

Examining our early childhood political history through song:

How music helped us heal

How music helped us kick arse!



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WELCOME AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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*“If we can’t sing we won’t be
part of your revolution”*



WELLINGTON WORKING WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTRE CHOIR – MAYDAY RALLY 1994
P.O. BOX 9491, WELLINGTON

Introduction from the *Union Made Choir* song book: 1997

“..the International Workers of the World US [founded in 1905] had started organising the hobos, the fruit pickers and the lumberjacks. This was an early socialist grouping which had a big impact on New Zealand’s early “Red Fed” Federation of Labour. The IWB ... believed that songs could be an organising tool.

Like the IWW we also think that songs can be an organising tool...choir members have started writing our own words to well known songs to respond to things that are going on in our country right now.”

Singing together is a chance for us to celebrate what we stand for.

**There once was a union maid, who
never was afraid.**

**Of the goons and the ginks and the
company finks,**

**And the deputy sheriffs who made
the raids.**

**She went to the union hall, where a
meeting it was called.**

**And when the company boys came
round she always stood her
ground.**

**No you can't scare me I'm sticking
to the union!**

I'm sticking to the union!

I'm sticking to the union.

**No you cant scare me I'm sticking
to the union, sticking to the union**

T'il the day I die!

by Woody Guthrie



KTA negotiating team 1988

THE LITTLE UNIONS THAT COULD

- The Kindergarten Teachers Association (KTA), established in 1958, was New Zealand's first early childhood union. It was a very small union and was 99.9% women.
- The Early Childhood Workers Union was born in 1982 and was even smaller and also 99.9 % women.
- Our first songs were generally traditional union songs that captured the essence of women's political struggle as well as workers rights e.g. we started to align ourselves as workers as well as teachers, particularly as our union paths merged, and we became the Combined Early Childhood Union of Aotearoa (CECUA) in 1990.
- We couldn't gather in large numbers for big rallies so we often used songs to make noise and get attention.

Chorus:

Don't be too polite girls, don't be too polite!

Show a little fight girls, show a little fight!

Don't be fearful of offending in case you get the sack.

Just recognise your value and we won't look

Back!

You name it and we do it in the child care trade

Since men don't do the job, I can't ask for higher pay

The people at the top rarely offer something

More,

Unless the people underneath are walking out the door.

Chorus

They say a man needs more to feed his children and his wife

Well, what are the needs of a woman who leads a double working life

When the whistle blows for knock-off it's not her time for fun

She goes home to start the job that's not paid and never done.

Chorus

Don't be too afraid, girls, don't be too afraid,

We're clearly underpaid girls, clearly underpaid.

Though equal pay in principle is every woman's right

To turn that into practice we must show a little fight.

Chorus

'We can't afford to pay you,' say the masters in their wrath.

But woman says 'Just cut your coat according to the cloth.

If the economy won't stand it then here's your answer boys,

Cut out the wild extravagance on the new war toys.'

Chorus

All among the bull, girls, all among the bull,

Keep your hearts full, girls, keep your hearts full.

What good is a man as a doormat or following close at heel?

It's not their balls we're after, it's a fair square deal.



KTA Wellington branch protesting in Cuba Street 1988

Don't you remember back in '82
We began talkin' about something new
Something strong and true
With ECWU
This is my message to you...

Don't worry about a thing,
cause every little thing gonna be all
right.

Singin: don't worry about a thing,
cause every little thing gonna be all
right!

Don't you remember the blood, sweat
and tears,
Tricklin' down our foreheads?
The anguish and the pain,
For the ultimate gain.
This is my message to you...

Don't worry about a thing,
cause every little thing gonna be all
right.

Singin: don't worry about a thing,
cause every little thing gonna be all
right!





SONGS AS THE NARRATIVE OF OUR STRUGGLE

- We often adapted traditional songs by putting our own words into them, to fit our context and as a response to the political situation around us.
- We reached a new zenith of creativity and wanted to compose music and songs so we could tell our own story – which sometimes had uncomfortable messages and/or were leftist leaning. We made them more palatable by the use of humour in the songs.

Let's get radical, radical!

Let's get into politics.

**Nuclear war and
Waitangi.**

Do we ratify the Treaty?

**We want to know your
views, count your votes.**

**Don't let Mervyn cut
your throats.**

We are KTA, KTA

And we're here to stay!

**This is what we've got to
say...**

Let's get radical etc



KTA conference at the Tauhara Centre in Taupo 1988

**There's one thing I want
before I die,**

**Is to punch Lockwood Smith
in the eye**

**And throw him over the Huka
Falls.**

**A chain and a whip, it will be
quite quick**

Bye-Bye!

