



UNITED STEEL WORKERS, CANADA

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2 gender equality

3 mothers at work

4 women and leadership

6 effective bargaining

7 the ladies' bridge

7 the EU...

# isisters

# gender equality

**F**OR centuries women workers have had to suffer poor conditions and low wages. In June 1863 Karl Marx wrote about 20 year old London milliner, Mary Anne Walkley who died of exhaustion because she was made to work on average 16 and a half hours without a break and up to 30 hours in the main season, working and sleeping in one room with 60 other girls.

## chainmakers, Ford, Grunwick

The women chain makers of Cradley Heath showed that you could fight back and win. Their 10 week strike in 1910 resulted in them securing the first ever minimum wage and the strike by women machinists at Fords paved the way for the 1970 Equal Pay Act. Women began to show the predominantly male-led trade union movement that they were prepared to fight for their rights and their dignity as workers. The most dramatic example of this was the 1976 Grunwick dispute when a group of mainly Asian women workers led by Jayaben Desai went on strike against appalling working conditions, compulsory over-time and an average pay of £28 per week while the average full-time wage for a female manual worker in London was £44 per week.

There have been many disputes involving women workers over the 40 years since Grunwick and the battle for gender equality at work continues to this day. In May 2016 researchers from Glassdoor Economic Research ranked Britain eleventh out of 18 countries on gender equality at work, behind the US, France, Spain and Sweden. According to the latest Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) report women earn on average 18% less than men and the gap between men's and women's hourly pay rates has only fallen slightly from 28% in 1993 to 23% in 2003. The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) found the pay gap worse in Scotland at 29% representing a £10,862 pay difference between men and women. In Northern Ireland the hourly earnings for women working full-time was slightly ahead of full-time male earnings and the Office for National Statistics believes this is because there is a higher proportion of public sector jobs.

## children and the pay gap

The IFS research found that the gender pay gap sharply increases after the birth of a first child. The gap between hourly earnings of the two sexes becomes steadily wider over the subsequent 12 years after the birth of a child with women falling 33% behind men. This so called "motherhood penalty" particularly hits more highly educated women who often miss out on subsequent wage progression. The IFS estimate that this group of wom-



en's wage loss is 4% for each year out of paid work.

If women continue to be treated as cheap labour by employers and penalised for the entirely natural process of giving birth to children then it disadvantages our whole society which is why the campaign for gender equality at work is a campaign that must be fought by the whole trade union movement.

Women's experience and knowledge enhances and strengthens our movement, particularly as we now make up over 53% of our trade union membership. So let's hope the TUC and all its affiliates make sure gender equality is central to every campaign.

BY ANITA WRIGHT, PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN

# changing attitudes

**I**N May 2016 the Wales TUC unanimously passed a motion proposed by the Equality Committee to establish a campaign to highlight the role of trade unions in challenging attitudes to the menopause and ensure that employers have appropriate procedures in place to support women experiencing the menopause in order to create healthy workplaces for women workers.

According to the Office for National Statistics in March 2016 women aged 16-64 made up 48% of the Welsh workforce. 50% of the over 50 age group were women, representing 213,000 workers. This figure cannot accurately reflect the number of women who are experiencing the menopause as it does not take account of those experiencing an early menopause or one brought about by medical treatment and surgery. It is also difficult to statistically gauge the number of people who experience the menopause from the non-binary, transgender or intersex communities and furthermore how different equality strands experience the menopause, or differs because of disability, age, race, religion, sexual orientation or marital/civil partnership status. Consequently, many women in today's Welsh workplaces are, or will be working through a little discussed stage of life, the menopause.

The motion has paved the way for the Wales TUC Women's Equality Network to link with other organisations to address the gaps in research that exist on the menopause and to

develop policy which can be used by union representatives to develop a supportive environment for women in the workplace.

