CHAPTER VI

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

INTRODUCTION.

All of the organisations so far discussed were Sydney organisations, although frequently influenced by organisations overseas or in other states, if they were not connected with them. Clubs like the Young Women's Christian Association were more closely connected, because although independent, they were virtually branches of an overseas parent body. Nevertheless, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the other organisations as far discussed did not consider themselves constituted to attend their activities or their influence in the same manner as other major women's organisations which came into existence at this period. In New South Wales there were three major and influential organisations which now made, or were in the position to make, vital contributions to the Women's Movement and they sought a variety of goals. Though they had a number of charitable interests, they intended to pursue either the prospects of equal rights for women as did the Women's Suffrage League; women's general interests, as did the National Council of Women; or both these and charitable aims as well, as did the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In the period immediately preceding the granting of the adult suffrage in New South Wales, and for a short time afterwards, these three were the most important and influential women's organisations in the colony, and the ones with the most general prestige.
It was through these organisations that the main activities of the New South Wales Women's Movement were channelled. The Women's Suffrage League, which will be discussed in full in Chapter IX, was the narrowest of the three in aim, because it had been founded for a particular purpose, and the least closely connected with any particular overseas organisation, although it was much influenced by overseas methods. The Women's Christian Temperance Union and the National Council of Women, however, were New South Wales counterparts of similar organisations whose headquarters were in the United States of America.

**THE WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE UNION.**

The Women's Christian Temperance Union was a temperance society founded by and designed for women. It was established by a woman who believed there was only one solution for drunkenness and who also believed, in company with most Victorian reformers, that like any other evil it would yield to a specific remedy. This belief was so strongly fostered by the Women's Christian Temperance Union and other American temperance unions that it did much to contribute to the introduction of prohibition. Prohibition was the actual aim in Australia too, but in the meantime Branches were prepared to settle for as much restrictive legislation as possible. The high water mark of the movement was the securing of 6 o'clock and Sunday closing.
In the process of working for these objects, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union dealt with nearly every other social and political question of the day, and because it was primarily a women’s organisation, it pushed the woman temperance worker into a number of arenas where she was forced to enlarge her activities and her knowledge, if not her outlook.

Temperance Societies had flourished in England since the early 19th century, though temperance was demanded as early as 1749 by John Wesley. Societies had been formed in Australia by the 1830’s, but though early supporters were considered eccentric the movement grew until by the end of the 19th century it had attained a respectability oddly in contrast with a society which was also responsible for some of the worst abuses of the drink traffic. The Women’s Christian Temperance Union was one world society among a selection of Rechabites, Sons and Daughters of Temperance, Good Templars, Church Societies and Christian Endeavour Movements. All of them were well supported.

In New South Wales temperance questions had made an early appeal to many women but until the coming of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union women did not have an organisation of their own. The Union itself was American in origin,

1. Society of Friends in Hobart, 1832; Total Abstinence Society, Sydney 1842.

2. Women temperance workers had been active very early. There are reports of the work of a Mrs. Calgarno in 1845 in New South Wales.
its birthplace the mid-west of the 1870's. The first concern of its United States members was to keep saloons closed and their success, though limited, led to the Union's continuance as a permanent body. About 1874, however, it attracted the membership of Frances Willard, a former President of Evanston College for Women, whose own development of interests from purely temperance questions to civil rights questions was reflected in the national and international sphere, and in the enlargement of the Union's activities.

The actual establishment of the Union in Australia took place between 1882 and 1887. There was no apparent difficulty in organising the first groups in any of the colonies. Approaches through Local Option Leagues, Temperance Alliances and the Protestant Churches, particularly non-conformist Churches, were almost completely successful, and the support of a number of abstemious prominent citizens in each state was also forthcoming.

In New South Wales the Union was founded, following the lectures of a visiting American temperance worker, Elia Johnson, in August 1882, by a band of ladies, many of whom were clergymen's wives. A Constitution and Plan of Work on the United States model was immediately adopted, and a public meeting held in York Street Wesleyan Church, Sydney on the following 4th September. The gentlemen present expressed their "confident expectation that the ladies would accomplish great and good work".

