Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1354

Bate, Thelma Florence

(1904 - 1984)

Born	19040803, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Died	19840726, Turramurra New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Political candidate

Summary

Thelma Bate was unsuccessful in her attempts to enter State and Federal Parliament, but worked for the community and for equality regardless of gender, race or creed throughout her life. She ran as a member of the Country Party in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly for Dubbo, 1947 (known as Harvey), in the Senate in 1951 and 1953 for Gwydir (now known as Kirkby) and in Kirkby's 1953 by election for the House of Representatives.

Details

Thelma Florence Bate was born 3 August 1904, daughter of Olaf Olsen. She later took her stepfather's name, Sundstrom, she was educated at Fort Street Girls' High School and the University of Sydney, graduating BA 1928.

After travelling abroad, she taught secondary school and in 1934 married a grazier, Richard Harvey, and went to live on his property near Ivanhoe, New South Wales. Widowed in 1946, she stood for the Country Party in the NSW Legislative Assembly seat of Dubbo in 1947 and was narrowly defeated.

In 1949 she married Kenneth Kirkby. She ran for the Senate in 1951 and 1953, unsuccessfully, on the Country Party ticket. She was one of two Country Party candidates for the Federal seat of Gwydir in a by election in 1953, and was again unsuccessful. She later devoted her considerable energy to various organizations including the Country Women's Association of NSW, which she represented in Toronto, Canada, 1953, at the Association of Country Women of the World. She was a member of the CWA for over 40 years, and served as secretary 1957-59, and president 1959-62. She was insistent that the Association include Aboriginal women and was an executive member of the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs.

She was actively involved in establishing the International Houses at both the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales, which housed international students in Australia on the Colombo Plan. It was for this work that she received the CBE in 1969.

In 1958 she married Henry Bate, known as Jeff, but the marriage ended in divorce in 1968. She had no children.

Published resources

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition
Putting Skirts on the Sacred Benches: Women Candidates for the New South Wales Parliament, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2006,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/pssb/home.html

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