kilometres south of the main city township of Wollongong. The small port with two jetties that had been established in 1883 to service mines was redeveloped into a protected harbour from 1901. Rail access between Port Kembla and Sydney had been completed in 1888. A copper refinery and smelter works were established. Electrolytic Refining & Smelting (ER&S), the first major manufacturing company, was established at Port Kembla in 1909, followed by Metals Manufacturing (MM) which began production in 1920 (Eklund, 2002, pp. 2, 20–27). Manufacturing employed 15 per cent of the work force in the 1920s (Lee, 1997a, pp. 53–54, 57–59, 66). By then it was the second largest area of employment and growing.

Union organisation broadened as the regional industrial base expanded. In this context, a second effort to establish a peak union council was supported by most unions in the area in 1914. Other occupational groups within the region which had also been organised by 1914 included: smelter workers, quarrymen, coal trimmers, coke workers, engineers, waterside workers, teachers, meat industry employees, carpenters, bread carters, labourers, municipal employees, blacksmiths, train drivers and firemen (Mitchell, 1978/9, pp. 9–10; Nixon, 1984, pp. 7–8). The new peak union body affiliated with the NSW Labor Council in May 1915 and it built on established links with the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The federal ALP leader, Andrew Fisher (Prime Minister of Australia, but earlier a miner) and George Burns (Labor member of the House of Representatives for the federal seat of Illawarra) both participated in a regional peak labour meeting in July 1914. There is little documentation for this initiative; however, it is thought to have folded in 1916 (Markey & Nixon 2004, p. 117).

SCLC 1926-1945

The second phase of the SCLC's history, from the mid 1920s until the mid 1940s, was shaped by the growth of manufacturing, particularly influenced by the establishment of the steel industry, by a major depression and by the Second World War. The circumstances of the Great Depression, from 1929 to the end of the 1930s, had a major impact on the region and throughout Australia. As world trade declined and access to capital loans from London dried up, demand for goods and public works declined. Unemployment reached about 30 per cent, and although recovery from the depression began from about 1933, employment did not fully recover until the Second World War from 1939 to 1945 (Schedvin, 1970). The war increased demand for manufacturing, especially steel products.

The region's major industry for many years was the steel industry. It was established in the late 1920s. Hoskins Ltd commenced steel production at Port Kembla near Wollongong in 1928, but by 1929 had amalgamated with other investors to become Australian Iron and Steel (AIS) in 1929 (Lee, 1997b, p. 59). However, AIS struggled with declining demand as it built the Port Kembla steelworks. In 1935 it was acquired by Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd (BHP), which already operated the largest Australian steelworks at Newcastle (Lee, 1997b, p. 59). By 1939 John Lysaght had established two steel fabrication mills; another was established by Commonwealth Steel, and welded tubemaking and wire products plants were established nearby (Murray & White, 1982, p. 98).

These developments had short- and long-term consequences. Mining unemployment rose dramatically in the Illawarra during the depression. The construction of the steelworks as unemployment grew from the late 1920s attracted thousands of unskilled workers hopeful of employment. The large and rapid influx of unemployed workers joined already unemployed miners. The lack of housing and other regional infrastructure, delay in construction of the steelworks until the mid 1930s due to the depression and AIS's refusal to provide accommodation for workers produced appalling living conditions (Eklund, 1994, 2001, 2002; Markey, 1988a; Mitchell & Sherington, 1984; Nixon, 1984; Richardson, 1984). The steelworks were also a dangerous place to work. Employees commonly referred to the plant as the 'slaughterhouse', where they worked with molten metal, pungent fumes and dust and had to watch for trains criss-crossing the plant. In 1937–38, there were six workers killed, and there were 809

accidents from July 1937 to June 1938 (Lever-Tracy & Quinlan, 1988, pp. 198–202). In the long term, these circumstances confirmed regional union concern with occupational health and safety, which had first been established by miners as a result of the dangerous working conditions they faced. In addition, poor living conditions contributed powerfully to a regional union concern with broader social issues.

The expansion of the region's industrial base also caused a shift in employment patterns. In 1933, as recovery from the depression began, manufacturing represented 23 per cent of the regional workforce, and mining had declined to 28 per cent. Regional miners only worked an average 175 out of a possible 274 days in 1928. Fred Lowden (leader of the Miners' Federation) claimed there were 1,000 unemployed men and another 1,000 to 1,200 men who were only working one day per week (Belcher, 1962; Markey, 1994, p. 186; Murray & White, 1982, pp. 66–70). By 1947 manufacturing employment accounted for 43 per cent of the workforce, and mining and quarrying declined further to 14 per cent (Merritt, 1968, pp. 172–175, 1971, pp. 49–50; Mitchell, 1978/9, p. 9).

The shift in employment produced corresponding changes in the structure of unionism in the region, with manufacturing and transport union membership exceeding that of mining by the late-1940s. A local branch of the Federated Ironworkers' Association (FIA) was established at Port Kembla in 1929. Initially it struggled to survive the depression and competition from the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) (Richardson, 1984, pp. 176–177). In 1937 the FIA's membership at Port Kembla jumped from 750 to 2,889 in a 12-month period. In 1940 the FIA gained another 400 members when the AWU did not provide relief for workers and their families during strike action (Lee, n.d. 2002, p. 91). The FIA became a dominant trade union force at Port Kembla from that time. This shift represented a significant reinforcement of the militant tradition established by the miners, since the FIA was a CPA-led union.

As the base of union membership expanded, particularly among militant unions committed to wider, class-based organisation, peak unionism reappeared. The third attempt at mobilising is regarded as an inaugural year. In June 1926 the Wollongong branch of the ALP reactivated the SCLC (known as the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council until 1949). The meeting was attended by eight of the most significant regional unions (Nixon, 1984, p. 20; Mitchell, 1978/79, p. 11). Paddy Molloy was elected president (1926–35), and Steve Best was appointed honorary secretary (he became the

first paid secretary 1928–1940). Best and Molloy were radical miners who worked effectively with a wide range of activists from the CPA and the left of the ALP. This broad left unity became established and a long-standing basis of mobilisation for the SCLC.

Under Best and Molloy's leadership, the SCLC quickly established a presence in the region but was soon affected by the Depression. In 1927 the SCLC assisted the FIA in an industrial dispute at the AIS and helped shop assistants, boilermakers, blacksmiths, nurses and hotel and café workers to organise (Mitchell, 1978/9, p. 11). It should be noted that this is the first reference to assistance to women as workers in the Illawarra in labour history literature. In 1928–29 the SCLC actively supported miners and wharf labourers in strikes and lockouts (Mitchell, 1978/9, p. 11). However, this was a difficult period for unions in the region because of high unemployment and the influx of unemployed workers to the region. In 1930 only about a third of Illawarra workers were unionists. The steelworks construction site employed about 500 non-unionists. By 1931 the Miners' Federation had lost 40 per cent of its membership (Richardson, 1984, pp. 37, 54; Merritt, 1968, p. 172; Eklund, 2002, pp. 49–50 140–41).

The weakness of the region's unions in turn undermined the SCLC. Between late 1931 and 1935 the SCLC only existed informally. Delegates resolved to keep the name of the council alive. They met once a month and tackled the problems of the Unemployed Workers' Movement (Blackley, 1998, 2001; Nixon, 1984). They also launched a successful 18 months' free speech campaign, involving meetings every Friday night at the corner of Church and Crown Streets in Wollongong. Newspaper reports of action against these activists included the arrest in 1931 of Leila Allen and Esther Curnuch, along with seven men, for participating in an unauthorised street meeting (Blackley, 1998, p. 133). The success of these initiatives allowed the SCLC to mobilise more broadly, bringing together unionists and the unemployed from the Unemployed Workers' Movement (UWM). The UWM was one of a number of CPA front organisations which were effective in the 1930s in developing class awareness (Macintyre, 1998, pp. 186–88, 269–74). In Wollongong the UWM had a membership of 3,000 by 1930. It demanded work or 'maintenance' at union rates of pay and developed an efficient self-help system growing and hunting for food and providing other necessities for members and their families organised through SCLC delegates (Blackley, 1998; Nixon, 1984). The free speech campaign and the UWM fashioned a

broad, working-class community alliance, which extended the base for unionism and the SCLC (Richardson, 1984, p. 78) when it was reactivated in September 1935.

A key object was to ‘organise the workers against war and fascism’ which at the time associated the SCLC with the political position of the CPA and left of the labour movement. It also sought the repeal of the Crimes Act 1914–1945, which it claimed was designed to suppress working-class activism. The Crimes Act declared ‘revolutionary and seditious’ associations unlawful and strengthened the Commonwealth government’s position when dealing with strikes (Nixon, 1984; Richardson, 1984, p. 202). A major industrial issue was compulsory and excessive overtime at the steelworks. Social issues such as unemployment benefits and housing also continued to be major concerns (Nixon, 1984; Richardson, 1984). Len Richards (1984) captured the mood in the following description:

There existed among Wollongong–Port Kembla workers a general consciousness of their own interests and aspirations, as distinct from those of other sections of the community. Much of this ‘consciousness’ was indeed conferred by the common hostility to the ‘inhuman face’ of BHP capitalism, as it glowered down upon their daily lives. What was at issue was not so much the size of this industrial colossus as the social effects of its capitalistic zeal directed unimaginatively to increased production, at the cost of its workers and their families. This questioning of social as well as economic priorities was for many workers a reaction to harsh conditions at home and at work from which escape had once seemed almost impossible. Their determination to bar every possible road back to depression was at the same time compelling them to take new attitudes in politics (p. 185).

The SCLC’s support for these basic industrial and social justice issues continued to build a substantial working-class support base.

The SCLC brought this working-class base to a broadening industrial and political agenda. This is illustrated in the 1938 *Dalfram* dispute. The *Dalfram* dispute was one of the earliest examples of Australian unions moving beyond traditional industrial issues and Labor politics into a broader arena. It is one of the most often cited regional disputes and is another symbolic incident in the region’s labour history which, like the Mount Kembla mine disaster, continues to be commemorated in the region.

In November 1938 the Port Kembla branch of the Waterside Workers' Federation (WWF), led by its secretary Ted Roach, refused to load pig iron on the *Dalfram* bound for Japan. Its grounds were that 'bombs on China today means bombs on Australia tomorrow' (Roach, 2000, p. 31). The dispute received immediate support from the SCLC and through it, support from the ACTU, despite the apprehension of the WWF's national secretary, Jim Healy. Roach was secretary of the WWF, but he was not a local. He was sent to the region in 1936 to organise the branch which had been in disarray. Nevertheless, it is significant that he led an action which went against the national office of the WWF and the national government, affirming regional independence. The SCLC threatened that all unions would stop work if any attempts were made to load the *Dalfram*. It also organised street processions and managed to unite a broad community base of support behind the WWF. BHP responded by sacking 4,000 steelworkers; however, the ban on the ship was maintained until January 1939. The government and much of the media accused the Port Kembla branch of the WWF of 'usurping' foreign policy. Robert Menzies, then federal Attorney General (and subsequently Prime Minister), earned his enduring nickname of 'Pig-iron Bob' after his efforts to intimidate the strikers and his visit to Wollongong. Although the strikers eventually allowed the *Dalfram* to sail, they established a major precedent for union intervention in foreign policy which, as Lockwood noted, was acted on more widely in the maritime unions' banning of the shipment of supplies and troops for the Dutch when they attempted to re-establish colonial rule in Indonesia after World War II (WIN TV 6 November 1975; but also see Griffiths, 1980, pp. 79, 85; Lockwood, 1987; Roach, 1996, pp. 25–34). One of the strengths that sustained the campaign was that the Port Kembla waterside workers' actions expressed fears of Japanese attacks held by many Australians. After the *Dalfram* dispute the SCLC moved into a period of consolidation.

Collaboration by the SCLC with external organisations, such as the Woonona Co-operative Society, continued. The co-operative's activities spanned economic, social and political activities and its Women's Guilds provided one of the first forms of formal roles for women in community affairs (Arrowsmith & Markey, 1999). In 1904 the co-operative had established a bakery that became one of the largest in Australia, and by 1928, the year it established its first Women's Guild, it produced 17,000 loaves of bread per week and had over 3,000 members. Women's Guild Membership overlapped with the membership of the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, which were established in 1938 (WWIC *Submission to Council*, 1978), initially to assist during industrial action.

These women's groups also supported wider 'progressive causes' alongside the SCLC. Balnave and Patmore (2005, 2006) claim that the Woonona Women's Co-operative Guilds became one of the strong women's groups associated with NSW Co-operative Wholesale Society (NSW CWS). These strong women's groups often ignored the expected gender roles and 'frequently challenged the male-dominated views of NSW CWS by criticising their leadership and organising conferences to look at alternative paths' (Balnave & Patmore, 2005, p. 32). In 1930 members of the Wollongong Women's Co-operative Guild attended a conference that focused on developing strategies towards the achievement of working-class ownership of industry in Wollongong (Lee, n.d. 2002, p. 73). The conference was also attended by representatives from the Woonona Industrial Co-operative Society, Miners' Lodges and other unions, the SCLC and the Labor Party. Other examples included the attendance of Corrimal Women's Guild at a CPA-instigated United Front Municipal Conference in 1936 where discussions included the adoption of a programme seeking legislative reform of working hours, mine safety, workers' compensation, unemployed relief and protection of civil liberties (Lee, n.d. 2002, p. 73). In 1939 Co-operative Women's Guilds had representatives on a regional Anti-Profiteering Committee alongside representatives from the Corrimal branch of the ALP, Miners' Lodge executives, and local churches (Lee, n.d. 2002, p. 74).

By 1940 the Woonona Co-operative Society had grown to 5,671 members and had eight branches. Lee claimed that 'the Woonona Co-operative and its Guilds and their close allies, the Miners' Federation and its Women's Auxiliaries, were a powerful force' (Lee, n.d. 2002, p 74). Women's organising in the region reflected the militant CPA dominance that was evident in male organising. At this time another regional women's group, the Democratic Housewives' Association emerged. The association was a breakaway from the NSW Housewives' Association, which had moved to expel communist women from their ranks (Arrowsmith interview, 24 January 2003). The new association offered its services to the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries at a time when they (and the Women's Co-operative Guilds) were increasingly dealing with the supply and price of basic commodities such as bread. By 1952 the Woonona Co-operative had a membership of 6,186; however, increasing competition from supermarkets and changes in consumption patterns saw a decline in the importance of the Woonona Co-operative. It eventually disappeared in the 1970s.

In 1944 the SCLC had 30 affiliates and represented 10,494 union members (ITLC *minutes*, 1943–45; ITLC *Affiliation Fees Book*, 1944). Participation in World War II was supported by the SCLC and regional unions. After Germany invaded Russia, left-wing labour organisations, especially those with Communist influence, worked to minimise strikes and promote the war effort. The SCLC organised publicity for Liberty Loans and raised money for Wollongong Hospital and wartime charities. In October 1943, the SCLC assisted the Volunteer Defence Corps recruiting personnel for the Heavy Industries Battalion (ITLC *minutes*, 27 October 1943).

However, industrial co-operation waned immediately after World War II. In September 1945, a strike at BHP coke ovens involving the dismissal of an FIA delegate, Don Parker, over issues of seniority, escalated to involve 13,000 workers representing 15 trade unions. The strike lasted until January 1946. BHP refused to negotiate on the grounds that the FIA had been deregistered in NSW. The dispute saw Illawarra miners laid off and the closure of the Newcastle steelworks. A Central Strike Committee was established, with representatives from SCLC, Newcastle Trades Hall Council and the NSW Labor Council. Support came from miners, seamen and other ironworkers in NSW and Victoria. Eventually the NSW Industrial Commission ordered AIS to reinstate Parker. A struggle for control of the dispute also occurred between the Illawarra and Newcastle labour councils, and the NSW Labor Council which was considered unreliable in its support of Illawarra industrial disputes and more concerned with maintaining its own authority in the labour movement (SCLC *minutes*, 1946). This tension in the relationship between the NSW Labor Council, who were led by the right of the ALP, and the left-aligned SCLC continued until at least 2003. (Markey, 1994, chs. 7–10; Murray & White, 1982, pp. 152–154). However, the strike confirmed the SCLC's key role as an agent of mobilisation in the Illawarra region.

SCLC 1946–1976

The period between 1947 and 1976 was an economic boom period for the region. By 1976 the region's population had grown to 222,250. The period was characterised by high employment driven by further expansion of the steel industry, and the region experienced massive population growth through immigration (Castle, n.d. 2002). After World War II 'tens of thousands' of migrants arrived from Britain and southern and eastern Europe to seek work in the region. During the 1970s they began arriving from Asia and the Middle East. By 1981 almost half the workforce at BHP was born outside

Australia and represented 34 different nationalities (Castle, 1997; Schultz, 1985, pp. 209–213).

One in every four workers in the region was employed at the steelworks between 1961 and the mid 1970s. Manufacturing represented 37 per cent of the total workforce; wholesale and retail represented 14 per cent; community services 10.5 per cent; mining and construction each represented six per cent; construction, transport and storage, entertainment and finance were between four and five per cent; and all other industries – communication, public administration, agriculture/forestry/fishing/hunting and electricity/gas/water – were each less than three per cent (ABS Population and Housing Census 1971, 1976). By 1976 BHP employed 41 per cent of the workforce, and steel accounted for over 70 per cent of male jobs in manufacturing in the region (Lee, 1997a; Markey, 1988a, pp. 65–69).

The SCLC's influence as the 'voice' for the working class in the region was well established by the end of World War II. This position was threatened when a coal strike in 1949 developed into a major dispute within the labour movement. The Miners' Federation, the CPA and left ALP leadership, together with other Communist-led or influenced unions stood against the federal and state ALP governments, the ACTU and the NSW Labor Council. The miners and their allies were defeated after the federal government sent troops into the mines, gaoled strike leaders and froze funds for the miners (Deery, 1978). However, they received strong support from the SCLC and affiliates, including the FIA. The 1949 coal strike represented the opening onslaught of the 'Cold War in Australia.

The impact of the Cold War on activists in the region emerged as an important issue during interviews. Irene Arrowsmith claimed:

No one who lived through the Bob Menzies and the cold war era could know how terrible these years were. Academics, writers, artists, actors had their careers destroyed if they expressed any progressive ideas. We are told that those years were contented and safe years but they were the opposite for anyone who had any progressive ideas (Arrowsmith, 2002, p. 11).

Participants in one large discussion group explained that the cold war had led to a deep suspicion of the media. The following conversation taped during the session reveals some of the fears.

Fred: ... workers never trusted the press. If the television came it was mainly to interview the leaders. The rank and file wouldn't allow them into boardrooms or anywhere else. The cold war was so intense. Many of the miners were known to ASIO [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation]. People were very suspicious. Anyone with a camera or tape recorder, that was really bad news. If they saw the *Illawarra Mercury* or anyone hanging around, they wouldn't let them in to take a photo. Even at the first big board meeting, someone said 'we should get a photo for this history of the union'. [The response was] 'if anyone comes in here and takes a photo I'm off, I'm not having any part of that'. You couldn't get photos. ... Lots of times, I'm not saying every time, they [the media] did hand on these things to ASIO. They could identify the leaders and when there was a big chance they nail them and murder them financially and put the family into debt.

Neville: A lot of them were living under assumed names.

Doreen: ... often wives were also looking for them, because they'd taken off to avoid paying maintenance.

Irene: People have forgotten that Ted Roach [CPA and secretary of the Illawarra branch of Waterside Workers' Federation] went to jail and was in Long Bay Jail in solitary confinement. Not just for a short while, but for a long time for sedition because he said something rude. About the queen or about the government.

Fred: They usually charged them after that with contempt of court or sedition. It was a hanging offence then. ... Yes, people were suspicious of photos. Remember some of the May Day marches that go back to the 40s. They'd get up somewhere and hide and take them coming down the street. Half the time they didn't know they were being taken.

Irene: Les Mulin was secretary of the labour council for a while [1948–54]; he had changed his name to Les Maynard. So he wouldn't be arrested. He used to sit at the back of the hall at meetings with his hat on and a big scarf wrapped round like this.

Doreen: The ASIO files, they'd take pictures of crowds at funerals. \$17.50 each they wanted for them. When I've got enough money I might buy them [laughing].

Steve: Someone ought to write a book about it. ... You'd definitely get a book out of it! (group discussion, 13 April 2005)

Steve's final comment highlights the importance to these participants of the impact of the Cold War on activists. Exposure of trade union activists was dangerous.

Relationships with the media have continually been an issue for the SCLC. This will be addressed later in the chapter.

A major consequence of the Cold War for the SCLC was the effect on the FIA. In 1951 the Communist leadership of the national union was overthrown, and a year later the Right assumed control of the large Port Kembla branch of the FIA. The impact upon the SCLC was the loss of its largest affiliate until December 1970 when a left-ALP rank-and-file team assumed control of the Port Kembla branch of the FIA. The Port Kembla branch, however, remained within a right-dominated union nationally (Murray & White, 1982, chs. 10–11, & pp. 302–06). The reaffiliation of the FIA to the SCLC led to local control of bargaining with BHP at the steelworks, and the SCLC played a major industrial role in leading and coordinating negotiations since there were a number of unions involved.

Meanwhile, the SCLC's involvement with social activism continued. From 1948 the SCLC attempted, unsuccessfully, to establish a co-operative with farmers to distribute agricultural produce at the best price for buyers and sellers. In the 1940s and 1950s it was active in the New Deal for Education Committee to improve local schools, and it was a major lobbyist for a university in Wollongong. A number of street marches over shortages of food were held in 1949 and 1950, and the SCLC and a number of its affiliates, including the FIA and the BWIU, became increasingly involved in agitation over food shortages and prices. In the 1960s the SCLC played a prominent role in organising the South Coast Pensioners' Coordinating Committee, and supporting Aboriginal rights.

The SCLC had offered full support for Aboriginal issues in the 1950s and 1960s. Fred Moore, a miners' delegate to the SCLC took a leadership role. Fred Moore and Ted Harvey (secretary of SCLC, 1954–69) first became interested in Aboriginal issues when a survey sponsored by the SCLC into Aboriginal living and social conditions in 1961 (Hambly, Howe & Hunter, 1961) was presented to a meeting of the SCLC. The SCLC played a major role in the formation of a regional Aboriginal Advancement League in 1961. The Aboriginal Advancement League sought support for Aboriginal land and housing rights and to defend Aboriginals in their struggles with the paternalist Aboriginal Welfare Board. The first committee of the League included president Bobby Davis, secretary Rhona Delaney and treasurer Fred Moore (Rorris, 2003, *DVD*; Moore interview, 20 February 2005).

Moore became a leading Aboriginal activist. His activism was fully acknowledged when he was honoured as a blood brother of the Jirrinjarra tribe. Moore claimed that the Australian Government was committing genocide against Aborigines by denying them the right and dignity to hold land (WIN TV, 16 July 1973). He also claimed that Aborigines were the only indigenous people in the world without land rights and the SCLC would give full support to any moves made by the Aboriginal people to gain these rights. For Moore, the injustices against Aboriginal people were appalling. They could not try clothing on in shops, many had no vote in elections, they were not included in the census, their living conditions and standards were appalling and they were subject to 'inhuman' and 'harsh' treatment by the Aboriginal Welfare Board. Many indigenous Australians at this time were living in tents and the backs of cars. The SCLC worked to gain housing for local Aborigines. They were disappointed with the end result, achieving much less than they set out to (Rorris, 2003, *DVD*).

The regional Aboriginal Advancement League was unique (at least outside Darwin) because of the strong union involvement. The organisation has been recorded as operating at a state or national, rather than regional level (Boughton 1999, p. 40–3). The SCLC's involvement was built partly on the fact that some Aborigines were members of the Port Kembla Waterside Workers' Federation, but there was strong support also from the miners. Fred Moore claimed that Aboriginal groups from the Pilbara and the Northern Territory consulted with the SCLC and received aid from it for their struggles, even prior to the 1967 Wave Hill dispute which saw Aboriginal activists tour union work sites throughout the country (group discussion, 13 April 2003).

The region's peace movement is another significant area of activism that has received little attention in mainstream Australian history or labour history. Regional participation in the anti-Vietnam war movement was supported by the SCLC. Like feminist activism, labour history literature on peace activism usually discusses activism in capital cities. Paul Edwards's coverage of the Vietnam War is no exception, although he does acknowledge that in 1970:

Anti-war and especially anti-conscription protests in various forms – marches, demonstrations, sit-ins, vigils – were now so common that only the more strident or striking attracted particular attention. One such protest occurred in June [1970] when five women chained themselves to the railings in the public gallery of the House of Representatives. The women, from the Save Our Sons and other anti-conscription groups in

Wollongong, were protesting over the gaoling of Louie Christofides, who had failed to pay a fine for refusing to register for national service. The House was suspended for 37 minutes while police and an attendant cut the women free. Christofides himself had made headlines in April 1969, when he sat on a railway line in Wollongong to hold up a train carrying conscripts to Sydney. He, and many of his supporters, were unusual examples of working-class protesters in a predominantly middle-class movement (Edwards, 1997, p. 279).

It is notable that in sitting on the railway line Christofides adopted a tactic first developed by female activists in mining communities in support of regional miners' strikes from the 1880s (see Organ, 2001; Ross, 1970). Christofides was strongly supported personally by the labour movement:

After I refused to register [for conscription] I found no one would employ me for a long time because it was illegal to employ someone in default of the Act. Eventually I was told to see Stan Woodbury, the secretary of the Painters' and Dockers' at Port Kembla ... He didn't know me, though he had seen me around. I told him my problem and he started me as a casual on the waterfront. I later joined the union (Langley, 1992, p. 121).

When he was jailed for his stand, waterside workers placed a 'go slow' on the loading of ships and held a 24-hour stoppage. Christofides became a delegate for the Painters' & Dockers' Union to the SCLC in 1975 (SCLC *minutes*, 11 January 1975) and a member of the SCLC's peace committee. Two of the women who chained themselves in the House of Representatives were Christofides's mother and Sally Bowen. Chapter Six will look more closely at the activities of Sally Bowen who was a leading regional activist in the CPA and the Miners' Women's Auxiliary; however, these examples point to the integrated relationships between individual lives and broad organisational support mobilised around campaigns.

There are a range of examples in this anti-war campaign that demonstrate the nature of the SCLC's activism. Reports of the Moratorium march held in Crown Street on the 8th of May 1970 depict young women carrying flowers for victims of Vietnam to be laid in the local Memorial Park (WIN TV, 8 May 1970). One of these young women is Diane Kelly. Diane's mother, Audrey, 'played an important role and was very close to the Vietnam issue' (group discussion, 13 April 2003). Her father Bob Kelly was general president of the Miners' Federation. Close-knit family relationships were often involved

in regional activism. Regional responses were individual, family and organisational responses to a national issue. These examples reflect scales of analysis that extend from the personal to the national. It represents the local expression of whole families who were involved in the region's responses to national and international issues such as war. It also reflects the SCLC participation in broader issues that were not directly work-related disputes.

Media coverage of regional activities included the weekly vigils, Moratorium marches, stop-work meetings and support for conscientious objectors. Weekly candlelight vigils were held outside the Presbyterian church in Crown Street. Newsreel footage depicts Merv Nixon, union activists and anti-war activists alongside local clergy handing out leaflets (WIN TV, 30 March 1969). These vigils were an important part of raising regional awareness of the issues but they also provided a new forum for networking. Almost all interviewees remembered participating in these vigils and the passionate commitment of a wide range of new activists who were mobilised around the issue of Vietnam.

A series of three mass Moratorium marches against the Vietnam War were held simultaneously across the nation from May 1970 to June 1971. The marches brought hundreds of thousands into the streets of Australian cities and marked the turning point in popular support moving away from the Vietnam War. The marches mainly involved youth, with some unionists, but in the Illawarra there was a higher proportion of union involvement (Edwards, 1997, chs. 12–14). The marches were held in Crown Street, Wollongong's main street, where most of the region's demonstrations and celebratory marches (for example, May Day march) were traditionally held. One TV newsreel report focuses on Stewart West, who was a regional leader of the anti-Vietnam protests whilst an official in the local Waterside Workers' Federation and prior to becoming a federal Labor Member of Parliament (MP), addressing the crowds at a march (WIN TV, 12 May 1972). These images also depicted other prominent unionists and MPs leading the marches.

Other television news reports depict protest meetings organised by the SCLC, including stop-work meetings of the Coalcliff Miners' Lodge, the Seamen's Union and waterside workers, a wider range of unionists than depicted in the printed literature where only waterside workers were acknowledged. Speakers at the Waterside Workers' meeting included the secretary of the SCLC, Merv Nixon, the secretary of the Seamen's Union,

Snowy Webster and the secretary of the Ports Committee, Jock Murray. Other prominent activists such as Sally Bowen (CPA and Save Our Sons) were also present (WIN TV, 10 May 1972). Some meetings were part of Australian-wide stop-work meetings by the Seamen's Union and the Waterside Workers demanding that the ACTU endorse the first Moratorium; other meetings were held under the banner of 'Stop work to Stop the War' after the second Moratorium (Edwards, 1997, p. 256).

The final withdrawal of troops from Vietnam occurred in April 1975; however, Vietnam and wider peace issues remained a concern for the SCLC. Membership of the Peace Committee in 1975 included delegates Bourne (Municipal Shire Employees' Union), Chalmers (Seamen's Union), Christofides (Ships Painters' and Dockers' Union), Dunn (FEDFA), Hegen (FIA) and Quinn (Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union). These were powerful unions in the SCLC, and the delegates on this committee were all high profile unionists. Delegate Woodbury (vice-president of the SCLC, Ships Painters' and Dockers' Union) claimed that 'the immoral war in Vietnam had cost the lives of thousands of Vietnamese and untold suffering to people of Indo-China, United States of America and Australians' and asked for the observance of a 'minute's silence for the fallen' as the final withdrawal of troops was completed (SCLC *minutes*, 20 April 1975). Activities of the Peace Committee during the year were varied, dealing with issues related to Chile, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand and Palestine (see Appendix 2.3 1975: SCLC Summary of Issues from Labour Council Minutes). On the Vietnam issue they lobbied the 'Australian Government to use their resources to recognise the Provisional Revolutionary Government in South Vietnam, to supply more medical aid and goods and to increase repatriation payments'. They also worked towards the formation of a joint committee between unions and the Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament to develop a 'support plan itinerary for assistance and victory celebrations for peace in Vietnam' in the region. They appealed to the public for donations of finance, food, clothing and medicine to assist the Vietnamese people, and affiliated unions were requested to make financial donations to Vietnam's World Peace Aid appeal (SCLC *minutes*, 6 & 9 April 1975).

The SCLC also continued to be at the forefront of attempts to improve living and working conditions, as well as consolidate union activism as a means to that end. The history of the SCLC is marked by incidents triggered by the impact on the region of a large-scale influx of capital investment in heavy industry. The priorities of capital, to

get the best price for coal, or to establish what became the largest steel mill in the Southern Hemisphere, along with the associated first mass influx of workers hopeful of employment (as the nation moved into the 1930s Depression), resulted in appalling conditions in a region with insufficient infrastructure to support reasonable working or living conditions. Working-class activism within the Illawarra region has been associated with an ongoing struggle to ensure safe working conditions and decent living conditions within (and sometimes beyond) their communities, and it is embedded in a strong awareness of class struggle.

The continuing awareness of class struggle also remained based in industrial disputes. Above-award bonus payments to employees of BHP were targeted in the 1960s when union members felt the non-transparent processes used by the company to allocate them were being used to discriminate against union members. The campaign, begun in 1963 by the FIA's NSW State Council, was stepped up in April 1967 when a number of 24-hour stoppages, mass meetings and marches were held, with 3,000 workers participating in the first of the marches in April 1967 (group discussion, 13 April 2003). In May the FIA's state body settled on a standard bonus of 20 per cent of the basic wage (rather than the original claim of thirty-three and a third per cent) and a review of bonus classifications for BHP employees (Murray & White, 1982, pp. 276–277). Ted 'Lofty' Harvey, secretary of the SCLC (1954-69), was interviewed by a local television reporter outside the steelworks near the Number Two Merchant Mill (group discussion, 18 August 2004) at Port Kembla in August 1967, three months after the FIA State Council had settled. In the interview he promised workers 'nothing but struggle' around the issue of work bonuses at the steelworks. 'You don't give up the battle, you stay in there and fight,' Harvey claimed (WIN TV, 3 August 1967). Harvey's interview was recorded two months after the state's FIA body considered this issue settled. It is one example of the refusal of the region's trade unions to comply with decisions made by their head office.

The ongoing struggle for decent wages and living conditions were vital, but as the following example reveals they were often linked into complex patterns of activism. Women's groups such as the Campaign Against Rising Prices (CARP) were encouraged by the South Coast Labour Council. CARP emerged in the region fighting the battle against the cost of living as the importance of the Woonona Co-operative Society declined.

In 1970, after a visit to New Zealand, Freda Brown, president of the Union of Australian Women (UAW), was impressed by activism around rising prices there, and established several branches of CARP in Australia. Branches were formed in NSW in Newcastle, Katoomba and in the Illawarra region as well as in Victoria and Queensland (Curthoys & McDonald, 1996). Members of CARP in Australia were involved in a number of major campaigns protesting about the cost of living increases, including a major bread campaign and a national meat boycott campaign in the 1970s. CARP was very vocal over a number of years, making a significant contribution to exposing price rises and promoting consumer rights (Curthoys & McDonald, 1996, p. 122–23). The Wollongong branch of CARP was particularly active. The regional group's activities were clearly linked with the concerns of the early Women's Co-operative Guilds.

Lucille Brown and Mary Green were responsible for starting the Illawarra region's CARP group (Borrow interview, 10 July 2004). Lucille Brown, who was a Miscellaneous Workers' Union (MWU) delegate to the SCLC, encouraged Wollongong housewives to bake more scones and boycott bread retailers in one local TV news report (WIN TV, 24 July 1975). Wollongong women, news reporter John Wiseman claimed, were setting up 'watchdog' committees in their attempt to curb the rising cost of living. Wiseman informed the region, during the nightly news programme, that the group would consider blacklisting shops that continued to raise their prices. The images presented in the news report have a strong symbolic resonance with 'Bread and Roses'. The iconic song was an important symbol for feminist activists within the region (group discussion, 18 August 2004), but also internationally (Conde et al., 2000). This is partly depicted by the content of the television report, but is reinforced with an image of Mrs Brown dressed in a flowered apron baking scones. Irene Arrowsmith, one of the activists on this campaign, talked about the deliberate use of conservative feminine imagery in the public image of women's groups. She described her participation in a protest march wearing a pinafore and wheeling her children in a pram (Arrowsmith interview, 24 January 2003).

CARP's actions were the result of a survey conducted by the Union of Australian Women (UAW) into the price of bread in 1970 and led to the establishment of a national bread enquiry in 1975. The UAW research claimed that bread manufacturers had increased prices because they were selling too many different types of bread (73 varieties were identified by the survey). CARP critiqued manufacturers' profits,

monopoly control, production and distribution and ‘demanded first, the establishment of a price fixing system that had input from consumers’, and second, that ‘manufacturers reveal profits and trading methods’ (Curthoys & McDonald, 1996, p. 127).

Price rises are usually offered as the reason for the types of actions by CARP; however, the issues were often a little more complicated. This becomes clear in the following conversation.

Irene: I had my photo on the front page of the *Illawarra Mercury* with CARP. ... Lucille warned us, she said that bread would go up to a dollar a loaf and our whole way of life would be gone forever.

Fred: You know what it was, the big monopolies coming in on the price of bread. Fielders ... They were putting all the little bakers out. There was a bloke out at Tarrawanna ... he’s still around just baking bread in the morning and the Labour Council put a ban on him for baking bread before the time, that stuff was involved with this too.

Monica: He was baking bread rolls, baking bread between Friday and Monday, it was the Bakers’ Union.

Irene: Yes you couldn’t get fresh bread, no matter how long the weekend was. People couldn’t get fresh bread.

Fred: Yes, every little town had a bakery, and Fielders came in and boom it was gone. Fielders and the big ones just took it all over. That was the fight (group discussion, 13 April 2004).

The conversation points to a constantly changing social landscape that is evident in small things like how and from whom we buy our bread. It illustrated the importance and the difficulties of discussing history and particular social contexts. In the 1970s patterns of bread consumption were as different from today’s patterns as they were from the 1950s when the Woonona Co-operative Society was baking bread. The small bakeries and fresh bread we now take for granted on weekends did not exist. Most working-class families in the 1970s depended on bread from large bakeries that only operated Monday to Friday. These large bakeries delivered bread to customers’ doors.

I remember coming home from school, and the bread would be on the front door step. Remember it used to be wrapped in waxed paper, by the time you got home and got it out of the sun the paper would be peeling open and the wax melting into the bread (Finch interview, 21 August 2004).

The SCLC in the 1970s was concerned about the rising price of bread facilitated by large companies who were co-operating with each other. It considered that large companies were acting like a monopoly attempting to force bread prices up. At the same time unions were concerned with protecting the working rights of their membership which consisted, in the main, of employee bakers who were working for large companies such as Fielders. Most small independent bakers had been forced out of business, as had the Woonona Co-operative Bakery.

Two years before, CARP had featured in another WIN TV news report, this time the focus was on meat prices. The footage includes images of Mrs Lelli (wife of Nando Lelli, Port Kembla branch FIA secretary) and Mrs Brown's speech to a group of male workers. The news reader claimed:

An assault on the spiralling rise in the cost of living, planned for Wollongong tomorrow, gained further industrial support today. Most trade unions in the area have called for short protest stoppages or for delegates to be represented at a march through Wollongong. ... CARP, the organising committee for the protest, whipped up the backing of unionists at Shellharbour sewerage works this afternoon at a meeting on the beach. Mrs Brown, secretary of CARP, and treasurer Mrs Lelli told the men of their plans for a boycott tomorrow on meat and the protest march through Crown Street, starting at 12.30. CARP is urging the average housewife, who controls the family buying power, to show her concern by taking an active role in the campaign. They suggest telegrams be sent to State and Federal Parliamentarians and the ACTU calling for prices control (WIN TV, 16 April 1973).

These women did not confine their campaigns to targeting women; here their campaign about an issue that is often seen as a women's issue, was successfully delivered to a male work group. Strategies pursued by women's groups were integrated into the trade union movement.

Trade unions' and housewives' organisations answered the broader national call for a boycott and attended the march, which was held in Wollongong in April 1973 (WIN TV, 17 April 1973). The concerns over rising prices at this time were not limited to Australia and New Zealand. Curthoys and McDonald (1996) reported that in the United States President Nixon had claimed the US meat price crisis could be solved if Americans ate less meat (p. 123). Many Americans and Australians were outraged by President Nixon's response to rising prices.

The nationwide protest resulted in the federal government calling for a report from the Australian Meat Board, and the issue was placed on the agenda of a special Premiers' Conference called by the Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam. The UAW addressed the federal government's prices committee presenting findings from a survey that demonstrated that out of 800 consumers, 774 had heard of the national boycott and supported price control. Action was maintained by various CARP groups in the lead-up to the 1973 August budget with support from 18 major unions (Curthoys & McDonald, 1996, p. 125). These groups lobbied against price rises calling for a referendum to 'change the constitution to give the federal government power to fix prices'. Whitlam's government lost the referendum on price and income control after the ACTU campaigned against income control; however, the government did establish a Prices Justification Tribunal that had limited powers based on 'moral suasion' and publicity (Curthoys & McDonald, 1996).

Irene Arrowsmith, who was one of those cited in the conversation above about CARP and bread prices, was involved with CARP. Her mother had been with the breakaway Democratic Housewives' Association, and her mother-in-law played a leading role in the Woonona Co-operative Women's Guild. Her father (who deserted them when she was a child) was a miner, a 'Wobblie' (member of the IWW), and her father-in-law was one of the Communist leaders of the FIA. She had worked for the CPA but spent most of her working life as a clerk in union offices. She was also a foundation member of the Wollongong Working Womens' Charter Committee (WWWCC) and the WWIC, as well as the chair of the SCLC's IWY celebrations and secretary or chair of the region's IWD Committee for years. Her daughter is currently an assistant secretary of the SCLC. Her sister was another major activist figure. All the participants in the group discussion sessions have similar activist credentials. This demonstrates the high degree of organisational articulation in the region and the mutually supportive interconstituency of working-class organisation which nurtured female activism.

The labour movement in the region has, over the years has confronted a range of threats designed to contain the power of working class people. This has resulted in a place consciousness of working class activists that is build on a long history of struggle for 'safe place' across a range of scales of analysis that is not limited to industrial matters. Applying the concept to working class activists allowed me to define the purpose of working class activism as a desire for safe space that incorporates social and political

goals. The term 'safe space' is often used by feminists to refer to women's only spaces where which gives women the freedom to consolidate their identities, demonstrate unity and provide mutual support for each other outside asymmetrically constructed gendered power relations. This support is generally believed to contribute to women's voice, their activism and organisation of activism. In this thesis I have expanded the notion of safe space in order to describe and redefine the purpose of the labour movement as the desire of working class activists for safe space.

The themes that have emerged from this analysis are the result of patterns of relations of the SCLC's affiliated unions and relations with other scales of analysis that include but are not limited to state, national, international; and family, workplace, industry and community. Regional activism is based on a place consciousness that was built from the relations that created its history, and these defining relations occurred at multiple scales. However, this chapter has focused on trends that emerged from the perspective of the broad Left of the region which drew from a conjuncture of social economic relationships of the region. These trends include: the influence of a narrow, heavy industry employment base; the political dominance of left-wing ideology that combined CPA and left ALP influences; a militant tradition of activism that was inherited by unions in other sectors as employment in the region shifted from mining and manufacturing to a growing services sector; and a strong sense of working-class community. A focus on the themes helped understand the ways that activism was done in this region during its history. They help understand the SCLC's reach beyond industrial matters into community building initiatives.

The chapter has identified two new regional meta-trends that are not included in previous analysis of the SCLC. These are a high degree of organisational articulation and 'safe space'. However, underlying these two themes is leadership, vision, broad alliances and place consciousness. The chapter has identified that although the agency of the SCLC has relied on these three underlying themes across three historical periods in a generative/historical sense, change has seen an intensification of organisational articulation as the SCLC's agency evolved and in turn a change in the organisation and articulation of elements of safe space has evolved. This focus in the chapter has contributed to broader understanding of some key historical, social and power relations that have contributed to the shape of relations in the labour movement in the region.

A Note on Gender Awareness

In this chapter I have drawn on Balnave and Patmore's (2006) claim that labour history can be enriched by examining the links between industrial and women's activities. Groups involved with links between industrial and women's concerns discussed in this chapter include groups working in community relationships with the SCLC prior to 1975, such as the Woonona Co-operative Women's Guild, Miners' Women's Auxiliaries and CARP. However, the gendered relationships within the labour movement are complex. This is a central concern for the thesis and will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Chapter Five: Analysis of the SCLC

Introduction

Chapter Five analyses the history of the South Coast Labour Council (SCLC). However, the key objective of the chapter is to begin to address the two key research questions for the thesis. The first research question is concerned with the impact of key social and power relations that influenced feminist activism in the region in 1975 and 1980. The chapter examines these by analysing the power and purpose of activism in the SCLC, with particular reference to 1975, the year that was celebrated as International Women's Year (IWY). The second research question is concerned with the impact that a class-based approach and gender-based approach might have on shaping stories about feminist activism. The history of the SCLC is evaluated using a class-based theory: Ellem and Shields's Dimensions of Peak Union Agency (see Table 2.1).

Chapter Five will establish that this class-based analytical tool can be usefully employed to illustrate six key themes that reveal the nature (or the key social and power relationships) of the region's activism that were evident in the previous chapter. The six key themes also effectively help demonstrate the power and purpose of the SCLC during first three phases of its history and in 1975 from a class-based perspective. These themes are (i) leadership, (ii) working class vision, (iii) place consciousness, (iv) broad alliances, (v) a high degree of organisational articulation and (vi) the desire for safe working and living conditions. Significantly, this chapter also establishes that Ellem and Shields's (2004) model can be enhanced if it is combined with a careful and purposeful consideration of gender.

