

# TIS The Independent Scholar

A peer-reviewed interdisciplinary journal

[www.ncis.org](http://www.ncis.org)

ISSN 2381-2400

**Volume 5 (August 2019)**



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**Shelby Shapiro** (Ph.D. American Studies), the General Editor of *The Independent Scholar*, served for many years as the English-language editor of *Tsum punkt/To the Point*, the magazine of Yiddish of Greater Washington, as well as for its predecessor publication. He is currently Associate Editor of *Records of the State of Connecticut*. His Ph.D. dissertation dealt with acculturation and American Jewish women in the Yiddish press; he is a Yiddish-English translator, and his research interests include Jazz and Blues (having presented jazz radio programs for nine years), the labor movement, the First World War, and immigrant anarchism.

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# AUSTRALIAN INFLUENCE ON THE AMERICAN WOMEN'S LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE FIRST DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: ALICE HENRY AND MILES FRANKLIN, EDITORS OF *LIFE AND LABOR*

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Date submitted: 2 March 2019

Date accepted: 20 July 2019

## **Abstract**

*This paper recounts the arrival in the United States early in the twentieth century of woman journalist, Alice Henry, and novelist, Miles Franklin, both feminists and social activists, fresh from Australia where women had won the right to vote and to be elected to Parliament, and where labor laws provided protection for workers. In Chicago they used their separate talents to further the cause of woman suffrage, labor reform and the organisation of the women workers, initially in their work for the National Women's Trade Union League, and later as editors of Life and Labor.*

*It discusses the extent to which Life and Labor succeeded in its aim of enlisting a wider public in the struggle for women's rights as an essential step towards the reform of labor laws, the dedicated work of Henry as editor and Franklin as assistant editor in generating a considerable part of the contents and editing and producing Life and Labor, and the implications that followed from the publication's dependence on the financial support of Margaret Drieir Robins, the WTUL national president, women's rights leader and philanthropist. It canvasses reasons for its failure to become self-supporting, its inherent disfunction as an organ of the trade union movement and a magazine for women readers, the departure of the editors and Henry's continued work as education officer for the WTUL and in producing books advancing the women's and labor movements.*

*The paper evaluates their work in the United States in the context of their lives in Australia which were rich in achievements as feminists and activists, and individually – Alice Henry as a pioneer woman journalist and Miles Franklin as one of Australia's most esteemed writers and literary figures.*

**Keywords:** *Australian influence, women's labor movement, women's rights*

Alice Henry, a pioneer Australian woman journalist and feminist, arrived in the United States at the beginning of 1906, aged 48; a tall, arresting figure with an air of authority and a shock of prematurely white hair. Miles Franklin, an acclaimed Australian novelist following the publication of her insightful and romantic first novel *My Brilliant Career*, arrived later the same year, a self-assured, vibrant, witty 27-year-old. This paper discusses why these two Australian social activists, feminists and successful women, left a country that was then a leader in women's suffrage and labor laws for one where women still had to win the right to vote and where many women worked in appalling conditions in unregulated industries. It canvasses what they achieved, initially as workers for the National Women's Trade Union League of America (NWTUL) during momentous events in the fight for workers' rights and social change, including the



prolonged strike of garment workers in Chicago and New York, then as editors of the League's national monthly journal, *Life and Labor*, established in 1911.

Research for this paper is based on original source material in Alice Henry's papers in the National Library of Australia; Henry's *Memoirs* edited by Nettie Palmer and published posthumously; her books, *The Trade Union Woman* (1915) and *Women and the Labor Movement* (1923); and copies of *Life and Labor* from 1911 to 1916. Henry's papers comprise four boxes of typescript and manuscript material comprising articles, letters, scrapbooks and newspaper cuttings. Most of the material is concerned with women and trade unions and women's suffrage. Her papers are an essential guide to tracing her work through the events and conferences she attended and the articles, papers and book she authored. The paper draws also on Diane Kirkby's biography of Alice Henry, *The Power of Voice and Pen* (1993) and Kirkby's 'The National Women's Trade Union League of America and Progressive Labor Reform 1906-1925' (1982), Jill Roe's biography of Miles Franklin *Stella Miles Franklin* (2006), Susan Magarey's biography of Catherine Helen Spence, *Unbridling the Tongues of Women* (1991) and Marilyn Lake's more recent *Progressive New World* (2018). The correspondence between Alice Henry in her later years and Herbert Brookes held in the Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes in the National Library of Australia opens a new perspective on Henry's wide artistic interests.<sup>1</sup>

The paper aims to bring a different perspective from previously published work to the achievements of Henry and Franklin in Chicago and their influence on the American labor movement through their pursuit of political, industrial and social reforms and feminist objectives for the NWTUL, and their editorship of *Life and Labor*. It emphasises the experience the two women brought to the United States through their previous immersion and activism in what was then the 'social laboratory' of Australia, where the first major battle of feminism had been achieved with woman suffrage, as had some of the social and political aims of the labor movement through legislation establishing an eight-hour day, just working conditions and the right to organise. It aims to establish, to the extent possible within the limitations of an article, the unique qualities of character and experience they brought to their positions during the period each was active in the United States through a close study of their own records.

The years these two Australians devoted to publicising and advancing the aims of the American labor and women's movements formed only a part of their lives which were rich in achievements in Australia, both as feminists and social activists and as individuals. Alice Henry was a pioneer woman journalist and campaigner for social, feminist and political and social reform objectives; Miles Franklin was one of Australia's most esteemed young writers and a socially active feminist. In the United States they brought to the NWTUL the enthusiasm, confidence and ability that had made them successful advocates in Australia. As the older participant of these two Australians in these struggles, Alice Henry brought an added wealth of experience in state-based and national struggles for women's suffrage, for the reform of employment conditions, for legislation protecting children and women and for the feminist goals of freedom to participate equally with men in education and employment and for an equal moral standard between the sexes.

#### ALICE HENRY, JOURNALIST AND FEMINIST

The skills Alice Henry brought to editing *Life and Labor* and advocacy for the NWTUL stemmed from her twenty years' experience in Australian journalism and her years of social activism. Her social conscience came from an upbringing that made her a feminist and a radical. Born in the inner Melbourne suburb of Richmond on 21 March 1857 to Scottish immigrants, Charles Henry, an accountant, and his wife Margaret, a seamstress,<sup>2</sup> she wrote in her autobiographical notes of her childhood: 'no sex division, still less sex inferiority, obtruded itself ...the distinctions between qualities and standing between boys and girls were literally unknown to me'. She quoted an episode in her childhood when her mother disapproved of a visitor's action in offering Alice's young brother a ride on a pony but not Alice. 'That was perhaps my first lesson in feminism,' she wrote.<sup>3</sup> Alice completed her education at Richard Hale Budd's Educational Institute for Ladies, one of the first girls' schools to follow traditional classical teaching.<sup>4</sup> Barred from further formal

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<sup>1</sup> See bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> Information about Henry: Papers of Alice Henry, National Library of Australia (NLA) MS1066; Alice Henry, *Memoirs of Alice Henry*, ed. Nettie Palmer with a postscript, Melbourne, 1944; Diane Kirkby, *Alice Henry: The Power of Pen and Voice*; Patricia Clarke, *Pen Portraits. Women writers and journalists in nineteenth century Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1988, 183-8.

