

suggested that those in Western societies have evolved through four phases: an initial stage of "universality", in which Bahá'í is regarded as the "spirit of the age"; followed by a period of increased emphasis on organisation, criterion of membership, and the establishment of stable and efficient administration; then a third phase of systematic plans for expansion and administrative consolidation; and finally, a phase of significantly higher rates of growth.[2] Despite its small proportions, the Tasmanian Bahá'í experience can be seen to reflect the first three stages of this general model.

Hyde and Clara Dunn arrived in Australia in April 1920 to spread the Bahá'í Message, and had already visited Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland. As described elsewhere,[3] their early success had come through contact with the metaphysical movements. When the Dunns and two Melbourne Bahá'ís spent three months in Hobart at the beginning of 1924 Hyde spoke on the platforms of the Theosophical Society, and through a Tasmanian acquaintance Ivy (Trixie) Colyer, also met church leaders, newspaper editors, and other individuals.

These efforts attracted a small group of adherents, which was not sustained despite the visit to Tasmania that year by Martha Root, and Hyde Dunn's return visit the following year. From this early period one remarkable woman, Gretta Lamprill, sustained the Bahá'í message on the island. Gretta had hoped to pursue a singing career, but her family was unable to afford such an education, and she took up nursing. She became a member of the National Spiritual Assembly, and more significantly, was named a Knight of Bahá'u'lláh together with Glad Parke, who travelled with her to the Society Islands (now French Polynesia) in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

The group did not expand between 1925 and 1934, the year in which the Bahá'ís of Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand formed their National Spiritual Assembly. With no more than three members in Tasmania, Hobart could not form a Local Spiritual Assembly, and could not send a delegate to the first National Convention. As a consequence of Martha Root's second visit to Tasmania, in March 1939, Eloise Jenson (Greenlaw), and then Kit Crowder, became Bahá'ís. The Tasmanian community did not increase in size or visibility until Martha Root's second visit, 5-10 March 1939. Despite her frail physical condition, she conducted an itinerary prepared by Gretta Lamprill: lectures at three high schools, the Spiritualistic Church, the Workers Educational Association, the Lyceum Club, the Theosophical Society, the Esperantist Society, Rotary Club, the Bellerive, and the Sandford Country Women's Association. ABC radio invited Miss Root to speak on Monday 6 March on her submitted topic, "Culture and world peace". On the same day Miss Root told her adventurous story in *The Mercury*. She made five broadcasts in all, and was given a Lord Mayor's reception. Two public lectures were delivered in Hobart. They were chaired by A.B. Taylor, Professor of English; and G.V. Brooks, State Director of Education. After a public meeting in Launceston Miss Root departed for Melbourne by boat.

The Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand had formed their National Spiritual Assembly in 1934, and although the Tasmanian Bahá'ís had not been able to participate in national conventions, they were a part of the national

community, and benefited from the systematic teaching efforts now being coordinated by the National Assembly. A campaign of public lectures in 1940 involved visits by Maysie Almond, by Hilda Brooks, and Charlotte Moffitt and Jane Routh. The NSA contributed 80 pounds toward the cost of teaching activities, in addition to teaching materials it had forwarded to Gretta Lamprill. At about this time Joan Peck joined the Hobart group.

In October 1940 Gretta Lamprill was visited by government officers seeking information about the group's activities. The spread of war in Europe had no doubt prompted the government to investigate the actions and attitudes of all manner of organisations; and the incident prompted the Bahá'ís to ensure that public officials be better informed as to the Bahá'í attitude to war.

The Bahá'ís sometimes collaborated with like-minded social movements, meeting occasionally with the Friendship society and with a group of spiritualists. Kit Crowder and Eloise Greenlaw became enthusiastic Esperantists. In 1942-43 the Hobart Bahá'ís were invited to join the League of Nations Union. They believed it was not possible to do this, but donated one pound one shilling. From the 1940s, also, the Bahá'ís involved academics in their public meetings: W.T. Dowsett, Mr W.A. Townsley, and Mr Trott were among those who spoke at events marking World Religion Day, United Nations Day, and other occasions. So too, did they invite outstanding public figures of the day.

Propagation strategies used by the Bahá'ís extended from personal contact and communications, to public meetings, and use of the mass media. An intense teaching campaign that commenced on 5 October 1943, for instance, consisted of public lectures, broadcasts, and book displays. Bahá'ís visited from interstate. Public meetings were held on 30 June 1943 and 14 March 1944, leading to the celebration of the centenary of the declaration of the Báb in May 1944. Kit Crowder spoke on radio on "One World - One Faith", and on 23 May some sixty people gathered at the Lord Mayor's Court Room to hear some addresses:

... interspersed by very enjoyable music items kindly arranged by Miss Myra Gillon...Wired greetings from the NSA and Gretta Lamprill were received and supper, which included a Centenary Birthday Cake made by Murial Handley, was served by members of our senior and youth groups.