This work is being led by Rhianydd Williams, Trade Union Equality Representative Network Officer Wales TUC and Sarah Rees, Director of Career Women Wales and builds on survey work undertaken about the experience of Welsh women in the workplace. The bilingual survey received over 3,000 responses and was open to all regardless of gender or union membership status. The majority of people who responded were union members and over 90% were women.

Initial findings showed that very few workplaces have policy on the menopause and it has often been treated as a joke topic, possibly as a way of coping with the issue. Over 75% of respondents said the menopause did affect working life and over 80% would welcome a model policy from the Wales TUC and support union training on the topic.

The full report is due to be published in September. It will contain useful information about the menopause, its affect on women in the workplace including case studies and provide model workplace policies for union representatives and employers.

WWW.WTUCLEARN.ORG.UK/NEWS-  
LATEST/MENOPAUSE-AND-WORKPLACE-  
SURVEY



# mothers at work: **discrimination**

**I**N March of this year, the government released research revealing the shocking scale of discrimination against mothers and mothers-to-be. The report *Pregnancy and Maternity-Related Discrimination and Disadvantage* makes for a depressing read. The government's weak response is even more disheartening.

The extent of discrimination on the basis of maternity was highlighted almost 10 years ago in a report published by the Equal Opportunities Commission in 2005. That report revealed that 30,000 women were being forced out of their jobs or dismissed as a result of their pregnancies and half of all pregnant women or new mothers suffered some form of discrimination linked to their pregnancy. Now the latest statistics, published jointly by the Department for Business, Industry and Skills and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, show that this discrimination is more entrenched than ever and that annually three quarters of all pregnant women and new mothers face negative or discriminatory treatment due to their pregnancy. 54,000 lose their jobs as a result.

## **more discrimination...**

So in 2016, more women face discriminatory treatment at work for having babies than they did 10 years ago. During that period, our governments have regarded as unacceptable a whole range of other discriminatory practices and have taken proud steps to secure a supportive, inclusive society for those groups. Yet, despite the dreadful statistics (from its own research) and the fact that women make up over 47% of the workforce, Ministers have refused to treat this issue with the gravity it deserves. It's time for government to take bold steps to tackle a discrimination which affects 50% of the electorate (and that's excluding the very large proportion of men indirectly affected).

It's time for an outraged response from the government: for big speeches on how this shocking form of discrimination needs to be stamped out; for a major national plan on how to tackle it; for a newly appointed Maternity Tsar. But we have yet to see this. On the contrary, the government delayed release of the report for months and then released it with the minimum of media coverage. Having reviewed the government's formal response to the research, it appears that the government is just not willing to tackle this particular form of discrimination.

## **barrier to justice**

In fact, it has actually exacerbated the problem by introducing an effective barrier to justice. In 2015 along with a



whole raft of measures concerning courts and tribunals, the government introduced a fee of up to £1,200 to bring a tribunal claim. There was also a pre-existing time limit of three months for bringing a case. If you consider that a woman with a potential pregnancy or maternity-related discrimination claim has either lost or faces losing her job or is receiving minimal pay (statutory maternity pay is about £140 per week), and is either about to give birth or is a new mother juggling the demands of a new baby with the stresses of the work situation, it is not surprising that the number of women bringing pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination claims is so low. The recent research tells us that fewer than 1% of all women who have suffered this form of discrimination take a case to the Employment Tribunal and that this is at an all time low.

Maternity Action is a small specialist charity which gives advice on workplace rights and entitlements to pregnant women and new mothers. We also fight for an end to discrimination against pregnant women and new mothers (and in this we are joined by a number of other organisations including unions, parenting groups and advice agencies). We want to see this issue receive the attention it deserves. This should be on every MP's list of urgent issues to deal with. It should be high on the government's agenda. Those elected to represent us must stop pretending this appalling situation doesn't exist.