<sup>3</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, p. 8.



education – the University of Melbourne had only recently allowed to women to matriculate but did not accept them as students – she worked as a teacher and private tutor.

Her first success in journalism, an almost exclusively male profession, came in 1884 when, at the age of twenty-seven, she had an article published in *The Australasian*, the weekly paper associated with the Melbourne daily *The Argus*. When she secured a position on *The Australasian*, Alice was assigned to reporting social functions and supplying cookery recipes, a 'humble' position, as she described it, 'at the bottom of the ladder'.<sup>5</sup> Unsatisfying as her work may have been, she was almost certainly the first woman journalist in Australia to be taken on to the staff of a major newspaper and trained on the job. Her account of her training under David Watterson, a strict and conservative editor, is one of the few records of this aspect of journalism in Australia before the introduction of the cadet training system. She wrote: "I owe [Watterson] much for the training he gave me. But progressive in his opinions he was not. He felt that both the labor movement and the feminist movement should either be ignored or actively opposed."<sup>6</sup>

Watterson continued to confine Alice to the social pages. but she was an enterprising reporter getting a few articles on social subjects and suffrage published, sometimes under pseudonyms. But in the mid-1890s, when Watterson proposed to restrict her solely 'to the women's columns of fashions, frills and frivolities', she rebelled and resigned.<sup>7</sup> After leaving *The Argus* she supported herself by starting an enterprising business in Melbourne offering a range of services for women for example as including as a 'town shopper' for country residents and as an employment agent.<sup>8</sup> For some years, until she sold the business in July 1899, Alice was a part-time journalist only, but she continued to contribute many articles to newspapers and periodicals.

Free to write on topics she chose she was published in many Australian and overseas papers on the recognition and regulation of women's paid work, social issues and sexual freedom. Her article on the moral training of girls was published in the *International Journal of Ethics* (Philadelphia) in October 1903,<sup>9</sup> and an article on the establishment of children's courts in South Australia, first published in the Melbourne *Argus* and the Adelaide *Evening Journal*, was reproduced in *The Times* (London) in support of the establishment of a similar court for juvenile offenders in Britain.<sup>10</sup> In March 1898, her eyewitness accounts of the extensive bushfires raging through Gippsland in eastern Victoria appeared in London in the *British Australasian*.<sup>11</sup> She also tackled some often ignored social problems such as education for intellectually challenged children,<sup>12</sup> and the treatment of people with epilepsy then regarded as a mental illness.<sup>13</sup> Her series on these subjects led to extensive discussion in 'Letters to the Editor' columns.

Long before she left Australia, Alice Henry was aware of the wider opportunities available overseas for a woman of reformist views. She was a friend of Catherine Helen Spence who had represented Australia at an International Conference of Charities held in Chicago in 1893. A feminist and social reformer and the first Australian woman to stand as a political candidate, Spence and Henry shared similar views on suffrage, democratic voting systems, social problems, labor reform, access to education and better conditions for women workers. Spence believed that 'women could take a place in the world beyond their households and accept responsibility in the public affairs of the community'.<sup>14</sup> Henry regarded her as a mentor.

The ties that developed between the feminist movements in the United States and Australia arising from Catherine Helen Spence's visit were reinforced by the visit of Australian feminist and suffragist, Vida Goldstein. In 1902, invited to speak at the first International Woman Suffrage Conference, held in Washington, Goldstein was welcomed by the president of the National American Woman Suffrage Alliance, Carrie Chapman Catt, who expressed the hope that her

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<sup>5</sup> Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, 186.

<sup>6</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Jeanne Young, *Catherine Helen Spence*, Lothian Publishing Co., Melbourne, 1939, p.132; Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, 186-7.

<sup>8</sup> 'Cleo', *Bulletin*, 14 November 1896.

<sup>9</sup> *Australasian*, 28 November 1903, 49; *Evening Journal*, 30 December 1903, 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Advertiser*, 1 December 1903, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Alice Henry, 'Teaching the Unteachables', *Argus*, 25 December 1897, p. 4; 8 January 1898, p. 14.

<sup>13</sup> 'Industrial Farm: Colonies for Epileptics, paper to Australasian Science Congress, *Tasmanian News*, 17 December 1901, p. 3, reprinted in many Australian papers.

<sup>14</sup> Susan Magarey, *Unbridling the tongues of women*, University of Adelaide Press, Adelaide SA, 2010 (original ed. Hale and Iremonger, 1985), p. 20.



visit would advance 'the bond of sympathy and good fellowship' between the Australian and American suffrage movements. As a representative of a country where women had won the right to vote and to stand as candidates at federal elections, following the federation of the Australian colonies as the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, Goldstein was greeted as a celebrity. Crowds flocked to her lectures on votes for women, she gave evidence to a United States Congressional Committee on the operation of female suffrage in Australia and she was invited to the White House to discuss suffrage with President Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>15</sup>

Influenced by the experiences of Catherine Helen Spence and Vida Goldstein, in 1905 Henry left Australia hoping that her experience in writing and speaking on feminist and labor issues would be valued and would lead to opportunities for meaningful work. She went as a delegate from the Melbourne Charity Organisation Society and a representative of the Women's Progressive League,<sup>16</sup> and after about six months in England and Europe she travelled to the United States. Catherine Helen Spence wished her well and sent her five pounds to help with her travelling expenses. She wrote:

Oh my dear friend I shall go with you on this interesting itinerary ... You are so much influenced by the experiences of Catherine Helen Spence and Vida Goldstein, more like minded with me than Vida Goldstein or any others to whom I have bidden God speed.<sup>17</sup>

In New York Alice Henry was invited to stay at Hull House, established under the settlement house social movement by Jane Addams whose invitation appears to have been prompted by correspondence with Spence. Addams, known as the mother of social work, was a pioneer American settlement house activist, reformer, social worker and leader in women's suffrage and world peace who in 1931 was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Henry was surprised by how warmly she was welcomed in America:

I was taken in at once and made welcome. At once! At first! A favoured visitor from far-away Australia! What those words mean to a mere newcomer! It was my introduction to the social workers' world at its best and highest, with close connections to the Labor Movement. ...

