

## MARGARET GEDDES

### When Maurice met Doris: reading between the lines

When Maurice McCrae Blackburn married Doris Amelia Hordern, in Melbourne, on 10 December 1914, a formidable political partnership was sealed. Both served as progressive members of federal parliament, and both made significant contributions to the social welfare of Australians.

By 1913, at the age of 23, Doris Hordern had already built a reputation as an activist within the Women's Political Association (WPA), the non-party-political organisation feminist and social activist Vida Goldstein started in 1903 to campaign and act on women's issues. Doris was a campaign secretary for Goldstein's 1913 election campaign for the federal seat of Kooyong, in Melbourne.<sup>1</sup> She was also one of the first young women to sell the WPA weekly, the *Woman Voter*, on the streets of the city.

On Saturday 2 August 1913, WPA members gathered in their clubroom at 229 Collins Street, in central Melbourne, to honour their founder and long-term president, and to present her with a cheque, 'as a symbol of their gratitude for her splendid leadership through many years, and particularly in the late election campaign'. According to the *Woman Voter*, during the evening Doris, together with Lucy Paling and Cecilia John, acted out a 'clever dialogue, written by Miss Doris Kerr<sup>2</sup> ... in which the old, stereotyped views of woman's sphere were met and combated by the new spirit of womanhood which finds expression in the WPA'.<sup>3</sup>

Maurice Blackburn, letter to 'Darling' (Doris Hordern) written from 'My Constituency', 24 July 1914, the day after he won a by-election for the State seat of Essendon. Maurice Blackburn Papers, MS 11749

In My Constituency,  
7.55

Darling, Here I am writing to you. Very tired I am indeed. This morning I received personal congratulations & opened letters & telegrams. This aft. I worked with judge. More letters & telegrams. Letter from your Uncle Hal to show you. New Hat. Telephone message from Lizzie Kavanagh. Note at library from H.H.C. Signed also E.B.C. & Newmarket. Nothing from Goldstein family. Telegram from Mr. Andrew Fisher. How's Maig? Give her my love & say I hope she'll cheer up & get well now. Great joy in London Town! Bringing letters & telms to show you. Very tired. Age jubilant. Flattering article in Bendigo Indep! to show you. Can't stay with you tomorrow night promised to go to Glenhuntly & help Andrew at opening meeting. You can't come: meeting in hotel worse luck. Very tired. Be better tomorrow. Heaps of telegrams - one from your sweetheart, Nichols. Met Mr. Flynn - she justly near fell on my neck. I'll avenge myself for Nichols. Best love, darling o' mine

Maurice

See you about 2.15

Love. Don't let Mr. Gordon float too much: to  
worked

At that time, Doris Hordern was working in the Book Lovers' Library at 239 Collins Street. The library was started in 1896 by British journalist and socialist Henry Hyde Champion in conjunction with Vida Goldstein's mother, Isabella Goldstein.<sup>4</sup> Champion had gifted his share to Vida's sister Elsie Belle when they married in 1898, and she managed the library until it closed in 1936.

Elsie Belle Champion was a feminist, like her sister Vida. She believed in equal pay for equal work<sup>5</sup> and hired only women to work in the Book Lovers' Library, as she explained in an interview with the *Lone Hand*:

Good literature ... has only to be put in front of people, and they read it. The library can also introduce a new author into Australia, and ensure his success. But even before this is possible, the person who introduces him must be a booklover. For that reason I believe in only having girls work in the library. I find they take more interest in their work, and are better able to extend that interest to men.<sup>6</sup>

The library was a popular meeting place for Melbourne's progressives, a group that included the poets Bernard O'Dowd and Frank Wilmot (who wrote as Furnley Maurice), writers Louis Esson and Edward Dyson and activists like Robert S Ross and Bella Guerin, the first woman to graduate from an Australian university, who was then known by her married name, Lavender.

Another radical Melburnian who frequented the library was 32-year-old lawyer Maurice Blackburn. He had been admitted to the bar in 1910 and was a declared socialist and member of the Australian Labor Party, as well as an active supporter of women's equality. He worked in the Selborne Chambers, in William Street, and lunched regularly at the WPA tearoom, a ten-minute walk away.

Maurice and Doris had known each other for some time when, on 8 August 1913, a note for Doris arrived at the Book Lovers' Library:

Dear Miss Hordern,

I should like to see you to-day, if I may.

If I do not see you after 2 to-day, I hope you can be at the Club this evening. I shall be there to tea.

Sincerely yours,

Maurice Blackburn<sup>7</sup>

At the subsequent encounter, the couple declared their love for each other and became engaged. Doris wrote to Maurice later the same day from her



Left: Maurice Blackburn as a young man. Photographer unknown. Maurice Blackburn Papers, MS 11749

Right: Portrait of Doris Hordern sent to Maurice Blackburn 19 November 1913, with 'To my boy' written on the back. Photograph by Alice Mills. Maurice Blackburn Papers, MS 11749

home, Pontefract, to the east of the city in Deepdene,<sup>8</sup> and this first sweet letter shows the impact the nine-year age difference had in the earliest days of their relationship.