The evening was chaired by Mr J. Modridge, a member of the Theosophical Society, and its success was noted in *The Mercury*. Similar meetings were held in Launceston, where Bahá'ís resided at times from the 1940s, but where a community can only be said to have emerged at a later date. In 1944 a regional teaching committee was appointed for Tasmania, as was a summer and winter school committee. Throughout 1945-46 the Tasmanian Teaching Committee advertised in the papers of all the major towns. Public meetings in Hobart were addressed by Gretta Lamprill and Kit Crowder, and during the year the committee investigated recording talks written by Mrs Axford for broadcast on radio stations across the state. Literature was donated to public libraries: the magazines *World Order* and *Bahá'í Magazine* were available in the reading room

at the Hobart Public Library, the Launceston YMCA, and the Launceston Public Library. The Hobart Bahá'ís were regular recipients of Bahá'í News from North America, and kept up with other Bahá'í news through the Bahá'í Quarterly and Herald of the South.

Dr Jack Bean, brother of the famed historian of world war one, C.E.W. Bean, typified the individual entranced by "universalism" of the Bahá'í Teachings, yet ultimately unable to adhere to the more formalised requirements of membership and belief. His association with the Bahá'ís also marked a high point in the community's relations with the Theosophical Society. A medical practitioner, Bean was a prominent Australian Theosophist, and had spoken at Bahá'í meetings for sometime before joining. Bean lectured widely on the Bahá'í Faith in the next few years in Tasmania, and in Goulburn, Brisbane, and Yerrinbool. Late in 1950 Dr Bean's wife Dorothy left Theosophy to become a Bahá'í, while he resigned, unable to reconcile Bahá'í teachings with his allegiance to Theosophy.

There were instances, too, where Bahá'ís faced the administrative requirement barring involvement in secret societies. Mr H.A. Wilkinson, Grand secretary of the Masonic lodges of Tasmania, had chaired a meeting organised by the Bahá'ís to observe World Religion Day in 1950, and had become a Bahá'í in 1952. Thus, when a report appeared in Bahá'í News in 1954 stating that Bahá'ís could not be Freemasons, Hobart Assembly asked the National Assembly for clarification. Subsequently, in the March edition of the Bahá'í Bulletin the National Assembly requested to hear from anyone who felt concerned about Shoghi Effendi's directive that Bahá'ís not be involved in secret societies, such as the Freemasons. In November 1957 the NSA reported that some Bahá'ís in Australia continued their adherence to Freemasonry, International Co-Freemasonry and the Rosicrucian Order. Mr Wilkinson chose to remain a member of his Masonic Lodge, and in 1958 was deprived of his voting rights.

The majority of the Tasmanian Bahá'ís, it must be said, had no difficulty in meeting the standards of the emerging Bahá'í administrative order. On several occasions they wrote to Shoghi Effendi to convey their greetings. Their relations with the National Assembly were harmonious, with very few points of misunderstanding, despite the distances between Sydney and Hobart, and the limited means of communication which hampered the possibility of easy dialogue.

For a time in 1945 one of the Bahá'ís stayed away from Bahá'í meetings after a clash with Gretta Lamprill. He had considered resigning, and said another member had actually done so, but a letter the following month from Gretta to Mariette Bolton saying that the whole matter was resolved. The Community reported of its past year:

We feel it can safely be said that all members have seized whatever opportunities came their way for spreading the Teachings and have used whatever approach they had at hand to present the Cause to the public - be it lending books, verbally, a window display or a fireside meeting.[4]

In 1949 Hobart Assembly made an interesting recommendation to the National

Assembly, which sounds like good advice at any time:

"that where a National Committee is functioning satisfactorily, not more than one change annually be made in the personnel, unless special circumstances make it necessary." [5]

The need for co-ordination and co-operation increased during the years 1947 to 1953, when the Australian Bahá'ís undertook a co-ordinated six year plan of action. Within Tasmania, the goals were to establish a Local Spiritual Assembly in Hobart, and groups in Launceston and Devonport. In 1950 the Hobart Bahá'ís were conducting a monthly study class in Launceston, where there were still no Bahá'ís. By January 1951 Glad Parke had moved there but the town remained unresponsive. Efforts were also made to develop communities in Burnie, Scottsdale, New Norfolk, and Glenorchy.

