

Pat Goble

100
YEARS OF WOMEN'S
SUFFRAGE
1908-2008



Reflection and Celebration





Pat Goble



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Printed and Handbound

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& School of Global Studies, Social Science and Planning

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Project Partners: Women's Electoral Lobby and League of Women Voters Victoria

Adjunct Professor Judith Smart background material on women's suffrage in Victoria

Shawn Callahan of anecdote for opening question techniques

Meg Minos for background material on bookbinding

Jackie Ralph for transcribing

Interviewee: Pat Goble

Interviewed by: Emma Brelsford

Interview of Pat Goble edited by Emma Brelsford

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Pat Goble



I would like to dedicate this to all women fighting for equality

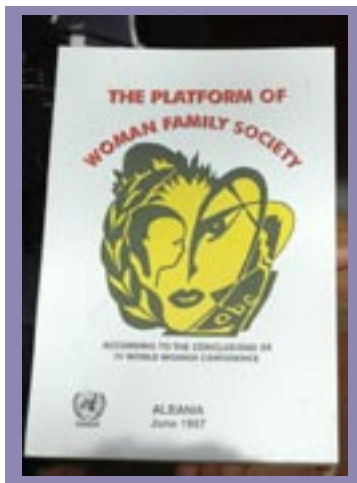
Sarah Costanzo



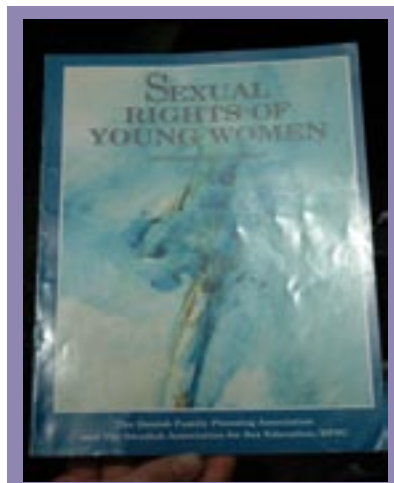
Mementos



Women's voters book

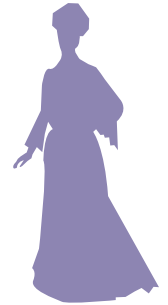


International Alliance of Women pamphlets



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Introduction



The 24th of November 1908 marks the day when the Legislative Council passed a suffrage bill enabling women for the first time to vote in state elections of Victoria, Australia. For the centenary celebration Liam Fennessy and Soumitri Varadarajan, RMIT Industrial Design Program, Kerry Lovering Women's Electoral Lobby, Sheila Byard Victoria League of Women Voters Victoria and artist Fern Smith worked in partnership; facilitating RMIT students to produce handmade limited edition books of twelve significant women in Victoria.

Four students Emma Brelsford, Sarah Costanzo, Cara Jeffery and Diana White conducted twelve two hour interviews with Gracia Baylor, Elleni Bereded-Samuel, Ellen Chandler, Angela Clarke, Ursula Dutkiewicz, Beatrice Faust, Pat Goble, Professor Patricia Grimshaw, Mary Owen, Marian Quartly, Associate Professor Jenny Strauss and Eleanor Sumner.

The students had never interviewed, edited nor produced handmade books it is a fantastic achievement with in a twelve-week semester. Their background work informed from in-kind assistance of historian Adjunct Professor Judith Smart; expert in narrative techniques and director of Anecdote, Shawn Callahan; writer, artist and bookbinder Meg Minos.

For all of us who have participated in the project it has given us time to reflect on the achievements and persistent struggle toward gender equality in Victoria. What shines through these twelve wonderful interviews is the strength, persuasive insistence for equality within our community and their huge generous hearts.

Fern Smith 2007



Pat Goble

I'm on a co-opted member of the International Alliance of Women (IAW). The first Congress I attended was in 1973 and have been present at every Congress since, which occurs every three years in different countries.

After several years I was co-opted on the Board for the pacific area region and was involved with the organisations in Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines, Fiji and Thailand. At a later Congress the Board decided that region was a very big area to cover and divided it. There were two organisations in Japan and one in Thailand which I had contacted but after a while the contacts ceased. After the division the Japanese co-ordinator contacted the organisations in that country and in Thailand. The organisations in Indonesia and Fiji lost contact and now I look after the organisations in the Philippines and the individual members in New Zealand. It was very hard work. When I say I look after them, I mean I make sure that they send their reports for the last three years to Congress and I pass on any information I feel that the President should know. One lady in the Philippines is a member of the Board, so she brings her report if she attends the Congress and I don't have to request her organisations report.