It is because I feel so deeply, because a feeling almost of awe is with me, that I cannot put into words all that I want to tell you. From your own heart, then, you must be the judge of mine. And believe me, oh! Do believe me! I recognised my Prince from the first, and was quite happy with a secret I considered all my own.

Do you not see that I had to appear calm and 'austere' or else all the world – and you! – would have known.

And how could I dare to fancy you loved me? You are good, and very wise, dear, and though I would be both, I am full of human weaknesses and failings.

Bound together with this love that God has put into our hearts we will help each other, and the great world full of happiness and suffering – together, can we not do great things?

Goodnight, dear! I am so happy – and I do love you.

Maurice Blackburn and Doris Hordern exchanged many letters over the following 17 months, until their marriage, in December 1914, and 79 of these

are held in the Blackburn papers at State Library Victoria. At the time, mail deliveries in Melbourne were twice daily during the week, with one delivery on Saturday, and on one occasion Doris wrote of receiving three letters within 24 hours: 'I have your three letters. Three letters from my sweetheart! One of course came last night and, quite unexpectedly, two this morning'.<sup>9</sup> The correspondence offers a remarkable insight into their relationship and their responses to the changes that the WPA was undergoing during that period. While it is tempting at times to read selected correspondence as a tug of war between Maurice and Vida Goldstein for Doris's allegiance, to do so would be to wildly underestimate Doris's own strength of character.

Doris's position in the Book Lovers' Library was one she valued, and one Maurice appreciated too. Three days after their betrothal, he wrote, 'I shall write to you every second day and shall catch a glimpse of you in the library whiles'.

But in his next letter to Doris, he broke the news that she was to lose her job because of their engagement. He had gone to visit the Champions, who were not at home, only to be told by their lodger Roy Newmarch, who worked for Henry Hyde Champion, that Mrs Champion was on the lookout for a replacement for Doris: 'some one she can rely on keeping for two or three years'. When the Champions arrived home at 11 pm, Elsie Belle confirmed the bad news. Maurice wrote, 'I was obviously disappointed but said that I did not want her business arrangements to be subordinated to my interests, and I thought you would feel the same ... Don't be upset, dearest; it may be all for the best'.<sup>10</sup>

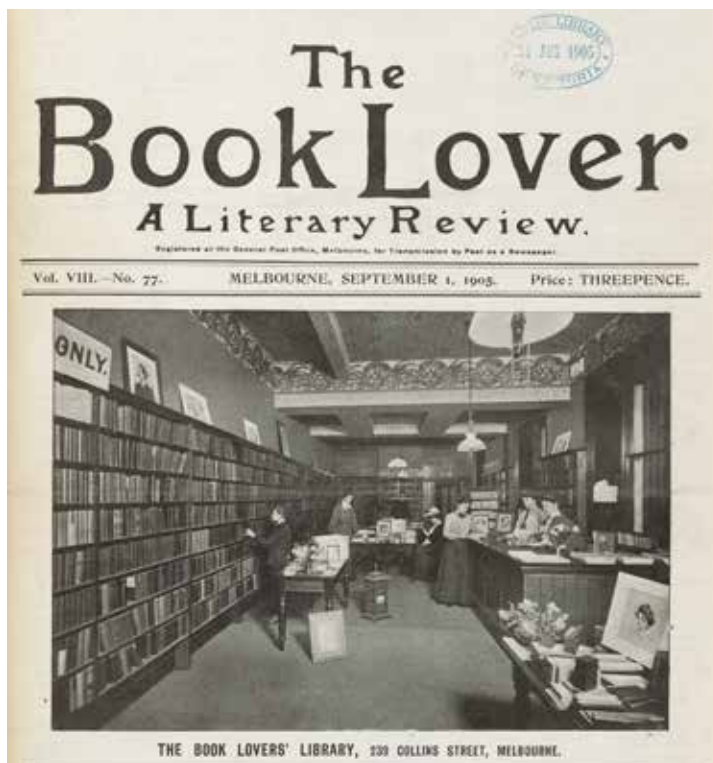
Doris was now restricted to working from home, in Deepdene, where she tutored secondary students. Consequently, the couple wrote more frequently, and through his letters, Maurice kept Doris up to date with the WPA and its internal politics as he observed it in the tearoom.

On Monday 6 October, he wrote about incurring 'the mild wrath of Misses Brown and [Cecilia] John for saying politically there is no woman's movement in Australia'. This rather mischievous assertion was made through his support for a letter that had argued that point in the *Argus* newspaper.

