Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6206

Holmes, Margaret

(1886 - 1981)

Born	18860308, Prahran Victoria Australia
Died	19810413, Brighton Victoria Australia
Occupation	Community worker, Religious Leader, Welfare worker

Details

Margaret Holmes was born on 8 March 1886 in Prahran, Victoria, to parents Charles Morell Holmes and his wife Margaret. After attending Tintern Ladies' College, Margaret enrolled in studies at the University of Melbourne, where she completed a Bachelor of Arts (1909), a Masters (1911) and a Diploma of Education (1911). During her time at university, Margaret was an active member of the Australasian Student Christian Union (ASCU), becoming president of the women's branch in 1907.

Margaret became the part-time general secretary of the ASCU (later the Australian Student Christian Movement) during World War I. From 1922 she was briefly a staff member of the Associated Teachers' Training Institute (later Mercer Hall) before returning once again to the ASCU. From 1924 until 1945 Margaret served as the ASCU's head-quarters secretary.

During the 1930s Margaret was involved with the League of Nations in Melbourne, assisting with the organisation of the 1937 Australian Peace Conference. She was also on the executive committee of the World Student Christian Federation from 1928, and the organisations vice-chairman from 1933 to 1941.

Margaret began a new career in refugee work during the Second World War. In 1938-39 she helped Ada Constance Duncan establish the Victorian International Refugee Emergency Committee and in 1940 she began to look after the interests of some of the refugees. From 1945 to 1949 Margaret was also secretary for World Student Relief.

After retiring from the Australian Student Christian Movement, Margaret was appointed executive officer of a new resettlement department (later the Ecumenical Refugee Agency) of the Australian Council of Churches. She worked closely with immigration ministers, including Arthur Calwell, in pioneering Australia's postwar migration. For her work with refugees and post war migrants, Margaret was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in January 1958.

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Margaret Holmes, circa 1920-circa 1989 [manuscript]

Author Details
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