**There's one thing I want
before I go,
Is to get rid of Luxton really
slow**

**And throw him over the Huka
Falls, .A cane and a wrack,
One big smack!
Bye bye.**



**There's one thing I want
before I leave,**

**That's to give Ruth
Richardson the heave**

**And throw her over the Huka
Falls.**

**A feather duster is sure to
buster her bye bye!**

**Well you think you're a hot
shot**

**Well you think you're a hot
shot**

But really... you're a snot!

You've lost the plot

You're really a snot

That's all

HEROINE WORSHIP

- Strong, stropky, and intelligent leadership was really important to us.
- Our leaders were our role models and we aspired to be like them.
- In 1985 Ros Noonan, former secretary of KTA, acknowledged the work of “all the wonderful, cheeky, impudent and above all disagreeable women in the early childhood sector...”
- They weren't disagreeable to us, only to some politicians!

Chorus: I wanna be, I
wanna be, I wanna be like
Jean!

I wanna be, I wanna be, I
wanna be like Jean.

I want to have her style, I
want her million dollar
style, I want to be the
president

I wanna be like Jean.

I remember the first time I
saw her at Orongamai
marae. The spot light it
was on her, there was not
an eye that was dry. I
remember the adulation,
the songs and the food
and the wine.

I remember the frock she
was wearing. It was dinky
and pink with a tie.

Chorus

I wanna have a secretary, wouldn't
mind if she was hairy,

Wouldn't mind if she was late

As long as her name was Kate!

Chorus: I wanna be, I wanna be, I
wanna be like Jean!

I wanna be, I wanna be, I wanna
be like Jean.



Ruth Ruthless and the Radicals at Hamilton KTA conference
1984

I wanna be like Jean

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Jean Pearson was KTA President for three years. Her Presidential Address outlines the areas of achievement and concern during the past three years as well as hopes for the future. Perhaps the most flattering tribute to Jean can be read into the following song.



"I remember the first time I saw her,
At Orongomai Marae,
The spot light was on her,
There was not an eye that was dry.

I remember the adulation,
The songs and the food and the wine,
I recall the dress she was wearing
It was dinky and pink and it tied.

.....

I wanna have her style,
And her million dollar smile,
I wanna to be the President,
I wanna be like Jean

By Ruth Ruthless.

Sung by Ruth Ruthless and the Radicals
during their first debut at Hamilton '83.

Jean continues her role on National Executive as Immediate Past President and on several Standing Committees.

She is now Headteacher at Wellington South Kindergarten.

We all wish her well

STAR QUEST 1984

Excerpt from KTA News 1984



WAHINE TOA

- KTA, ECWU and CECUA were all strongly committed to bi-culturalism and anti-racism.
- The Runanga (Maori Women's caucus) were an amazing group of stropky Maori women who also used song powerfully and significantly.
- They hugely influenced the membership, and the union's direction.

Nga iwi e! Nga iwi e!
Kia kotahi mai te Mo-a-na-"nwi"-
kiwa
e-i-a-i-e

Kia mau ra! Kia mau ra!
ki te mana motuhake me te aroha
e-i-a-i-e

Wahine ma! Wahine ma!
Ma-ra-nge mai, Ma-ra-nge mai, kia
kaha
e-i-a-i-e

E tama ma! E tama ma!
E tama tu, E tama tu, tama ora!
e-i-a-i-e

Nga iwi e! Nga iwi e!
Kia kotahi mai te Moana-"nwi"-
kiwa
e i-a i-e



KTA conference at the Tauhara Centre in Taupo

E tu kahikatea
Hei whakapai
ururoa
Awhi mai awhi
atu
Tatou tatou e

Stand like the
kahikatea (tree)
To brave the
storms
Embrace one
another
We are one
together

(written by Hirini
Melbourne for the ECE
convention in 1983)



Wellington South Kindergarten children and families join in the political protest

WOMEN MAKING MUSIC FOR WOMEN

- There were many female musicians who were also important role models for us and who sang rousing feminist songs e.g. Peggy Seagar's "*I'm Gonna Be an Engineer*" and, closer to home, the Topp Twins *Untouchable Girls*.
- They inspired some of us to become semi-professional e.g. *The Silvernotes* who performed at the launch of *Te Whāriki* in 1996 and who were sometimes paid to perform at union gigs.

We're untouchable, untouchable,
untouchable girls.

We're stropky, we're aggressive, we'll
take over the world!

We're untouchable, untouchable,
untouchable girls.

We're untouchable, untouchable girls.

We live in a world that doesn't care too
much.

