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'Lovable Natives' and 'Tribal Sisters': Feminism, Maternalism, and the Campaign for Aboriginal Citizenship in New South Wales in the Late 1930s

The NSW Aborigines Protection Board had administered the gazettal, management, leasing, and revocation of reserve lands, the distribution of rations, and the control and dispersal of the Aboriginal population since the late nineteenth century. Growing criticism led to a Parliamentary Select Committee investigating that Board's operations in 1937. An Aboriginal political organisation, the Aborigines Progressive Association led by Aboriginal activists Bill Ferguson and Pearl Gibbs, was calling for full citizenship rights for Aboriginal people and, at the very least, Aboriginal representation on a reformed board of administration.¹ In 1938 a support group of white sympathisers, known as the Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship, was established at the instigation of these leaders. Meanwhile the powerful anthropologist Professor AP Elkin from Sydney University was pressing for reform of the administration, so as to allow for his own appointment to a reconstructed Aborigines Welfare Board, as an expert in Aboriginal culture. Since 1933, when he was appointed President of the Association for the Protection of Native Races (APNR),² Elkin had been promoting 'practical anthropology' as a way of better governing colonised peoples.³ When the APNR was approached separately by both a disgruntled ex-employee of the Board, Roy Brian, and by Bill Ferguson in 1937, Elkin had taken up their call for an enquiry into the Board's administration; his communications with the NSW Premier were accompanied by the recommendation that the 'psychological and sociological problems involved' in Aboriginal administration 'require special knowledge' and a copy of one of his articles.⁴ Various women's organisations were also taking a keen interest in the calls for reform, seeking the appointment of their own representative. Their most popular candidate was the anthropologist Caroline Kelly, who had represented the United Associations of Women, as well as Sydney University and the APNR (of which she was secretary), at the 1937 Enquiry. Kelly was closely associated with Elkin, who promoted her anthropological expertise before both the Premier and the Protection Board.⁵

As Goodall and Huggins have pointed out, conflict between the women's movement's support for anthropological involvement in administration, and the Aboriginal movement's hostility to anthropology, limited the political alliance between feminists and Aboriginal activists.⁶ 'Listen to the voices of the Aborigines themselves!' the NSW activists exhorted white Australians. 'We do not need anthropologists, clergyman or police! Give us equality of treatment and opportunity with all other Australians.'⁷ Yet Elkin, who argued that Aboriginal people were incapable of successfully adapting to modern society without expert pedagogic intervention, reached a larger audience of literate, affluent white women through his evening lectures at Sydney University. The receptivity of the contemporary women's movement to Elkin's campaign was an expression of both the maternalism circulating in popular female culture of the day, and of the desire of the feminist organisations to secure a foothold in the emerging bureaucratic state, through the appointment of their own representatives to Boards of administration. Given that they were forced to justify their demands for inclusion within the discourse of scientific rationalism, there was an inherent tension between the themes of maternalist authority and scientific authority. Goodall and Huggins concluded that 'the most productive relationships' between white and Aboriginal women 'tended to be personal rather than organisational.'⁸ While there has been much valuable work recently on the role of white women's organisations in reforming Aboriginal administration in the interwar period, little attention has been paid to personal relationships. This article examines the relationship between Pearl Gibbs and a white activist for Aboriginal citizenship, Joan Strack, a relationship which was both personal *and* organisational.

Joan first met Pearl in 1937, at a 'tea-party' for Aboriginal servants that Joan was hosting. Out of this meeting, Joan and Pearl ended up sitting together during the Enquiry hearings in late 1937. Joan intended to give evidence but, like other witnesses, never had the opportunity. As the Enquiry crumbled in early 1938, an organised alliance was forming between the activists from the Aborigines Progressive Association and the sympathetic white witnesses. The United Australia-Country Party coalition government was obliged to promise a 'reorganised system' in its election policy speech in March 1938, due to the growing public interest, and it was in this atmosphere that the Committee for Aboriginal Citizenship was set up that month, with Joan appointed secretary. She and Pearl (the only official Aboriginal member of the Committee) appear to have been the driving

force in the group.