Class-Based Analysis

The following section will use class-based tools to analyse the key themes that emerge in the history of the SCLC. The section begins with structural factors which determined the formation and consolidation of the SCLC, before moving to consider the dimensions of peak union power and purpose. How purpose and power was shaped by its affiliates is important in understanding the nature of peak union bodies (Brigden, 2003). I have

adapted six relevant structural elements from the schema provided by Ellem and Shields (2004, p. 37): inclusiveness, density, concentration, internal division, affiliate representation, leadership, and associational monopoly. I define and illustrate these elements as follows.

1. Inclusiveness refers to the proportion of affiliated unions in the region. Almost all unions with a regional presence are affiliates of the SCLC; it traditionally has had one of the largest affiliated memberships of a regional peak union body in Australia.

The SCLC had 58 affiliated unions in 1975 (see Appendix 3.1 which contains a list male and female delegates of affiliated members) and it drew great strength from this.

2. Density refers to the proportion of union membership in the region. Union membership in the Illawarra is high by national standards (Markey et al., 2001).

It has been claimed that in the 1960s and 1970s trade union membership in the region exceeded 80 per cent of the total workforce and was close to 100 per cent for miners, steelworkers and waterside workers (Clothier & Maddison, 2002, p. 124). Although it varies from virtually 100 per cent coverage in the mining and steel industries to minority coverage in retail, hospitality and other service industries, nevertheless, the union density in the service sector is much higher than the national average (Markey & Hodgkinson, 2008). High levels of union membership have been actively pursued by the SCLC throughout its history. In 1975 the SCLC assisted the increase of membership within its affiliated unions. Recruitment drives targeted the retail trades, hairdressing (SCLC *minutes*, 9 July, 6 & 20 August 1975) and teaching (SCLC *minutes*, 19 March, 9 & 16 April, 11 June, 6 August and 17 September 1975). An example from teaching is discussed below in the section addressing the role of the SCLC as an agent of external change in the industrial mode. In 1975 it pursued a preference for employment of union members, the active recruitment and retention of union members and co-enforcement of award and agreement provisions in co-ordination with affiliates as a broad membership strategy (SCLC *minutes*, 19 February, 9 August 1975). Chapter Six will examine one dispute in the retail sector, known as the conspiracy boutique dispute. The conspiracy boutique was the result of tensions between its managers and owners with the SCLC, despite the support for the campaign by the regional chamber of commerce.

3. Concentration refers to the spread of membership across affiliated unions. Concentration in a small number of unions creates a power imbalance within the labour movement which hinders the unity of purpose needed to establish a peak council.

Until the 1940s the miners' unions dominated the labour movement numerically and for this reason provided much of the SCLC's leadership. However, as early as the 1920s and 1930s the growth in manufacturing provided a more diverse membership base for the SCLC. From the 1940s further growth in manufacturing created a concentration of numbers in the FIA, but it was balanced by a number of other manufacturing unions and the miners. The FIA was also not affiliated in the 1950s and 1960s. From the 1970s the growth in the region's service sector spurred expansion of white-collar unionism, which provided a diverse balance of power in the SCLC.

4. Internal division refers to occupational differences, but also the ideology within the peak union body.

The region is traditionally characterised by a narrow range of occupations with a concentration in heavy industry and mining (Markey & Wells, 1997, p. 99). While there was a shift in employment towards a growing service sector in the early 1980s, most unions in this sector tended to inherit the region's militant traditions and socialist ideology.

The key affiliates of the SCLC have all been left wing unions with the exception of the Australian Workers' Union (AWU). The ironworkers, miners, teachers and waterside workers were led or strongly influenced by the Communist Party for significant periods from the 1930s. The AMWU, the Municipal Shire Employees' Union and the Miscellaneous Workers' Union were led by officials associated with the left of the ALP. The FIA's national, state and regional leadership positions were captured by the right in 1951–55 resulting in disaffiliation from the SCLC, but in 1970 the regional leadership was assumed by officials linked with the left of the ALP, and they immediately re-affiliated with the SCLC. Illawarra regional union branches were frequently considered more left or activist oriented than their state or national bodies, even in normally left unions (Markey & Nixon, 2005).

5. Leadership. The history of the SCLC until 1980 (at which point the history of the SCLC in this thesis stops) has been noted for its series of strong male leaders.²² The strong leadership of the SCLC was built on a vision of industrial justice, nurtured by the strong influence of left-wing ideology from the CPA and the Left of the ALP working together. This vision incorporated the social revolutionary ideals embedded in CPA ideology that was evident in the leadership of key unions in a range of activities from 1930 (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 173).

In the previous chapter I noted the importance of the miners Paddy Molloy and Steve Best who provided leadership at a critical formative period in the 1930s. Both were able to work with CPA and left-ALP militants, although neither of them were members of either party. Steve Best, who held the role of secretary for the SCLC for 12 years from 1928, was a highly regarded miner who understood struggle. His leadership credentials were, in part, established when he was sacked from Coledale Colliery in 1926 and was unable to gain work in another mine in the district. Later, he was also dismissed from Hoskins Ltd for trying to organise workers on the steelworks construction site. Markey and Nixon (2004) described Best as a man who:

... had a reputation for thinking carefully before he acted, and for being a person of quiet authority and great personal charm, with whom it was hard to quarrel. Such a man was well equipped to lead the TLC [SCLC] through the vicissitudes of the Depression years, to build bridges between various sections of the regional labour movement in the interests of unity (p. 158).

Best was a popular figure in the district, a member of Corrimall Bowling Club, who established the Wollongong ALP Socialisation Unit in August 1930 to support the NSW ALP's 1930 metropolitan conference²³ resolution to operationalise the socialisation of industry (Markey, 1994, pp. 260–261). Best was probably the author of the 'Education in Socialist Theory' articles which appeared in the *South Coast Times* from August 1930 for several weeks (Mitchell, 1978/9, p. 11; Richardson, 1984, p. 16).

²² Secretaries of the SCLC for the period covered by this thesis include (in date order) Steve Best (1928–40), Jack Cranston (1940–42), Len George (1942–48), Lesley (Les) Mulin (1948–54), Edward (Ted) Harvey (1954–69), Merv Nixon (1969–87), Source: *SCLC Honour Board*, 2003. While the thesis privileges stories about Best, Harvey and Nixon, existing histories of the SCLC indicate that all these leaders were considered 'strong' leaders.

²³ The 1930 NSW Metropolitan Conference of the ALP established a Socialisation Committee to 'devise ways and means to propagate the first and principal platform of the party'. Support peaked in 1931 with 180 Socialisation Units based on party branches. Unions were also urged to form Units but the State ALP leader, Jack Lang, and his supporters in the NSW Labor Council, worked against the Units with the support of many union leaders who saw them as a threat, and at the 1933 NSW ALP Conference the Units were dissolved.

Ted Harvey, SCLC secretary between 1954 and 1969, was a highly respected leader whose suitability for the position was established during his term as a full-time organiser with the FEDFA (Federated Engine Drivers' and Firemen's Association). This union had been deregistered by the NSW Industrial Commission because it was seen as 'a militant organisation, causing lots of strife' (group discussion, 18 August 2004). Strong leadership, typified by Harvey, has been identified as one of the factors contributing to the strength of SCLC during its history (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 153; Nixon, 1984; Rittau, 2001), enabling it to mobilise regional unionists and activists on a broad range of issues. The SCLC's leadership role was and is enacted by individuals such as Ted Harvey. Like other leaders of the SCLC, in his role as secretary he was the 'voice' for the regional unionists. Ted Harvey's words and actions around issues of bonuses discussed in the previous chapter reflect patterns of struggle that engaged the earliest leaders of the SCLC such as Steve Best and 'Paddy' Malloy.

This leadership ability to maintain links with and between the CPA and ALP was referred to by interviewees when describing Merv Nixon, who was Ted Harvey's successor and secretary of the SCLC (1969–1987). Schultz (1985) describes Merv Nixon as:

... committed to a dream of unions and community groups joining with small businesses to provide direction for the city, rather than allowing the region to be controlled by decisions made in head office in Melbourne, Sydney or abroad (p. 218).

6. Associational monopoly. The SCLC's position was never weakened by challenges from rival regional peak bodies. The Labor Council of NSW did at times in the 1950s to 1980s challenge the boundaries of SCLC jurisdiction because of ideological differences, but these same difficulties reinforced place consciousness which provided a strong basis for maintaining the SCLC's autonomy.

Dimensions of Peak Union Agency

In order to understand the distinctiveness of the SCLC I have utilised the dimensions of peak union agency to examine the historical variations in the SCLC's purpose and power. The model has previously been usefully employed in the analysis of peak union bodies that demonstrate spatial awareness (Ellem, Markey, & Shields, 2004). The model is designed to analyse peak union bodies at a range of scales of analysis which include national, state and regional peak union bodies; minor adaptations in definitions focus the model towards regional peak union analysis. The following section will demonstrate the SCLC as it is both influenced by, and in turn influences, activism at a range of other scales of analysis, such as those articulated by Mylett et al. (2000) and shown in Table 3.1. The model does this by focusing on the key bundles of social and power relationships that influence power and purpose of the SCLC.

The model is divided into nine sectors that deal with the interrelationships between types of agency utilised by peak union bodies and mode (or area of focus). The roles of peak union councils as agents of mobilisation, agents of exchange and agents of regulation are each divided into three areas of concern (modes). These areas of concern are the industrial, the political and the social. The following descriptions of the nine dimensions draws heavily on Ellem and Shields's (2004, pp. 43–50) definitions of the dimensions. The definition is followed by examples from the history of the SCLC.

Agent of Mobilisation

The first basis of mobilisation is union density and inclusiveness for peak councils. Mobilisation power is defined as delegated institutional power (from affiliated unions) that requires an ideological commitment to shared action, a form of place consciousness and a power balance between affiliated members. No one group or subgroup of members should dominate (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 50).

1. As an agent of mobilisation in the industrial mode, regional peak union bodies co-ordinate interunion campaigns and industrial action, assist in the formation of new unions, contribute to the revival and/or renewal of existing affiliated member unions and forge 'common cause' on industrial matters that can include, for example, improved wages, hours and conditions. Regional peak union bodies rarely co-ordinate and lead multi-union collective bargaining (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 45–46).

The formation of the SCLC represented its emergence as an agent of mobilisation. The key purpose of its formation was to provide collective action and solidarity, initially around the struggles for industrial justice. Markey and Nixon draw on the ‘dimensions of peak union agency’ to analyse the formation and consolidation phases of the SCLC between 1926 and 1945. They demonstrate that while some of the enabling factors for peak unionism existed in the region in the period prior to 1926, there was little commitment to peak unionism. The dominance of the Miners’ Federation provided little opportunity to consolidate a broader working-class purpose. However, in 1926, a leadership which was committed to a broader vision for a more inclusive and broader working activism emerged, and by the 1930s the SCLC was able to begin to forge ‘common cause’ around industrial, political and social issues as the region’s industry base widened and union membership grew from the mid-1930s. Leadership and broad vision emerge as two of the enabling themes of the SCLC.

Ellem and Shield claim that place consciousness is also an important factor in mobilising. Place consciousness was a factor when a mass meeting of over 2,000 ironworkers ‘rejected wage indexation guidelines and demanded the FIA State Council step up award negotiations’ in November 1975. Staff reallocations and reclassifications had resulted in less pay, and these unionists felt that companies should consult with unions when changes were implemented. In response ‘heavy industry in Wollongong ground to a halt while 13,000 ironworkers stopped work for [the] meeting’ (WIN TV, 14 October 1975). Nando Lelli received support from the meeting to do ‘battle with the state executive’ over the award. Ferdinando (Nando) Lelli (secretary of the Port Kembla branch of the FIA, 1972–1990) was Italian, and the first migrant from a non-English-speaking background (NESB) to achieve a leadership position in any Australian union. Lelli, part of the team that recaptured leadership of the branch from right-wing influences in 1970, claimed his team was more concerned with local issues and membership control of the branch. Further, ‘his team was more representative of the diverse ethnic background of BHP workers’ (Murray & White, 1982, pp. 303–304). This dispute is one example of the independence of local unions from their state and national head offices who they felt did not understand nor adequately support conditions in the region. This is one element of the region’s place consciousness. The region’s place consciousness emerged as a third key theme for the SCLC during this research.

2. As an agent of mobilisation in the political mode, regional peak union bodies organise propaganda on individual issues, nurture and promote collective consciousness (this includes class-consciousness among organised and unorganised workers), sponsor working-class electoral candidates and actively participate in political campaigns for Labor candidates at regional, state and national levels (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 45–46).

The nurturing of class-consciousness was manifest in the range of activities of the SCLC across its history – activities which were well beyond the standard industrial sphere of unions. The nurturing of this ideology is evident the 1930s, when CPA influence was strong in the region, and a number of conferences were held to develop a collective socialist agenda within the region. It was also evident in August 1975 at a Workers' Action Conference, organised to determine SCLC policies for improved living standards for workers and their families based on current economic and social conditions (SCLC *minutes* 9 July, 10 August 1975).

Left-wing ideology provided the basis for strong links between the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), the Australian Labor Party (ALP) and the SCLC. A number of SCLC secretaries have been members or were former members of the CPA. Left wing influences and leadership were based on the historical importance of left-dominated unions in the region, notably the miners' originally, the FIA, WWF, metal workers', FEDFA and teachers' unions. Even when unions with a regional presence were right-wing nationally, their regional branches were likely to be left wing (Markey & Nixon, 2004).

It was not just that national and state offices of the FIA and other unions did not understand the region's issues, it was also that they had a different political ideology. The dominant commitment to left-wing ideology was expressed as different to national and state union offices that were often right wing (Markey & Nixon, 2004). Other examples of unions in the region whose political base has been different to their head office at various times, including the Municipal Employees' Union and other white-collar dominated bodies such as the Public Service Association (PSA) (Markey interview, 2004). Other unions which were left wing in the region impacted substantially on the political complexities of their state or national offices. The PSA was one prominent example in the 1980s and 1990s.

The SCLC also has a continuous history of strong relationships with a significant bloc of state and federal ALP candidates who also were activists in the region's union movement. Examples include the early support for miners as candidates of the NSW state government with the region in the first stage of the history described in the previous chapter. The SCLC has also provided strong support for CPA and Labor candidates in local government. The substantial Illawarra presence in the ALP participation in NSW state parliamentary organisation, in addition to the left-wing union traditions described here, have also powerfully reinforced place consciousness.

3. As an agent of mobilisation in the social mode, regional peak union bodies work towards labour–community alliances encouraging broader community involvement in non-industrial campaigns around issues such as social, environmental and human rights issues. Such issues may be cross-class and can harness 'collective norms other than those of class – namely various forms of place consciousness' (Ellem & Shields, 2004, pp. 45–46).

The SCLC has been highly successful as an agent of mobilisation in the social mode. The social mode was a key focus for activism in the region during the 1930s, in the face of depression, over issues that included unemployment, serious housing shortages and the free speech campaign. The *Dalfram* dispute was an example of the use of industrial means being employed to pursue broader social objectives. When the SCLC was reactivated in 1935 the Unemployed Workers' Movement, other CPA-based organisations and worker-owned co-operatives had provided powerful mobilising forces. This mode of activism continued after the Second World War and included the role of the SCLC with the Aboriginal Advancement League, as well as activities over housing, education, pensioners and the sphere of relations of consumption.

These patterns of mobilisation in the social mode have been nurtured by the dominant left-wing political ideology of the region's labour movement, as well as by its developed place consciousness. In turn, the relative distinctiveness of the SCLC's extensive mobilisation in the social mode has further reinforced place consciousness.

Agent of External Exchange

Exchange power is based on previous mobilisation and the ability to form structural coupling or sustained exchange relationships with external social forces such as the employers, the state and other movement based organisations. Structural coupling

empowers peak bodies with long-term structural relationships imparting legitimacy. As with mobilisation power, it also requires an ideological commitment to shared action and a form of place consciousness (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 50)

4. As an agent of exchange in the industrial mode, regional peak union bodies collaborate with, and represent the views of, their affiliated members with employers and local employer organisation and with other union bodies including state and national peak bodies (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 46–47).

The SCLC's opportunities for structural coupling with employers have been curtailed by the state arbitration system which governed industrial relations for most of the SCLC's history. The SCLC is not a registered union and therefore cannot appear before industrial tribunals in its own right; its officers can only appear before tribunals as representatives of registered unions. Strong unions also tended to jealously guard their autonomy in negotiations. Nevertheless, unions frequently sought SCLC support in industrial disputes, and where a number of unions were involved the SCLC could play an important co-ordination role. This occurred at the steelworks in the 1980s when the key unions were aligned ideologically. As a result of these trends, the SCLC did develop some exchange relationships with employers. This particularly occurred with peak employer organisations and even small business in pursuit of common objectives for regional economic development and lobbying state government (Markey & Nixon, 2004). An example of this will be examined in the following chapter.

Relationships with other peak union bodies, particularly the Newcastle Labour Council encompassed a long history of mutual support. The Newcastle and South Coast have similar histories of mining and steelmaking. One key example of mutual support can be seen when in 1945 the SCLC responded to the dismissal of Don Parker at the Port Kembla steelworks. The SCLC worked with a Central Strike Committee with the Newcastle Labour Council and the NSW Labor Council with strong support from miners, seamen and other ironworkers in NSW and Victoria.

The role of agent of external exchange is also built on the capacity for mobilisation, particularly in industrial disputes. The campaign for bonuses at BHP between 1963 and 1967 is an example of the SCLC's working in two dimensions of the industrial mode: that is, as an agent of mobilisation it co-ordinated ten unions within the region, as an agent of external exchange it worked with the State Council of the FIA, to ensure

bonuses would not be used to discriminate against unionists. Further, when Harvey (the secretary of the SCLC) utilised the media to propagandise and raise consciousness about the nature of working-class struggle, the action also demonstrates the SCLC working in the political mode as an agent of mobilisation. Harvey's message demonstrated the socialist traditions of the region. From the perspective of Illawarra union activists, this was about the ongoing class struggle that was embedded in the nature of the employment relationship.

These militant and left-wing traditions (Markey & Nixon, 2004) also influenced the organisation of white-collar and professional unions. In some well-known cases these unions were able to influence the activism style of their state branches. The regional branches of the Teachers' Federation initiated a militant approach to the issue of relief teaching in 1967–68 that resulted in the first strike action by teachers across NSW (O'Brien, 1987, pp. 131, 133–135). The leaders of teachers' unions in the Illawarra during the 1960s (including Jim Dombroski and Max Graham, life member of the SCLC) were part of the SCLC executive (group discussion, 13 April 2004). They saw themselves as part of the working-class struggle rather than as a professional union. Another three of their delegates went on to become presidents of the SCLC: Arthur Osbourne (1979–1989), Mike Dwyer (1994–2000) and Peter Wilson (2000–2005).

In 1975 four teaching unions were associated with the SCLC: the Illawarra Teachers' Association, the North Illawarra Teachers' Association, the South Illawarra Teachers' Association and the Technical Illawarra Teachers' Association. In 1975 the NSW Teachers' Federation, to which these bodies were affiliated, was involved in a protracted dispute over a union preference clause. It had won this clause in 1974, but the following year the NSW government succeeded in having the clause in their award revoked by the NSW Industrial Commission (O'Brien, 1987, pp. 188–189). The SCLC claimed the attack on the preference clause was an attack on all unions (SCLC *minutes*, 19 March 1975) and offered full support. In April the SCLC disputes committee insisted that a meeting be convened by the SCLC with executive members of unions on a state and district level to enable a decision for industrial support for the preference clause that would include a demonstration to coincide with the opening of NSW parliament (SCLC *minutes*, 16 April, 11 June 1975). Other local action included meetings of teachers and the provision of buses to a demonstration on 30th September 1975 (SCLC *minutes*, 17 September 1975). The clause was reinstated in 1976. Such examples provide strong

evidence of the SCLC's capacity for mobilisation beyond its immediate sphere of influence, as an agent of exchange with employers, state unions and the industrial tribunal.

5. As an agent of exchange in the political mode, a regional peak union body can collaborate and build relationships with state and political parties. These relationships can range from lobbying about policy issues to more complex 'structural coupling' (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 46–47).

The role of the SCLC as an agent of external exchange is evident in strong links with the NSW state governments who have recognised the SCLC as a 'major spokesperson for the region's economic development' (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 174). This has particularly been the case with ALP governments which have held power in NSW for 65 years during the period 1901 to 2010. Many unions which have been affiliated to the SCLC were also affiliated to the ALP. The SCLC was able to build on this structural coupling together with place consciousness of a significant regional bloc of state and national parliamentary representation. Strong relationships with Labor members of parliament at state and national levels have therefore played a role in the SCLC's capacity to develop relationships with the state. Interest in legislative reforms was demonstrated in 1936 when ALP conferences focused on working hours, mine safety, workers' compensation, unemployment relief, protection of civil liberties and repeal of the Crimes Act which were key interests of the SCLC. Most campaigns within the region have included lobbying political parties.

The working relationship with members of parliament can be illustrated through the example of Stewart West. West was introduced in the previous chapter as a regional leader of the anti-Vietnam protests whilst an official in the local Waterside Workers' Federation. When West became a member of parliament in the federal electorate of Cunningham (1975–1993) he was also the president of the Port Kembla branch of the WWF. Media reports demonstrated the political capacity of the SCLC to effectively draw on strong relationships with members of federal and state government. At a meeting convened by the SCLC, after a mass meeting by the FIA at the Wollongong showground in 1978, to discuss the dismissal of twenty-eight crane drivers and chasers at the steelworks, Les Johnson and Stewart West (federal members of parliament for Hughes and Cunningham in the Illawarra region, respectively) and George Petersen (state member for Illawarra) collaborated with the SCLC (WIN TV, 17 April 1978) to

support the FIA. These MPs were all from the left wing of the ALP. In the case of the NSW state parliament, the region has always had a significant bloc of ALP members. Currently it has five electorates all of which are represented by the ALP, and one of these representatives is special minister for the Illawarra. This level of parliamentary representation has provided a substantial platform for gaining regional development assistance, particularly for port and transport infrastructure (Markey, 1988b; Markey & Wells, 1997; Rittau, 2003). In other words the SCLC's success as an agent of exchange in the political mode has reinforced its agency of exchange in the social mode.

6. As an agent of exchange in the social mode, a regional peak union body can act as a representative for affiliated members on broader issues (than industrial issues) (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 46–47).

The focus on regional economic development targeting employment growth and provision of transport, education and housing facilities through the state government, already referred to, indicates a major role as an agent of exchange in the social mode stretching back to the 1930s. Both the Woonona Co-operative Society and CARP also provide examples of the SCLC as agents of exchange in the social mode. Further examples of the SCLC as an agent of exchange in the social mode can be seen in the their presentation of a strong union position on issues of war, working with other community organisations such as Save Our Sons (Vietnam War). In World War I and the Vietnam War the SCLC strongly advocated against conscription, but in World War II grass roots union strategies were adjusted to accommodate broader support for the war.

Agent of Regulation

Regulation power builds on agencies of mobilisation and exchange that enable formal exchange with external agents that in turn enable the accumulation of more power and may contribute to a change in purpose (from the original purpose/s) (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 50).

7. As an agent of regulation in the industrial mode regional peak union bodies can oversee the 'determination, monitoring and enforcement of industrial agreements and awards, as well as rules and practices relating to affiliate governance, administration, demarcation, inter-union dispute resolution and union amalgamation' (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 47). As agents of regulation it is most

likely that these matters would be co-determined and co-enforced with employers and/or tribunals, government and workers and their unions (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 47–49).

As an agent of regulation in the industrial mode, the SCLC was usually called in by affiliates as a last resort in their dealings with employers. This occurred either when unions were in a relatively weak state or when a large worksite such as the steelworks required co-ordination of a number of unions. The previous chapter alluded to a number of instances in the late 1920s when the SCLC's predecessor peak body assisted individual unions involved in industrial disputes over wages and conditions, most notably the FIA in 1927, and miners and waterside workers in 1928-29 (Mitchell, 1978/9, p. 11; also see Chapter Four). The weakening of the peak body itself by the 1930s depression undermined this role. However, the SCLC played a major role in the 1936 Annabel²⁴ dispute, which indicated the growing recovery of unionism from the Depression. This dispute involved all steelworks unions, lasting three months under the control of a combined unions committee of the SCLC. It was extremely significant in succeeding in limiting overtime thereby challenging the employer's interpretation of the FIA award (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 165). Support from the SCLC also ensured that other unions would not enrol members of an FIA lacking recognition in the state industrial relations system.

The Annabel dispute was as much an example of the SCLC's co-ordination role as of assistance to a union weakened by the depression and deregistration by the state. A number of other subsequent examples occurred in the steelworks. Under the exceptional circumstances of the Second World War, the SCLC undertook a key role in co-ordinating unions and overseeing work regulations to maximise productivity for the war effort (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 167). After the Second World War major industrial disputes occurred in the steelworks involving the SCLC. The previous chapter has already referred to the 15-week Parker dispute over seniority during the last months of 1945 and early 1946 (see Chapter Four). It was a major instance of the SCLC's co-ordinating role as agent of regulation in the industrial mode, involving not only Port Kembla steelworkers, but also Illawarra miners and Newcastle steelworkers locked out by BHP, as well as the Newcastle Trades and Labour Council and Labor Council of NSW. The SCLC had the capacity to draw on wide community support for the strikers

²⁴ Norman Annabel was dismissed from the steelworks after refusing to work excessive overtime.

and their families. In a manner reminiscent of its role with the UWM in the 1930s, the SCLC co-ordinated 21 area committees responsible for organising fishing, hunting rabbits, wood collecting and bulk purchase of basic foodstuffs, in addition to producing children's toys for Christmas and entertainment provided by members of another SCLC affiliate, Actors' Equity (Markey & Nixon, 2004, pp. 169–70; Illawarra Trades & Labour Council and Newcastle Trades Hall Council, *The Story of the Steel Strike of 1945*, St George Newspaper Print, Sydney, UOW archives; Murray & White, pp. 152–54; also see Chapter Four).

In all of these cases the SCLC enjoyed success, largely because of its authority amongst affiliates: *power over* ensuring *power for* regulation in the industrial mode. However, the SCLC's community embeddedness, which enabled it to draw on wide support beyond the unions, also ensured its success. Consequently, these were powerful examples of the SCLC's agency of regulation in the industrial mode.

The success of the SCLC in these early disputes confirmed its role as an agent of regulation in the industrial mode, not only at the steelworks, but also in regional industry more generally. Its role at the steelworks was consolidated when the Port Kembla branch of the FIA reaffiliated in 1970 under its new left-wing leadership, after a period of disaffiliation, from the 1950s. More generally, the SCLC played a growing role in assisting weaker unions in the growing service sector, as they attempted to establish countervailing regulation of the employment relationship (Markey & Nixon, 2004, pp. 172, 174). In this way, the SCLC persisted with the role its predecessor had undertaken in the 1920s.

8. As an agent of regulation in the political mode, regional peak union bodies can influence 'statutory and regulatory provisions regarding union recognition and rights, bargaining regimes and minimum wages and entitlements' (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 48). Further, it can extend to non-industrial issues such as 'pricing and incomes policy, taxation, competition policy, trade and tariff issues, education and training, immigration and competition policy' (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 47–49).

The SCLC's agency of regulation in the political mode has been unusually significant for a regional peak union body in Australia. This has rested on two main factors: Firstly, the parliamentary political influence that the SCLC wields as a result of the significant

bloc of regional ALP members of parliament, particularly at NSW state level, which has been the focus for much industrial relations regulation in the Australian federal system. This significance is magnified in the Illawarra region since a high proportion of award and agreement regulation has been within the state, rather than federal jurisdiction, and for much of the SCLC's history state jurisdiction has been considered more amenable to unions (Markey & Hodgkinson, 2008). Many of the SCLC's affiliates are also affiliated to the ALP, and indirectly this gives the SCLC influence in choice of candidates and monitoring of their performance after election. Secondly, the will to engage in regulation in the political mode has been driven by the dominance in the SCLC of robust political ideologies of the Left which value political organisation for broader, collectively-oriented, class-based issues.

As agent of regulation in the political mode, the SCLC's role has been continuous since the 1940s. There are numerous instances of its influence in industrial legislation, although failures also, as with the repeal of the Crimes Act that it sought in the 1930s (referred to in Chapter Four). One spectacular example of the SCLC's role, and of its political independence, occurred in 1987 when the NSW ALP government amended workers' compensation legislation, limiting the amount payable to workers for injuries sustained at work and abolishing the right to sue for damages under common law. All NSW unions and the Labor Council of NSW originally opposed these reforms, but nevertheless were persuaded to call off industrial action in opposition to them. In the Illawarra, however, the SCLC and regional unions defied calls to abandon industrial action and persisted in mines, steelworks, schools, building sites, public service offices and municipal council work. The state ALP member for Illawarra, George Petersen, actually crossed the floor to vote against the legislation and was subsequently expelled by the ALP (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 & 22 April, 18, 21, 26 & 28 May 1987; Markey & Wells, 1997, p. 98). Another example of political independence occurred in 2002 when in a by-election for the federal seat of Cunningham, a Green candidate, Michael Organ, defeated the ALP candidate largely as a result of SCLC support (together with Liberal Party withdrawal from the contest and the preference system of voting).

Two more unusual and landmark successes were in gaining location of the coal loader and state grain terminal for Port Kembla in the 1980s, to expand employment opportunities. Both instances required leadership from the SCLC in facilitating dispute-

free construction of facilities and agreement on efficient work practices. In the case of the grain terminal, the SCLC fostered an alliance with farmers to ensure a favourable decision on location and participated in a quadripartite Port Kembla Task Force to explore further port development options (Markey, 1988a; Markey & Wells, 1997, p. 98; Rittau, 2003).

On a broader political front, in the sphere of foreign relations, the SCLC played an important role as agent of regulation (see Chapter Four). This occurred with the *Dalfram* dispute, where the local Waterside Workers with SCLC support effectively halted shipment of pig iron to Japan. I have also previously noted the major leadership role of the SCLC in co-ordinating regional union and ALP opposition to the Vietnam War through industrial stoppages and political demonstrations and, in particular, the importance of some SCLC activists in the anti-war movement (referred to in Chapter Four).

9. As an agent of regulation in the social mode, peak union bodies can play a role in the regulation of labour market supply as well as the division of labour, commodity market regulation and social relations (Ellem & Shields, 2004, p. 47–49).

As agent of regulation in the social mode, the SCLC has been unusually active for a peak union body, and this level of commitment has drawn on the strong sense of place consciousness in the region, as well as the political influences and ideologies of the left which underlay its agency of regulation in the political mode. In addition, the SCLC has drawn from its embeddedness in the acute sense of working-class community which largely defines place in the Illawarra, as well as potentially contributing to this sense of community.

Examples of agency of regulation in the social mode have been referred to extensively in the previous chapter. Some of the earliest instances occurred in the 1930s with the free speech campaign, support for unemployed workers in maintaining wage rates and provision of food and other necessities and in campaigns to address the housing crisis in the region. An industrially weakened SCLC during the Depression achieved a relatively high degree of success in these activities, forcing local authorities to acknowledge the right to free speech, providing extensive material sustenance for the unemployed in

developing self-help programmes, and even in 1938 gaining some state government support for workers' housing.

The circumstances of the 1930s were exceptional, but the range of activities at that time provided a base from which a pattern of widespread community activity subsequently emerged. I have noted previously (in Chapter Four) the strong links between the SCLC and Women's Guilds and the Woonona Co-operative Society. I have also drawn attention to the continued role of the SCLC in gaining housing as well as educational facilities to university level for the region, support of pensioners, ensuring jobs for anti-war activists and the critical role in supporting Aboriginal rights. In particular, the previous chapter noted the strong relationships with consumer price regulation in CARP from the 1970s. In addition, from the 1970s the SCLC was involved in maintaining a number of green bans on development projects considered socially undesirable (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 171).

In Chapter Four I pointed to some of the long-standing fears about relationships with the media that had emerged during interviews. In 1975 the SCLC was involved in a bitter dispute with the media. A march on the *Illawarra Mercury* was led by miners from the region's largest colliery that had just entered the fourth week of a dispute triggered by a Miners' Federation campaign for wage increases (WIN TV, 24 July 1975). The dispute had seen the dismissal of 800 miners and a lockout by mine management (SCLC *minutes*, 23 July, 20 August 1975) that the miners claimed had been inaccurately reported. Unions in the region, co-ordinated by the SCLC, were 'digging deep into their pockets' to enable the first strike pay to support the miners (WIN TV, 25 July 1975). Miners had been unable to receive social service payments, and the SCLC were involved in intensive lobbying of the relevant government minister to have legislation changed that prevented workers from receiving social services during lockouts (SCLC *minutes*, 17 September 1975). The SCLC worked with the Miners' Women's Auxiliary to address the individual social impact of the strike. Their concerns were to minimise the impact on issues that might arise for miners' families including hire purchase agreements and house payments (WIN TV, 30 July 1975). In introducing the segment on the Miners' Women's Auxiliary during the dispute, the newsreader had claimed 'these women were behind their men 100 per cent'. Miners' wives were always a part of the class struggle in the Illawarra.

The march on the *Illawarra Mercury* was also supported by the SCLC. At an SCLC meeting claims of a long history of ‘gutter journalism, irresponsible statements and not checking for authority’ were levelled at the *Illawarra Mercury* by the FEDFA, FIA, AMWU, AWU, Miscellaneous Workers’ Union, Municipal Shire Employees’ Union, PSA and BWIU (SCLC *minutes*, 1 October 1975). A media committee was formed and subsequent activism included a visit to the office of the editor of the paper by the media committee, a five-week ban on the paper, which included not speaking to journalists (agent of regulation) and at least two public protest marches.

Action against the *Illawarra Mercury* came in the midst of national criticism of media for bias and a blatant anti-labour stance (O’Lincoln, 1993). A number of trade unions outside the Illawarra had attempted to place bans on the newspapers. O’Lincoln (1993) claims that while these bans are usually ineffective, the SCLC was successful. The SCLC won the right to contribute a weekly column in the *Illawarra Mercury*. They also negotiated a right to reply when an editorial in the paper entitled ‘Our Dying Land’ attacked ‘irresponsible militant union leaders’ for the region’s economic situation (*Illawarra Mercury*, 18 July 1975).

In one TV news report of the protest marches (WIN TV, 24 July 1975) aimed at the *Illawarra Mercury*, Sally Bowen, leader of CPA and the Combined Miners’ Women’s Auxiliary, is glimpsed selling *Tribune* (CPA newspaper) at the march. The image of Bowen selling *Tribune* was a familiar sight to activists at regional marches (group discussion, 13 April 2003). The juxtaposition of the two papers embodies a suspicion of media and the struggle for working-class ‘voice’ within the region. But it also signals that the regulation of the media was not only supported by trade unions but by a broader constituency. The success of the SCLC as an agent of regulation with this campaign relied on an extensive degree of organisational articulation.

Four general observations may be made about these activities. First, they are unusually broad for a peak union body, reflecting the unusual depth of working-class community and strength of left-wing political ideology in the regional labour movement. Second, the boundaries of industrial, political and social modes overlap considerably. Third, the continuity of working-class traditions, not only from the 1930s when the SCLC became embedded in that community, but much earlier. In the continuity from the Woonona Co-operative to CARP there is an inclusion of workers as consumers as well as producers. In fact, this built on much earlier British working-class attempts to control

prices in popular protests and riots, exerting a ‘moral economy’, dating back to the eighteenth century (Thompson, 1991, pp. 185-351). Similarly, it is worth noting early miners’ initiatives and support in the establishment of regional hospitals from the nineteenth century, when we consider that the SCLC was the major force in the formation, at the end of the 1970s, of a co-operative, union-based South Coast Workers’ Health Centre to provide free health care and initiate research in occupational health (Markey & Wells, 1997, p. 98). Fourth, in pursuing this broad range of activities in the social mode of regulation, the SCLC created a series of substantial sites for female activism, from price control and consumer relations to health services.

Safe Space

The theme of safe space is a recurring and important theme in the previous chapter. Many of the stories that emerged during research for the thesis focused on the creation of safe space. The first organised mobilisations of workers occurred in the industrial mode, where the dangerous nature of the mining industry saw the early organisation of miners in 1878 into Miners’ Lodges. It was not only that mining was a dangerous occupation, but the isolation of mining communities and strong resistance to workers’ organising by owners (who mostly lived outside the region) had created a strong sense of community typical of early underground mine communities (Mitchell, 1980). The emergence of the Woonona Co-operative in 1886 marked a formal extension of the ability of the working class to mobilise at an organisational level. Safe working and living conditions continued to be an important theme in the place consciousness of the working class and the SCLC, from the days of miners contributing to maintenance of hospitals financially and by participating in their boards, through to demands for ambulance stations and medical facilities at the steelworks from the 1930s to 2000s and to the formation of the Workers’ Health Centre.

Conclusion

Chapters Four and Five point to several key recurring themes defining the way working-class activism was done in the region. These themes included the importance of the role of strong leadership and the militant traditions of left-based alliances, nurtured by a vision that saw the working class with a significant voice in shaping the conditions of their lives both inside and outside the workplace and based in turn on a strong sense of place consciousness that is characterised by a high degree of organisational articulation.

Place consciousness was not just about identity, it was also about building safe space relative to the material conditions of the region. The struggle for safe space emanated from the material conditions of danger in mining and steel, of social hardship in the 1920s and 1930s when the steel industry was established and from the insecure position of immigrants post-1945.

The analytical tool used in this chapter was Ellem and Shields's Dimensions of Peak Union Agency (see Table 2.1). The relations I focused on here are those that emerged in the left-wing culture of the region with particular focus on the SCLC role as a key mobilising agent in the pursuit of social, political and industrial justice within the region. Their role as an agent of mobilisation is facilitated by a long history of leadership agency and a regional commitment to a broad left vision (Markey & Nixon, 2004, p. 173) that has nurtured its role as an agent of exchange with employers, the state and social movements. The role as an agent of social regulation, through the pursuit of issues such housing, education and the rights of Aboriginals, pensioners and women was facilitated by its ability to mobilise broad support for such issues, and this in turn relied on a sense of place consciousness.

While it was useful to separate each of the dimensions out for the purpose of analysis, in practice they overlap and are mutually supportive. Success in agency of mobilisation is critical for building agency of exchange and regulation but maintaining the success the SCLC had as an 'agent of mobilisation' relied on its role as an agent of exchange with employers, the state and social movements. The struggle for industrial and social justice included all aspects of life from unemployment and work to health and hospitals, transport, pension, education, policing and the cost of living. The struggle for each of these issues has a long history within the region. A detailed analysis of each of these areas is beyond the scope of the thesis. However, the history of each of these issues and the complex sets of relations that shape the region's response to each of the issues is shaped by the strength of the SCLC's agency, which relies on its social and political modes.

The themes that have emerged from this analysis are the result of patterns of relations of the SCLC's affiliated unions and relations with other scales of analysis that include but are not limited to: state, national and international organisations; and family, workplace, industry and community. Regional activism is based on a place consciousness that was built from the relations that created its history, and these defining relations occurred at

multiple scales. Chapters Four and Five have focused on trends that drew from a conjuncture of social, political and economic relationships of the region. These trends include: the influence of a narrow, heavy industry employment base; the political dominance of left-wing ideology that combined CPA and left ALP influences; a militant tradition of activism that was inherited by unions in other sectors as employment in the region shifted from mining and manufacturing to a growing services sector; and a strong sense of working-class community. A focus on the themes helped understand the ways that activism was done in this region during its history. They help us understand the SCLC's reach beyond industrial matters into community building initiatives.

The two chapters have identified two new regional meta-trends that are not included in previous analysis of the SCLC. These are a high degree of organisational articulation and 'safe space'. However, underlying these two themes is leadership, vision, broad alliances and place consciousness. The chapter has identified that although the agency of the SCLC has relied on these four underlying themes across three historical periods in a generative/historical sense, change has seen an intensification of organisational articulation as the agency of the SCLC evolved.

Gender Note

The women's activism that I purposefully built into Chapter Four is almost invisible in this chapter. As a stand-alone chapter, the analysis in this chapter can be described as 'gender blind'. Gender blindness has two aspects (Wilson, 1996; Linstead 2000). First, gender blind analysis ignores that working-class activism and the SCLC purpose have been defined from masculine experience. Secondly, gender (or ethnicity) is treated as irrelevant, or 'inconsequential', to the enactment of peak union activism (following Linstead, 2000).

This chapter has drawn on the incidents that are traditionally presented in the labour history of the region. The historical set of stories about class-based activism within the labour movement of the region have prioritised and subsequently mythologised particular disputes as representative of the SCLC. These disputes are typically disputes involving men, such the *Dalfram* dispute, the Parker dispute and the Annabel dispute, all of which emphasised and valorised the actions of men in a region that is characterised by its narrow base of masculine industries and dangerous work. This analysis provides a substantial description of the activities of the SCLC and how its

purpose was broader than that of individual trade unions in the region and peak union bodies outside the region. Here the focus is on the political role and public contribution of the SCLC to the wider class movement. Women's organisations are therefore constructed as having sectional interests within the labour movement, but their public profile locates them outside the SCLC. The lack of information about women activists who were delegates to the SCLC makes it difficult to include their stories.

A key focus within peak union body literature is on the unifying and fragmenting aspects of power as peak unions attempt to 'influence capital-labour relations' and shape 'economic landscapes' (Brigden, 2004 p. 221). The theory focuses attention on the mediated and reconfigured unified purpose of affiliated members of peak union bodies (Briggs, 2004). Brigden (2004) points to the necessity of understanding 'the intricacies of power relationships between affiliates, affiliates and the peak body, within the leadership group, with the rank and file and within the broader labour movement' (p. 220). However, the microprocesses of how unity was achieved with those outside peak union bodies, with the exception of the state and employers, is not prioritised. The class-based story of the SCLC can identify women as having a role in the social mode but does not acknowledge a broader contribution of women to shaping working-class activism. Analysis of fragmenting and unifying factors such as gender are ignored. This will be discussed further in Chapters Eight and Nine.

Chapters Four and Chapter Five present different perspectives on working-class purpose, that are designed to work together. A major decision in planning the construction of the thesis was: How would I organise the material to write about women's activism as a constitutive element of regional activism? In thinking about the structure of the thesis I was confronted with a similar decision when constructing the film (see Chapter Three). It was important to incorporate stories that were part of the popular mythology about the SCLC. Yet a key structural decision in the film was: How many images of women relative to men could I include and not jeopardise the credibility of the film as a 'serious history' of the SCLC? In Chapter Three I indicated that the thesis was structured as a 'patchwork' where the integrity of the overall image of women's activism presented in the thesis relies on images presented in individual chapters from different perspectives. Chapters Four and Five subsequently provide a picture that is greater than the sum of the parts. Chapter Six will draw on primary data

gathered, which together with limited existing research will fill the void created by the perceived absence of women on the ‘inside’ of the SCLC.

Chapter Six: SCLC and Women on the ‘Inside’

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a broad history of the SCLC and featured organised women’s activism in the Illawarra region until the 1970s to provide a context for stories about women involved with the SCLC and WWIC during 1975 and 1980. The groups discussed included the Co-operative Women’s Guilds and the Miners’ Women’s Auxiliaries in the period between 1928 and the early 1970s. The chapter demonstrated an evolving formal engagement of women with the labour movement that was an integral part of the high level of organisational articulation in the region’s labour movement.

This chapter continues to build a picture of feminist activism and the SCLC with a focus on women who were union delegates to the SCLC in 1975 and 1980. Most of the texts about the labour movement in the Illawarra depict women as marginal to, or absent from, the region’s labour relations. Following recommendations by labour historian Cathy Brigden, this chapter begins to establish the presence of and examine the nature of women’s agency within the region (Brigden 2005, p. 19). Detailed biographical information about key activists Peggy Errey and Sally Bowen is presented alongside an overview of women’s engagement with the SCLC during 1975 and 1980. An overview of regional engagement with International Women’s Day is provided. Three critical incidents, the Medibank dispute (1975), the Conspiracy Boutique dispute (1974–5), and the Chicken Shop incident (1980) are highlighted to demonstrate the agency of SCLC women activists. Finally, a fourth, critical incident, the Spot Café dispute (1941), is introduced to refocus attention on the broader historical patterns of engagement of the SCLC with women and work.

