

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4796

Stuart, Florence Rhoda

(1872 - 1932)

Born 1 January, 1872

Died 31 December, 1932

Occupation Journalist, Political activist

Summary

Florence Stuart wrote regular columns for the *Westralian Worker* under the pseudonyms of 'Hypatia' and 'Adohr'. The *Westralian Worker* was published in Kalgoorlie from 1900 – 1912.

Details

Florence Collings was born in Brighton, England, the child of Quaker parents, c.1872. She moved to Queensland with her parents in 1883.

She was a committed socialist and an accomplished singer who performed at the opening of the Brisbane Trades Hall.

She married Julian Stuart soon after his release from imprisonment for his part in organizing the 1891 shearers' strike and they moved to the eastern goldfields of Western Australia in the late 1890s.

A political activist, she helped to organize the Eastern Goldfields Women's Labour League and was elected secretary to the first Western Australian Labor Women's Conference in 1912. Under the pseudonym 'Hypatia', Florence wrote fierce columns on socialist, feminist and labour issues in the *Westralian Worker* (December 1904-April 1906, August 1907-February 1908, and July 1911-September 1911). She exhorted all socialists to raise their children to be class conscious. She damned those Labor Parliamentarians for attending government house functions in frock coats and top hats, 'I am sick and tired of finding excuses for the average labor member's want of backbone and dignity', and for forgetting that their first loyalty should be to the workers who had turned out to elect them. She was equally hostile to those workers who wasted their time on sport, in gambling on dogs and horses and in reading 'trashy literature'.

On other occasions she reflected on the working conditions of meat packers in Chicago and of local bar-maids. She fiercely rebuked anyone who purchased any article at all – even an ice cream – from an Asian person and warned those who had cheered the victory of Japan over Russia that they would live to regret their attitude.

Florence admired the honesty of 'Guido Fawkes' (Guy Fawkes) and the sober example of Paul Kruger, President of the Boer Republic.

When she left the goldfields to live in the seaside suburb of Cottesloe, she applied her verbal scourge to the 'ladies' whom she encountered on train rides to Fremantle. She condemned the action of labor men who supported Australia's involvement in WW I as a 'shuddering blasphemy'.

Florence raised five children and died in 1932.

Published resources

Journal

Biographical register of members of the Parliament of Western Australia, Black, David and Bolton, Geoffrey; assisted by Mozley, Ann and Simpson, Patricia, 1990

Resource Section

Stuart (nee Collings), Rhoda Florence (c.1872-1932),
<http://workinglives.econ.usyd.edu.au/stuart.html>

Site Exhibition

Karlkurla Gold: A History of the Women of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Criena Fitzgerald and National Foundation for Australian Women, 2012,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wikb/wikb-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

Andrew Gill

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