Miss John wants to hold a class at Deepdene [at Cecilia John's home] for the education of me – what do you think of that, Mouse? I expect to have Miss Goldstein brought on me like a shower.

I hope the badge of servitude is not chafing my small girl's finger.

Doris refused to bite. 'My Dear Boy', she replied the next day,



*The Book Lover*, 1 September 1905, Melbourne: JW Cutting, cover (detail) showing the Book Lovers' Library in Collins Street, Melbourne, where Doris Hordern worked before being dismissed on her engagement to Maurice Blackburn. RARELTF 052.9 B64

Your semi-political letter had a most cheering effect. You certainly seem to be putting your foot into it properly. I can quite understand our zealous friends going for you in a warm and spirited manner. I don't know of course how you argued on the subject, but I, too, am of the opinion of my feminine colleagues that there is a woman movement in Australia ...

But there! Beloved! You & I are not going to waste our precious time in a useless argument are we? You have a perfect right to your opinion & I do to mine – and after all we agree in the main.

Only a few days later, on 10 October, Maurice voiced his pride in Doris's activism: 'Your fame is noised abroad in the land. A rather malicious old lady who was at school with my mother asked my sister "Whether you were not the girl who was nearly taken by the police for selling Suffragette papers?"' Selling the *Woman Voter* on the streets was a strategy Vida Goldstein had brought back from Britain, which she visited on the invitation of the Women's Social Political Union and its founder Emmeline Pankhurst in 1911–12. It was a means of raising the WPA's public profile, but there was also an economic imperative: the newspaper was in desperate need of funds.

WPA member Iolanthe Scanlan, who also worked in the Book Lovers' Library, was another paper seller. As a luncheon regular at the WPA tearoom, she was the source of much of Maurice's gossip on the WPA leadership. On 30 October, when Maurice encountered Scanlan at the club, he reported to Doris that she was as 'unhappy as usual and just as quaint as ever'. She was complaining about the fact the WPA had entered a boat in the annual Henley Regatta twilight procession on the Yarra, in Melbourne:

Just now she is in revolt against the attempt here to acclimatise the methods of the WSPU [Women's Social Political Union]; but she says when Miss John wants a thing there does not seem to be anything to do but to cave in ... Unkindest cut of all that grieves her is that when she said that she was beginning to think that men were not always indispensable, Miss Goldstein said that she was glad Miss Scanlan was coming to her senses – or words to that effect.

The regatta was a major event in Melbourne, attracting crowds of around 100,000. That year the WPA boat caught fire, much to the merriment of onlookers, and Scanlan clearly did not agree with the brave face the *Woman Voter* put on the event:

At night we were very often called 'Suffragettes', and an amusing incident occurred that justified the remarks. One of our lanterns caught fire, and in time the decorations were blazing. However, a couple of the women crew soon had it under control and out before the police boat got near and the vast crowd cheered and applauded.<sup>11</sup>

Goldstein was visiting Adelaide at the time of the regatta, so Scanlan was able to sheet responsibility for what she considered a fiasco directly home to John.

Cecilia John was an intriguing character who was viewed with some suspicion by longstanding WPA members. She was Vida Goldstein's closest companion and confidante from 1913 to the end of the decade. According to an interview she gave to *Stead's Review*, she was born in Hobart to Welsh parents and moved to Melbourne as a teenager to study singing. She had a 'full rich contralto voice of great range and flexibility' and performed with the Metropolitan Liedertafel and the Melbourne Philharmonic Society. In order to sustain herself in Melbourne, she started a poultry-breeding farm in Deepdene, not far from the Hordern home. The interview notes that John, unable to afford a lawn mower, first cut the grass herself with a pair of scissors. Obviously, not a woman to be trifled with.<sup>12</sup>

At the age of 36, John had joined the WPA during Goldstein's 1913 election campaign, drawn, she said, by Goldstein's 'advocacy of International Peace and Arbitration as a means of preventing war, and her declaration against boy conscription'. 'Boy conscription' refers to the *Defence Act 1909*, which from 1911 required compulsory military training for all boys between the ages of 14 and 18. This issue was dear to John's heart. She was the leading contralto at the Independent Church in Collins Street, whose minister, the Reverend Leyton Richards, was an outspoken opponent of the Defence Act, and, according to the interview,

coming under the influence of the Rev. Leyton Richards, she threw herself heart and soul into the movement against the system of boy conscription ... Whenever she could spare odd hours in her strenuous life, she would tramp from house to house, distributing literature of the Australian Freedom League, that organisation which, more than any other, had prepared Australian thought to resist the attempt to introduce conscription during the war.<sup>13</sup>

Though 'International peace and arbitration' was the final plank in the 1913 WPA platform, there is little evidence of Goldstein and the WPA's committed opposition to compulsory military training before John joined the association. One early mention is in the *Woman Voter* of 5 August 1913, which announced a WPA debate titled 'Compulsory military training: to be or not to be?' at the Independent Church lecture hall: 'On the 11th Rev. Leyton Richards and Mr. [John W] Barry, representing the Australian Freedom League, will oppose, and the following week Mr. [Maurice] Blackburn, LL.B., will defend, the system'.