Australia is a word to rouse interest in all that circle and I arrived at a moment when Australia was beginning some of her most notable experiments in social legislation, and, Federation having been accomplished, Americans generally were feeling a sense of sisterly interest in this new young community in a territory as large as their own, with a tiny population and a future all before it.<sup>18</sup>

From New York Henry went to Hull House in Chicago where she met Mrs Raymond Robins and her husband, a wealthy couple with progressive views, who were supporters of the settlement. Margaret Drier Robins had recently become national president of the NWTUL and the following day she offered Henry the job of office secretary of the Chicago branch of the League. She started work immediately under a veteran unionist, Emma Steghagen, sitting at a desk at the Chicago labor monthly, the *Union Labor Advocate*.<sup>19</sup> Very soon Henry was also editor of the Women's Department of the paper where her training on the Melbourne *Argus* and *Australasian* was invaluable.

#### MILES FRANKLIN, NOVELIST, NATIONALIST, FEMINIST

Towards the end of 1906 Australian novelist and feminist, Miles Franklin reached Chicago bringing with her introductions to Alice Henry from Vida Goldstein and Sydney feminist Rose Scott. Born Stella Maria Sarah Miles Franklin at Talbingo, New South Wales on 14 October 1879 into a pioneering grazing family, German and English on her mother's side, Irish on her father's, her ancestors had run sheep and cattle on the high plains of the Monaro in southern New South Wales for generations. She described her childhood in a bush home in the mountains close to what became after Federation of the Australian colonies, the border with the Australian Capital Territory in a book describing her life to the age of ten in *Childhood at Brindabella*. Her family's downward slide on the social and financial ladder to a small

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<sup>15</sup> Clare Wright, <http://theconversation.com/birth-of-a-nation-how-australia-empowering-women-taught-the-world-a-lesson-52492>; Janice N. Brownfoot, 'Goldstein, Vida Jane (1869–1949)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)*, vol. 9, Melbourne University Press (MUP), Carlton Vic., 1983, 43–5.

<sup>16</sup> *Age*, 15 April, 12; 19 April 1905, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Letters Spence to Henry held in South Australian Archives, quoted in Magarey, p. 163.

<sup>18</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, p. 45.





farm near Goulburn, heightened her pride and self-awareness and contributed to her emergence as a 'nationalist, feminist and novelist' and to the writing of her first novel, *My Brilliant Career*. Described as 'a marvellously rebellious' account of a bush girl growing up, the novel was rejected by Australian publishers, but was published in England in 1901 to instant acclaim. Its young author was welcomed in literary and feminist circles in Sydney by suffrage campaigner, Rose Scott, and later in Melbourne by feminist and suffragist, Vida Goldstein, who had only recently returned from her six-months' lecture tour in the United States.<sup>20</sup>

In the few years between the publication of *My Brilliant Career* and 1905, Franklin wrote three novels, but they remain unpublished. With Australian publishing prospects bleak, she left for San Francisco in April 1906 hoping that she would find work in a feminist environment while she followed up the success of her first novels by submitting further manuscripts to American publishers. Working her way across the continent Franklin reached Chicago where through her contact with Henry she was appointed secretary to the NWTUL's National President, Margaret Dreier Robins and worked from the same office.

#### WORKING FOR THE LEAGUE

Henry saw the work of the League in organising women workers and achieving industrial reforms as a link between the feminist and labor causes that she had championed all her life. She wrote:

The connection between the woman movement and the labor movement is indeed close and fundamental, but that must not be taken to imply that the workingman and the woman of whatever class have not their own separate problems to handle and to solve as each sees best. ... . The assumption that 'all working-woman's wrongs' would be solved by leaving them in the hands 'her working brother' ... [has] led to the unfortunate neglect of suffrage propaganda among working women, and to a no less unfortunate ignorance of industrial problems, also on the part of many suffragists, whether those affecting working men and women alike or the women only.<sup>21</sup>

As a lecturer and a field worker organising new branches, Henry became a key figure in the campaign for woman suffrage, union organisation, vocational education, and labor legislation. She had a dignified appearance and spoke with all the conviction of years of activism in Australia. American audiences were 'in awe of her English accent, snowy head and great knowledge'.<sup>22</sup> Her dignified presence allowed her to grasp opportunities as she did in 1906 when, as a guest at an event at the White House she took the opportunity to pass on 'Australia's impromptu greetings' to President Theodore Roosevelt.<sup>23</sup> In her other role as editor of the women's section of the *Union Labor Advocate*, the journal of the Chicago Federation of Labor, she could draw on her experience of women's suffrage, labor legislation and measures adopted in Australia for dealing with social problems.<sup>24</sup> In her first year in America she had established her intellectual standing as a social historian with an article published in a New York weekly *The Outlook* on the Australian labour movement.<sup>25</sup>

#### GARMENT WORKERS' STRIKE

During the next five years Henry and Franklin established their credentials as fighters for women workers. In 1910 during the prolonged strike of garment workers in Chicago and New York, they organised strike relief, joined barricades and, more importantly, publicised the plight of the strikers gaining wide publicity and mobilising sympathy and support. One of their articles, 'Why 50,000 refused to sew', which described in detail the conditions that had led these oppressed,

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<sup>20</sup> Information about Franklin: Jill Roe, 'Franklin, Stella Miles 1879-1954', *ADB*, MUP, 1981, vol. 8, 574-6; Jill Roe, *Stella Miles Franklin: a biography*, Fourth Estate, Pymble NSW, 2008; Drusilla Modjeska, 'Miles Franklin: A Chapter of Her Own', in *Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925-1945*, Sirius Books, Sydney, 1981, 182-220.

<sup>21</sup> Alice Henry, *The Trade Union Woman*, D. Appleton Co., New York, 1915, 255-6.

<sup>22</sup> Diane Kirkby, 'Henry, Alice (1857-1943)', *ADB*, vol. 9, MUP, 1983, 264-5.

<sup>23</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> Diane Kirkby, *Alice Henry: The Power of Pen and Voice. The life of an Australian-American Labor Reformer*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, 90.

