

AGM Resolutions, 20 May 2017 (carried unanimously)

Britain's withdrawal from the European Union

The National Assembly of Women notes that the current government clearly intends to use Brexit as a cover for bolstering Britain's position as a deregulated, low wage economy in which women can and will be further exploited and impoverished. The NAW is committed to exposing, challenging and resisting the implementation of this reactionary and cruel agenda.

However, it recognises that in the changed and emerging environment outside the EU, it will be crucial not only to oppose the government's machinations but also to put forward a clearly articulated programme which advances the economic, social and political interests of working class women and their families, demonstrate that this is achievable and win mass support for its implementation.

This AGM therefore calls on the incoming Executive to prioritise consideration of how the NAW can play a leading role in the promotion and achievement of this alternative strategy and what it should do immediately to further these ends in the short and medium-term future.

Moved by: Liz Payne for the Executive Committee. Seconded by Monique Buchli

Women Refugees

Conflict, bombing and wars, have destabilised huge areas of the Middle East and Africa and led to millions of people seeking refuge outside of their own country. Many have been exploited by traffickers, some losing their lives in trucks or crossing in makeshift rafts across dangerous seas. More than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015, only to find themselves demonised and held in squalid camps while European governments argued over resettlement quotas.

Women and girls make up over 50% of any refugee, internally displaced or stateless people and they are at particular risk of violence, assault, exploitation and sexual harassment at every stage of their journey, particularly if they are unaccompanied, elderly, disabled, pregnant or alone with children.

This AGM calls on NAW sisters and the Executive to work with others to highlight the plight of women and girl refugees and campaign to ensure that receiving countries take full account of their safety and well being.

Moved by: Yvonne Washbourne for the Executive Committee. Seconded by Carolyn Simpson.

Women and the far-right

The NAW is alarmed by the rise of far –right parties in the mainstream political life in Britain and across Europe. Far-right parties show little concern for women's rights and are frequently hostile to abortion, gender quotas, equal pay and equality in family life. However, they are using gender as a useful wedge when it comes to the issue of immigration, particularly from predominantly Muslim countries maintaining that the hijab is a symbol of patriarchy and Islam is a threat to European values.

This AGM will continue to work with others to expose the reactionary anti-women policies of the far-right.

Moved by: Carolyn Simpson for the Executive Committee. Seconded by Marilyn Smith.

Children and austerity

There are currently over 4 million children living in poverty in Britain – that's over a quarter of all children. 63% of these children are in families where someone is working. The charity Bernardo's believes that "poverty is the single greatest threat to the well being of children and families affecting a child's education, health and life chances" and Unicef emphasised the need for a strong welfare system to reduce inequality.

The ruthless austerity policies and welfare cuts are directly responsible for the steep rise in child poverty, which now stands at the highest level since 2009/10. Even the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child acknowledged that the UK government's fiscal policies and allocation of resources

have contributed to inequality and adversely impacted on the lives of children. The government's manipulation of poverty indicators and targets and its refusal to honour the Dubs' amendment which committed Britain to accept unattached child refugees is the most obvious sign of this government contempt for children's rights.

Britain has one of the worst pre-school child mortality rates in Western Europe and cuts to the NHS, particularly the threat to maternity units will inevitably put more children and babies at risk. Despite there being a shortage of midwives, health visitors and school nurses the government has replaced bursaries with student loans which will deter many people from taking up one of these essential NHS careers.

Early Years education has also suffered with over 350 Sure Start nurseries closing in since 2010 and although parents are entitled to access 15 hours a week of free childcare, cuts to the education budget has forced many nurseries to close. Local authority schools are also facing a funding crisis with many being forced to make teaching assistants and teachers redundant. Yet the government is prepared to waste millions on so called Free schools and expand selective Grammar school.

This AGM instructs the EC to work with affiliates and other like minded bodies to highlight the impact of austerity on children and promote the rights of children to health, education and a full life

Moved by: Anita Wright for the Executive Committee. Seconded by Sally Pirrie.