The SCLC has traditionally been a ‘male domain’ because the affiliated membership has been located in a region characterised by heavy industry. In this context women were ‘often only visible in separate women’s sections of the organisations’ with limited forms of political activity up until 1954 (Blackley 1998, p. 148). Traditionally restricted

employment possibilities for women had existed within industries where the relevant trade unions had little influence within the SCLC. Yet Schultz claimed:

Over the years, and despite the odds, women fought with determination for jobs and their rights. Many of the most outstanding people in the city are women, some are trade union organizers, others are prominent in politics, education or community affairs. Their activism is a legacy of the city's history. Since the end of last century, women played an important role during industrial disputes. In some celebrated instances during miners' strikes, they lay down on the railway tracks to prevent trains loaded with coal mined by scabs leaving for port and, in another instance boarded trains loaded with scab coal and, with their children, shovelled it off before the trains reached Sydney. During the 1930s depression women took the lead in many of the protests in the city; after the war, these traditions continued. The women who were organized and active were by any measure a formidable group (Schultz 1985, pp. 162-163).

Participation in the regional labour movement by being a delegate to the SCLC required organising skills within one's own union, and many of the women delegates to the SCLC had demonstrated leadership skills within their own unions. It should be noted that the two matriarchs presented in this chapter, Peggy Errey and Sally Bowen, worked with a number of other women who were equally 'formidable' in the period between 1975 and 1980. These include Irene Arrowsmith, Doreen Borrow, Fay Campbell, Monica Chalmers and Irene Sanaghan. Each of these women's stories shed important light on feminist and women's activism in the SCLC as they helped shape and contribute to the purpose and power of the SCLC. Lack of space limits a complete overview of all of these women; however, these women's voices have shaped the material in the thesis. In particular Monica Chalmers, Irene Arrowsmith and Doreen Borrow were very generous with the time they spent discussing their lives with me during my writing of the thesis. Monica, Irene and Doreen participated in individual interviews and several group interviews. They also participated with me in a range of social and political activities organised by the local labour history group (for example, Christmas dinners), the WWIC (for example, a picket line outside the local football stadium to protest against violence towards women by players) and the SCLC (for example, May Day marches), where our conversations invariably included stories about their lives. However, Peggy Errey and Sally Bowen were both very active, in the left of the ALP and the CPA, respectively, which were identified in previous chapters as the

two key dedicated political influences that have contributed to the shaping power and purpose of the SCLC.

Existing labour history literature indicates that women's formal contribution as delegates to the SCLC began in the 1950s (see Blackley, 1998). Blackley's PhD thesis on working-class activism in the Illawarra region identified three types of engagement with women and work by the SCLC between 1921 and 1954. First, she identified a campaign by the SCLC, the Shop Assistants' Union and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union (HREU) in 1941 to improve working conditions for women in service industries. The campaign began after 61 complaints against 'restaurants, boarding houses [including hotels] and milk bars in the Illawarra for underpaying their workers' (Blackley 1998, p. 174). Second, she states that equal pay appears to have been favourably supported by the SCLC during World War II and was taken up again after 1956. Blackley claims that in 1956 after attending the world Conference of Working Women, held in Hungary, Mrs Taylor²⁵ addressed the SCLC 'urging support for equal pay'. She was received favourably and the SCLC agreed to arrange meetings with female unions, including the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, the Hospital Employees' Union, the Illawarra Teachers' Union and the Women's Auxiliaries to encourage them to support the campaign for equal pay. Third, she identifies three women who became delegates to the SCLC between 1921 and 1954. Those identified are Mrs K Burke who became a delegate for the Hotel and Restaurant Employees in 1952. Mrs M Everitt was a delegate from the Clerks' Union in 1954, and Mrs B Perry, from the Teachers' Federation,²⁶ was listed as a delegate in 1954. Other sources claim that Peggy Errey was a delegate from the Restaurant and Catering Trade Union (RCTU) in 1953 and again in the 1960s as a delegate from Miscellaneous Workers' Union (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 January 2003).

Equal pay has a long history amongst women activists from the region. Zelda D'Aprano (2001) in her introduction to *Kath Williams: The Unions and the Fight for Equal Pay* claimed that this history has rarely been acknowledged. Her brief reference in the introduction indicates that Irene Arrowsmith and Monica Chalmers (Clerks' Union), Doreen Burrows and Jane Ellen (Reed) (Postal Workers Union), Evelyn Taylor and Sally Bowen (Iron Workers Union), as well as Olive Howe and Peggy Errey, had been

²⁵ Nomenclature as referred to in the SCLC minutes.

²⁶ Betty Perry's union affiliation was clarified by Monica Chalmers in a personal communication on 3 June 2009.

engaged in the struggle for equal pay (D'Aprano 2001, p. xi) for at least 20–30 years before the introduction of the ACTU's Working Women's Charter in the 1970s and noted that there was no acknowledgement of their role beyond her reference. However, Sally Bowen has received some attention from labour historians, and it is appropriate to begin this chapter with her story.

Sally Bowen (1918–1999)

Any history of this region would be incomplete without an acknowledgement of Sally Bowen. Sally remains one of the region's 'favourite' female activists, and in 1990 she was awarded life membership of the SCLC. During her life she played leadership roles in the South Coast District branch of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), the Combined Miners' Women's Auxiliary and the local branch of the Union of Australian Women (UAW). In the early 1970s many women activists, including Sally, were highly committed to issues of peace, taking part in anti-Vietnam protests in the region (group discussion, 13 April 2003; Chalmers interview, 13 October 2004). Sally was an active member of the Association for International Co-operation and Disarmament from the 1950s and Save our Sons during the 1970s. She helped establish the Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC) in 1980 where she played a key role facilitating relationships between the well-established women activists and the younger feminists. As president of the Taskforce for the Aged in Healthy Cities in the 1990s she was involved in a range of campaigns for better services for the aged. The focus on Sally's personal history in the following section provides a vehicle for representing the complex and ongoing nature of women's activism in this region.

Sally Bowen was born in Gunnedah, NSW, on 8 January 1918 and died at Thirroul in the Illawarra region on 25 February 1999. Sally began her life as the child of share-farmers in NSW and moved with her family to the Illawarra in 1941. She began her working life in the Illawarra when she obtained a job as a cook at the Corrimal Hotel at the age of 23 (Bowen 1994; Fox 1996). Opportunities for women were limited in the region during World War II, since the predominance of essential heavy industry in the region ensured that fewer men were released for the war effort. After several other short-lived jobs Sally was one of the few women to obtain a job at Lysaghts on the manufacture of the Owen sub-machine-gun. Fox reports that 'Sally had never worked in

industry, but she told them [Lysaghts] she could drive a tractor and use a gun and was soon hard at work hammering the numbers on the guns' (Fox 1996, p. 19).

Sally's support for union principles and the regional labour movement was an emergent process. Sally recalled that:

The company made 'large profits' and it was an environment where she learnt 'how the capitalist system works'. In contrast to the isolation of the hotel, she recalled 'the solidarity between the women workers' at the factory, and that the 'commitment to the union and each other was very strong'. They were united because of 'the problems of work', but also because it was during the war. Difficulties with 'home, children and the heartache of those who had husbands in the war' were also shared (Blackley 1998, p. 193, citing Robertson 1975, pp. 409–410).

At Lysaghts Sally joined the FIA and became a shop steward. The FIA was at that time Communist led and militant, with 100 per cent union membership in Sally's section, especially after Sally and other union members volunteered to dunk a non-union woman into warm machine oil (Robertson 1975, p. 410). During this period she also became a member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), where she helped organise fundraisers and socials for the Red Cross and the CPA.

In 1944 when production of the Owen gun ceased she was transferred with some other women to the steel mill. However, she disliked the work and left Lysaghts. Sally eventually obtained a job at Berlei (an underwear manufacturing company). However, the Clothing Trade Union was weak with few members. She remembers that after the freedom and camaraderie of the steel industry working in the clothing factory was like going back to school. She found it oppressive. She also found that the union was not interested in looking after its women members, and she began to organise action among the workers. Sally and two other women formed a social club by passing notes around the factory. The social club acted as a focal point for grievances (Robertson 1980, pp. 412–413). This experience built upon her employment during the war years and contributed to a growing awareness of the need for a better deal for working women (Bowen 1994, p. 3).

Sally resigned from Berlei in 1947 to care for her parents. Conditions in nursing homes during that time were appalling, and she felt there was no other option. Living in poverty, with welfare parcels and 25 shillings per week to supplement her parents'

pension, she became a dressmaker from home. Irene Arrowsmith, Monica Chalmers and Doreen Borrow claimed that during this time Sally ‘cornered the market on men’s ties’ and refused to share her patterns with anyone. In her ‘spare time’ Sally continued to work for the CPA (group discussion, 18 August 2004). During the 1949 coal strike she helped organise activities for miners’ children. She learned about working-class pride concerning charity, charging a small fee for some of her activities, but repaying this with ice creams and sweets for the children.

The death of her father gave more time for political organisation. During 1950–55 Sally, encouraged by Eric Aarons (CPA district organiser until the early 1950s), was employed by the CPA as South Coast District secretary. The role Sally undertook was difficult. She relied on rudimentary public transport for the extensive travelling up and down the coast that her organising role required. She lacked confidence for activities such as pamphlet writing at first because of her limited formal education. Furthermore, as a woman she was made very conscious of the dominant masculine culture of militant industrial and political organisations (Penson, 1992, p. 30; Robertson, 1980, pp. 414–415).

Sally’s first campaign as district secretary was for the establishment of a major public hospital in Wollongong. Later, while campaigning for ‘No’ in the 1951 referendum to ban the Communist Party, she met Dave. They married in 1954. Although she resigned as district secretary in 1955, the same year she lost her first-born child, she remained on the district committee of the CPA and was later elected district president in 1977. While many women were overlooked for international trips because of their family responsibilities, in 1964, when her children were six and seven, she led a CPA women’s delegation to the USSR to look at how women were integrated into communist society. According to Robertson she was very impressed by:

... the freedom of women there to enter public life (public laundries, midday meals in factories and schools, child-care facilities), but took note that few women held positions of power ... After the development of the women’s movement she began to understand that the law can guarantee women many things but that is not enough; it is necessary to change the fundamentally sexist attitudes in society and end the sexual division of labour (Robertson, 1980, p. 418).

Sally and Dave's home in Fairy Meadow became a focal point for many working-class activists over the years. In interviews for this thesis a range of stories about Sally's kitchen emerged. They also included stories of personal support. For example, Irene Arrowsmith proudly showed me pictures of her wedding dress which was made by Sally. The beautiful, sky-blue dress was detailed with delicate and intricate beading. Irene and her husband Neville lived in Sally's 'front room' for a number of years after their wedding (Arrowsmith interview, 24 January 2003). There were also stories of large sums of union money hidden in jars in the kitchen when miners in 1949 anticipated their bank accounts being frozen (Robertson, 1980, pp. 413–414); stories about continuous pots of stew to cater for visitors at any time of the day; and dinner parties where the leadership of key unions, the SCLC and the CPA discussed politics (Nixon interview, 11 June 2003; group discussion, 18 August 2004). When Dave became a miners' leader he looked to her for political advice over tactics because of her experience. He supported her political activities and was a great help with housework (group discussion, 18 August 2004; but also see Robertson 1980, pp. 413–414).

Sally joined the Miners' Women's Auxiliary in the mid-1950s and later became secretary. She was a member of the Nebo Miners' Women's Auxiliary and the Combined Miners' Women's Auxiliary. She remained secretary of the Women's Auxiliary until 1982 when Joyce Critcher took on the role (WWIC *newsletter*, 2004). The Women's Auxiliary naturally supported the men in their industrial struggles because they saw them as their struggles too, but the Women's Auxiliary developed a high degree of autonomy within the Miners' Federation. One of the major events each year for the Auxiliary was International Women's Day. Sally was committed to International Women's Day (IWD) and her contribution to feminist activism in the mid-1970s and early-1980s will be discussed further in a following section in this chapter on IWD.

Sally's leadership of both the district branch of the CPA and the Miners' Women's Auxiliary played an important role in the labour history of this region, but as for many women this leadership role is rarely fully acknowledged. Incidents from Sally's life give a fascinating view of a female social activist who fought for social and industrial justice all her life. According to Shirley Nixon, Sally's ideas and activism had a significant impact on key players in the region's labour movement and on the SCLC and its policy development. Shirley described Sally as someone who 'wasn't scared to speak out, a

very good speaker, she should have been prime minister'. However, 'as a woman and a communist [she] only ever received negative exposure in the media and significantly was never given full acknowledgment by trade unions or other organisations such as the Communist Party' (Nixon interview, 11 June 2003).

In the previous chapter Sally was identified as one of the women from Save our Sons group who chained themselves to the railing in Parliament House in Canberra during an anti-Vietnam War protest. Chains featured in Sally's life again in 1973 when she was involved with a group of women protesting against BHP's refusal to hire women. A CPA survey conducted in 1962 had revealed that 80 per cent of the jobs in the steelworks could be handled by suitably qualified women (WWIC *Bowen audio tape* n.d.). In a taped interview Sally described the incident:

In '73 a group of women went out on the 2.30 train, and walked into the steelworks, no one attempted to stop them. Three of them had chains and padlocks with them and padlocked themselves to the suggestion box. The rest of us stood around and held up our sheets with all our requests on it [We wanted] a fair go for women, the men were happy to give us support. Dr. Ros Harrison, from Sydney, Jan Reed, from down here [Wollongong] another whose real name I never knew, they dropped [the] keys down their bras, and there they stood. Well it was quite a circus! Security came bounding up and said 'you can't do this', and I said 'well we're here aren't we'. The police looked at us and did nothing else. It was too big a situation for them to handle. By then a lot of women started to collect to give us support, they built a fire outside the fence. Those women stayed there with support till 11.30. ... Of course a lot of funny things were put in the suggestion box in that time (WWIC *Bowen audio tape*, n.d.).

In the 12 months following the demonstration over 500 women were hired by the company as ironworkers (Schultz, 1985, p. 167). Monica Chalmers claimed it was also an important incident in the development of women and awareness of women's issues in the area and led to the awakening of many women who saw it on television and followed it in the newspapers (group discussion, 13 April 2003; WWIC *Armour*, 1983). Later Sally played an important role in encouraging and supporting relationships between the older working-class women and the new 'women's libbers'. As a member of the Miners' Women's Auxiliary, Sally helped establish the Wollongong Women's Information Centre in 1980 and played a key role in encouraging the younger female

activists. Her role in the opening of the WWIC will be discussed further in the following chapter.

SCLC Women Delegates

Sally is one of twelve women whom the SCLC has officially acknowledged as having made an outstanding contribution to the labour movement, by presenting them with life membership of the SCLC. Women identified on the SCLC honour board, which was commissioned in 2007, are: Irene Arrowsmith, Doreen Borrow, Sally Bowen, Fay Campbell, Monica Chalmers, Peggy Errey, Jennie George,²⁷ Shirley Graham, Daphne Lucas, Anne Meehan, Betty Perry and Irene Sanaghan. Of these women, Irene Arrowsmith, Doreen Borrow, Fay Campbell, Monica Chalmers, Peggy Errey, Anne Meehan and Irene Sanaghan were identified as active in the minutes of the SCLC in 1975 and/or in 1980.

Twenty-two of the 94 delegates recorded in the minutes and attendance records for the SCLC in 1975 have been identified as women. These women represented the Federated Clerks' Union (FCU), Australian Workers' Union (AWU), Australian Postal and Telecommunications Workers' Union (APTU), Miscellaneous Workers' Union, Federated Iron Workers (FIA), and the Liquor Trades Union. These numbers need to be regarded as tentative, as there was no mention of women from the Teachers' Federation, and anecdotal evidence suggests that at least three women from this union were actively engaged with the SCLC (Chalmers, personal communication, 3 June 2009). The women participated in decision-making committees including the finance committee, the disputes committee, the migrant unity action committee, the local government committee, International Women's Year Committee, International Women's Day Committee and the May Day Committee. Representation by women delegates to the SCLC in 1975 is believed to be higher than in other peak bodies at the time. For example, Mitchell noted that in 1974, 13 out of 110 delegates to the SCLC were women compared with the NSW Labor Council which had nine women out of 400 delegates

²⁷ Jennie George was general secretary of the NSW Teachers' Federation in 1980. She became president of the NSW Teachers' Federation in 1986. She was the first woman to become vice-president of the ACTU (in 1987) and president of the ACTU (in 1996). Since 2001 she has been the national ALP MP for the seat of Throsby, which is in the Illawarra region.

[http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=\(Id:handbook/allmps/jh5\);rec=0;](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=(Id:handbook/allmps/jh5);rec=0;)

and the Newcastle Trades and Labour Council which had two women delegates out of 162 (Mitchell, 1975, p. 12).

By 1980 there were at least 32 women union delegates to the SCLC, and the number of individual unions represented by these women expanded the number of unions represented by women (SCLC *minutes*, 1979–1980). These figures should also be regarded tentatively because of the incomplete nature of the records. Unions now represented by women also included: the Public Service Association (PSA), the Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union, the Meat and Allied Trades Union, the Illawarra Teachers' Federation, Actors' Equity and the Theatrical and Amusement Employees' Union. Women were identified as working on the Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee (WWWCC), the Peace Committee and the Finance Committee and held elected positions including trustee, Aboriginal Affairs delegate, and one was also a director of the South Coast Workers' Migrant Centre (SCLC *minutes*, 23 April 1980). One was elected as a representative on Board of Trustees to Wollongong City Art Gallery (SCLC *minutes*, 16 July 1980) and another on the Management Committee of the Beaton Park Sports and Leisure Centre (SCLC *minutes*, 19 November 1980).

Women were involved with, or affected by, many of the issues and campaigns that were engaged with by the SCLC in 1975 and 1980. Lists of concerns and campaigns identified from the minutes of the SCLC in 1975 and 1980 are provided in Appendix 2.2 and 2.3 respectively. While minutes for 1975 and 1980 were useful to identify elected positions at the SCLC, they are somewhat misleading because women activists played key informal roles on a number of committees. For example, in 1975 Peggy Errey was very active on the social services committee although she was not officially elected to the committee. While meeting minutes summarised for this thesis demonstrate that women were actively involved on a wide range of issues, the nature of the commitment will be demonstrated in this chapter through a closer examination of the work of delegate Peggy Errey.

The following section of the chapter begins with biographical data about Peggy Errey. Peggy was an SCLC delegate between 1953 and the early 1980s when she retired. The chapter then moves to a broad discussion about International Women's Day (IWD) prior to examining the links between International Women's Year (IWY) and the Conspiracy Boutique dispute. The Conspiracy Boutique dispute is then briefly

compared with two similar disputes. The first of these was identified by Blackley in her 1998 study of working-class community in the region between 1921 and 1954. The dispute is known as the Spot Café dispute and occurred in 1941. The second dispute is known as the Chicken Shop dispute and occurred during 1980. The comparisons demonstrate significant changes in the nature of industrial disputes involving women in the region but also point to complex patterns of organisational relations in which women's activism is sited.

Peggy Errey (1914–2002)

Peggy Errey has been described as a matriarch who was often consulted (and deferred to) by men and women in the labour movement of the region. In 1980 she was a significant player in the Chicken Shop dispute and highly regarded as a mentor by some of the younger women and men involved with the SCLC and the WWIC. Her comrades described her as:

A feisty and highly courageous little Irish woman ... someone to whom we all owe a deep debt of gratitude for her lifetime contribution to improving the lives of the workers and their families locally, nationally and internationally. She was a woman who stepped outside the confines of home and family in a time when it was not popular to do so. She did this to improve the lives of others and to right the many wrongs inflicted upon the powerless of this world ... But, [she] was a woman who was fun to be with whether it was on a picket line or at a social function. She made people laugh with her Irish wit and was first to kick off the singing of protest songs or those of her homeland (Borrow, *Eulogy* 2002; Borrow, *Tribute* 2003).

... [she was seen] often helping a battered wife or a person fighting drug addiction or someone needing a place to stay for the night. She was not judgmental and had the ability of being able to treat all women and men equally because she could empathize with anyone. Errey also believed in personal responsibility and that respect had to be earned. She believed that people should take pride in their job and do it honestly. ... She was a true believer in the labour movement but her faith was not blind; on many occasions she openly expressed her frustration with the Labor Party and argued passionately at ALP and union forums (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 January 2003).

Peg Errey²⁸ was born in Ireland, one of a large family strongly committed to the Irish Republican cause. She left Ireland to seek work in London where she married and had two children. She spent the war years in London, where she was deeply affected by the Nazi air raids. Her early history resulted in a deep and active commitment to opposing British occupation in Ireland. In the late 1960s and early 1970s she helped establish the umbrella organisation *Australian Aid to Ireland*. As a peace activist she served a number of years on the peace committee of the SCLC and was a member of the Australian Peace Committee.

Peggy and her immediate family migrated to Australia after World War II. Their first home was at the Fairy Meadow Migrant Centre which was located approximately two kilometres north of central Wollongong. Peggy's first job was with the Migrant Centre as a cook. She joined the Restaurant and Catering Trade Union (RCTU), becoming both a workplace delegate and a delegate to the SCLC in 1953. Around this time Peggy also joined the CPA. While she later joined the ALP, her trade union education has been attributed to these early years at the Migrant Centre and in the CPA.

In the 1960s Peggy became a cleaner with the Wollongong Tertiary College and joined the Miscellaneous Workers' Union from whence she became a delegate to the SCLC. In her own union, the Miscellaneous Workers' Union, she served as a state and national councillor, executive member and vice-president of NSW Miscellaneous Workers' Union. In the 1970s she was a board member of the South Coast Workers' Medical Centre. She was also a founding member of South Coast Workers' Childcare Centre. She was involved in setting up the Migrant Resource Centre as well as campaigns for funding and establishment of the University of Wollongong. As an indication of her tireless work she was acknowledged with life membership of her union (AMU), the SCLC and the May Day Committee. In 2000 the newly amalgamated Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU) established the *Peggy Errey Advanced Delegates Course* in recognition of her work.

²⁸ Details for the section on Peggy Errey are reconstructed from: Arrowsmith, I. (2002). Wollongong Women's Information Centre: The Early Days. *Illawarra Unity: Journal of the Illawarra Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, 2(5), 10–14; Borrow, D. (2002) *unpublished Eulogy*; Borrow, D. (2003) *unpublished Tribute*; Dolan, V. (2002). Setting up the Wollongong Women's Centre, *Illawarra Unity: Journal of the Illawarra Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History*, 2(5), pp. 15–19; West, I. (2003) *Sydney Morning Herald*, Obituary, 12 January 2003; SCLC *minutes* (various), WIN TV *news reports* (various); WWWCC *minutes* (various); and WWIC *minutes* (various).

The regional and national women's movement also owes a great deal to Peggy. At the national level she was a member of the ACTU's Women's Committee when the Working Women's Charter was an active concern during the mid- to late-1970s. At the regional level she was a member of the Union of Australian Women (UAW) and a member of the New Opportunities for Women Committee (NOW) formed in 1965. She became a founding member of the SCLC's Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee (WWWCC) where she played a mentoring role to a number of younger activists. She was also a founding member of the Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC).

An examination of SCLC minutes for 1975 reveals Peggy's commitment to her role as a delegate to the SCLC. She was active on the International Women's Year (IWY) Committee. She was also a member of the social services group. She presented reports and recommendations from the social services group which researched and recommended SCLC policy and action on a range of issues. One significant example was the recommendation that the SCLC support Medibank.

Medibank was a free, universal health insurance scheme introduced in June 1975 by the Whitlam Labor government. The social services group of the SCLC were committed to ensuring the success of the scheme within the region. They worked with procedural specialists at the Wollongong Hospital to examine the hospital's involvements with Medibank, and they sought submissions from affiliated members to ensure an integrated approach was developed. Subsequently, the case they presented to regional doctors resulted in the successful negotiation and implementation of the scheme.

After the Whitlam government's dismissal in November 1975, the newly elected Fraser government established a review committee of Medibank despite their pre-election promise not to oppose the scheme. Response to the proposed changes was one of outrage. O'Lincoln claimed:

... it was the workers of the NSW South Coast who made the first important move. This was a militant area. Labor Council secretary Merv Nixon was a Communist, while the President of the Port Kembla wharfies, Stewart West, was an ALP member who regarded the Communists as too moderate. ... A 24 hour stoppage, to be backed by a march and rally [included] "the public, pensioners, housewives, etc." Australian Workers' Union delegates [visited] the NSW TLC in Sydney, where they argued unsuccessfully for action. Miners' pit-top meetings ...

demanded more resolute leadership from Bob Hawke. The passivity of the NSW TLC, together with Bob Hawke's reluctance to back industrial action [was discouraging]. Counter staff at post offices voted to ban literature explaining the Medibank changes, forcing the government to hunt for alternative outlets. ...The strike showed the strength of local militancy, and also had a certain impact further afield. Delegates at subsequent meetings in Melbourne showed considerable interest in the news from Wollongong. ... Claude Forell [senior editorial writer with the *Age*] declared: 'Something startling and significant happened this week in Australian politics and its full implications have yet to be realised. The trade union movement has become the effective opposition to a government whose authority and arrogance had seemed invincible (1993, para. 35).

The scheme was eventually altered to include a 2.5 per cent levy on income with an option to take out private health care. However, the SCLC and the 40,000 workers who were mobilised had forcefully demonstrated support for a socialist approach to healthcare. Their ability to mobilise widely across the region had an impact on the broader Australian labour movement. The SCLC's position on Medibank demonstrated a commitment to a socialist approach that was not only ideological, it was grounded in extensive research and collaboration with the medical profession and unions, and this contributed to a substantive policy position and strategic planning. Affordable medical treatment for working-class families was also consistent with the broader commitment to the theme of safe space that I developed in Chapter Four.

Other recommendations from the Social Services committee in 1975 included disassociation from statements by the prime minister on 'union solutions' that attempted to restrict union bargaining and 'the Woodward' proposals on Aboriginal land rights. They organised a social services delegation to Canberra which met with parliamentarians to discuss pensions and other social services, when preparing commentary for the SCLC on the National Budget for that year (*SCLC Report on National Budget*, 28 May 1975). This group also recommended union support for the Campaign Against Rising Prices (CARP) against bread prices, as well as a bus for unemployed women to attend the IWD march to be held in Sydney in March.

It is worth noting at this point that Peggy Errey's engagement with activism covered an exceptionally broad spectrum of interests. For example, in 1980 she was also an SCLC representative on the Management Committee of Beaton Park Sports and Leisure

Centre. Nevertheless, Peggy made a major contribution to regional feminist activism. She was a member of the Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee and represented the SCLC on the ACTU Women's Committee. With the WWWCC she engaged in campaigns against sexual harassment in the workplace, discrimination against women at BHP and actively supported the establishment of the Wollongong Women's Information Centre. Interviews conducted for the thesis revealed that her strategic advice and highly developed organising skills played a valuable role in the success of some campaigns. These campaigns will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter when I discuss the Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee (WWWCC) and in the following chapter when I discuss the opening of the WWIC.

International Women's Day (IWD)

IWD was first celebrated in Australia in 1928 and meetings have been recorded in the Illawarra since the early-1930s. International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated annually on March 8th. The date, acknowledged by the United Nations, has spread worldwide since the Second International Conference of Socialist Women held in Copenhagen in 1910 where delegates from 17 countries were inspired by the traditional commemoration of women's workplace participation by some eastern European women and by the demonstrations and strikes in the preceding years of American garment workers. IWD in Australia was originally entirely in the hands of radical, working-class women who were concerned with working conditions for the whole workforce not just for women (Stevens 1985). The earliest campaigns included demands for a basic wage for the unemployed, an 'eight-hour' day for shop girls, annual holidays on full pay, equal pay and international peace.

Working-class women in the Illawarra region had a strong commitment to IWD celebrations. In the Illawarra the earliest local records point to an open-air meeting in 1931 in Wollongong and a working women's conference in Corrimal in 1935 (WWIC *Newsletter*, March 1999; *Illawarra Mercury*, 23 February 1994). The region has an unbroken tradition of IWD commemoration since the Scarborough Miners' Women's Auxiliary hosted an event in 1939 (*Illawarra Mercury*, 23 February 1994; WWIC *unpublished speech by Doreen Gilliam*, March 2003). Doreen Gilliam, historian of the region's IWD committee, claims the group has one of the longest continuous serving records of any in Australia. 'The groups of women who have constituted these

committees have met regularly throughout the years to work for the emancipation of women, both in Australia and overseas and have been responsible for bringing many distinguished visitors prominent in the women's rights movement, both nationally and internationally to the region' (WWIC *Submission to Council*, 1978).

During World War II IWD was kept alive locally by dedicated women broadcasting on women's affairs on local radio and another women's conference held in Wollongong in 1944. The 1950s saw visits to the region by prominent speakers including Mrs Evatt, wife of the then Federal ALP Opposition Leader, Dr Evatt. She urged women to become politically minded, to see that Australian children enjoyed a full, free and happy life and to work for world peace (WWIC, *notes on IWD by Gillam*, undated). During the 1960s attacks on established racial and social injustices began to be addressed (*Illawarra Mercury*, 23 March 1994). IWD functions continued demonstrating women's concern over racial violence, social injustice, Aboriginal rights and threats to international peace. Aboriginal women began joining the celebrations and Monica Clare, an Aboriginal woman, became IWD secretary in 1968. Also in 1968, on the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, a Torres Strait Islander, Dulcie Flowers (a nursing sister and a member of the Aboriginal Progressive Association) spoke at the annual local IWD function on what the UN declaration meant to her people. During this period South Coast women often joined with Sydney women to celebrate women's achievements and to voice their views on international affairs (WWIC, *notes on IWD by Gillam*, undated).

The 1970s saw the influence of the Vietnam War and the Women's Liberation Movement on IWD leading to an expansion of issues to include in the struggle for women's rights. Problems such as rape, domestic violence and the right to abortion began to be aired publicly (WWIC, *notes on IWD by Gillam*, undated).

International Women's Year (IWY)

One key area of concern for women at the SCLC in 1975 was International Women's Year (IWY). During the year the SCLC supported a range of initiatives around International Women's Day, disputes involving working women and issues raised by women delegates under the guidance and recommendations of an organising committee chaired by Irene Arrowsmith (Irene Arrowsmith had been IWD secretary in 1960, 1964, 1966 and 1967 (SCLC *minutes*, various)). Other members of this committee were: L

Norris, P Errey, A Carney, M Atkinson and M Brown from the Miscellaneous Workers' Union; I Arrowsmith, M Chalmers and P Minns from the FCU; G Shuster, H Walther, P Lizzi, H Jansen, B Mead, R Heggen, A Hodgkinson, J Tot and G Vizgoft from the FIA; and S Bowen, S Cooper, A Heggen, E Gudgeon and J Phipps from the IWD committee. The committee included both men and women. The range of issues that the committee wanted to pursue included migrant women (proposed by Errey) with particular reference made to the need for translation services in hospitals (proposed by Chalmers) and courts as well the possibility of consulting with migrant women workers at the steelworks to understand their demands and concerns for IWY (unlisted). Other issues to be pursued included seeking support from the city council for childcare facilities (proposed by Errey and Norris) and a women's health centre (proposed by Errey); support for a bus to help unemployed attend the Sydney IWD march (proposed by Phipps) and contacting women in other countries. The IWY committee encouraged the local city council to commit to IWY activities (Errey); however the Lord Mayor of the City, Frank Arkell, eventually decided on a separate agenda, a response of which Peggy Errey was particularly critical. However, as a result, the highlights of this year within the region for women were to be the IWD march held in Sydney in March, supported by the SCLC and the 'Happening Week' held in June supported by the local city council. Although the following section discusses IWD, reference will be made to the 'Happening Week' in the following chapter in the discussion of events leading up to the establishment of the WWIC.

In Wollongong, International Women's Day (IWD) events marked the start of the celebration of International Women's Year (IWY). A special church service was held at St Andrews Church and the traditional IWD Committee Lunch was held on 25 March. An exhibition in the Town Hall featured arts and crafts by Chilean people and copper ware and pottery from some of Wollongong's female artists and artisans. Women activists either handed out pamphlets in Wollongong or went to march in Sydney on 9 March and carried banners and posters drawing attention to the problems of unemployed women. A number of women travelled to the march on the bus organised by the Miners' Auxiliary IWD Committee, the Unemployed Women's Committee and Women's Action Campaign (WAC) that was sponsored by the SCLC.

In the local evening news WIN TV's Paul Bongiorno reported on Wollongong women's participation in the march, stating that:

A feeling of oneness and real elation was the way Wollongong women described yesterday's International Women's Day march in Sydney. ... International Women's Day Committee secretary Sally Bowen said the march was one of the most exciting she had ever been in. The women from Wollongong represented migrant groups as well as unemployed textile workers, Women's Electoral Lobby and the Women's Action Group. Liaison Officer for the South Coast Women's Unemployment Committee Jill Phipps said the march was morally uplifting and a real boost as women from Newcastle, Wollongong and Sydney shared their common plight (WIN TV 9 March 1975).

The IWD theme for 1975 was 'Women's right to live, love and work' and the broadsheet published by Sydney groups that year acknowledged Wollongong trade union women:

Women like those who recently demonstrated in Wollongong are refusing to be silent when they are sacked. Some women shop assistants, who were sacked for joining the union, picketed the shop. Their solidarity and the support of other workers finally forced the shop owner to leave the business. Unemployed women along with the South Coast Labour Council organized a demonstration demanding the right to work which was one of the biggest on the South Coast for years (WWIC *IWD Broadsheet*, 1975).

The demonstration referred to in the broadsheet was known as the Conspiracy Boutique dispute. A discussion of complicated dynamics influencing the events associated with this dispute helps demonstrate important aspects of the nature of the region's activism. First, it highlights mobilising strategies which 'evolve tactically, rather than logically, improvising appeals, incorporating and adapting various ideas to their particular cause' (see Blackley 1998, p. 162 citing Scott 1988, p. 61). Second, the incident provides an illustration of complex relationships between the SCLC's agency and regional organisational structures during a specific incident in which class action was enacted in the region. Third, the dispute typifies the interplay of 'unity' and 'fragmentation' within the region that contribute to the way that both class and gender were mobilised to achieve the SCLC's goals.

The Conspiracy Boutique

The Conspiracy Boutique was a small women's boutique located in Crown Street, the main street in Wollongong. It was one of six stores owned by Danari Investments Pty

Ltd, a Sydney based company. The company's other five boutiques were located in Sydney. In early November 1974 the manager of the Conspiracy Boutique terminated the employment of five female employees for attempting to join the union and asking for union conditions (*Illawarra Mercury*, 7 November 1974). The Retail Traders' Association had recently signed an agreement with SCLC to agree to award conditions; however, not all small businesses were 'complying' (*Illawarra Mercury*, 22 November 1974). Many local small business owners supported the SCLC and insisted on full union membership and compliance with award conditions in their shops; however, the Sydney based owners of the Conspiracy Boutique refused. A picket line was called and the ensuing battle lasted four weeks. The store eventually closed and was sold in December to a local business man, Mr P (Nick) Vakanas, who owned another boutique in the region called 'Sham Shack'. Mr Vakanas had a long association with unions and a commitment to employing union members. He claimed he would offer preference of employment to two casuals employed now in his own store and also to the five girls whose dismissal from Conspiracy touched off one of the most controversial industrial disputes in Wollongong at the time. Merv Nixon, secretary of the SCLC, further claimed that the SCLC would take responsibility for the other affected 'girls' and make sure they were employed (*Illawarra Mercury*, 22 November 1974; 9 December 1974).

The four-week dispute began after a visit to the store by members of the Shop Assistants' Union, Mrs I Sanaghan (also a life member of the SCLC) and Mr D Parkinson, to ask the young women to join the union. Mr Parkinson explained to the *Illawarra Mercury* that the store had sacked two women the previous week and were refusing to operate under conditions 'won by the Shop Assistants' Union' (*Illawarra Mercury*, 7 November 1974). The previous manager of the Conspiracy Boutique, unhappy with working conditions, had resigned the week before after consulting with the union and management. The new manager (Miss Church) stated that 'if the girls join the union we will put them off and hire new girls' (*Illawarra Mercury*, 7 November 1974). She claimed the owners did not want anything to do with unions and the girls were too young to know their own minds. She called the police to evict the unionists from the shop. The young women left the store with the union officials and decided to picket the store in an effort to have the original manager reinstated (*Illawarra Mercury*, 12 November 1974).

The confrontation in the boutique occurred on the same day that a large protest march, supported by the SCLC, surged through Crown Street. Over 1,200 ‘unemployed and other disaffected’ citizens from the leather and clothing industries demanded retrenchment safeguards and retraining schemes proposed by government, pay entitlements and reintroduction of import quotas (*Illawarra Mercury*, 8 November 1974). The march, led by the Unemployment Committee, was specifically targeting ‘female unemployment’ and ‘redundancies’. Local unemployment in the region had increased to 1,218 for men and 1,478 for women with unemployment for women expected to worsen (*Illawarra Mercury*, 9 November 1974; 24 February 1975). The local media reported that 6,700 jobs had been lost in the clothing and textiles industry in NSW and SA and further losses of over 300 a week continued. In order to address this issue, the SCLC, with support from the Newcastle Trades and Labour Council, was demanding that retail shops stock Australian goods. The crisis was blamed on government reductions in protective tariffs for the industry that had resulted in stores stocking cheap Asian imports (*Illawarra Mercury*, 8 November 1974). Regional factories reported as closing down because of the cheap imports included Berlei (Wollongong), James North (Wollongong), Regal Shirts (Wollongong), Averil Industries (Helensburgh) and Whitewear (Oak Flats) (*Illawarra Mercury*, 15 November 1974).

The Conspiracy Boutique picket line was supported by the SCLC and their affiliated members who called an immediate black ban on the store. Their phones were disconnected, mail remained undelivered, garbage was uncollected, and transport workers refused to deliver stock until the dispute was resolved (*Illawarra Mercury*, 16 November 1974). Actors’ Equity members at television and radio stations refused to accept advertisements for the company (*Illawarra Mercury*, 19 November 1974).

Eight days after the picket line had been established, front-page headlines in the *Illawarra Mercury* screamed: ‘ALL OUT... Attack on unionist stops the city’ (16 November 1974). Mr Dunn (FEDFA delegate to SCLC and a member of the SCLC peace committee) had been bashed on the head with an iron bar while participating on the picket line. Dunn fell to the ground and had to have six stitches at the local hospital. In response to the violence the SCLC called a 24-hour city-wide stoppage. It was expected that at least 60,000 South Coast workers would stay at home in protest. The *Illawarra Mercury* claimed ‘the protest would cripple heavy industry, miners, Port

Kembla waterfront and hundreds of retail stores' (16 November 1974). On page two the SCLC was reported as claiming 'the stoppage could only be averted if the boutique was closed down'. A manager from Conspiracy claimed that the attack on Mr Dunn was perpetrated by a local 'skinhead' looking for trouble. However, he also claimed unionists had broken into the store and his wife's 'blouse was torn' (*Illawarra Mercury*, 20 November 1974).

Nine unions indicated support for the 24-hour stoppage and another 15 recommended support at union meetings. Unions committed to the stoppage were the Shop Assistants, AWU, Builders' Labourers, Bread Carters (who had a black ban on another Crown Street store), Dental Technicians, FEDFA (Dunn's union) Miners, Municipal and Shire Employees and the WWF. Unions considering strike action included the Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union, Building Workers' Industrial Union and the Teachers' Federation'. However, Nando Lelli from the FIA was cited as claiming that their 15,000 workers would not support the strike because their workers might not understand what the dispute was about. The Transport Workers' Union (TWU) and the Locomotive Engine Drivers' Union also recommended their workers not join the stoppage (*Illawarra Mercury*, 18 November 1974).

In response to the proposed stoppage, 'more than 70 South Coast shop owners threatened to close their doors as a protest against 'the increasing terror' of the SCLC. The group of shop owners was lead by Mr Groben, a local baker and small businessman. He appealed to unionists, 'This is the first chance for all union members to show their militant leaders that they have to think first of the welfare of their own family' (*Illawarra Mercury*, 18 November 1974). The local mayor appealed for calm and some shoppers wrote letters to the editor of the paper objecting to the strike (*Illawarra Mercury*, 20, 21, 22 November 1974). The editor of the *Illawarra Mercury* claimed the stoppage was irresponsible and that the FIA supported his view (18 November 1974). Given the tensions between the SCLC and *Illawarra Mercury*, it is unlikely that Lelli would have been happy with this claim by the media.

The following day the stoppage continued to dominate the front and second page of the *Illawarra Mercury*. It was reported the stoppage would still be going ahead but without the support of the Miners, the Liquor Trades' Union and the Seamen's Union (19 November 1974). However, Nando Lelli (secretary of the FIA) encouraged off-shift ironworkers to attend the meeting at Trades Hall to be held prior to the march, as did a

number of other unions. Why did the FIA and other key unions withhold full support for the stoppage?

The day before the stoppage managers from BHP appealed to the court to postpone a case with the FIA involving a \$9-per-week wage flow-on for over 25,000 iron workers. They claimed the proposed city-wide stoppage was industrial action and the hearing should not proceed. To ensure the hearing was not delayed Justice Cahill (who was hearing the appeal) was reported to have left the courtroom and phoned the state and national branches of the FIA obtaining an assurance that the FIA would not participate in the stoppage (*Illawarra Mercury*, 19 November 1974). This undoubtedly explains the FIA's withdrawal from direct participation in the 24-hour stoppage, although it is noteworthy that Nando Lelli recommended off-shift workers attend the protest. In the previous chapter I discussed the tension between the Port Kembla FIA and its state and national bodies. It is likely that Lelli was annoyed by the direction from these 'outside' bodies when they assured Justice Cahill that the Port Kembla branch would not participate in the full day protest in support of a regional issue. It might also have been because the editor of the *Illawarra Mercury* claimed that the FIA supported the view that the stoppage called by the SCLC was irresponsible. Inaccurate reporting by the paper during 1975 was a key issue for the SCLC and affiliated unions.

The 24-hour stoppage was postponed; instead a street meeting outside the Trades Hall Centre was followed by a march to the picket line outside the Conspiracy Boutique. Merv Nixon appealed to the 1,000-strong crowd for union solidarity at 'a time of rising costs and unemployment. It is not our economy. It is the capitalist economy. If we had our way we would be implementing trade union policies'. It was announced that the picket would continue, and a ban was placed on all of Danari's stores in Sydney. Most local shops closed for the day, and 7,000 workers from the AMWU and waterside workers were reported to have stopped work for the day (*Illawarra Mercury*, 20 November 1974).

In the introduction to this section on the Conspiracy Boutique I indicated that some small businesses were not complying with union conditions agreed to by the Retail Traders' Association. The day after the city-wide stoppage Mr Groben and his group of rebel business owners again threatened to close their shops for two days and to sack their combined 110 employees, who were mostly women. He claimed small businesses were scared by the union response to the Conspiracy Boutique situation. It was better to

sack all workers and run their businesses themselves because most of his supporters ‘are migrants, unfamiliar with the union system in Australia’ (*Illawarra Mercury*, 20 November 1974). Some members of this group had already been targeted for noncompliance with union conditions. One of the other stories that emerged during the 24-hour stoppage included the refusal of a Sydney bakery to supply bread to a small bread carter who had been supplying bread to a store in Crown Street black banned by the Bread Carters’ Union. The rebel carter was also refused bread for the 35 other stores he delivered bread to on the day of the stoppage (*Illawarra Mercury*, 20 November 1974). In Chapter Four I referred to an interview that pointed to a range of complex issues that indicated that CARP’s activism on bread and the cost of living was complicated with tension between large bread monopolies and small bakers. Here, too, the SCLC’s response to the Conspiracy Boutique’s noncompliance with union conditions at the request of female workers was embedded in a complex web of issues and regional relationships.

