



THEODOSIA DALMARA  
(FEDERATION OF GREEK  
WOMEN) WITH  
NAW PRESIDENT  
DONA FELTHAM AT  
THE NAW'S 2011 AGM

JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN 50P SUMMER 2011

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# terry marsland



TERRY MARSLAND 1931-2011  
SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, TRADE UNIONIST  
PAST PRESIDENT OF THE NAW

A leading figure in the upsurge of trade unionism in the 1970s Terry Marsland died earlier this month in her Merseyside home. She was aged 79.

Terry was a senior official in the Tobacco Workers Union, TASS and MSF and was in the forefront of the struggle for left policies and women's rights. She was a member of the TUC Women's Committee from 1977 until her retirement in 1993.

Terry was born into a large family of Irish Liverpoolians, one of 10 children. She married into a Communist family and was much influenced by her mother-in-law, Marion Marsland, an early stalwart of the National Assembly of Women of which Terry became President in 1992.

Terry worked as an official for the Goldsmiths and the Bank Employees Unions becoming a national official of the Tobacco Workers Union in 1973 and later the Deputy General Secretary.

A forceful and compelling public speaker, she addressed CND rallies and spoke at Greenham Common, The Women's Peace camp, taking her daughters with her. She moved the first pro-abortion rights resolution at the TUC in 1975 and with her union's full support became a leading activist for peace, international solidarity.

When the Tobacco Workers Union merged with TASS in 1986 she took over the leading role in the women's structure and took forward an effective and democratic force into the new union MSF in 1988.

Terry's commitment to fighting for women's rightful place in the trade union movement went far beyond her own union. She convened regular meetings of left women activists from

many trade unions in order to fight for progressive policies at the TUC. This group of left women took a lead in organising support for progressive women to be elected to the General Council.

When Ken Cameron, General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, began a root and branch examination of the union's equality policy he sought advice from Terry. Terry spoke at the first FBU women-only weekend at Wortley Hall. She was inspirational. She showed what women, united, could achieve in their trade union, their workplace and in their personal lives and relationships.

Besides her many trade union commitments, Terry was always a champion of the *Morning Star*. She was an elected member of the paper's Management Committee in the early 1980s.

Terry was a Communist Party member for most of her adult life and as such made important contributions to the work of the Party particularly in helping to develop policies and cadres among women activists in the trade union movement. Mick Costello, the Party's National Industrial Organiser in the late 1970s and early 1980s, paid the following tribute "Terry Marsland was in the tradition of Communists who never lost sight of the importance of winning Socialist advance if the gains won in the daily struggles of the working class, its unions and the democratic movement were to be secured."

Terry served on the Equal Opportunities Commission, the ACAS Council and the Women's National Commission.

After her retirement she became involved in local politics. She was the independent Chair of the Warrington Borough Council Standards Committee, a member of the Cheshire Fire Authority, and a non-executive director of the Cheshire and Merseyside Strategic Health Authority.

Anita Halpin, Communist Party trade union co-ordinator and former chair of the TUC Women's Committee says "Terry Marsland will be remembered as one of all too few senior women trade unionists. As a full-timer she remained a working class champion, never becoming a bureaucrat. As all true socialists Terry was an internationalist and will remain a role model in the true sense of the words for all sisters."

Fittingly her last public speaking engagement was at the Merseyside Women's Movement celebration of the Centenary of International Women's Day in March 2011.

BARBARA SWITZER

# naw on the 2

LEFT TO RIGHT: GLORIA MILLS,  
DARINKA ALEKSIC, DONA  
FELTHAM, LORENE FABIAN



THE National Assembly of Women was invited to be one of a group of 200 organisations representing a broad based alliance of community and campaign groups at the front of the *March for the Alternative* along with trade union leaders and speakers at Hyde Park.

On arrival at the meeting place I bumped into three other NAW sisters: Lorene Fabian and Darinka Aleksic (Abortion Rights) and NAW vice president Gloria Mills (Unison). I knew that many other NAW sisters were there with their various unions and organisations, although with more than 500,000 people in attendance there was not much chance of actually bumping into anyone on the day.