On 13 November, Maurice wrote, 'Today I was at the Club. Miss Brown and Miss Kerr are very annoyed because there is too much Freedom League in the Voter. They say it is not fair to commit the Association to support the Anti-Defence Campaign'.

By the end of 1913, Cecilia John had taken over the editorship and management of the *Woman Voter*, and she went on to play a central role in the anti-war organisation the Women's Peace Army, which the WPA formed in 1915. John's relationship with Vida Goldstein, and more particularly her influence upon her, became a regular topic of speculation, which Maurice relayed to Doris.

On 24 November, Maurice wrote of a suggestion put to him by Scanlan and Doris Kerr, who, at 24, was then the WPA's honorary treasurer.

I was at dinner at the Club alone. Bye & bye entered Miss Scanlan & later Miss Kerr who goes to Sydney today but who had received a note from Miss



Goldstein to call. Miss Scanlan was asked if Miss Goldstein was in. 'Yes' said she. 'Is Miss John in?' asked Miss Kerr. 'Of COURSE' said Miss Scanlan (just like that). Then turning to me Miss Scanlan said 'Why don't you get someone to marry Miss John. Then we'd all be happy.' 'Yes' said Miss Kerr; 'but getting someone would take some time. If you really wanted to help us you'd ask her yourself.' I said I should have been happy but for circumstances over which I had no control (that's not the way in which I put it). Miss Kerr didn't see the obstacle: and afterwards when Miss Goldstein & Miss John came in almost arm-in-arm, Miss Kerr asked wouldn't I satisfy them before she went to Sydney. I rejected the voice of the charmer & ducked.

So there's an anecdote for you.

In December, Maurice became involved in an issue of great importance to the WPA. On seeing Goldstein and John in the parliamentary gallery, Walter Manifold, member of the Legislative Council, had declared he did not like discussing the Age of Consent Bill in front of women. When Goldstein challenged him to a debate, he refused, and was attacked for 'false modesty' and double standards in an article in the *Woman Voter*, which concluded, 'Look at the result! 80 per cent of our male population affected with venereal disease'.<sup>14</sup>

Maurice wrote to the *Woman Voter* objecting to that figure. He quoted the previous article, which had stated that 'sex antagonism' played no part in the thoughts of the women looking into the social problems associated with venereal disease, and added, 'I heartily wish I could believe that to be true of the writer herself'.<sup>15</sup> Beneath his published letter and headed 'The writer of the article replies' was a defence of the figures, which included a list of doctors whose estimates, it said, ranged from 73 to 90 per cent of the male population. The figures were taken from Christabel Pankhurst's book *The Great Scourge and How to End It*, which was first published as a series of articles in the Women's Social Political Union newspaper the *Suffragette* between April and September 1913.<sup>16</sup> The *Woman Voter's* bald claim of '80 per cent of our male population' misstated Pankhurst's figure, which was 80 per cent of marriage-age men – a different figure, though one Maurice also disputed. Venereal disease, already a major medical concern, became an increasingly public issue after the outbreak of war in 1914.

On the day after the letter's publication, Maurice wrote to Doris:

I have replied to the reply to me. Miss Goldstein told Mr [Roy] Newmarch to tell me that if I wanted to reply I must put my letter in today. This very much rushed me but I did it. Mr Newmarch says that they are all very angry and Miss

Goldstein considers that I have insulted her. Mrs Goldstein would not bow to me when I came into the WPA rooms this afternoon with my letter.

Another little titbit on John and Goldstein was offered by Doris Kerr: 'Miss Kerr says that the latest about the engaged couple is that Miss John has given Miss Goldstein a gold watch. I said I thought a ring was the regular thing'.

In her reply, Doris Hordern commented only on the cold-shouldering of Maurice:

I am sorry to hear that Miss Goldstein & family take your letter in that way for it is unjust that they should do so – I feel very much annoyed with Mrs Goldstein for being so trivial and with them all for thinking you capable of being insulting. Never mind, boy, I know and believe in your motives.