Presenting the Conspiracy Boutique dispute as a stand-alone dispute that involved some women shop assistants supported by the SCLC undervalues the complexity of regional labour movement dynamics. However, revealing the broader connections, for example, escalation of the dispute that resulted after a physical attack on an SCLC male delegate resulted in a loss of focus on women delegates.

The Conspiracy Boutique story recounted here bears a striking resemblance to two other disputes uncovered during research for the thesis. The first of these is a dispute in 1941 described by Blackley in her PhD thesis called the ‘Spot Café’ and the second is a dispute in 1980 called the ‘Chicken Shop’.

The Spot Café

Blackley’s thesis (1998) *Blood, Sweat and Tears to Get a Living: Relations between Working-class Men and Women in Wollongong, 1921–1954* refers to a series of disputes during 1940 and 1941 that reveal the SCLC had embarked on a campaign to improve the working conditions for women in service industries. She refers to a series of over 61 reports of underpayment in guest houses, restaurants and shops in the region. The Spot Café dispute began with a strike by six unionised waitresses after one of their colleagues was dismissed. The café had been the site of a number of complaints, and union membership of staff at the café was the result of a broader drive by the SCLC, the

Hotels, Caterers and Restaurant Employees' Union (HRCEU) and the Shop Assistants' Union. A picket line outside the café resulted in the arrest of the secretary of the SCLC, John Cranston, and an organiser for the HRCEU, Vic Workman. The strike attracted financial support for the waitresses, particularly from miners' lodges and ended 'after a demonstration outside the shop by 2000 South Coast trade unionists and their womenfolk' (Blackley 1998, p. 179). Blackley claims that the escalation of the dispute after the arrests not only involved significant breaches of wages and awards, as well as the right of the labour movement to protest, but also demonstrated a patriarchal response to the plight of young women who represented the appropriate and prevailing femininity at the time. All waitress were young and single and not only the victims of clear breaches of award conditions, but subject to bad language and potential sexual harassment, especially given their dressing room was also being used by the boss for shaving each day (Blackley 1998, pp. 174–182).

There are a number of similarities between the Spot Café and Conspiracy Boutique disputes. In reports for both cases the young women involved in the disputes were consistently referred to as 'girls', posing no threat to the prevailing images of masculinity within the trade union movement. In both cases the protection of 'girls' was the instigating issue; however, in both cases the dispute was escalated after attacks on senior male trade union officials and the mobilisation attracted wide community support. One major difference between the disputes is that there was no hint of sexual harassment of female workers in the Conspiracy Boutique dispute. The Chicken Shop dispute in 1980, which was based around sexual harassment, provides an interesting comparative illustration of a small business owner, who like the owners of the Conspiracy Boutique was 'driven out of town' by activists. One of the major differences between the two earlier disputes and the Chicken Shop dispute was an increase in the mobilisation capacity of women activists within the region. All of the campaigns that involved the WWWWCC provide excellent examples of the contribution of feminist activism to the role of the SCLC as an agent of exchange and an agent of regulation across the industrial, political and social modes discussed in Chapter Five.

The Chicken Shop

When asked about their favourite campaign many of the interviewees referred to the Chicken Shop dispute in 1980, in which 41 young women were exposed to sexual

harassment by the owner of a small takeaway chicken shop. Two quotes typify the respondents' memory of the dispute:

The chicken shop, that was scandalous, we didn't get much media coverage on that because we could get sued. He had a small chicken shop in Crown Street, an atrocious man - talk about sexual harassment. The Commonwealth Employment Service kept sending him girls every couple of days. [We] painted the outside footpath, glued up his doors; went in the shop and made a commotion (Arrowsmith, cited in Laneyrie 2002, p. 22).

Peggy Errey had the right as union organiser to look at his books. She had a complete record of the turnover, because they signed the book when they started. She basically told him to close down and get out of town. Sent him back to Balgownie. He ended up very frightened (Dolan, cited in Laneyrie 2002, p. 22).

In January 1980, three months before the opening of the WWIC, three young women explained to the WWC problems at a Crown Street takeaway food store. The young women described to the WWC numerous incidents of sexual molestation and harassment by the proprietor of the Crown Street 'Chicken Shop', pointing to the large turnover of staff at the shop, claiming that most girls left or were sacked after only a few hours or a day on the job. The young women explained that the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) had asked them to attend the meeting to seek further assistance. The AWU had explained to the young women that while it would be following through on the matter, it could not take their case to the Industrial Commission because the girls were not prepared to return to the job if they were reinstated.

In response the Charter group threw themselves into lobbying aimed at policy intervention. Letters were sent to the SCLC, the Police Minister, Social Security, all local members of parliament and local media. Of particular concern was the policy of holding back unemployment benefits for workers who 'voluntarily' left their jobs because of harassment. The WWC also demanded that it be pointed out to employers that they would not be entitled to claim Commonwealth Wage Subsidy under such circumstances, particularly when the case had been brought to the attention of police, local Commonwealth welfare agencies and local media.

The 'Chicken Shop' story sparked outrage in the Illawarra community the next week when it emerged in the news media. Newspaper reports claimed the chicken shop owner

had sexually harassed at least 41 young women. These reports confirmed many of these young women only managed a few hours on the job before the owner of the 'chicken shop' approached them for sexual favours. Front-page headlines in the *Illawarra Mercury* reported that 'The South Coast Labor Council will take allegations that a Wollongong food store proprietor sexually molested his young female staff to District Police Superintendent Ralph Masters'. The newspaper reported that as a result these young women had lost their unemployment benefits for voluntarily (sic) leaving paid employment. One editorial report claimed 'The South Coast Labor Council has used its muscle in far less serious matters ... by insisting that Youth and Community Services Minister Jackson investigate. ... such an investigation will do the business community a service in exposing a monster' (*Illawarra Mercury*, 30 & 31 January 1980). Despite the concerted campaign towards policy changes and public awareness, many of the feminist activists were concerned that the immediate situation would not be dealt with. Trish Donaldson claimed that the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) acknowledged that it knew about the reputation of the chicken shop owner, nevertheless 'they kept sending women along' (Donaldson interview, 2 November 2005).

This incident was one of a number where activists, in interviews, talked about strategies they participated in that are not recorded in any available archival material. One such strategy was the 'paste-up' which involved gluing front and back doors of a shop, pasting posters over them and painting slogans on the footpath outside a shop. The posters usually contained messages such as 'The Women of Wollongong are Not Happy' (Dolan interview, 12 November 2004), 'Sexexploiter' (McGee interview, 11 October 2004), or 'Sexual Harasser' (Donaldson interview, 2 November 2005). The secret activities appear to have been maintained by activists contributing their time in small bursts when they could. Val Dolan (member of WWWCC), who had her own car, did paste-ups when she could; she remembers doing at least one on the back door of the chicken shop. Irene Arrowsmith didn't take part in the action; she didn't drive and had children at home but remembers working on posters after finishing work and before catching the five o'clock bus home. Another activist Maureen McGee told me she was six months' pregnant at the time and was out at least one night at 2.00 am painting graffiti over the chicken shop and dropping perfume. She said:

Someone cleaned up the footpath immediately after we did the chicken shop and the police followed us home. They didn't follow my car, but they followed Trish Donaldson and her close friend. On the way home

they saw a butcher shop that had been annoying everybody and they wrote something on that. It was something like 'feed the man meat', it was one of the early slogans about men, I'm not sure but it was something very clever like that. She was known. I wasn't there for that bit. ... they escaped the police but they had the car number, ... [the police] went around the next day and saw her husband. He kept a really straight face while they told him he must keep a better rein on her and keep her behaving better. He said he would and there weren't any charges. I was as sick as a dog the next day wondering what would happen (McGee interview, 18 October 2004).

Trish Donaldson did not remember her husband talking to the police; however, she did remember having to go the Austinmer Police Station, which is in the northern suburbs of the region, for a formal caution. She also thought that one of the police was a bit sympathetic – he had daughters the same age as the women who had been sent to the shop for work (Donaldson interview, 2 November 2005).

The Chicken Shop dispute clearly demonstrates that by 1980 activism 'for and by' women had changed. This difference can be attributed, in part, to the increasing levels of feminist activism in the region after the formation of an ad hoc committee of the SCLC – the Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee (WWWCC). However, as illustrated in previous examples, such as the Conspiracy Boutique dispute, there are other factors, such as increasing engagement with women's issues by community groups outside the SCLC. These groups will be discussed in the following chapter.

The following section introduces the Wollongong Working Women's Charter Group which, between 1975 and 1980, increasingly engaged in activism specifically around women's work issues.

Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee (WWWCC)

During the years 1975 and 1980 one of the focal points for trade union women in the region was the development of the ACTU's Working Women's Charter (see Hagan 1986, pp. 239–242 for a copy of the charter). The policy, known as the Working Women's Charter, was adopted by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) at its 1977 congress in response to growing pressure from affiliated unions and women's organisations (Markey 1994, p. 436). According to Watson (1998) the campaign for the Working Women's Charter was active in Australia between 1976 and 1981. Charter

members influenced by socialist feminist politics saw working with women in trade unions as a key strategy to achieve change (Watson in Caine et al. 1998, p. 529). Pocock describes it as a working document that continued to be amended, providing feminists with a focus for activity within the trade unions, noting that white-collar unions achieved more success with the charter (Pocock in Caine et al. 1998, p. 326). Its demands included childcare centres, equal pay, more education and training, parental leave, flexible working time, migrant women workers and more trade union training for women.

In Wollongong a Working Women's Charter Committee was created specifically to discuss and implement the ACTU's Working Women's Charter in the Illawarra region in 1978. However, a Charter Group was active prior to the adoption of the Charter by the ACTU. Diana Covell claims that Peggy Errey, Bev Mielczarek, Fay Campbell, Monica Chalmers and Irene Arrowsmith belonged to the group before she arrived in Wollongong early in 1978 (Covell interview, 25 April 2006). It is likely that the early group was an ongoing committee, known as the Women's Action Group that had been convened to discuss the possibilities for IWY. The group had also had discussions about the possibilities of establishing a women's refuge, referred to as Sally House. Irene Arrowsmith, who had chaired the SCLC's International Women's Year Committee, had attended the first Australian Women's Trade Union Conference in Sydney in August 1976 (SCLC *minutes*, 21 July 1976) that was held to write the ACTU's Women's Charter (SCLC *correspondence*, 25 June 1976). Irene remembered attending this conference:

They held a national conference in Sydney over about four days and our local group was part of this. It was held at the University of Sydney. I was there, it was a wonderful new experience. I'd never had anything to do with academia. I was totally impressed and spent the weekend in the dormitory, they were just like cells I thought. The conference discussed and formalised what should be in the Charter demands. The local branch had the support of the South Coast Labour Council ... (Arrowsmith 2002, p. 12).

Peggy Errey was elected the Illawarra Charter Group representative to the ACTU Women's Conference in 1977. Cathy Bloch from the NSW Teachers' Federation was also one of the founding members of the National Women's Committee to the ACTU and a strong supporter of the WWGCC. Irene Arrowsmith claimed these women had to

‘push really hard to get it going’ in Wollongong (Arrowsmith interview, 24 January 2003). At the leadership level and officially they were supported by the SCLC and CPA, but the women felt that some individual members of blue-collar unions were not always supportive.

The Wollongong Working Women’s Charter Committee (WWWCC) was more formally established under the auspices of the SCLC in November 1978 in a bid to encourage more women to participate in union activities (SCLC *correspondence*, 6 November 1978). The WWWCC appears to have been active until about 1984 (SCLC *minutes*, various; WWIC *WWWCC membership lists*, 1982–1984). There are a number of gaps in minutes for the committee and its activities cannot be fully tracked; however, Monica Chalmers stated that there was a gradual dropping off of the group after the early-1980s (Chalmers interview, 13 October 2004).

The WWWCC initiative was believed to be one of the first regional attempts to organise around a Women’s Charter (WWIC *WWWCC minutes*, 17 February 1979). The WWWCC networked extensively outside the area with other feminists; by their second meeting they had contacted three Sydney Women’s Charter Groups. Groups identified in minutes as organising around a Working Women’s Charter in Australia including the Food Preservers’ Union in Melbourne and workers at the Redfern Mail Exchange in Sydney. In the Illawarra the Teachers’ Federation had established a Women’s Action Group to implement a charter, prior to the introduction of the ACTU charter. The Metal Workers’, Clerks’, and Insurance Unions had held a few meetings to discuss the charter and the AMU had expressed concerns for migrant women (WWIC *WWWCC minutes*, 17 February 1979). Members of the WWWCC had networked extensively within the region addressing unionists at their workplaces including the waterfront section of the MWU (WWIC *WWWCC minutes*, 10 December 1978), using strategies very similar to those by the CARP group (see Chapter Four). They formed links with the Trade Union Workers’ Medical Centre and with trade unions on which they had no representation, including the Australian Shipwrights’ Union. They talked to anyone they could, including sub-branches of political parties and political organisations (WWIC *WWWCC minutes*, various).

Archival research revealed that the WWWCC had approximately 50 members by 1980 and consisted of representatives from fifteen regional union bodies,²⁹ political parties including the Labor Party, the CPA and the SWP, government departments including the State Premier's Department and the Immigration Department and other women's groups including CARP, UAW and the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries (SCLC *minutes*, 1975–1980; WWIC WWWCC *minutes*, 1978–1980, WWWCC *membership lists*).

Major problems identified in the region included:

- i. equal pay for work of equal value
- ii. childcare
- iii. equal opportunities in education and training
- iv. paternity and maternity leave
- v. the exploitation of migrant women in the workplace (see WWIC WWWCC '*Union relook*', undated).

The WWWCC decided on two key initiatives in 1978: the first was to obtain feedback from wider community members about the charter objectives; the second was to establish a Women's Centre Steering Committee to work towards the establishment of the Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC WWWCC *minutes*, 6 November 1978). Targeted strategies for the development of the charter in these early stages included: maintaining representatives on the National Charter Committee, writing articles, networking at grass-roots level and publicity. The charter was seen as an important tool that could be utilised to educate people on the job, open doors, help make women's claims seem more legitimate and help make grass-roots organising easier (WWIC WWWCC *minutes*, 17 February 1979).

Major campaigns evident in minutes between July 1979 and June 1980 included:

- i. opening of the Wollongong Women's Information Centre
- ii. the second regional IWD march

²⁹ Trade union bodies represented included: the SCLC; the Administrative and Clerical Officers' Association (ACOA); Australian Journalists' Association; Australian Postal and Telegraphists' Union; Australian Workers' Union (AWU); Electrical Trade Union (ETU); Federated Clerks' Union; Federated Ironworkers' Association (FIA); Meat and Allied Trades Union; Australian Miscellaneous Workers' Union; Municipal Employees' Union; Professional Officers' Association; Public Service Association (PSA); the Illawarra Teachers' Association; Australian Theatrical and Amusement Employees' Association.

- iii. the establishment of a committee and ongoing support for the Jobs for Women Campaign against BHP
- iv. support for Wollongong Abortion Action Committee and safe facilities for abortion
- v. support for the Migrant Resource Centre and the development of a bilingual publication on trade unions for migrant women
- vi. support for dismissed local clothing factory workers
- vii. support against sexual harassment in the workplace
- viii. support of refugees, the Vietnam Reconstruction Project and Women in Vietnam
- ix. support for the development of local childcare facilities.

The 'Chicken Shop' and the butcher shop campaigns mentioned above were only two of a number of employers and groups targeted by the feminist activists for paste-ups during the period between 1979 and 1980. Included in the interviews were stories about paste-ups targeting the *Illawarra Mercury* after derogatory comments about 'hairy-legged feminists' were published (see Chapter Seven), a garage that employed 'topless' women bowser attendants, a local club that employed topless waitresses and a car sales yard for the sexual harassment of a car detailer.

Conclusion

This chapter continued to build a picture of feminist activism and the SCLC with a focus on women who were union delegates to the SCLC. The key objective of the chapter was to reveal the agency of women in relation to, and independent of, the SCLC. To achieve this objective the women first had to be identified, and second their agency described. Although existing labour history and peak union literature on women's activism in the region is limited, it indicates that women's formal participation in the SCLC as delegates began in the 1950s. Participation in the regional labour movement, as a delegate to the SCLC required organising skills within one's own union, and many women delegates to the SCLC had demonstrated leadership skills within their own unions and often in other key organisations. The chapter first presented a life history of Sally Bowen. In her roles as a leader of the Miners' Women's Auxiliary and the CPA her story provides an example of one woman's journey to become a significant person of influence within the region's labour movement and on the SCLC.

The chapter revealed that a number of other women delegates to the SCLC have been acknowledged by the organisation by awarding them life membership. The chapter also suggests that the number of women delegates to the SCLC during the 1970s was higher than other peak union bodies in Australia by comparing it with the NSW Labor Council and Newcastle Trades and Labour Council. Further, at least 32 female delegates to the SCLC who represented at least 12 different unions were identified. The chapter then drew on the activism of Peggy Errey to provide examples of significant commitment and influence on major campaigns, such as the Medibank dispute, that had a wider impact on the labour movement in Australia. It is also an example of the type of extensive preparation and research that are a part of the SCLC's ability to mobilise around important community issues.

The SCLC's engagement with International Women's Year also demonstrated that the nature of activism in 1975 was deeply embedded in a regional response that acknowledged an evolving consciousness of the broader influence of women's liberation but also remained firmly related to working-class issues. The Conspiracy Boutique dispute, which was heralded in the Sydney feminist's broadsheet for IWD as an example of feminist activism from the region provides an interesting dilemma for the researcher because of the dynamics of a dispute that were firmly embedded in a wide range of regional relationships, issues and campaigns. In this chapter the example was used to illustrate the contingent nature of grass-roots trade union activism that responded as events unfolded during particular campaigns and the complexity that arises from the high degree of organisational mobilisation within the region.

Other significant examples of activism around women's work were provided. These examples included the Spot Café dispute in 1941, the Chicken Shop campaign in 1980 and the Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee. The example of the Spot Café dispute demonstrates that SCLC was involved in activism around women's work, despite the narrow heavy industry focus of the region's employment. It also alludes to activism built around the prevailing views of femininity that also appear to be evident in the Conspiracy Boutique dispute. The Chicken Shop campaign was introduced to demonstrate the nature of feminist activism by women and for women in 1980 as the region's feminist activism became more consciously enacted from separate spaces, supported by the SCLC.

The next chapter focuses on feminist activism as it emerged in the region. The chapter will excavate details about other women who contributed to feminist activism between 1975 and 1980, leading up to the opening of the Wollongong Women's Information Centre.

Chapter Seven: Women's Liberation and the WWIC

Introduction

Chapter Seven continues to identify feminist activism and provide an overview of the dynamics leading to the opening of the Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC) which provided a new focus for feminist activism within the region in 1980. Stories previously presented in the thesis, for example, the Conspiracy Boutique dispute, demonstrated the complexity of relationships in the labour movement of the region. Stories about how women activists within the region mobilised around the establishment of a women's centre are also complex. This chapter will continue to identify feminist activists and the unfolding of regional feminist activism during the 1970s with a focus on the intense mobilisation that occurred between 1978 and 1980 when the centre opened. Key activists included in this chapter are Ruby Makula and Val Dolan. In 1978 Ruby was the driving force behind the 'Free Judith Mitchell' campaign, and Val played a major role in the establishment of the Wollongong Women's Collective (WWC). Their stories, and the stories of the groups they belonged to, help demonstrate the intensifying nature of women's activism in the region during the 1970s.

1970–1975

By the early 1970s some working-class women activists were organising around a range of activities that were not limited to workplace concerns. For example, 'Lydi Post, Gill Hopkins, Gina Behrens and Jan Reed were actively trying to institute contraception and birth control clinics' (McGee interview with Makula, 8 March 1989). Maureen McGee was working with migrants in Cringila (McGee interview, 18 October 2004). Many of the participants described this as 'a consciousness raising' period. Experienced women activists (from organisations such as the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries, the Union of Australian Women, the South Coast Labour Council, the CPA and the ALP) such as Peggy Errey and Sally Bowen, were starting to listen to Women's Liberation ideas.

Women were also asserting their right to education, and many women from working-class families took advantage of the new opportunity to enter universities after the

Whitlam government abolished university fees (Arrowsmith, 2001). Ruby Makula was one of these women. Many of the activists who later participated in the WWIC took advantage of this; however, accessing this new opportunity was not always straightforward. After becoming the top student in a daytime matriculation course at the local technical college, Ruby Makula applied for a merit based scholarship from the University of NSW. When she discovered that a male administrator had decided that a woman of 39 or 40 was too old to go to university, and given the scholarship to a young male 'she really kicked up a fuss' (McGee interview with Makula, 8 March 1989). She threatened to strip naked on the steps of the university; she asked Laurie Kelly (state ALP MP) to investigate the case, and she bombarded the university with phone calls until the decision was reversed. After the decision was reversed she found she had also received one of the 50 Mature Age Commonwealth Scholarships that not only paid all fees and provided a book allowance, but also gave her a small allowance. She rejected the original scholarship and went to university on the Commonwealth scholarship. Ruby told Maureen McGee that it was during this period that she developed her consciousness of gender inequities. Ruby claimed:

It was not just of the injustice that was done to me, but I began to realise that women like myself, who did have a lot of academic potential, had more or less missed the boat, because they couldn't get in. And there wasn't a great deal of hope for you academically because of the forces that ranged against you. Anyway I began to understand what a patriarchal society meant (McGee interview with Makula, 8 March 1989).

Ruby's growing awareness of the difficulties for women who were prepared to take advantage of the new possibilities offered through the opening up of the university system was reflected in the stories of a number of other participants. Stories about these difficulties ranged from the limited transport structure in the region and difficulties with childcare arrangements to harassment by male lecturers and physical abuse from unsupportive husbands.

Ruby Makula's activities and relationships provide a thread around which to organise stories about feminist activism in the first section of this chapter. Ruby was seen by many as one of the key activists in the establishment of the WWIC. Stories about her engagement and encouragement of other women activists featured in many of the interviews conducted for this thesis. Maureen McGee, a founding member of the

WWIC who conducted an extensive life history interview with Ruby a few weeks prior to her death in 1989, described Ruby as ‘a very gentle person as well as having this incredible ... tenacity and perseverance, that very few people could match’ (McGee interview, 18 October 2004). Ruby’s evolving awareness of women’s oppression and activism strongly reflected her ‘personal is political’ philosophy. Ruby’s ‘political and social understanding came out of [her] life’, she felt she had a strong drive to action, she claimed ‘when something really touches me and I feel strongly about it. And then, I feel that nothing stops me’. By the mid- to late-1970s Ruby believed that for women ‘injustices occurred in life because of sexism and this sexism was not only stupid, it was cruel. It was wasteful of human resources. Even in a political sense ... all this talent is going to waste, when women are oppressed’ (McGee interview with Makula, 8 March 1989).

When a Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) group was formed in Wollongong in 1972 Ruby Makula became a member. The group was initiated by three local women, Elizabeth Sandeman-Gay, Mollie McCloskey and Gina Palmer (Sandeman-Gay interview, 14 October 2004). The limited records held in the archives at the WWIC indicate that there were about 40 members at its peak (WWIC: *WEL mailing list 1975*; see Appendix 4.1 Women Activists 1975–1980). Elizabeth told me that prior to her activism with WEL she was a timid housewife with no political experience. She thought the political situation needed changing and believed that she ‘just might be able to play a part in changing this’. When the Wollongong City Council formed its IWY committee, Elizabeth Sanderman-Gay was WEL’s representative. She was elected the promotions officer, but also took on the role of treasurer after the elected member ‘dropped out’. Elizabeth remembered struggling with both positions because there was no one to show her how to do it. Elizabeth’s experience with this committee was one example of women’s groups not working together in 1975.

I noted in the previous chapter that the city council’s IWY committee chose to focus on the development of a ‘happening week’ in June, rather than collaborate with the SCLC’s IWY committee, who preferred to focus on the more traditional working-class celebration of IWD in March. The different directions of the two women’s committees for the IWY celebrations reflected the tensions in ongoing patterns of relations between the SCLC and Wollongong city’s Lord Mayor Frank Arkell (1974–1986) about who represented the collective ‘voice’ of Wollongong.

As part of the 'happening week', WIN TV filmed a two-hour special called *Access Women In Wollongong* (WWIC: *Armour speech*, 1982). The special aired on 1st July with a guest panel who were invited to answer questions on communications and migrant women and job opportunities for women. The audience included women from working-class women's groups such as Sally Bowen, trade unionists such as Peggy Errey and new 'women's libbers' including those from WEL (WIN TV 30 June 1975).

Robyn Slater, who hosted the show, attempted to set the scene by telling the viewers that women in Wollongong weren't a group of radicals. However, there were those in the audience who were determined to show that we were just that. This was an interesting time. It was so obvious that there were some good groups represented in the TV audience but they were not working together (WWIC: *Armour speech*, 1982).

Many of these women had attended the IWD march in Sydney, and some were also involved with attempts by the SCLC's Women's Action Campaign (WAC) in 1975 to establish a separate space for women named 'Sally House'. The 'Sally House' project had three interrelated goals. 'The first, for a 'primary specialist base for the total health, welfare and social needs of women. Two, an information, resource and educative organ. Three, a referral agency to locate and guide women to appropriate local specialist services' (*Illawarra Mercury*, 3 & 10 March 1975). These goals bear a strong resemblance to the original goals of the WWIC when it was later established in 1980. The SCLC's WAC membership was mostly drawn from women who were active with the SCLC, although it also had some WEL and Women's Liberation supporters. However, 'Sally House' was seen to have failed because of the lack of interaction between women's groups (WWIC: *Armour speech*, 1982). According to Irene Arrowsmith by the end of IWY 'the young 'women's libbers' disappeared from sight as quickly as they had arrived'.

1976–1977

Between 1976 and 1977 there was a significant increase the activities of women's groups in the education sector. The university started the Women in Society course encouraged by a Feminist Study Group of local academics. Maureen McGee, who had been working with migrants in Cringila, convened a small Marxist study group whose membership included Gill Hopkins, Ruby Makula and Chris Dickson (McGee interview with Makula, 8 March 1989). The NSW Teacher's Federation established women contacts in Illawarra schools for teachers who had been examining sexism in their curriculum for a number of years. Three local Teachers' Federation Associations established a combined teacher's-women's action group (WAG) in Wollongong that had approximately 40 members (WWIC *WAG membership lists*, various). The aims of WAG were to improve working conditions for women and to involve women in the union. In 1977 they established the Illawarra Non-Sexist Education Committee (INSEC) and received a Schools Commission Grant for \$23,000 to set up a resource centre in Wollongong (WWIC *Submission to council* 1978).³⁰ The group was run on a collective basis with the organisation and chairing of meetings rotated to give individuals experience in the skills. Some of the newer activist had not completely disappeared from sight they were clearly involved in their own activities.

1978–1980

Feminist activities throughout the region began to escalate in 1978. In this year the WWWCC invited a broader range of activists to participate in their work around the ACTU's women's charter (see Chapter Six). The Teachers' Federation WAG group focused on issues of superannuation, assertion training, sexism in education, meeting procedure, the WWWCC and teacher's promotion processes. According to Darelle Duncan (WAG and INSEC, and women's officer for the NSW Teachers Federation in 1980) the group's activities demonstrated that women belong in the union, and the union was aware of and sensitive to their issues (WWIC: *Women's Coordinator's Report*, WAG, 1980). In Chapter Five I demonstrated that the local Teachers' Federation considered itself part of the region's working-class struggle. It was, at this time,

³⁰ The group disbanded during 1980, the year that the women's centre opened, transferring all its resources to the WWIC and providing a base for its feminist library.

involved in a protracted dispute about a union preference clause. The activists from the teachers' WAG also clearly saw themselves as part of the broader working-class activism in the region.

Three other sets of activities were identified by participants as influential on the growing level of feminist activism in 1978. First, the Free Judith Mitchell campaign was instigated by Ruby Makula. Judith Mitchell was a young woman who was imprisoned after she was accused of murdering her newborn baby. This single issue campaign drew together a significant cohort of women (and some men) from both inside and outside the trade union movement. Second, Val Dolan, along with two other students, established the Wollongong Women's Collective (WWC) at the University of Wollongong. The WWC provided a more permanent base for many of the activists who had been involved with the Free Judith Mitchell campaign, as well as for the growing number of women outside the trade union movement who were taking advantage of the opportunity to attend university. Third, the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries IWD committee invited representatives from the emerging groups including the WWC, WWWCC, INSEC and WAG to help them organise the IWD celebrations to be held in 1979. A major event for 1979 was the IWD march, and the ensuing publicity helped consolidate the relationships between the region's women activists and a broader set of institutional alliances around women's issues.

Free Judith Mitchell Campaign

The first of these important events was the Free Judith Mitchell campaign. The Free Judith Mitchell campaign successfully challenged the legal and judicial system with a public campaign to obtain the release from jail of a young mother accused of murdering her newborn baby in Newcastle (NSW). The young mother had given birth into a pan toilet, where the baby died. Ruby Makula, prompted by the concern of her daughter Avril, organised a small item in the *Illawarra Mercury* inviting interested people to attend a meeting to discuss the case (Dolan 2002, p.16). The ensuing campaign attracted a membership of at least 36 local activists (WWIC: *JM contact list*, undated). Included in the membership of this group were seasoned activists such as Monica Chalmers (SCLC delegate) who joined the group with her daughter Sharny and others with very little activist experience, such as Val Dolan (Chalmers interview, 13 October 2004).

Val attended the first meeting of the Free Judith Mitchell campaign with her mother after reading Ruby's article in the paper (Dolan 2001). Val's interest in the case was sparked because she remembered her mother telling her never to go to the toilet by herself in the late stages of her pregnancy, and she knew of a number of other women who had similar stories. She thought the arrest was unjust. She described her experience of the campaign:

After finding out the full circumstances of the case we set out to seek justice for this woman. Posters appeared all over town including the Court House and the Railway Station. Mike Morrissey and I went out one night with a huge bucket of wallpaper paste and even pasted a moving bus! As Women's Officer on the SRC I had access to student publications. I'm a bit of a frustrated journalist and enjoyed dashing off articles for these publications. I also attended meetings at various Sydney universities to speak about the case. At this stage young, feminist solicitor Virginia Bell became involved. Other women staged sit-ins at State Attorney Frank Walker's office and accosted [NSW] Premier Neville Wran at every opportunity. People contacted doctors for expert medical opinion. ... Our action became the subject of the *Coming Out Show* on ABC radio [30 May 1978] and it was only then that we each got the full picture of what we had achieved (Dolan, 2002, p. 17).

According to many of the interviewees Ruby Makula's leadership and networking in this campaign and later for the Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC) cannot be underestimated. Lenore Armour described Ruby's leadership of the Free Judith Mitchell campaign:

[Ruby] wrote letters, went on deputations. She learnt the legal system very quickly, learnt how to deal with politicians and bureaucrats, she visited Judith Mitchell in gaol, she visited her relatives and after months of tireless energy-giving which is hard to believe in retrospect, Judith Anne [Mitchell] was freed and completely exonerated. The court admitted she had been wrongly imprisoned in the first place and had not had adequate or efficient legal representation (WWIC *Armour speech*, 1982).

The following segment from the transcript of Maureen McGee's interview with Ruby Makula further illustrates the 'variety of women' that included 'every shade of politics from the right to the far left' that the Free Judith Mitchell campaign brought together:

Ruby: The case was quite remarkable for the variety of women that came together on it, wasn't it?

Maureen: Yes, we pulled in everyone.

Ruby: Yes that's what you have to do, don't you? There was you and I, Virginia Bell, Anna Frankel, the barrister, a Russian Jewess émigré from Hong Kong. I knew her before this, through Dr. James [Asthma Foundation] actually. I still hear from her now and again. She continued and she is very much a feminist in her way, despite the fact that she is so well heeled and all the rest of it.

Maureen: I think she is a Marxist too.

Ruby: Is she? I don't know. But it did bring together a diversity of women. People like Liz Hilton from the Labor party down south.

Maureen: Real working-class women from Wollongong and academics.

Ruby: Yes, ex-nuns Kath McCormack and Helen Power.

Maureen: *Every shade of politics from the right to the far left* [my emphasis].

Ruby: And Joyce Phelan, that nice woman, yes, the Catholic element. They were supportive. We got a fair amount of publicity and recognition for that achievement with the Free Judith committee. Steward West MHR sent us a telegram if you remember. The news of her getting out, being exonerated and free was somehow broken at a South Coast Labour Council meeting. Liz Hilton must have rung them. The women who were involved in union-style politics at that time were also very aware of the women's movement.

We felt that this thing that had developed between us through Judith would be a real pity to let go. Various groups felt it. ... One person, Val Dolan, who was studying at uni contacted me and said she wanted to form a women's group. ... Val is a marvellous case in point, she was part of the patriarchal system herself, she was very much of that, but she became more and more aware. The Judith case really touched her and she grew and grew from then. She's a very, very worthwhile person. Anyway she wanted to form a women's group so they formed this group at uni and started meeting ... (McGee interview with Makula, 8 March 1989).

The Free Judith Mitchell campaign represented a major turning point for women's activism in the region (Chalmers interview, 13 October 2004). Touched by Judith

Mitchell's personal situation and inspired by Ruby's leadership, women from a broad range of backgrounds worked together to achieve Judith Mitchell's release (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 July 1978; WWIC, ABC radio *The Judith Mitchell Campaign*, 29 April 1980). Differences between the women, articulated in source material for this case, included: religion (Catholic, ex-nuns, Jewish); politics (ALP, CPA, trade union politics, non-political); type of feminism (Marxist and radical); age (mothers and daughters); education (university trained); local and non-local; and class (working class and others). It was during the research around this case that the distinction between 'real working class' and 'working class' first emerged. In the quote above Ruby used the term to identify Liz Hilton (PSA, SCLC delegate in 1980). Liz was seen as 'real working class' because of her location inside trade union politics. This distinction was important. The term was not only used to describe other women from within the region but was often juxtaposed with the other identified differences. For example, Irene Arrowsmith described differences amongst women at the WWIC as 'working class women and university types' (Arrowsmith interview, 21 January 2003). It was often difficult to clearly categorise women as one or the other, many of the 'university types' were working class women who were the first in their families to attend university. Val Dolan was one of these women.

The following section introduces Val Dolan and her work as a foundation member of the Wollongong Women's Collective. Val was introduced in Chapter Three as the member of the local labour history group who first introduced me to the history of the WWIC and later assisted me to search the UOW film archives in the early stages of the thesis. Her story helps demonstrate the rapid growth in organisational articulation between women's groups at a time when feminist activists from the university increasingly engaged with trade union women.

Wollongong Women's Collective (WWC)

Val Dolan was elected women's officer for the Students' Representative Council (SRC) at the University of Wollongong between 1978 and 1979. In her role as women's officer she established two groups, known as the Wollongong Women's Collective morning and afternoon groups (WWC), with Judy Willis and Patsy Campbell in August 1978 (WWIC *SRC women's officers' report*, 1979–80). Ruby and many of the Free Judith Mitchell committee became members of the WWC (see Appendix 4.1 Women Activists 1975 to 1980). The collective embraced radical feminist ideology. It was concerned

with discriminatory practice in bureaucratic and legal structures and was committed to the concept of women's liberation and the elimination of sexism. Issues dealt with by the collective included all aspects of women's liberation, with a particular focus on problems connected with rape, abortion and contraception at both local and political levels (WWIC *Submission to council*, 1978).

Val's final report as the women's officer to the Students' Representative Council (SRC) in 1979 (undated) provided an indication of the intensification in networks between women's groups and the changing nature of organised activism 'by women and for women'. These were:

- i. Support for the Free Judith Mitchell campaign and following; participation in the ABC's 'Coming Out' programme speaking on Women in Prison.
- ii. Contact with, and participation in, the Illawarra Non-Sexist Resource Centre (INSEC).
- iii. Formation of Wollongong Women's Collective's day and evening groups (WWC).
- iv. Contact with, and participation in, Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee (WWWCC).
- v. Support for the IWD in 1979. The WWC printed a broadsheet for the first march in the region.
- vi. The organisation of an abortion forum that resulted in the formation of the Women's Abortion Action Committee group (WAAC).
- vii. Continuous letter writing to politicians to express the collective view on reform of current rape laws, health care funding, cuts in funds to Leichhardt Women's Health Centre and the Lusher motion (anti-abortion motion).
- viii. The organisation of a rape forum after the rape of two female students during Val's term as women's officer. The first of these involved a nasty gang rape, and Val's involvement with this incident is discussed below. The second incident involved the rape on campus of a recently separated young mother, who became the first referral by police to the newly established sexual offence referral clinic at Wollongong Hospital.

- ix. Continual contact with the sexual offence referral clinic at Wollongong Hospital and attendance at meetings in Sydney regarding running of these centres.
- x. Financial support for 'Kids Uni', which was a childcare centre located at UOW, through funding of candidates to Child Care Conference and subsidised fees for needy students (*SRC women's officer's report 1978–79*, Dolan interview, 12 November 2004, personal communication, with victim of second rape incident, name suppressed).

Val laughed when she told a group at a labour history seminar in 2002 that she failed her 'Women and Society' paper at university in 1978 and had to repeat the subject. Val's failure of the subject during a year of intense activism appears to reflect a limited understanding of the relationships between practice and ideology, and the personal as political.

Val told me that the only feminist thing she had ever done before the Judith Mitchell campaign was 'trying not to get given away at the altar' and her election as the women's officer for the Student Representative Council (SRC) at the University of Wollongong. She said that if she had still been married she could not have participated. Her husband would not have stood for it. In her previous married life Val had only once ever been out by herself – after, of course, she fed her children and put them to bed. She was very grateful to the women (and men) who supported and guided her political development during this period. This guidance and inspiration came not from her paper on women and society, but from women activists (such as Ruby Makula and Monica Chalmers) and local political players (such as George Petersen, State MP) in the labour movement.

As women's officer, one of her early activities involved support for a young female student who was the victim of a gang rape. In the following section Val describes this incident. Her story alludes to the types of pressures many of these activists experienced at work, including harassment by the authorities because of their feminist activities. The story is also an illustration of the support for the younger Women's Libbers provided by older activists from the region.

The young woman involved came from Stanwell Park, and having missed her last transport home after Thursday night shopping went with her boyfriend to hitch a lift home. The two guys who offered her a lift took her to a road off Mt Ousley, stripped her lower half and took it in

turns to rape her until tossing her out of the vehicle. She made her way back to the road in the dark getting severely scratched by lantana on the way only to have several motorists drive by not wanting to pick up a half naked female. When she eventually reported it to the police they had no questions about her telling the truth. They had received messages of a naked female on Mt Ousley. They were also aware of the road where it was obvious, by the discarded women's clothing, that women had been taken there before. However, in their infinite wisdom, the police decided the victim was in the wrong. Their verdict was that she should report to them every Thursday night!

I went to the Police Station to intercede on her behalf. I was treated with disdain by both male and female police who followed me out to my car. The police walked around my car trying to find fault but couldn't because I always keep it serviced and keep good tyres etc on it. That was one of the reasons I was chosen to go to the police station. They [members of the Student Representative Council] said 'Because you've got good clothes Val, and a good car ... you go to the police station, you go because they won't be able to pick on you'. So I said, 'fine, as women's officer I should do it anyway'. That was from younger people who'd had experience with the police ... they knew what they'd do and that's why they got me to go. Anyway, the police said to me, 'We'll get you'. My confident and foolish reply was, 'You can't get me because I don't do anything wrong'. Wasn't I naïve! I knew George Petersen vaguely through the Folk Club and so on the following Friday night I said to him 'excuse me ... can I talk to you about something ...' I told him what had happened to me and he gave me some good advice, which I was able to use quite soon – unfortunately.

Colin Markham and Mary Paris were running a Labor Party newspaper, *District Voice*, at the time. They ran the story that I had written; it took up a half page of the paper. It was very explicit, everything that had happened. The story was also published in *Tertangala* (Wollongong University student paper). I wrote the complete story to every local politician, to the premier and the police minister. At some point Women's Centre member, Maureen McGee, sent the article to *Tribune* and it came out on the back page complete with graphics of two large pigs standing over a cowering woman ... with my name on it. But I didn't know that this had happened, you'll hear later.

At work one day – I was working at Koonawarra Primary School – I received a phone call from the police. They wanted me to come in that afternoon. I told them I had family responsibilities after work and had no time. Their response was that unless I agreed to come in they'd send a wagon to collect me and they made comments like: 'Val, you'll cause a

bit of a stir, won't you, when the wagon comes out to get you while you're on playground duty' ... if this is not intimidation? I told them 'I can't come today, but I'll definitely come tomorrow afternoon.'

... So I networked and a formidable bunch of women accompanied me to that meeting: Monica Chalmers, Ruby Makula, Maureen McGee and others, all that could squeeze in the lift and they stepped out of that lift with me. Me at the head, and Inspector Detective Wilson got a big shock! At the end of my questioning DI Wilson took a copy of *Tribune* out of a drawer and shoved it at me! That was the first time I'd seen it. The outcome was I was in the clear because I had chosen my words very carefully, I hadn't exaggerated, I told it how it was. Next time I was to ask for assistance from the detective inspector before setting out on a writing campaign. Who knows what would have happened if I had gone alone?

... When I got out Monica said to me, 'Val, if you hadn't got home to your kids that night the trade unions were all coming out in support' – I felt so protected, it was wonderful (Dolan 2001, pp. 19–21).

The personal support extended to Val during this ordeal was one example of the increasing interaction between younger and older activists. The relationships between individual women were also increasingly being enacted at a more formal level between groups. Val and Ruby Makula, as representatives of the WWC, participated in the planning for the first IWD march to be held in Wollongong in 1979.

First IWD March

Three years after the march in Sydney for International Women's Year the Miners' Women's Auxiliary invited a number of women's groups to participate in preparations for International Women's Day to be held in Wollongong in 1979 (WWIC *notes on IWD by Gillam*, undated). The resulting organising committee included the Wollongong Women's Collective (WWC), the Wollongong Working Women's Charter (WWWCC), Trade Unions, the Unemployed People's Movement, the Pro-Abortion Lobby, the Illawarra Non-Sexist Resources Centre (INSEC) and the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries (WWIC: Callaghan, Dooley & Crittle, 1995). The first IWD march took place in Crown Street with a 200-strong contingent of women and some men. 'Together they claimed their space and voiced the first chants of the Women's Movement in the streets of Wollongong' (WWIC: Callaghan et al., 1995). Issues aired at the march included improvements for women workers, repealing abortion laws, women's health needs,

Aboriginal women's rights, migrant women's rights, childcare, rape and sexism within schools. Activist Ruby Makula was able to articulate publicly that 'without rights for women there will be no rights for men and children' (WWIC: Callaghan et al., 1995).

The march itself was seen by activists as a wonderful success; however, it was the ensuing negative media attack by the *Illawarra Mercury* columnist 'Icabod' that ensured the relationships between groups were cemented (WWIC: *Armour speech*, 1982). The newspaper column read:

It was only two weeks ago that your humble scribe stood in a Crown Street gutter dumbfounded, as a large formation of Fun City femmes took control of the road in celebration of International Women's Day.

It might do wonders for their cause, but it won't do much for their pores. Several hours in the sun, in fact, had left these tiny but essential elements of facial beauty flushed and swollen. The incessant chant 'Wadderwewant? ... whennerwewannit?' had left their voices coarse and their diction ruined, possibly forever.

The holding aloft of banners calling for women to unite had beefed out their arms and exposed armpits sadly unacquainted with the razor's edge. (*Illawarra Mercury*, 22 March 1979).

The column was situated next to a larger article extolling the virtues of a well-known local model and her beauty school. The 'suggestion' that the women activists should attend the beauty school provoked a surge of outrage (WWIC *Join Hands*, November 1979). Val Dolan remembered her response:

In the early hours of the morning, with a friend keeping my car running, I stuck the article and a large banner saying *WOMEN ARE OFFENDED: WOMEN ARE ANGRY* across the doors, then sealed the locks and down the joins with PVA glue. And someone who was there later said they couldn't get the door open, when the workers came to work ... but I didn't hang about to see that (Dolan 2001, p. 19).