I have been involved with the League of Women Voter's of Victoria since 1970 and over the past few years the membership has increased because the younger women



have become interested in the Leagues' policies and joined. We have about 30 members at present. Many years ago the "oldies" used to go to the schools and give talks to the students on 'how to vote', but because the oldies have passed on the visits stopped because the younger members do not have the time. But I have no doubt about the future of Australia. I won't be here, but the young women have it all under control. The young women in some of the organisations are really superb, they have got the grasp of what to do in Australia and so I have no worries about the future of Australia. I'm very, very proud of the young ones who've got their heads screwed on right.

'I think it's really important that women be there in the public sphere'.

An Australian woman, Pat Giles who was our president for eight years, said to me a woman really can't be an MP unless she has a very supportive husband or else if she's single. And I think you won't get too many women as MP's trying for a career in parliament unless they have a very supportive partner, husband or whatever it might be, because it's a pretty tiring job. I don't know how a woman could have such a career without the support.



Pat Goble

I belong to the Alfred Hospital Nurses League and a few years ago the committee was concerned that the League could “fold up” because the ex-nurses were not joining. I said the ex nurses will not join until they’re in their 40’s or 50’s unless they’ve got a supportive husband who will look after the children. They’ve got their kids to look after. Funnily enough it was only about 10 years ago the membership suddenly rose in the Alfred Hospital Nurses League. We get quite a few members coming in now because they’ve reached their 40’s and they can come out and enjoy themselves. I think this happens at every organisation I am involved with. And this was also happening at the time when I was starting to get interested in women’s organisations and wanted to become involved so that I could know more about women’s issues.

Mrs Collman, who was the president of the League of Women’s voters at the time, said to me “You should become a member of the League of Woman Voters if you to know what is going on with women”.

‘I decided this was the right thing to do. I’d been fascinated by the progress of women, so I joined the League of Women’s Voters in 1970’.



After I joined the League of Women Voters in 1970 I flew to a meeting in Sydney for the Federation of Women Voters, the national body, being very keen and interested to learn more of its activities. Some of the members had decided they were getting too old to carry on and as the young ones were not coming in to join the organisation, they decided they should close the Federation. We in Victoria decided we should carry on, that we would call the organisation The League of Women Voters of Victoria which meant that we were no longer a national body, only a State and as such, only an associate of the IAW.

Bessie Rischbieth, a prominent member of the organisation in Perth, gave quite a large amount of money to the Federation so at the conclusion of the final meeting they divided it up between the States's and gave us \$2000 each at the time. I don't know what the other states did with their shares, but Victoria came back and formed the Bessie Rischbieth Trust. The committee used the funds to educate girls, the boys were included later, of Parliamentary procedures. When the Federation wound up in the 1970's, we in Victoria really felt we could still continue as a State rather than as the Federal, but it was very sad. The President really didn't want to give up but just felt they were too elderly to carry on with the same enthusiasm. Then in 1973 I attended my first Congress of the International Alliance of Women, as a proxy because the President didn't feel she could travel. There is a great deal of networking and learning



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to do because every country and organisation has different issues to consider. At the Congress the delegates attend the workshops which interest them such as education, health, elimination of violence, trafficking etc, to discuss plans for the final “program of action”. Then the various delegates, I’ll use Botswana for example, will go off (if her government will allow her to go in the first place) and she’ll arrive at the IAW Congress and when the Congress is over, then she must go back with the ideas formed and work on them with the Botswana government through her organisation.

Now for example, one of the things that the Botswana delegate did when she went back, this was in 1970 or around about then, was there were quite a few women in Botswana whose husband’s went to the diamond mines and they didn’t see them very often and not very much money was sent home. The women were organised to have chicken farms and also they were taught how to book keep. After a certain time they ran their own chicken farms and they were very good at money and book keeping. Another group of the women were very good at making pottery, so they were encouraged to sell their ceramics or whatever they were making to tourists. So they took over the money, and those women became self reliant while their husbands were away.

‘So you go back with the “plan of action” and that’s how it works’.

Pat Goble



People say to me all the time “Oh, nothing happens, you don’t do anything or it’s slow”, and yes it can be slow but there are also significant achievements. In New Delhi I became very friendly with an Egyptian delegate and at the next Congress in 1976 at Long Island University the Egyptian delegate said to me that in the 3 years since the New Delhi Congress there were two major changes in Egypt. In Egypt, young girls were leaving to get jobs in Switzerland and other European countries, but when they got there, there were no jobs available and they ended up working in the brothels with no chance of returning home because of the shame.