As we walked down Northumberland Street towards the Embankment it was hard to see the huge crowds of various union banners, however, the noise that we could hear would surely make it clear to this Tory-led Coalition Government that there is an alternative to the attacks on Public Services and the disproportionate effect on women and the vulnerable in society.

Whilst walking along at the front of the march and with the carnival atmosphere behind us we reached Hyde Park and made our way down to the stage area to listen to the speakers. After a few hours we started to make our way back through the park to get back to our respective train stations, that is when the enormity of the numbers of people who had turned out to attend the march hit us.

When we left the park four hours after arriving the demonstrators were still pouring in through the gates. With such an array of union and hand made banners our walk back through the

6 march



# tuc women's conference



LESLEY MERCER, CHAIR OF THE 2011 TUC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE, REFLECTS ON THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE

demonstrators took us even longer than it did to get there and as we walked back along the route we kept stopping to chat to other marchers, listen to the music and read the various home made banners, it was heart warming and inspiring to see so many young, old, veterans, students, professionals, women, men and children united in one aim, to make this government listen.

The TUC should be congratulated on a well-organised day and now it is up to the individual unions and organisations to pick up the baton to ensure that the day is a springboard for further demonstrations, either individually or collectively, because this government's mantra of "we're all in this together", should be "we're all getting out of this together".

DONA FELTHAM, NAW PRESIDENT

It was a great honour to chair this year's TUC Women's Conference, both for me personally and for my union the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.

If I had to choose two words to sum up the mood of the conference I would say "passionate" and "powerful".

Despite – or maybe because? – this conference was taking place at a time of deep economic crisis, there was no wallowing in how awful things were. Delegate after delegate wanted to talk about action. Practical union action, to resist cuts, put forward the alternatives, and working together with other community groups. And the need to achieve a massive turnout for the demonstration on 26 March, with women out in force, was also a feature of this conference. All the more pleasing when that was exactly how it turned out!

Coming from the health sector, I was encouraged by the interest in the

emergency motion on the future of the NHS. The Health Bill before parliament, combined with huge "efficiency" savings, threatens to destroy the NHS as a publically funded, publically provided service, free at the point of need. If we let the coalition government get away with this, we will lose one of our most precious national assets.

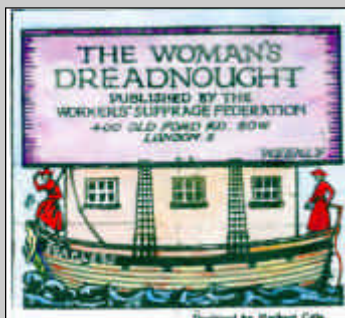
Although much of the conference debate centred around the attacks on jobs, public services and living standards here at home, the conference also heard from two inspiring international guests, Pemba Lama from Nepal and Helen Kelly from New Zealand. Learning more about life in other countries, and how we in the UK can build solidarity, has always figured in TUC women conferences and 2011 was no exception.

What was different this year, though, was the number of sisters who felt able to talk from the rostrum about the very painful, and intensely personal, experiences of being subject to violence, discrimination and harassment – both inside and outside work. As a union official, I have represented many members over the years, but the first-hand accounts we heard in Eastbourne this year brought me and many delegates close to tears.

The conference was brought to an end in fine style by Lisa Robinson from the probation officers' union NAPO. Lisa confessed to being the public servant who made it into *The Guardian's* top 100 women on international women's day, by virtue of sitting down on the tracks in front of a train until the police were called to deal with a group of drunken rugby supporters who were abusing a young woman on the train. Lisa quite rightly got a standing ovation for her courage.

And so another TUC Women's Conference over. With all of us feeling better informed, knowing what we need to do, and feeling confident that we can make a difference.

## sylvia pankhurst memorial lecture 2011



**Suffrage campaigners on the ocean wave lecture to be given by Dr Jo Stanley FRHistS**

**Friday 12 August 2011, 7pm at Wortley Hall, Sheffield**

**see <http://sylviapankhurst.gn.apc.org/> for more information**

# national assembly of women

JANETTE FERGUSON REPORTS ON THE  
NAW'S AGM, 7 MAY 2011, WORTLEY HALL

**O**UR President Dona Feltham welcomed members with the sad news of the death of past-President Terry Marsland. Dona read a lovely poem, called for a one minute silence, then finished with the reading of a second poem.