<sup>25</sup> Alice Henry, 'Industrial Democracy: The Australian Labor Movement', *The Outlook*, 3 November 1906, 566-70.



unorganised women workers to strike, gained publicity as far away as England.<sup>26</sup> Alice Henry described the publicity they gained as 'immense', something that could not have been achieved except for a 'struggle on a stupendous scale'.<sup>27</sup> They exposed the reduction in piece rates, the long hours and unsafe and unhealthy working conditions and the power wielded by foremen in imposing penalties and demanding sexual favours, in an industry in which the overwhelming majority of workers were non-English speaking migrant women. The unsafe conditions women worked under were horrifyingly illustrated by the death of 146 workers in a fire in the Triangle shirtwaist factory in New York where employers had blocked exits and stairwells to prevent workers taking unauthorised breaks.<sup>28</sup> As the garment workers strike dragged on, the strikers and their families endured hunger, evictions and cold, and besieged the Chicago League headquarters for basic strike relief of food rations and help with rent and coal. Alice Henry and Miles Franklin joined picket lines and distributed relief to the workers while their publicity raised awareness of the conditions in the industry and the desperate plight of the strikers.

#### 'THE HUNGER BARGAIN'

Early in 1911, the strikers were forced back to work through desperation, their sole gain being an agreement with one major employer to establish a board of arbitration with employee representation. 'The hunger bargain has been struck,' the editors wrote as they detailed the losses in human suffering through employers refusing to re-engage some strikers and the majority forced to return to the same unsafe and degrading conditions. They saw the principal gains as 'the sense of solidarity, of mutual understanding' that had grown between the huge unorganized group of immigrant workers and organised labour. The strike, they wrote, opened 'a window into industrial conditions' for 'thousands of well-meaning' but 'entirely ignorant' Chicago citizens'.<sup>29</sup> Reflecting on the strikes in the garment and allied industries, Henry wrote four years later:

The beginning of the present stage of the industrial rebellion among working-women in the United States may be said to have been with the immense garment workers' strikes. All have been strikes of the unorganized ... One most important fact was that they had the support of a national body of trade-union women, banded in a federation, working on the one hand with organized labor and on the other bringing in as helpers, large number of outside women.<sup>30</sup>

The epic fight contributed to a decision by the NWTUL to expand the women's section of the *Union Labor Advocate* into an ambitious national monthly journal, *Life and Labor*, with the aim of enlisting the interest of a much wider public in the struggle for workers' rights. The new publication had a double function that Henry described as "an organ of the League activities, and the expression of members' views; and as a running diary of what was happening in the world of working-women, for the information of students and of all interested in sociological matters."<sup>31</sup>

The beginning of the journal signalled a new era in the League's work and the two Australians were chosen to take charge, Alice Henry as editor and Miles Franklin as assistant editor. In their first editorial in *Life and Labor* published in January 1911, they recognised the potential for revolutionary action by workers in situations such as the prolonged struggle of the garment workers and its bitter end and they pointed to the potential in awakening public opinion through the widespread publicity the strike had generated. They wrote:

If the whole burden of remedying unfair industrial inequalities is left to the oppressed social group we have the crude and primitive method of revolution. To this the only alternative is for the whole community through co-operative action to undertake the removal of industrial wrongs and the placing of industry upon a basis just and fair to the worker. ...

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<sup>26</sup> Alice Henry and S.M. Franklin, 'Why 50,000 refused to sew', *Englishwoman*, June 1911, 297-308.

<sup>27</sup> Alice Henry, *The Trade Union Woman*, 113-4.

<sup>28</sup> *Life and Labor (LL)*, January 1913, pp. 6-11; Alice Henry, *Women and the Labor Movement*, George Doran Co., New York, 1923, 118.

<sup>29</sup> *LL*, March 1911, 88-9; June 1912, 170-2.

<sup>30</sup> Henry, *The Trade Union Woman*, pp. 110-11.

<sup>31</sup> Henry, *The Trade Union Woman*, pp. 74-5.





Destructive action peculiarly affects women and as we know that woman's industrial life is inseparable from her civic and social development the purpose of *Life and Labor* will be to express the forces both latent and active in the woman movement of this country and thus bring the working girl into fuller and larger relationship with life on all sides.<sup>32</sup>

#### EDITING *LIFE AND LABOR*

Henry and Franklin brought to their positions as inaugural editors of the League's journal *Life and Labor* their experience in Australia of the two most important aims of the American feminist and labor movements. Under the Australian Constitution, adopted when the Australian colonies federated as the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, they had exercised the right to vote equally with men and they were entitled to stand for the Commonwealth Parliament; they had been active in the successful female suffrage campaigns in several Australian states, and they had seen the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration set a minimum male basic wage in a country where there was already an eight-hour day. There were glaring gaps – some states prevented women from standing as parliamentary candidates, female wages were set well behind male rates and many women slaved for long hours in home-based industries on piecework rates. Nevertheless, Australian women were far in advance of American women in these fields.

For the past thirty years, Alice Henry had exploited the print media, then the only method of mass communication, to 'educate, inspire, attract and influence readers'.<sup>33</sup> She had developed her ability to present the underlying need for woman suffrage to effect feminist goals, the need for workers to organise and for society to recognise the grave defects in an economic system that allowed such an imbalance between employers and the right of their workers to a living wage and just conditions. She had a vigorous, stimulating mind, enthusiasm and zeal. Miles Franklin brought different talents, described by Henry as 'her ready pen, her fresh interest in everything, her initiative and her easy adaptability' that made her 'an easy addition to the staff'.<sup>34</sup> Henry was educative and earnest, Franklin brought lightness, a human touch and her literary talent that gave 'vitality and verve' to the journal while 'her sense of irony of women's place' added to its 'distinctive feminist flavour'.<sup>35</sup>

Diane Kirkby, Henry's biographer, described their conception of the journal as 'a feminist working-woman's journal which was at the same time investigative and informative'.<sup>36</sup> Its major appeal was to middle-class professional women, feminists, activists, social workers and community leaders rather than the unionists it represented, many of whom had neither the money to subscribe nor the time to read the journal. The consequences of its ambivalence, in appealing primarily to middle-class professional women rather than working-class women, was to become more apparent and more threatening to its existence in following years. At its beginning, the editors saw harnessing the power of activist women to gain the vote as a first step in giving women the power to influence industrial and social legislation. Before the passing of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the American Constitution in 1920, American women had no right to vote in national elections and could vote in only a minority of states.

With their joint talents, Henry and Franklin produced an attractive, professional publication bringing together writing by Americans prominent in the labor and feminist movements. They featured interviews with trade union and political leaders, biographical articles on women workers, articles on their exploitation, reports of strikes and suffrage conventions, international suffrage and labor news, short stories and poems. Their article on the bitter end to the garment workers' strike in the first issue was followed by two more on the lessons of the strike. In subsequent issues, appealing stories on the lives of women who had emerged to become union leaders or those who worked in oppressed industries, were intermingled with educative articles on the aims of the League.