Joan's positioning as an activist was complex considering that she came to this as a direct result of her experiences as an employer of Aboriginal 'apprentices'—young girls forced into domestic service by the Board.⁹ A wife and mother living on Sydney's affluent North Shore, Joan had connections amongst the ruling elite of the time, and particularly with several of the most prominent women involved in the conservative women's groups. A staunch supporter of the United Australia Party (forerunner to the Liberal Party), Joan's politics were firmly to the right—in fact she had been associated with the anti-Communist New Guard through her husband Norman.¹⁰ Indeed to all outward appearances she was typical of that class of respectable urban matrons who took advantage of the government's systematic removal and indenturing of Aboriginal girls.

In 1934, Joan had written a sentimental eulogy to her dying grandmother, a 'pioneer woman' on the far South Coast of NSW, which was set firmly within the discourse of maternalism so popular at the time. 'The love care and understanding which she expended upon these simple and lovable Natives people has never been forgotten', Joan wrote in her diary.

She patched up their quarrels she fed & clothed them until they came to look upon her as their own 'little Missus'... it was a common sight to see this dear old lady seated before a cheering fire with fishu-shawls & cushions, & on the floor, beside her foot stool, an aged Aboriginal gazing up into her face with a child like love and trust. On several occasions she came to Sydney simply to demand justice for these defenceless people, once having a manager of the Station removed because of his dishonesty.¹¹

Joan's romantic construction of her grandmother's relationship with Aboriginal people served as a model for her own activities. At the time—three years before meeting Pearl Gibbs—she was herself 'demanding justice' for an Aboriginal girl then working for her as an 'apprentice'. Two months earlier, in March 1934, Joan had spoken before the Feminist Club, a prominent women's group,¹² on behalf of this young woman whom she presented as a helpless child in need of motherly protection. Joan was not alone in celebrating her personal connections to one of the 'Mothers of Empire'—the feminists of the interwar period had no compunctions about their historic associations with imperialism,¹³ and at least two other prominent activists of the time, Mary Bennett and Jessie Street, traced the roots of their

'affection' for Aboriginal people to the alleged benevolence of their pioneering ancestors.¹⁴ Yet despite Joan's enthusiastic embrace of maternalistic rhetoric, she went on to become one of the very few white voices asserting Aboriginal equality, and the lone white woman's voice against the feminist groups' endorsement of the appointment of an anthropologist as their representative on a reformed Board of Aboriginal administration. Joan's unusual stance was primarily due to the influence of Pearl Gibbs, who appealed to her 'white sisters' not to give the Aboriginal people 'the stone of anthropology' but to recognise Aboriginal equality, which involved a refusal to condone the continued control of Aboriginal people by white authorities, 'trained experts' or otherwise.

The relationship between Pearl Gibbs and Joan Strack was itself unusual. The fact is that relationships between individual Aboriginal and white women were typically that of mistress and servant. This meant that generally Aboriginal and white women related to each other not only as women divided by race but also by class, with an older, married white woman occupying a position of intimate and familial authority over a young and single Aboriginal woman.¹⁵ The 'maternalism' which characterised the organised women's movement, that is, the belief that as upper-class white women the feminists were entitled, indeed obliged, to adopt a protective and motherly stance towards Aboriginal women, actually mirrored the ideology embedded in the traditional domestic service relationship. The maternalistic principle was intrinsic to domestic service in any context,¹⁶ but particularly so in the case of Aboriginal-white women's relationships constructed by colonialism, where it had been exalted to the status of a prescriptive myth, the so-called 'legend of the good fella missus.'¹⁷ By the 1920s, the story of Jeannie Gunn's 'little Missus' and her cute child-servant 'Bett-Bett' on an outback pastoral station had saturated Australian popular culture, especially amongst a female, urban, middle-class readership.¹⁸ Joan's tribute to her grandmother reflects the pervasiveness of the 'little Missus' motif, to the point where it represented for her, an employer herself, a sense of her own identity. There was, however, a crucial difference between the mistress-servant relationship on the frontier, and that which existed in interwar suburban Sydney. Since 1915, when the NSW Aborigines Protection Board gained extraordinary legislative powers enabling them to remove forcibly Aboriginal girls *en masse* from their communities and place them in indentures, the terms, conditions and wage arrangements of Aboriginal domestic employment were set, organised, and