## annual report

The annual report and accounts were accepted with these points noted:

- Lydia Meryll commented on the nuclear disaster in Japan, about the impact of contamination in water sources, and what it means for all countries' plans for nuclear power
- There will be a delegation visiting the UK from our sister organisation in Japan in the autumn
- Lorene Fabian told us that Abortion Rights has now affiliated to the NAW
- Anita Wright stated that the closure of the Women's National Commission was horrendous and a disaster for women everywhere
- It was noted that Ute Navidi has stood down from the EC, due to uncertainty about her job and future plans. Ute was thanked for her tremendous work and will be invited to continue to attend the EC meetings
- The President drew attention to the new NAW banner which was displayed at the AGM.

## depleted uranium weapons

**Rae Street** (CND) was our first speaker and told us that the UK soon realised they could use nuclear power (U238), a nuclear waste by-product to make uranium weapons, which makes them virtually free to arms manufacturers. The UK and the USA have both used them in battle. They were first fired by the US, and the UK used them in south Basra and in the Balkan war whilst knowing of the possible concerns about leukaemia. Chief Uranium Alpha



RAE  
STREET



Radiation is most damaging, ionising radiation after explosion, huge heat, black dust affects lungs, lymph glands and keeps affecting particularly women and children for a very long time. Heavy metals, heavier than lead, toxins and carcinogenics, spread over a 25 mile radius, or more with changing winds. **Breaking News:** Costa Rica is now the second country in the world to completely ban uranium weapons (in April 2011), Belgium was the first.

Support from grass roots needed to raise awareness. Two delegates from the CND have attended the Balkans, to catalogue affects. People, industry, economy all affected. Rae asked us to look out for a poem called *Young Iraqi Identity Card*.

**Pam Flynn** proposed the first motion on *Depleted Uranium Weapons* on behalf of the Executive Committee, which was seconded by Vicki Gilbert.

The full text of the motion is on the NAW website [www.sisters.org.uk](http://www.sisters.org.uk) and it calls for the NAW to

- support the Campaign Against Depleted Uranium
  - feature the campaign in *Sisters* and on the website
  - call on the UK government to review its position on 'depleted uranium' munitions; and to acknowledge the 'precautionary principle', and to
  - signal this issue for the agenda at the forthcoming WIDF conference in Brazil, December 2011.
- It was carried unanimously.

## women and pensions

**Eleanor Lewington** proposed our second motion *Women and Pensions* on behalf of the Executive Committee, which was seconded by Gloria Mills.

She outlined the ConDem government's attack on women's pensions, saying that the increase in the state

pension age to 66 for both men and women by 2020 was not in any party manifesto and the Coalition Agreement itself stated the pension age would not rise before 2020. For women born after March 1953, the delay in receiving their pension will be up to two years. Half a million women will have their state pension delayed by more than 12 months. The equalisation of state pension ages was in the 1995 Pensions Act, 15 years before implementation started and 25 years before the age of 65 would take effect. To now give some of these same women less than eight years to adjust to a delay of two years in their pension date is disproportionate and unfair.

Eleanor reported her concern that this hurried change in retirement age, without full and proper consultation, is to be followed by more changes in the structure of state pensions, the proposal for a universal pension payment of £140 per week from 2015, but with the elimination of the second state pension, as well as pension credit.

The AGM resolved to campaign both against the pension age increase and against any retrospection and theft of accrued entitlements and discussion also considered the role of the State in



LYDIA  
MERYLL

# annual general meeting 2011



GLORIA MILLS

caring for people in their old age, the level at which the state pension should be set and the benefits that would be lost by those currently on pension credit should the system be changed. It was carried unanimously.

## women and the cuts

Our second speaker was **Gloria Mills** (NAW Vice President). Gloria opened by saying she would make no apology for believing in equality, justice and human rights. Organisations such as the NAW are needed now more than ever, when women are in the front line of many of the negative effects of deregulation, globalisation, the experiment of flexibility of labour and the removal of social protection. She continued by looking at the causes of the current crisis and how unemployment is affecting women worldwide, particularly Ireland and the UK. This is being used in a coordinated attack on trade union rights and on workers' terms and conditions. There is a strong case for re-affirming the State's responsibility for providing services.

