



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT
AT THE 2009 SYLVIA
PANKHURST MEMORIAL
LECTURE AT WORTLEY HALL:
SPEAKER DR. JACQUELINE
MULHALLEN WITH RICHARD
AND RITA PANKHURST

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN 50P AUTUMN 2009

2 from little acorns

3 50 years of AAM

4 hope not hate

8 happy birthday Phyllis!

8 Wortley Hall festival

isters

from little acorns...

WOMEN AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

LAST November, Dr Ute Navidi, an NAW Executive Committee member, was in Rotterdam attending a conference entitled *Child in the City* when she was asked by a colleague from Vienna about UK perspectives on gender mainstreaming in public space. It was fair to say that this topic was one we had not considered. On her return Ute asked others on the EC about this and sisters cast about for an answer. It came from Manchester, where Hannah Berry has been developing activity for the Women's Design Service (WDS).

The WDS works to ensure that the design and use of the built environment (streets, homes, workplaces, and public spaces) reflects the needs and aspirations of women. Women's needs are different from those of men in relation to the built environment. Women are more likely to be carers of babies, children and elders or of people with learning difficulties or disabilities. Women are more likely to work part-time and nearer to their homes. They have less access to a car during the day. They use public transport more. They use parks and green spaces more. They feel less safe out and about at night. Because women tend to be primary carers and often earn much less than men, they have different requirements for the way our towns, buildings, transport and public spaces are designed. There is nothing inevitable about the way our streets are laid out, or our homes and workplaces are designed. By considering gender in relation to the built environment, it can be made better and safer for everyone.

Planning and design that takes women's needs into account would consider functionality, ongoing upkeep and maintenance, visual appearance,

access and personal safety. As an example, if we consider the physiological differences between men and women, allocating equal space for men and women's toilets means that women get the worse deal.

Planners should think carefully about:

- Streets and car parking
- Public transport and cycle provision
- Homes and housing, including care homes, refuges and sheltered housing
- Community facilities
- Workspaces
- Shopping and leisure facilities
- Play spaces, parks and squares
- Public toilets

The gender equality duty is still being largely ignored by planners. Implementation of the duty with regard to planning and design requires more than corporate backing and championing.

As a result of our conversations with Hannah, Manchester members of NAW worked with the Musician's Union who took a resolution on women and the design of public space to the TUC Women's Conference. A similar resolution was discussed and agreed at our AGM this spring. We are now working with the Women's Design Group to learn about architecture, urban design, planning and design from a women's perspective. We want to play a part in "gender proofing" planning policies and working out impacts on women who will live in or use the finished spaces.

More information is available at these websites:

www.wds.org.uk or www.gender-site.org – the "definitive online resource for gender and the built environment" and please contact the NAW at naw@sisters.org.uk if you would like to get involved in our work on this issue.

UN women's agency = equality?

THE NAW is supporting the campaign for a UN Women's agency as featured in the Spring '09 edition of *Sisters*.

See how many of the questions below you can answer correctly and pass to your friends to raise awareness of the on-going inequality and discrimination that needs to be addressed by an agency with appropriate resources.

Q1. What percentage of the 1.3 billion people who live in extreme poverty are women?

- a) 50% b) 60% c) 70%

Q2. There are an estimated 780 million illiterate people worldwide. How many are women?

- a) 1/3 b) 2/3 c) 1/2

Q3. How much of the world's land is owned by women?

- a) 1% b) 5% c) 15%

Q4. How much of the world's food production is by women?

- a) 10% b) 25% c) 50%

Q5. There are 192 permanent representatives at the UN from the world's nations. How many are women?

- a) 11 b) 18 c) 38

Q6. Children whose mothers are educated are more likely to:

- a) live beyond the age of 5
b) be immunised
c) attend school themselves

Q7. Globally, how many women have been victims of rape or attempted rape?

- a) 1 in 5 b) 1 in 7 c) 1 in 10

Q8. The percentage of men's gross hourly pay that women in the EU earn on average is:

- a) 85% b) 75% c) 65%

Q9. What is the most common cause of death for women aged 15-19 worldwide?