controlled by this central bureaucracy. The agenda underpinning the so-called 'apprenticeship' policy was the dismantling of existing reserves, through the systematic 'merging' of women of child-bearing years into the white working class. Thus the white woman's traditional role of maintaining colonial boundaries of race¹⁹ was transformed, as she became the instrument of a state-directed policy of dispersal. The political intervention of the state in the private domestic arena had significantly qualified the mistress' traditional maternal authority. Although her participation in the system was voluntary unlike that of the servant who had no autonomy whatsoever, the mistress, once bound by Board contract, was obliged to defer to the authority of the state.

Where no major confrontation arose between the Board and the employer, however, it is apparent that many white mistresses did not comprehend the limits of their authority. To return to the details of Joan Strack's narrative, it took a serious conflict to turn her from acquiescence to protest. Even after the Protection Board had removed two servants from her charge, against her stated wishes, Joan was only perplexed by what she saw as a breakdown in communication between herself and the Board. She failed to make the connection between their removal and specific attempts by her to play an active maternalist role, in the first instance, assisting her worker in her appeal to the Board for her trust monies and, in the second, appealing to the police to help prevent what she considered sexual harassment of her worker. It was not until she undertook to put before the Board her third worker's serious allegations of abuse by previous employers, and was met again by a peremptory demand to relinquish that young woman, that Joan realised that her authority as a 'good fella missus' was subordinated to designs of the state she wanted no part of. At the same time, Joan learned through this worker, Del,²⁰ that the supposedly orphan girls placed in service had perfectly sound families from whom they had been taken. Joan's dismayed diary entries at this time recall the account of American slave mistress Mrs Shelby in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Harriet Beecher Stowe presented her fictional white mistress as realising the hypocrisy of her efforts to give her slaves 'a condition better than freedom', when her husband overrode her Christian ideals by selling her maid's young child.²¹ In Joan's case, it was the hostile intervention of the state, rather than her husband, that led her to reassess her participation in the apprenticeship system. It was at this point that Joan mobilised her personal and social connections in the women's movement, finding that the combined pressure of the Board

and the police department too much for Del and herself to resist alone.

When Joan had spoken before the Feminist Club on Del's behalf she unreservedly adopted a maternalist approach, presenting Del purely as an exhibit and herself as Del's champion in the place of her parents. Having realised the limits of her maternalist authority on the domestic front, Joan now began to talk about the need to have white women appointed to the Board to 'protect' the interests of the young women apprenticed, an idea beginning to be current among the women's movement at the time. She also began to take a keen interest in the new 'social anthropology' being popularised by Elkin. Shortly after Del's return to her family (a bitter-sweet victory for both women),²² Joan was invited to help set up a sub-committee within one of the national women's groups to 'assist' Elkin in his campaign to reform Aboriginal administration. However, due to the onset of the Depression, there was a hiatus in her activities. Her husband (an advertising accountant) being unable to find work, she and her children went to live rent-free in Joan's mother's cottage at Woy Woy at the end of 1935; by 1937, however, her husband had found employment again, they had a nice house back on the North Shore and Joan set up her tea-parties for Aboriginal apprentices.