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<sup>32</sup> Editorial, *LL*, January 1911, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Diane Kirkby, "Those Knights of Pen and Pencil": Woman Journalists and Cultural Leadership of the Women's Movement in Australia and the United States', *Labour History*, May 2013, 82-4.

<sup>34</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, 89.

<sup>35</sup> Kirkby, *The Power of Pen and Voice*, 118.

<sup>36</sup> Kirkby, *The Power of Pen and Voice*, 119.



In editorials and articles, Henry and Franklin stressed the essential need for the organisation of the power of women in trade union and suffrage organisations. In an editorial in the February 1912 issue of *Life and Labor*, they wrote:

As workers, organization is our instrument for enforcing just dealing, adequate return for service, safe and decent working conditions of labor. Organization is the engine for driving home the rights of labor, for protecting it against exploitation by financial interest. Organization is the tool by which wages are increased and hours shortened. This tool will yet pry the locks from the fire-tap factories and even jack up the courts to a sense of social responsibility. What organization really stands for us is the right to labor on terms of freedom, and to experience life in its fullness. Out of the completeness of organization must inevitably come these twin rights, to labor and to live in freedom.<sup>37</sup>

In Australia Henry had seen that the combination of the organisational power of trade unions and universal suffrage (with the exception of Indigenous people) had been successful in forming the first Labor Government in the world. She was passionate to bring these two forces together in the United States. In the same issue of *Life and Labor*, she wrote a hard-hitting article on the National American Woman Suffrage Association criticising the disunity and lack of organization that had seen the Association lose all its leaders of national reputation and long experience. Women in the organization must realise, she wrote:

The day of primitive methods and of individual protests is gone ... the only protest on behalf of democracy of any weight is a planned and organized campaign. ... Courage sisters! We can only fit ourselves for the responsibility that is coming to us by exercising faithfully the responsibilities we already possess.<sup>38</sup>

Franklin began an irregular book review section, 'When we have time to read' in the June 1911 issue but she recognised the problem for busy working women warning that they would not be able to keep up with reading without an eight-hour-day and a living wage. Her part solution was to reprint some popular stories women workers may have known in their childhood such as Hans Christian Anderson's 'The Ugly Duckling', which were easy and quick to read. She also reviewed relevant books, for example, one on the militant suffrage struggle in Britain in which she described 'the continual outrages against fair play' that had caused some of 'the most enlightened women of the age' to decide that militancy was the only resource left.<sup>39</sup>

#### MRS ROBINS BECOMES ASSOCIATE EDITOR

At the beginning of 1912, Margaret Dreier Robins joined as associate editor and began to contribute a series of practical articles on 'How to Organize' and instructions on letter writing. As the influential source of authority and finance, she contributed to editorial decisions and according to several accounts suggested many ideas for inclusions but left the work of carrying out some of her ideas to the overworked editors. Both were often away from Chicago, Miles Franklin in her other role as secretary to Mrs Robins as president of the NWTUL and Alice Henry giving speeches in her educative role in the trade union movement and attending conferences. They had to write most of the content of the monthly, edit the material, prepare it for publication and see it through printing. Miles Franklin did most of the office work and production, ensuring the 32-page journal got out on time. Henry was notoriously disorganised, and she was also often away from the office speaking at events, attending conferences in other cities and publicising the journal to potential subscribers and supporters. She kept the journal operating, however, during a period in 1912 when Franklin became ill during an emotional crisis. This followed news that her persistent Australian suitor, Edwin Brindle, had abandoned his pursuit and had married in Australia. Franklin had several romantic attachments in Chicago before she rejected the idea of marriage, describing it as 'rabbit' work.<sup>40</sup>

In 1913 Franklin also had to edit the journal alone for about four months while Henry was recuperating from illness in Canada. At the same time, she had charge of the America-wide National Women's Trade Union League while Margaret Dreier Robins was in Europe. In a letter to her aunt at Brindabella in the far distant Australian bush, Franklin described her situation in characteristic style:

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<sup>37</sup> Editorial, *LL*, February 1912.

<sup>38</sup> Alice Henry, 'The National Association American Woman Suffrage Association and Machine Politics', *LL*, February 1912, pp. 51-55.

<sup>39</sup> S.M. Franklin, 'When we have time to read', *LL*, June 1913, pp. 181-82.

<sup>40</sup> Roe, *ADB*, p. 575.



I have been doing all the editing for months ... I have been crew of the captain's gig and chief bottle washer in all sorts of things. I have even given my opinion on settling strikes and sent organisers and investigators hither and yon. I will have to take in the size of my hat when Mrs Robins comes back.<sup>41</sup>

Her description of her workplace on Dearborn Street must have amazed the Franklins at Brindabella who still relied on a postman on a horse to deliver the mail and who had not encountered buildings approaching the height of skyscrapers:

We have an office suite of four rooms in one of the big skyscrapers and one of them is my private office. I have an assistant to help me. I have my own telephone switch and all sorts of conveniences. Quite a change from the life of an Australian bush girl. We have a mail chute just outside our door in which we drop our letters and when we want a telegraph messenger to take things we press a button in the wall. The building has a barber shop and a restaurant and all sorts of things. There are some thousands of people quartered here. It is a great sight when the buildings light up at night.<sup>42</sup>

Although it was the subject of only a scant reference in *Life and Labor*, the news that a Chicago architect, Walter Burley Griffin, had won the competition for the design of Australia's new National Capital was exciting news to the two Australians, particularly Miles Franklin who had grown up just over the ranges to the west of the land on which Canberra was to be built.<sup>43</sup> They visited Griffin and his wife Marion Mahony Griffen, who was responsible for the drawings that were part of his winning entry, in their office only a few blocks away to congratulate them, recounting their visit in an enthusiastic article published in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*. In it they described Griffin as 'very modest about the stupendous achievement of planning a national capital, but enthusiastic about the great opportunity' offered by Australia. Griffin regarded Australia as: 'The newest of the great Commonwealths, already the most advanced economically, and with the fewest steps to retrace.' When a visiting architect queried Griffin's naming of the parliamentary building in his plan for Canberra as the Governor's Palace as out of keeping with democracy, Marion Mahony Griffin, replied: 'Not a bit, is not democracy the supreme monarch in our day, and a palace is none too good to house democracy.'<sup>44</sup> The Griffins are mentioned in only a sentence or two in *Life and Labor* in a Franklin article on 'Elisabeth Martini, Architect: A Pioneer in an Old Profession'. Apart from a portrait of Martini, however, the article is illustrated entirely with Marion Mahony Griffin's designs for buildings in Illinois: the Adolph Mueller residence and garage in Decatur and the Church of All Saints in Evanston.<sup>45</sup>