On her own account, Doris Hordern was becoming more concerned about the direction of the WPA and decided to approach Cecilia John about her concerns. On 17 December, she wrote to Maurice of a conversation she had had with another long-term member, Lucy Paling:

We spoke of the feeling at the Club and she says Miss Goldstein knows & has spoken to Mrs Paling about it more than once. She has her own reasons for letting it alone – although she has spoken to Miss John about it. Mrs Paling says she fails to see what Miss Goldstein is driving at quite. She says it won't do any harm to speak to Miss John any way. As to finances, the Club & Association are above water but the Voter is now in Miss John's entire charge, she undertook to manage it alone and if it is not paying she alone is to be held responsible. I don't think it was wise to give such a large responsibility into the hands of one so new to the game as Miss John, do you? But it was by the vote of the executive that it was done, so nothing much can be said on the subject ... Mrs Paling fancies Miss Goldstein is testing the real strength of the Association over this affair with Miss John. I only hope she won't test it too far, that's all. It isn't all she hopes it is I fancy.

Doris had already come into conflict with senior members of the WPA. On 6 November, Maurice had noted, 'When I came in yesterday & caught you with Miss Goldstein I knew you were getting it. The pink of your cheeks had deepened with annoyance or excitement or fear (?) I don't know which'.

Maurice's dispute with the *Woman Voter* continued, and his spy Roy Newmarch continued to supply him with news from the front. On 18 December, he wrote:

I hear that Miss John was the author of the article I criticised. Mr Newmarch tells me that they read my 2nd answer letter together last night & were first

disposed not to publish it. They said I must have been writing it for a week. As a matter of fact, seeing that they asked me for my evidence, I don't think they acted very fairly in telling me that my reply (if I replied) must be in by yesterday. If they refuse to publish it or mutilate it, I shall have my own opinion of them. At any rate, I am glad to hear Miss Goldstein is not responsible for that opinion or that attitude. I think she is partly responsible for the reply – though it is very silly.

The next day, he reported Paling's response. 'She said she was so glad that I wrote and protested against that painful statement which she has been reluctant to believe. I have not seen Miss Goldstein since I sent the letter more than once and that time she didn't appear very disposed to speak to me.'

Maurice spelt out his criticisms of the WPA in his letter of 12 March 1914:

I think that the Association is getting every day more and more coloured by sex-antagonism. Nothing seems worthy of attention except the delinquencies of men. The interests of children, the interests of wage earners seem to many of them to count as nothing if they can't be turned to use in the duel between men & women. Why doesn't the Association work for an improvement in the position of illegitimate children for instance. I spoke to Miss Goldstein at lunch & asked her why the WPA doesn't agitate for a legal minimum wage for women whose trades are not covered by wages boards ... She just played with the suggestion, thinks it can be postponed until 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' is got ... But sex antagonist capital can be made out of the refusal to give E.P. for E.W. It can't out of the other. Anyhow I get sick of the talk, it won't help men or women to understand one another; the effect will be the reverse.

Doris replied the next day:

I liked your quite lengthy letter that came this morning. I agree with you about the growth of sex-antagonism within the Association but think that it is perhaps inevitable. And if they are not doing exactly the best things possible, at any rate they are doing as it seems best to them and they are in deadly earnest. No matter how much any society or group is opposed, no matter how little good they seem to do, that spirit of progress and reform which is life and breath to them must count for good in the long run. It may not seem to leave any mark but I'm sure it does. Nothing is wasted. I think the same of individuals: their motives count for more than their actions and how shall we judge them? Don't be angry with the WPA or with its members, darling; those who are most interested in it are in it in real earnest even if they do not always act wisely or see clearly.



Elsie Belle Goldstein (sister of Vida Goldstein), later known as Elsie Belle Champion, proprietor of the Book Lovers' Library. Photograph by Falk Studios, c. 1896. Pictures Collection, H2013.229/5

On 23 March, Maurice Blackburn reported that he had decided to go to the clubroom less often, which prompted Doris's reply the following day:

In a way I am sorry you have decided so about the Club. I always felt a sort of satisfaction in thinking that you got decent meals there, if slender, and I also knew just where to find you. But, dearest, I'm sure you know what is best. I, too, hate the stupid way they have been annoying you.

The next day, Maurice was already missing the club and still involving himself in the politics of the WPA.

I went as far as Glenferrie Station with Mrs Paling last night, and we talked. I told her what I have told you that I think the Association is interesting itself in nothing that does not offer some chance of taking it out on men. She herself is pretty dissatisfied with Miss Goldstein. I, of course, said nothing on that head except that I thought Miss Goldstein who has been so largely helped by men ought to be the last to lead a holy war of the sexes.

We talked generally. She said that she had spoken to Miss Goldstein & Miss [Hilda] Moody about my expressing my opinions before the girls on the subject of Christabel Pankhurst's book. She said she hoped I didn't mind. I said I didn't ... I rather missed the Club today. It has many dear memories. However I'll get over it soon. I feel hurt that women who have known me for as long as

Miss Moody should think me treacherous & think that a separation of some duration will be a good thing for both sides.

Maurice continued to mix socially with the Champions and went to dinner at their place with Frank Wilmot, and he was determined not to let the WPA get him down. On 6 April, he wrote, 'I don't propose to worry about things the WPA members say of me ... so long as I know that neither you nor Mrs Hordern are likely to be influenced by what they say, I am content'.