## **what we want**

We want to see the Employment Tribunal fee removed. We want the time limit for bringing a claim extended to six months. We believe that health and safety protection needs an overhaul so that every pregnant woman is assessed in the context of the risks posed by her particular job. We also want more advice and information for pregnant women and new mothers including the reintroduction of the very much valued (but sadly

axed for cost saving) *Birth to Five* booklet given to all new mothers which contained a raft of useful information including about rights and entitlements at work. And we want statutory time and facilities for breastfeeding/expressing so that women do not have to make a choice between breastfeeding and work. These aren't big asks, but they are necessary.

We also want government to shout about it. We want a communications campaign aimed at businesses, as well as the wider community, highlighting what they need to do and making it crystal clear that this discrimination is not OK. We know such action can be very effective – as it was with the National Minimum Wage and the Wearing Seatbelts campaigns for both of which government took to the road with huge lorries with signage, billboards, radio and TV infomercials, articles, speeches, statements etc. We need the same level of exposure and commitment if we are to stand any chance of ensuring women can carry out their jobs in safe and fair working environments.

## **forward not back**

And for those in government who aren't convinced by the arguments; who would seemingly be more at home back in the 1900s; who dismiss this as merely a 'women's' issue, we say this: its time they recognised that this discrimination has wide-ranging effects. It affects the health of unborn babies and children, of families as a whole; it affects family income and contributes to child poverty; it affects society by propelling the gender pay gap and reinforcing glass ceilings and it directly affects GDP and the prosperity of the labour market. It needs dealing with immediately without further prevarication.

Please join us in fighting against this shocking form of discrimination by signing up through our website. [www.Maternityaction.org.uk](http://www.Maternityaction.org.uk)

BY ANNABEL BERDY, SENIOR POLICY OFFICER, MATERNITY ACTION

# women and leadership in Canada's U

**T**HE United Steelworkers Union (USW) is an international union with about 800,000 members across North America. Historically, the United Steelworkers has been a manufacturing union, however, with the decline of manufacturing in North America – including Canada – we've had to diversify our membership, much like Unite the Union. The result is that, in Canada, about half our membership is employed in some type of manufacturing, while the rest is split between mining, forestry and many different types of services. The union in Canada is split into three districts, all of which have quite diverse memberships and quite a bit of autonomy:

## the districts

**District 3**, which covers four provinces and three territories in Western and Northern Canada, is our largest geographical district. USW members in this district work in various sectors, though there is a strong presence of mining and forestry, along with manufacturing. USW recently merged with the Telecommunications Workers Union, which has a large number of members in this district. As a result, the composition of the membership is changing, with an increasing number of members in the telecommunications industry. Overall, the number of women members in the district is about 10%.

**District 6** covers Canada's most populous province of Ontario and the historical heart of manufacturing in the country. The district also covers four Atlantic provinces on Canada's east coast. This district has perhaps seen the biggest change to its membership in the past 25 years – with the decline of manufacturing the union has really had to expand its base in order to survive. As a result, our biggest locals (equivalent to branches in the UK and Ireland) are in post-secondary education (university support staff). While we still represent workers in steel mills and other types of manufacturing in the district, we also have numerous members in the security sector, health care, credit unions and call centres. Women make up about 45% of the membership in District 6, the highest of any district in Canada.

**District 5** covers Canada's French-speaking province of Quebec. The members in this district typically work in manufacturing, mining, telecommunications and security services. Like District 3, women are still the minority of the membership, comprising about 10 to 15% of the membership.

Overall, in the Canadian section of the USW, women make up about 20% of the membership.



## women and leadership

The top leadership positions in the International Union (the US and Canada) are taken almost entirely by men. Of the 13 international officers, there is only one woman; of the District directors, all are men, as are all of their assistant directors, including Canada's three districts.

Our staff numbers also show the under-representation of women working in the field (as organisers and union staff representatives): only about 15% of field staff are women. We've done much better at our national and international offices, where the majority of department leaders are now women (in the US; it's still less than half in Canada) and we have been able to specifically target the hiring of women over time, which has led to more and more women rising the internal ranks of the union, at the central offices, at least.

