Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1556

Francis, Susan

(1877 - 1946)

Born	18771014, Brisbane Queensland Australia
Died	19460422, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Activist, Nurse

Summary

In 1927 Susan Francis stood as a Labor candidate in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly elections for Bondi. She then stood as a Lang Labor candidate in the Waverley Municipal Council elections of 1932.

Details

Susan Francis was born on 14 October 1877 in Brisbane, one of five children. She became a domestic servant, though she called herself a housekeeper, when she married Arthur Rawlins, known as Francis, in 1897. They had three children, two of whom survived to accompany her to Sydney in 1911.

From the early 1920s Nurse Francis, although unqualified, advertised herself as a midwife and attended many births in inner city Sydney. She was the subject of two enquiries before the Nurses' Registration Board in 1927 and 1930 but was never prosecuted. She was well known for her work during the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919, and widely liked for her tireless help for the poor.

Susan Francis was active in the Labor Party and ran in the seat of Bondi in 1927, gaining 22.7% of the votes. She was president, then secretary of the Labor Women's Organising Committee from 1928 to 1935 and led delegations to ministers, organised public meetings campaigned for candidates and was a delegate to the State Conference of the party. She was one of three delegates from New South Wales to the Interstate Women's Conference in 1930.

During the depression in the 1930s, Susan Francis helped to set up a hostel for homeless women and girls which opened in 1931, and she became matron of such a hostel in 1935.
The regard in which she was held by the Labor Party was shown by the huge function put on in her honour in the Empress Room of Mark Foy's department store, when she married again, in 1936. She subsequently became known as Nurse Francis Wilkes, and remained an active member of the ALP until her death in 1946.

Published resources

Resource Section
Francis, Susan (1877 - 1946), Tracey, Sue, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/AS10170b.htm

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

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

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