The government is making it harder to obtain figures on equality impact assessment and trying to do away with it and the Equality and Human



ANN MUNSEY

Rights Commission's budget has been slashed. Gloria advised the AGM of the work going on in the European TUC to achieve equality and that every economic indicator shows that women will lose out more than men from cuts in jobs and services. We need a co-ordinated strategy to defend public services and pensions. There are choices about how we spend money and we should start collecting the tax that is avoided and evaded rather than making tax collectors redundant.

## federation of Greek women

Our third speaker was **Theodosa Dalmara** (Greek Women's Federation) speaking about the crisis in Greece and Europe. Theodosa started by saluting Terry Marsland's international work which had been significant. Terry's warmth and passion has been appreciated by everyone who met her.

Greek women and all workers are fighting against an unprecedented attack. There will be a further General Strike on 11 May as part of a series of strikes. This is a crisis of capitalism whose motivation is the pursuit of profit. We have seen this in the past and know that the management of capitalism is not possible partly due to policies, such as those of the IMF and the European Bank.

In Greece the unemployment rate has increased by over one third to over 15%, with women and youth unemployment at 18.8% and 21.2% respectively. The so-called social enterprise is a way of privatisation and reducing working conditions. Education and health are being affected with a reduction in choice and the elderly are being left with little support. The burden of their care will fall mainly on women. All EU member states are affected, even those who have no debt problem, or are not in the Eurozone. All are looking at a strategy for the abolition of collective agreements and the start of individual ones. A distorted approach to lifelong learning is being used along with "flexibility" to reduce conditions and allow women to fit into caring responsibilities.

Groups in Greece are participating in

direct action and at present the police and army are taking a low profile in this, even although strikes are being made illegal. The alliance against monopolies has had some successes, but they continue to fight because they want different forms of development.

The Women's International Democratic Federation, in alliance with world trade unions, world youth and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, all need to be involved in the struggle.

Delegates discussed

- the money spent on the military and on NATO
- assumptions put out by the media that become common belief
- benefits from alternative technology, going to the workers producing it, and people who use it, not the capitalist companies
- direct action on tax avoidance
- climate change
- the political parties, and who to support for real change
- the role of the recently elected councillors in reviewing cuts.

Dona then brought another very good and very successful AGM to a close, by thanking the delegates who managed to attend this year, wishing everyone a speedy and safe journey home with the hope that we will see even more sisters at next year's AGM.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY BARBARA SWITZER!



THEODOSA DALMARA, DONA FELTHAM, VAL DUNCAN

# naw history three perspectives

## the 1970s

janette  
ferguson

In 1975 the NAW, jointly with the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), organised a very successful and prestigious seminar in the London Business School, bringing together women from Eastern and Western Europe and representatives from South Africa, to discuss the problems women were facing both in Europe and South Africa.

The WIDF was the initiator, at Non-Governmental Organisation level at the United Nations (UN), of International Women's Year in 1975. This led to the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) and worldwide events being organised.

These included the World Congress of Women for International Year in Berlin in 1975, with representatives from 141 countries and 88 international organisations; the World Conference For a Peaceful and Secure Future for all Children in Moscow in 1979 with representatives from 131 countries and 47 international organisations; the World Congress of Women Equality, National Independence and Peace in Prague in 1981, with delegates from 133 countries and 96 international and regional organisations.

As the UN had designated 1975 International Women's Year there was increased activity in the struggle for women's equality.

The Equal Pay Act and the Employment Protection Act came into being, with the NAW submitting opinions to government.

Many working class struggles have taken place as a result of actions by the government of the day.

The regeneration of activity on women's issues throughout the UN Decade for Women provoked new interest in the NAW, which had the broadest appeal to all women capable of coordinating the work. It was decided therefore that efforts had to be made to gain and build branches, seek affiliations and increase membership and so make the NAW a force to be reckoned with.