- a) HIV & AIDS
b) complications in pregnancy and childbirth
c) malaria

Q10. There are 8 targets (Millennium Goals) that the UN wants to achieve by 2015. Which one concerns women's equality?

- a) first b) third c) seventh

answers on page 8

Nuclear Power: a new dawn or a danger too far?

EXTRACT FROM NAW DISCUSSION PAPER PRESENTED TO NAW AGM APRIL 09 BY LYDIA MERYLL

THE Government has suggested 11 sites in England where Utility companies might choose to locate new nuclear power stations. There are two off-the-shelf designs being discussed with two companies or consortia, neither British. The Government retains ownership of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) meaning the tax payer owns the waste and the decommissioning process.

A site for a national 'Repository' for the legacy waste has not been found and the new power stations' design must include a 'temporary' local waste store, suitable for 100 years, before a central store is constructed. Local communities, seduced by the promise of new jobs, seem unaware that waste will remain in their locality for decades after the stations; the life of a power station being about 50 years. The security risks from accidents or terrorist attack have to be considered.

26 April was the 23rd anniversary of Chernobyl where 300 times the radiation of Hiroshima was blown across Europe and beyond. Children in the region still suffer the long term effects of living in a radioactive environment. Those who profit from nuclear power minimise these dangers. However the government believes in the word of Ed Miliband, 'nuclear power is part of the low carbon future for Britain'.

making **hope** a reality



CELEBRATING THE PAST; BUILDING THE FUTURE – A CONFERENCE ON 26 JUNE 2009 SPONSORED BY ACTSA AND AAM ARCHIVES COMMITTEE TO MARK THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

THE PICTURE SHOWS A PROTEST MARCH IN JUNE 1992 AGAINST THE SHOOTING IN BOIPOPONG

ACTION for Southern Africa was founded at a conference on 29 October 1994, six months after South Africa's first democratic election and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as President. At the same time the Anti-Apartheid Movement dissolved itself after 35 years of campaigning for solidarity with the people of South Africa in their struggle to end apartheid and white minority rule. As the new South Africa was born, the AAM saw the need and potential for new forms of solidarity in a radically changed post-apartheid southern Africa.

In December 1995, Philippa Clark and I visited South Africa where we met friends who had returned and learned first hand about the struggle in the country. We were seen as somewhat of a curiosity when we were taken to the township of Soweto by Thembi Nobodula. People came to see the very rare sight of and speak to these white women. The whole visit was an emotional and humbling experience.

This conference was chaired by Lord Bob Hughes, chair of AAM and Honorary President of ACTSA and opened by Her Excellency Lindiwe Mabuzza, High Commissioner for South Africa, who gave a moving account of her experiences during apartheid and expressed her personal thanks as well as those of her people for the part that AAM and its supporters played in bringing about democracy in South Africa.

Ambassador Abdul Minty, founder

member and Honorary Secretary of AAM from 1952 to 1994 with Justice Albie Sachs, who played a key role in drafting the post-apartheid constitution, introduced "The development and impact of the AAM" followed by His Excellency Antonio Gumende High Commissioner of Mozambique who spoke of "The impact of apartheid and the struggle against it in the southern Africa region". This was followed by a panel discussion, chaired by Jonathan Steele, *Guardian* columnist and joint author with Ruth First and Christabel Gurney of *The South African Connection: Western investment in apartheid*, Paul Brannan Head of Campaigns, Christian Aid and former Campaigns Officer of AAM, Brian Filling, AAM Scotland and ACTSA Scotland, Christabel Gurney, Secretary of AAM Archives Committee, former editor of *Anti-Apartheid News* and ACTSA NEC member, and Jenny Duncan, member of ACTSA Youth and Student Delegation to Southern Africa in 2006 and now ACTSA NEC member. They shared their memories of the AAM and discussed the lessons of the campaign, looking at how these could be applied to the issues facing southern Africa today. The audience participation was lively, constructive as well as critical in retrospect.

The workshops covered the many issues that effect the future development: health, education, youth and students, economic and social development and sport of South Africa all of which are vital to the wellbeing of its people. The eyes of the world will be focused on this when South Africa hosts the World Cup in 2010, the largest international event ever held on the African continent.

