



JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN 50P WINTER 2016

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economy for equality

AN ECONOMY THAT DELIVERS EQUALITY –
REPORT OF THE NAW WEEKEND SEMINAR
NOVEMBER 2016

DR Faiza Shaheen, Director of the Centre for Labour and Social Studies (CLASS) opened the NAW weekend seminar with the statement that what women need is what society as a whole needs. She talked about the work of CLASS in challenging mainstream economic and social ideas and of the talent and energy of those on the left in CLASS who don't want their work to just be in journals but are reaching out beyond the labour movement through conferences and events. The CLASS annual conference in November was an excellent example of how CLASS brings together a diverse range of speakers who are committed to mapping a progressive path forward for Britain.

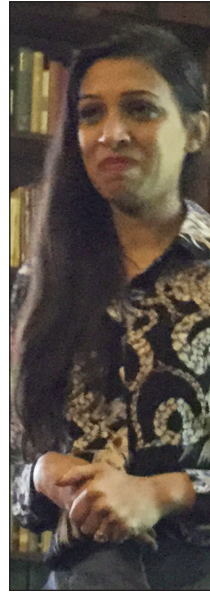
She drew attention to the link between gender and race inequality, saying that the gender pay gap is greater for black and ethnic minority women who tend to work in lower paid jobs: "Gender inequality is growing because the hospitality and care sectors in our economy is growing. Women have been worse hit by austerity, particularly women of colour and the labour market is becoming increasingly polarised with low wages and de-industrialisation on one side compared to high wages and finance markets on the other side".

She identified the key factors for creating a more equal society notably:

- an economy that is inclusive; built on growth; with good jobs; funded by a progressive taxation system and within a spend-based framework
- a commitment to end discrimination through laws and policies that address discriminatory barriers alongside a public campaign to challenge prejudice and ingrained reactionary social norms
- accountability and representation that gives people a voice in decision making; ensures budget transparency and preceded by equality assessment.

In conclusion Dr Shaheen made the case for the campaign for gender equality to focus on the intersection with race inequality and stressed the importance of trade unions in challenging discrimination and inequality.

The seminar continued on day two with a presentation by Siobhan Edean, Unite Head of Equalities on The role of Women in the Trade Unions. Siobhan echoed Dr Shaheen's view that there is a deliberate attack on trade unions in order to disarm the workforce. She said that a strong industrial strategy was needed that recognised the digital economy along with the development of strong public



services. She said that the fight for equal pay was not about the redistribution of the existing pot of money but a challenge about the size of the pot.

Siobhan argued for trade unions needed to change their structures and practices in order to build leaderships which included more women. Finally, Siobhan said that we have to build alliances between trade unions and communities and celebrate the contribution women have made to building our society – citing the Ladies Bridge Project when women workers physically rebuilt Waterloo Bridge.

Anita Wright, NAW President opened the presentation on The Role of Women in Society by stating that "Female oppression is indissolubly linked to the operation and maintenance of the capitalist system". She showed how in early pre-class societies the division of labour between men and women was more co-operative and not exploitative. Frederick Engels saw women's oppression under capitalism as "a problem of history not biology". In an advanced capitalist society like ours, working class women bear the greatest burden of low wages and the most housework and caring responsibilities. The solution is to struggle for a government committed to an expansion of the economy and creation of well paid, secure employment, educational opportunities and the socialisation of domestic services and child care facilities.

Throughout the two days, delegates at the seminar had the opportunity to discuss a range of topics including the cost of war and peace; the welfare state; the EU referendum; equality at home and in the workplace and community campaigning as well as having the chance to relax and enjoy the wonderful catering services and surroundings of Wortley Hall.

women work for free...

THURSDAY 10 November 2016 was Equal Pay Day (EPD). This means that women are effectively working for free from 10 November to the end of the calendar year, because on average they earn less than men. EPD is calculated using the mean full time gender pay gap which is currently 13.9%.

EPD 2016 falls only one day later than EPD 2015 which means the pay gap is closing. But at the current rate of progress it will take over 60 years to close the gender pay gap. With low pay impacting on the lives of millions of women and with mounting evidence of the impact gender inequality has on our economy, it's clear we simply can't afford to wait that long.