At local (branch) level, we see that overall, the number of women in elected positions is roughly representative of the membership (about 20% of elected positions are held by women, equal to the 20% that women make up of the membership). BUT, it is important to break this down a bit: only 10% of local union presidents are women and only 11% of local union vice presidents are women. Women are over-represented in the recording secretary position (30%). This is true if we move down to another sub-category, where in the units (a sub-branch of the local) women are over-represented in secretary positions and are under-represented in steward and grievance chair positions.

What does this tell us? Women in elected positions experience the same phenomenon that women in almost any type of work experience: they are over-represented in positions with less power and prestige, though not necessarily in positions that have less

responsibility or less work. Women are less likely to be in publicly visible positions or in positions that will allow them to climb further in the union's leadership ranks.

The data we have is only broken down between men and women; we do not know how many women or men of colour are in the various elected positions, or anything about LGBTQ people in the union, nor about workers with disabilities. So, this brings us to the question of why women are still under-represented in many of the more prestigious and powerful positions in the union.

On the one hand, there is the most obvious answer, which is that we have historically been a union representing workers in male-dominated industries. The vast majority of our membership has been male and, even as we diversify the types of workers we organise and represent, it takes a long time to develop union leaders and to rise through the ranks of the union: we can be somewhat hopeful that, over time, women will attain more leadership positions. But, it's not enough to just wait for women to rise through the ranks or to assume that the only reason women are still under-represented in leadership position is based on demographics. There are other reasons why women have had trouble gaining positions of power in the union.

## union expectations

There are, in fact, other, less tangible reasons for the lack of women in leadership in the Steelworkers: there are still strong expectations about workload and dedication that is predicated on an outdated model that has relied on women's unpaid labour to support the total dedication of male trade unionists to the union. There is a long-standing expectation that to be truly dedicated to the union, it must be a



# United Steelworkers Union

singular focus – you must work irregular hours (that is unavoidable to some extent, of course), be on call continually and be expected to pick up and move on short notice. This entire way of working ignores the realities that women are still expected to take on the brunt of the domestic labour and therefore often have many additional responsibilities outside of paid work and union involvement. It also ignores the reality that many union activists (men and women) are single parents or have a two-partner home in which both partners work (regardless of gender). We still have work to do to ensure that we have the proper supports for all members (men and women, regardless of family status) and that having outside responsibilities are not viewed as an indication that a member is not dedicated to the union and, therefore, not real leadership material. USW does not always provide access to childcare for members attending leadership courses or conferences.

Additionally, those in the union, as with more people in broader society, still maintain many sexist assumptions about women's capabilities. This is not an indictment of the union's leadership or staff or members, rather it is a reflection of the fact that we all live in a patriarchal society and that sexism is deeply entrenched in our minds and in our social and economic structures. Women in the historically male-dominated manufacturing sector face particular struggles, having to "prove" themselves capable of being able to do the work and then that they won't "be able to handle representing or leading a male-dominated unit". When there are actual problems and issues that are faced by women (such as sexual harassment), it may be seen as "proof" that a women simply can't handle working in a certain type of environment, rather than the fact that we don't always provide additional supports to women who have to work in environments where they have to struggle for respect or constantly prove their competence or deal with unwanted harassment. There is also a phenomenon that exists throughout society that dismisses women's abilities or knowledge; women are frequently passed over for training and leadership opportunities, and more likely to benefit from initial assumptions that they're capable, so don't have to spend as much time proving themselves. These are just a few general barriers that many women face. We all know the quote "whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good".

## women of steel

What we are actually doing about it

and why I think that over time, things have already improved a lot and will continue to improve. The biggest and most important program we have to build women's power in the union is through our Women of Steel program, which was started by women steelworkers in Canada in the 1980s. This was at a time when women made up an even smaller portion of the union and were mostly working in manufacturing and other historically male-dominated industries. Women working in these sectors faced particular challenges at work and in the union: not having access to bathrooms, harassment and assumptions about their abilities from employers, lack of any mentors in the union, and so on. Women in Canada pushed for the creation of women's committees to provide women USW members with space to develop their power and to discuss the issues that they faced in both work and the union.