These gatherings, at which Joan provided refreshments for Aboriginal girls working in the Sydney area, followed in the maternalist tradition of bourgeois women's philanthropy (such tea-parties being considered an admirable means by which elite women could mould working-class girls into good wives and mothers, and to combat working-class radicalism),²³ and was consistent with current feminist campaigns aimed at countering the domestic servant shortage.²⁴ However, Joan's plan, which she continued to refine and develop into a proposal for a 'Girls Club' whilst on the Citizenship Committee, was somewhat more radical. Such a Club contravened Board prohibitions against Aboriginal apprentices socialising with each other, and could provide a forum where workers could air their grievances against the system. Joan announced to the press that the Club was to be a 'headquarters' for Aboriginal servants in Sydney, from which they could launch a demand for a magisterial enquiry into the trust fund system, and indeed she had collected evidence for the 1937 Enquiry from the earlier tea-parties. Unfortunately, it is not known whether the 'Girls Club' ever actually functioned. Joan had great difficulty finding a room to rent, and eventually her enthusiasm for the project was subsumed by her activities in trying to get the organised women's movement to support citizenship rights and to

withdraw their support for the anthropologists.

Given that Joan herself had a strong personal interest in social anthropology, indeed, had written to Elkin professing her support for him and for Kelly just prior to her involvement with the Citizenship Committee, it is ironic that she should come publicly to oppose the feminists' endorsement of Kelly. From the women's organisations' viewpoint, Caroline Kelly's credentials as both a trained anthropologist and a member of the umbrella group for conservative women's organisations, the United Associations of Women, made her an ideal candidate. 'On occasions when we make representations for women to be appointed to Boards, we are told that we have no-one qualified to suggest,' the UAW president Jessie Street wrote to the NSW Premier. 'We maintain that on this occasion our nominee [Mrs Kelly] has better qualifications than the persons already appointed.'

This UAW letter, which opened with the statement that the 'most vital problem' was 'the half cast child ... this problem cannot be satisfactorily tackled without the help of women,'²⁵ documents the attempt by this organisation to reconcile maternalist conceptions of white women's role with the demands placed upon them by the rationalist state. However, the Aboriginal activists viewed Kelly with alarm, as they did the growing white interest in anthropology generally. They were implacably distrustful of the anthropologists' argument that Aboriginal people in NSW required a careful programme of assimilation before they could be admitted to citizenship, and throughout 1938 and 1939 the Aborigines Progressive Association consistently voiced its opposition to the appointment of anthropologists to a reconstructed Aborigines Board. As the white adjunct to the Aborigines Progressive Association, the Citizenship Committee supported them in their opposition. Joan wrote to the Public Service Board (which was to appoint the new members of a reconstructed administration) on behalf of the Committee, expressing the Committee members' distrust of the 'experts'. 'We, who know & understand the Aboriginal people', she wrote, 'are convinced that their need is for men & women who have lived amongst them & loved them rather than so-called experts, people in whom the Aborigines themselves have confidence & to whom they could appeal.'²⁶ The tenor of this statement recalls Joan's eulogy to her grandmother, showing a strong continuity between the role she saw as appropriate for a white mistress and that she constructed for public administrators. Indeed, she had explicitly said as much in a letter to the Premier at the end of the 1937 (prior to the establishment of the Committee), asking

him to receive a deputation of the Aborigines Progressive Association. Introducing herself as one who had 'had [Aboriginal people] always in my home' and whose forebears had employed and loved Aboriginal people, Joan thus legitimised her right to represent their concerns and needs.²⁷ In these two earlier statements, the tension between the discourse of maternalist authority and that of scientific rationalism is evident. However, during her term on the Citizenship Committee, her relationship with Gibbs led her to reconstruct her role, so that the moral authority she believed she had as an employer was modified by the insights she had gained working with the activists for Aboriginal equality. That is to say, as her personal relationships changed from mistress towards servant to that of fellow political campaigner, she dropped her maternalist 'protective' approach in favour of emphasising Aboriginal capabilities and rights.