The concluding plenary "Building the Future" was chaired by Frank Dobson MP for Holborn and St Pancras. Clearly the answers to the

many question posed could not be found in so short a time but the discussion was lively, enthusiastic and positive and gave delegates much to take away and follow through in their continuing activity.

One sad aspect of the conference was the absence of Mike Terry, Executive Secretary of AAM for two decades, whose untimely death last year robbed us of an extraordinary man, as he is so rightly described in the celebratory book *Mike Terry – 17 October 1947 to 2 December 2008 – An Extraordinary Man*. It details how, under his leadership, the AAM grew in influence and size, especially following the Soweto Massacre of 1976 and the Mandela Concerts at Wembley. Membership increased from 2,500 in 1984 to 20,000 in 1989, with 1,300 affiliated organisations. In 1994, when the AAM was disbanded, Mike chose to return to university to train as a teacher. Working at Alexandra Park School in Haringey, North London, he continued to promote the values he cared about so deeply to a new generation and was instrumental in establishing the partnership between Alexandra Park School and Ephes Mamkeli Secondary school, the East Rand Township in Wattville where Oliver Tambo is buried. Students from the school paid a tribute to Mike, a man who inspired them, with a description of their visit to South Africa where they had made a video of their own and the other students' activities. While this occasion was a celebration of AAM it was also a celebration of Mike's life. The five years (1989-94) that I worked with Mike Terry as Vice Chair of AAM were the most inspiring of my years of activity. He taught me a great deal, always emphasising that you must have patience with voluntary organisations and democracy (not always easy to remember).

The Conference ended with reflections from Paul Boateng and Lela Kogbara, Chair of ACTSA, chaired by Anne Grant, British Commissioner to South Africa 2000-5, and a selection of short films telling the visual and heart-rending, but also exhilarating, story of apartheid South Africa and the AAM.

BY BARBARA SWITZER

THERE ARE THOSE WHO MAKE WARS
YET NEVER STAND ON KILLING FIELDS
WHO NEVER FEEL THE ROCKET PAIN
OF THOSE YOUNG SOULS
WHO DIE IN VAIN
YET MERRILY PURSUE CAREERS
OBLIVIOUS OF ALL THOSE FEARS
THAT HAUNT THE BRAVE
WHO HAVE TO KILL
THEN LIVE WITH GUILT FOR EVERMORE

SEE NATURE IN ITS WONDROUS GLOW
WITH RIVERS, SO PURE, THAT GENTLY FLOW
SEE CHILDREN HAPPY IN THE HILLS
SECURE FROM ALL THOSE MINES THAT KILL

OH, MEN OF WAR
STOP NOW! NO MORE!

BY PATSY PILLAY, NAW MEMBER

hope **not** hate

IN the recent European elections, the BNP received fewer votes than they did in 2004. However, they won two seats, one in the North West and the other in Yorkshire and the Humber. The people of Yorkshire are now represented in the European Parliament by a confirmed hard-line Nazi, Andrew Brons.

Nick Griffin won his North West seat by just 1,200 votes. He won because of the failure of the major political parties. He did not win through new support. He did not win a breakthrough victory. He actually received the lowest percentage vote for the BNP in any of its key regions.

The problem everywhere was that voters stayed away from the polls in large numbers. People showed their disaffection around MP's expenses, the recession and the lack of clear policies to help ordinary people. In Yorkshire and the Humber, the Labour vote almost halved from 413,000 to 230,000.

Although the BNP's policy on women is hateful, like the rest of their platform, the facts are that child and pensioner poverty remains a significant problem, action to tackle violence against women is almost a postcode lottery, and draconian welfare to work policies are still on the government's agenda.

In the run up to the election, the Hope Not Hate campaign, a broad coalition co-ordinated by Searchlight, worked throughout the UK to marshal opposition to the BNP and to persuade voters to turn out. When the campaign started organisers feared the BNP

would win 5, 6 or 7 seats and following the expenses scandal they revised this to 12 seats. However, the grassroots activity stopped such a breakthrough. Thousands of volunteers turned out week after week distributing literature, many of them active for the first time in campaigning of this kind. In the North West, Unite the Union co-ordinated a day of action which attracted young women with their children.

