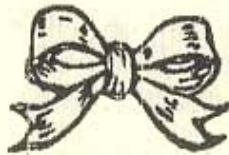


NATIONAL WOMAN'S CHRISTIAN
TEMPERANCE UNION OF
AUSTRALIA LTD

39th

Triennial Convention



"... for such a time as this"

*An Address by the President,
Mrs Ellen Chandler of Melbourne.*

May 27 2009, Adelaide

“...for such a time as this”

This Biblical quotation from the Book of Esther, unfolds in a story which reminds us of a tale from Arabian Nights. What a wonderful TV Mini series it would make – poor refugee Jewish girl wins beauty contest to become Queen of Persia and risks her life to save her people. A concerned, wise and politically savvy Uncle is her mentor against the evil Prime Minister who pulls every trick in the book. It contains lively dialogue, relationships and dramatic suspense, royal banquets, assassination plot, trickery and revenge. Can't you imagine leaving the dinner dishes and dashing in to watch TV, hanging out for the next episode?

It is one story in the Bible which does not mention God but its truth is there for us when we see a woman, a young woman, changing the course of the politics of a nation, with grace and dignity, courage and tenacity.

Esther knew that it was her role to make a difference. She took notice of the words of her Uncle. She knew that she could not let the time pass to save her people because there would never be another opportunity in her lifetime. Esther accepted the challenge.

Each generation has its own challenge and often great leaders arise to meet that challenge.

Mother Teresa really believed God called her “for such a time as this” for the destitute in the slums of Calcutta. **Emily Pankhurst**, when urging the well-heeled women who assembled in her Drawing Room in London to protest even to the point of imprisonment, to gain votes for women, believed she was there “for such a time as this”. **Frances Willard**, a Christian woman far ahead of her time, set the structure and organised the early Woman's Christian Temperance Union believing she was there “for such a time as this”

Do we have that fire? Do we, as a society, believe that we are here to make a difference “for such a time as this” . The responsibility is ours. Or are we like the story of the -

Emperor's New Clothes?

You will remember that tale by Hans Christian Anderson. A visitor persuades the Emperor that he could make robes from special cloth which was unique, magnificent and, of course, very expensive. The cloth was so rare that only the wise could see it. To the foolish it would be invisible. So of course, the vain Emperor told the scoundrel to go ahead and make the royal robes. There was no doubt in the Emperor's egotistical mind that he would see the cloth. On the due date the "con" man arrived with the robes in a very large parcel which He opened with due ceremony. With his arms extended, supposedly displayed magnificent robes. Now, not wanting to be thought foolish, the Emperor primped and posed in front of the mirror and declared to all and sundry, his new robes were unique, absolutely glorious - see the colour, the magnificent style. He would wear them in the Royal Parade.

His courtiers could not enlighten him for they were fearful of their position if classed as foolish. His subjects were frightened to speak out. After all executions were the order of the day and who wanted to lose his head? They even applauded the Emperor's magnificence as he rode along. What were they really seeing?

However, one lonely, innocent, little voice piped up "Daddy, why is the Emperor in his underwear?" "Ssh, my boy, do not embarrass me, we will all be in trouble, you are not old enough to understand." But the child persisted - and danced around calling as only a child can "the emperor isn't wearing clothes". Soon others understood where wisdom was to be found and one voice became 2, then 6 then 60 and more, all laughing and pointing at the Parade. A very embarrassed Emperor made haste to return to the palace. The maker of those invisible, non-existent robes received his just reward.

In many ways society today could be like that Emperor believing the voice, enticed by glamorous advertising telling us what to drink, where to gamble, what to smoke and how to party. We are constantly entreated to live a particular lifestyle and forget our troubles. The gloss and hype may attract and the true image become invisible. Why else would young people photographed in demeaning positions in gutters or night club toilets think it was OK on a night out?

“for such a time as this”, where are the voices who can see the reality and make a difference by persistently upholding the truth that gambling, alcohol and drugs are not glamorous, healthy or even economical?

We are, as a community, appalled by headlines in capital city newspapers of “city awash with vomit”, “excessive drinking and violence in CBD” and the current trend to binge drinking as a rite of passage among our young people. But did you know that 64% of those young people had their first drink of alcohol from a bottle surreptitiously found in a cupboard at home? That while older people may decry the habits of the young with the “it never happened in my day syndrome” 11% of people over 60 years of age drink to excess and many older persons are more likely to drink daily.

When the National Health and Medical Research Council Australian Guidelines were released a couple of months ago they barely raised a ripple. Even though for good health, they recommended a change to no more than 2 drinks a day for adults and no alcohol for teenagers or pregnant women. These are great recommendations to build on and pertinent issues that must challenge our organization and society. But, sadly, many are seeing the Emperor’s glorious new robes and ignoring the reality of a major health problem costing Australia, at every level, in excess of \$16 billion a year. They can ignore the proliferation of licences for pokie machines and that gambling, even at the pokies, is destroying homes and families.

Current TV advertisements are very pertinent – you probably know the one where the father at the barbeque calls the young son to get him another beer from the frig, and through the magic of digital photography the era changes and the son becomes the father. Then *he* calls *his* son to get him a beer and so a culture is passed on through the generations.

Of course, we acknowledge that about 30% of 17 year olds have not consumed alcohol in a given period and about 10% of adults have never, ever, had a full serve of alcohol.

As members of the WCTU we are here “for such a time as this” and we strive to make a difference through our Education programs, literature and political activism because -

We care about babies born with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder for which there is no cure and that for every one hundred live births one baby will be born effected by alcohol.

We care that the number of drug addicted newborn is 40 times more than 25 years ago.

We care that young people are unable to realise their full potential because of brain defects caused by alcohol or drugs.

We care that drivers (of whatever age) over .05 cause tragic accidents, and that violence against women is a problem in our society.

We care enough to want to make a difference.

Frances Willard said “Live your life as an example to others and of benefit to all”. WCTU has a grand history of political activism and social reform.

“for such a time as this” we can all choose to leave our comfort zones to demonstrate that it is not *those* people who make a difference, it is all of us together – citizens changing the shape and culture of our own society.

Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery but today is a God’s gift to use, to treasure or discard. It is our choice.

It was Eleanor Roosevelt who said “women are like teabags, you never know how strong they are until they are in hot water.”

Men and women here tonight at the 39th Convention of the WCTU - **we need to be in hot water for such a time as this.**

And may God bless us all.

Ellen Chandler

Please contact us if you are interested -

- *in becoming a member or a supporter*
- *in literature*
- *booking a program or a speaker for your school, church or organization*

***Our Mission Statement - "To Promote
a drug-free lifestyle and Christian ethics in the
home and community".***

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