Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0637

John, Cecilia Annie

(1877 - 1955)

Born	18771105, Hobart Town Tasmania Australia
Died	19550528, Godalming Surrey England
Occupation	Feminist, Opera singer, Pacifist

Summary

Cecilia John, who sang ‘I Didn’t Raise My Son to Be a Soldier’ until banned by the government under the War Precautions Act of 1915, founded the Women’s Peace Army with Vida Goldstein. Interested in social questions, John was a member of the Collins Street Independent Church, the Women’s Political Association and wrote for the *Woman Voter.* She established the Children’s Peace Army and ran a women’s co-operative farm, the Women’s Rural Industries Co. Ltd, at Mordialloc, providing employment to women in financial need.

Details

The daughter of Daniel and Rosetta (née Kelly) John, Cecilia John came to Melbourne during her early teens to study music and singing. To pay for her training she established a poultry farm at Deepdene. By 1911 John was a successful teacher of singing and voice production as well as a poultry expert. She also joined the Collins Street Independent Church, distributed anti-conscription literature for the Australian Freedom League and supported Vida Goldstein in her campaign for election to Federal parliament in 1913.

A member of the Women’s Political Association she wrote for the *Woman Voter* and with Goldstein established the Women’s Peace Army and became its financial secretary. At anti-conscription meetings she sang ‘I Didn’t Raise My Son to Be a Soldier’ until banned by the government under the War Precautions Act of 1915. She also formed the Children’s Peace Army and the People’s Conservatorium. Along with Ina Higgins, John ran a women’s co-operative farm, the Women’s Rural Industries Co. Ltd, at Mordialloc, providing employment to women in financial need.

Following World War I John attended the Women’s International Peace Conference at Zurich with Goldstein. She also worked for the International Red Cross in Geneva and the Save-the-Children Fund in London where she became involved with the Dalcroze Eurhythmic system of dancing. In 1932 John became principal of the London School of Dalcroze Eurhythmics, a position she held until her death on 28 May 1955.

Published resources

Resource Section
John, Cecilia Annie (1877 - 1955), Gowland, Patricia, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A090484b.htm

Edited Book
Australian Feminism: A Companion, Caine, Barbara, Gatens, Moira et al., 1998

Monash Biographical Dictionary of 20th Century Australia, Arnold, John and Morris, Deirdre, 1994

Book
That dangerous and persuasive woman: Vida Goldstein, Bomford, Janette M., 1993

Radical Melbourne : a secret history, Sparrow, Jeff and Sparrow, Jill, 2001

Put up the sword, Pankhurst, Adela, 1917

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders

Archival resources

National Library of Australia
Miss Cecilia John on "why I am a Bolshevik"

Scheme of proposed Women's Rural Industries Co

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Unemployment / W.P.A. Women's Labour Bureau

Correspondence 1897-1919 [manuscript]

Author Details
Anne Heywood

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