The jobs women do are more likely to be low paid, they are less likely to receive bonuses or to progress to the most senior and highest paid roles. Women still face discrimination in the workplace with 54,000 women having to leave their jobs early every year after having a baby or becoming pregnant. In addition, the under-valuing of caring roles means those not in paid employment but working looking after loved ones often do not have sufficient support and recognition and are often excluded from opportunities to move into paid work.

The labour market is highly segregated with 80% of care workers being women while 90% of the science, technology, engineering and manufacturing sector workforces are men. Jobs which are traditionally done by women are paid less than those which are mostly carried out by men. One US study found that as women moved into male-dominated sectors the pay fell which reinforces the fact that women we undervalued rather than the jobs they do.

The introduction of mandatory gender pay gap reporting means that companies with over 250 staff will have to publish both their mean and median pay gap. But this on its own will not help to close the gender pay gap. We need to campaign to ensure that employers are required to publish an action plan on how they intend to close the gap and there should be legal sanctions for those who fail to address this gender discrimination.

[HTTP://WWW.FAWCETTSOCIETY.ORG.UK/
POLICY-RESEARCH/THE-GENDER-PAY-GAP/](http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/policy-research/the-gender-pay-gap/)

fighting for a **fair society**



THERE'S been a huge amount of media hype about women in leadership recently with Hilary Clinton standing for US President and Theresa May becoming Prime Minister. Great play was made of their gender during the election period and it's often used against them – Theresa May was criticised for not having children, Clinton for not being in strong enough health to lead the country. So even these Tory women have to cope with the deeply rooted sexism and misogyny in our capitalist society BUT what really separates them from women in our movement is their class politics.

Theresa May, like all previous Tory Prime ministers is pro-privatisation, pro-big business and strongly anti-trade union. As a member of both the coalition government and previous Tory government she has fully

endorsed policies that have ruthlessly pushed down wages, asset stripped the welfare state and local services in order to maximise private profit and increase private wealth.

Women, particularly working class women have been hardest hit by these slash and burn policies:

- Over 400,000 jobs lost in the public sector – mostly occupied by women
- Civil service smallest since the Second World War
- 1.7million people on zero hours contracts
- 1 in 8 working people living in poverty
- Gender pay gap still high, rising to 25.9% for women over 50
- One fifth of women's income made up from benefits, which have been cut
- 400 Sure Start nurseries closed
- Cuts to voluntary sector including

Women's Refuges (68% of workers in the voluntary aided sector are women)

Most women start their life in a low paid job and end their life in a low paid job which means they suffer from pension poverty in old age. The Trussel Trust report that they have given three days food to over one million people in 2015. One in five mothers has gone without a meal to feed their children and one in six children are now living in poverty. The situation has got so bad that Trussel has now set up Energy Banks because of fuel poverty and funeral directors are reporting a rise in people applying for a government grant to bury relatives.

Meanwhile inequality is at its highest

■ 634,000 of Britain's wealthiest people own 20 times more than the poorest 13 million

■ The richest 10% own more than half of Britain's wealth

■ Top 1% own 23% of the wealth while the poorest 20% own 0.8%.

Trade unions are vital in the fightback as we are the largest voluntary organisation representing over five million people with over 53% of trade unionists being women. We are everywhere, in schools, offices, factories, and hospitals. Women are more integrated in our communities – we use local services more than men particularly libraries, health services and clinics – and are predominantly the carers for the young and elderly. So we are uniquely placed to link trade unions with our community and build strong and resilient networks. What women do best is bring together the organisational experience of trade unions with the experience and knowledge of our local community.

This is what the NAW did in 1949 after the war, campaigning for peace, jobs, equality and a stable future for children. We're still doing the same now by supporting the People's Assembly; being involved in the peace movement and working in local campaigns to save A&Es, libraries et al. *And importantly* engaging in the debate about an economy that delivers equality. Equality is not an add-on luxury – it has to be integral to all our policies. If we're serious about fighting for a fair, just and truly equal society then gender equality must be central to every campaign and women in the leadership of this movement.