We've got to stand up!

We've got to have guts!

We are untouchable but we touch.

We're untouchable, untouchable girls.



The Biggest Loser presented by the Education
Leadership Project team at Hui Topu
(Ministry of Education's professional development
national hui 2006)

Friday finally came around

This girl's ready to paint the town

Tonight ain't nothin' gonna slow me down

Did my time working all week

Tonight's all mine

Tomorrow I'll sleep

Wanna hear a band with a country sound...

I've been couped up all week long,

I've been working my fingers to the bone.

It's a girl's night out, honey there ain't no doubt

I'm gonna dance every dance t'il the boys go home

Well it's my night to rock

No watching that old clock!

Oh there ain't no doubt, Lordy it's a girls night out!



The Silvernotes perform at the launch of Te Whāriki in Christchurch 1996

HAVING FUN AND KICKING ARSE

- Of course we loved the performance aspect of singing, and the creativity. Singing also brought us together, united us and we were literally in harmony.
- New people were encouraged to become active and were often included in the song writing, the performance and the protests.
- When we sang at conferences we sometimes changed people's views and attitudes, even changed their votes on contentious issues.

Snap, Snap, Snap election!
(Tune of Twist and Shout)
We'll shake it baby now, Shake it out baby.
Twist and Shout, Twist and Shout
Marshall is in and Wellington is out!
Snap, Snap, Snap election!
Snap, Snap, Snap election!
(Tune of I Love you Timothy)
We love you Russell,
We love you Russell,
We love you Russell,
You are our hero.
We look into your eyes,
Do we see truth or lies?
We want equity and pay parity!
Snap, Snap, Snap election!
Snap, Snap, Snap election!
But please don't think that we're naive
It's still too soon to believe
That all our struggles will be gone
We still have to fight on...



The Red and White Menstruals
1984



ON THE STREETS

- Singing was important but sometimes we branched out into full blown street theatre performances, particularly when the issues got really intense!
- Drama combined with song to make an even more powerful message, sometimes even making our own leaders twitchy.



**Red Alert
campaign**

**Protest at
parliament**





Demonstration at State Services Commission and Ministry of Education

**1996
Kindergarten
teachers
removed from
the State Sector
Act**



THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD...WHERE DID IT LEAD US?

- We sang for a reason: we wanted change - better pay and conditions, recognition of our status, better child care services for women... and eventually we got it.
- Change came in other forms e.g. in 1994 CECUA merged with NZEI where the early childhood tradition of singing and performance no longer had the same significance in the new union.
- New government policies were introduced that supported the sector and the need for protest died away.
- Our singing changed.

Step by step
the longest march
Can be won,
can be won
Many stones
can form an arch
Singly none,
singly none
And by union
what we will
Can be
accomplished still
Drops of water
turn a mill
Singly none,
singly none





DANCING TO A DIFFERENT TUNE

- **We still continue to use song but in a different way from the political past e.g. for processing new situations, new information, new issues, new policy directions, new regulations, paradigm shifts...**
- **But we sometimes sing the songs from our past to remind us of where we have come from and how much we have gained!**

**Now is the time for all good women
To stand up and say who they will be.
Now is the time for all good women
To stand up and fight
Start claiming the right
The right to be free!**



KTA Wellington branch protesting at parliament 1988

**As we come marching, marching in the beauty of
the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts
gray,
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden
sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing: "Bread and roses!
Bread and roses!" As we come marching,
marching, we battle too for men,
For they are women's children, and we mother
them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life
closes;
Hearts starve as well as bodies; give us bread, but
give us roses!
As we come marching, marching, unnumbered
women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient cry for
bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging
spirits knew.
Yes, it is bread we fight for -- but we fight for roses,
too!
As we come marching, marching, we bring the
greater days.
The rising of the women means the rising of the
race.
No more the drudge and idler -- ten that toil where
one reposes,
But a sharing of life's glories: Bread and roses!**



**THANKS TO ALL THE FABULOUS WOMEN AND MEN WHO HAVE
PARTICIPATED IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD UNION MOVEMENT AND HAVE
HELPED GET US WHERE WE ARE TODAY.**

*We're gonna keep on walking forward
Keep on walking forward
Keep on walking forward
Never turning back, never turning back*

*And we're gonna keep on walking proudly (3x)
Never turning back, never turning back*

*And we're gonna keep on singing loudly (3x)
Never turning back, never turning back*

*And we're gonna keep on loving boldly (3x)
Never turning back, never turning back*

*We're gonna keep on walking forward
Keep on walking forward
Keep on walking forward
Never turning back, never turning back*