Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1358

Beaver, Aileen Winifred

(1926 - 2017)

Born	19260101
Died	20170220, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Activist, Metalworker, Political candidate, Trade unionist

Summary

A prominent unionist and social justice campaigner, Aileen Winifred Beaver ran as a Communist Party of Australia candidate for Auburn in 1978, for Elizabeth in 1981 and for the seat of Sydney in the House of Representatives in 1977, 1983 and 1984.

Details

Aileen Beaver left high school aged 14 and has been a union activist all her working life.

Towards the end of the 60s Aileen Beaver decided to seek work in the metal industry in a successful effort to build support for a campaign to reintroduce equal pay in that industry. Women metal workers had been given equal pay during the second World War ‘to protect men’s jobs’, but this was removed when the war ended. She is credited as a writer and performer in the 1975 documentary ‘Don’t Be Too Polite Girls’ which addressed these issues.

At the first Women’s Liberation Working Women’s Conference in Melbourne, Aileen tabled questionnaires completed by women in her Malleys workshop. The data revealed that women workers were often as concerned about being treated with respect as workers as they were about pay.

Another measure of her success was her role as secretary of the Shop Committee in the male-dominated workforce at Malleys. She was also active in the Building Workers’ Women’s Committee, and the Working Women’s Group of Women’s Liberation. Equal pay, peace, abortion rights, childcare and International Women’s Day were prominent in the activities of the groups in which she worked. While at Malleys, in cooperation with Turkish women in the community, Aileen also successfully campaigned to establish a childcare centre in Auburn for their children.

She retired to the Blue Mountains where she remained a diligent activist and advocate for the regeneration of natural bushland.

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

Aileen Beaver oral history interview,
https://collection.sl.nsw.gov.au/record/9Bv7l0y9

Archival resources

State Library of New South Wales
Aileen Beaver oral history interview

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