

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0970

Stevenson, Jean

(1881 - 1948)

Born 7 November, 1881, Dunedin New Zealand

Died 19 April, 1948, Wellington New Zealand

Occupation Community worker

Summary

Jean Stevenson was General Secretary of the Melbourne Young Women's Christian Association 1915-1919 and was Industrial Secretary of the National Young Women's Christian Association for a time before resigning in 1922/24 [exact dates are disputed by sources]. She continued her work with the Young Women's Christian Association at a local level, becoming General Secretary of the Auckland Association.

Details

With a background as a factory worker, Jean Stevenson was trained by the Young Women's Christian Association in Adelaide and by the same organisation's American Training School in New York. A vociferous advocate for women's rights in the workplace, Stevenson is understood as instrumental in pushing active support for the 1920 Champéry (Switzerland) Young Women's Christian Association Conference, which had recommended campaigning for: eight hour days for women; public employment bureaus for women; and maternity benefits for married women. In support of this 'Women in Industry' campaign, Stevenson requested all Australian Associations to submit studies on the impact of industry on workers. None did.

Stevenson is noted as expressing disdain for this lack of action and the 1922 Young Women's Christian Association Australasian Convention resolution, despite advocating the Swiss Conference's resolutions, resulted in what seems to have been interpreted by Stevenson and others as a vote of no confidence for the Industrial Secretary: the motion was moved to leave the Department Secretary position vacant for a period and to reduce National administration to a minimum. In particular, delegates seem to have been uncomfortable with the National staff's push for Industrial and 'girls work'- a response Warne sees as indicative of a nation – wide internal fear of the 'politicisation' of the Young Women's Christian Organisation.

Stevenson resigned in protest after the 1922 conference and became local General Secretary of the Auckland Young Women's Christian Association.

Published resources

Book

The Dauntless Bunch : The Story of the YWCA in Australia, Dunn, Margaret, 1991

Y.W.C.A. 1882-1982 : Melbourne pictorial history, Durrant, Leoni, 1982

Thesis

The Mother's anxious future : Australian Christian Women's Organisations meet the modern world, 1890s-1930s, Warne, Ellen Mary, 2000

Resource

Stevenson, Jean 1881 - 1948, Coney, Sandra URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>, 1998,
http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/DNZB/alt_essayBody.asp?essayID=4S45

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Resource Section

Hinder, Eleanor Mary (1893 - 1963), Foley, Meredith and Radi, Heather, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A090310b.htm>

Archival resources

The University of Melbourne Archives

[Young Women's Christian Association of Australia](#)

Author Details

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Created 24 May 2004

Last modified 1 May 2009