In the two months leading up to the election Hope not Hate delivered 3.4 million newspapers and leaflets across the country. In the North West alone, 1.6 million *Hope not Hate* newspapers and leaflets were delivered by approximately 1,200 supporters; an effort that dwarfed that of any of the political parties who contested the election.

Following the election results, Hope Not Hate co-ordinated the "not in my name" petition, presented at the European Parliament's first sitting on 14 July, when Brons and Griffin took their seats. The aim was to tell the world that the BNP do not speak for Britain and that the BNP are not there in our name. In the days following the election over 60,000 joined the campaign and by mid July, the number was more than 100,000. There is a remarkable video showing this support which can be viewed at <http://action.hopenothate.org.uk/your-video> and shared with friends.

Hope Not Hate is very proud that it was able to garner such support, but this pride is bittersweet being born from the tragedy of racists represent-

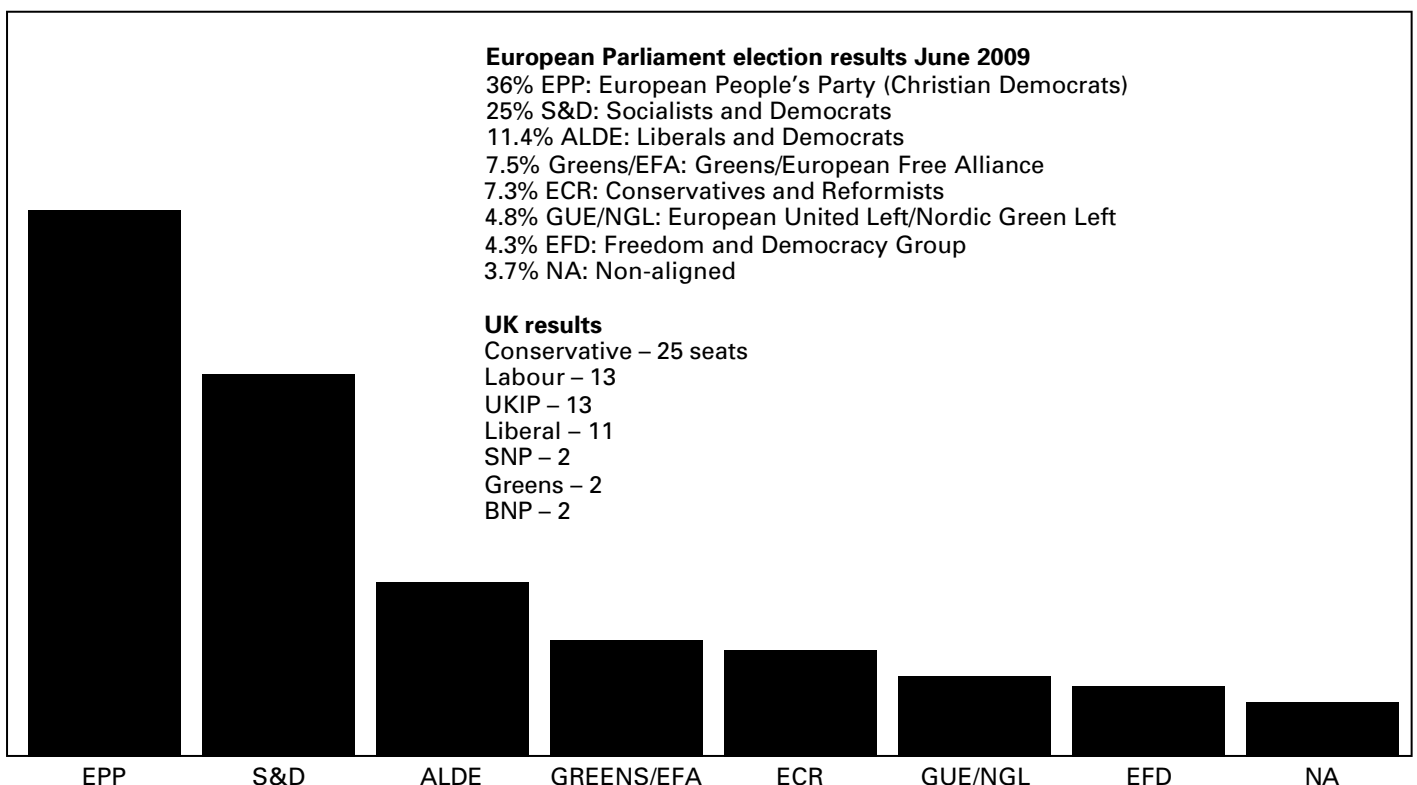
ing Britain in the European Parliament where they may collect half a million pounds in salaries and expenses over the next four years.

