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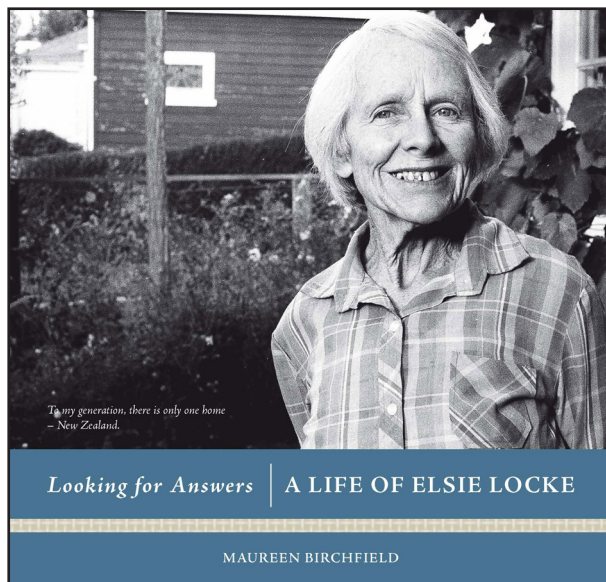
A life of Elsie Locke

Maureen Birchfield

Writer and activist Elsie Locke was a remarkable woman whose contribution to New Zealand went largely unrecognised during her lifetime. In a long and eventful life she campaigned for birth control, women's rights, nuclear disarmament, social justice and the environment before such causes were popular. She wrote almost 40 books, numerous articles and School Journal stories, and was a published poet.

Forthright she might have been, but the diminutive Elsie Locke was a very private and modest person. In this insightful and compelling biography, Maureen Birchfield peels back the layers of the public firebrand to find an ordinary woman who negotiated enormous personal obstacles to raise four children while striving tirelessly to improve the world around her.

Recently declassified security files confirm that the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service (and its antecedents) had Elsie firmly in their sights, particularly while she was a member of the the Communist Party of New Zealand (1933–56). Incorporating information from these files, Maureen Birchfield delivers a fascinating portrait of a woman ahead of her time.



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