Women in the province of Ontario pushed for the creation of Women of Steel and formed key alliances with the primarily male leadership of the time. Leo Gerard, who is now the International President, was a strong supporter of Women of Steel in its early days when he was on staff in District 6 and when he became district director. It's taken a lot of work to expand the program from its roots in Canada to the whole union, but uncompromising women union activists have ensured that the program has become an integral part of the union across the continent. With International President Leo Gerard as an early supporter, the union as an organisation has really taken this on as a fundamental aspect of the union.

What has Women of Steel been able to accomplish and what does it focus on? It is now part of the Union's Constitution (rule book) that we have women's committees in every local and that there are District and National women's committees. This helps ensure that the Union prioritises the particular issues that women face in a male-dominated union and often in male-dominated workplaces, along with the emerging membership in predominantly female occupations. Women of Steel provides education and leadership training for women in the union and pushes the union to act on issues of pay equity and subsidised child care, for example. Importantly, it provides an infrastructure for women to be introduced to the union and all of its programs and entryways to workplace and political activism.

## beyond the women in steel programme

The Union and its International Executive Board recognises that



women continue to be under-represented in leadership in the union and that if the union wants to continue to be a leading voice for working people we need to actively organise and represent workers beyond our traditional base. This means organising and representing workers in various parts of the service industry, for example, which are often feminised (post-secondary education, health care, and so on). We need strong women leaders who can organise, act as mentors, and push issues that disproportionately affect women or contribute to women's sustained inequality (domestic violence, pay inequity, work-life balance and expectations about childcare and domestic work). As a result, we actively seek to get women into our mainstream leadership development courses (this is the training that is not connected to Women of Steel). Directors are requested to select women and members who are likely under-represented in leadership to attend the multi-year training (this would include members of racial minority groups, LGBTQ members and so on). With this initiative, we've seen the numbers of women in the leadership development school increase and will, over time, see the effects of that in the better representation of women in leadership in the union.

In Canada, we are also making a determined effort to address equity issues in our education work. Our education department is currently revamping many of our courses to include an equity lens and to work with our members to address equity issues that we may have neglected in the past. This includes collective bargaining training on finding ways to reduce the gender wage gap and to prioritise bargaining language around domestic violence.

Ultimately, we have a long way to go to expand women's power within the union and the broader labour movement and to ensure that women working in low-wage, precarious sectors have better access to unions. It is through organising women workers and developing strong women leaders that we can strengthen the trade union movement. Many of the initiatives by the Steelworkers in Canada aim to do this – we're not there yet, but we're on our way.

BY MEG GINGRICH  
MEG WORKS IN THE RESEARCH, PUBLIC  
POLICY AND BARGAINING SUPPORT  
DEPARTMENT IN THE NATIONAL OFFICE OF  
THE USW IN TORONTO, CANADA

# building leadership; effective bargaining

I am not tempted to reach for one of those leadership self-help books to look for ideas, but prefer to start by asking you to think of a person in the trade union who you admire as a leader. This person does not need to be a national figure. They might be a convenor, senior activist or workplace representative. What characteristics did they have that made them a leader who you admire? From my own personal experience and perspective here are some of the character traits that I think makes a good trade union leader in the workplace:

## the ability to listen

Successful organising is often about listening to what workers' priorities and problems are, organising and bargaining around those issues, and getting 'wins'.

## having clear direction

In a workplace, and in a sector, defining and communicating our collective goal, and getting agreement on how we get there. Short term, medium term and long term actions.

## display conviction

We are right and we are strong. Have a strong vision and the willingness to see it through. Yes, I will be in the front and centre of this. I will lead this, but we are always a collective.

## professionalism

Does that sound like a dirty word? It isn't. Do not 'do this on the hoof'. Do not think we will win through collective bargaining because it is 'fair'. Be better prepared than the bosses. Have every bit of evidence that you need. Forensically analyse and take apart their arguments. Know the company accounts. Know the agreements. Have case-studies to hand. Know the law. Let's be honest, very often the bosses are not that smart and not that well prepared. Use that to the full.