Viv Northover (CPA and WWWCC member) claimed a sit-in and demonstration was threatened (WWIC: *Join Hands*, 1979). Lenore Armour (Free Judith Mitchell campaign, INSEC, Teachers' Federation, WWWCC, WEL and WWIC) claimed the women had 'the support of legal representation' (WWIC *Armour speech*, 1982). Ruby Makula also swung into action; she secured a rare public apology from the *Illawarra Mercury* after she presented the editor of the *Mercury* with a pre-written apology that she insisted was

to be published in the paper the next day. She explained to Maureen McGee that you could not just 'go and ask for an apology and leave it up to them' (McGee interview, 18 October 2004). According to Maureen, Ruby's political awareness, developed in part through her experience with the Free Judith Mitchell campaign, combined with her connections with the Australian Labor Party and the SCLC, ensured that the apology was published.

The apology read: 'We regret any denigration and personal insult that may have resulted from the article ... This apology is extended to all those who participated in the International Women's Day March 1979' (*Illawarra Mercury*, 27 March 1979). The apology was extended to:

- i. Wollongong Women's Collective
- ii. Illawarra Non-Sexist Education Committee
- iii. Wollongong Street Theatre Group
- iv. SRC Wollongong University
- v. NSW Teachers' Federation Illawarra Association
- vi. Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee
- vii. South Coast Miners' Women's Auxiliary
- viii. South Coast International Women's Day Committee
- ix. Nebo Miners' Women's Auxiliary
- x. The Australian Union of Students
- xi. The Non-Sexist Resource Centre

This apology was significant. For the first time a number of women's groups were publicly identified as supporters of women's issues (WWIC *Armour speech*, 1982). The list demonstrated that women's groups in the region were now working together and they were stretching the region's traditional patterns of class and gendered relations (WWIC Callaghan et al., 1995).

WWWCC Revisited

The excitement of new ideas, combined with anger of the various groups about the media response to IWD, helped to advance the aims of a number of women's groups, including the WWWWCC. Three weeks before the march the WWWWCC had held its open forum on the ACTU's working women's charter to elicit views from a broader range of

women within the community (see Chapter Seven). The forum had attracted wide support from trade unions and women from the WWCC. As a result forum participants had not only committed to work towards the implementation of the ACTU's charter, but had also determined to pressure local unions into supporting four objectives from the Women's Liberation Charter. These were:

- i. comprehensive sex education and birth control advice; free and freely available contraception and safe legal abortion facilities
- ii. equal access to all social security benefits regardless of marital status and age
- iii. English classes for migrant workers on the job, in work time at the boss's expense
- iv. setting up preferential hiring of women in industries and jobs where they have been traditionally excluded (WWIC, *WWCC aims and objectives*, 12 November 1979).

After the IWD march in 1979, activities at the WWCC intensified around three related yet distinct areas of activism. These included: 1) the implementation of the ACTU's Working Women's Charter and efforts to persuade unions to adopt additional aspects of the Women's Liberation Charter; 2) the reactivation of the 'Jobs for Women' campaign against BHP; and 3) the establishment of the WWIC.

The next section of the thesis provides a brief description of the 'Jobs for Women' campaign against BHP. This is followed by a description of the establishment of the WWIC.

Jobs for Women Campaign

Originally the fight for women to obtain work in the steel industry began after World War II. The term 'Jobs for Women' was first used in the late-1960s. Five hundred jobs were gained in early 1973 as a result of that campaign (*WWIC newsletter*, 1999). The 1980 campaign was launched in April, a few weeks after the opening of the WWIC. It was a 14-year struggle (1980–1994) for the right of women to be employed in the traditionally male steelworker positions at Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP), driven by women in the WWCC from the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) (WWIC Allen, 1999; Covell interview, 25 April 2006). The campaign received national coverage and resulted

in the first class action of its type against the largest employer in the area, BHP (see *Illawarra Mercury*, 22 & 23 April 1980).

This was a significant regional campaign that has been credited with attracting and utilising significant resources from outside the region's trade union movement (Tonkin, 2000) as it evolved. While the campaign did attract significant help from femocrats in the NSW government and the South Coast Migrant Resource Centre, a close examination of the political dynamics during the period prior to, and during, the launch of the campaign reveal that the successful mobilisation was initially enabled through strong links between activists, the SCLC and the ALP. For example, when there was a shortfall in funding for the campaign, Merv and Shirley Nixon arranged a meeting with the NSW state Premier that resulted in extra financial support (Covell interview, 25 April 2006). A detailed analysis of this campaign is beyond the scope of this thesis; however, it is worth noting that during the early stages of this campaign Ruby Makula, Peggy Errey and Fay Campbell (SCLC delegate, ALP) all played a strong supportive role. For example, Peggy Errey provided important strategic advice that ensured that the women who were 'complainants' (that is, women who had applied for jobs at BHP) retained decision making during the campaign when the leadership of 'political parties' attempted to take control (Covell interview, 25 April 2006; Chalmers interview, 13 October 2004). Diana Covell (a convenor for the 1980 Jobs for Women campaign) claimed that the grass-roots control of the decision making was important, it 'cut down on the political nonsense'. She also claimed that Fay Campbell first suggested the idea of a tent embassy. The tent embassy, held in July 1980, gained positive news media attention (WIN TV 3 July 1980) and the activists collected over 2,000 male steelworkers' signatures in support of their campaign (WWIC Allen 1999). The tent embassy, held for three days outside the gates of BHP, was 'patrolled' by the SCLC 'to make sure we were safe' (Covell interview, 25 April 2006). In this campaign 'safe space' was enabled for grass-roots activism 'by and for' women from a space that was physically, emotionally and politically safe.

The Establishment of the WWIC

The original steering committee for the WWIC was formed by members of the WWWCC after Peggy Errey and Diana Covell reported on the proceedings of the ACTU conference in Melbourne which had formulated the Working Women's Charter. The original proposal for the centre was that it would be part of the regional strategy to

‘co-ordinate activity around the charter and provide information, advice’ (WWIC *WWCC minutes*, 6 November 1978). However, an essential prerequisite for the WWIC was the articulation of an underlying philosophy acceptable to all women’s groups in the region (WWIC *Makula notes for Tertangala*, undated). Trish Donaldson (WWCC secretary) thought there was:

... a real chance of continuing the breadth of involvement, of including feminist ideas, but also active in other areas ... I thought we were going to build something different, the broad representation is probably why we got the original funding ... Wollongong was a city that relied on its industrial base, I thought we were going to build something different to cities. Sydney was more intellectual I suppose, based around universities and doing interesting research ... Wollongong was much more a working-class town, with strong activist traditions from the role of the SCLC (Donaldson interview, 2 November 2005).

An invitation was extended to all women’s groups to participate in the project (WWIC *WWCC letter of invitation*, undated) and a second steering committee was formed. This committee ratified a series of resolutions on the basic principles on which to base the centre, in a five-hour meeting in May 1979 that Ruby Makula described as a ‘feat of endurance’ (WWIC *President’s report*, 1980). The steering committee operated on a subcommittee basis. Separate subcommittees worked to:

- i. clarify the philosophy of the centre
- ii. approach the Community Services Office of the Wollongong Council for premises and subsequently develop an application for the premises
- iii. delineate ‘what the centre is and how it will operate’
- iv. study available information on legal requirements and procedures
- v. develop funding applications
- vi. draw up a constitution
- vii. explore possibilities of charity registration (WWIC *WWCC minutes*, various; *Report to First AGM of WWIC steering committee*, 23 August 1979).

Committees were made up of individual members of the various women’s groups. Their role was to report back to their groups and provide suggestions to the co-ordinating committee. Formal statements of support for the centre that included their ideas about the ‘function and operation of a women’s centre’ were elicited from each group. Ruby

Makula claimed 'it should be stressed that it is the co-operation and collaboration of the groups which individually and collectively form the basis, the rationale and the philosophic justification for this project, and which set a precedent within the women's movement, that is both progressive and unique – and is potentially a really valuable contribution to the women's movement' (WWIC *Report to first AGM*, 23 August 1979).

Contact meetings with the Women's Co-ordination Unit, the Department of Youth and Community Services and Ethnic Affairs were held (WWIC *Makula notes for Tertangala*, undated) resulting in significant support for the project from the NSW state government. Carmel Niland, women's adviser to the Wran state government, helped not only with details about funding submissions, but also on questions of whether to form as a collective, a co-operative or a charity. A submission to the Department of Youth and Community Services for \$35,000 resulted in a \$19,000 grant. Later, with support from Carmel Niland and the Women's Co-ordination Unit, another \$5,000 grant from State Premier Neville Wran was received.

Local city council aldermen were lobbied, and with the support of local ALP branches and the ALP NSW Women's Committee, the Wollongong City Council was approached for the rental of a suitable property. Val Dolan said:

... the meeting [to present the rental application] was open but only two women could present our case for the use of a council building for a 'peppercorn rent'. The Deputy Lord Mayor had to declare himself ineligible to vote, as it was his daughter, Beth Parker (Teachers' Federation), who presented our case (Dolan interview, 12 November 2004).

The resulting offer of an old 'derelict' house from council was accepted although it required a major transformation. Irene Arrowsmith said it was all hard work with many women putting in long hours well into the evenings and on weekends to renovate the building (Arrowsmith interview, 21 January 2003).

By August 1979 a management committee for the WWIC was established with representatives from all the women's groups that had appeared in Icabod's apology. Another set of small committees emerged to take responsibility for different aspects of planning and decision making. These included a publicity committee to decide on the content and spokespersons for publicity; three committees for the preparation of the

building (renovation and paint, aesthetics and cleaning) (WWIC *WWIC management committee minutes*, 21 November 1979); and a health committee to investigate the possibilities for women's health services (WWIC *management committee minutes*, 12 December 1979). The task of preparing for and hiring a salaried co-ordinator fell to Maureen McGee, Ruby Makula, Sue Gilroy and Penny Griffith (WWIC *management committee minutes*, 12 December, 1979).

The pace of activities was intense and exhausting. Ruby Makula remembered:

I was busy at work, really busy. I'd come home and get tea ready. Then I'd run out to a Labor Party meeting purely to push the Women's Centre. I had all the motions etc. ready prepared before I got there. I remember one night in Unanderra [15 minutes south of Wollongong], and then I went down to another one in Oak Flats [40 minutes south of Wollongong] which followed on after that. This is at night. It was pouring with rain, I came back then to a Women's Charter meeting, to report to the Charter meeting. Driving back, it was raining and the oncoming headlights were dancing in the rain. I thought, 'How am I going to get back?' and of course I wasn't physically well. I didn't have cancer then. I had high blood pressure. I didn't know that at the time (McGee interview with Makula, 8 March 1989; but also see WWIC *WWWCC minutes*, 11 June 1979).

Many of these women were simultaneously attending, on average, about five different sets of committee meetings. Each committee met on an average of once a fortnight, and the women's centre organising committee stepped up to meeting weekly as the opening of the centre loomed closer (Dolan 2002). A review of Val's activities in the two months before the women's centre opened revealed that she had attended at least nine committee meetings and at least twelve working bees preparing the centre for the opening (WWIC *Visitors book*, 1980).

Other activities that these women engaged in, while also working towards the establishment of the WWIC, included the forum on rape (November 1979) organised by the WWC; a forum on the Working Women's Charter (February 1979); organising and participating in the first and second IWD marches held in March (1979 and 1980); a forum on abortion (March 1979); campaigns around the closure of local clothing factories (June 1979); a street stall to raise awareness on abortion (September 1979); the 'Chicken Shop' campaign (January and February 1980); a regional conference on sexual harassment (April 1980); organisation of the relaunch of the 'Jobs For Women'

campaign against BHP also to be held April 1980; and negotiations to establish a health service at the WWIC (see Appendix 2.1 Timeline).

Opening the WWIC

A crowd of over 200 attended the official opening of the WWIC by Carmel Niland in April 1980. Minutes attributed the opening to early collaborative efforts between feminist groups and trade unions in the region (WWIC minutes, 1980–1981; WWWCC minutes, 1979–80). The archives indicate that the feminist groups who participated in the pre- and early history from 1975–1981 included:

1. Combined Miners' Women's Auxiliary
2. International Women's Day Committee (IWD Committee)
3. Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee (WWWCC)
4. Wollongong Women's Collective (Day and Evening Groups) (WWC)
5. Women's Study Group, University of Wollongong
6. Illawarra Non-Sexist Committee (INSEC)
7. Feminist Street Theatre Group
8. The Health Collective
9. Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC)
10. Nebo Miners' Women's Auxiliary
11. Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL)
12. Women's Writers' Workshop
13. Wollongong Women's Performing Arts Group
14. Union of Australian Women (UAW)
15. Witchwork's Print Collective.

Unions groups represented in this early history of the WWIC included:

1. South Coast Labour Council (SCLC)
2. Administrative and Clerical Officers' Association (ACOA)
3. Australian Journalists' Association

4. Australian Postal and Telegraphists' Union
5. Australian Workers' Union
6. Electrical Trades Union (ETU)
7. Federated Clerks' Union
8. Federated Ironworkers' Association (FIA)
9. Meat and Allied Trades Union
10. Miscellaneous Workers' Union
11. Municipal Employees' Union
12. Professional Officers' Association
13. NSW Teachers' Federation
14. Combined Illawarra Teachers' Federation
15. Public Service Association (PSA)
16. Teachers' Federation
17. Australian Theatrical and Amusement Employees' Association

The lists represent a remarkable organising achievement by the women who established the WWIC. The list of women's organisations includes both working-class and radical feminists. The list of trade unions is distinctive. It is a broadly based representation of trade union presence in the region, reflecting strongholds of regional working-class industrial organisation, but also public sector white-collar, professional and semi-professional unions. All unions listed were affiliated to the SCLC and all had representation on the WWGCC. The list appears to be incomplete. Other unions identified in the research who had representatives involved with the establishment of the WWIC included the Australian Bank Employees' Union, the Australian Insurance Employees' Union, and the Australian Social Welfare Union. Key regional unions not listed were in male dominated industries, included the Miners' Federation (who were supportive and had representation on the WWGCC through the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries) and the Waterside Workers' and Builders' Labourers' unions. Female dominated industries that provided employment for women in the region, such as the nurses, factory workers and hairdressers, were organised outside the region, but they also were the subject of disputes involving the SCLC during the year (see Appendix 2.3:

1980 Summary of Issues from Labour Council Minutes; and WWIC *WWWCC minutes*, various).

The following section of this chapter presents a summary of key activities for the WWIC in 1980. The material is organised into the same categories that I used to present the WWIC in Chapter One. These six key structural elements are the working group members, service delivery, feminist activities, interagency and community development (see Appendix 1.2: WWIC structure, 1980). This format was utilised to classify activities. Structuring the historical material about the institution in this way enabled me to clearly identify significant differences in patterns of women's activism and the organisational relationships across the WWIC's history. Although this is not relevant in this thesis, one of the objectives of the study was to identify a relevant framework or frameworks that would be useful in understanding women's activism within the region.

WWIC Structure in 1980

The Working Group

The working group was called the 'management committee' in 1980. The structure of the Management Committee was designed to provide an opportunity for women who chose to take part in all aspects of the planning and decision making of the organisation (WWIC *Makula notes for Tertangala*, undated). This was reflected in the first constitution that stated a key aim was to allow the 'democratic representation of all affiliated groups on the management committee, and allow for the inward and outward flow of ideas and suggestions between the committee and groups' and a higher commitment from everyone involved (WWIC *President's report*, 1980). The original constitution for the first management committee established a maximum of 20 members including nominated representatives from all affiliated organisations and each of the WWIC's collectives. The remainder of the positions were to be filled by full members, who would be elected at annual general meetings. No staff or anyone who received fees from the WWIC could be a member of the management committee (WWIC *Annual General Meeting: Steering Committee*, 23 August 1979). In 1979–1980 this group had 15 members but grew to 22 during 1980–1981 (see Appendix 4.2: Working Group Members 1979 and 1980 which provides a list of the working group members of the WWIC during 1980). This is a significantly different structure to the current Working

Group which now includes a number of staff members and no representatives from affiliated feminist activist organisations.

The established regional patterns of multiple membership amongst women's organisations and issues-based activist groups provided a relatively smooth integration of the older women's groups and the women's liberation. According to Ruby Makula a high level of interaction both on a personal and philosophical level emerged among the differing groups (WWIC *Makula notes for Tertangala*, undated; see Appendix 4.1 Women Activists 1975–1980). However, there were some tensions evident between those who wanted to 'sit in a circle' and those who wanted more structure. Monica Chalmers (SCLC delegate for Federated Clerks' Union), who took on the role of minutes secretary in the steering committee and first management committee, and Irene Arrowsmith, who was a trustee for the steering committee, both remarked with amusement that minutes were often changed when attempting to ratify minutes from a previous meeting, depending who was at the meeting (group discussion, 19 August 2004). Trish Donaldson felt she learnt a lot about what could and couldn't be done with this type of open format during this time. She liked more structure and said many of the women would often joke about the 'WWIC headache', the huge headache you got from the long meetings. Another key tension was over whether or not to allow men to become members of the centre after INSEC insisted on a non-sexist policy. Their request was defeated. The view of many of the activists who eventually came together to form the WWIC was that feminism was the most important 'ism' (Nixon interview, 11 June 2003). The question of 'woman's oppression' was what tied the group together (McGee interview, 11 October 2003).

Members

Membership of the WWIC grew rapidly in the first two years. By December 1981 there were 205 individual members (WWIC: *Monthly Journals*, 1980–1981). Affiliated organisational members included the two local Teachers' Federations and the NSW Teachers' Federation; the WWC; the WWWC; the Union of Australian Women, Nebo Miners' Women's Auxiliary and the Combined Miners' Women's Auxiliary. Multiple membership of women in various women's groups and individual campaigns championed by the WWIC saw many women activists not necessarily becoming financial members of the centre but still actively involved. Many of these women supported the activities and aims of the centre, but chose to focus their attention on

other affiliated groups and campaigns. Diana Covell, who was one of the key activists in the 'Jobs for Women' campaign, was one of the initiators of the idea for a women's centre (Covell interview, 25 April 2006; WWIC *minutes*, WWC various). Her increasing engagement in activities around the 'Jobs for Women' campaign left little time for the WWIC. A second example is Fay Campbell who was a key activist with the SCLC. It is likely that it was Fay who recommended that the young women affected in the 'Chicken Shop' story talk to the WWC.

Service Delivery

Service delivery at the WWIC in 1980 had a dual focus. The first was the information and referral service. The second area of focus was the Health Collective. The information and referral service has remained a key part of the work at the WWIC. In August 1980 Ruby Makula reported that the visitor's book held over 1,100 signatures, and enquiries numbered 654. This figure doubled itself for the next few years; in 1982 the WWIC recorded 1834 contacts between women clients and the centre's co-ordinator. Information by clients was sought on domestic violence, sexual harassment and discrimination, health, pregnancy, abortion, legal issues, social security, housing, sexuality, emotional support and refuges. Issues related to women's work continued to be dealt with by the WWC. Statistics on visitors to the centre included a range of groups who were utilising the space for meetings. Groups using the centre during 1980 included: Women's Action Collective (WAC); Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC); Women and Law Collective; WWC; Union of Australian Women (UAW); Teachers Federation Women's Action Group (TF WAG); a self-defence course; the SCLC migrant women's book committee; the print collective; Nebo Miners' Women's Auxiliary; the Jobs for Women campaign; the IWD Collective; the Health Services Collective; and an assertiveness training group (WWIC *Visitors Book*, 1980).

A paid co-ordinator at the centre, Sheree Escobar, managed the information and referral service and group bookings; however, much of the work at the centre was carried out by volunteers. In 1980 volunteers assisted with operational tasks such as filing of resource materials and typing. Volunteers also assisted with helping support clients. Shirley Nixon remembered spending at least two or three days a week helping clients. She said it was:

Just finding ways for them to get court help, or just talking to them, untrained as I was, talking about ways they could deal with it and often

arranging it and taking them to the various things, and support in court if they got that far. ... I haven't got the skills to be a counsellor, I wanted to give help. ... giving them strength and knowledge about how to go on (Nixon interview, 11 June 2003).

The second major focus of activities for service delivery was the Health Collective.³¹ The idea for a women's health service was proposed by the WWCC steering committee. The service commenced in October 1980 and was available until 1984 when \$80,000 was allocated by the Department of Health to the Health Collective and the stand-alone Illawarra Women's Health Service was established. The clinic initially operated for four hours per week which was later extended to nine hours when more resources were available. It was staffed by a salaried woman doctor (Dr Shirley McLean), two volunteer trained nurse/paramedics (Yvonne Shannon and Barbara Biceago) and a volunteer receptionist (Meryl Bradford). A sympathetic male pathologist bulk-billed disadvantaged women as well as supplying some medical supplies free of charge (WWIC AGM Presidents Report, 20 August 1980; *Annual General Report*, 1981).

According to Shannon:

[We had] received numerous complaints about inadequate, unsympathetic, and often expensive health care. We talked with so many confused, unhappy women and some were downright angry. Of particular concern was the increasing use of painkillers and tranquillisers. A Health Collective was formed with the aim of providing a health care service based on a concept of holistic medicine that would enable women to be healthy, integrated persons, capable of taking responsibility for their own health, and then maintaining it. ... No time limit was placed on the consultations and great care was taken to offer a welcoming and caring atmosphere. Pamphlets, books and instruction sheets were available so that women could read about their problems and different ways to deal with them. Reasons for particular treatment were fully explained (WWIC Shannon, undated).

Barbara Biceago was one of the nurses who completed a paramedics course as part of the preparation for establishing the health service. While the training and careful

³¹ Members of the Health Collective in 1980 included: Lioba Riste, Janet Cregan-Wood, Jane Taylor, Ruby Makula, Sally Quilter, Nina Southall, Viv Northover, Sherrie Escobar, Val Newsham, Jennie Pearson, Stephanie Carr, Barbara Biceago and Grace Tague.

preparation saw opening plans for the service delayed it was important to have everything in place. She explained:

Other centres like Leichhardt were doing a lot more alternative health. I would be really uncomfortable in a women's health centre or clinic that set up to be offering health services where there wasn't that backup knowledge base. Being in a planning day [of one of the more alternative health centres], there was one woman who was basically saying, we should get all these women in, all these women who are being abused and all these women who have had domestic violence, rape, we get them in and then we plumb the depths. Wow, I'm just thinking of all these people fragmenting everywhere, no structures in place to contain them in any way. It can actually be more damaging to people. While I'm a radical person, I'm also a conservative person in regard to treatment. It's more than just rocking up and chatting about something. In the same way we now demand more from psychologists or doctors. There is more accounting for people.

We did have systems in place but it wasn't the documenting and the systems culture we have today. And there weren't vulnerabilities around people taking legal action the same way there is today. I think the framework was designed with the integrity of the practitioners. We really discussed things together and we felt really comfortable about what we might do. I think we tried to do it with integrity, we as a group had a professional integrity about how we went about things. It was a space I was comfortable in. I am aware, subsequent to the fact, that we had no consciousness around lesbian issues. ... In the context that lesbian health is women's health, not gay and lesbian (Bicego interview, 12 November 2004).

In 1981 the health service was seen as one of the WWIC's 'greatest achievements' (WWIC *Annual General Report*, 1981). For the first time women of the region were provided with the option of medical care that suited their needs.

Feminist Activity

Feminist activism stemmed from the concerns of the various organisations and collectives that constituted the WWIC. However, this activism was also reflected in broader trends evident in feminist activism in Australia and internationally. The women from the Health Collective and the WWC at the university were very involved with rape crisis. Spongberg (1998) claims that rape crisis centres became the focus of feminist activity relating to rape in Australia in the mid-1970s. The first rape crisis centre was

established in Sydney in 1974 (Carmody, 1990); subsequently in 1978 six clinics were established in the social work departments at major hospitals in Sydney and two were established in regional hospitals, namely in Wollongong and Newcastle (Carmody, 1990; Weeks, 1994). The WWC and the Health Collective wanted to ensure that the service at the hospital was what women needed:

We wanted to make sure that when women asked for help they would not feel victimized because of the treatment at the hospital ... someone who worked at the hospital found out what the rules were and the way it [rape crisis management] should be done. ... the way that it was set out was great. [However] when women went there they were having [to deal with] moralising doctors and all sorts of men. Rape crisis was good on paper but not being carried through in practice ... so we started putting pressure on them to do it, to carry through. We did posters and had public forums (Dolan interview, 12 November 2004).

The Health Collective also worked successfully with the Women's Abortion Action Campaign (WAAC). The WAAC was a most recently formed local group, and it was concerned with disseminating information on abortion, contraception and other aspects of women's health (*WWIC Submission to Council*, 1978). The WWIC had a number of complaints about a local abortion clinic, and representations to the owners were reported as 'unsuccessful'. In a second campaign protest letters were sent to the Minister for Health in a joint campaign with other Women's Health Collectives in the state about a new Youth and Community Services policy on abortion for wards of the state.

Other feminist activities at the WWIC included the work by the print collective, known as 'Witchworks' that was established in 1980. Contributions by the print collective and the feminist theatre group to International Women's Day became a colourful and integral part of the Wollongong Women's Centre's contribution to feminist activism in the area during this period. According to Callaghan et al. the colourful posters and productions of 'Witchworks', a feminist based printing collective became a symbol of the early IWD marches demonstrating the importance of women's creativity and the control of their own information and publicity (WWIC Callaghan et al., 1995). The group's workshop and materials were based in a small garage at the WWIC. The collective does not appear to have been highly organised, rather 'people came and did their own thing' (Anniversary tapes, 29 July 1999). Records indicate that the group was

active until at least 1982.³² The Wollongong Feminist Street Theatre Group was a relatively newly formed group that had so far made two public performances. It was a drama group which interpreted current situations in the light of how they specifically affected women (*WWIC Submission to Council*, 1978).

The yearly themes for IWD were based on important struggles that women face, both locally and globally. ‘Jobs for Women, Not Machines’ was the theme of Wollongong’s second IWD march in 1980. Women used IWD events to make strong statements about government policies that were forcing women out of the workforce and community attitudes that held them responsible for ‘taking men’s jobs’ if they stayed. ‘About 150 women took part in the march and later were entertained by the Feminist Street Theatre Group at Stewart Park where Jennie George (then secretary of the Teachers’ Federation) and Fay Campbell (from the Australian Women’s Union) addressed the marchers’ (*Presidents Report to AGM*, 29 August 1980).

Interagency Work

Interagency work included work with and between local activist organisations. The structure of the WWIC was built on interagency between groups with activists representing other organisations as part of their committee work with the WWIC, but also representing the WWIC within those groups. Other key interagency work included work with the SCLC as a number of the WWIC’s activists increasingly engaged in work on SCLC committees, such as the SCLC’s peace committee. Interviews with a number of participants, and historical documents, tended to describe 1980 and the next few years as a ‘consolidation with the trade union’ phase.

Conclusion

The opening of the Wollongong Women’s Information Centre (WWIC) marked a major step forward for the organisation of women in the region and was unique in Australia in many respects. It was unique because of the strong working-class and radical organisational culture in the Illawarra, together with rapid social and economic change

³² Sources include: Report from Witchworks to WWIC AGM November 1982, invoices (various dates 1982–1984) and WWIC Anniversary tapes, 29 July 1999. Known members included Colleen Jones, Chris Bourke and Lynne Keene (Anniversary tapes, 29 July 1999), Tracey Bright, Debbie McClosky, Heather McBeth, Robin McLaughlin, Anne Lefevre, Ros Gibbons, Rhonda Payne, Maree Faulkner, Jude McBean, and Gizella Feher (Witchworks phone numbers list undated).

and the influx of 'new wave' feminist ideas. Complex interplay between individual women, different factions of the labour movement, community and feminist activities took place during a dynamic and colourful period in the labour history of Wollongong between 1978 and 1980. This feminist history is rarely recognised in recorded histories of the region, or in existing literature on feminism in Australia, which tend to focus on major population centres, such as Sydney and Melbourne, in their analysis of trends in feminist organisations.

Stories that are told by women who were involved with the setting up of the centre are all different, yet all reflect a unique energy that emerged during this dynamic and colourful period. The personal sets of stories that emerged from personal interviews remind us that organisations such as the WWIC are built on sets of relationships and that these relationships are fluid and constantly changing and evolving. Although the members have a very clear sense of the WWIC as an entity with its own history, the WWIC can also be understood as an organising point for stories that are intimately interwoven with evolving personal histories, friendships and community as well as class and gender. It is these stories that are prioritised and extended in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight: Gender Analysis

Introduction

I have argued that women's activism was embedded in regional patterns of class relations and signalled that an understanding of gendered patterns of engagement with the region's labour movement was an important element for an understanding of the changes in the nature of feminist activism in the region. In Chapter Four I pointed to the difference in forms of activism for men and women, for example, men participating in union activism and women participating in the women's guilds and auxiliaries, to illustrate unity and shared interest in ensuring 'safe space'. In that context the struggle for 'safe space' evolved from the material conditions of dangerous work and social hardship experienced by the working class within the region. Safe space for men was important, and it was a shared story. The notion of unity and shared interest in 'safe space' was a useful device for illustrating that, despite a general lack of attention in much of the literature to women's activism, women did have agency within the region's labour movement. However, their activism and agency occurred within a hierarchical arrangement that influenced the nature of their activities. This chapter will analyse this hierarchical arrangement.

In Chapter Two I signalled that as an emergent field of study, peak union literature contains few studies focusing on the agency of women activists, and considerable work remained in excavating these stories and applying gender analysis. Chapters Six and Seven continued to recover stories about women's activism in the region. Chapter Six focused on women activists who identified with and contributed to the power and purpose of SCLC. The chapter demonstrated the SCLC had higher than average representation by women in peak union bodies and that women's representation and active participation, as union delegates to the SCLC increased between 1975 and 1980. Chapter Seven focused on women activists who contributed to the development of activism by and for women that not only resulted in the establishment of the WWIC but also saw increasing engagement and clearer understanding by the SCLC in issues such as sexual harassment that were initiated by their female delegates.

The purpose of Chapter Eight is to carry out a gender analysis of the changing nature of women's activism in the region that builds on previous work on peak union bodies and gender (see, for example, Brigden, Forbes-Mewitt & Snell, Pocock, 1997; Curtin, 1999; Cooper, 2000; Williams, 2002; Franzway, 2002; Ledwith & Colgan, 2002). This section of the chapter explores how women's activism in 1980 changed and emerged from the constraining forces and the possibilities embedded in the gendered patterns that existed in the region's labour movement during 1975 (Connell, 1980, p. 42). This is the basis of a 'generative' approach that demonstrates how feminist activism within the region changed, although it still remained embedded in cyclical historical patterns of gendered relationships within the region.

Social institutions, such as the SCLC and the WWIC, engage with and produce ideology, and therefore they are sites of a struggle to control and define the underlying ideological basis for gender (Althusser, 1971). Connell and Messerschmidt have argued that 'gender hierarchies are affected by new configurations of women's identity and practice ...' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 848). The relocation of the centre of feminist activism from the SCLC in 1975 to the WWIC in 1980 represented a significant change in the consciousness and practice for women activists within the region. This change not only impacted on women, but it also influenced the leadership of the SCLC and helped shape power and purpose at the SCLC. This chapter addresses the hierarchical institutional configurations of gendered patterns that provide the cultural and ideological framework of feminist activists. These patterns, in turn, materialised in changed daily practices and interactions (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 950) of feminist activists. Industrial relations researchers including Forrest (1993), Pocock (1995, 1997), Hansen (2002) and Greene and Kirton (2006) and labour historians, for example, Lake (1986, 1996, 1998) and Magarey (2007) have claimed that the issue of men must become part of the gender debate if we are to understand how unequal relationships are embedded in capitalist and patriarchal values. These values are constantly renegotiated and maintained. The above authors have pointed to the presence of structural and cultural barriers to universal women's participation in unions. This has resulted in an under-representation of women generally in the Australian trade union movement (Cooper, 2000, p. 54). Barriers include the structure of women's employment, the gendered division of domestic labour, trade union structures and trade union culture (Greene & Kirton, 2006). Research demonstrates that union practices have been constructed by men and are 'built around men's needs and masculine ways of

operating' (Greene & Kirton, 2006, p. 494). Women who do participate in trade union activism are confronted with patriarchal ideology, which manifests itself in all kinds of subtle ways to the extent that women often described being symbolically, rather than actually, excluded from trade union domains. One example of this is when their concerns are treated as special needs (Cobble, 2007).

In order to understand the changing nature of feminist agency it is necessary to conceptualise the gendered relationships in which the SCLC and the WWIC are embedded and the way that gender shaped the practices of activists. To achieve this, the following section of the chapter will first provide a framework for the analysis by introducing the concept of gender regimes drawing on the work of R W Connell (Connell, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1985, 1987, 1995, 2002; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell's analytical framework has the potential to extend an understanding of the relationship between gender and power (see, for example, Brigden, 2003) and gender and hierarchical structure (see, for example, Forbes-Mewitt & Snell, 2006) in peak union body literature and industrial relations literature.

Gender Regimes

The term 'gender regime' used in this thesis refers to the gender hierarchy of the region's labour movement. The concept of gender regimes introduced by Connell (1987) refers to the 'institutionalised power relations between men and women where gender is a property of institutions and historical processes, as well as of individuals' (Wajcman, 1998, p. 3). Gender regimes, according to Connell (1987, 2002), can be analysed through the application of a structural inventory of the four key patterns of relations introduced in Chapter Two. These are power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations (Connell, 1987, pp. 111–116; 2002, pp. 60–70). Changes in each of these four gender structures tends to be triggered through broad social contradictions that result in internal 'crisis tendencies' generated within the gender regime that can 'undermine' and force change in each of the structures (Connell, 2002, p. 71). Drawing on Habermas (1976), Connell explains that this approach:

... allows us to distinguish periods when pressures for change are well controlled, or are gradually building, from periods when crisis tendencies erupt into actual crisis and force rapid change. It also allows us to identify interests that can be mobilized for and against change, by examining where different groups are located in the structure under

pressure, and how they come into being within that structure (Connell, 2002, p. 71).

Relevant groups in this study include the various women's groups associated with the SCLC that have been identified in Chapters Four through to Chapter Seven. Key individuals and the groups identified are from male and female dominated unions affiliated with the SCLC and the various committees that constitute the SCLC. I will argue that in 1975 and 1980, pressures for change to the gender order were gradually building in the face of interests both for and against change to the gender regime of the SCLC (and the labour movement more broadly). Despite the highly colourful and intense period surrounding the emergence of the WWWCC and WWIC the pressures were still 'controlled' in each of the four structures (Connell, 1987) that influence gendered relations at the SCLC and the broader labour movement in the region. These pressures were influenced by historical, regional meta-trends identified in Chapter Four. These meta-trends were a high degree of organisational articulation and safe space, underpinned by three key elements: strong leadership, broad alliances and place consciousness. These themes and elements were also evident in women's activism within the region, that was presented in Chapters Six and Seven.

Gender-Based Analysis

The following section of the chapter will use gender-based tools to analyse changes in feminist activism and agency between 1975 and 1980 with a focus on regional patterns identified in Chapter Four. The following section provides a description of the structural factors that influence gender relations based on the model developed by Connell (1987, 2002) which includes power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations.

The first two sets of relations are power relations and production relations. These two sets of relations are difficult to separate as they are intimately entwined with each other. In feminist industrial relations literature, theorists who utilise Connell's work on gender regimes rarely discuss these two sets of relations separately; rather they tend to use the terms interchangeably, with an emphasis on production relations. See, for example, the work of Williams (2002). In this thesis I have drawn on Brigden's (2004) distinction between 'organisational power' and 'collective movement power' to differentiate between power relations and production relations, respectively (see Chapter Two).

Brigden draws attention to the distinction between ‘how’ peak union bodies mobilise power and ‘why’ (for what purpose). I found this distinction useful for thinking about the difference between power relations and production relations, while at the same time I acknowledge the complex intersections between them. In this chapter the term ‘power relations’ refers to how power relations (within and between the SCLC and WWIC) were mobilised, thus highlighting organisational power as it is enacted between ‘the leadership and individual affiliates or groups of affiliates, or between factions’ (Brigden 2004, p. 489). Production relations are concerned with ‘collective movement power’ that mobilises ‘power for’ its ‘affiliates and members collectively, above and beyond section union interests’ (Brigden, 2004, p. 488) and common purposes. Production relations defined in this way allow the analysis to highlight how activism itself was done (once collective purposes were decided).

Power Relations

The first dimension of Connell’s model is power relations. Power relations are seen as a key dimension for understanding gender regimes by a range of feminist theorists including Acker (2006), Gherardi (1995) and Gherardi and Poggio (2001). Connell argues that gendered power relations include direct control over individuals; oppression by one group against another; ‘masculine bias’ in institutionalised practices that favour men; and discursive power (Connell, 1987, pp. 107–111; 2002, pp. 58–60 but also see Burton 1991, p. 13–21). Connell claims that change in gendered power relations stems from a contradiction between women’s subordination at work and at home versus the abstract ideas of equality. This has resulted in ‘crises tendencies’ that have led to the questioning of men’s control of institutions and men’s power in sexuality and the family.

The period between 1975 and 1980 can be characterised as the gradual building of the ‘crises tendencies’ in power relations in the region’s labour movement. There can be little argument that the masculine nature of the region had historically resulted in institutionalised practices that favoured men and resulted generally in subordinated roles for women at work and at home and that there was a tension with abstract ideas of equality.

Yet, the SCLC’s ability to mobilise and sustain union and community connections has resulted in the region’s labour movement being seen as less ‘masculinist and parochial’

than other peak union bodies that were also dominated by left-wing politics and mining (Ellem, 2006 drawing on Markey & Nixon, 2005; Ellem & Shields, 2005; Ellem, 2005). The region's left political alliances ensured a commitment to equality for women that was evident in 1975 in the SCLC at leadership level. Women interviewed claimed equality was part of CPA and Socialist Party policy (Arrowsmith interview, 24 January 2003, Borrow interview, 12 July 2003) and adhered to by the leadership of all the local political parties. Like the men, many of the women were also active in local leftist political groups. Examples of women mentioned earlier in the thesis include Sally Bowen, who was the leader of CPA, and Peggy Errey, who was highly respected in the Labor Party.

Political party membership was an important source of mobilisation power held by the SCLC (see Chapter Four). However, much of the power afforded to women as a result was complicated by intersections of gender, politics, the influence of key unions in masculine industries, such as the Waterside Workers and the Miner's Federation, and spatial relations that helped retain both the SCLC's collective power (power for members) and its institutional power (power over its members) (Ellem & Shields, 2004).

All participants who were involved with the SCLC that were interviewed believed it to be an essential part of the success of feminist activism within the region in both 1975 and 1980. Doreen Borrow confirmed the importance of the involvement of the SCLC when we discussed power relationships that impacted on regional activist groups in an interview. According to Doreen, if any activism in the region did not have the 'imprimatur of the SCLC on it' then its activities were much more difficult to mobilise. Shirley Nixon confirmed the relevance of the power of the SCLC for feminist activism in the region. She claimed that:

... the SCLC was very significant for anything to do with leftie or any new ideas. I knew that Merv and the trade union movement would back us through anything. It was the potential influence that the Labour Council gave us, despite the fact that they didn't have any feminist ideas; they were just into struggle (Nixon interview, 11 June 2003).

Shirley was very aware of the power politics of the time. When I asked how much voice the women actually had on any of the issues, she went on to talk about how anything they wanted to do had to be done 'behind screens' and 'speaking through a man'.

Shirley and a number of other interviewees understood that they created space with the relationships that were possible at a given time, and in 1975 and 1980 their various relationships with Merv and other men in leadership positions in the trade union and political spheres were important. Shirley claimed that Merv listened to and respected women's views on the world and attempted to integrate them into union policy. One example of this is when Merv attempted (unsuccessfully) to continue the support for the inclusion of a pro-abortion statement in the Working Women's Charter at the ACTU on behalf of the WWWCC (Taylor interview, 2 November 2004; WWWCC *minutes*, 20 August 1979).

When I asked Shirley Nixon how Sally Bowen had her opinions heard by Merv, she described big friendly dinner parties with lots of political discussion. Sally's influence as leader of the CPA, leader of the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries was significant, especially because Merv saw her as one of his mentors (Nixon interview, 11 June 2003). The Miners' Women's Auxiliaries (and its IWD committee) had strong organisational support from the SCLC. Public support for the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries was evident in media images of their meetings which often depicted Merv in attendance (see, for example, WIN TV 30 July 1975). The WWWCC also received this type of support. Merv's name was not only the signature on the letter inviting wider support from women's groups for initiating broader activity around the Working Women's Charter (SCLC *SCLC correspondence*, 24 November 1978), but his name appears at the top of their communication tree (WWIC WWWCC *communication tree*, undated) and was also at the top of attendance list at the initial meeting (WWIC WWWCC *minutes*, 6 November 1978). When the FIA and the Amalgamated Workers failed to send a representative to the initial meeting to discuss the Working Women's Charter they received a letter from Merv encouraging them to send a representative to the next meeting (SCLC *correspondence*, 24 November 1978).

Not all women's initiatives were supported in such an unconditional manner. I asked Doreen Borrow about support of the SCLC for the committees she was active on. Doreen had been active on the SCLC peace committee for a number of years. In 1975, she was an organiser for the APTU; she was also involved with WWWCC, CARP and a Chilean Solidarity Group. She identified three issues that were intertwined: gender, political alliances and regional alliances. First, it was difficult to get women into positions of power at the SCLC and meeting structure ensured you could not raise

issues from the floor: ‘You couldn’t get the floor. You’d try to raise an issue but they wouldn’t give you the floor. In those days, it wasn’t like today, it was pitiful. It was meant to marginalise ...’ (Borrow interview, 10 July 2004).

The organisational power of the SCLC over its members (to shape policies and ideology) was through the hierarchical structure of committees.

The SCLC operated this way, you have the SCLC and then in those days they had committees. They had the disputes committee, they had the waterfront committee, they had the peace committee, they had various ones that looked after health and housing. You had to be elected from the floor, by the delegates, to be a member of that committee ... (Borrow interview, 10 July 2004).

Meetings were not open to all voices; rather it was delegates of committees who raised issues on the floor. It was members of the Services Committee that recommended support for the CARP campaign (prior to its agenda being dominated by head office) and for the IWD bus that took the women to the IWY march in Sydney in 1975. Decisions were clearly decided prior to the meetings. Decisions were ratified at public meetings.

Merv was ex-officio on every committee in the SCLC. So he always made sure he was out to win the vote ... Once [when he didn’t have the numbers] here, he got a member of the glovemakers’ union to come down from Sydney to [vote to provide the majority] (Borrow interview, 12 July 2003).

The hierarchical structure of committees and strong leadership clearly reproduced institutional practices that ‘contained’ the direction of changes in policies, choices of campaigns and the ideological commitments of the organisation.

Statements of many of the interviewees supported Doreen’s claim that this situation was also complicated both by political alliances and by regional loyalties:

You’ve got to understand the times we lived in. And the question of the split in the CP [1969 when the SWP formed a breakaway group from the CPA], the impact it had on most organisations, which included the Chilean Solidarity Committee and CARP. The control of them was outside the labour movement. So anything outside of that! We [Irene Arrowsmith, Doreen Borrow and Monica Chalmers] were only talking about it today, when the May Day Committee in Sydney brought out

Quilapayun³³ for the May Day Celebrations [in 1975]. That committee had mostly Communist Party members. When they came down and asked for a donation from the SCLC, or from the [local] May Day Committee, I'm not sure which. All they'd give was \$100. And they had a lot of money at that particular time. But because of the people that were in control of May Day [in Sydney] they weren't about to support it ... You'd have to live through the times to recognise the terrible bitterness and machinations (group discussion, 19 August 2004).

Doreen indicated that she and her partner Mike Clunne (Firemen and Deckhands' Union) often discussed SCLC policy at home and while she had strong opinions on a number of issues, she valued Mike's advice. She³⁴ disagreed with the SCLC policy position to focus on uranium rather than international peace.