We must make sure that we stop them winning any election in future. With council by-elections and a General Election within the next year the strength of the BNP vote in a number of areas is a deep cause for concern. (The BNP polled 10% or more in 52 local authority areas, the highest being Barking and Dagenham where it took 19.5% of the vote.)

As Nick Lowles and Sonia Gable write on the Hope Not Hate website:

"Two BNP MEPs are two too many. We believe that the Hope Not Hate campaign limited the BNP gains (and almost prevented Griffin from winning in the North West) but now we must face the new challenge ahead. The BNP now has a platform and resources with which it can greatly expand its activities but they will also be under the spotlight as never before and their election has generated widespread anger and revulsion. Over 80,000 people have signed our 'Not in my name' online petition, the vast majority totally new to us. Our job, to coin an organising phrase, is to turn this anger into hope and finally into action."

'Hope Not Hate' needs your help in making sure that the BNP don't win more seats. This can be done by turning out supporters and taking part in the grassroots campaigning that'll really make a difference. More information can be found at <http://action.hopenothate.org.uk>





Phyllis Birch: Celebrating 80 years!

NAW member Phyllis Birch celebrated her 80th birthday in Switzerland earlier this year. Phyllis only became politically active after her 60th birthday. This activism began when she wrote to her MP (who was then Peter Hardy) being angry that an Aunt had lost her home care package following time in hospital. Phyllis didn't tell anyone about this as she thought her family would think her foolish and, following this political awakening, her son-in-law would often joke that his mother-in-law had been taken by aliens and they had left this other woman in her place. But he was proud of her and the way that she has continued to write to her MP and Councillors about any perceived injustices which can range from Post Office closures to pensions.

In her 60s Phyllis joined the NAW, saying it was to keep her mind active. Her 70s saw her at her first demonstration, not a local one. No, Phyllis had to go one better; it was an international demonstration in Brussels to highlight the plight of those living in poverty around the world. She was rightly proud of herself for standing-up and being counted.

Her 70s also saw her venturing from the shores of the UK, and holidaying in Europe and in Canada, despite believing she would never go there. (As a child, she had a pen-friend in Canada and tells of how when she asked her mum if she would ever get to Canada her mum told her "No".) However, 2007 saw her heading for Canada despite the problems caused by her arthritis and the fact that she could hardly believe she'd made it.

This arthritis continues to slow her down physically but she still shows that solid determination to achieve what can seem impossible to others. Her next major project is to go the Olympics in 2012; accompanied by her daughter as usual.

Phyllis has always been a loving and loyal friend to both friends and family. People are proud to know her and to spend their time with her.

The NAW Executive and members congratulate her on her birthday, thank her for her work on behalf of the NAW and wish her many more enjoyable and productive years.

This issue has been edited by Val Duncan

Opinions expressed in the articles in this journal are not necessarily the views of the National Assembly of Women.

Sisters is a vehicle through which women can air their views, but they must be in consonance with the aims of the NAW.



Freda Brown

1919–2009

President of
the WIDF
1975-1989

A TRIBUTE FROM
TERRY MARSLAND
NAW VICE PRESIDENT

I was present at the Women's International Democratic Federation Congress in Berlin when Freda Brown was elected President. Over subsequent years I learned more about her and her achievements on behalf of working people and women in particular.

Born Freda Yeti Lewis she became an Australian political activist and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party from 1968-1972. Her contribution to women's equality and emancipation was inspiring, not only in Australia but internationally as well. It was Freda who persuaded the United Nations to establish International Women's Day and she was also the only Australian woman to be awarded the Lenin Peace Prize.

