



AUSTRALIAN
WOMEN

CHURCH

WOMEN AT WORK

From Deaconess Frances McKechnie

Women at Work conjures up pictures of a great flurry as cuppas are served; dishwashing; floor polishing, ironing - oh, and so many often routine never-ending tasks. These are still to be done, but there are occasions when, instead of being the Marthas, the women of the Christian Church, must be Marys. To stop and listen can be hard because it seems a waste of precious time; to stop and listen and appreciate is even harder because it demands understanding and a sensitive awareness of what is being said. To stop, listen, appreciate and then change the course of one's life is desperately hard, for each of us is so sure that our little rut runs in the right direction.

From Perth

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From Perth to Brisbane, A.C.W. members have had to stop and listen as Mrs Selveratnam has travelled around our Continent, telling of the Fellowship of the Least Coin. The women of Asia have asked, "But how many of our least coins are needed just to make one U.S.\$1?" How many indeed, and yet they come so that many U.S. dollars are made, and much is done, and this is because they come with prayer.

Our Lord took a boy's small lunch, blessed it, and fed the multitude. Surely this was her message to us. In Melbourne, over lunch, Mrs Selveratnam told us of the new roles for church women in Asia, particularly for Moslem women, either deserted, divorced or widowed. The Christians have found a new rôle in just standing by these women in their hour of very true need, and then by helping them to make a new life.

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Pastor Molander, from the Diaconate Desk at Geneva, paid an all too brief visit to Sydney and Melbourne. Some of the things which he told the Deaconesses and women workers of the church, made you stop and listen. The starvation problem of the Phillipines has not been helped by the double crop of the Miracle Rice - this has just meant a double amount of profits for the rich!

Behind the Iron Curtain, the disbanded orders of Deaconesses and Nuns are finding new and demanding work to do as they see the State care for those from whom a good return can be expected but no care given to the permanently ill, the sub-normal or the retarded. Without funds, but with great faith, they have entered into a new ministry. The stopping and listening has been good for us.

The Working Committee, on your behalf, presented Mrs Selveratnam with a spoon with an opal map of Australia on it, just to remind her of a very rushed trip.

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World Community Day hit the press in one suburb. Headed "Spirit of Ecumenism" it told of the combined services in word and picture. Not often World Community Day makes the press!

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Things have been happening up north. Things are always happening there, but a Conference has just been held in Darwin where the Methodist Overseas Mission, Aboriginal Stations in Arnhem Land have become completely integrated with the United Church of North Australia. This was a big step but it does co-ordinate the work in a very effective way, and bring so much closer the end of the "Mission era" and the beginning of a truly indigenous Church in the North.

Talking of the United Church, Deaconess Lorna Stevenson has just moved down to hold the fort at Katherine. This is a big undertaking for Lorna who is to have the whole responsibility of the town ministry on her shoulders. Latest rumour has it that she is having to cop with a Landrover - does this mean the first Patrol Deaconess!

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Mrs Ashton has been in Queensland, and as ever, had a rushed but good time, and enjoyed meeting those who may be shouldering the responsibilities of the Working Committee next year.

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Veronica is on her way home. We are all sad to say goodbye to her. None of us, except those handling her affairs, saw a lot of her, because she came here to study, but we were aware of her being among us, and just wish a year did not vanish so quickly. We wish her so very well as she seeks to use her added skills back in her homeland. For her we hope that the strain of the first days was far outweighed by the kindness of her hostesses, the fellowship of the church, and the new skills acquired.

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Books - (the promised review that isn't).

"Fragments of War"

Gives profiles of work in Indo-China. Thoughtful, provoking and yet showing how constructive, faithful lives can be in war.

"In Quest of the Least Coin"

Recalls before it is forgotten, the story of the beginning and the continuing work of the Fellowship of the Least Coin.

"Circle of Prayer" Volume 4 - is coming out now. Once again, all the Fellowship of the Least Coin truly means is highlighted by these prayers around them. "Who is My Neighbour" points out some of the real needs of people that make them our neighbours.