I was on the peace committee and they wanted to form a branch of the Australian Peace Movement, but Mike said 'No, we're working with the SCLC because it's the peak body representing the workers in this area and whatever we can do, we'll work with the Labour Council, which is the correct way to work', so we stayed with the Labour Council. ... All they wanted to do, they got sidetracked, they became very nationalist and just wanted to concentrate on the mining and export of Uranium, keep Uranium in the ground and the Anti Nuclear Movement, putting aside the international struggle for peace, which was directed by the World Peace Council, which we had originally been affiliated with (Borrow interview, 10 July 2004).

These examples demonstrate that political alliances, regional loyalties and gendered relations had implications for production relations within the SCLC. The examples also point to three key influences on power relations in 1975 in the SCLC articulated by respondents. They are political affiliation, negotiating a gender regime where identity was constructed through relationships with men, and place consciousness.

At this point in the chapter, I need to go back to Connell's claim that changes in power relations emerge from tensions between subordinated positions for women at work and at home with abstract ideas of equality. Women's subordinated positions in both spheres and the ideas of equality emerged as complex ideas in this study. First, analysis of the

³³ Quilapayun was a Chilean singing group who specialised in resistance songs. In 1975 they accompanied Joan Jara (wife of Victor Jara, a singer and songwriter, who had been murdered in a political coup) on a tour of Australia to raise awareness of the situation in Chile.

³⁴ It should be noted that while Doreen did support the SCLC choice of direction she nevertheless also continued to be active with issues of world peace (WWIC *WWCC minutes*, various, SCLC *minutes*, various).

data using the separation of women's subordination at work and at home was difficult. This will be addressed in the following section. Second, change was occurring in the ideological meaning of equity and production relations at SCLC between 1975 and 1980. This will be discussed in the sections on production relations and symbolic relations below.

Attempts to understand power relations in the region through a separate analysis of subordination at 'work' and subordination at 'home' were difficult. For many of these women there was little or no separation between their work and home. Many of the stories did not fit into either/or categories. A more subtle understanding of the polarity between work/home and public/private categorisations was required. Many of the women activists were married or in relationships with significant trade union activists. The following examples are only indicative of a wide range of heterosexual relationships evident in the SCLC in 1975. Sally Bowen's husband Dave was the secretary of his mining lodge. Leading member of CARP, June Lelli was married to Nando (secretary of the FIA). Doreen Borrow's partner Mike was a delegate to the SCLC representing the Firemen and Deckhands' Union. Teachers' Federation delegate to the SCLC, Betty Perry, and her husband Jack (a builder) were close friends with Max and Shirley Graham (both delegates to the SCLC from the Teachers' Federation) and Jim and Lil Dombroski. If theory is used that insists on separating public and private spheres, these women's influence and power becomes invisible (Fletcher, 1998, 1999). Official decisions made in the board room of the SCLC (and recorded in minutes) were often underpinned by political and gendered processes that occurred outside formal SCLC meetings. These processes included close friendships and marital relationships.

1980

By 1980 women activists were embedded in two different sets of power relations. These relations were with the SCLC and the newly emerged WWIC. A strong relationship existed between the two organisations, particularly through the WWCC group, which was a standing committee of the SCLC, and the steering committee responsible for establishing the WWIC. Nevertheless, at a structural level the SCLC's commitment to feminist activism continued in 1980 when feminists established their own space at the WWIC. This commitment is demonstrated through institutional support for the activities of the Working Women's Charter Group, such as the 'Chicken Shop' incident. This was also evident informally when Monica Chalmers and a group of women activists stood

behind Val Dolan at the police station, armed with the threat that unions would all strike if Val did not make it home to her children (see Chapter Seven).

WWIC

While the original steering committee of the WWIC had both men and women on it, in 1980 the membership defeated a move by the Teachers' Federation Non-sexist group to allow male members in the WWIC. The WWIC became an all female group that nevertheless reflected the key elements that contributed to the regional meta-trends. This included broad alliances, strong leadership and a strong sense of place consciousness that underpinned the desire for safe space and the high degree of organisational articulation. The following section illustrates these key elements.

The broad alliances that contributed to the establishment of the WWIC also reflected similar tensions (to those at the SCLC) within the power relations at the WWIC. Shirley Nixon described political splits of this time as being like sections of the church:

Sally's mob were communists, 'they' were the socialists. Do you remember all those variations? It was the various versions of socialism or communism; they were like sections of churches ... I was in the Sally Bowen camp.

She believed there were tensions between political factions, but women firmly believed that feminism was more important, given that both 'the socialists and communists were sexist'.

The women's centre [WWIC] appealed to women across the board; I remember the others being there, the others being the socialist mob. There were some tensions, some people wouldn't speak, but it was definitely a point of contact where people realised it was slightly more important than any 'ism'. ... both were sexist.

While feminism was a unifying factor for the women, it was the traditional, regional axes of power that contributed to recreating power relations. Key leadership roles in the region's labour movement were CPA and left of the ALP. These were evident within activities at the WWC and the WWIC in 1980. For example, Sally Bowen (CPA) played a role in ensuring that Trish Donaldson (CPA) took charge of drawing up the original constitution for the WWIC. Peggy Errey (ALP) provided significant advice to Diana Covell (SWP) around the Jobs for Women campaign that ensured decision

making in the Jobs for Women campaign would be controlled by women who were complainants (see Chapter Seven).

These differences were evident in interviews. Political affiliation was one expression of difference as women talked about the relationships between women. This is seen in the example above where Shirley identified as a 'communist', but also named the 'others' who were socialists. Differences were also identified in descriptions of the criteria for political experience and descriptions of leadership qualities. Constructs of both 'other' and political experience (that was regarded as wisdom) were complex and differentiated along several axes that had implications for gendered power. Examples of 'othering' are also evident in the following quotes.

If I had things that separated me out from the women at the Women's Centre it was that I considered myself a radical feminist. ... There was a lot of input from the SCLC and a lot of women were only celebrated if their husbands and their union mates would let them be. I really felt that a lot of the agendas were driven by male dominated institutions; I thought they should be challenged. There was a bit too much focus on the 'jobs for women' campaign. I felt that many people ignored what we were doing with the health centre. I think we went off on our own ways though. There was the 'Jobs for women group' and the 'health collective', I was very much into the health collective, and I often didn't know what was happening with the women in the other group.

... The women in Wollongong were different, but if we had to categorise, we did have two broad based groups. What I'd call the university and the union women, but even so they were all women from this region, there was more a feeling that this was not just a feminist enterprise, but this was a Wollongong community sort of thing.

Participants' descriptions of Ruby Makula (see Chapter Seven) and Sally Bowen (see Chapter Six) were examples of the constructions of wisdom. Ruby was one of a number of women whose leadership was defined and recognised by all participants. Barbara Biceago and Val Dolan described Ruby as someone who had a very special gift. She was a practical activist, not academic, not intellectual. She was someone who encouraged others. She believed in the power of others, of people, and using resources to achieve potential. She introduced Val Dolan to the practicalities of lobbying ALP members and political parties; she took Shirley Nixon to her first WEL meeting in Sydney; and she attended Marxist study groups with Maureen McGee. Ruby, like Merv

Nixon, was able to contain political factions, draw people together and inspire them in order to facilitate relationships.

Sally Bowen was a structural facilitator. She was able to identify and create new possibilities that linked various organisations. Sally Bowen was not only leader of the CPA, she had a leadership role in the Miners' Women's Auxiliary. She played a key role in encouraging relationships between the Miners' Women's Auxiliary members and members of the WWIC. Sally 'coaxed' the mining women by obtaining a portable building from the Coal Board. The building was installed behind the WWIC with the help of the Miners' Federation. The building became the home of the Miners' Women's Auxiliary and was named 'Sally Bowen Hall' in her honour. With this interesting solution Sally was able to maintain 'a space of their own' for the auxiliaries yet sited next to the younger women at the WWIC.

According to Irene Arrowsmith:

The women from the Miners' Women's Auxiliary were very nervous of women's liberation and their outrageous behaviour. Sally coaxed them here. ... They always met in their own demountable [portable building]. They didn't have much to do with the house, they were very nervous of it, as were their husbands. Because it was trade union policy [to support the Women's Centre] the men all supported it, but they didn't like it. They were very nervous about having anything to do with 'that type of woman' ... [they] didn't approve.

Sally strongly encouraged the women from the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries to become involved with campaigns involving the Women's Centre. Joyce Critcher (who became secretary of the Combined Miners' Women's Auxiliary in 1982 when Sally resigned) recalled Sally encouraging her to work with younger women from the WWIC.

In 1980 Sally's dinner parties still provided a forum for women's opinions; however, some changes had occurred. In 1978 Merv married Shirley and by 1980 Shirley (one of the founding members of the WWIC) was also sitting at Sally's dinner table. Sitting alongside Shirley was Jane Taylor (one of the younger activists from the WWIC who was also mentored by Merv). Shirley recalled that there were not too many women in that close circle. The friendships built around political alliances, such as the circles of friends seen from the Teachers' Federation or those from the CPA who attended Sally's dinner parties were part of the gendered power relations of the region. In all these

relationships the boundaries between home and work, as well as public and private, intersected but were complicated by both political and emotional relationships.

An understanding of the power relations involved in women's activism during this time requires an acknowledgement of the opportunities that were available to feminist activists through their relationships with men and women who were in leadership positions in the region's labour movement. The examples provided indicate that Sally and Shirley were able to more easily access support from Merv Nixon in his role as secretary of the SCLC because of their close personal relationships. In 1975 Doreen could not, and she had to work through her relationship with Mike to have her voice heard. In 1975 women at the SCLC were unable to mobilise to support the development of their own space, illustrated by their failed attempts to establish Sally House. By 1980, however, a number of women leaders were able to mobilise a broader support for issues of interest to women, including the founding of the WWIC because of the greater strength of women's collectivism.

The traditional regional patterns of working-class political power were reproduced in relationships at the WWWCC and WWIC in 1980. When the WWIC became an all female group, it reproduced regional meta-trends of broad alliances and a high degree of organisational articulation, strong leadership and a strong sense of place consciousness, as it worked towards the construction of safety for women in the community and their own space from which to organise. Within this broader framework other differences emerged that also influenced power relationships between women activists including age and education level, intellectual versus practical and intellectual and/or professional versus working class; brands of feminism that included radical, conservative, socialist and liberal; as well as local versus non-local status. Strong leadership from extraordinary women including Sally Bowen, Peggy Errey and Ruby Makula facilitated relationships across these differences. Axes present, but silenced, were ethnicity and sexual orientation. These other differences emerged from interviews as modifying factors that tended to reinforce regional working-class feminist identity. During 1975 and 1980 gendered power relations were both changed and unchanged, but these changes did not lead to an 'internal crisis' in the structure of gendered power relations at the SCLC or within the region's labour movement. Instead separate space was created.

Production Relations

Production relations have received considerable attention in feminist industrial relations literature. Production relations stem from men's and women's different relationships to work and home that incorporates sexual divisions of labour in both the public and private realms (Connell, 2002, pp. 60–62). Connell claims that contradictions arise in a gendered imbalance of inputs and outputs of social labour. Examples include work (or input) done by women that is unseen and therefore invisible (Fletcher, 1998, 1999; Jacques, 1993) and outputs that include unequal incomes, conditions and career opportunities (Connell, 2002, pp. 72–73). While there was an increasing consciousness of women's subordination at work during this period, the integrated nature of the region's labour movement ensured that both systemic barriers (Acker, 2006) and opportunities (Connell, 2002) for feminist activists existed side by side, albeit embedded in gendered relationships.

In the context of this thesis, production relations in organisations included the development of policy and activism around work, politics and social conditions. Activism included meetings with employers, picket lines or tent embassies and political lobbying. A key change in production relations for female activists was a shift in who they were doing their activism with, and the types of organisational rituals embedded in processes, for example, in meeting protocols. In 1975 the activists were mostly working with men; by 1980 much of this activism was based on women's relationships with other women. In 1975 women activists had to negotiate the formal rituals embedded in SCLC meeting protocol that Doreen described above as 'designed' to marginalise. By 1980 at the WWCC and WWIC they were engaged in rotating chair and minute-taking positions.

The following section analyses the production relations in which female activists were engaged in 1975 and 1980. Production relations were defined earlier in this chapter as the outcomes of 'collective movement power' (Brigden, 2004). It is concerned with how power was mobilised 'for' affiliates and workers in the region. Understanding these regional relationships contributed to teasing out the changing nature of grass-root activity by the SCLC and women activists. The work done by trade union activists was shaped by the types of employment available within the region, the high unemployment rates and expressions of sexism (see discussion on emotional relations below) and

political and spatial loyalties. During this period women's activism inside the SCLC received the support of men and women albeit in different ways.

Specific areas of need within the region included high male unemployment but there was a much higher level of unemployment for women in both 1975 and 1980. In December 1979 the figure for unemployed women was twice the national average, with 4,189 women registered as unemployed and only 70 job vacancies advertised (*Illawarra Mercury*, 7 March 1980). This figure is a gross underestimation of the situation as at this time married women whose husbands were working were unable to register. Other problems for women identified in the region included isolation due to lack of job opportunities; language and cultural barriers; lack of information about social, health welfare and support facilities; inadequate public transport; and sexist behaviour by employers (SCLC *minutes*, various; WWIC *WWCC minutes*, various). The issues addressed by the SCLC came out of the broader material conditions of day-to-day life within the region. In 1980 some women were still dealing with broader material concerns intertwined with union activity, but they also had the option of dealing with the material concerns of women within the region. I now turn to a more detailed examination of production relation outcomes that women and feminist activists engaged with in 1975 and 1980.

1975

Female trade union activists were engaged in a broad range of SCLC activities during this year. In Chapter Five I pointed out that women's representation as delegates to the SCLC was higher than in other regions, and while men dominated the key positions and committees, there were a number of powerful women on key internal committees who clearly had an influence on key broad social policies (for example, Peggy Errey's role on the Social Services Committee developing SCLC policy during the Medibank dispute). I also indicated that there were a number of workplace campaigns supporting female workers that included hairdressers, teachers, liquor trades, shop assistants at a large retail store and BHP canteen workers that drew on SCLC support. The industries listed here were key areas of employment for women in the region. The liquor trades and shop assistant unions had female delegates on the SCLC. Minutes indicate that female delegates actively negotiated successful outcomes. In the case of the liquor trades, when two women were dismissed and replaced with non-union males, Mrs Lidden from the liquor trades union and 'a representative from the SCLC' negotiated

their reinstatement after bans on the company's canteen were threatened by the FEDFA and the AMWU (SCLC *minutes*, 9 July 1975). While little is known about the dynamics of this incident it should be noted that unions who were engaged in the activism all had representatives on the services committee of the SCLC. The FEDFA and the AMWU were male dominated unions, represented by male delegates, but who also had representation on the services committee of the SCLC. The FEDFA and the AMWU were also key players in the Conspiracy Boutique dispute discussed in Chapter Six. In the Conspiracy Boutique dispute it was a member of the FEDFA who was hit on the head during the dispute. It should be noted that this type of solidaristic union support, or 'secondary boycott action' became illegal in 1977 (Hutson, 1983, pp. 294–95); however, in 1975 it was legal, and it was common practice at the SCLC.

Female dominated industries such as hairdressing and textiles had no representation on the SCLC (because they had no local branches), and they were represented by males from head offices in Sydney. When the SCLC social services committee recommended action be taken to attempt to organise the largely unrepresented workforce in hairdressing two successful Wollongong salons, both owned by young, local female businesswomen, were targeted (WIN TV 2 July 1975). Little is known about the outcome, no report was made to the SCLC, but in a surprising twist it was announced that 'male hairdressers will not charge regular customers and their families who are experiencing financial difficulties' (SCLC *minutes*, 20 August 1975). I assume this recommendation refers to the fact that (male) workers taking part in the wider regional action about wage restraints would not have to pay for haircuts. In this case there was no indication of the type of solidaristic support that generally characterised production relations between unions affiliated with the SCLC in 1975.

In 1975 women's political activism included groups such as IWY, CARP and the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries. The activism centred on working-class living standards. Analysis of minutes of the SCLC for 1975 revealed that the IWY organising committee for the SCLC included both men and women (*minutes*). Content analysis of regional news media (WIN TV) revealed an emphasis on solidarity between both men and women in support of women's activism. For example, news media coverage of the Miners' Women's Auxiliary included footage of Merv and Sally at organising meetings (WIN TV, 30 July 1975). Media coverage of CARP included women's organisers addressing men on work sites (16 April 1973).

1980

By 1980 there was a discernible shift in production relations. Activism could now be clearly labelled 'by women and for women' around employment issues and women's health. One area targeted included renewal of energy around jobs for women in traditionally men's occupations. This can be seen in the 'Jobs for Women' campaign that resulted in the first class action of its type against the largest employer in the area (see, for example, *Illawarra Mercury*, 22 April 1980 and 23 April 1980). Other campaigns saw bilingual information prepared for migrant women (for example, for Turkish women employed at Yallah Meatworks and a nearby chicken farm), on the aims of the Working Women's Charter union rights and union organising. Specific cases of harassment by small employers, for example, 'the Chicken Shop' increasingly occupied members of the Working Women's Charter group. The rapidly declining textile industry in the area was also the subject of at least two campaigns during 1979 and 1980. In 1980 when the WWWCC was involved in a series of clothing factory disputes, the WWWCC received little support from the externally located union. Women from the WWWCC were asked to 'stop interfering in unions' affairs' by a male trade union official from Sydney. In these instances production relations were influenced by gender relations and by place consciousness. Within the region the WWWCC activists had been encouraged and supported by the SCLC to act independently on women's work issues; however, unions outside the region resented what they perceived as interference by women. The incident triggered discussion within the WWWCC about their location 'outside the trade union movement' and their role in the trade union movement (WWCC *minutes*, 17 September 1979). It is worth restating here that the WWWCC redoubled its efforts at consolidation with the SCLC in the next few years.

The analysis of production relations revealed that within the trade union women activists were supported by the SCLC. The public image of activism within the region was one of solidarity between men and women around both trade union issues and social concerns. By 1980 there had been a significant shift to separate organising around women's issues to the WWWCC. Key activism targeted employment issues on campaigns initiated by the WWWCC or referred by the SCLC. There was no 'internal crisis' in production relations at the SCLC. Opportunities for trade union women activists increased inside the SCLC, with the increase in female delegates (see Chapter

Six) and outside. Sexism was described as experienced from individual unions located outside the region, but was also evident in discussion about individual trade unions within the region. This is elaborated in the following section.

Emotional Relations

Emotional relations refer to the types of emotional ‘attachments and pleasure’ that are considered appropriate (or not) within a specific gender regime (Connell, 2002, pp. 62–65). Emotional relations can be either or both positive or negative. A major axis of emotional relations in Western cultures is sexuality. For example, gendered emotional relations can include bias against women (misogyny) and/or notions of romantic attachments (Connell, 2002, pp. 62–65). Broader changes in sexuality provided contradictions and tensions that resulted in ‘double standards’ as some women began to reject the idea that they were ‘objects of desire’ for men and explore various forms of sexuality such as sexual permissiveness, but also the lesbian lifestyles (Connell, 2002, p. 73).

Elements of the masculinity identified within trade unions in Australia include the dominance of working-class culture that is masculine with heterosexual ‘sexual politics that produce[s] homophobia and sexual harassment’ (Franzway, 1997, pp. 134, 144). Shirley Nixon indicated that Sally Bowen was never fully acknowledged for her role in the CPA, and she often had to deal with serious discrimination. Further, she was the subject of significant negative media exposure (Nixon interview, 11 June 2003).

Stereotypical notions of males as breadwinners and women as working for ‘pin’ money (Pollett, 1981) were also evident. Irene Arrowsmith felt that the WWIC had the support of leadership via the SCLC; however, the support didn’t impact on the ideas of the unions, because most unions had male leadership and were nervous of women ‘taking men’s jobs’ coupled with their perception that women were not real workers and were ‘only temporary in the workplace’. Irene talked about her job in the Miscellaneous Workers’ Union office:

... they had a very militant section. I remember a general meeting; they were incensed because there were women there. School cleaners in the main, but also cleaners from the TAFE and university, they were voting a certain way and I remember the watchmen were incensed with ‘bloody women’, who weren’t really workers in their eyes because they weren’t industrial workers (Arrowsmith, 2002).

Heterosexual relationships and emotional relations were significant themes in this research. Many women were either maternalised or sexualised in both 1975 and 1980. It appears some key trade union officials enjoyed their contacts with the 'young women' involved with the WWIC. One respondent who worked for a trade union felt there was an element of the erotic present, with male officials enjoying the attention, as long as it was not their wives who were involved.

On picket lines female activists were often heckled by male trade unionists for being the 'wrong sort of woman' if it was discovered they belonged to the WWIC (Arrowsmith, 2002). Separated women told of how, if they had been married, they would not have been allowed to participate in activities at the WWIC. This demonstrates that having leaders onside is not a sufficient condition for eliminating sexism. Merv Nixon operated at a very centralised level of the trade union leadership, separate from the rank and file, in a peak body which was constrained by its individual union affiliates, which were in turn constrained by members.

One of the major themes that has emerged was the romantic attachments. Many of the key leaders involved with the SCLC had partners who were also activists. The region has a history of working-class women who were not only formidable in their own right, but were reproducing historical patterns of activism that were a 'legacy' (see Schultz 1985, p. 162) of working-class family relations within the region. For example, descriptions of Sally presented earlier in the thesis demonstrate that Sally was not a passive woman. She 'wasn't scared to speak out on anything' publicly (Nixon interview, 11 June 2003) despite the fact that media exposure tended to be negative. In Chapter Five I pointed to an incident during the war years where she threatened to dunk another woman who was refusing to join the union. According to Shirley Nixon:

Most of the communist party were men. Sally was dominant over the men too. Her husband made the tea. Dave, a lovely man ... but he wasn't the boss. Sally was.

When I asked Shirley who was the boss between her and Merv she responded:

Hmm. Me. He would have walked from here to hell for me. And if I said to him, 'and that's why', he got the labour council to do things around women's issues; he would get it up somehow. ... It wasn't only that, he'd been brought up by a woman who had been deserted and had a good insight into the indignities of women in this society, and he'd had some

good teachers in the CP, namely Sally Bowen. He hadn't just been taught; he had instincts that saw the injustices.

When I asked her about whether they talked about activism at home she said:

I don't think we ever thought let's have a campaign about this. You know we'd be talking over meals and so on, there'd be an issue going on in the district and we'd talk about that. And sometimes it didn't happen (sounds a bit boring), I don't think we ever thought lets ... He didn't think of the women's centre, but once it was put to him then he thought ... anything he could do via the labour council ... he wasn't going to contribute any actual muscle work either, but he would take the influence of the labour council along with him.

Shirley's interview also provided a number of examples that illustrate that the SCLC's influence was mediated by personal relationships with male leaders of the labour movement. In Shirley's case she knew she could 'rely heavily on a powerful man'. She described a typical conversation at the dinner table:

If I was thinking about starting a campaign, I would immediately say 'now how do you do it?' And he would say 'try this' ... or 'I'll speak to...' He might only say to me 'go and see so-and-so' but then I would go see that person and say 'Merv said you might be able to help me' ... I was in the usual way manipulative, but how else do you get things done if that's the way?

In retrospect, Shirley felt that in 1980, when the WWIC first opened, many feminist activists did not fully appreciate either the nature of violence and sexism nor depth of domestic violence within the region. She explained her own changing awareness:

I remember, even though I thought I knew a lot about the abuse of women, being horrified at the tales of some of the women. The brutality in the home. I remember that I was going through another growing part of my life. Even though I was already a mature woman, I thought of myself as being politically wise. If you'd have asked me I would've said 'yes, yes, yes'. It is still hidden, so I was shocked and appalled and all those things. I found out we were amateurs (Nixon interview, 11 June 2003).

In 1980 a deeper awareness of issues for women was beginning to emerge from work with clients at the WWIC, and also in their relationships with each other.

Changes in production relations saw a closer working relationship between older and younger activists who had been working increasingly closer together since the 1978 Judith Mitchell campaign and were influencing each other's consciousness and emotions. Doreen Borrow remembered:

... a women's group (might have been from the Women's Centre) had a thing on abortion. Hmm no, wasn't so much on abortion, it was on old women who are my age now. They came down to talk about their lives, work and stuff. They spoke about their lives and their involvement in the women's movement. Some of them said they'd had abortions. The younger women were amazed. Way back then! But people became pregnant, didn't want to or couldn't afford to have the baby; it was really interesting, a bonding time between those old people and the younger ones. Younger ones were looking at them differently and thinking well my life's been like that too. The right to termination. A woman's right to choose. But people don't see that you've had a life. Even my granddaughter says, 'Did you do that, Nan?' (Borrow interview, 10 July 2004).

A number of other participants indicated that they had attended pro-abortion meetings and events. One participant said that at one meeting she'd attended, out of 13 women at least 11 had personally experienced an abortion. Another woman claimed abortion was a working-class issue; as a working mother, she just couldn't have afforded another child.

When reflecting on the work of the health collective Barbara Biceago acknowledged that there was 'no consciousness around lesbian issues, ... lesbian health is women's health, not gay and lesbian' (Biceago interview, 12 November 2004). At least one woman who self-identified as lesbian confirmed that as a lesbian there was no acknowledgement, although this did emerge as a significant theme in the history of the WWIC several years later.

In 1975 emotional relations were clearly embedded in heterosexual working-class relations. In a stereotypical but symbolic sense, many of the women who emerged as leading activists with the SCLC were dedicated class activists in their own right, involved in relationships with husbands where support for each other's work was mutual. However, they were often subject to serious gender discrimination in the organisations they worked for and received negative exposure in the media.

By 1980 the activists had developed a changed awareness of gender issues that was to continue to develop in the coming years as their awareness of the issues deepened. In 1980 they had created their own space that was to allow them to reflect and begin to define their own activist identity and purpose. In 1980 the emotional relations of the women at the WWIC were still grounded in heterosexual relations; however, they were also learning to negotiate within the 'sisterhood' of women activists.

As a concluding remark for this section of the chapter I would like to note that both Shirley's and Sally's growing awareness of sexism and patriarchy was viewed from safe private space. I will come back to this later in the chapter.

Symbolic Relations

Symbolic relations involve the complex patterns of embodied experiences that are resistances to and collusions with culturally accepted meanings of gender. Symbolic relations are those sets of relationships that contribute to the ascription and the normalisation of the cultural meanings of gendered bodies, behaviours and practices (Connell, 2002, pp. 65–68). Crisis tendencies within symbolic relations produce tensions in the ways that patriarchy is given meaning, and the ways particular meanings are legitimised. Connell claims that patriarchal relations are now not justified by essential arguments about a timeless natural gender but by arguments that accept, first, the notion of equality and second, that gender ascriptions can change.

Food has been a significant symbol for women in building, maintaining and strengthening relations. As expected it appeared strongly in the interviews and archival data at the WWIC. Examples previously mentioned in the thesis include, the 'bread and roses' symbol reflected in the CARP campaign, Sally's dinner parties and Merv's and Shirley's breakfast discussions. In discussions about the opening of the WWIC, Irene Arrowsmith reflected on the food she experienced as part of the transition that reflects change between 1975 and 1980. She claimed:

It was a new format for things, new people. When you went to the Women's Centre you didn't have to get dressed properly. Because there were 'terrible' looking people there ... it was so good. Even the food was different. New stuff, no longer just saos [dried crackers] with tomatoes and cheese, but hummus and tabouli and other extraordinary goodies. Heaven! New Heaven!

Food such as this was served at the ‘new’ restaurant in town, where activists from the women’s centre went to relax after meetings. Food was important in allowing social space, but also featured in stories about funding-raising dinners and political dinners.

Descriptions of food and the tables they were served at were highly evocative. A range of ‘table’ experiences during the research process triggered a series of reflections about tables in various contexts. These reflections helped me create a structure or map of relationships that enabled a deeper understanding of the importance of informal relationship building. One significant personal experience involved a men’s table that I discovered when I urgently required a signature from the secretary of the SCLC who was ‘at lunch’ during the construction of the film. The lunch was in a private room at a local Italian restaurant, and the table was surrounded by a large group of about twenty powerful males from the region. I was very surprised that these men, many of whom I thought were arch rivals from different walks of life, could be so relaxed together. This was not a working-class event but a regional table, and it was clearly a regular event where many issues were discussed while at the same time relationships were built in an informal way that blurred business and pleasure, public and private, and personal and political.

During data collection many of the interviews were conducted during meals. For example, when I interviewed Irene Arrowsmith, Doreen Borrow and Monica Chalmers, Doreen had prepared a beautiful lunch for the four of us. The meal provided social space in the middle of the interview that allowed the interviewees the space to relax but also to quiz me about my family. When they established that I had an auntie whom two of them had known at school, there was a positive shift in trust that influenced the stories they told me after lunch. Reflecting on these incidents and stories about Sally’s dinner table, and Merv’s and Shirley’s breakfast table, provided a metaphor that helped me understand links between the public and private. Sally’s dinner table was private, but also part of CPA community. Shirley’s and Merv’s table was a private table but there they discussed significant policy issues. There were a range of tables where different directions for policy and campaigns were discussed, and each of the tables was linked to a range of other tables through the people that sat at them. Sally’s table was informal, she was the leader of the CPA (but not a delegate to the SCLC) but people had enormous respect for her. The formal table of the SCLC board room was not available to Sally in 1975 or 1980. She had to access power in different ways. Tapping into

understanding what happened at these tables was important, it was symbolically a way to understand how ideas were nurtured.

In using this tool I was also able to think about some of the changes in patterns of activism. By 1980 new tables had emerged and those sitting at the older tables had changed. One new table could be visualised at the local Turkish restaurant where some of the older and younger new feminist activists shared new food such as hummus and tabouli after meetings at the WWIC. A significant new table was Shirley's and Merv's private breakfast table, after their marriage in 1978. Shirley also gained some access to committee members by taking minutes at SCLC meetings. Although it is unconfirmed, it is likely that she was responsible for the long entry in the minutes referred to below, in a discussion on sexism at the Wollongong Workers Club.

These examples link back to a theme I noted in Chapter Four when I talked about safe space. These tables were also safe spaces, and as safe spaces they contributed to the development and nurturing of relationships. The image of tables that nurture and create safe space for sets of relationships was a powerful image. It reinforced the understanding that the nature of relations within the region required a more subtle way of thinking about links between the dimensions in each of the theories I had utilised in the study. Reflecting on the way relationships were nurtured and consolidated at different tables was useful. However, reflecting on the way the tables were linked provided an unusual symbolic visual map of flows of regional relations that shaped how I understood Connell's four sets of power relations.

Each of these four sets of relations – power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations – emerged and developed at uneven rates (in comparison to each other) yet in practice they are intertwined. Each pattern of relations is influenced by all of the other sets of relations and result in configurations of patterns in a particular time and place that 'deal with' (rather than being 'determined by') the social relations of gender (Connell, 1987, pp. 139–140). For Connell relations between these configurations of patterns of power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations result in a core of hegemonic masculinity that is based on the 'authority of masculinity' and 'the power of men' that limit the power of periphery groups (other masculinities and all femininities) to 'gain cultural definition and recognition as alternatives' (Connell, 1987, p. 186). The concept of hegemonic masculinity has often been used as an analytical tool in industrial relations (see, for

example, Kainer, 2006; Wajcman, 2000) and labour history (see, for example, Taksa, 2000, 2005) and organisational studies (Hearn & Collinson, 2006; Sinclair, 1998), and as a theory has current relevancy in attempts to understand the relationships between groups in gendered regimes (Acker, 2006; Connell, 1987, 2002; Wajcman, 1999).

Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity provides one way of thinking about gendered power relationships that places ‘men as men’ (Hearn & Collinson, 2006) firmly on the agenda while examining the gendered nature of regional influences that emerged from the research data. Hegemonic masculinity has been defined as a configuration of gender practices in which a stereotypical idealised version of masculinity supports, sustains and legitimates patriarchal power and authority and therefore the dominant position of men and subordinate position of women (Connell, 2005, pp. 76–81). The concept of hegemonic masculinity generally describes a culturally dominant idealised form of masculinity against which other forms of masculinity and femininity are compared and found lacking (Brewis & Linstead, 2001). It is an image of masculinity that few men, including those who belong to the hegemonic group, can live up to. Connell (1990) claimed that the use of the concept allows researchers to explore how gendered identity and behaviour are determined as appropriate (or not) and helps explain how asymmetrical gendered relationships (Gherardi, 1995; Gherardi and Poggio, 2001; Hearn and Collinson, 2006) are constructed and maintained (Lupton, 2000, p. 34; Mills, 1998, p. 172).

Pocock claims that leadership in the trade union movement is traditionally represented as the heroic male and offers rewards that come through the public wielding of power in a job that is exciting and demanding (Franzway, 2000, pp. 84, 136; Pocock, 1997, pp. 20–23). The heroic ideal of leadership is linked to the image of a 24/7 commitment that has tended to perpetuate ‘the myth of the heroic, tough and self-sacrificing official’ (Franzway, 2000). Current understanding of trade union masculinities in the Illawarra is built on homosocial notions of working-class solidarity, formed between men digging in the bowels of the earth or sweating in the huge ‘industrial playground’ that was the Port Kembla steelworks (Boas, 2001, pp. 20–24). Other homosocial images developed in Chapters Four and Five include miners organising in the face of the cold war at the pit, risking exposure in May Day marches that could result in blackballing and persecution by anti-communists and employers. It is a masculinity built on protest and struggle

against capitalist class interests, specifically against BHP (who owned the steelworks and a number of coal mines).

Trade union officials as heroic, tough and self-sacrificing officials is evident in studies of masculinity that usually locate trade union masculinities as 'other' to a hegemonic masculinity within the broader society (see, for example, in Claire Williams's (2002) study of the intersections of masculinities and emotional work in trade unions related to the timber industry). There is a substantial literature that has usefully explored trade union and working-class masculinities and the impact on women and men within the trade union movement. In this thesis I used the concept differently. I wanted to explore and compare masculinities and femininities within the trade union movement in order to explore the nature of feminist activism and the impact of the regional gender regime in which they were located. Rather than cast trade union masculinities as 'other' to a broader societal hegemonic masculinity I cast secretaries of the SCLC as examples of hegemonic masculinity. The gender regime is: hegemonic masculinity (leadership of the SCLC, Merv Nixon in 1975 and 1980); emphasised femininity (in relationships with the leadership of the SCLC, Sally Bowen in 1975 and Shirley Nixon in 1980); other masculinities (male activists in individual trade unions); and other femininities (other female activists in the trade union and labour movement).

In this role Merv reproduced regional patterns of masculine leadership following previous secretaries, including Ted Harvey and Steve Best, and can therefore be cast as a symbolic representation of regional hegemonic masculinity within the region's labour movement. In Chapter Four I demonstrated historical patterns of leadership that included an ability to mobilise regional unionists and activists across a broad range of industrial, social and political issues that enabled a high degree of organisational articulation and the development of 'safe spaces' within the region. These secretaries exhibited the capacity to maintain strong links between the CPA and left of the ALP, forge 'common cause around industrial issues' amongst unionists and provide a voice for regional trade unionists that demonstrated a clear understanding and ability to articulate a commitment to a socialist vision for region (as opposed to being controlled by decisions made in the head offices of BHP). These secretaries were seen as charismatic leaders, whose prowess in team sporting activities and background in mining or steelmaking provided them with credibility for the position.

Hegemonic masculinity in the region is based on heterosexual patterns of relationships. The relationships between hegemonic masculinities and femininities are an important aspect in this analysis. Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is the dominant gender position (1987, pp. 183–188). It maintains its dominant power position, not necessarily by force, but by subordinating other masculinities and all femininities. Collusion in supporting the idealisation of masculinity was evident in the interviews with a number of women. In one example, a younger feminist activist (who was noted for her staunch feminist activism by most other participants) and I discussed the value of using the idea of hegemonic masculinity to examine the relations between the SCLC and the WWIC during the ‘Chicken Shop’ incident. Her response was critical. She claimed the concept was not relevant, that the men were right beside the women, ‘all the way’, stating that on a picket line in 1980 against the Wollongong Workers’ Club the men stood ‘shoulder to shoulder’ with them. The picket line she referred to had been established as a protest against the employment of female strippers at the club. When I checked the SCLC minutes I found the following exceptionally detailed and lengthy decision recorded in response to a letter of complaint about the sexist entertainment:

The SCLC deplores the recent actions of the Wollongong Workers’ Club, the ironworkers’ club and other clubs in the region who hold sexist shows. We, in particular, deplore the actions of the Wollongong Workers’ Club in importing male clients for this purpose. The action at the workers’ club is especially offensive in view of the equal contribution made by women along with men in the foundation of and support for the club over the years.

That shows such as these, which feature striptease performances, put women up for public display as mere sexual objects, ignoring their other human dimensions, and encourage the view of women as being available on demand (which is at the basis of violent attacks on women, such as battery and rape).

That the argument that women are exercising their freedom if they choose to perform in this way is not sustainable in our society where free ... to all job opportunities is not available to women, and where work done by women is still, for the large majority, paid for at lower rates than men receive.

That this council endorses the actions of the women (*and a man*) who took part in the demonstrations against these performances at the Ironworkers’ Club and the Wollongong Workers’ Club.

That this council would remind the Wollongong Workers' Club that the SCLC was instrumental in saving the club from liquidation in the not too distant past, and that, in full awareness of the Club's financial situation, council urges the workers' club to keep principles of equality firmly in mind when promoting the club.

The trade unions and peace groups have given patronage to the club by holding meetings there. The Labour Movement holds such functions as the visit of Sister Rosalie Bertell, the seminar on the role of Creative Arts on the Workers' Movement and trade union meetings in the club, along with such functions as the Yugoslav National Day celebration.

We commend the club for its hosting of such activities as May Day and Hiroshima Day and for the presentation of the working-class theatre/restaurant show by Bread and Circus.

If the workers' club is to justify its existence and keep the support of the labour movement, we make known it must provide alternatives to bourgeois culture such as is available anywhere else and not participate in the promotion of sexism.

That women's representatives and the SCLC address Wollongong Workers' Club Committee on the matter (SCLC *minutes*, 13 August 1980).

This entry was unusually long for SCLC minutes. The strong institutional response in the statement demonstrated that symbolic support for the activism of the women on this issue is evident; however, the response also indicated that the men of the trade union movement did not stand beside the women on this picket line. It is important to note that although support for women's issues was evident, it was symbolic. The strength of the symbolic support may have resulted in 'forgetting' by the young woman mentioned on the previous page. Several other participants queried my interest in the history of the WWIC; they regarded the SCLC as 'much more important'. It should be noted that the point, strongly made by several other respondents, including Shirley Nixon and Val Dolan, was that it was the women who did all the 'actual work' towards the establishment of the WWIC. This pattern reflects findings by Jude Elton, who claimed that even when the leaders of unions were sympathetic, initiation and follow-through on issues supporting women is the result of organising and activism by women (Elton, 1997, p. 111).

Studies of masculinities have undergone considerable development since the 1980s and since pivotal data for this thesis was gathered. In a recent re-examination of work around gender regimes and the idea of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) call for a 'reformulation' of the concept that will firstly, emphasise the agency of women; secondly, recognise spatial dimensions; thirdly, emphasise the embodied experience of privilege and power; and fourthly, pay more attention to the dynamics that recognised 'internal contradictions' that allowed possibilities of movement towards gender democracy' (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 829). Each of these four issues have been addressed in the thesis.

Hegemonic masculinities are relational not only in relationship to other masculinities, but also to femininities. Gender regimes included relationships between hegemonic masculinities, emphasised femininities, other masculinities and other femininities (Connell, 1987). Connell and Messerschmidt recognise that the concept of emphasised femininities had been mostly overlooked in much of the literature utilising the concept (2005, p. 848). They also pointed to the difficulty in practice of demonstrating an internal dynamic of hegemonic masculinities that is 'positive' (2005, p. 853) and one that contributes to depicting masculinities that do not simply reproduce hegemonic relations and patriarchal power, but also attempts to achieve equality with women (2005, p. 853). It is a positive image of hegemonic masculinity that I am articulating, without denying that 'some men are bastards' and that institutional processes do discriminate against women.

Connell further claimed that relations between hegemonic masculinity and other groups (emphasised femininities, other masculinities and other femininities) prevented other groups from 'gain[ing] cultural definition and recognition as alternatives, confining them to ghettos, to privacy, to unconsciousness' (Connell 1987, p. 186). This lack of cultural definition makes it difficult to clearly define other masculinities and femininities (Connell 1987, p. 183). He draws attention to feminist theorists, including Irigaray (1985) whose work demonstrates 'the absence of any clear-cut definition for women's eroticism and imagination in a patriarchal society' and how little the leading theorists could agree on what were the characteristics of women amongst the plethora of traits. This definition could be usefully applied to understanding femininities in relationships with stereotypical working-class male trade unionists. It is less useful when attempting to understand the gendered relations in the labour movement in this

case study, especially male leaders who were committed to playing a positive role on gender issues.

Connell claimed that emphasised femininities are patterns of femininity defined around compliance with the subordination of women and 'oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men' (Connell 1987, p. 183, but also in Connell & Messerschmitt, 2005). Emphasised femininities are generally characterised by feminine virtues which are given the 'most cultural and ideological support at present'. Connell claims that most histories recognise and assume conventional heterosexual femininity, while ignoring the experience of 'spinsters, lesbians, unionists, prostitutes, madwomen, rebels and maiden aunts, manual workers, midwives and witches' (1987, p. 199). In Connell's model other femininities, which are not emphasised femininities, are 'defined centrally by strategies of resistance or forms of noncompliance [with desires of all masculinities], others are defined by complex strategic combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation to broader societal gender norms' (1987, p. 183).

In this context there were two key problems for this case study. First, the interests and desires of men are generally defined in homo-social terms, locating masculinity as desiring autonomy and mobility in their resistance against capitalist interests in the public sphere. The projection of these characteristics on to leadership has resulted in leadership that is depicted as engaged in a heroic journey (Sinclair, 1994; Laneyrie, 1995; Fulop & Laneyrie, 1995). Second, definitions of women could only be constructed as supporting men's desires consciously or unconsciously and consequently were embedded in a gender regime that cast emphasised femininities as maternalised or sexualised figures. These are key ingredients for an unhappy marriage! Reconfiguring men's desire as heterosexual, and importantly, desiring safe space rather than autonomy, was fruitful.

In constructing Merv Nixon as the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, I could also demonstrate a symbolic change in femininities in the region between 1975 and 1980. In this explanation Sally Bowen embodied emphasised femininity in 1975 in her role as female leader in the region's labour movement (CPA) and Merv's mentor. As a key member of the Miners' Women's Auxiliary in 1975 Sally represented a form of women's activism that was just aware but somewhat nervous of women's liberation ideas. Shirley Nixon embodied emphasised femininity in 1980 as Merv's wife. Her brand of feminism embraced socialism (as a member of CPA) and liberalism (as a

member of WEL) but was quickly developing a deepening awareness of the violence against women.

In reconstructing hegemonic masculinity as relational (as heterosexual rather than homo-social) and redefining 'desire' as a desire for safe space in the public sphere, I am also able to reconceptualise power, leadership and purpose at the SCLC in relational terms. Power sometimes could be envisaged as 'power with', rather than relying on Ellem and Shields's (2004) definitions of power as 'power over' as it was used to define organisational power, and 'power for' as it was used to define 'collective movement power' in Chapter Five. This in turn allows me to draw on Fletcher's (1998, 1999, 2007) way of seeing outcomes of relational practice and relational leadership as zest; empowered action; an increased sense of worth; development of new knowledge; and the desire for more connection for both leaders and followers, and also to envisage the relationships between organisations involved in the region's labour movement as mutually benefiting from their interactions as they pursued safe space in industrial and social spheres. Fletcher's model of relational practice, which draws on the work of Jean Baker Miller's (1976) *New Psychology of Women* is summarised in the following section of this chapter.

Relational Practice

Fletcher's (1999) model of relational practice outlines four practices based on relational criteria that are typically not recognised in the work done by women. The model provides the basis for understanding the micro-processes of how 'power with' can be analysed. These practices are preserving, mutual empowerment, self-achievement and the creation of teams.