I was also a delegate to the WIDF World Women's Conference in Moscow in 1984, in the period of 'Perestroika and Glasnost', presided over by Mikhail Gorbachov, who opened the conference with a powerful speech on the rights of women, peace and disarmament. He made special reference to Freda, who was President of the conference, emphasising her outstanding contribution to women across the globe. Following the opening session the conference was divided into three mini conferences. I was given the honour of chairing that on unemployment. On the first evening the chairs of these conferences were invited to meet President Gorbachov and Freda at a reception. While it was special meeting him, my greater pleasure was meeting her.

Mikki Doyle, former Editor of the Women's Page in the *Morning Star*, another outstanding and inspirational woman, knew Freda very well and I learned a lot from her about Freda's many achievements.

Freda became the leader of the women's movement in Australia, campaigning on issues such as aboriginal rights, women's education in Afghanistan, against apartheid in South Africa and against the war in Vietnam. In fact she visited the country during the height of the war and on returning to Australia was condemned and accused of aiding the enemy, due to her attack on the use of cluster bombs.

The causes she championed were many and varied and in 2004 on International Women's Day, at the age of 85, she was honoured for her work against apartheid by the South African government during a ceremony in Johannesburg marking the 10th anniversary of the defeat of that pernicious regime. Freda worked with the ANC Women's Section throughout the 1970s and 80s through her work with the WIDF.

It is impossible to quantify the impact that Freda Brown's influence had on the many campaigns she pursued but without women with such deep commitment and their hard work the struggle for women's equality, social, political and economic advancement would be the poorer.

It was a great privilege for me to be given the opportunity to write this brief sketch of an outstanding sister and comrade.

“surviving capitalism’s crisis”

SURVIVING CAPITALISM’S CRISIS –
THE MORNING STAR’S CONFERENCE

BY ELEANOR LEWINGTON

THE June *Morning Star* conference on Surviving Capitalism’s Crisis, held in London, was attended by delegates from a wide range of organisations many of whom referred to the new look and larger *Morning Star*, now able to give much needed wider coverage to labour movement news.

The first plenary session was entitled ‘Consequences of the Crisis’ and Rob Griffiths, General Secretary of the CPB, highlighted the loss of jobs, the breakup of skilled workplaces and the rising trend in housing repossessions and evictions. New Labour has surrendered to big business. We need trade union leaders to make demands on the Labour government or withdraw support and we need a more united militant labour movement.

Megan Dobney, SERTUC Regional Secretary (and NAW EC member), called the *Morning Star* an essential weapon in our armoury, which she said may be a rather warlike expression of support, but we are under attack, and need to build an effective response.



She looked back at Margaret Thatcher’s oft paraphrased words “there is no such thing as society”, and said that probably Thatcher’s strongest legacies were the attacks on trade unions as collective bodies man-

aged by their members and the ‘right to buy’ policy of the early 1980s that individualised much public sector housing. The consequences of these policies, and the limited responses by the Labour government, are that trade union membership has almost halved since her government and with it working people’s ability to protect themselves at work. The individualisation of society has, ironically, promoted the far right’s agenda of blaming other people collectively.

Megan also suggested that the question of whether capitalism is in crisis is arguable: “workers, society and politicians are in crisis, but I’ve yet to be convinced that the capitalist system is in crisis. Perhaps it’s a matter of semantics: if we define ‘crisis’ as a turning point, our task is to turn it in our direction.”

Winning workers’ hearts and minds to collectivism, organisation, to solidarity, and to action is our biggest task today.

Jeremy Corbyn MP said that we should demand that the Labour government protect jobs, end the ID scandal, and pull out of Afghanistan. He believed it was time for New Labour to get out of the way and let the labour movement take over.

The 11 workshops were in two sessions meaning that NAW delegates were not able to cover the wide range of topics.

The Women and the Crisis of Capitalism workshop was introduced by Mary Davis and Sharon Allen (Charter for Women Steering Group Secretary).

Mary argued that the crisis will disproportionately affect women: cutting the public sector will increase the feminisation of poverty, with fewer nurseries, after school clubs and care homes. Sharon spoke on the need to widen support for the Charter for Women, by involving local Trades Councils and women’s organisations. The debate on prostitution and sex workers’ rights was discussed, and new initiatives to challenge prostitution were welcomed.