## be consistent

If you want respect among your membership and respect from the employer you must be a consistent leader. This will give you credibility with management. If you are to be seen as a formidable bargainer then both sides will probably be able to predict in advance what your analysis, position will be, and if they know you well they might even anticipate your strategy and tactics. That is not a bad thing, because, if this is the case, you are winning before you enter the room.

## trust and honesty

Be plain speaking and straight talking. Do not say different things to different people. Do not say things behind people's back that you are not prepared to

say to their face. Colleagues should know that if they are going to get a 'don't do that again', or a reprimand, that it will be in private if possible. But everyone should also know that if you are going to metaphorically stab someone, it will be in the front.

## dealing with defeats

The workers, united, will never be defeated. Well, that is quaint but it is not true. Not every battle in a war is won. So there is a skill in extracting the optimal value out of any situation. A great campaign might not get the change you wanted today, but it might build organisation and the evidence base, to get that win next year. A wise trick in bargaining is to make sure your side always has a way out with dignity. An 'all or nothing' bargaining position, what is now popularly known as 'binary' can lead to a 'car crash'.

## dealing with wins

Celebrate wins. Make sure your members know what has been won and that the union did it, and that was only possible because people joined the union and were active. But, controversially, do not humiliate the opposition. Demoralise – 'yes'. Humiliate – 'no'. You will have to negotiate again soon, you might have more demands lined up. A humiliated opponent might go into complete opposition, or indeed be replaced.

## be an inspiration

This is not easy, because some people have more charisma than others, (chance for a joke here), but everyone can lead by example. People should look up to you.

## be a delegator

Someone who sucks in power and tasks is not a leader, they are an autocrat, or a control freak and they are doomed to fail. A leader identifies talent, builds development opportunities and delegates tasks and power – building a human machine that replaces its parts on an upward trajectory. You cannot go and do something else, for another group of workers, if what you are doing already collapses when you leave. The ultimate leader leads a team or campaign that functions perfectly without them.

## good communicator

Successful leaders will need different communication skills for different circumstances. Negotiations can be formal and technical, one-to-ones can be about persuasive language, building team work about being clear about tasks and goals and building motivation.

## accountability

Celebrate the fact that trade unions are democratic organisations with clear accountability structures. We have democracy, the folks on the other side of the table do not – and this is a source of strength for us. Negotiators stand on the shoulders of the many.

## empathy

This is the new HR management buzz word. So when your colleagues believe that you are sensitive and understand their concerns, the thinking is that they will be more likely to work with you and share in your vision, and commit all their efforts to 'the task'. Well, without being complacent, think effective trade unionists have been doing that ever since the Tolpuddle Martyrs agreed to work together in common cause. But that hackneyed old phrase, 'walk in the other person's shoes is useful'. If you are negotiating 'walk in the opposition's shoes' to inform your strategy, tactics and communication. Know thine enemy!

## flexibility

Not every problem demands the same solution. Be open to new ideas. Spot a win when it is emerging.

## hope

We are trade unionists. Life is never easy. But change is possible and you are the agents of change. *We are going to make it happen.*

So far I have not said 'women' and 'equalities' because leadership skills in bargaining are not gendered. But the battlefield is gendered. When we look around us, what we see

- A stubborn gender pay gap
- Fixed gendered job roles
- Unequal pay for work of equal value
- Glass ceilings
- The vast majority of part-time workers are women
- More than 50% of part time workers paid less than the minimum wage
- Women are responsible for the great majority of caring responsibilities for children and vulnerable adults
- Many families living in poverty for whom work is not a route out of poverty, it is a route into poverty.

