



National Assembly of Women

Annual Report May 2018 – April 2019

The National Assembly of Women was founded in 1952 to work for full social, economic, legal, political and cultural independence and equality for women irrespective of age, race, religion, philosophical belief, sexual orientation or nationality. These aims, of course, can only be fully achieved in a world at peace and to this end we campaign for an end to nuclear weapons and militarism.

National Assembly of Women Officers and Executive Committee 2018-19

President: Anita Wright

Secretary: Sandra Durkin

Treasurer: Eleanor Lewington

Executive Committee

Megan Dobney, Siobhan Edean, Rose Keeping, Bernadette Keaveney, Liz Payne, Carolyn Simpson, Joanne Stevenson.

Vice Presidents

Vera Baird QC, Rita Donaghy CBE, Pat Hawkes MBE, Alice Mahon, Gloria Mills CBE, Frances O'Grady and Anne Scargill.

Executive Committee Meetings

The EC has 4 times since the last AGM.

SISTERS

Four editions of Sisters were published this year carrying reports of events and activities including articles by Dame Vera Baird; Su Patel, Chair of TUC Women's Conference; Gail Cartmail, Unite Asst Gen Sec; and a special feature in the autumn edition on the gender recognition act.

SISTERS can be viewed in colour at www.sisters.org.uk

Website

The NAW Executive has been in discussions with GreenNet, who host our website to upgrade the site and make it more user friendly. This has been a slow process but it is hoped to be completed by summer 2019. The website will continue to cover NAW activity; progressive campaigns especially the People's Assembly against Austerity; various Labour movement demonstrations and events that members may wish to attend have been advertised including those from West London NAW branch. Reports of WIDF activities and regional meetings are also posted on the website.

Join up with other sisters on the NAW facebook group:



<https://www.facebook.com>

Looking back on 2018

The political agenda throughout 2018 has been dominated by Brexit and exposed the deep divisions within the Conservative and Labour Parties, leading to a number of rogue MPs setting up the Independent Group. One thing they are clearly not independent from is capitalism. They are registered as a limited company called Gemini A Ltd whose donors include the former Chairman of Lloyds TSB – know them by their friends!

The EU has overshadowed the ongoing impact of the government's austerity policies – which are biting even deeper, particularly for women. Despite more women being in work, poverty in Britain has risen by 500,000 over five years with 4m workers living in poverty. A rise almost entirely driven by the increase in the poverty rate of working parents, particularly for lone parents, 91% of who are women. The deeply flawed system of Universal Credit has made it worse and paying for basics like food, housing, gas/electricity are a daily struggle. It's taking its toll on women's physical and mental health. The International Council on Women's Health Issues is right in saying that the physical and mental health of women and girls determines the health and well-being of our modern world which is why we need to step up the campaign for proper funding levels for our health services.

Women have specific health needs that are different from men – the natural biological functions of menstruation, pregnancy and the menopause should not prohibit girls and women from their equal right to education, jobs and full participation in society. This is why the NAW supports campaigns to end period poverty, for maternity rights and against menopause discrimination, many of which have been jointly led by trade unions including Unite and CWU.

The current political chaos, prolonged periods of austerity and the increasing gap between rich and poor has led many people to become disillusioned with traditional social democratic parties. This is fertile ground for the far-right and we have seen these forces reinventing themselves as "populist" parties - for the first time since 1932 Germany now has members of the fascist Alternative for Germany (AfD) elected to its parliament. In such dangerous times it is important to challenge and defeat the politics of hate and extremism, nationally and internationally, which foster racism, misogyny and fear. In these pessimistic times it is vital to restore trust and hope that a better future is possible. To this end progressive elements in the labour and trade union movement must work together to secure the election of a government committed to peace, equality and social justice.

Anita Wright, President

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NAW Activity over the past year

AGM Motions 2018 focussed on changes to the Gender Recognition Act; the far-right and threat to peace; promoting defence diversification and an end to indefinite immigration detention. NAW members, including EC members have been actively engaged in these campaigns. Reports and articles on these issues have regularly appeared in *SISTERS*.