Since that date, much hard and consistent work brought a measure of success. New branches were formed and many new affiliations made. National and international conferences have been held and members have taken part in many international events organised by the WIDF.



## my earliest memory

barbara  
switzer

**T**HIS picture was taken on the corner of Criccieth Street in Moss Side, Manchester when I was 12. It was an outing by coach in 1952 to Pickmere in Cheshire organised by the NAW. One exciting moment I remember was that the bus driver had taken the coach (which was a bit old) up a very steep slope but couldn't make it to the top. The organiser was very concerned and wanted to take the kids off so that it could be reversed down, but no, everyone wanted the fun of doing downhill backwards. She walked down the hill behind the coach.

We had races, games and a picnic. Later that year we had a Christmas party in the Salvation Army Hall with a Santa and presents for everyone. One of the kids in the picture was poorly and couldn't come, so Santa went to see her at home – such was her excitement that she almost had a relapse. I remember Edie saying that the joy on the child's face was worth every bit of the effort.

These events were the only real treats most of these children had – has much changed for such children today?

I recall that our neighbour, Edie Shennan from a Communist family, talked to my mother and others about

local issues and pursued them with our Tory MP Florence Horsburgh. What sticks in my mind is a delegation of local mothers going to lobby her about the lack of facilities available in the Princess Road School (long gone) where children were learning to write using hard toilet paper (no soft tissue in those days). My eldest brother, top right in the picture, delivered newspapers and was our introduction to the *Daily Worker* which was among his papers. I know that there were other activities but my memory deserts me. It was approximately 20 years later that I became active after I moved south to take up the post of Divisional Organiser in the Draughtsmen and Allied Technicians Association which after several mergers is part of Unite.

**BARBARA SWITZER IS THIRD FROM THE RIGHT ON THE BACK ROW**

**THE BOARD IN THE PICTURE SAYS "NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN. MOSS SIDE GROUP, MANCHESTER. CHILDREN'S OUTING"**

*continued from next page*

obscene cost of the resort to arms by major imperialist powers, including our own, must be challenged and defeated for all time. The social advances are still needed. So a very worthwhile agenda from the past, a new one on the horizon.

This, of course, is just a fragment in the life of the Assembly but it shows our influence, our policies and programmes. I have always been proud of the work of the NAW and to have been a continuing member from its inception.

**BERYL HUFFINLEY IS A FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE NAW**

# starting in the 50s beryl huffinley



**R**ECALLING the birth of the National Assembly of Women immediately brought to mind the sense of excitement and optimism that we were almost re-creating the atmosphere that must have permeated the campaign for the 'Women's Right to Vote'.

I thought especially of the agenda, the things we take for granted now and what were burning issues of inequality then, in no essential order of priority, immediately:

- divorce could only be obtained by 'proven infidelity' and was extremely expensive so 'living over the brush' was more common than we realised and came to light when looking through the Burghers List before canvassing for elections
- abortion was a crime, so 'back street abortions' were almost the order of the day, risking life, being almost accepted as the norm
- equal opportunities, a long cherished aspiration
- child care facilities that remained post-war were under constant attack, and
- campaigns to keep day nurseries and the provision of nursery schools were still more long term dreams rather than a reality in planning.

These illustrate only a few of the immediate demands that come to light. Yes, it was a very unfair society especially for women.

To be a delegate to the first Annual Meeting in London, meant we had to complete an individual nomination paper, this had 10/12 blank spaces which nominees had to have signed by supporters and possibly donate a little towards our fares, which were in reality, the basis for our reports back and for establishing contacts to form local groups.

The absolutely outstanding success of the gatherings in London were beyond our wildest expectations, we ended up with two inaugural meetings rather than the one planned because St Pancras Town Hall could not cope with the numbers. It was launched with such enthusiasm, young women rushing to the rostrum to tell of their needs, experiences, desire to partici-

pate in planning theirs and their family's future lives.

Even now after a lifetime of involvement, in the Movement, at various levels and in many aspects of it I still recall that period and those inaugural launches as one of the key landmarks in our Women's Movement.