On 9 April, he wrote reflecting on the changes he thought he had brought to Doris's life:

I have several times felt that I have come between you & the things & persons of which you are fond. Through me you had to leave the Library, which leaving you felt very much at the time. Through me (so the WPA think) you have been diverted from working for them. Through me Miss Goldstein has become cold to you. If all this is true then darling remember that I love you dearly and that I know that you love me dearly as well.

In May, the *Woman Voter* announced that the WPA tearoom had been placed under the charge of a house committee and improvements were in train: 'The Committee gives the greatest possible care to the meals, and a varied menu may be looked [*sic*] for and prompt dispatch of orders'. In addition to luncheon from 12.30 pm to 2 pm and dinner from 6 pm (this was soon changed to 5.30 pm) to 7 pm, an expert cake-maker had been found, and 'delicious home-made cakes' were now on sale.<sup>17</sup> In June, there was a public plea: 'We want our members and friends to make it widely known that we have a cosy tea-room, and that we supply non-members with meals'.

On 5 June, a double dissolution of both houses of federal parliament was announced, due to the Liberal-Conservative fusion government's majority of only one in the House of Representatives and minority in the Senate, and on 23 June, Goldstein opened her campaign for the seat of Kooyong with a public meeting in the suburb of Hawthorn. Among the policies outlined this time was the abolition of compulsory military training as demanded by the Defence Act.

Maurice was focused on state politics. Early in July, he won Labor Party pre-selection for a by-election in the seat of Essendon, in northwest Melbourne, which he won comfortably on Thursday 23 July, turning what had been a safe Liberal seat to Labor. Doris attended the post-election count and wrote the next day, 'I was frightened more than I can tell, last night. That crowd, that excitement, my anxiety for my boy, all together weakened me. Wasn't that silly? Fancy that for a WPA girl? Fancy that for an experienced

campaigner'. And Maurice wrote on Friday night, on a lettercard headed 'In my constituency, 7.55':

Darling, Here I am writing to you. Very tired I am indeed. This morning I received personal congratulations & opened letters & telegrams. This aft. I worked with Judge. More letter & telegs. Letter from your Uncle Hal to show you. How's that. Telephone message from Lizzie Kavanagh [the Goldstein family's long-serving housekeeper]. Note at Library from HHC [Henry Hyde Champion] signed also EBC [Elsie Belle Champion] & [Roy] Newmarch. Nothing from Goldstein family.

Henry Hyde Champion reported Maurice's election victory in the *Book Lover*:

Mr Maurice McCrae Blackburn performed a brilliant feat in politics which not only goes further than anyone in Australia, but is unparalleled in any part of the world. He stood for Essendon, in the Legislative Assembly in the Victorian Parliament, as a member of the Labor Party, but he did not deny that he was a Socialist by conviction, and had been a member of the Socialist Party in Victoria. The fact was screamed aloud by his opponent, and the striking result was that he beat the Liberal candidate by over one thousand votes! No such upheaval has ever been known before, and it places Mr Blackburn, who has frequently contributed to our columns, right in the front of the leaders of people in Australia.<sup>18</sup>

By July, the probability of war in Europe was dominating newspaper headlines, and the likely involvement of Britain and Australia was a point of growing concern. On 4 August, the day before the prime minister, Joseph Cook, declared that Australia was at war, Maurice wrote:

The State Parliament today adjourned for a week on account of the war trouble. I think Miss Goldstein will be wise if she's careful what she says about the war. She said rather too much last night. Britain has behaved very well, I think ...

Mrs Champion says that she can't sell anything. I think that the federal elections will go in favour of the Liberals as being the Govt. in power ... I think that Miss Goldstein's opposition to the Defence Act has probably ruined her chance. That is of course if there is any war in which Britain is involved.

On the same day, Doris wrote to Maurice:

I have little patience with these good folks who get war scare badly & refuse to

move hand or foot (or thereabouts) for fear they will be in the thick of it. Every second person I met today in Canterbury seems to believe that Melbourne is doomed. I hate panic. Things are very bad, but I believe the size of the print in the daily press makes everything look blacker than is necessary. The headings just make one feel sick and one shudders at the wicked waste of life – life that cost so much, that is so precious. Creating panic means doubling the loss, I should think.