In the workshop on Trade Unions and the Global Fightback, Unite Assistant General Secretary Tony Burke, considered the attacks on employment rights, with the spread of anti-trade union legislation, and union busting tactics. He argued for the creation of transnational unions to combat the right wing, free market agenda. Carolyn Jones, of the Institute of Employment Rights, highlighted the fact that 60 years after the adoption of the ILO’s convention on the right to trade union organisation and collective bargaining both are under attack. The European Court of Justice judges look on labour as a commodity to be moved around the world in search of profits. Recent disputes in Britain suggest that a newly invigorated international code is long overdue.

In the afternoon plenary session on “Solutions to the Crisis”, Jenny Clegg, expert on China, argued that developing nations are challenging the US global hegemony with mutually beneficial trade and cooperation between the global east and south.

John MacDonnell MP said that if they lose the General Election this will be the first Labour government to leave a more unequal society than it inherited. He called on the conference to support the People’s Charter to provide an alternative around which the left can rally.

The conference ended with Cuban Health Workers general secretary, Maria del Carmen Rodrigues Reyes, presenting the alternative to capitalism’s cyclical crisis, by highlighting Cuba’s enormous advances since the 1959 revolution. Despite the long US blockade and the attempts to destroy the socialist economy, there have been massive advances in health and literacy. She received a standing ovation at the end of the conference saying we must globalise solidarity, peace and love. “Say no to neoliberalism and capitalism. Long live socialism!”

(Other workshop topics included Welfare for the Rich, Workfare for the Poor, Public Housing, NHS, Green New Deal, Cost of War, Counter Terrorism and Civil Liberties, Youth in the Recession, Challenges for LGBT, and Latin American Alternatives to Capitalism’s Crisis).

LISTEN TO WOMEN FOR A CHANGE

World Wide Women

Working for Change in Africa ... in
Europe ... in the UK ... in Sheffield

Day Conference: Saturday 24 October,
9.45am to 4pm

Quaker Meeting House, St James Street, Sheffield (next to the Cathedral)

Speakers, Discussion, Workshops

ALL WOMEN WELCOME

To book contact worldwidewomensheffield@gmail.com 0114 266 0434

Organised by Sheffield National Assembly of Women, Sheffield FEMS, and
Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (Sheffield)

farewell sisters

Mary Colyer

Once you had met Mary Colyer you would never forget the experience, she had a command that few would deny, but she was the most generous person you could wish to know. I first met Mary when she asked me to give a talk at the local NAW meeting about the work of Women's Aid in Nuneaton. I came away with a donation to Nuneaton Women's Aid and membership of the NAW for which I thank Mary because it led to making some precious friendships.

Mary was a philanthropist of note and there are few good causes and charities which did not benefit from her generosity. She took many of the local, unemployed people under her wing, particularly young people, who she tried to help in many ways, and however she engaged them she always fed them. She believed in food for the mind and the body, but the brie and walnut sandwiches were not a success.

Mary Colyer was a 'retired' headmistress, although she never stopped trying to teach people. She could always be seen at local events raising money for a particular charity or cause. Jumble sales, tombolas, white elephant stalls were all popular with Mary and those who knew her cannot forget her 'famous' annual garden party. Mary was a very private person in every sense of the word and the garden party ending in a kiss from Mike Peters has gone down in history. If there was no scheduled event to raise money Mary would frequently give money from her own purse.

Mary took her politics seriously and although she was happy to take visitors along to meetings, she never forced others to adopt her beliefs. She will never be forgotten for the tireless work she did against the Poll Tax and during this time there was never a week that went by without Mary appearing in the newspaper for something, whether it was marching, speaking, rallies, articles or showing her disapproval at a particular meeting by blowing a bugle.

There are few people in Nuneaton who do not remember Mary Colyer for some reason, whether for her generosity or her strength of character, and a short piece such as this cannot do her justice or paint a suitable picture of the woman. The loss of Mary Colyer heralds the end of an era but her memory will always show Mary Colyer – a presence.