We also see that since the global economic crash, the collective bargaining agenda has narrowed, focussing more narrowly on job protection and then pay. Most of those doing the negotiating are men. I am not going to say that they are doing a bad job. But I am going to say that we need to do a better job. We need:

- More confident and active women reps

# lighting up the **ladies' bridge**

CELEBRATING THE WOMEN WHO BUILT  
WATERLOO BRIDGE

**A** two day animation of Waterloo Bridge to highlight and celebrate the women who worked to rebuild the bridge during the Second World War is taking place on 23 and 24 of September. It will be focusing the spotlight on women and their vital contribution in construction. Labour records show there were as many as 25,000 women working in construction during the Second World War. The aim of this project is to make visible the invisible and to encourage and inspire the much needed new generation of women engineers with an exciting variety of happenings in and around Waterloo Bridge. *The Ladies Bridge*, a documentary started 10 years ago by film-maker Karen Livesey, played a vital role in securing its' rightful place in history.

Historian Dr Christine Wall, searched the archives and country for evidence. In 2015, the combination of an interview with Betty Lind for the documentary and Christine Walls' find of three photographs of women welders working on the temporary Waterloo Bridge resulted in the story making official history. Prior to this, it was only the

river boat pilots on the Thames that kept the story alive, and to this day many people are unaware of this history. English Heritage is currently considering a blue plaque application on the bridge commemorating the women. It is hoped that this celebration will encourage English Heritage to give the permission for the plaque.

For three nights at dusk, a collage of photographs and moving footage will be projected in epic proportions filling one side of the National Theatre's Lyttelton Theatre fly tower. During the day Film London's KinoVan will be parked on the Southbank by Waterloo Bridge from 10am to 9pm screening a programme of short films celebrating women's contribution to the built world. Films from organisations such as the BFI, Film London, Women's Engineering Society, Thames Tideway plus others, will be programmed alongside regular screenings of *The Ladies Bridge* documentary.

On Friday 23 September, this projection will be accompanied by two further projections under the bridge, and

lyatra Quartet, a group specialising in found sounds will play a set to the projection 7pm till 9pm, then a recorded sound track will play till 11pm.

On Saturday 24 September, a choir of a 100 will sing under the bridge, songs from the second world war such as *Don't Fence Me In* and other classics, a celebrity (possibly Sandi Toksvig) opening the event and some theatrical performances all culminating in a human chain crossing the bridge to Somerset House, arms raised to capture the spirit of what we can achieve together.

Totally Thames Festival Concrete History 2016 Light up the Ladies Bridge will give people a chance to celebrate and embed this vital history into the popular consciousness. Come and be a part of it.

BY KAREN LIVESY OF CONCRETE HISTORY  
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## the EU; where will it end?

- More highly skilled female trade union officers
- More female trade unionists leading in the workplace and leading in our union
- More women in lead roles in collective bargaining situations.

The collective bargaining agenda needs to be broad and to explicitly include equality issues as a priority – not an afterthought. Type the phrase 'Women and Collective Bargaining' into the evil empire that is called Google and you will get 1,630,000 hits. All of which are about equal pay, gender equality – 'Women's Issues'. These are problems that do need to be fixed but jobs, redundancy, pay, training, career progression are all women's issues too. A better world is possible and trade unions are the hope of the world. That is only true if women achieve true equality, and it is our responsibility to make it happen.

BY CAROLYN SIMPSON

CAROLYN IS THE LONDON AND EASTERN  
REGION WOMEN'S AND EQUALITIES  
ORGANISER OF UNITE THE UNION

THIS IS AN EDITED VERSION OF THE SPEECH  
SHE GAVE AT THIS SUMMER'S UNITE  
WOMEN'S WEEK

**T**HE European Economic Community (EEC) was established in 1957 by Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany with the aim of creating economic integration including a common market and customs union. MEPs were appointed to the Parliament by member states until 1979 when universal suffrage was introduced.