A law was passed which said no girl could leave Egypt to go to work in Europe for any job – unless the Egyptian government had a letter from that firm or business or to say that it was legitimate. That was one law that was changed in between 1973 to 76. The other law passed concerned the marriage laws, that no elderly Egyptian man could take as many women as he wished or divorce his current wife for a younger one. The men would just drop a girl when she was 25 and marry somebody else. But the information had to be taken to the rural areas as well where the problem was greater. These were changes made through delegates lobbying their governments through the IAW congresses.

When I attended the 1979 Congress in Liberia, it was the first time we the delegates



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heard about the problem of female genital mutilation. The World Health Organisation had asked the IAW to discuss it at the sessions.

At one session I was the rapporteur and an English delegate was the chair person when she brought up the subject about genital mutilation and asked for information from the African delegates. Well there was a beautiful African girl dressed in black with gold bangles, who got up and in very rapid French, told us to mind our own business as it was part of their culture. We had an interpreter who could hardly keep up with her she was speaking so fast and passionately! She told us it had nothing to do with us, that it was part of their culture and that was that. She really went to town on us and we all sat there dumbfounded. That session went on without any further discussion. It was a very sensitive topic, and no one wanted to ask her if she had undergone the operation.

But over the past few years the topic came up again and we found out more about it and now in Victoria it sits as a criminal offence. An Ethiopian delegate who'd trained in the USA said no law would stop it completely, that it had to be education and that it would take at least two generations. If you tried to stop it by law, the grandmothers would take the girls out into the country side and they would use sharpened sea shells or rusty razorblades and they would perform it themselves out there. So it had to be



education.

“Change is a gradual process. I believe in climbing up the ladder slowly”

For the upcoming IAW Congress in New Delhi we'll receive a program of planned sessions, about 3 or 4 weeks before we travel so we can choose the issues which concern us. Usually we have a 'program of action' and when we get to a Congress we divide into plenary sessions to form the correct sentences and wordings. If a delegate doesn't like a particular word, or somebody from another country says 'I don't think that word fits in there' then we have to work together on rearranging it. It takes time to satisfy all the delegates but finally a program of action is printed for the delegates to work on for the next 3 years. Hopefully we can do all of the things that we say we are going to do in the programme.

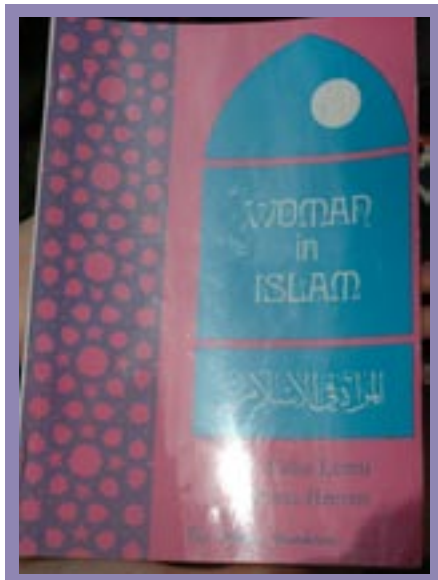
It is great working with all these dedicated women towards the same end, discussing new issues and most of all renewing friendships. I have had a long and happy association with the International Alliance of Women through my membership with the League of Women Voters of Victoria. By attending the Congresses every three years and the meetings between I believe I have been given the opportunity to learn of the problems



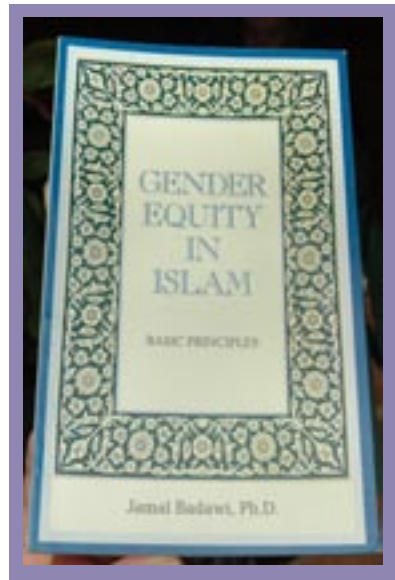
Pat Goble

of women in many countries through friendship.

Mementos



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Final Notes

***** Pat Goble has been involved with women's organisations such as the League of Women Voters and the International Alliance of Women since the 1970's. Every three years Pat attends the IAW Congresses which has taken her to various countries in an effort to understand many different issues facing women. Pat Goble is a trained nurse and is a member of the Alfred Hospital Nurses League.