The editors' frequent absences reporting conferences and strikes and giving speeches at events make the appearance of the journal each month a remarkable achievement, as was the volume of writing they had to do. Miles Franklin wrote profiles of the first two women ever chosen by a national political party as delegates to elect a presidential candidate after attending the 1912 Republican National Convention, and in 1914 she reported the American Federation of Labor conference.<sup>46</sup> Henry reported many labor and women's conferences and was often a speaker. Both published many articles on industrial problems particularly campaigns for a minimum living wage, sometimes drawing on the Australian experience of state wage boards and the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration which in 1907 had set a minimum basic wage for male employees based on the needs of a family rather than solely on a company's profits.<sup>47</sup> They also highlighted the conditions in which women worked in individual American industries, for example, Franklin's piece on button makers in 'More about Pearl Buttons' and 'The new broom how it is sometimes made', and Henry's 'The Chicago Waitresses'.<sup>48</sup> They also tackled some intractable social problems. Franklin began a discussion on

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<sup>41</sup> Stella Miles Franklin to Aunt Annie (Mrs Thomas Franklin), Brindabella station, via Canberra, *Life and Labour*, Room 901, 127 Dearborn Street, Chicago, 21 November 1913, copy with author.

<sup>42</sup> Franklin to aunt.

<sup>43</sup> Franklin to aunt.

<sup>44</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 3 August 1912, 15

<sup>45</sup> S.M. Franklin, 'Elisabeth Martini, Architect: A Pioneer in an Old Profession', *LL*, February 1914, 40-3.

<sup>46</sup> S.M. Franklin, 'The Women Delegates [to the Republican National Convention]', *LL*, August 1912, 234-6; December 1914, 361-4.

<sup>47</sup> Henry, 'The Living Wage', *LL*, July 1913, 195; Margaret Dreier Robins, 'The Minimum Wage', June 1913, 168-72; 'Wages Boards in Australia', June 1914, 179-81.

<sup>48</sup> Franklin, 'More about Pearl Buttons', *LL*, December 1911, pp. 377-9; 'The new broom how it is sometimes made', October 1914, 294-6; Henry, 'The Chicago Waitresses', April 1914, 100-03.



prostitution with an article querying the relationship between low wages and vice.<sup>49</sup> Henry wrote two articles, 'The Vice Problem from Various Angles' and 'Municipal Mastery of Vice,' in which she advocated 'a single standard of morality' between the sexes plus a living wage for all and votes for women to give them the power to influence legislation.<sup>50</sup>

The beginning of the First World War presented a dilemma for the Australian editors as unlike neutral America, Australia had followed Britain in declaring war and was raising the First Australian Imperial force to send overseas. In September 1914 they published a joint article blaming the tragedy of World War I on the build-up of armaments. 'The fallacy of the argument that armaments preserve peace has been exposed in a way that beggars the descriptive powers of the wildest journalism and leaves sober people aghast', they wrote.<sup>51</sup> Henry followed this in the December 1914 issue with 'War and its Fruits', in which she advocated sending a 'Peace Ship' from the United States to Europe. She hoped that American peace advocates would bring 'such pressure that at least an armistice must be declared'. If not, she wrote, European civilisation was 'doomed to destruction'.<sup>52</sup>

### *LIFE AND LABOR IN CRISIS*

*Life and Labor* maintained its high standard for four years from the beginning of 1911 but by January 1915, it was in deep financial trouble when the major financial backer, Margaret Dreier Robins, decided to stop paying the bills. Her withdrawal of support may have indicated some disagreement with the direction of the publication, yet she held the position of Associate Editor and it was the responsibility of the League, which she also financed, to give clear directions on the journal's aims and scope. The editors appealed for new financial supporters and for greater efforts to enrol new subscribers and they made drastic economies, including a reduction from 32 to 16 pages and a move to cheaper premises.<sup>53</sup> But none of these measures led to improvement in the underlying problem—the publication's dependence on outside financial support.

The events that led to the departure of both editors are difficult to unravel. Whether voluntarily or through pressure or just by reading the situation, Alice Henry resigned stating that she wanted to take less harassing and fatiguing work as national lecturer and educator for the League, a position that had fallen vacant. This was not unlike the work she had done addressing meetings, conferences and groups when she was publicising *Life and Labor*, in the course of which she always stressed the need for workers to organise to fight for their rights and to work for the vote as a fundamental right and as the key to other reforms for women employees. At 58, Alice was a woman who had worked hard all her adult life so the move may have appeared reasonable. It also allowed her the time to finish a book she had been working on for some years and which Mrs Robins often urged her to finish. Her major publication, *The Trade Union Woman*, was published later that year.

Henry remained loyal to Margaret Dreier Robins. As NWTUL president, she wrote, Robins 'put up a record for initiative, courage and resourcefulness' and in her public life 'the cause of the labor women ... was always her first interest'.<sup>54</sup> She had given the organisation 'her time, energy and influence and most generous financial help and advanced by many years the position of working women'.<sup>55</sup> She continued with a justification for Mrs Robins ending support for the organization:

Mrs Robins felt, however, that if the Women's Trade Union League was to fulfil its true function of being a working women's organization, she must withdraw to some extent her helping hand and its management must devolve upon the girls themselves. Her judgment was sound, as has been seen in the League's subsequent success as an essential part of the labor movement and its facility for drawing more and more into women into trade unions.<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, the devastation of losing her journalistic career in such circumstances would have been a blow to Henry. She had maintained her career in difficult circumstances in Australia where she was a pioneer woman employed in an

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<sup>49</sup> Ethel Mason and S.M. Franklin, 'Low wages and Vice—Are they related?', *LL*, April 1913, 108-10.

<sup>50</sup> Henry, 'The Vice Problem from Various Angles', *LL*, May 1913, 141-44; 'Municipal Mastery of Vice,' December 1912, 363-4.

<sup>51</sup> *LL*, September 1914, 260-3.

<sup>52</sup> *LL*, December 1914, 357-9.

<sup>53</sup> *LL*, February 1915, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Alice Henry, *Women and the Labor Movement*, pp. 115-16.

<sup>55</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, p. 67.