Angrily attacking Kelly in a letter to one of the major tabloids that had been giving the anthropologist favourable coverage, Joan accused her of obscuring the causative role of the Board in the oppression of Aboriginal people—specifically, through its policy of removing the young girls from their own communities—in the hope that she might be appointed. The 'facts are well known to [the Aborigines]', wrote Joan, '& they have no patience with insincerity they have a keen perception & recognise the publicity agent at work immediately.'²⁸ A few days later, Joan drew up a Citizenship Committee circular exhorting the granting of citizenship rights to all NSW Aboriginals, which specifically demanded that any appointed representative of the women's movement was to be 'not a social Anthropologist.'²⁹ This latter qualification was clearly directed against Kelly, and copies were circulated to all the major NSW women's organisations with a covering note requesting approval. There was not a very favourable response. The conservative women's groups either declined to support the Committee altogether, or made substantive changes to its formulation, including the appointment of an anthropologist as their representative (the UAW now recommending the appointment of Camilla Wedgwood, the principal of the Sydney University Women's College and a well-known social anthropologist who lectured under Elkin).³⁰ The Feminist Club, which Joan had joined as an executive member two months earlier, after delivering a speech for citizenship, was particularly perturbed by the call for citizenship rights. The President of the Feminist Club, Mrs Cameron, wrote back to the Citizenship Committee asking for further details. 'Does the suggestion of full citizen's rights include all natives whether on reserves,

settlements or living as ordinary citizens?' she asked.³¹

Towards the end of 1939 the Protection Board itself resolved that one new member should be a woman, suggesting the Education Department's female inspector of schools. At the time, one of the Board members had in his possession a letter from Joan, to which he had replied three days earlier. '[I]n no circumstances will the woman you refer to be appointed to the Board', he had written. 'I think that if she were, everybody would immediately resign.'³²

As no copy of Joan's letter has survived, her nominee remains unknown, but the startling rancour of the reply invites speculation. Perhaps she had suggested Pearl Gibbs—such a suggestion may have been enough to alarm the Board into considering a safer alternative. It is certainly possible that she did so.³³

From their initial meeting at Joan's tea-party, the two women had shared concerns over the Aboriginal apprentices. While Pearl had never been indentured by the Board, when she worked as a younger woman in service in Sydney many of her friends had and, in the 1920s, she had attempted to help some of them appeal to the Board, with the same lack of success Joan found. (It was two such women who had taken Pearl with them to meet Joan.) Throughout their work together on the Committee, Pearl would have no doubt been closely involved with the various cases Joan was handling of parents looking for their daughters or attempting to get them returned home, and the Aborigines Progressive Association leader Bill Ferguson himself enlisted Joan's help on behalf of some friends of his. In this context, Joan's race and class made her useful to the Aboriginal people, as she could visit apprentices and their employers when such access was denied to Aboriginal friends and family.³⁴ Likewise, Joan's connections with the feminist movement were utilised by the Aboriginal activists. However, in *this* context, Joan worked with Pearl Gibbs not as champion of a vulnerable girl servant but, rather, on public platforms speaking before women's organisations and other groups. They were brought together by the fact that being women, they were seen by both Aboriginal and white male activists as the most appropriate people to talk before a feminist audience on 'women's issues' such as the apprenticeship system and child endowment. By late 1939 (around the time that Joan had written to the Board member), Pearl symbolised for Joan the principle of Aboriginal equality. She wrote to the *Daily Telegraph* about the annual meeting of the Association for the Protection of Native Races, complaining that 'citizenship was not mentioned ... yet we all know that citizenship is

the *only* thing which will lift these people from the depths of despair & remove them from the clutches of the so-called Protection Board'. The letter then continued:

Beside me at this meeting sat a lady, a half-caste & a friend of mine her Mother is a much loved Aborigine ... her father was an Englishman a seaman in the British navy, ... and her son, is at this moment in the Australian navy! Yet she possesses *no* Citizen Rights of any kind, instead she or her children may be pounced upon at any time by the Protection Bd. & sent to some Reserve or Station, labelled 'Aborigine' & this can be done & is frequently because the Aboriginal 'Act' gives the Board complete control over any persons even *suspected* of having Aboriginal blood!³⁵

The two women had attended the meeting together as fellow activists, and Joan's defining of Pearl as her social equal, a 'lady' rather than a 'girl' was significant. The fact that, like Joan, Pearl had a son fighting in the war encouraged Joan's identification with her, and Pearl's intense pride in her own mother would have deflated any presumption of a maternal role by Joan.