BY JACQUI NAPIER



MARGARET METHLEY WITH XUAN HONG, A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF VIETNAM, WHO PRESENTED HER WITH A FRIENDSHIP MEDAL IN 2007

Margaret Methley

Margaret was a member of NAW for many years and had been a familiar figure at the AGM. It was therefore, with deep sadness that the NAW Executive Committee learned of her death on 24 February just nine days after her 82nd birthday, following a long illness.

Margaret was the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of Medical and Scientific Aid for Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (MASVLC) from 1993 and editor of its newsletter from 1996. Her interest in and sympathy for the people of Vietnam began in 1954, when they gained their independence from France, whose colonies the three countries of Indochina had been for about a century. The country began to make remarkable progress in primary health standards, but she was appalled when the Accords of the Geneva Convention of 1954 were flouted and the promised elections did not take place. She was even more appalled when the bombardment from sea and

air of the central province began. Dr Joan McMichael on returning from the country in 1965 reported of the acute shortage of medicines and medical equipment and the Medical Aid Committee for Vietnam was born.

Margaret channelled her anger into practical work, too extensive to record here. During her long illness it was hoped that her health would improve but, just before an EC meeting in Coventry on 14 February, a message was received saying that her condition had deteriorated. Madeleine Sharp, her great friend, visited immediately and saw this was the case. However, the next day, Margaret's 82nd birthday, found her much improved and back to her old self demanding to know everything that had gone on the day before and the plans for the future. Madeleine said that she had a really good birthday and although Margaret's condition deteriorated until she died, peacefully in her sleep, it was a wonderful memory that she would cherish.

A bed will be endowed in her name in the British friendship hospital, Ky Anh – see www.msavlc.co.uk.

The NAW sends its condolences to Madeleine and to Margaret's family.

Tax, who pays? A question from a member in Manchester...

Dear Sisters

In the current furore about public finances, and the cries of woe about proposed tax rates, it's easy to lose perspective on relatively recent history. While clearing old papers, I found my notice of PAYE coding from 1973-74. I nearly had a fit looking at the percentage tax rates involved. As our red-top tabloids bemoan higher taxes for the rich (a proposed 50%), it's interesting to see these rates. Basic rate of tax on the first £5,000 of taxable income was 30% and then rates increased by a mighty 5% for each £1,000 of taxable income beyond £5,000 up to £8,000. Then we

were allowed to earn a further £2,000 for the next couple of hikes upward and the richer you got the more you were able to earn within a band. Beyond taxable earnings of £20k the tax rate was 75% for the whole of the remainder.

At the time I was earning around £1,500 gross. My personal allowance was £595 and I was, quaintly, allowed to claim tax relief for a housekeeper (£100) or daughter's services (£55).

Leaving aside this stark demonstration of the class and gender bias of the tax system of the time, the more serious point is that we need to bust the myth that personal tax rates above 22-23% are somewhere in the stratosphere; and recollect that without tax, you can't have services.

NAW at the **Wortley festival**



diary dates

NAW meetings 2009/10

- 14 November in Manchester at the Pankhurst Centre
- 23 January in London
- 13 March in Manchester

NAW Annual General Meeting

- 17 April at Wortley Hall, near Sheffield

TUC Congress

- 14-17 September in Liverpool

STUC Women's Conference

- 10-11 November in Dundee

CND AGM

- 10-11 October in London

Campaign Against Arms Trade

- National Gathering 31 October in London

Answers to Quiz on page 2

1c; 2b; 3a; 4c; 5b; 6all; 7a; 8b; 9b; 10b

AS usual the NAW's stall at the Wortley Festival at the beginning of July was a roaring success!

With a philosophy of "pile 'em high, sell 'em cheap" we sold fabulous clothes, interesting ornaments, useful household items, and almost everything else you can think of – as well as distributing NAW flyers and membership forms and adding over £150 to NAW's campaign fund.

In addition, the many NAW members and their families enjoyed wonderful Wortley Hall, and each others' company – and a sunny day.

The top picture shows Barbara Switzer, Megan Dobney and Nuala Cameron, (with Arlene Gentles seated with two passing fairies) and in the second: Megan, Norma Bramley, Barbara and Anita Wright.

Many thanks to all who helped!

join the NAW now!

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