



**Challenging Male Advantage in Australian Unions**

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## Abstract

This thesis analyses the traditional union conception of the 'problem' of women in the union movement, and shows how this conception is wrong headed. The thesis makes an argument that the focus on women, always women, in conventional analysis, and the failure to name male advantage and resistance to women, have distorted our understanding of traditional unionism and questions of gender within it. The thesis highlights the importance of keeping men, women, and the relationship between the two in clear focus in any institutional study.

In its early chapters the thesis surveys some historical material, relevant feminist theory and the state of Australian unions today, to set the discussion of contemporary Australian unionism in context. This discussion is followed by three empirically-based chapters. The first of these analyses data showing the systemic over-representation of men in the Australian union movement, especially where power lies. The second examines the range of Australian and international union responses to the 'problem' of women's under-representation throughout unions. The third analyses the nature of women's and men's activism in their unions, revealing that many conventional explanations for women's lesser participation in unions are inaccurate and misleading, and that the different circumstances of women's and men's private lives underwrite the terms of their political engagement in public organisations like unions.

Finally, in theorising gender-relations in unions, the thesis argues for a much closer analysis of male resistance to women in unions, and in other similar political institutions.

### Statement of Authorship

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

.....Date..... 14 October 1956.

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## Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ACSPA	Australian Council of Salaried and Professional Associations
AFL	American Federation of Labor
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organisations
ANF	Australian Nurses Federation
AMWU	Australian Manufacturing Workers Union
ASU	Australian Services Union
CEQ	Centrale de l'Enseignement du Quebec
CFDT	French Democratic Confederation of Labour
CGT-FO	General Confederation of Labour (France)
CGIL	Italian General Confederation of Labour
CNV	Christian National Federation of Trade Unions (Netherlands)
CPSU	Community and Public Sector Union
CIO	Congress of Industrial Organisations
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CLUW	Coalition of Labor Union Women
COHSE	Confederation of Health Service Employees'
DGB	German Confederation of Trade Unions
DIR	Department of Industrial Relations
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
FCU	Federated Clerks Union
FEN	Federation del Education Nationale
FNV	Netherlands
FTF	Federation of Civil Servants and Salaried Employees' Organisations (Denmark)
GMB	General and Municipal
GSEE	General Confederation of Greek Labour
ICTU	Irish Confederation of Trade Unions
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILO	International Labor Organisation
LO	Swedish Trade Union Confederation
MOA	Municipal Officers Association
NALGO	National and Local Government Officers Association
NPEC	National Pay Equity Coalition
NSW	New South Wales
NUPE	National Union of Public Employees
NUW	National Union of Workers
NZCTU	New Zealand Council of Trade Unions
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OGB-L	Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (Luxembourg)
PSU, CPSU	Community and Public Sector Union
PSA	Public Service Association
SAIT	South Australian Institute of Teachers
SA	South Australia
SDA	Shop and Distributive And Allied Employees Association
SEIU	Service Employees International Union
SERTUC	South East Region TUC
TCO	Central Organsation of Salaried Employees (Sweden)
TUC	Trades Union Congress (Britain)
ICEF	International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers Unions
RENGO	Japanese Trade Union Confederation

UAW	Union of Auto Workers
UIL	Italian Labour Unions
UGT	General Union of Workers (Spain)
USS	Swiss Federation of Trade Unions
USWA	United Steel Workers of America
UTLC	United Trades and Labor Council of South Australia
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby
WTUL	Women's Trade Union League
WWC	Working Women's Centre