<sup>56</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, p. 67.



overwhelmingly male industry and then in an extremely demanding and multi-faceted position in the United States. Her remarkable journalistic career, so summarily ended in Chicago in 1915, was recognised in Australia in 2014 when she was inducted into Australia's Media Hall of Fame.<sup>57</sup>

Henry's departure left Miles Franklin an unhappy survivor. She had already been replaced in her long-held position as secretary to Mrs Robins in her role as president and chief backer of NWTUL. Now as editor with a staff of two she had to bring out a drastically reduced publication with, to say the least, a problematic future, while she was expected to maintain the quality of previous issues. At this stage Margaret Dreier Robins whose moves had precipitated these events seemed doubtful about the outcome. She wrote that despite Miles Franklin's 'excellent qualities both as a writer and editor', she did not have Alice Henry's 'knowledge of the labor movement or her fine vision'.<sup>58</sup>

By August 1915, Henry had left the publication and in October Franklin left for England on three months' leave from which she did not return. Franklin had admired Margaret Dreier Robins' establishment of the NWTUL and her huge contribution to its work and finances. In her roles at the NWTUL and *Life and Labor*, however, she had carried a heavy workload with a great deal of responsibility and at the same time canvas for support and subscribers. It was two years before Miles Franklin felt any mitigation in her hostility to the treatment that she had received from Mrs Robins.<sup>59</sup> *Life and Labor* continued in a truncated form until 1921 when it was reduced to a 4-page union paper.

Alice Henry attributed the financial failure of *Life and Labor* to the periodical having to fulfil two different and inconsistent functions: 'as an organ of the movement' on one hand and 'a magazine for general reading' on the other.<sup>60</sup> It seems surprising that a journal of such quality did not attract enough subscribers and advertisers to make it self-supporting in a country as industrialised and populous as the United States. It is useful to compare this with the experience in Australia, then a country with a population of less than four million, where several publishing ventures advocating the emancipation of women in all forms garnered support from subscribers and advertisers. Louisa Lawson's crusading, radical, feminist paper *The Dawn: A magazine for Australian women*, which she began in Sydney in 1888 employing only female staff in all roles, remained a viable, commercial publication for seventeen years. From its first issue and through the 1890s depression, it was supported entirely by subscriptions and a healthy amount of advertising. Some of its success can be attributed to Lawson's pragmatic approach in including enough practical articles of general appeal, even supplying dress patterns, to engage women who were initially only peripherally interested in its reforming agenda.<sup>61</sup>

Australian writer and journalist, Dame Mary Gilmore, was equally pragmatic in her long-running column for women in the *Australian Worker*. She wrote powerful articles on important women's issues, but she also included a popular section in which she replied to women who wrote for advice, dispensing her own brand of down-to earth, hard-won wisdom.<sup>62</sup> While *Life and Labor* maintained a bright, appealing style, its content was almost entirely directed at the lives of women as activists and workers, barely touching their domestic lives and aspirations for their children which were as important to many of them as working conditions.

#### AFTER *LIFE AND LABOR*

For four years Henry and Franklin produced a substantial, challenging journal that set out and advocated the essential goals of the women's and labor movements. Henry continued this work throughout the United States for the next ten years in her new role as head of the League's education department. In 1915 in her book, *The Trade Union Woman*, she continued the campaign for voting rights and reform of labor laws. After American women won the right to vote and stand for political office, she concentrated in her second book, *Women and the Labor Movement*, on promoting labor

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<sup>57</sup> Virginia Trioli, 'Alice Henry (1857-1943)' in *Media Legends: Journalists who helped shape Australia*, eds Michael Smith and Mark Baker, Wilkinson Publishing, Melbourne, 2014, pp. 47-50.

<sup>58</sup> Jill Roe, *Stella Miles Franklin*, 153-4.

<sup>59</sup> Kirkby, *The Power of Pen and Voice*, 121-3; Roe, *Stella Miles Franklin*, 154.

<sup>60</sup> Kirkby, *The Power of Pen and Voice*, 123-4.

<sup>61</sup> Clarke, *Pen Portraits*, pp. 160-71; Patricia Clarke, 'Jennie Scott Griffiths: How a conservative Texan became a radical socialist and feminist in World War I Australia', *ISAA Review*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2016, 37-8.

<sup>62</sup> Patricia Clarke, 'Women in the Media' in *A Companion to the Australian Media*, ed. Bridget Griffen-Foley, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2014, 496.



reform, advocating a shorter working day, a minimum wage, promotion and wages based on competence not sex, and neither compulsion nor prohibition against wage-earning after marriage. She was described as 'spokeswoman for the millions of her sex', employed in industry in the United States.<sup>63</sup>

In 1924 Henry visited Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Germany to report on the Workers' Education Movement and to attend an International Workers' Education conference at Oxford. At the end of the year she visited Australia where she was welcomed home as a woman who had been a distinguished ambassador for her country for the past twenty years. Her greatest disappointment was the state of Australian trade unions which, once so flourishing and effective, had in her view become backward and lacking in thoroughness and persistence.

Alice Henry retired from the NWTUL in 1927 and, after a serious bronchial illness lasting eighteen months, moved to the milder climate of Santa Barbara, California. Earlier she had begun corresponding with influential Australian businessman, Herbert Brookes, who in 1929 was appointed Australian Commissioner-General in the United States.<sup>64</sup> This unexpected friendship between the feminist, radical Henry and the deeply conservative Brookes, had the unlikely result of revealing just how passionate was her interest in music, art and literature in Australia and the United States, an aspect of her life not otherwise apparent in her writing. She alerted Brookes to developments in artistic fields particularly American reaction to new books by Australian women writers. She sent him reviews published in the United States of the first two volumes of Henry Handel Richardson's classic novel, *The Fortunes of Richard Mahony: Australia Felix* and *Ultima Thule*, M. Barnard Eldershaw's *A House is Built*, Mary Fullerton's *A Juno of the Bush* and the first of Miles Franklin's 'Brent of Bin Bin' series.<sup>65</sup> When Herbert Brookes resigned his post on 22 October 1930 because he believed Australia could not afford the expense of such overseas representation while it was in the midst of the Depression, he left Henry the problem of getting a venue in San Francisco for the 'First Contemporary All-Australian Art Exhibition'. Curated by Australian expatriate artist Mary Cecil Allen, it had been shown successfully at the Roerich Museum in New York.<sup>66</sup>

In the crisis of the Great Depression, Alice Henry's League pension was reduced and then ceased. In 1933, at the age of 76, she returned to live in Melbourne and reunite with her brother, her only relative. Although she was welcomed as a notable and successful Australian woman, settling back was not easy and she missed her life in America, her home for nearly three decades and where she may have expected to live for the rest of her life in touch with her friends and colleagues from her years of work in the labor and feminist movements.

