

Archive No. 01

Bon Hull (28 March 1915 - 16 June 2000)

Jessie Mary 'Bon' Hull was born to a working class family, was raised in Footscray and had a state school education. She enrolled at the Emily MacPherson College where she learnt dress designing. After working as a designer in the rag trade in Flinders Lane for many years she opened her own shop, a delicatessen, which was a successful business venture. She married twice and had three sons and eventually four grandchildren.

Bon was not quite 55 years old when she attended the first meeting of the Women's Action Committee (WAC) on 2 March 1970. She immediately became an enthusiastic and active founding member of this group that set out to challenge the patriarchy and to change conditions for all women. Bon was involved in most of the radical actions organised by WAC in the early '70s, including the equal pay tram ride in April 1970 and the anti-Miss Teenage Quest demonstrations in 1970 and 1971.

Bon went to Fairlea Women's Prison rather than pay the fine after she was charged when she tried to prevent a cop from hitting a woman during an anti-Vietnam demonstration in 1970. She helped to organise the national Women's Liberation Movement Conference, Women at Work, and Women in the Trade Unions, at Melbourne Uni in August 1971. She was partly instrumental in setting up the first Women's Liberation Centre at 16 Little La Trobe Street in 1972. And was a member of the Abortion Trust Fund that loaned money to women who needed but couldn't afford to pay for abortions.

From 1974 Bon was an active member of the Melbourne Women's Health Collective which set up a health care service for women at 85 Johnston Street, Fitzroy. After the service closed down because the collective refused to compromise on its women-only policy in order to get government funding, Bon wrote a book, *In Our Own Hands: A Women's Health Manual* published by Hyland House in 1980.

When the medial services of the Queen Vic Women's Hospital were moved to Clayton, Bon initiated a campaign in 1986 to save the site in Lonsdale Street for the women of Victoria. The present Queen Victoria Women's Centre while not quite what she had in mind when she documented the case that as the women of Victoria had raised the initial money for the first

hospital to be run for women and by women they therefore owned the Queen Victoria Hospital, it is, nevertheless, a tribute to Bon's tenaciousness and courage and stands as a memorial to her untiring efforts on behalf of all women.

On 11 March 2004, Bon was successfully nominated by the QVWC and, along with 21 other women on the day, her name and a listing of her achievements were posthumously added to the Victorian Women's Honour Roll.