When we came back from the meeting we held 'Report Back Meetings' for those and others who had signed the nomination forms but invited others along too. From these meeting and from some of our own contacts we established the Groups. I believe this was a very important surge in the women's movement. If you look at just a few of the crimes against women that I've listed above and think of where we are today, it justifies all the work of the Assembly that gave rise to much of the campaigning that followed. Political parties took these up as part of their agenda. Equal pay became a major call of the union movement; abortion became a right rather than a crime and was carried out by medical practitioners, thus reducing the risk of the death of the children and their mothers. The trade union movement began to pay more attention to the Charter for Women's Rights.

When negotiations took place, facilities at work for women became the order of the day. After long battles equal pay became accepted as the norm and opportunities for training and advancement meant acquired skills for many women too.

Childcare always featured on our agendas, day nurseries, nursery schools, opportunities for sports facilities and children taking advantage of scholarships for further educational opportunities and career prospects. Whereas when I was younger many passed their scholarships but their families could not afford for them to take them up, especially the girls. Better healthcare was also our concern and the demand for cervical cancer screening was an issue that came to the fore. It was in these areas that women found that they could have a voice, they learned to lobby local authorities and MPs and organised meetings to inform local communities.

This is merely a brief outline of the inequalities that we tackled and we gave impetus to other women's organisations so that they too amended their agendas to fight with us for the same objectives. All this helped build the importance of our status but especially the demands and programmes which have changed our lives.

I would like to add that our international affiliations have always seemed vital to me and I am pleased that the Assembly has fostered these at all levels.

I recall an international meeting in Berlin where Angela Davies led the American delegation. We had been talking about our fight for equal pay, Angela followed us to the rostrum. We had mentioned the "women's rate" in Britain as an illustration and our fight to abolish it. She told us that in the USA there was such a thing as a "black rate" and their fight was not just the "man's rate" but to abolish the black rate and get the white person's rate. This was an eye opener and still comes back to me whenever racial discrimination is mentioned.

Our sisters from South Africa, who came to our assemblies, were frozen and I recall we collected money from the delegates and took them to buy woollies, a lovely memory of our interpretation of it. They were pleased at what they called 'our sisterhood'.

We have achieved much but there is still much more to achieve. The  
*concluded on previous page*

**PRESS RELEASE: PALESTINIAN  
GOVERNMENT MEDIA CENTRE  
11 MAY 2011**

## **ISRAELI GOVERNMENT STEALS PALESTINIAN CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS FROM OVER 140,000 PALESTINIANS**

The Palestinian Government demands the reinstatement of citizenship rights for the 140,000 Palestinians who were illegally stripped of their right to return from 1967 to 1994. The efforts by the Centre for the Defence of the Individual to have the Israeli government disclose this previously concealed information are to be applauded.

Dr Ghassan Khatib, Director of the Palestinian Government Media Centre, said: "We welcome a report which highlights an illegal and inhumane Israeli action, which Palestinians have of course long been aware of as its victims, but which, the international community has never intervened to stop. Human rights violations by Israel need to be brought to greater attention and its government held to account for them. This policy is part of the Israeli strategy to remove as many Palestinians as possible, while moving Israeli citizens into our lands."

This policy of "illegally" stripping Palestinians of their citizenship rights continues in East Jerusalem today. Any East Jerusalemite Palestinian with an Israeli ID card who leaves the country for several years has his ID revoked.

The Government Media Centre calls upon the UN to take measures to restore Palestinian Civil and Political Rights that are being violated by Israel.

"Now that this practice has been revealed, every single case must be identified and citizenship restored".

# the tory **pensions** contrick

**M**ANY people will have read Vince Cable's press statements earlier this year promising a flat rate state pension of between £140 and £155 per

## help!!



Sisters, the NAW needs your help with a couple or three things...

**The Working Class Movement Library** has got an NAW Banner from North Staffs Branch, however, they do not appear to have any history of how it got there. We can explain the tree and the dove, the knot is for the Knotty (the North Staffs Railway) but we don't know when, why and where it was made, does anyone out there have that information? We hope to use the image for our 60th anniversary celebrations.