#### 'A BACK NUMBER AND AN OLD HEN'

During the first few years back in Australia, Henry re-established herself as an active speaker, broadcaster and writer promoting the achievements of women. She gave lectures for the YWCA and wrote a chapter on the history of Australian women gaining the vote for the *Centenary Gift Book*, published for the centenary of the State of Victoria in 1934.<sup>67</sup> She was a prominent member of the Press, Letters and Art Committee of the National Council of Women for whom she compiled a 'Bibliography of Australian Women Writers', in response to a request from the International Council of Women. Although now a historic document held in the State Library of New South Wales, it remained in manuscript form only, an outcome that rankled Henry deeply.<sup>68</sup> She also assisted American writer and commentator, Hartley Grattan, an authority on Australian society and culture, during his tour of the country.

In 1936 she received a bitter blow to her self-esteem when a broadcast she had been scheduled to make on the ABC on Jane Addams, the joint founder of Hull House, an early settlement house in Chicago, was cancelled, the excuse being that her voice 'did not carry well over the air'. The blow was compounded when she heard studio gossip describing her as 'a back number and an old hen'. Henry's talk eventually went ahead, probably due to the influence of Herbert Brookes

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<sup>63</sup> *Evening World*, 11 February 1925, Papers of Alice Henry NLA MS 132, Box 2.

<sup>64</sup> Herbert and Ivy Brookes Correspondence, NLA MS1924.

<sup>65</sup> Brookes correspondence, Box 80, NWTUL, Chicago, 25/1201, 2 September 1929; YWCA, New York, 25/1246, 23 September 1929; Santa Barbara, California, 25/1280, 1302,1576, 1833, 1991, 2063-4, 2387-8, 2821, 1 October 1929 – 7 April 1930.

<sup>66</sup> Brookes correspondence Box 84, 25/4990-2, 22, 31 October 1930; Box 11, Santa Barbara, 1/9359-60, 31 August 1931.

<sup>67</sup> Alice Henry, 'Marching towards citizenship', *Centenary Gift Book*, Frances Fraser and Nettie Palmer eds, Robertson and Mullins, Melbourne, 1934, 101-7.

<sup>68</sup> Brookes correspondence, Box 112, Kooralbyn, Erin St, Richmond, Vic., 39/191, 6 February; 39/195, 8 April 1938; Alice Henry comp., 'Bibliography of the works of Australian Women Writers', State Library of NSW, QA820.3H.





who was ABC vice chairman. Brookes told her he regretted that the young generation were 'so woefully ignorant of the services to society which you and the few others with similar ideals and gifts have rendered during your long and creative career'.<sup>69</sup>

There were further blows in 1937 when she turned eighty, the first being the death of her brother who was lost at sea. She also came to the realisation that, despite the intervention of influential friends who lobbied on her behalf, she would have to suffer the humiliation of applying to become a naturalised citizen of the country where she had been born and to which she had contributed so much. Simultaneously she had to give up her American citizenship.<sup>70</sup> 'To belong to two countries is a tragedy', she wrote.<sup>71</sup> In 1940, she moved to a nursing home where Miles Franklin visited her from Sydney and celebrated with a party. '[Y]ou know how she adored being given a party.' Miles wrote to a friend in America.<sup>72</sup> Her literary executor, writer and critic Nettie Palmer, a central figure in Australian literary life in the 1930s and 1940s, encouraged Henry to write her memoirs which Palmer edited and published after Henry's death on 14 February 1943.<sup>73</sup>

#### MILES FRANKLIN AT WAR

After she left *Life and Labor* in 1915, Miles Franklin went to England arriving during the maelstrom of World War I. She did voluntary war work in London and in 1917 volunteered to serve with the American section of the Scottish Hospitals Unit in Macedonia. After about six months she contracted malaria and had to return to Britain.<sup>74</sup> During the 1920s she was Secretary of the National Housing and Town Planning Committee in Bloomsbury and worked for feminist and progressive causes. She had several novels published under one of her pseudonyms, 'Brent of Brent Hill' and others under her own name before she returned in 1932 to live permanently in Australia. During the following two decades she became a central figure in the Australian literary world, her voluminous correspondence, particularly with women writers, comprising a rich record of Australian literary life.<sup>75</sup> She had a literary success with her novel *All that Swagger* published in 1936 but others were not published until after her death: *My Career Goes Bung*, written in 1902 but not published until 1946 and *On Dearborn Street*, the location of the *Life and Labor* office in Chicago, written in 1915 but not published until 1981.

Miles Franklin died in Sydney on 10 September 1954, leaving the annual Miles Franklin Literary Award, Australia's most prestigious literary prize, honouring her extraordinary contribution to Australian literary life. There was a further honour in 2013, with the inauguration of the Stella Prize, named in her honour, which is awarded annually to the best fiction or non-fiction book by an Australian woman.

#### CONCLUSION

The work of these two Australians in publicising and advancing the aims of the American labor and women's movements from 1906 formed only a part of their lives which were rich in achievements in Australia both as feminists and social activists and individually: Alice Henry as a pioneer woman journalist and Miles Franklin as one of Australia's most esteemed writers and literary figures. In the United States they brought to the National Women's Trade Union League

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<sup>69</sup> Brookes correspondence, Box 91, Wellington Parade, Melbourne, 26/321-2, 30 May, 1 June 1936.

<sup>70</sup> Brookes correspondence, Box 14, Wellington Parade, Melbourne, 1/12279, 28 January 1935; 1/12440, 8 June 1935; 1/13006, 6 June 1936; 1/13371, 19 January 1937.

<sup>71</sup> Brookes correspondence, Box 11, 1/8817, 9 January; 1/9109, 10 June, 1/9322; 5 August, 1/9359-60, 31 August 1931, Santa Barbara, California.

<sup>72</sup> Kirkby, *The Power of Pen and Voice*, 221.

<sup>73</sup> Henry, *Memoirs*, *Woman Today*, December 1936, 4; Nettie Palmer, 'Pathfinders: Who was Alice Henry?', *Australian Women's Digest*, April 1945, 19-20.

<sup>74</sup> Patricia Clarke and Niki Francis, 'Canberra Women in World War I', *Australian Women's Register*, <http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cww1/essay.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Carole Ferrier ed., *As good as a yarn with you: Letters between Miles Franklin, Katharine Susannah Prichard, Jean Devanney, Marjorie Barnard, Flora Eldershaw and Eleanor Dark*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992.



the enthusiasm, confidence and ability that had made them successful advocates in Australia for women's suffrage, for the reform of labor conditions for women workers and for the feminist goals of freedom to participate equally with men in education and employment and for an equal moral standard between the sexes. During their work for the League and as editors of *Life and Labor*, they advanced these aims with great energy and ability imparting the freshness of their Australian experiences to this work.

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