ANITA WRIGHT IS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN

THIS IS AN EDITED VERSION OF THE SPEECH SHE MADE AT MIDLANDS TUC EQUALITIES CONFERENCE

the WIDF congress

255 WOMEN, REPRESENTING 55 ORGANISATIONS FROM 44 COUNTRIES CAME TOGETHER IN BOGOTA, COLOMBIA, FROM 14 TO 18 SEPTEMBER FOR THE 16TH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION (WIDF) UNDER THE THEME "WOMEN UNITED FOR PEACE AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM".

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN, AS THE ONLY BRITISH AFFILIATE TO THE WIDF WAS REPRESENTED BY LIZ PAYNE AND ANITA WRIGHT

AT a packed opening ceremony chaired by the WIDF European Vice-President, Skevi Koukouma of Cyprus, delegates received messages of greeting and enjoyed an artistic and cultural programme. The general secretary of the Communist Party of Colombia addressed the gathering and a video-recorded contribution from Victoria Sandino, one of the FARC negotiating team in Cuba, was played. Ms Sandino stressed the crucial importance of women standing shoulder to shoulder with men in building the peace process and securing its effectiveness.

In closing the opening ceremony, the WIDF World President, Marcia de Campos, welcomed and saluted delegates, organisations that could not be present for whatever reason and all the struggling women of the world.

During the congress delegates had the opportunity to attend workshops on key debates including imperialist wars, aggression and challenges to peace; the capitalist crisis and its impact on women; climate change, food security and women; democratic rights for women, equal pay and the campaign to stop violence against women as well as the direction of the WIDF in campaigning for equal rights for women everywhere.

The congress elected Lorena Pena of El Salvador as the new WIDF World President to serve for the next four years. Congress also agreed to strengthen its regional organisation by electing two, rather than one, Vice-Presidents for each region as follows:

- Europe: Skevi Koukouma from Cyprus and Ada Donno from Italy
- Asia: Chae Chun Hui from North Korea and Anie Raja from India
- America: Elizabeth Tortoza from Venezuela and Gloria Ines from Colombia
- Arab World: Intissar Elwazir from Palestine and Shamiran Odisho from Iraq
- Africa: Luzia Ingles Van Dunen from Angola and Petrima Hangura from Namibia

The President and Vice President constitute the Secretariat. Regional Co-ordinators were also elected and representatives from each region were also endorsed who together constitute

the Steering Committee which assists in co-ordinating the work of the Secretariat. All these committees met immediately following the close of congress.

The WIDF congress was taking place at a crucial time in Colombia's history because after 52 years of civil war a peace treaty had been negotiated between the government and the FARC opposition. An advisory referendum was due to be held in October to endorse the treaty. Hopes were high that it would be a YES vote, even though reactionary forces were campaigning against the peace deal. For this reason it was decided that while in Bogota, WIDF delegates and supporters, young and old, would march through the centre of the city culminating in a rally, theatrical performance and the laying of flowers in the Plazoleta Policarpa. NAW delegates, along with other sisters were proud to join the march in an act of solidarity with the amazing women of Colombia and all those around the world struggling for peace and justice.



FINAL DECLARATION OF THE WIDF FROM THE XVI CONGRESS IN BOGOTA, COLOMBIA, SEPTEMBER 2016

We meet at a crucial time in Bogota for the XVI Congress of the Women's International Democratic Federation under the theme "Women united for peace and the struggle against imperialism".

Our Colombian comrades are negotiating peace in their country. They set a great example for the world and we join them in declaring our unconditional support for the struggle for peace in all countries.

We live in a time when imperialism led by the US, the European Union and NATO extends its military aggression across the world. At the same time, initiating an economic and political war which is causing relentless violence and destruction, based on lies, manipulation and distortion of the facts. Through terrorist acts, coups disrespect and violation of rights and freedoms, imperialism seeks to politically influence countries that are legitimately seeking their independence and sovereignty. Never before have we seen such a great number of conflicts across the globe.