**We are also looking for** any photographs of people, banners, locations (with info who or what they are) etc, to use in the 60th anniversary celebrations next year. So please, search your attics, your old photo albums (you haven't looked at for years), or anywhere else you store your memorabilia, we need it. (Please contact [naw@sisters.org.uk](mailto:naw@sisters.org.uk), 0191 252 0961. We will return anything sent to us of course.)

**We need to raise funds** to be able to do the NAW's 60th anniversary proud, one of the ways we will do that is to sell packs made up with a card, a postcard and a couple of different bookmarks all with our new banner in full colour on them, we will sell them together or separately, at any festivals etc, we attend. *Please help in any way you can. If you have any good ideas please share them with us.*

**Pack:** greetings card, postcard and 2 x bookmarks: £1

**Greetings card:** full colour front and back, inside blank, with envelope 50p; **Postcard** 30p; **Bookmark** 20p

Cheques should be payable to NAW and sent with order and 50p P&P per order to:

NAW Treasurer, 1 Lee Close, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0DW

Reductions may be possible for bulk orders; contact [emlewington@btinternet.com](mailto:emlewington@btinternet.com)

week for all new pensioners by 2015 and emphasising how this would particularly benefit women. What a shock then to read the government's Green Paper *A State Pension for the 21st Century* and find no mention of such a promise. Could it be that the Tories and Vince were trying to cover up the thefts of pension benefits they were engineering from 500,000 women by pushing forward their state pension ages? By promising buckets of jam and the odd slice of bread from 2015, we'd forget this rip-off and the other cuts to pensioner incomes from slashing fuel allowances, free swimming and changing increases from RPI to CPI?

Yep. The Green Paper proposals are supposedly to simplify the state pension, but fail to reduce complexity for years to come. By restricting any options for reform to "cost no more than if the current system continued" there must be losers if there are winners. In short, a thinly disguised case for making us all work longer and retire on less. The NAW will be responding to the consultation which ends on 24 June and our response will be available on the website. Meanwhile, don't be conned; the two options put forward are unsupportable and the best way forward is to argue for the current state system, but with the basic state pension set at the agreed European poverty level of £178 per week uprated as now and a state second pension which would become over time an entirely flat-rate addition.

We will be making three main points:

- The state must provide an adequate income for all pensioners, sufficient to lift everyone above £178 per week. This means an end to the disgraceful position whereby the UK's share of GDP (at 9.2%) on pensions will be third from bottom in the EU by 2060, undercut only by Estonia and Poland. The

top three countries' (France, Germany and Italy) shares will be 14.1%, 12.7% and 13.6%.

- There is no justification for further increases to the state pension age. A civilised society should guarantee its citizens a decent retirement, welcome the increases in longevity and act to promote equality across class, geographical areas and generations.

- The question of affordability is a political one. A decent state pension could be afforded if we increased employment rates to 80% and introduced fair taxation policies including raising the upper National Insurance threshold as our GDP rose. We have to nail the lie that there is no alternative.

In the meantime we continue to demand the government withdraw its unfair plans to increase the retirement age for women born after March 1953 and go back to the previous Tory government's policy set out in 1993 that people needed reasonable periods of notice of changes in state pension age. They then said the reasonable notice was 15 years; it is outrageous that they are giving less than five years.

The Hands Off Our Pensions campaign needs our full support

BY NAW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS  
MARGARET BOYLE AND  
ELEANOR LEWINGTON

## diary dates

**NAW Executive Committee meetings** are open to all NAW members. Agreed dates for 2011-12 are Saturday 13 August at Wortley Hall, 22 October London, 28 January Manchester, 24 March London. Contact Val Duncan, NAW Secretary, for further information on 0191 252 0961 or [naw@sisters.org.uk](mailto:naw@sisters.org.uk)

## join the NAW now!

*I would like to join the NAW. Here is £15 for the annual subscription (£5 unwaged) which includes my subscription to **sisters**, the journal of the NAW.*

*Our organisation would like to affiliate to the NAW. Enclosed is: £15 (local organisation/NAW branch), £30 (regional organisation), £45 (national)*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

phone \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: NAW, 92 Wansbeck Avenue, Cullercoats, Tyne & Wear NE30 3DJ