NAW continues to work closely with the trade union and labour movement and has provided speakers at a number of regional and national events including:

- People's Assembly Against Austerity National Conference – workshop on A Charter for Working Women
- Unite Women's School in Eastbourne
- Bristol CPB and Morning Star meeting
- BBC Radio South West
- Leicester CPB
- IWD International Event – London

Copies of *SISTERS* and other NAW material were available at all these events.

West London NAW Branch Report

The branch holds bi-monthly meetings with a focus on speakers, discussions and campaigning. In May 2018, we had a lively and committed speaker, Catherine Thomas, from Medecins Sans Frontieres. We gained an insight into the work in Refugee camps, for example in Greece, where there are 60,000 stranded refugees due to EU closed borders. MSF relies on donations and focuses on work at the forefront of war and conflict. Our Branch donated a cheque to MSF.



Maisie Carter branch Chair and Catherine Thomas from MSF.

In July, we followed up a talk from Barbara Switzer with a viewing of the DVD about the Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial which we discussed last year. We also heard about the UNICEF report highlighting over 30 million children currently being held as refugees – and the urgent need for government action. We took NEU reports on School funding cuts and the action planned for September. Then, following our regular sales, donations were made to Cuba Solidarity, Medical Aid for Palestine and Global Justice.

In September, we had a report on the NUT delegation to Nicaragua and we discussed the National Pensioners Convention Lobby of Parliament on 24th October. We also heard the MAP report of the appalling loss of life and injuries in Gaza.



We were pleased to welcome back Diana Wells from the Vietnam Children's Charity in November as she had just returned from her annual visit to their AGM in Vietnam.

We heard her first-hand report of the 4 projects the Charity is organising – Sponsoring Disadvantaged Children, School Building, 'Ready for Work' and setting up Special Needs provision. There has been an emphasis on recruiting Vietnamese workers and increase the presence in Hanoi. The exciting new development of 'Removing Barriers to Education' project supports careers advice and access to higher education. The Branch made a special donation to this Vietnamese work.

At our January meeting we were pleased to welcome Paul Dawson, an Amnesty Volunteer Country Co-ordinator for the Yemen. Paul gave us a real insight into the history of the Yemen, a British Protectorate until 1957. Following civil war in the 90s, Al Qaeda gained support and an insurgency in 2004 was followed by a Saudi invasion and action by the UEA – leading to a humanitarian disaster. There is a focus on campaigning linked to the Campaign against Arms Sales and to increase pressure on the UK to work at the UN for peace in Yemen.

Our annual IWD celebration lunch in March was the usual success with thanks to Dr Susan Shonfield. Overall, our members have taken part in a range of campaigns for Peace, the NUT/NEU and have attended many other meetings, locally supporting the Forum for the Elderly and Refugees in Richmond. We made donations to the NAW, to the Rainbow Fund, Global Justice, the Fistula Hospital, War on Want, Vietnam Children, Medical Aid for Palestine, MSF and Cuba. Our treasurer, Joan Danvers, ensures that our fund-raising efforts give us the funds to continue this work.

Secretary Roz Carter

NAW Conference Wortley Hall 29/30 September

The 2018 autumn conference had two themes: The Future of Work - robotics, artificial intelligence and automation and its impact on women and Valuing Women and Girls in the Workplace and Society. The conference started with the 1978 Lucas Aerospace film 'We've always done it this way' telling the story of the innovative ideas that shop stewards produced when faced with redundancies such as cars that could run on rail or road. Speakers included Sharon Graham, Unite Executive Officer, Julie Ward MEP and Kiri Tunks, President NUT section of NEU and co-founder of Women's Place UK.

Full report in SISTERS Winter 2018

Charter for Women update

The Charter for Women was launched at a fringe meeting at the TUC Women's Conference in March 2003 by a group of active women trade unionists who were concerned with the lack of real progress on women's equality. The National Assembly of Women supported the launch and was a founding member.

The purpose of the Charter was not to offer new policy but to present a campaigning programme which brought together the key demands which progressive women were fighting for in various arenas. The Charter covered three broad areas: social policy; the labour market and the labour movement. It raised the main progressive concerns/ campaigning points under each of these headings.