In 1973 the Conservative Prime Minister, Edward Heath, took Britain into the EEC. The Labour Party accused him of failing to negotiate reasonable terms for our membership particularly in relation to the Common Agricultural Policy and loss of sovereignty and pledged to renegotiate the terms and to hold a referendum. The newly elected Labour government in 1974 was in favour of remaining in the EU but at its annual conference in April 1975 members voted by 2:1 to leave. The 1975 referendum saw the Labour cabinet split with MPs like Tony Benn, Minister for Industry, and Michael Foot, Secretary of State for Employment, campaigning for a NO vote.

The NO campaigners included the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru and the trade union movement led by TUC general secretary, Len Murray, who had boycotted EU advisory structures since 1973. The turnout was 64% with a 67% vote to remain.

Much has changed in 41 years. The 2016 referendum saw all the main

political parties and the TUC campaigning to stay in the EU, except they were still calling for EU reforms, which allowed UKIP to steal the ground for complete withdrawal. Remain campaigners underestimated the general population's deep distrust of politicians and the underlying scepticism about "Project Europe". Reactionary forces aided by the mainstream media tapped into the ingrained xenophobic and racist attitudes that are embedded in our capitalist society and allowed them to rise to the surface. But it would be disingenuous to suggest that the 17,410,742 people who voted NO were racists or that the 16,141,241 who voted YES were liberal multiculturalists. Neither was it old against young – 64% of 18-24 year olds didn't vote. The picture is far more complex than that. All demographics were split in the referendum and Brexit had support from every age group, political party and economic bracket.

Brexit is too important to be left to the Tories and big business. The trade union and labour movement must promote a positive agenda for social and economic progress. Gender equality must be central to the development of these policies because improving women's lives and creating a more equal society is good for economic growth and social coherence. Let's get on with the job.

BY ANITA WRIGHT



# NAW at Wortley!



ONCE again we organised our National Assembly of Women stall at the South Yorkshire Festival in Wortley Hall's gardens. The sun shone and the fabulous goods donated by our members "flew off the shelves" and £207 was raised for the NAW's coffers.

# Sylvia at Wortley!



THIS year's Sylvia Pankhurst Lecture was given by author and activist Ruth Taillon on *Socialism, feminism and the women of 1916*. Details and the text of the lecture is here <http://sylvia pankhurst.gn.apc.org/index.htm>

# NAW autumn seminar 2016

FOLLOWING last year's success, the National Assembly of Women will be holding its second weekend seminar on 12 and 13 November at Wortley Hall, Sheffield.

Keynote speaker is economist and activist, Dr Faiza Shaheen, Director of the Centre for Labour and Social Studies and former Head of Inequality and Sustainable Development at Save the Children UK.

There will be plenty of opportunities to discuss what kind of social, political and economic policies would benefit women as well as having the chance to relax and enjoy networking with other sisters.



All-in costs for the weekend (includes en suite rooms, all meals, refreshments and all sessions) are:

- Single room occupancy £75
- Sharing twin room £60 per person
- Non-residential delegates £20

The NAW is subsidising this event from the Val Duncan Memorial Fund.

To book, email [naw@sisters.org.uk](mailto:naw@sisters.org.uk) or write to The NAW, 72 Milwain Road, Burnage, Manchester M19 2PR.

Cheques should be made payable to The National Assembly of Women.

## what's on...

The NAW **Executive Committee** meetings are open to all members. If you would like to attend please contact the Secretary on [naw@sisters.org.uk](mailto:naw@sisters.org.uk) or at NAW, Bridge House, Newport Street, Hay on Wye, Powys HR3 5BG

Next meetings are Saturday 10 September London, Sunday 13 November Wortley Hall, Saturday 28 January London.

A colour pdf of Sisters can be downloaded at [www.sisters.org.uk](http://www.sisters.org.uk)

## join the NAW now!

*I would like to join the NAW. Here is £20 for the annual subscription (£10 unwaged) which includes my subscription to **sisters**, the journal of the NAW.*

*Our organisation would like to affiliate to the NAW. Enclosed is: £20 (local organisation/NAW branch), £45 (regional organisation), £60 (national)*

Name

Address

postcode

Organisation

phone

email

Send to: NAW, 1 Lee Close, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 0DW