3. Manuscript Minutes of the Women's Christian Temperance Union 1882. These Minutes are in the possession of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, George Street, Sydney.
The formation of the New South Wales Branch preceded the main United States-inspired missionary campaign which in Australia was most strongly felt in Victoria and South Australia. Mrs. Leavett, the first of the Women's Christian Temperance Union's world missionaries, arrived in Victoria in 1886, at a time when agitation for local option was at its height and when 35,000 names had been collected for a local option petition. Local option became law in Victoria in 1885 and the temperance cause was well-supported, and on the whole, popular.

Mrs. Leavett, after a 18 months stay, and a journey which took her through three Eastern colonies, left a well-established group of unions behind, particularly in Victoria, one of which had already conducted its first deputation in Victoria, asking for further restrictions of the liquor traffic, before Mrs. Leavett left Australia.

The South Australian Union was more firmly established with the arrival in 1889 of the second-round-the-world missionary, the highly articulate professional journalist, Jessie Ackerman, who was to make a number of later visits to Australia and to become Australasian President of the Union, and in the eyes of members at least, an Australian citizen. She wrote, as a result of these visits, a descriptive, appreciative, always outspoken report on Women in Australia.

4. Canon Boyce of the Church of England in Sydney was the virtual life of the New South Wales Temperance Movement at this period.
Jessie Ackerman assisted in the setting up of 22 branches of the union in two months during her first visit, and in a comparatively few years she saw the unions holding annual conventions in each colony, and in 1892 a national convention in Melbourne. This was one of the first, and certainly one of the most important meetings of women held at that time in Australia. Five years later Australia was asked to send delegates to the first world Women's Christian Temperance Union conference in Toronto.

In each country the activities of the Union were divided into a number of sub-departments, some of those activities were purely charitable in nature and may only have involved hospital visiting, and some would today be regarded as the province of trained social workers or domestic economists. The head of each Department was usually required to furnish periodic reports from which it is evident that the Women's Christian Temperance Union worker was a familiar figure in all classes of society and in a great many localities.

5. The maximum number of these Departments set up by Frances Willard was about 50. The Australian Branches did not reach this figure, but many had established well over 30. In 1900 there were in New South Wales: Hygiene and Heredity; Scientific Teaching; Anti-Opium and Narcotics; Sunday School Work; Literature; Press; Medal Contests; Systematic Giving; Christian Citizenship; World's Missionary Fund; Evangelistic and Cottage Meetings; Unfermented Wine; Tram and Cabmen; Purity; Mother's Meetings; Sabbath Observance; Flower Mission; Sailors; Public Houses and Barmaids; Rescue Work; Miners; Work Among Foreigners and Aborigines; Railway Work; Shearers; Prison Work and Police Matrons; Agricultural Shows; Coffee and Free Reading Rooms; Drawing-Room Meetings; Household Helpers; Legislative Work; Franchise; Peace and Arbitration and Anti-Gambling.
All the unions were, and remained, primarily religious bodies with open briefs in the field of relief work. In New South Wales, the Union's early work was taken up with charity for the abandoned, the operation of soup kitchens, and the visiting of whatever institutions the government could be persuaded to allow them to enter. Their first petition to Parliament, which was signed by 8,000 people, asked for Sunday hotel closing and restrictions on other days. The Union also had some objectives which were especially dear to them, notably the prevention of the employment of barmaids.

This subject had worried nearly everyone with temperance sympathies and formed part of the discussion of the 1887 Royal Commission into Liquor in New South Wales. To aversion on the part of many to seeing women serving liquor was allied a strong suspicion that their unacknowledged and frequently probable function was to act as decoys. As part of their aim was to suppress vice in all its forms, the Women's Christian Temperance Union waged unceasing war on the employment of women behind bars. Few barmaids, however, accepted their offers of rescue, and publicans and their supporters often retaliated.

6. Another was the extension of temperance teaching in schools. A deputation to the New South Wales Minister for Public Instruction in 1881, Report of the Minister of Public Instruction 1891, p. 46, resulted in permission to let pupils read the Union's literature and sit for examinations. These same privileges were also extended by Roman Catholic Schools.