When Clara Dunn and Thelma Perks visited Hobart in November 1948 meetings were held at the Bahá'í Centre and in the homes of Kit Crowder and Katie Pharoah. As reported in the Bahá'í News Bulletin:

The meetings were happy gatherings and the true Bahá'í spirit prevailed. There was lively discussion and great interest shown. Regular visits of Bahá'ís from the Mainland would stimulate interest in the non-Bahá'í community and be of great value to the furtherance of the Cause in Tasmania. [6]

After years of effort, the Hobart Bahá'ís established their Local Assembly in 1949. Mrs Mabel Bailey, Miss Eileen Costello and Mr F.C. Parsons had joined the community in 1948, and on 30 December 1948 the Hobart Bahá'ís cabled Shoghi Effendi:

HOBART JOYOUSLY APPLYING FOR ASSEMBLY STATUS STOP HUMBLE SERVANTS SEND LOVING GREETINGS SUPPLICATE PRAYERS

The members of Hobart's first Local Assembly established at Ridvan 1949 were Frank & Myra Brown, Mabel Bailey, Kit Crowder, Eileen Costello, Katherine Marcus, Gretta Lamprill, Katie Pharoah, and Ben Raynor.

The Assembly provided the administrative foundation for the effective functioning of the Bahá'í community. It established committees for teaching, socials, and the preservation of Bahá'í history. These committees were retained in subsequent years, and there were also Bahá'í representatives to the AAUN and the Good Neighbour Council, which was concerned with the settlement of migrants to Australia. In 1950 the North American National Spiritual Assembly mentioned in correspondence the its Australian counterpart that "excellent opportunities" existed for cooperation between Bahá'í communities and agencies of the United Nations, the Australian NSA editorialised:

It is known that the Hobart Community has been fostering its association with its local U.N. Association for some time. It has met with considerable success and has won many friends for the Faith in Tasmania. Other communities may well look to the advantages of fostering such association. [7]

The involvement of Bahá'ís in other movements should also be noted. Mrs Pharoah was involved in the good neighbour program, and Mrs Greenlaw attended meetings of the newly formed Pan Pacific Women's Association. Late in 1950 Hobart Local Assembly decided that it wanted to help in settling Persian Bahá'ís in Australia. Although initial inquiries were made with commonwealth authorities, no progress seems to have been made at this time.

In the six year period 1947-53 an unprecedented number of Bahá'í speakers visited Tasmania from inter-state and from other countries. They included Clara Dunn and Thelma Perks (together in November 1948 and Clara Dunn alone in March 1951), Ethel Dawe (1946), Kit Carpenter (April 1949), Stanley P. Bolton (September-October 1949), Bertha Dobbins (May 1950), and Dorothy Dugdale and Ann Peace. Noted Indian Bahá'í, Mrs Shirin Fozdar, visited Tasmania in September 1952, addressing a wide range of meetings in Hobart, New Norfolk, Launceston, Burnie and Devonport.

New members of the Bahá'í community during the six year plan included Jean Scholes (who declared in 1949 but died on 9 August of the same year); Mrs Ada Wilson, the eighty-year old mother of Mrs Bailey (1949); Glad Park (1950), who a few years later was to join Gretta Lamprill as Knight of Bahá'u'lláh to the Society Islands; Mrs K Rothwell (1951). Albert Benson, editor of a newspaper in Devonport, became a Bahá'í late in 1952, having received a copy of Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era from visiting Adelaide Bahá'ís Anne Pierce and Dorothy Dugdale. His wife and son also joined. Mrs Ethel Marrison also joined at this time and the Devonport community was established in 1953.

When Edward Walter Bailey declared in 1952 Gretta Lamprill wrote to Hobart Assembly: "Our hearts were indeed rejoiced at the good news of the enlistment into the "ranks of the cohorts of Bahá'u'lláh", of another Believer in Hobart - Mr E.W. Bailey. In 1938 there was only one believer in Hobart, now there are twelve. There were no believers in Launceston in 1949; now there are five. Praise be to God for this great bounty!":[8]

The result of so much activity was the formation of nine communities by Ridvan 1953 (there were groups in Burnie, Devonport, Glenorchy, Launceston, New Norfolk, Scottsdale, Huonville and Lilydale - in addition to the LSA in Hobart)- although of these only Hobart, Launceston, Glenorchy and Devonport had any permanence, as the remainder had been formed through the temporary transfer of Bahá'ís from Hobart and Launceston.

As subsequent events showed, the Bahá'ís were attempting to hold together more communities than their numbers would allow: by 1951-52 several members of the Hobart community had departed interstate (Gretta Lamprill and Ben Raynor to Sydney, and Kath Marcus to Adelaide), and within a few years the Assembly lapsed. By the mid-point of the Crusade, in 1958, the Tasmanian community comprised just 21 Bahá'ís in 6 groups. Hobart Assembly had fallen to six members, and was only re-established in 1961.