A significant number of unions affiliated and along with the NAW played an active role in promoting and campaigning for the demands set out in the Charter for Women. A number of highly successful meetings and conferences were organised by the Steering Committee, which until 2013 met regularly to share information and co-ordinate the work.

Following a long period of inactivity the Charter Steering Committee and its remaining affiliates agreed that the National Assembly of Women should take ownership of the Charter and its assets and incorporate the demands set out in the Charter into the campaigning work of the NAW. Following this decision, the NAW asked Professor Mary Davis to review and update the Charter. The NAW is hoping to present the revised Charter at its next conference in autumn 2019.

Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Lecture 2018

The lecture took place on 11th August at Wortley Hall with an illustrated presentation by Dr Sheila Hanlon on the subject of Cycling to Suffrage.

Sponsored Pedal4Pankhurst tribute rides raised £1,471 towards the Sylvia statue.



Conferences and Stalls

The National Assembly of Women had stalls at a number of local events including the South Yorkshire Festival, at Wortley Hall and TUC Women's Conference.

Affiliations

NAW is affiliated to: Abortion Rights; Campaign Against the Arms Trade; CND; Cuba Solidarity Campaign; National Pensioners Convention; Palestine Solidarity Campaign; Women's International Democratic Federation and is a shareholder of Wortley Hall and the Morning Star.

Membership

We have 27 affiliates who have paid up to date. 120 individual members have paid up to 2019, and 25 that have not paid this year.

NAW ACCOUNTS for 1/1/18 to 31/12/18	
General Fund	
INCOME	
Carried over from 2017	6069.45
INCOME	8542.95
Membership	4121.80
Affiliations	500
Donations	230
Seminar	980
Sales	191.87
Bank transfer	.01
Charter for Women	2519.27
EXPENDITURE	4233.72
Bank Charges	72
EC Travel	935.34
Post	792.88
Stationery	129.39
Printing	741.31
Website	108
Affiliations	125
Stalls	150
Adverts	200
Seminar	980
NOT DEBITED at 31/12/2018	140.94
Balance at bank	10519.62
Val Duncan Fund	
Balance from 2017	3919.20
Expenditure on 2018 Seminar	991.95
Balance at bank end 2018	2927.25
TOTAL c/f to 2019	13446.87

Treasurer's comments

We have used the Val Duncan fund to make up the costs of the seminar at Wortley Hall.

The extra income this year has been as the transfer of £2519.27 from the Charter for Women.

Auditor's Report

I can confirm that I have audited the accounts sent to me by the Treasurer, Eleanor Lewington and find them accurate. I congratulate Eleanor for the presentation of the accounts which made the auditing straightforward.

Brian Clarke 21.01.2019

**National Assembly of Women
Annual General Meeting 2019
Saturday 27th April
11am to 3pm**

**Unite the Union, 128, Theobalds Road,
Holborn, London WC1X 8TN**



AGENDA

10.30am doors open/tea
and coffee available

11am -11.30 Welcome and
introduction

11.30 -1pm Annual Report
Minutes of 2018 AGM
Motions

1pm-1.45pm lunch (provided)

***FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR
WOMEN***

Panel and discussion
1.45pm – 3pm

3pm Scrutineers report
and closing remarks

If you haven't already notified us that you are
attending please email naw@sisters.org.uk or
write to Bridge House, Newport Street HR3 5BG
to let us know so we can arrange catering.

**NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2019**

Eight nominations were received for seven
places on the Executive Committee. One
nominee declined so the following are elected
unopposed:

**Megan Dobney
Siobhan Endean
Rose Keeping
Bernadette Keaveney
Mollie Brown
Liz Payne
Yvonne Washbourne**

One nomination was received for each of the
officer posts so the nominees are elected
unopposed as following:

**President – Anita Wright
Secretary – Sandra Durkin
Treasurer – Carolyn Simpson**

The NAW Executive would particularly like to
thank Eleanor Lewington, who is standing
down this year. She has worked diligently and
tirelessly for many years as an Executive
member and Treasurer. Her contribution on
the Executive will be greatly missed.