7. In 1884 Mr. E. Webb introduced a Barmaids Employment and Restrictions Bill in the Legislative Assembly. It did not secure a second reading.
In 1886 the Bathurst WEEKLY ADVOCATE announced it was offering
a prize to the best looking barmaid who could decoy the most men
to the Bathurst hotels. Bathurst had, for a number of years,
a particularly strong Temperance Union with a membership well
over 100 by 1891. They were active social workers, keen
house to house campaigners for local option, in which they had
some success, and earnest battlers to improve the general
standards of the women employees in various local works.
Bathurst publicans in all probability entered the barmaid
campaign with some relish.

The earnestness of the Women's Christian Temperance Union
worker was never in question, but the light in which they
regarded drink - the foul and subtle fiend - the belief that
Christianity, strict temperance, and to a lesser extent,
non-smoking, were all synonymous, naturally alienated much
sympathy. Their views set them somewhat apart from other women's
organisations because they were willing to extend their keen
wholehearted co-operation only within the rigid framework of a
liquor-free society. The uncommitted found them difficult

8. Nor their social work. Their workers were indefatigable.
Travelling organisers battled ill-health and poor conditions
and covered thousands of miles of territory. In 1894 the
Misses Vincent and Cummins toured New South Wales; the
following year, South Australia; in 1896 Western Australia; 1897 Queensland. In all they travelled over 20,000 miles.

9. Their meetings usually featured songs and recitations
emphasising the evils of drink. Firm favourites were "Don't
Say That He Died From Drink", "Don't Marry a Man if He Drinks"
and "The Drunkard's Child".
to understand; they were distrusted by many and often
unwittingly gave offence. In New South Wales the
Women's Christian Temperance Union was one of the few
organisations which asked for, and was refused, vice-regal
patronage.

None the less, the ideals of the Union and its later
involvement with the franchise and with various other social
questions involving women, made it important. Its absolute
importance as a body is not altogether easy to gauge because
of its relatively small membership and its completely inflexible
outlook. It was dedicated firstly to prohibition and secondly
to a multitude of civil rights and moral purity causes,
particularly the suppression of the traffic in vice and opium.
On occasions the object of a campaign was imported direct from
overseas without sufficient investigation by the Women's Christian
Temperance Union to show whether the problem was as acute in
New South Wales as in the country of its origin.

10. Early in their association with the National Council of
Women they had objected to a constitutional preamble with
aims which did not include the words "Under God's Blessing"
as their own did. Again on 20 September, 1901, Catherine
Spence, South Australia's leading feminist, writing to
Rose Scott of the New South Wales Women's Suffrage League,
expressed her hope that no Women's Christian Temperance
Union members would represent Australian women at a
proposed American Congress because they had "a prohibition
axe to grind". Scott Papers, Uncatalogued MS, Item 22.
One of the great strengths of the Union lay in the fact that the opposition it aroused was only covert; hardly ever outspoken. Many of its causes might be unpalatable or unpopular, but they were unquestionably worthy and almost impossible to defy publicly. Few public figures in fact, did so, whatever their private opinions, and Members of Parliament who received their deputations hedged politely and were frequently bested by the delegates' earnestness in argument. In addition temperance, their main cause, was not wholly synonymous with wowsers in the 1880's and 1890's and there was an extraordinarily large number of public figures, both in Australia and overseas who openly acknowledged that they were total abstainers. Abstinence was a well-respected Victorian virtue.

One of the great attractions of such temperance societies for women lay precisely in this point. Work for temperance ideals represented an opportunity for women to display all the qualities, and to encourage them in others, to which men paid so much lip service. Women openly supported wide scale sobriety as a means to achieve a higher moral tone in society.

11. Henry Parkes and Dr. Arthur Renwick were frequent chairmen of Women's Christian Temperance Union meetings and in 1891 the Premier of Victoria chaired the Intercolonial Meeting. On the other hand the League protested strongly at the suggestion that Sir John Robertson, who was not a total abstainer, take the chair.
In order to perpetuate their ideals more strongly in the community, the Women's Christian Temperance Union finally became a most effective instrument in the New South Wales Women's Suffrage campaign.

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN.

The National Council of Women was, in many respects, the prestige body of the women's movement in New South Wales, and in so far as one organisation can be said to represent the main aspirations of the women's movement, it was this one. But it was not representative of New South Wales women as a whole, and it lacked the most important ingredient in an association dedicated to causes: vitality.