However, the unity we have built in the XVI Congress has renewed our hope. The founding principles of the WIDF are closely linked to the struggle for peace and solidarity, with women defending their legitimate interests and rights. Resistance renews and strengthens our organisation as the only international force for equality and rights of women.

On every continent, WIDF actively demands that governments establish and implement laws that strengthen domestic markets, promote the interests of its people, build their national industries, promote the public budget against the neoliberal policies of privatization that benefit banks and landowners to the detriment of creating jobs, public health, education, transport, security and housing.

The WIDF urges all women in the world to keep strong and united, advancing step by step in our determination to be independent, democratic and anti-imperialist. The WIDF, over 70 years, has worked for the mobilisation of women from all continents through strengthening their common and global causes. The expansion of the WIDF as the driving force for the liberation of women is essential to embody the struggle of women for a world of justice and peace.

The XVI Congress of the WIDF is in itself an important contribution in making connections, strengthening relations of friendship and cooperation, defining strategies to improve our work and create the conditions for the just struggle for a society without exploitation of man by man, for peace and human dignity.

LONG LIVE THE WIDF! LONG LIVE INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY!

LONG LIVE THE STRUGGLE OF THE WOMEN OF THE WORLD! WE SHALL OVERCOME!

tackling violence against **women**

25 November is the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women – and a TUC delegation of female trade unionists joined sisters from across Europe in Madrid to fight back against the sex-based violence women face at home and in work. The European TUC study *Safe at Home, Safe at Work* has uncovered the shocking scale of violence against women across 11 European Union member states.

“Violence at work, including the effect of domestic violence at work, affects workers’ wellbeing, health, safety and job performance,” the study points out. “Violence at work is a core safety and health issue and remains a major and persistent barrier to the achievement of gender equality at work and in society.”

One in three women has experienced sexual or physical violence. One in five has been assaulted at work and more than half have experienced sexual harassment. In Britain, that rises to two thirds in the 18-24 age group.

The TUC’s *Everyday Sexism Project* published this summer found that almost all harassers (nine out of 10) were men and 17 per cent had line management authority over the women they were harassing.

Tackling this epidemic of sexist abuse is made harder by the fact that most women (79 per cent) do not report it when they are subjected to sexual harassment. Around a quarter worry that they will not be believed if they do so, while a fifth are too embarrassed to come forward. Others fear for their job prospects or workplace relationships if they tell their employer.

This is a trade union issue, a workplace issue that affects all women, whatever their race, age or sector.

And it’s getting worse. Since 2010 the Conservative-Liberal Democrat and Conservative governments have presided over an explosion in casualised, precarious and insecure employment. The zero-hours contract is now a staple feature of employment in social care, retail, catering, cleaning and hospitality, and even – as my union the UCU has exposed – in professions such as university lecturers.

Sexual harassment is widespread among both students and staff at universities – but it is frequently invisible. Many universities operate confidentiality clauses and non-disclosure agreements as part of their contracts, and it appears these are being used to silence victims to protect the reputation of institutions. This can allow perpetrators to go unpunished or transfer to other workplaces where they continue to harass and abuse women.

Workers on zero-hours contracts lack the hard-won protections of full-time employees and are at a greater risk of facing discrimination and ill-treatment.

TUC research has shown that women without job security feel less able to take action against colleagues who are sexually harassing them because they fear retaliation – a woman who speaks out can have her hours cut or even lose the job entirely without management having to provide any explanation.

The greater numbers of migrant women and younger women in insecure work means these women are facing increasing violence. In the public sector, government cuts have led to underfunded and understaffed services. Not only do women bear the brunt of the impact as the majority of public-sector workers – taking the pay freezes and the extra work burden caused by understaffing – but they are on the receiving end of increasing violence from service users.

The more that workers lack power, the more susceptible we are to abuse of all kinds, from anyone.

So this is not just an equalities or human rights matter – it is a key issue for trade unionists.