There were a number of international Bahá'í visitors to Tasmania during the years of the World Crusade. In 1954 Hand of the Cause Mr Furutan visited,

accompanied by Mr Faizi:

"It was a great joy to us all to meet these two lovely souls, and to hear about all the Intercontinental Conferences. Our Assembly was much depleted at this time with sickness and bereavement, but our visitors were taken round for Non Bahá'ís to meet and hear the visitors." [9]

Shirin Fozdar made a second visit to Tasmania in January 1960, obtaining publicity in the Devonport Advocate. Mrs Jeanne Frankel visited in May 1960. Such visits notwithstanding, the community grew only slowly in the years to 1963. Hobart community's membership fell during 1954-55 from 15 to 10. After having the Centre for six years, the community reported to the National Assembly that it could no longer maintain it, as the rent was raised 150% The advice of National secretary Jim Heggie was for the Assembly to seek financial assistance from the Tasmanian community through the Regional Teaching Committee. This avenue was evidently unsuccessful, as the Centre was lost in April 1956. Meetings were thence held at the Brown's residence. In that year, for the first time, the Hobart Bahá'ís failed to affiliate with the United Nations branch in Tasmania, although they did pay their fees for affiliation to the Temperance Council.

Yet there was growth. Through Mrs Bailey, chairman of the Regional Teaching Committee, Mrs Joan Dean and Mrs Linda Jacobson became Bahá'ís in Glenorchy early in 1953. Tasmania's second Assembly was formed in Devonport in 1963. Its members were Reg Priestly, Ethel Marrison, Wilma Vandendool, Bill Vandendool, Mrs G. Smith, Glad Parke, Albert Benson, Gretta Lamprill, and Margaret Benson. At the completion of the ten year World Crusade there were two Local Assemblies, two groups and four isolated Bahá'ís in Tasmania: LSAs had been established in Hobart and Devonport, groups in Beaconsfield, & Glenorchy, and isolated Bahá'ís on King Island, Launceston, Lilydale & Longford.

The Bahá'í community in Tasmania as at Ridvan 1963

Assemblies Groups Isolated Bahá'ís

Devonport Beaconsfield King Island

Hobart Glenorchy Launceston

Lilydale

Longford

Growth of the Bahá'í community in Tasmania 1953-1963

53-54 54-55 55-56 56-57 57-58 58-59 59-60 60-61 61-62 62-63

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Conclusions

The contribution to the Bahá'í Faith in Australia made by the Tasmanian Bahá'ís has been out of proportion to their numerical strength. Those who became Bahá'ís in Tasmania who subsequently moved to other states included

Everard and Murial Handley, Goro and Ingrid Jorgic, Frank, Eleanor and John Burdett, Bob and Laurie Sherwin, Reg Priestly, and Grenville Kirton. Tasmania's first Bahá'í, Gretta Lamprill, was elected to the National Assembly in 1942, and at the beginning of the World Crusade pioneered to French Polynesia. Kit Crowder became a fluent public speaker, and in the 1950s was elected secretary of Hobart LSA. In 1953 she was acting secretary of the National Assembly, and a member also of the Tasmanian regional teaching committee. She gave valuable assistance to the incorporation of the National Assembly in Tasmania. Frank and Eleanor Burdett had joined early in 1952, having studied the Bahá'í teachings for more than a year. They moved to Sydney in 1962 to become care-takers at the newly completed Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, remaining until their retirement many years later. The Jorgics left for Adelaide about May 1954, and Goro was later elected to the National Spiritual Assembly. This paper has sought to provide a brief outline of the activities of the Tasmanian Bahá'ís, to which further investigation will no doubt add.

Notes

[1] Shoghi Effendi, "The Unfoldment of World Civilisation", 11 March 1936, in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: selected letters*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991, 201.

[2] Peter Smith, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: from messianic Shi'ism to a world religion*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 181.

[3] Graham Hassall, "Outpost of a World Religion: the Bahá'í Faith in Australia 1920-1947", *Journal of Religious History*, 16:3, June 1991.

[4] *Bahá'í Quarterly* 36, July 1945, 14.

[5] 29 October 1949 Hobart LSA to NSA. 0385/0144. Hobart Assembly 1938-1957.

[6] "Report on Mother Dunn's teaching activities", *Bahá'í News Bulletin* 9, December 1948, 10-11.

[7] *Bahá'í News Bulletin* 34, December 1950, 9.

[8] Gretta Lamprill to Hobart LSA, 2 Oct 1952.

[9] Annual Report 1953-1954. 0385/0144. Hobart Assembly 1938-1957.

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