The work of the National Council in New South Wales was disappointing. An American-inspired organisation, formed by Miss Susan Anthony and Mrs. Cady Stanton, it was originally conceived as a suffrage organisation. After consultation with members of English women's organisations, it was decided by the United States organisation that the time was not ripe for an International Suffrage Association, and that another organisation, with adult suffrage included in its constitutional aims should be formed. Its office bearers in the United States especially were all well-known suffragettes with international suffrage as their main target. Consequently they were anxious to support similar organisations. Actually this
interest was shared in all countries where universal suffrage was not imminent, but in deference to those countries where this was not the case, the principle finally was not automatically incorporated with the Council's aim. In 1902 the National Council in Australia even after its first franchise successes in the country, officially opposed the principle of internationalism. But it had done little as an organisation to support suffrage and in New South Wales had merely passed on its resolutions in favour, to the Premier. In the international sphere the Council seemed to be even more careful and non-committal.

The National Council of Women had been almost 15 years in existence overseas before a branch was formed in New South Wales. When this was done it was largely the work of the Windeyer family who called the first meeting in 1896 and hoped to have it under way before the proposed London Meeting of the International Council in 1898. Miss Windeyer, daughter of Lady Windeyer, subsequently represented New South Wales at this meeting, which by then had an international membership of a million women.

In spite of its claims that a "National Council of Women, meeting in conference at stated periods would be helpful to the various causes which the members of the Council would represent 12 to the community ", the Council started slowly. The Windeyer family, particularly Miss Windeyer, canvassed every charitable

12. There were 17 different organisations represented at the Council's first meeting. Over 40 were associated with it by 1914.
organisation in Sydney for delegates and was refused, usually on the grounds that members were committed elsewhere, could not attend in the daytime, or had too many domestic duties. An organised woman's group of this nature had apparently little appeal. Even in 1906 a special meeting had to be called to discuss how individual groups could be made to take more interest in the Council.

This difficulty in winning support was further evidence of the reluctance of many women to participate actively in affairs which to them still seemed to represent unusual interests. It explains their concern, as a body, over very narrow issues for a number of years and their desire to avoid controversial topics. Indeed the more organisations which became affiliated with the Council the greater the difficulty it had of presenting any sort of united viewpoint or taking any strong stand on an important topic. Individual members and the organisations they represented often held very much more radical views, but the Council was the careful mouthpiece for a multitude of bodies, some of which were ultra-conservative.

13. Skirting the issue of passing a resolution in favour of equal pay at its first meeting, the Council went on to agree to Lady Windeyer's suggestion of "Home Literature" as a suitable topic for discussion. It also supported Louisa McDonald's resolution "that a knowledge of domestic arts be included in the curriculum for girls in public schools". Manuscript Minutes, 1896 National Council of Women.
It had the added concern of keeping its Vice-Regal patroness protected. As a result the Council never made one particular cause its own and was always particularly careful, as was the Women's Club, to prove primarily how well it could keep to organisational rules and proceedings, while keeping concerned, if not deeply, with various questions of the day.

The Council was never accused of poor management, and never became involved in a controversy. When it did support an issue, it was usually one that had been cautiously tried, passed muster elsewhere, and been fairly thoroughly researched by their guest speakers. The idea of the council became theoretically attractive in time, but New South Wales women were completely unable to make use of it as their American founders envisaged.

CONCLUSION

By 1900 women had increased the number of their interests and widened the scope of their activities considerably in New South Wales. Both the Government and the general public were becoming used to their multitude of activities. There were more of them taking part in a variety of mainly charitable or semi-charitable enterprises, though the social composition of these groups had probably not altered in thirty years.

In many cases they had taken over the ideals and the methods of overseas organisations, but nowhere had they also taken over their spirit. The nearest approach was made by the Women's Christian Temperance Union which Union provided a valuable organisation for suffrage work. The Union made its enemies
but was not to work up the same degree of antagonism from powerful opposing organisations as their counterparts did in the United States.

Women were still strongest where their outside interests coincided with the traditional ones. When they supported important social legislation affecting themselves, they were able to do it with the minimum of embarrassment to themselves or to anyone else. Their organisations were never suspect, the ideal of Victorian womanhood never compromised.