From the moment the war began, disagreements began to splinter the social circle in which Maurice Blackburn and Doris Hordern moved. Some, like Maurice, had no hesitation in supporting Britain at the outset. On the other hand, in a column headed ‘The war: women’s part’ and subtitled ‘Women of the world! Unite!’ the *Woman Voter* immediately declared itself against the war:

In this appalling crisis the women of all nations are called upon to show their common bond of motherhood. Let them show a calm and sober judgment. As the mothers of the race they will rise up against the barbarous notions that their sons are to be slaughtered at the behest of Kings and Emperors. Whether Germans, Russians or English, they will know that this war is only the result of the barbarous outlook and the blunders of politicians of all countries. They will understand in their hearts that the call has come to the women of all countries to band together to save the people from the merciless designs of rulers, who see in their helpless subjects only so many dead bodies, over which they may, perchance, ride to ‘victory’.<sup>19</sup>

On 19 August, Maurice reported, ‘I was in the [Book Lovers’] Library today. Mrs Champion is talking very foolishly about England’.

In the midst of this, Vida Goldstein’s federal election campaign continued. Maurice reported on 1 September that Doris Kerr, for one, was

not taking much interest ... Some of the others, she says, are very hopeful. Miss Scanlan has a month’s holiday from the Library.

... I see that Mr Sinclair is lecturing at the Gaiety next on ‘War & the Remedy’. I wonder if you’d like to go?.

A former Unitarian minister, Frederick Sinclair headed the small Free Religious Fellowship of which Maurice was a member, and Sinclair’s expressed opposition to Australia’s participation in the war soon caused some consternation.<sup>20</sup> On 2 September, Maurice reported to Doris:

I am just returned from lunch with Dr [Herbert] Woollard ... He is rather troubled at the division which the war is making in the Fellowship and also at the difficulty of reconciling resistance with the Ethics of Christianity. He is rather inclined to think with me that Christ would have been ready to defend Judea & would have taken a strong stand against foreigners who like Antiochus Epiphanes sought to outrage the Jewish religion. He thinks that he will not go to the Fellowship for some time, till things have settled.

In the federal election on 5 September, the Labor Party defeated Cook's Liberals, and Andrew Fisher became prime minister, with a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Vida Goldstein polled 10,264 votes to Sir Robert Best's 15,545.

The WPA's next battle was with the new federal government's wartime censorship, which from October 1914 came under the War Precautions Act. But censorship had already begun on 3 August, the day before the official declaration of war, and the *Woman Voter* was soon in trouble. Goldstein refused to refrain from publishing articles calling for peace, and in September, she and Cecilia John encountered an armed guard and police at the paper's printers, Fraser & Jenkinson, at 341 Queen Street, a short distance from the clubroom. On Goldstein's instructions the paper was made up, and John and the guard then took the proofs to the censor's office. The parts of the 18 September issue of the paper that were censored were left blank, drawing public attention to the act.

On 21 September, Maurice offered Doris an account of the censor's run-in with the *Woman Voter*, which he had gained second hand from an acquaintance who was present.

He went down with the guard but the censor did the censoring. He says that there is a deputy appointed here of the censor in England. He said that he understands the trouble arose from Miss Goldstein's refusing to give the Deputy Censor a promise not to disregard his directions. He saw Miss Goldstein and Miss John. He says that he does not think Miss Goldstein would have given much trouble but for Miss John who 'put the words into her mouth'. One thing that Miss Goldstein says that roused him was that she hoped that the Australian troops when they reached the scene of war would throw down their arms & refuse to fight ... He says that the Censors have closed 5 papers in Queensland; that they nearly closed the 'Age' and the 'Herald' here.

Once again, Cecilia John got the blame. And there was an interesting endnote to the letter: 'Charles [Maurice's source] says that Miss Goldstein rang up several photographers & asked them to come & take photos of Fraser & Jenkinson's with the guard there. The photographers came & he told them they might



be involving themselves in trouble so they went away'. It is unlikely they encountered the deputy censor in person, but from 17 August to 23 September that role was filled by Colonel John Monash, who was made commander of the Australian Corps in 1918. He had met Goldstein in 1887 when serving under her father, Jacob Goldstein, in the Victorian Garrison Artillery.<sup>21</sup>

Doris's three sisters and her mother, Louisa, shared her interest in the WPA, and on 17 September, Doris wrote that she was to attend a WPA meeting.

I did not intend going but Mother wants it and thinks it wrong of me always to stay away. After all, too, I cannot honestly say I do not want to go, dear. I am curious to know details of the demand for a recount at Canterbury [a voting booth within the Kooyong electorate] – I want also to hear what is being said about the censoring of the Voter.

At the 'special' meeting of members on Tuesday, only Miss [Hilda] Moody, Mrs [Bella] Lavender & Miss Cornell out of the whole roomful were for defence. All the rest are non-resistant. I can but think they have not thought out the thing in detail & realised the consequences.

By 22 September, Maurice was being quite frank that his sympathy for Goldstein and John had been exhausted:

I was interested in hearing of Mrs Paling. I hope she manages to hold her own but rather doubt whether the effort is worthwhile. I should like to know how she expects to checkmate Miss John ... Did you read Age (Monday's) report of Kooyong's declaration of poll with Miss Goldstein and Miss John's remarks. I must say I sympathise with Sir Robert Best.