At this same meeting, Joan was 'attacked', as she put it, by Kelly, who accused Joan specifically of 'stirring up trouble on all the Stations in N.S.W.' 'You flatter me,' Joan responded smartly, 'I didn't know I had such powers.'³⁶ Soon after this encounter Joan wrote another letter to the papers pointedly ridiculing Kelly. As she lauded Aboriginal intelligence she disparaged the mental capacity and authority of white women. Having asserted that 'Half-caste & Aboriginal people in N.S.W. are entirely fit for Citizenship far more so than many of our politicians', Joan went on to state that, in Aboriginal society:

marriage laws & Social Codes are so intricate that few white men & *no* white women have ever mastered them all ... not even the women who call themselves 'Tribal Sisters' (to the extreme mirth of the Aborigines) be it said who immediately conjure up pictures of somewhat portly female anthropologists prancing extatically to the strains of some Aboriginal dirge & attired in somewhat meagre belts of 'ochre', sparsely dotted with Emu feathers (one Aboriginal woman said to me 'I hope a *fan* was added' I asked why & the reply was 'to hide the blushes of our 'Tribal Sister'![])

In using a comment attributed by her to an Aboriginal woman to criticise Kelly, Joan implied that she herself, while not capable of

'mastering' Aboriginal culture either, had a personal rapport with Aboriginal women no white anthropologist could claim. This rebuttal of the anthropological 'knowledge-power' claim was important. Having been an employer, and being currently a fellow activist, Joan clearly saw herself as relating to and 'knowing' Aboriginal people on an everyday level, which entailed a recognition of their fellow humanity rather than their cultural exoticism. Joan concluded that Aboriginal people required civil rights and Board representation. 'This is the very *least* we can do', she exhorted her white readers, to 'make amends for the past' and to 'shoulder our responsibilities even at this late hour.'³⁷

The Aboriginal people did not receive their entitlement to Australian citizenship until a very much later hour, in the late 1960s, although they did eventually get some token representation on a Board that was dominated by Elkin. The Citizenship Committee folded shortly before the proclamation of the new Welfare Board legislation in May 1940 when Joan resigned in disillusionment; Pearl Gibbs had left Sydney several months earlier, similarly disenchanted. Despite the fact that the Aborigines Welfare Board was ushered in without any representative of the women's organisations on it, it was welcomed with open arms by the various women's groups. They registered their support for Elkin's programme of anthropologically-guided assimilation and, indeed, while no white woman was ever appointed to a policy-making position, white women *were* employed in increasing numbers as 'Lady Welfare Officers' and other administrative welfare staff.³⁸ Ironically enough, within a few months of her resignation Joan embarked on a new campaign through the Feminist Club, with maverick anthropologist Olive Pink, to accompany Pink as a government-appointed 'Lady Protector' of 'defenceless' Aboriginal women in Central Australia.

Victoria Haskins

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Endnotes:

1. The history of Aboriginal citizenship rights is complex. While some Aboriginal people in NSW were theoretically entitled to the state franchise in NSW and thus the Commonwealth franchise, for a variety of reasons most were unable to exercise this right. Furthermore they were subject to a range of discriminatory state laws and practices denying them civil rights enjoyed by other Australians—such as not being allowed to manage their own finances or being denied these altogether (including pensions like Old Age and Child Endowment), not being allowed to drink alcohol, having their children removed summarily, their individual and communal land grants revoked at the whim of government departments, and not being able to pass such grants onto their descendants, plus being obliged to endure all kinds of human rights abuses both on the reserves under the autocratic management of the Protection Board, and in the wider society under a range of segregationist practices.
2. *APNR Executive Committee Minutes* 10/10/33: Sydney University Archives 1/131 S55 Series 1 Item 1.
3. Heather Goodall, 'An Intelligent Parasite: AP Elkin and White Perceptions of Aboriginal History', paper delivered to AHA conference, Sydney, 1982: 6.
4. *APNR Executive Committee Minutes* 21/9/37, 19/10/37. Letter, Elkin to Stevens, 20/10/37; Memo, Premier's Secretary, 27/10/37; Copy, letter, Stevens to Elkin, 28/10/37: *Premier's Department Correspondence Files* 12/8749A: 62/1515 Part 1.
5. NSW Aborigines Protection Board Minutes 2/12/36, 7/7/37, 1/12/37. Letter, Elkin to Premier, 29/9/39; Copy, letter, Stevens to Elkin, 28/10/37; Copy, Letter, Premier's Secretary to Kelly, 19/10/37: *PDCF* 12/8749A: 62/1515 Part 1.
6. Heather Goodall and Jackie Huggins, 'Aboriginal Women Are Everywhere: Contemporary Struggles', in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Sydney, 1992: 400.
7. *Australian Abo Call*, III, July 1938: 1; V, August 1938: 2: cited in Goodall, 'Intelligent Parasite': 15.
8. Such works include Marilyn Lake, 'Feminism and the Gendered Politics of Anti-Racism, Australia, 1927-57'; 'From Maternal Protectionism to Leftist Assimilation', *Australian Historical Studies*, no.10, April 1998: 91-108; Lake, 'Frontier Feminism and the Marauding White Man', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no.49, 1996: 12-20; Dianne Davidson, *Women on the Warpath: Feminists of the First Wave*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1997: 139-164; Fiona Paisley, 'Ideas Have Wings: White Women Challenge Aboriginal Policy 1920-1937', PhD thesis, La Trobe University, publication forthcoming (Melbourne University Press); Alison Holland, 'The Politics of Commitment', forthcoming PhD thesis, University of NSW.
9. See Alec Morgan and Gerald Bostock (producers), *Lousy Little Sixpence*, Sixpence Productions, Australian Film Commission Creative Development Branch, Chippendale, 1983.
10. The Stracks were custodians of the papers of the North Shore branch of the New Guard. While Joan, as a woman, could not be an active member of the all-male New Guard, she was proud of the fact that she had personally handed de

Groot his sword on the occasion of the Harbour Bridge opening.

11. JKS Diary entry 5/5/34, qtd. Haskins: 1
12. See Gail Griffith, 'The Feminist Club of NSW, 1914-1970: A History of Feminist Politics in Decline', *Hecate*, vol.14, no.1, 1988: 56-67.
13. See Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism and History*, Verso, London, New York, 1992: 228.
14. Letter, Street to Heffron, 30/10/39: *PDCF*, no.58-1515: 12/8750. See also Peter Sekules, *Jessie Street: A Rewarding But Unrewarded Life*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1978: 163-164, on a book she published about her grandparents' pioneering experience. For Bennett, see a discussion of her biography of her father, in Holland, 'Feminism, Colonialism and Aboriginal Workers: An Anti-Slavery Crusade', Ann McGrath and Kay Saunders (eds), *Aboriginal Workers: Labour History*, no.69, University of Sydney, 1995: 53-54.
15. Alternative relationships were those existing between white female missionaries/ teachers/ nurses/ matrons, and Aboriginal women: see Diane Barwick, 'And the Lubras Are Ladies Now', in Fay Gale (ed), *Women's Role in Aboriginal Society*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1978: 51-63; also Lyn Riddett, 'Guarding Civilisation's Rim: The Australian Inland Mission Sisters in the Victoria River District 1922-1939', *Journal of Australian Studies*, no.30, September 1991: 29-44; Riddett, "'Watch the White Women Fade": Aboriginal and White Women in the Northern Territory 1870-1940', *Hecate*, vol.19, no.1, 1993: 73-93. Aboriginal women and working-class white women have also worked together, lived together and been imprisoned together, but to my knowledge there have been no publications dealing specifically with such relationships.
16. See Judith Rollins, *Between Women: Domestic and Their Employers*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1985: 189-191.
17. See ME McGuire, 'The Legend of the Good Fella Missus', *Aboriginal History*, vol.14, no.2, 1990: 124-151.
18. Mrs Aeneas Gunn, *The Little Black Princess*, Robertson and Mullins, special school edition 1924 (1905); Mrs Aeneas Gunn, *We of the Never-Never*, Arrow Australia, Sydney, 1990 (1908). See Katherine Ellinghaus, 'Racism in the Never-Never: Disparate Readings of Jeannie Gunn', *Hecate*, vol.23, no.2, 1997: 76-94, for an analysis of the historical and continuing significance of Gunn's work in terms of (re)constructing the colonialist encounter.
19. See Ann Stoler, 'Rethinking Colonial Categories: European Communities and the Boundaries of Rule', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, no.31, January 1989: 134-161; Myrna Tonkinson, 'Sisterhood or Aboriginal Servitude? Black Women and White Women on the Australian Frontier', *Aboriginal History*, vol.12, no.1, 1988: 27-39.
20. The real name of this young woman has been changed to protect the privacy of her descendants.
21. Cited in Ware, *Beyond the Pale*: 55.
22. Del's return to her own family was hard-won but their broader aims—which included exposing and redressing the Board's malpractice and fraud—were not realised.