- i. The first of these categories represents a focus on task and the required relational work of protection, nurturance and connection (1999, p. 53) required to maintain and nurture a project.
- ii. The second refers to enablement of individuals to contribute to tasks and processes, and this will result in growth for both parties.
- iii. The third category is the ability to 'maintain connections with co-workers in ways that would preserve the future growth potential of these relationships' (1999, p. 65).

- iv. The final category addresses issues of creating an environment at an individual and group level to foster 'growth-in-connection' (1999, p. 74).

More recently Fletcher (2007) has linked this work to leadership and the relationship, mutual growth, connection and power relationships between leaders and followers. Fletcher's 'growth fostering connections' require mutual empathy and empowerment that acknowledge vulnerability and individuals who expect both to grow and to feel a responsibility to contribute to the growth of others. Outcomes from the relationship between leaders and followers are seen as zest, empowered action, increased self-esteem, new knowledge and the desire for more connection (Fletcher, 2007). Fletcher stresses that such relationships reflect 'power with', rather than 'power over' and that both the leader and follower experience growth through the connection.

Traditional leadership models that do not emphasise mutual outcomes can be characterised as vampiric. In vampiric relationships one party is likely to experience growth and a sense of accomplishment; however, the other is likely to be left feeling drained and depleted. Fletcher (2007, p. 353) claims that the leadership/follower relationship should be characterised by:

- i. Zest: Connection with the other that gives both members a sense of increased energy and vitality
- ii. Empowered action: motivation and ability to put into practice some of what was learned or experienced in the relational interaction
- iii. Increased sense of worth: Increased feelings of worth that come from the experience of having used one's relational skills to achieve mutual growth-in-connection
- iv. New knowledge: Learning that comes from the experience of having co-created new knowledge by interaction through a fluid process in which members fully contribute their own thoughts and perspective while being influenced by the thoughts, experiences and perspective of the other.
- v. Desire for more connection: A desire to continue this particular connection or establish other growth-fostering connections, leading to a spiral of growth that extends outwards beyond the initial participants.

These characteristics help redefine the nature of the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininities, as presented in this chapter, during 1975 and 1980, and many of the relationships of the female leaders and the women in the SCLC, WWWCC, WWC and WWIC during 1980. The model allows these relationships to be considered as webs of relationships, rather than a hegemonic process. If the relationship between Sally Bowen and Merv Nixon, or the relationship between the WWIC and the SCLC, is conceptualised using these criteria, it is possible to reconstruct their relationship as one of mutual growth. This is one of the major themes that emerged in my data.

The themes that have emerged from this analysis are the results of patterns of relationships that influenced feminist activism associated with the SCLC during 1975 and 1980. In this chapter Connell's structural analysis recommended an analysis of power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations as a useful tool for identifying change in the gender regime in which feminist activism was located. The analysis identified a slow building of 'crisis tendencies' in each of these four areas that was 'controlled', but nevertheless identified key changes that influenced the changing nature of activism by women. However, without including a mechanism for understanding women's activism as 'power with' as well as 'power over' and 'power for', as it was defined by Brigden (2003) and Ellem and Shields (2004), important aspects of the nature of activism were invisible.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

This chapter revisits the broad purpose and the research questions prior to summarising the key findings, considering the contributions of the thesis, the limitations and the implications for further research.

The aim of this thesis was to develop a framework to research and write a history of regional women's activism and engage with current debates on the future directions for writing about women's activism in labour history. Relationships between class analysis and feminist analysis had received considerable attention from feminist labour historians since the early 1970s; however, the relationships between peak union organisations and feminist or women's organisations had not been examined. This study is situated in that gap. It centres on women's activism in two key institutions in the Illawarra region of NSW, Australia that were focal points for women's activism. The first institution, the South Coast Labour Council (SCLC), is the region's peak union body. The second institution, the Wollongong Women's Information Centre (WWIC) is a focal point for women's services and has a strong collective feminist identity.

Two research questions were constructed to interrogate women's activism in the region during two critical years of significant change. The first year was International Women's Year in 1975, and the second, 1980, was the year that Wollongong Women's Information Centre was established. My two guiding research questions were:

1. What were the key historical, social and power relationships that influenced feminist activism in the SCLC and WWIC in 1975 and 1980?
2. In what ways do the concepts of class and gender shape narratives about women's activism?

Key Historical Social and Power Relationships

1975

The key historical social and power relationships that influenced women's activism in the SCLC in 1975 were with the SCLC and left political parties, the ALP and CPA. Although women were members of other organisations, such as CARP, and therefore potentially had access to other 'geographies of power', these groups tended to lose support when their activism was directed from outside the region. A key feature of this study was the identification of the major axes of power, namely, class, gender, political affiliation and union membership and their interrelationships. These axes of power that characterised relationships were firmly embedded in the regional meta-trends identified in Chapters Four and Five. These meta-trends included: the influence of a narrow, heavy industry employment base; the political dominance of left-wing ideology that combined CPA and left ALP influences; a militant tradition of activism that was inherited by unions in other sectors as employment in the region shifted from mining and manufacturing to a growing services sector; and a strong sense of working-class community. The evolution of the SCLC's agency in each of the 'dimensions of peak union agency' (Ellem & Shields, 2004) had created a tight nexus of power relations and relationships with those on the 'inside' of the labour movement. These features were important for activism within the region.

1980

The key historical social and power relationships that influenced feminist activism in the SCLC and the WWIC in 1980 were still those existing between individual women and their various relationships to the SCLC and left political parties. It should be noted that through their various relationships with 'insiders' of the region's labour movement, other geographies of power were being accessed by feminist activists. These enabling relationships were to provide a broader range of power sources for feminist activists from the WWIC as it established its independent identity as a feminist-based organisation and subsequently moved towards separate organising in the mid-1980s. (This development is beyond the frame of this thesis.)

In 1980 many of the women were still embedded in relationships with key members of the region's labour movement. A number of the women's liberation and younger women attracted to the new women's groups such as the WWIC, WWCC and the

WWC were being enabled through mentoring relationships with older female activists or links with key male activists. Relationships had been established with the well-established women's groups such as the IWD Committee and the Miners' Women's Auxiliaries. Members from the SWP, who had recently arrived from Sydney, were also quickly establishing relations with key 'insiders'. The emergence of new groups and the high level of cross-institutional membership provided access to both social and power relationships. Key axes of power were still class, gender and political affiliation but now included those with no political affiliations and the SWP. However, union membership, education level, age, brands of feminism (socialist or radical), ethnicity and sexual orientation became additional axes of power amongst the women.

Between 1975 and 1980 these relationships existed through a range of dimensions crossing boundaries between public and private relations, work and home relations, and social, political and industrial relations. Key relationships with significant women were consolidated and empowered during this period. This is congruent with the argument by Cathy Brigden (2003, 2005) that stories about conception, gestation and birth are important. Stories about creation of space, such as the story about the WWIC, are stories about multiple relations – for there is no such thing as 'immaculate conception'. These women were aware that they were making history, but they were also making space for themselves, for their daughters and for working-class women of the region in public and institutional spaces. While the SCLC remained important at this time it was the changed relationships between women that became the key driver for facilitating activism. When Val Dolan was harassed by the police, it was the women from the Judith Mitchell campaign and the WWCC who stood behind her at the police station. They were standing firmly in their own collective power while also utilising the symbolic power of the SCLC.

Between Gender and Class

The theoretical enquiry and analysis focused on how concepts of class and gender shaped narratives of feminist activism. This question was very slippery and proved to be the most difficult to engage with during the research process. At times, it seemed all roads led back to an emphasis on masculinity or men. It was not until the concluding stages of the thesis writing that I was able to understand some of the dilemmas posed by the second research question.

Ellem and Shields's model (2004) was grounded in an understanding of organisational power that emphasised the SCLC's 'power over' or ability to control its affiliates, and collective movement power that emphasised the SCLC's 'power for', or its ability to enact power on behalf of its affiliates. This explanation had driven most of the research and the writing phase. However, I did not fully recognise that this was also deeply embedded in narrative structure and that it was gendered. 'Power for' and 'power over' (Ellem & Shields, 2004) are the basis for a narrow range of narrative plots about heroic action. Doesn't everyone know that heroes conquer new lands? They do not stay home to nurture; they only stay home if there is a defence to be mounted. The attempt to write against these archetypal plots was akin to the position of other masculinities and all femininities as originally depicted in Connell's gender regime. This position prevented other groups from 'gain[ing] cultural definition and recognition as alternatives, confining them to ghettos, to privacy, to unconsciousness' (Connell 1987, p. 186). From a feminist perspective, the analysis was gender blind (see Chapter Eight). What was missing was an understanding of 'power with'.

Connell's theory was selected to explore gender, in part because his writing around gender regimes was more optimistic about creating change in gender regimes than other theorists (for example, Acker, 2006). It offered the potential to explore opportunities and barriers, rather than just barriers for women within a gender regime. However, the notion of gender regimes is defined in such a way that it still prioritises masculine interpretations, and this was again a significant problem as the emphasis kept sliding back to the SCLC and masculine elements of the study. Gender theories generally accept that definitions of women could only be constructed as supporting men's desires consciously or unconsciously. Consequently, they are embedded in a hierarchical gender regime that depicts emphasised femininities as maternalised or sexualised (compare Gherardi, 1995; Franzway, 2001). Casting the regional gender regime as a hierarchy rather than as a web of both positive and negative relationships, consequently resulted in reproducing the women's stories in a narrow range of narrative plots where women are cast as mothers, lovers or monsters (see Telford, 2003).

Socialist feminists using standpoint theory have focused on epistemological issues that include 'how knowledge is constituted and for what purpose' (Calás and Smircich, 2006 p. 304). Questions are not 'how to eliminate politics', but rather how to gain a broader understanding of 'which politics advance and which obstruct the growth of knowledge';

and ‘for which groups does such politics advance or obstruct knowledge’ (Harding, 2004b, pp. 20–21). An important question for this thesis was: Does the politics of ‘class’ and/or the politics of ‘gender’ currently depicted in labour history obstruct or assist the growth of a collective voice for women activists in the Illawarra region? Both the class-based theory and the gender-based theory used in the thesis assisted me to understand the position of the activists. Yet the underlying assumptions about power and hierarchy embedded in the theories led to a narrow range of narrative structures and therefore incomplete stories. A combination of relational theory and feminist standpoint positions has the potential to disrupt these narratives.

The following section of this chapter addresses how theoretical analysis has been used in this study.

Contributions

In Chapter One, I claimed that the thesis engages with and contributes to debates in four current trends in labour history literature. These are:

1. an ongoing concern about the invisibility of women and their agency in institutional studies
2. an ongoing dissonance between theories of class and gender
3. an emergent interest in peak union and community relationships
4. a growing engagement in peak union literature with spatial awareness.

Engagement in these four debates resulted in contributions that included:

1. the excavation of new material about women activists
2. theory building
3. the use of new research tools.

Identification of Previously Unacknowledged Women’s Activism

The identification of previously unacknowledged women’s activism in the region was a major component of the research for this thesis. The search for women activists, the organisations they belonged to and the activities they engaged in, was an essential first step before the first research question could be addressed. By including two

organisations with different activist bases, namely class and gender, I was able to identify and explore a wider scope of women's activism than is usually explored.

The research excavated many stories about women's activism; I have identified a surprising number of more than 150 women activists who were associated with the SCLC and/or the WWIC during the five years 1975 to 1980 from primary sources. The archival research mined a diverse array of primary sources in order to identify women activists. These included film archives, audio tapes, photo collections, poster collections, newspaper articles, organisational newsletters, unpublished reports, meeting minutes and correspondence, affiliation and attendance records and unpublished historical manuscripts on histories of the WWIC and IWD. The excavation also involved the identification and collation of previous disparate secondary sources about women activists relevant to the history of the SCLC.

Nonetheless, as Brigden (2005) and Cooper (2002) remind us, identification of women activists is insufficient; it is their agency and influence that should be explicated. In order to achieve this, the thesis has combined biographical material about a selection of activists with stories from two institutions that provided a platform for women's activism in the Illawarra region. While I expected that I would find evidence of agency and influence amongst these women, I was very surprised at the extraordinary range of activities in which these women were engaged. I had assumed that the narrow range of employment opportunities for women at this time would result in less scope for activism. Instead, I found women's activism between 1975 and 1980 that addressed issues relevant to all scales of analysis from the body, families and workplaces through to the national and international, that included issues such as rape, child sexual abuse and abortion, as well as concerns for the price of bread, the cost of hire purchase, regional traffic infrastructure, higher education, as well as global issues such as world peace. The extraordinary range of campaigns and activism is not fully addressed in the thesis; however, the examples used were selected to illustrate the key interactions and relationships that shaped women's activism, but that were, in turn, also reciprocally influenced by the women's activism.

Further, an understanding of the broader historical patterns of women's engagement with trade union organisations has also emerged from the thesis. The changing patterns of women's activism between 1975 and 1980 are historically located between patterns of local women's activism identified in studies by Blackley (1998) and Tonkin (2000).

All three studies identify and stress the importance of nexus between class and gender within the region. Blackley's study of the Illawarra working class between 1921 and 1954 explored different experiences of working-class women and men, but simultaneously revealed that their struggles were mutually constructed by the material and social conditions of their time prior to my study. Tonkin's (2000) study focuses on the Jobs for Women campaign between 1980 and 1994 to illustrate wider geographies of power accessed by feminist activists. Significant amounts of work still remain to identify female activists and piece together the historical patterns of engagement of women's engagement with trade union organisations, but also with other forms of women's activism such as feminist activism.

Theoretical Contribution

A wide range of analytical tools was utilised in the study to answer these questions. These include:

1. an organisational chart provided by the WWIC as a lens for women's activism
2. a chart of scales of analysis to identify scales of analysis to ensure a spatial awareness in the study
3. three metaphoric analytical tools; the first of these was 'patchwork' to explain partial representation in stories but also to explain the relationships between the parts of the thesis and the final product; the second, 'safe space', was used as a lens for a historical overview of women's engagement in activism prior to 1970; the third, 'tables', were utilised to explain the webs of public and private relationships of activists.

The thesis contributes to debates about the direction of feminist theory for understanding the impact of class and gender on women's activism in labour history more generally, and in particular, the literature on trade union organisations. I have argued that a deeper understanding of the region's labour history can be achieved through the use of a feminist standpoint epistemology. The use of this approach enabled me to identify two new meta-trends in the region's history: the desire for safe space and a high degree of organisational articulation. The desire for safe space encompassed a fundamental belief in the right to both industrial and social justice. Instead of highlighting 'industrial safety', I could discuss 'safe space' as a key concern of regional

activists. The inclusion of women's activism in the story also highlighted a higher level of organisational articulation within the region's working-class institutions.

Two theories highlighted in the study to answer the second question were:

1. Ellem and Shields's model of dimensions of peak union analysis as a class-based theory
2. Connell's theory of 'gender regimes'.

In order to understand how women's activism was shaped by theory I focused on two analytical tools. In Chapter Five I applied the recently developed, class-based model, Ellem and Shields's (2004) 'Dimensions of Peak Union Agency' to the history of the SCLC. This model was utilised to provide a class-based analysis of power and the purpose of class-based activism at the SCLC and provide a historical context for women's activism in 1975 and 1980. The analysis provided a substantial description of the activities of the SCLC and how its purpose was broader than other union bodies in the region and other peak union bodies. The class-based analysis of the SCLC identified that women's organisations had a role in the social mode of agency. However, the resulting analysis in Chapter Five was gender blind. The analysis helped demonstrate that the emphasis on political purpose is embedded in current definitions of power *over* and power *for* (Brigden, 2003). What is missing from theoretical consideration in peak union literature is power *with*. Without this, 'relationship' is constructed as instrumental. Relationship has not yet been theorised as a desired outcome in itself.

In Chapter Eight gender-based theory, Connell's (2002) 'gender regimes', was applied to explore how regional gender patterns were reproduced but also changed through focusing on women's activism between 1975 and 1980. I used Connell's theory 'gender regimes' to explore the changes in power relations, production relations, emotional relations and symbolic relations that helped shape patterns of women's activism. However, I found that without a relational understanding of leadership, rather than a hierarchical understanding, it was difficult to articulate 'power with'. In contrast, relational theories emphasise 'power with'. They emphasise the mutual growth, connection and power relationships between organisations and individuals who both expect to grow and feel a responsibility to contribute to the growth of others (Fletcher, 2007).

No previous studies have addressed the relationships between peak union organisations and feminist organisations; therefore, this thesis begins the process of filling this lacuna. Much of the work on union relationships had focused on male-dominated organisations and was written from a perspective that unions are the major agentic force within these relationships. While I began the thesis process attempting to understand the tensions between class and gender, it was the similarities between the two, in the impact on narrative structures, that revealed important insights about the analysis and reconstruction of women's activism.

Hartmann's (1979) discussion on the relationship between Marxism and feminism within patriarchal capitalist societies made the point that it was not clear in 1979 that 'the 'socialism' being struggled for [was] the same for both men and women' (p. 24). Debates about the relationships between class and gender have occupied considerable space since then. The debates and tensions have changed, matured, but nevertheless still exist. I argue that while it is still not clear that working-class struggle was the same for both men and women, understanding women's activism can benefit from theorising it as both unified and fragmented by class and gender. This requires a deeper understanding of the impact of both class and gender and the changing patterns of relationships between them. A purposeful, simultaneous focus on class and gender continues to stimulate creative options for research that have no straightforward answers. In particular, I would like to draw attention to the potential for further development of spatial analysis that is more cognisant of webs of relationships between public/private, inside/outside that disrupt the influence of definitions that privilege masculine hierarchy embedded in class and gender theories.

Research Tools and Methodology

The development and use of an artefact, the film, during the data gathering was an important innovation. The power of visual material to trigger powerful emotions in discussion groups became evident in discussion groups during the data gathering phase. The film elicited a rich set of new stories about activism in the region, although evaluation of the film as a research tool was beyond the scope of this study.

The construction of the film also contributed to a deeper understanding of the importance of spatial awareness in constructing texts. This was particularly useful in demonstrating place as a constituent of class and gender formation and the significant

differences between places accumulating over time. The original impetus to include spatial dimension stemmed from my interest in understanding ‘how’ to represent a regional story. Specifically, I wanted to build an awareness of how the region was shaped by other scales of analysis, and at the same time help reproduce other scales of analysis in the film *Promise of Struggle*. The decision was influenced by the need to represent ‘regional distinctiveness’ in a way that regional activists perceived as important. Further, the use of stories about individuals, groups and campaigns needed careful handling of ‘partial representation’ while attempting to write about patterns of relations. Subsequently, I developed a metaphoric tool, patchwork, as a way of visualising this. The film and the thesis were experiments in regional storytelling that attempted to articulate a spatial awareness of the region through design (focusing on how a regional story is told and representing specific meanings about the region) and content (focusing on how relations in a region occur across symbolic and physical spaces).

Haraway, a feminist standpoint theorist, argues that knowledge is always ‘partial sight and limited vision ... the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular’ (2004: 93). From this perspective the value of the production of the film and the thesis provided platforms for significant connections and unexpected openings that situated knowledge makes possible.

Limitations of the Thesis

There are a number of different ways that I could have approached this study. The choices made precluded other approaches. A more detailed focus on the broader social and economic relations of the period between 1975 and 1980 would have enabled a deeper understanding of the stories of key changes that were occurring in the trade union movement and feminist movement at this time. Many of the stories, although mentioned, have not been fully explored. For example, a closer examination of the impact on patterns of relationships triggered by key changes in legislation would have been useful. An important example was that there was no analysis of changes in trade union relationships after ‘secondary boycott action’ became illegal in 1977 (Hutson, 1983, pp. 294–5). Alternatively a wider focus on broader patterns of women’s activism in the region is still needed. Particular gaps in the time frames that require further excavation and analysis are the periods 1954 to 1975 and 1980 to the present. There was

a growth in women's engagement with the SCLC from the early-1950s, and information about this period is sparse. Likewise, histories of the WWIC, feminist organisations and women activists at the SCLC after 1980 require attention.

Other limitations were embedded in the data selected for the study. In Wollongong, as in other regions during the target period, there was significant development around social services, such as child minding, family counselling and family planning. A study of activism around these services will identify a higher number of female activists in the region. Information about other webs of relationships that supported these initiatives has the potential to further illuminate patterns of organisational articulation within the region.

Overall, the thesis has presented a somewhat celebratory depiction of the history of these two institutions and some of the activists in the region. Positive relational stories that contributed to the theme of 'safe space' have been privileged over a range of negative stories that emerged in this study about the relationships between women and women, women and men. It is important to note that underlying the 'safe space' theme in the thesis are twin themes of betrayal and violence. Betrayal and violence in public and private places emerged as significant themes in interviews. There are two reasons that these themes have not been developed in this study. Firstly, I was focused on trying to move beyond a discussion of barriers to women's activism; secondly, a significant number of important stories were tagged by participants as confidential. The implications of non-inclusion of these stories are that the emotional and symbolic aspects of relationships have not been fully explored.

Implications for Further Research

The thesis points to two key areas for future historical research in labour history on trade union organisations and women's activism. Firstly, significant research is still required to identify key women activists; secondly, understanding broad patterns of engagement and women's agency requires further consideration of the underlying assumptions embedded in the theories, particularly class-based and gender-based theories used to analyse women's participation.

The excavation of women's activism can benefit from extending the search beyond traditional primary sources, such as minutes and organisational documents. Many

women who have had significant influence on trade union institutions may not be easily found in sources such as institutional minutes. Further, relationships with other women's institutions, such as feminist organisations, can result in a broader picture of the breadth of their activism. The research in this thesis has demonstrated that significant trade union women were not only interested in issues related to women in trade unions, but in a broader holistic range of political, industrial and social issues across an array of scales of analysis.

Class and gender provide limited understanding of women's activism as stand-alone approaches. Subsequently research requires purposeful, simultaneous application of those approaches to the analysis of women's activism and the institutions they belong to. Theories of class and gender are designed to explore different axes of power relationships. Gender relations will be analysed more effectively if the emotional and symbolic relations that underpin power relations and productions (see Connell, 1987) are clearly articulated. Working-class relations will be analysed more effectively if power *with* can be incorporated into current theoretical discussion of power *for* and power *over* (see Ellem & Shields, 2004). This requires a broader analysis of the limitations of the underlying assumptions embedded in the concept of power 'for' in the peak union and industrial relations literature. Further, detailed research is required to understand the impact of analysis using these theories on the construction of stories about women activists. Particular attention is required to problematise the complex links between public and private aspects of (activists') work and home life. As this thesis demonstrates, the boundaries between them are not clear cut for female activists and, I would argue, they are not for male activists either.

Feminist standpoint epistemologies and relational theories are an underdeveloped resource in literature about trade union organisations and labour history literature more broadly. Feminist standpoint epistemologies stimulate questions about the relationship between knowledge production and activism. Relational theories draw attention to processes and outcomes of mutual growth and the potential for embodied transformations. Relational theories, from a feminist standpoint perspective, provide a significantly different approach to the analysis of the relationships between activists and institutions. I agree with Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) that we need to be able to define positive relationships between the masculine and feminine. Even more valuable in a study such as this, is a clear understanding of how to define positive relationships

between women when applying theories that are unconsciously embedded in heterosexual and homo-social assumptions. Women's relationships in this thesis combine creative wisdom with principles of action, yet these relationships combine renewal and regeneration as well as provide support and sustenance. Defining women with the capacity for survival and self-protection and as self-assertive in defence of principles and ethical values is difficult. Maternalising or sexualising women in archetypal narratives that cast them in hierarchical relationships and as fulfilling masculine desire is passé. A deeper, richer understanding is required to fully acknowledge significant women activists and the webs of relationships in which they engage.

The relationship with the trade unions in 1980 promised equality but resulted in separation. The WWIC and the SCLC have followed different paths that reflect the different but artificial legal, ideological and epistemological spaces that have increasingly divided gender and class since the early-1980s. In 1975 and 1980 the WWIC and the SCLC had a significant liaison that shaped the nature and purpose of working-class activism and feminism in the region for years to come.

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Biceago, Barbara	WWIC & health collective history	12 November 2004
Borrow, Doreen	SCLC & WWIC history	12 July, 2003; 10 July 2004
Botcia, Freda	WWIC current	6 December 2004; 20 February 2005
Chalmers, Monica	SCLC & WWIC history	13 October 2004
Covell, Diana	WWIC, WWWCC & JFW history	3 July 2005; 25 April 2006; 7 January 2007
Dolan, Val	WWIC & WWC history	12 November 2004
Donaldson, Trish	WWIC & WWWCC history	2 November 2005
Finch, Margaret	Regional context	21 August 2004
Hogkins, Annette	WWIC history & current	23 January 2003
Markey, Ray	Regional history	10 March 2003; 18 October 2007
Masters, Jacqui	WWIC current	26 October 2004; 6 December 2004
McGee, Maureen	SCLC & WWIC history	11 October 2004; 18 October 2004
Moore, Fred	SCLC history	8 April 2004; 20 February 2005
Morrighan, Vivianne	WWIC history	9 January 2005; 24 January 2007
Nixon, Shirley	SCLC & WWIC history	11 June 2003
Sandeman-Gay, Elizabeth	IWY & WEL history	14 October 2004 (unrecorded phone interview)
Stewart, Jenny	WWIC history	3 January 2006
Stylianou, Demetra	WWIC current	8 December 2004; 20 January 2004
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Taylor, Jane	SCLC & WWIC history	2 November 2004; 19 November 2004
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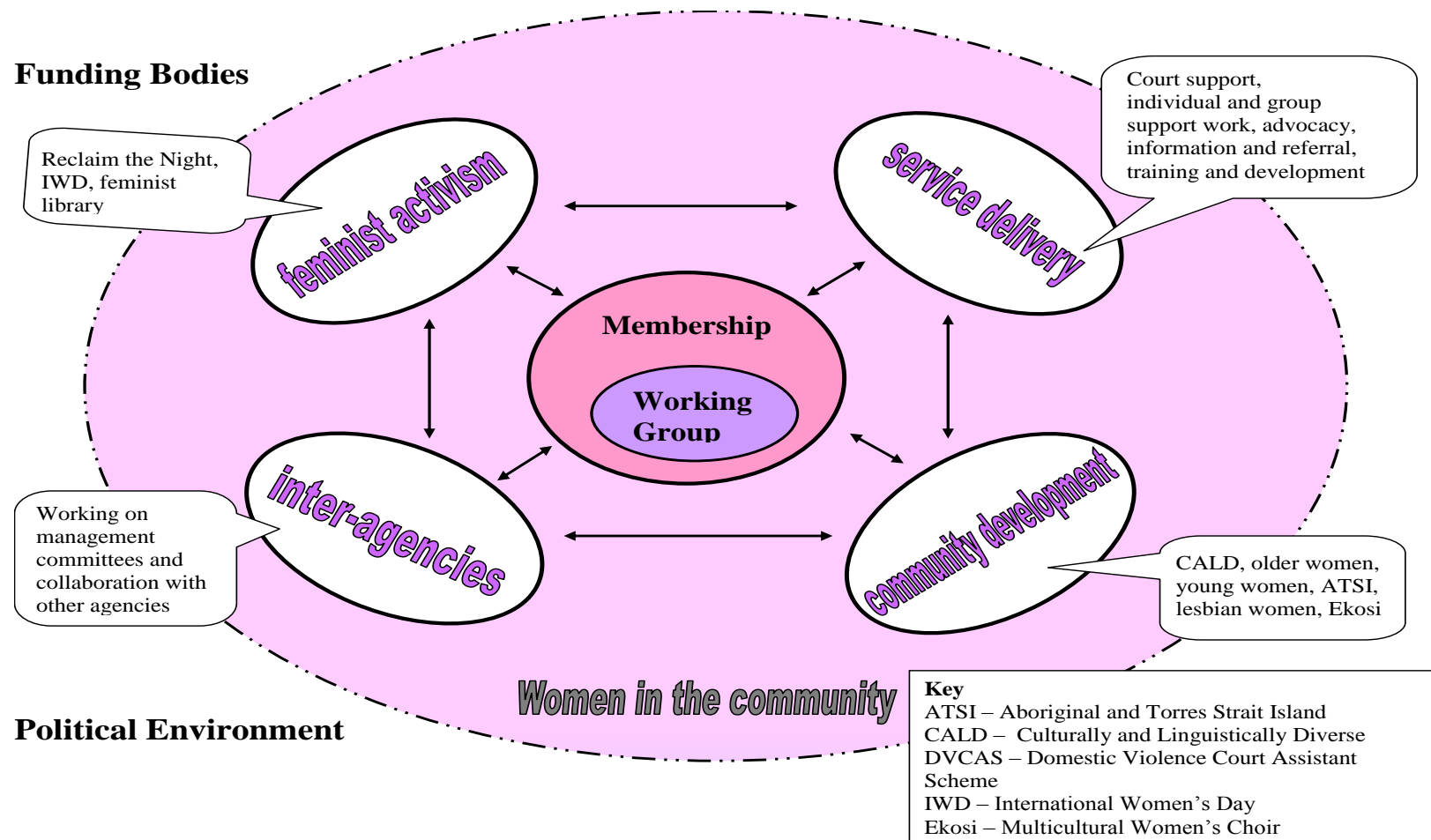
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Appendices

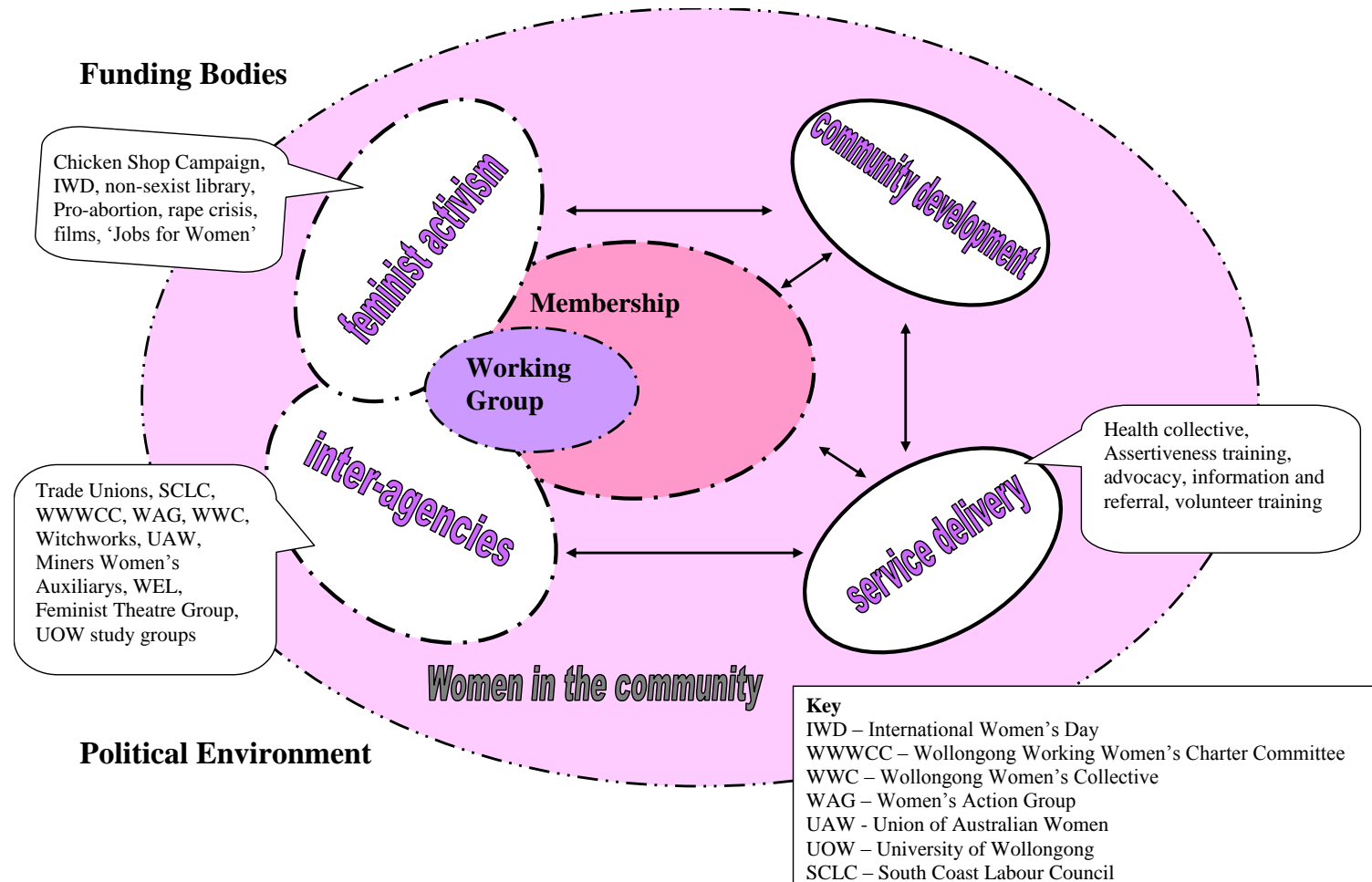
Appendix 1.1: WWIC Structure 2008/9

Sources: WWIC planning meeting 2003, WWIC Annual General Reports 2008 and 2009



Appendix 1.2: WWIC structure 1980

Sources: WWIC minutes 1979–1980, WWWCC minutes 1978–1980



Appendix 2.1: Timeline

Years	Events
1887–1925	<p>1887 150 miners' women stand in front of train carrying blacklegs Bulli Mine Disaster</p> <p>1896 Woonona Industrial Co-op Society established</p> <p>1902 Five Mt. Kembla miners' wives arrested for assaulting black legs Mount Kembla mine disaster</p>
1926–1945	<p>1928 Woonona Women's Co-operative Guild formed Steel production commences in the region</p> <p>1929 Militant women's movement group established by CPA Mrs Panser expelled from CPA for disagreeing with Central Control Committee</p> <p>1931 Open air meetings for IWD</p> <p>1931 Leila Allen and Esther Curnuck arrested and goaled with seven men at Friday night free speech meeting</p> <p>1935 Working women's conference at Corrimal May Day celebrations revived in the district</p> <p>1936 Corrimal Women's Co-op Guild at United Front Municipal Conference address</p> <p>1938 Scarborough Miners W's Aux (first Aux established) IWD Committee luncheons commence</p> <p>1939 FIA unsuccessful attempts to set up Women's Auxiliaries in Wollongong and Port Kembla Co-op Women's Guilds join Anti-profiteering committee SCLC – Spot Cafe Dispute SCLC Women's Auxiliary organise May Day dance, social nights and on peace issues Mrs K. Burke elected SCLC delegate for Hotel and Restaurant Employees Democratic Housewives Association establish breakaway group from NSW Housewives Association Street protests about shortage of food, includes FIA, BWIU, Miners 150 women employed in Lysaghts manufacturing sub-machine gun</p>

1946–1969	<p>Sally Bowen elected South Coast District Secretary for CPA</p> <p>Business and Professional Women's Club (branch established)</p> <p>1952 Betty Perry (Teachers Fed) asks SCLC for support for UAW</p> <p>1953 Mrs. B. Perry elected SCLC delegate for Teachers' Fed, Errey delegate for Hotel and Restaurant Employees</p> <p>1954 Mrs. M. Everitt elected SCLC delegate for Clerks' Union</p> <p>1956 Mrs. Taylor addresses SCLC on equal pay after attending World Conference of Working Women (Hungary)</p> <p>Family Law Courts initial work (Elenor Wilson)</p> <p>1960 Errey delegate to SCLC for MWU</p> <p>1961 Aboriginal Advancement League established, Rhona Delany first Secretary</p> <p>1962 Survey in Steel Industry about what jobs women can do</p> <p>Aust. Federation of University Women, Illawarra Branch established</p> <p>New Opportunities for Women (NOW) established</p> <p>1964 Sally Bowen visits USSR in CPA delegation</p> <p>1965 National Council Of Women attempt to set up a local branch</p> <p>1969 Peace Vigils weekly – woman threatens to set herself alight</p> <p>Women's Groups begin early Jobs for Women at BHP Campaign</p>
1970–1974	<p>Five women chain themselves to railings in House of Reps – anti conscription</p> <p>Attempts to establish contraception and birth control clinics</p> <p>Moratorium March (Mothers in Mourning, Save Our Sons)</p> <p>Small consciousness raising groups start</p> <p>Monica Chalmers becomes first female organiser of May Day (early 70s)</p> <p>1972 WEL group formed locally</p> <p>Women's Liberation seminar</p> <p>Anti-war marches</p> <p>1973 Three women chain themselves to gate at AIS</p> <p>SCLC forms Committee to organise IWY</p> <p>CARP meat boycott campaign</p> <p>1974 Conspiracy Boutique Dispute</p> <p>SCLC has 13/110 female delegates</p>

1975	<p>March</p> <p>May</p> <p>June</p> <p>July</p> <p>Nov</p>	<p>IWY</p> <p>SCLC has 22 female delegates</p> <p>Chilean Solidarity Group established</p> <p>IWD March in Sydney</p> <p>FIA Women's Clerk Strike</p> <p>Launch of ABC "coming out ready or not show"</p> <p>Interview with Sally Bowen on IWD</p> <p><i>Illawarra Mercury</i> produces first supplement on IWD</p> <p>UOW College Union hosts lunch, speaker Janet Leggo, President of IWY</p> <p>Ruth Ross, Aust National. Advisory Committee for IWY, address at Union Common Room</p> <p>The happening week</p> <p>CARP Bread Boycott</p> <p>WIN TV 90min special on women in Wollongong screened</p> <p>WIN TV interview with Janet Leggo on women and the law</p> <p>Special edition of <i>Labour History</i> with articles from local academics</p>
1976–1977	<p>1976</p> <p>1977</p>	<p>IWD lunch – speaker Carolyn Jobson on Timor</p> <p>University <i>Women in Society Course</i> begins</p> <p>Teachers Fed. establish women's contacts</p> <p>Women in Education examining sexism in teaching</p> <p>SCLC sponsor Arrowsmith to first Labour and Women Conference</p> <p>WAG established by combined Teachers' Unions</p> <p>INSEC established and obtain Commonwealth Grant \$23,000 for resource centre</p> <p>ACTU adopts Working Women's Charter</p> <p>Sally Bowen elected District President of CPA</p>
1978–1979	<p>March</p> <p>April</p>	<p>IWD lunch – speaker Anne Deveson</p> <p>Judith Mitchell sentenced to gaol</p> <p>Forum on abortion, sterilization and contraception</p> <p>Errey and Covell attend ACTU Melbourne Conference</p> <p>Initiating meeting for Free Judith Mitchell Campaign</p>

	May	Women's films at University sponsored by SRC Dolan elected women's officer to SRC at UOW
	July	INSEC and Free Judith Mitchell Campaign Wine bottling fundraiser Judith Mitchell released from Mulawa gaol
	Aug	WWC day and evening groups established at UOW
	Sept	First meeting to organise the region's first IWD March
	Oct	WWC intercede in rape victim harassment by police
	Nov	First meeting of WWWCC Forum on Rape by WWC
	Dec	WWWCC – Committee elected to develop WWIC proposal
	Feb	WWWCC Forum on Working Women's Charter
	March	First IWD March – Theme is <i>Right to Work</i> , Speaker Jennie George <i>Illawarra Mercury</i> attack on feminist marchers SCLC endorse the Abortion Contraception Action Day in March by WWC WWIC Co-ordinating Committee first public meeting Abortion Forum – WAAC formed locally SCLC – cuts of workers in health, nurses strike
	June	Crystals Clothing & Clothing Trades Union campaign – WWWCC
	July	WWWCC addressed by Borrow on plans for WFTU Conf. Cyprus, Oct
	Aug	First AGM WWIC Steering Committee WWWCC concerned with underpayments in take away, canteen workers conditions
	Sept	First meeting of WWIC management committee WAAC street stalls proceeding Right to Life Week
	Oct	INSEC objects to policy on 'no men' at the Women's Centre World Federation of Trade Union conference – Working Women in Cyprus Melbourne based <i>Women at Work</i> reject WWWCC article for being anti union
	Nov	Obtained keys to WWIC Stewart Street premises from City Council
	Dec	SCLC establish a standing committee for Women in Trade Union movement WWIC health committee elected

1980	Jan	First Co-ordinator hired for WWIC
	Feb	'Chicken shop' dispute SCLC has 32 female delegates
	March	Second IWD March – Theme: <i>Jobs for Women</i> , Speaker Pat O'Shane
	April	Regional conference on sexual harassment Official opening of the WWIC WWIC Women's film nights commence Peg Errey interviewed by WIN TV on harassment at work New 'Jobs for Women Campaign' launched First volunteer training group for WWIC
	July	Tent Embassy outside AIS WWIC bar-b-que Film and Coffee mornings SCLC peace committee Hiroshima day activities'
	Aug	Meeting on Rape legislation with Women's groups, Women's Advisory Committee and Police. Second AGM WWIC
	Oct	Discussions on feminism begin at WWIC Opening of WWIC Health Service Feminist Media – talk by Arrow and O'Connor
	Nov	Articles published by local academics in key labour history text

Appendix 2.2: 1975 – SCLC Summary of Issues from Labour Council Minutes

Employment & Industrial Disputes	Community, Health & Environment	Diverse Communities
<p>Electricity</p> <p>Mining:</p> <p>Coalcliff Sth Bulli</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Standowns & lockouts ➤ Wage freezes ➤ No social security during lockout ➤ Media Misrepresentation ➤ 800 dismissal <p>Waterside workers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bad amenities <p>Lysaghts & CRM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Proposed one week Easter stand down <p>Other Steel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wages ➤ Price increase steel ➤ Profitability ➤ FIA members at ER&S retrenched ➤ Contract labour doing work usually done by union members at AIS (affects AMWU, FIA and BWIU) ➤ Second contract labour dispute (65 members in shipping repair section) ➤ AIS canteens dispute* <p>BLF (state vs federal body)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support for state branch <p>Teachers Federation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unionist preference clause ➤ Proposed education cuts ➤ Employment of overseas teachers rather than unemployed teachers 	<p>Flood – support for farmers</p> <p>Unemployment</p> <p>Medicare support</p> <p>Hospitals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Kidney machine <p>State Emergency Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Time off for SES lectures <p>Sally's House</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attempt to establish Women's refuge <p>Cost of living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Workers' Action conference ➤ Bread Prices (CARP, Arrowsmith, Brown, Borrow) ➤ Petrol taxes ➤ Govt. Budget <p>Federal election campaign</p> <p>Pensions</p> <p>Delegation to Canberra</p> <p>Retirement trusts</p> <p>Transport infrastructure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Railways ➤ Local transport needs <p>Housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tax concessions ➤ Commission homes ➤ Housing interest <p>Pollution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Coalcliff ➤ Port Kembla housing ➤ Port Kembla Coal & Coke ➤ Australian Fertilisers ➤ BHP/AIS ➤ Gambling casino 	<p>Aboriginal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Aboriginal Advancement League ➤ Land rights Nowra & Wreck Bay ➤ Housing ➤ Discrimination ➤ National Aboriginal Day <p>International Women's Year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Visit to worksite seeking ideas and demands from the women workers. ➤ Play on women presented to SCLC by Women's Theatre Group ➤ City Council's separate agenda <p>International Women's Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bus to Sydney March <p>Migrant Unity Action Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attempts to establish migrant workers centre ➤ Voting in elections for migrants after 12 mths residence <p>Discrimination & exploitation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Translation for those seeking hire purchase and community services e.g. hospitals ➤ Costs of translators in Doctors' surgeries and courts <p>International Solidarity & Peace</p> <p>Chilean Solidarity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Quilapayun & Joan Jara visit ➤ Imprisonment of Gladis Dias ➤ Petition IWY congress, Mexico ➤ Ban on export of wheat

Employment & Industrial Disputes	Community, Health & Environment	Diverse Communities
<p>Waterboard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Administration of the board ➤ Penal clauses <p>Hairdressing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Anti-union establishments, underpayment of wages, unfair trading practice, hindering union officials ➤ Only one female unionist in the industry, attempt to establish local branch <p>Liquor Trades Union</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Two female unionists replaced by non-union males <p>Conspiracy boutique</p> <p>Coles</p> <p>Dispute between SPU and AWU</p> <p>Angus & Coote</p> <p>2WL radio station</p> <p>Ports Committee</p> <p>Payments for crew of <i>Panamax</i></p>	<p>Pollution (cont)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Jervis Bay ➤ Coal loader ➤ Coal waste ➤ Drainage East Woonona <p>Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Media Committee formed ➤ 5 week ban on <i>Illawarra Mercury</i> ➤ Support Tribune – workers voice ➤ WIN TV unfavourable reports ➤ Telegraph, Mirror and Australian banned during journalist strike. <p>Local Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Child Care 	<p>International Solidarity & Peace (cont)</p> <p>South Africa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ban on retail goods ➤ Fish (Woolworth & Coles) <p>Vietnam</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Visiting delegation ➤ Rebuilding – food, clothing, medicine <p>Thailand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Objection to US troops in retaliation for US ship seizure <p>PLO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Visas should be granted to visitors ➤ Freedom of speech <p>East Timor</p> <p>Cyprus</p> <p>New Zealand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NZ compensation act <p>World peace aid appeal</p>

Source: South Coast Labour Council minutes for 1975

Appendix 2.3: 1980 – SCLC Summary of Issues from Labour Council Minutes

Employment & Industrial Disputes	Community, Health & Environment	Diverse communities
<p>Mining: South Clifton Colliery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attempted closing of pit <p>Steel ER&S</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unionist sacked <p>BHP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Plate Mill attempts to introduce a 6 day roster <p>Retail GJ Coles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Right to join union of choice (but also inter-union AWU, SPU, SDA) <p>Kentucky Fried Chicken (Miranda)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Abuses of S45D tort, picket <p>Tooths Brewery (Sydney), support for 800 worker redundancies</p> <p>Transport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ S45D tort used against TWU ➤ Misuse of SCLC name by member of Maritime Union <p>Small Business Kiama Downs retail store</p> <p>Government PSA – dispute re government appointments to positions rather than from PSA</p> <p>Education Discrimination against part time teacher</p> <p>Health Community nurses sacked Shellharbour hospital (demarcation dispute BLF)</p>	<p>Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Medibank support ➤ Working toward opening (includes funding drives) of worker's health centre. ➤ Agent orange ➤ Use of Debendox by pregnant women ➤ Public Nursing home <p>Cost of living*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ CARP ➤ Shorter working week <p>Federal election campaign programme Based on unemployment, industry programs, community programs, rights of migrants, women, Aborigines, opposition to uranium mining and atomic weapons, education, living standards and a non aligned independent Aust. Foreign policy</p> <p>Transport Study of scheduling rail ,road and conveyor transporting of coal</p> <p>Public transport – improvements to rail including electrification of rail, public parking, amenities for staff, level crossings</p> <p>Media <i>Illawarra Mercury</i> inaccurate reporting <i>Nowra News</i> contributing to racial problems for Aborigines.</p> <p>Community Justice Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support for NSW legislation to enable establishment of community disputes 	<p>Aboriginal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Land rights Nowra & Wreck bay ➤ Discrimination ➤ Help to gain their own Centre in Wollongong <p>Women</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women's Charter Group ➤ Jobs for Women Campaign ➤ Sexual harassment at work ➤ Sexist entertainment at clubs ➤ Migrant women's information booklet <p>Migrant Unity Action Committee*</p> <p>International solidarity & Peace Olympic games appeal and support for athletes after major sponsors withdrew financial support Hiroshima Day Rally World Peace Congress (Bulgaria) Iran</p>

Employment & Industrial Disputes	Community, Health & Environment	Diverse communities
Entertainment & Media Dapto Showground ➤ Non union staff hired Fraternity Club ➤ Rest room provision, safe car parking for staff <i>Illawarra Mercury</i> – demarcation dispute about use of new technology	Arts Support for Steel City Pictures, Bread & Circus, and Redback Posters	

Source: South Coast Labour Council minutes for 1980

Appendix 2.4: WIN TV news reports

References refer to Cameraman and Reporter. Exceptions are those referenced as unknown, in these cases the running scripts were either too badly deteriorated to identify the cameraman and the reporter, or were missing.