Nevertheless, he maintained his interest in women's rights and the WPA. On 13 October, he reported that he had rung the WPA's Hilda Moody and told her that there was a proposal to remove the disqualification of women for the municipal councils as part of the Local Government Bill and that Goldstein had rung him back, expressing her intention to attend.

Doris's response the next day to Maurice's action was one of relief: 'I am glad you let the WPA know about it, dear; they should appreciate that, and I hope they do'.

The following day, after the Legislative Assembly had carried Richmond member Ted Cotter's amendment enabling women to stand for municipal councils, Maurice replied:

I thought it proper to give Miss Goldstein an opportunity of coming up. As a matter of fact, it was my amendment. I framed it & gave it to Cotter to

move. I don't like Miss Goldstein personally: but I have nothing against the Association and I think that if they attended to matters like this it would be all the better. I did not move it myself because I had a lot of amendments down.

Doris was delighted and replied the next day, 'I got your letter this morning and liked the news it contained muchly. I hope Miss Goldstein knows that the amendment was really yours. If not I'll see that the information reaches her'.

It was then up to the Legislative Council to pass the Local Government Bill. In his letter of 20 October, Maurice reported, 'I saw Mrs and Miss Goldstein & "Rose on pillow" up at the Legislative Council. They were watching the Local Govt. Bill but the Council did not get very far'.

The bill was passed and Doris reported the following day, 'I saw in the paper this morning that the "Women as Councillors" was passed in the Council accompanied by Miss Goldstein's smile'.

By this time Vida Goldstein's determination that the WPA should adopt an anti-war platform was causing increasing conflict within the association. On 2 November, Doris called on Maurice for some legal advice, having heard that the honorary secretary Hilda Moody and honorary treasurer Doris Kerr had resigned from the WPA executive,

because when the question of a peace campaign was voted on and negatived by 3 to 2 the opinion of the majority was put aside. I think such goings on are just disgraceful – don't you?

I don't intend to leave the Association, but I would like to have a good old row with it with a view of putting things on a sounder basis. If Mrs [Bella] Lavender has not resigned I'd like to persuade her to do so with a view of having the General Meeting called now for the re-election of officers – that is if the constitution allows them to work with three instead of five. It couldn't allow only two, anyhow.

Think on it and tomorrow I will take any legal advice! Can't something drastic be done?

Doris and her motion were ruled out of order at the meeting that followed, and it is hard not to detect a certain satisfaction in Maurice's letter of 6 November, which he begins, 'My dearest infant'.

How are you after your fight? You looked as if you had enjoyed yourself ... You will now have an opportunity of studying firsthand Miss Goldstein's methods ...

I told Mr Robinson yesterday about the proposed insurrection in the Association & predicted its result – that if Miss Goldstein could not beat you she would rule you out of order. So when he asked me today I told him my predictions were verified.

The *Women Voter* announced the resignations of Hilda Moody and Doris Kerr in its next issue.<sup>22</sup>

On 10 December 1914, Maurice McCrae Blackburn and Doris Amelia Hordern were married by Frederick Sinclair. And what of young Doris's early aspiration 'together we can do great things'? During World War I, Maurice Blackburn was a leader of the anti-conscription movement, which defeated two referendums that sought to impose conscription in 1916 and 1917. He lost his state seat in 1917, and in 1919 he established the law firm Maurice Blackburn and Associates. He was a noted defender of civil liberties, as well as a union lawyer. He was elected to the seat of Fitzroy in 1925 and served in the state parliament for the next eight years. He served as speaker to the Legislative Assembly in 1933, when the Labor Party was out of office. He entered federal parliament in 1934 and held the seat of Bourke, in northern Melbourne, for nine years. He was twice expelled from the Labor Party, the second time, in October 1941, for his refusal to stop participating in the activities of the Australia-Soviet Friendship League.<sup>23</sup> He was serving as an independent Labor representative at the time of his electoral defeat in 1943. He died in 1944, at the age of 63.

Doris Blackburn worked for the community in which she lived. She was a leading member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and she worked with the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria and the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties. In 1946, she won the federal seat of Bourke as an independent Labor candidate, and in 1947, she was the only parliamentarian to speak out against the establishment of the Woomera British-Australian missile-testing range on Indigenous land in central Australia.<sup>24</sup> She lost the seat in 1949 and retired from federal politics. She remained a tireless worker for community-based organisations and was the first deputy president of the Victorian Aborigines' Advancement League when it was formed in 1957. She died in Melbourne in 1970, at the age of 81. The quote Doris asked to be included in an obituary for Maurice is appropriate for them both: 'It has been said of him, "He was a man for whom no good cause, as he saw it, was lost while he lived"'.