23. Clipping, 'Mothering Girls', *Daily Telegraph*, 4/7/[c.WW1]: Stott Family Papers, National Council of Women ML MSS 38/50. See also Janey Stone, 'Brazen Hussies and God's Police: Feminist Historiography and the Depression', *Hecate*, vol.8, no.1, 1982: 17; Josie Castle, 'The Australian Women's Guild of Empire', in Elisabeth Windschuttle (ed), *Women, Class and History: Feminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978*, Fontana, Melbourne, 1980: 287-307.
24. Jessie Street and Ruth Emerson Curtis, 'Australia's Helpless Housewives', script of radio broadcast play, 15/4/37; *United Associations of Women*, Domestic Service Folder: ML MSS 2160 142/71 Y790.
25. Letter, Street to Premier Mair, 6/7/40, qtd. Haskins: 241.
26. Draft copy, Letter, JKS to Chairman, Public Service Board NSW, 3/11/[38], qtd. Haskins: 237.
27. Draft Letter, JKS to Premier Stevens, n.d., c. Jan.-March 1938, qtd. Haskins: 216.
28. Draft Letter, JKS to Editor, *Sun*, c. 8/2/39, qtd. Haskins: 239.
29. Copy, CAC resolution, c. 27/2/39, qtd. Haskins: 239.
30. D. Wetherell and C. Carr-Gregg, *Camilla C.H. Wedgwood 1901-1955 A Life* (NSW UP, Kensington, 1990.)
31. Letter, Feminist Club President Cameron to JKS, 4/5/39, qtd. Haskins: 243. Mrs P. A. Cameron, according to Griffiths, never used her first name (Norma?) publicly; these were her husband's initials.
32. Letter, Bate to JKS, 6/9/39, qtd. Haskins: 243.
33. It is, of course, also possible that Joan nominated herself. I think however that this is unlikely, for the following reasons. There is no mention in any of her private papers that she ever desired to take on such a prominent position herself; and she expressed intense dislike not only of the 'self-seeking' motivations she saw behind Kelly's campaign, but also of fellow Committee member Michael Sawtell's privately (later publicly) expressed desire to be appointed to the Board. Although it may be that she saw herself as being one who could take on such a role with integrity, it would seem highly out of character for her not to have arranged for someone else to make the nomination on her behalf. One also suspects that her own nomination would not have received quite as vehement a response from the Board member.
34. Haskins, 'Could You See To the Return of My Daughter', article forthcoming.
35. Draft Letter, JKS to Editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 10/10/39, qtd. Haskins: 246.
36. Diary entry, 9/10/39, qtd. Haskins: 247.
37. Draft Letter, JKS to Editor (publication unknown), n.d., c. late 1939, qtd. Haskins: 248-9.
38. See Anna Cole, 'Gender and the Politics of "Aboriginal Advancement"', PhD thesis in progress, University of Technology, Sydney.