Dyson and McCarthy (1980). *Illegal Immigrants*, 4 July.

Dyson and Booker (1982). *Protest March*, 28 February.

East and Bongiorno (1975). *Miners' Women's Auxiliary*, 30 July.

East and Bongiorno (1975). *Bus to Sydney*, 7 March.

East and Bongiorno (1975). *International Women's Day Bus*, 9 March.

East and Bongiorno (1975). *Women's Strike Committee*, 30 July.

East and Bongiorno (1975). *Women Disadvantaged at AIS*, 14 October.

East and Gillespie/Bongiorno (1975). *International Women's Year Special*, 9 March.

East and Booker (1982). *Merv Nixon*, 2 March.

East and Martin, (1975). *IWY Activities*, 30 June.

East and Moore (1975). *Coalcliff Miners Pay*, 25 July.

East and Bongiorno (1975). *Judy Yates Intimidated*, 2 July.

East and Failes (1975). *Women's Legal Rights – Leggo*, 23 May.

East and Failes (1975). *Chilean Refugees*, 7 July.

Gillespie and Bongiorno (1975). *Mrs. Brown*, 24 July.

Gillespie and Bongiorno (1975). *Bulli Miners Street Protest*, 19 August.

Gillespie and Bongiorno (1975). *Pig Iron Bob Researcher*, 6 November.

Gillespie and Failes (1975). *African Boycott Meeting*, 11 July.

Maunder and Moore (1970). *The Teachers are Revolting*, 5 May.

Nixon and Martin (1975). *Tell the Truth*, 24 July.

O'Donnell and Bongiorno (1975). *FIA Award Demands*, 23 May.

O'Donnell and Bongiorno (1975). *Hairdressers Union Row*, 30 June.

O'Donnell and Bongiorno (1975). *FIA Mass Meeting*, 14 October.

O'Donnell and Bongiorno (1978). *Labour Council Meeting* 17 April.

O'Donnell and Bongiorno (1975). *Mt. Kembla Disaster – Coalcliff*, 31 July.

O'Donnell and Bongiorno (1975). *FIA Showground Meeting*, 14 October.

O'Donnell and Failes (1972). *Protest at Port Kembla*, 10 February.

O'Donnell and Failes (1973). *Aboriginal Advancement League*, 16 July.

O'Donnell and Failes (1975). *F.I.A. Girls Meet*, 4 March.

O'Donnell and Moore (1972). *Day of Protest over Nixon*, 12 May.

O'Donnell and Moore (1973). *Women's Meat Price Protest*, 25 March.

O'Donnell and Moore (1973). *Alderman Baker on W.E.L.*, 29 May.

O'Ferrall and Moore (1973). *Mrs. Lelli on CARP protest*, 16 April.

O'Ferrall and Moore (1973). *Steel Unions Reject*, 18 July.

O'Ferrall and Wiseman (1973). *CARP's Vigilantes – Mrs Brown*, 29 March.

O'Loughlin and Booker (1980). *Jobs for Women Campaign*, 3 July.

O'Loughlin and Wilson (1980). *Sexist Meeting*, 17 April.

Quine and Failes (1975). *F.I.A. Picket Line*, 5 March.

Unknown (1967). *Ted Harvey – 'promise of struggle'* 3 August.

Unknown (1969). *Weekly Vigil for Peace in Vietnam*, 30 March.

Unknown (1970). *Steelmaking Process*, 8 April.

Unknown (1972). *South Clifton Miners Vote*, 11 May.

Vakrenholz and Bongiorno (1978). *SCLC meeting*, 17 April.

Ward and Morgan (1970). *Moratorium March*, 8 May.

Wood and Hendo/Patmore (1983). *Kemira Sit-In First Anniversary*, 14 October.

Yeman and Wood (1982). *Campbell Again*, 2 March.

Appendix 2.5: Promise of Struggle Running Sheets

This is a copy of the original running sheets I prepared for the visual and sound editors who provided technical assistance in the construction of the film. Time refers to the cutting locations for bites of film to be taken from transposed footage. These time selections were cut further during the final stages of the film construction.

The ‘voice over’ (V/O) is bolded, other planned sounds included sound from the original film footage (SOF) and music selected from a range of music that regional activists identified with.

Images to be used are bolded, and text where available from the WIN TV running scripts was included.

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
3.24.32 to 3.25.09	<i>SOF</i> ... You don't gain any conditions by leaving an establishment you stay there and endeavour to fight it out ... I never promised the men anything but struggle around this issue of bonuses ...	3.8.76 No Script available (issue bonus at steelworks – Ted Harvey)
1 or 2 sec bite from clips listed below	V/O Harvey's words encapsulate the founding principles of the Illawarra Trades and Labour Council, the predecessor of the South Coast Labour Council	14.1.75 FIA members vote against State Executive 17.4.78 Labour Council meeting with Les Johnson and Stewart West (members for Hughes and Cunningham) and member for Illawarra George Petersen (expressing solidarity with SCLC and workers in steel industry re strikes.)
As above but also	<i>Music</i> ... every picket line, keep their memories alive, and we'll win every time. They've been right every time, and their right again now. But the strength of one isn't much of a	8.5.70 Young women carry flowers for victims of Vietnam in Moratorium march. 17.4.78 (<i>repeat</i>) Labour Council meeting

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
3.21.18 to 3.22.24	power, so united they stand against all odds, fighting for us all against the little tin gods ...	<p>3.7.80 Jobs for Women Campaign</p> <p>14.10.82 Miner with family after Kemira Sit-In</p> <p>16.7.73 Meeting of Aboriginal Advancement League</p> <p>12.5.72 Vietnam protest march</p> <p>24.7.75 Sally Bowen selling <i>Tribune</i> and miners march</p> <p>17.4.78 (<i>repeat</i>) Labour Council meeting</p> <p>24.7.75 (<i>repeat</i>) Miner's March</p> <p>12.5.72 (<i>repeat</i>) Anti Vietnam March</p>
	<i>Title Page</i>	8.4.70 Back ground footage from AIS
2.07.08 to 2.07.27 1.13.48 to 1.14.15	Steve Best the first secretary and 'Paddy' Molloy the first president of the Labour Council understood struggle. They were miners whose union was the first in the region and established a militant tradition.	<p>Photos from W'Gong Uni Archives Steve Best and Paddy Molloy</p> <p>Coalcliff Miners pit-top meeting dated 11.5.73 (represents miners)</p>
	This militant tradition was taken up by other unions as the base of the Labour Council broadened. ...It was built on a strong sense of working class community which unified the region and demanded industrial and social justice for all.	<p>Dalfram photo: courtesy of W'Gong Library (represents watersider workers)</p> <p>Steelmaking footage dated 8.4.70 (represents steel and iron workers)</p>
	This vision took the Labour Council beyond the	Text: Housing, Education, Aboriginals, Pensioners, Women

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
	industrial arena into broader areas of social justice such as housing, education and the rights of Aboriginals, pensioners and women.	
2.19.28 to 2.19.38 and 19.49 to 20.23	<p>The Labour council Vision was nurtured by the strong influence of left wing ideology – from the Communist Party and the left of the Australian Labour Party working together. This left wing unity contributes to a strong sense of independence from the state and national labour movements ...</p> <p>SOF ... interview with Lelli</p>	<p>May Day photos from W'Gong Uni Archives</p> <p>14.10.75 A mass meeting of Iron Workers today rejected wage indexation guideline and demanded the FIA State Council step up award negotiations.</p> <p>Heavy industry in Wollongong ground to a halt while 13,000 ironworkers topped work for this morning's showground meeting. Work will resume at 11.20 tonight</p> <p>.... About 2000 unionists attended the meeting and in a series of resolutions called for a stepping up of negotiations in all expired awards and a campaign at the state level if these fail.</p> <p>The men let it be known they were not happy with staff re-allocations and re-classifications that bring in less pay.</p> <p>In future companies should consult the union before changes are made.</p> <p>The Port Kembla Branch certainly gave Nando Lelli the support he needed in his battle with the state executive...where it goes from here still remains to be seen.</p>
	Workers struggle for industrial and social justice have always been highly visible. This was not just about wages and strikes. It was about a basic human right. The right to safe work conditions.	<p>Scripts missing</p> <p>'Joy' dispute footage (see Artie Rorris)</p> <p>Medicare footage (see Artie Rorris)</p>
2.04.22 to	The Mount Kembla explosion in 1902 which killed 96 men and boys remains the greatest mine disaster in	Photos of Mine Disaster

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
2.05.06	<p>Australian History.</p> <p>SOF ... interview with miner on safety</p>	<p>31.7.75 Seventy-three years after Australia's greatest coalmine disaster safety can still fall behind in the rush to win coal.</p> <p>On the anniversary of the Mt. Kembla disaster Coalcliff miners again today spoke out strongly for greater mine safety.</p>
3.10.46 to 3.12.00	<p>Miners' struggles affect families and whole communities.</p> <p>Unionists often reached deep into their pockets to support comrades taking a stand.</p> <p>Here in 1975 about %15,000 strike pay was paid out to 55 eligible members. Single men received the grand sum of \$12, married men \$20.00 with \$2.00 extra for each child</p>	<p>27/5/75 Coalcliff miners last night rejected management approaches that they return to work – because they claimed conditions had not changed in the three weeks since the dispute started.</p> <p>But today there was a glimmer of hope for a settlement with the announcement that a conference of disputing parties would be held probably next Wednesday.</p> <p>The strike at one of the South cost's biggest collieries entered its fourth week today and Miners Federation members queued at the Trade Union Centre for their first strike pay.</p> <p>About \$15,000 was paid out to the 550 eligible members.</p> <p>Single men received \$12, married men \$20 and \$2 for each child. A voluntary levy of \$5 was placed on all members at District pits this week to support the strike campaign</p> <p>In addition the campaign committee is seeking support from the public, bread manufacturers and butchers in anticipation of a long struggle.</p> <p>Although some of the men admitted today they were having a hard time making ends meet they remain solid behind the issues being fought</p>
1.25.09 to 1.25.36	<p>These workers could not stand against the bosses without their wives. ... These women were behind their men 100% Organisations, such as the Miner's Women's Auxiliaries and Waterside Workers Women's</p>	<p>30/7/75 There's no chance Coalcliff miners wives will attempt to get the coal moving again by going cold on their husbands.</p> <p>As the dispute nears the end of its fifth week Coalcliff wives have formed themselves into</p>

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
	Committees were the backbone of the working class community.	<p>an action support group.</p> <p>This morning at the Miners' Federation Hall the women got down to the serious business of survival.</p> <p>Secretary of the southern District Miners Women's Auxiliaries Sally Bowen chaired the meeting and Labour council secretary Merv Nixon outlined what had been done to lighten the financial burdens of the miners' families so far.</p> <p>Solidarity was the key not of the meeting and at least the women present, were with their men one hundred per cent.</p>
3.7.39 to 3.8.05 (3.8.43 to 3.9.07)	Groups such as CARP were encouraged by the South Coast Labour Council SOF ... interview with Lou Brown	<p>24.7.75 Bread prices are up again and Wollongong housewives have been urged to retaliate by baking more scones.</p> <p>An angry secretary of the South Coast Campaign Against Rising Prices Mrs Lou Brown today called for a boycott of bread retailers and a nationalisation of the industry.</p> <p>WIN TV News caught up with Mrs Brown as she prepared at batch of scones for her family.</p>
3.18.06 to 3.19.05	<p>The ongoing struggle never seemed to end. During the 1982 Kemira-sit the Illawarra forced its way into the forefront of the national conscious after the retrenchment of 200 miners. Thirty-One of these miners marched into the colliery and stayed underground for 16 days.</p> <p>During that time their workmates travelled to Canberra where they stormed parliament house in an effort to bring attention to the problems of the unemployed.</p>	<p>14/10/83 Today marks the first anniversary of the sit in by Miners at the Southern Districts Kemira Colliery. The sit in, while failing to save the jobs of miners retrenched from the pit, has left its mark on the history of Australia's Trade Union movement. George Wood reports... Kemira Colliery is one of the oldest and safest pits on the South Coast. Miners first dug their way into the rich coal seam in the 1950s, and Aust. Iron and Steel Pty Ltd bought the pit in the 1930s. It supplied coking coal to the Port Kembla Steelworks and at its peak had a workforce of more than 300, Last year, the world recession and fall in domestic steel orders led to a decision by Aust. Iron and Steel to cut back on coking coal intake. At Kemira colliery, that meant the retrenchment of about 200 men.</p> <p>Two weeks after that announcement, the miners, frustration reached breaking point, and 31</p>

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
	<p>When they came to the surface for the final time on October 19th they had won a three-week extension to their retrenchment and improved their redundancy pay.</p>	<p>of them marched into the colliery. They stayed underground for 16 days.</p> <p>During that time their workmates above ground travelled to Canberra where they stormed parliament house in an effort to bring attention to the problems of the unemployed.</p> <p>For a short period each day the underground protestors came to the surface... and when they came up for the last time on October the 29th, they'd won a three week extension to their retrenchment and improved redundancy pay.</p> <p>Kevin Donohue was the miners lodge president at the time... he was lucky... he works on the northern coalfields and travels to Wollongong each weekend to be with his wife and family. It's inconvenient but at least it's a job and money. SOF 1.54</p> <p>The employment situation and housing market has kept many of the Kemira miners in Wollongong, and while some may feel bitter, and there are allegations the sit-in has affected their work prospects, Wollongong Workers Research centre secretary Mike Donaldson believes their protest has had a marked affect on Australia...</p>
	<p>From the 1980s employment shifted from mining and manufacturing to the growing services sector. Unions in this sector inherited the militant tradition.</p>	<p>24/7/75 Three hundred Coalcliff miners marched to the offices of the <i>Illawarra Mercury</i> this morning, chanting "Tell the Truth, objective reporting".</p> <p>They were met by the executive editor of the <i>Illawarra Mercury</i>, Mr John Richardson, who invited the men into the building to discuss their complaints. The men told Mr. Richardson they were unhappy with reports in the paper concerning the current dispute at the Colliery.</p> <p>The men alleged the reports had damaged their credibility.</p> <p>After half an hours' discussion the men passed a vote of no confidence in the paper's reports on the dispute. (<i>merges into shop assistants march below</i>)</p>

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
		<p>28.2.82 Unionists and politicians joined forces yesterday for a protest march along Crown Street.</p> <p>As Emily Booker reports the march was in support of shop assistants right to join the union of their choice.</p> <p>The markers moved off from the Trade Union Centre at 10.30 and proceeded along Crown Street. Shoppers stood by as the protesters walked past carrying banners and placards supporting their cause. Miners waterfront unions, women' groups and local labour politicians were among those in the march. Storemen and packers union organiser Fay Campbell led the march in support of SPC members who were retrenched from supermarkets on the South Coast. The employers had refused to recognise the right of this union to cover shop assistants.</p> <p>On Friday the Industrial Commission handed down a decision giving sole coverage of shop assistants to the Shop Distributive and Allied employees Association.</p> <p>Retrenched employees were told they could return to their jobs only if the joined the SDA.</p> <p>Mrs Campbell said today the retrenched workers would turn up to work tomorrow but she refused to say if they would comply with the Commission order.</p> <p>The SPU executive will meet tomorrow at 6 p.m. to determine what further action will be taken.</p>
1.1.30 to 1.2.30	<p>SOF 1.31 interview with Merv about police violence</p> <p>(Note: this may need to be repositioned)</p>	<p>1/2/82 Unionist on the South Coast will gather for a rally in Matthews Park at 9.30 this morning to protest against the use of police against picketers.</p> <p>Secretary of the South Coast Labour Council, Merv Nixon yesterday spoke to Emily Booker about the protest ...</p>

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
		(Woolworths dispute)
2.24.24 to 2.25.18	<p>The Teachers' Federation was one of the earliest and most influential white-collar unions established in the region.</p> <p>SOF 1.22 ... interview with Jim Dombroski</p>	<p>5/5/70 About 500 Illawarra High schoolteachers are to be docked a day's pay because of the Black Friday protest on March 13th.</p> <p>Although the teachers are not officially paid until tomorrow, many today received their cheques which showed that the day's pay had been deducted.</p> <p>Outside the Department of Education in Atchison Street at about 4 o'clock this afternoon, about 30 teachers gathered to demand an explanation.</p> <p>President of the Illawarra Teachers Federation, Mr. Jim Dombroski spoke with newsman Terry Moore...</p>
<p>3.16.55 to 3.17.11</p> <p>And</p> <p>3.17.11 to 3.17.47</p>	<p>Women occupied many service sector jobs. They began to organise on their own behalf.</p> <p>SOF 1.25 ... Diana Covell on the tent embassy</p>	<p>3/7/80 Tents, banners and petitions presented an unfamiliar sight to steelworkers at Australian Iron and Steel today.</p> <p>Outside the employment office in Cringila, a group of Wollongong Women set up a tent embassy to focus attention on their claims of job discrimination at AIS.</p> <p>Emily Booker was at the site when the tents were being set up and has this report...</p> <p>About 12 women will be staying overnight in the group of tents near the Cringila railway station.</p> <p>The group is planning to file the first class action suit Australia has ever seen against the steelworks company.</p> <p>It claims that the company is discriminating against women in their attempts to get jobs at the works.</p> <p>Another tent embassy is planned for next Thursday night and a public meeting is being</p>

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
		<p>organised for July 17 at the Workers Club.</p> <p>I asked Diana Covell what the women hoped to achieve in the campaign</p>
<p>2.20.35 to 2.25.35</p> <p>And</p> <p>11.27 to 12.10 dvd</p> <p>Then</p> <p>16.52 to</p> <p>18.28 dvd</p>	<p>At this time Aboriginals also began to reorganise over their rights, especially to land. The Labour Council supported them. According to Miners Federations Fred Moore ...</p> <p>SOF ... Fred Moore on Aboriginal rights</p>	<p>16/7/73 The Australian Government was committing "genocide" against Aborigines by denying them the right and dignity to hold land.</p> <p>Miners Federation acting secretary, Mr. F. Moore said this at the NSW Aboriginal Land and Rights Council conference held at the Trade Union Centre in Wollongong at the weekend.</p> <p>(include footage of Fred from Rorris film interview)</p> <p>Speaking at the conference, Mr Moore said the SCLC would give full support to any moves made by the Aboriginal people to gain land rights.</p> <p>Mr. Moore was accepted as one of the Jirrinjarra tribe at the initiation ceremony of Mrs. Mary Duroux, an Aborigine fro Kempsey.</p> <p>A number of senior tribal leaders attended the conference.</p> <p>Mr. Moore said Aborigines were the only people in the world without land rights.</p> <p>He said they must have the trade union movement behind them to achieve their aims.</p> <p>Mrs Duroux is the first woman to be accepted as a "brother" of the Jirrinjarra tribe.</p> <p>She was also appointed chairman of the NSW Aboriginal Land and Rights Council conference.</p> <p>The conference was part of the National Aboriginal Day celebrations.</p> <p>Pastor Frank Roberts of Sydney said the Aboriginal immigration policy which was based on</p>

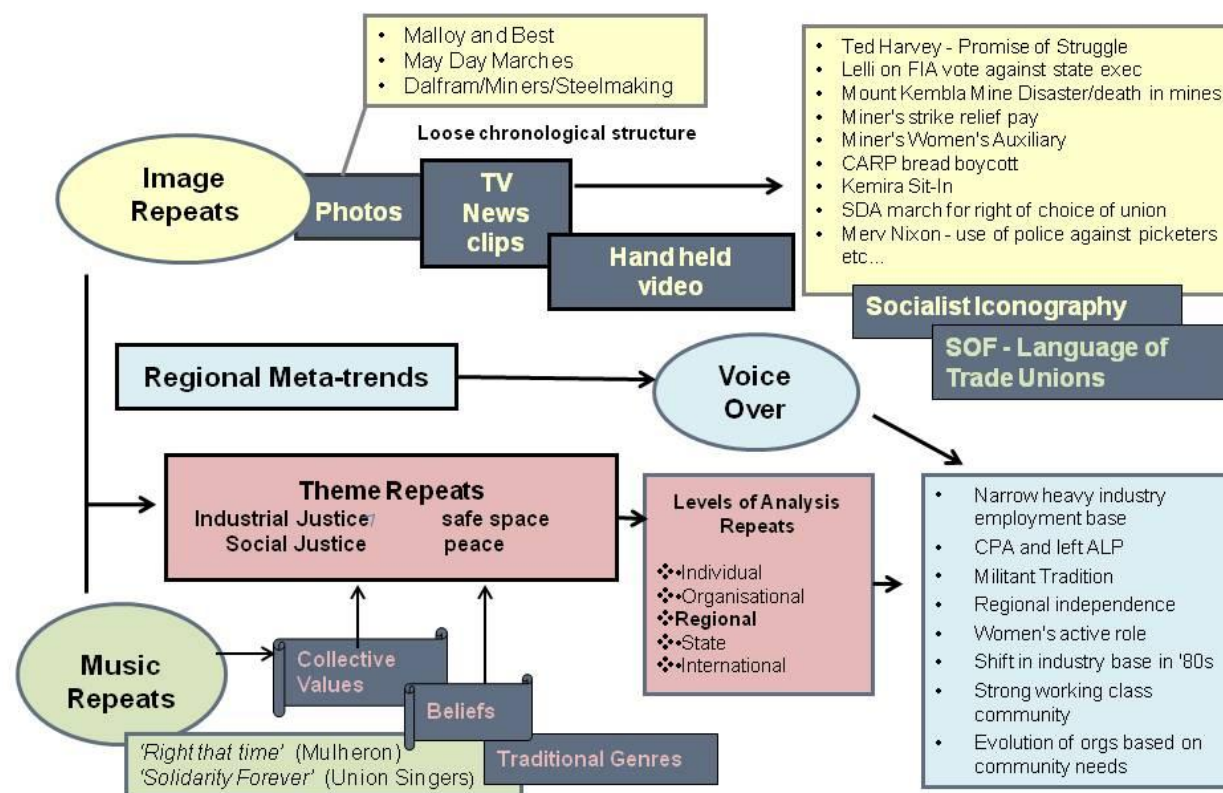
Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
		rescinding the White Australia policy and land rights were the two main causes of the Aboriginal people.
2.13.04 to 2.14.16	<p>The Labour Council also supported international victims of oppression</p> <p>A Chilean singing group which fled their country after the Pinochet military coup, visited Wollongong in 1975 urging working people to boycott all Australian trade with Chile. The group belongs to an international solidarity movement which condemned fascism and the takeover by the right wing in Chile.</p> <p>At a press conference, held at the trade union centre Mrs Joan Jara explained ... SOF ... interview with Joan Jara</p>	<p>7/7/75 A Chilean singing group which fled their country after the Pinochet military coup, visited Wollongong in 1975 urging working people to boycott all Australian trade with Chile. The group belongs to an international solidarity movement which condemned fascism and the takeover by the right wing in Chile.</p> <p>At a press conference, held at the trade union centre Mrs Joan Jara, whose husband was murdered in the coup, explained the reasons for the group's Australian visit</p>
2.07.26 to 2.08.07 And 2.8.43 to 2.9.15	<p>The principle of intervention in international struggles for solidarity was established by the wharfies in 1938 with strong Labour Council and community support.</p> <p>SOF 2.14 ... interview with Rupert Lockwood</p>	<p>6/11/75 The role of the Port Kembla waterside workers taking industrial action to influence foreign policy will be the subject of a new book.</p> <p>Veteran political journalist and commentator Rupert Lockwood is in Wollongong to research the background to the Pig Iron boycotts to Japan before World War II.</p> <p>Mr Lockwood spent a great part of today in the archives unit of Wollongong University.</p> <p>He is using a Literary Board grant to research the whole Pig Iron issue for his book.</p> <p>The name Pig Iron Bob originated in Port Kembla as a result of that issue and stuck with Mr Menzies throughout his career.</p>
1.7.37 to 1.9.59	The same tradition had powerful expression in the anti-Vietnam war movement of the 1970s ... later, against the instruments of nuclear war and the war in Iraq. Trade	30.3.69 Peace Vigil (no script)

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
And 3.06.59 to 3.07.20	unions in the Labour Council played a leadership role in the region in these struggles in the region.	But include footage of Merv Nixon and protestors
1.15.49 to 1.16.10 And 1.16.48 to 1.16.53 And 2.28.30 2.29.30 Add to final sequence with footage from MUA film		<p>8/5/70 Moratorium March</p> <p>Shouting slogans, waving banners and carrying flowers for peace, about one thousand demonstrators today marched through Wollongong taking part in a nationwide anti-Vietnam Moratorium. Appeals to keep the demonstration peaceful were made by march organisers before procession of protest moved off.</p> <p>Students, unionist and family groups, many with small children filed through Wollongong' main street in one of the largest marches of protest the city has seen.</p> <p>A group of young people inspired by a socialist activist group sat down on the roadway at various points along the route of the march chanting pro-North Vietnamese slogans.</p> <p>Police did not intervene and the young demonstrators moved off after a few minutes at each stop, before it was necessary for specially appointed moratorium marshals to move them on.</p> <p>The March did not stop at the cenotaph as originally planned, but despite this, shoppers lined Crown St three deep to watch the long parade of banners.</p> <p>Although there was no physical violence verbal clashes were common along the route.</p> <p>The destination of the Moratorium march was the Burelli Street Rest Park where Moratorium leaders addressed the demonstrators and called for a minute's silence.</p> <p>Moratorium committee leader Doctor Alan Healy placed a flower in park in memory of Vietnamese, Australian and American war dead.</p> <p>(Cut from script: A sit-in at the commonwealth offices after the march was broken up by</p>

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
		<p>Commonwealth police from Sydney without incident.</p> <p>There will be a full report on Moratorium activities in Sydney and Melbourne during our National bulletin.</p>
	Song <i>Solidarity Forever</i> fading up	<p>10/5/72 Waterfront workers and the crews of seven ships at Port Kembla today called for the ACTU to organise national stoppages to protest of President Nixon's blockade of North Vietnamese ports.</p> <p>Members of the Waterside Workers Federation stopped work for 24 hours following a walk-off by crews at Port Kembla.</p> <p>More than 300 men and women at a rally this morning endorsed a resolution calling for ACTU action.</p> <p>Speakers included the Secretary of the SCLC Mr. Merv Nixon, the secretary of the Seamen's Union Mr Snowy Webster and the secretary of the Ports Committee, Mr Jock Murray.</p> <p>They said if President Nixon continued his policy there was a risk of World War II.</p> <p>But also include footage of miner workers protest on the issue</p>
		<p>Spectators clashed verbally with protesters during a rally in Wollongong today against the American blockade of North Vietnam ports.</p> <p>The "Stop work to Stop the War" call by the South Cost Labour council brought out about 150 marchers for the protest rally.</p> <p>The march down Crown Street, which was led by prominent Unionist and a State Parliamentarian, was due to proceed to Burelli Street...however at the Keira Street</p>

Time	V/O + SOF (incomplete)	Images + WIN TV Newsreader Text
		<p>intersection the protesters conducted a rally directed at shoppers...</p> <p>It was at this stage that ugly scenes almost developed, when a Greek migrant began objecting to the protestors.</p> <p>Police prevented any incidents developing by moving on the marchers...</p> <p>At the Rest Park, the protest proceeded without further incident.</p>
	<p>And as we move into the 21st century, The South Coast Labour Council, the trade union movement, and the people of this region</p> <p>... are still demanding industrial and social justice for all.</p> <p><i>Song: They were right (repeat)</i></p>	<p>footage on march (handheld video).</p> <p>Include image of Maurie Mulheron on stage and finish with child with Australian flag sitting on father's shoulders in the crowd.</p>

Appendix 2.6: Promise of Struggle Plan



Appendix 3.1: SCLC Affiliates, Delegates and Committee Representation

1975

Union	Delegates and elected position	Committee representation
Actors and Announcers Equity		
Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union	Arber (President from July), Barker (President til July), Bringolf, Doyle, Quinn, Stocker, Williams	rules revision (x2), action conference (x2), disputes, peace, metal group, finance, social services
Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union		
Australian Building Construction Workers' Union		
Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen		
Australian Meat Industry Employees' Union		
Australian Railways Union		
Australian Workers' Union	Bowmaker, Black, Campbell, Chrozonowica, Coombe, Coopes, Hill, Hope, Lawrence, Newman, Parkinson, Sanaghan, Stewart, Weber,	local government, migrant unity action, finance
Baking Trades Employees' Union		
Bread Industry Employees & Salesmen's Association		
Builders Labourers' Federation	Boyd, Cristie, Owens, Pringle	
Building Workers Industrial Union	Durston, Durston, Lloyd, Brown	local government, housing advisory, steel union group
Commercial Travellers Guild		
Dental Technicians Association		
Electrical Trades Union	Pitt	metal group
Federated Brick, Tile and Pottery Workers' Union	Smith	
Federated Clerks' Union	Chalmers, Arrowsmith, Mins, Smith	IWY (x3)
Federated Engine Drivers & Firemens' Association	Barnes, Dunn, Kelly	social services, peace, disputes, action conference, pollution
Federated Gas Employees' Industrial Union		
Federated Ironworkers' Association	Gillespie, Heggen, Kelly, Lelli, Noort, Odds, Roberts, Rood, Walther, Whetherall	peace, social services (x3), action conference (x2), metal group, finance,

Union	Delegates and elected position	Committee representation
		pollution, rules revision, migrant unity action, local government (x2). IWY (x3)
Federated Liquor and Allied Industry Employees Union	Lidden, Noble, Norris (Ass Secretary), Rennick, Waterson	finance, disputes, social services, pollution, IWY
Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union	Atkinson, Errey, McNeilage, Norris, Norris, Parker, Piquero	disputes, steel unions, action conference, social services, IWY (x2)
Federated Pulp and Paperworkers' Union		
Federated Rubber and Allied Industries Union		
Federated Storemen & Packers Union		
Firemen and Deckhands' Union	Clunne	marketing, action conference
Hairdresser and Wigmakers Employees' Union	Konz	
Health and Research Employees' Association of Australia	(dis-affiliated in June)	
Illawarra Colliery Officials Association		
Illawarra Teachers' Association	Graham (trustee)	action conference
Miners' Federation	Moore, Swan, Whiley, Bringolf	
Moulders' Union		
Municipal Shire Employees' Union	Bourne (trustee), Finch	disputes, peace, action conference
North Illawarra Teachers' Association	Simpson Osbourne...	
NSW Fire Brigades Employees' Union		
Operative Plasterers and Plaster Workers' Federation	Butler, Corfield	finance, rules revision, steel unions
Pastrycooks & Biscuitmakers' Union		
Plasterers' Union		
Plumbers and Gasfitters' Union		
Plate Sheet & Ornamental Glass Workers' Union	Mant, Storey	
Printed and Kindered Industries Union		
Public Service Association	Wilding, Williamson (auditor)	action conference, finance,

Union	Delegates and elected position	Committee representation
		pollution
Pulp & Paper Workers' Federation		
Seamens' Union of Australia	Chalmers, McLlvenie	peace, rules revision, social services, local government
Ships Painters and Dockers Union	Christofides, Woodbury (Jr Vice President)	peace, action conference, rules revision, may day
Shoalhaven Illawarra Teachers' Association		
South Illawarra Teachers' Association	Hart	action conference
The Australian Coal and Shale Employees/ Federation		
The Operative Painters and Decorators' Union		
The Technical Teachers' Association	Robertson	
Theatrical and Amusement Employees' Union		
Tilers & Slaters Union		
Trainee Teachers' Association		
Union of Postal Clerks and telegraphists	Borrow, Jenet	action conference
Water and Sewerage Employees' Union		
Waterside Workers' Federation	Lowrey, McAlear (auditor), Murray (Snr Vice President), McLean, West	local government, disputes, action conference, social services

Notes:

Committees listed in minutes, but no record of membership of Builders Trade group, public transport group, mining group, may day committee, media committee and propaganda committees.

A number of individuals were named as committee members, but there is no record of union affiliation.

Sources: D169/2/19 – Correspondence 16th April 1975, 13th May 1975, Meeting minutes 26th February 1975, 19th March 1975, 23rd July 1975, 17th September 1975, 1st October 1975, AGM minutes 19th February 1975. (Note at least three other delegates were list in minutes but no union affiliation is indicated: Spelling of names is from the minutes)

Appendix 4.1: Women Activists 1975–1980

Union	Name	SCLC '75	SCLC '80	WWWCC	WWIC	WWC	WAG	WEL	JM	IWD	HC	JFW	INSEC
	Aladek							*					
	Allen							*					
Meat Employees' Union	Anderson		*										
	Anderson							*					
Teachers Fed	Andrews								*				*
Teachers Fed	Armour			*	*			*	*				*
FCU	Arrowsmith	*	*	*	*		*		*	*			
MWU	Atkinson	*	*	*					*	*			
MWU	Baker			*									
	Barker			*						*			
	Beyford			*									
Miners' Aux	Beattie				*								
	Biceago				*				*		*		
PSA	Black		*						*				
NSW Teachers	Block		*		*								
Teachers Fed	Boller						*						
APTU	Borrow	*	*										

Union	Name	SCLC '75	SCLC '80	WWWCC	WWIC	WWC	WAG	WEL	JM	IWD	HC	JFW	INSEC
Miners' Aux	Bowen				*					*			
AWU	Bowmaker	*											
	Bradford				*								
Teachers Fed	Brewer		*	*	*	*							
MWU	Brown		*	*									
	Burgess							*					
	Burke			*	*				*	*			*
	Byrant							*					
	Byrne							*					
AWU	Campbell	*	*	*									
	Carr				*						*		
	Cartledge								*				
Teachers Fed	Carter												*
	Cashworth							*					
FCU	Chalmers	*	*	*	*				*				
	Chalmers				*				*				
AWU	Chrozonowicz	*											
AWU	Christofides			*									
	Clarsen								*				
	Colston												

Union	Name	SCLC '75	SCLC '80	WWWCC	WWIC	WWC	WAG	WEL	JM	IWD	HC	JFW	INSEC
AWU	Combe	*	*										
APTU, then AWU & FIA	Covell		*	*	*	*			*				
	Critcher				*								
	Cunnigham				*								
	DiLeva				*								
Teachers Fed	Dolan (Newsham)			*	*	*			*	*	*		*
	Donaldson			*	*								
Illawarra Teachers	Duncan		*	*	*								*
Teachers Fed	Ellison				*		*						
MWU	Errey	*	*	*	*								
	Evans								*				
	Faulker				*								
	Feher				*	*							
	Franks							*					
	Furlonger								*				
Teachers Fed	Garrety									*			
	Gibbons				*								
	Giddey							*					
ACOA	Gilroy			*									
	Gordon				*								

Union	Name	SCLC '75	SCLC '80	WWWCC	WWIC	WWC	WAG	WEL	JM	IWD	HC	JFW	INSEC
Illawarra Teachers	Gregg		*				*						
AJA	Griffith			*	*					*			
	Gudgeon	*						*					
	Hardy				*								
MWU	Harrison			*				*					
PSA	Hilton		*						*				
	Hilton								*				
FIA	Ivanoska			*									
	Jenkins								*				
	Jones								*				
	Jones								*				
	Jones				*								
	Jones									*			
	Kanks								*				
Teachers Fed	Kon (Con)				*		*						
	Kyle								*				
	Lane							*					
	Lazzarotto				*	*							
Teachers Fed	Levertensen						*						
Fed Liquor & Allied	Lidden	*	*										

Union	Name	SCLC '75	SCLC '80	WWWCC	WWIC	WWC	WAG	WEL	JM	IWD	HC	JFW	INSEC
	Mearing			*									
ETU	Mackenzie			*									
	Maher							*					
	Makula								*				
PSA	Makula				*	*		*	*	*	*		
	Matters				*					*			
	Mayhew								*				
	Mekosa												
	McCloskey						*	*					
	McCormack								*				
Professional Officers Association	McGee			*	*				*				
	McKay							*					
	McLoskey				*	*							
Meat & Allied Trades	Mielczarek		*	*	*								
	Morrissey							*					
PSA	Mukula							*					
	Murray							*					
	Nesbitt									*			
AWU	Newman	*	*										
Teachers Fed	Newsham				*								

Union	Name	SCLC '75	SCLC '80	WWWCC	WWIC	WWC	WAG	WEL	JM	IWD	HC	JFW	INSEC
Co-ordinator at TAFE	Nixon				*			*					
Fed. Liquor & Allied	Norris	*	*										
Theatrical & Amusement Employees	Northover		*	*	*	*			*	*			
	O'Gorman								*				
	Owen				*								
	Palmer						*	*					
Illawarra Teachers	Parker		*		*				*	*			*
Teachers Fed	Pearson			*	*						*		
	Peet							*					
MEU	Peterson				*								
	Phelan								*				
	Ragg							*					
	Reid							*					
	Reid				*								
	Reynolds								*				
	Richards								*				
	Riley							*					
Social Workers'	Riste				*					*			
	Robinson							*					
	Rowley			*	*								

Union	Name	SCLC '75	SCLC '80	WWWCC	WWIC	WWC	WAG	WEL	JM	IWD	HC	JFW	INSEC
	Rutnam			*									
	Sallans				*								
AWU	Sanaghan	*	*										
	Sandeman-Gay							*					
	Shannon				*						*		
	Sharkey				*						*		
	Shearing							*					
	Shepherd							*					
	Simpson				*								
	Smallwood				*								
	Smith							*					
	Southall								*	*			
AWU	Stewart	*											
	Strazdins								*				
	Strickland							*					
	Stuart							*					
	Sweeney							*					
Illawarra Teachers	Taylor		*	*	*		*						
	Taylor							*					
Actors' Equity	Thompson		*		*								

Union	Name	SCLC '75	SCLC '80	WWWCC	WWIC	WWC	WAG	WEL	JM	IWD	HC	JFW	INSEC
Teachers Fed	Turner						*						
	Walker							*					
	Walker				*								
Fed Liquor & Allied	Watterson	*	*										
AWU	Weber	*											
Teachers Fed	Welsh												*
	West			*									
	Wetherall							*					
APTU	Whiteman		*										
	Wilding							*	*				
	Wilkinson				*								
Combined Miners' Aux	Wilson				*								
	Yourn							*					

Key: WWWCC: Wollongong Working Women's Charter Committee; WWIC: Wollongong Women's Information Centre; WWC: Wollongong Women's Collective; WAG: Women's Action Group; JM: Judith Mitchell Campaign; IWD: International Women's Year; HC: Health Collective; JFW: Jobs for Women Campaign; INSEC: Illawarra Non-sexist Education Committee.

Appendix 4.2: Working Group Members, 1980

Name		1980–1981	1979–1980	Other Affiliation
Beattie	Sharon	rep for Nebo Miners' Women's Aux		
Bicego	Barbara	*		Health Collective
Bradford	Meryl	*		Health Collective
Burke	Chris		*	WAG, INSEC
Carr	Stephanie	*		Health Collective
Chalmers	Monica	*	Minutes Secretary	
Chalmers	Sharny	rep for Feminist St Theatre		
Cuningham	Rose		*	
Donaldson	Trish	Secretary	Secretary	WWWCC
Duncan	Darelle	*		WAG, INSEC
Ellison	Debbie	rep for Teachers Federation WAG		
Errey	Peg	rep for UAW	*	UAW, SCLC
Faulker	Maree	rep for Print Collective		
Makula	Ruby		President	WWC
Matters	Jenny	Minutes Secretary	Ethnic Officer	
McLoskey	Debra	rep for Campus women's collective		
Mielczarek	Bev	rep for WWWCC	Treasurer	WWWCC
Newsham (Dolan)	Val	rep for WWC	*	WWC, INSEC, IWD, Health Collective
Northover	Viv	rep for IWD	*	IWD
Parker	Beth		Publicity	INSEC
Rowley	Sue	Treasurer		Women's Study Group
Simpson	Sue		*	
Taylor	Jane	*		WWWCC
Thompson	Ruth	*		
Walker	Bev	President	Publicity	Women's Studies Collective
Wilkinson	Shauna		*	
Wilson	Jocelyn	rep for Combined Miners Women's Aux	Assistant Treasurer	

Sources: WWIC *minutes of AGM*, 23 August 1979, and 20 August 1980.