In Britain, trade unions have been at the forefront of campaigns against violence against women, providing guides to help workers know and assert their rights, hotlines to report bullying and practical assistance, advice and representation to victims. A range of campaigns have highlighted particular cases – such as Unite’s campaign against violence in the hotel sector or Usdaw’s on safe journeys to and from work. But there’s much more to do.

In Madrid this week we’re discussing how unions can intervene to protect women, for example by engaging in strategic litigation with employers who refuse to provide a safe working environment, campaigning for proper legal protection from third-party sexual harassment (for example by a customer in a shop or a passenger on a bus). We’ll be looking at how we can get employers to help staff who encounter domestic violence – winning them the right to paid leave or access to counselling and support.



Unions need to be drawing up guidelines for best practice in these areas and ensuring they are included in bargaining with employers. And we need to recruit, particularly among groups such as young women and migrant women who are less likely to belong to a union. Not only does trade union membership provide support and assistance in enforcing your rights – especially for those in precarious work – trade unions will be crucial to fighting back against casualisation and insecurity in the first place.

25 November 2016 was the 56th International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. Sexual harassment is specifically outlawed under the Equality Act, and the United Nations declaration on the elimination of violence against women goes further, recognising that it is “a manifestation of historically unequal power relations” and “one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.” But the fact that gender-based violence is on the rise shows acknowledging the problem is not enough. As socialists, as feminists and as trade unionists, we need to eliminate violence against women once and for all.

VICKY KNIGHT (PICTURED ABOVE) IS CHAIR OF THE TUC WOMEN'S COMMITTEE AND VICE PRESIDENT OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE UNION

THIS ARTICLE FIRST APPEARED IN THE MORNING STAR



for **peace** and **unity**

The campaign goes on – report of the CND conference

“INSPIRATION for the year ahead” said Kate Hudson, general secretary of CND, reporting back from the two-day Annual Conference held in Manchester in October. NAW sent two delegates to the conference, held in the historic Mechanics’ Institute.

The opening session received a rousing welcome to Manchester from former NAW president and veteran peace campaigner Betty Tebbs.

The first day of the conference was dedicated to CND’s democratic process and debated a number of important resolutions around continuing to campaign on Trident despite the recent vote by the Tories to renew the submarines which carry the missiles, mobilising against NATO and so-called “missile defence”, new and emerging weapons systems, and continuing to oppose nuclear power and the new build at Hinkley. Two vice presidents – Caroline Lucas MP and Jeremy Corbyn MP sent heartening video messages. Jenny Clegg writes elsewhere in this issue about lethal underwater drones which the National Assembly of Women helped to get debated at CND Conference.

The second day focused on campaigning – looking at “What Works” in lobbying MPs, using social media, working with local authorities and joining the dots around arms sales and militarism. Workshop sessions followed, enabling everyone present to engage with the forward agenda and gain a sense of what we have to do.

BY PAM FLYNN (PICTURED BELOW)
WWW.CNDUK.ORG



Britain and the UN ban on nuclear weapons

ONE hundred and twenty-three members of the United Nations General Assembly recently voted to convene a conference in 2017 to negotiate a ban on nuclear weapons. The UK government chose to vote against these negotiations. This is a bizarre position, to put it mildly. Successive UK governments have stated a commitment to both a nuclear weapon free world and its achievement through a multilateral process. Yet faced with the opportunity to take forward genuine multilateral talks, the UK first boycotted the United Nations discussions on a global ban and then turned up to vote *against* starting negotiations!

Prior to the UN discussions more than 2,000 emails were sent to the Foreign Secretary or the Ambassador to the UN asking for genuine participation in the discussions. All correspondence on this topic appears to have been ignored. This is despite the UK’s obligations under the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty to enter into negotiations to bring about the elimination of nuclear weapons.

So now it’s necessary to pile on the pressure to get the government to engage with the process, sit down at the table and support a global nuclear ban. Negotiations will begin next spring. You can get postcards to send to Boris Johnson MP from CND.

BY LYDIA MERYLL
WWW.CNDUK.ORG

Students and young people fighting for peace and unity

WORLD Youth Day on 11 November marked the foundation of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) in 1945, when thousands of delegates representing millions of young people from around the globe gathered at London’s Royal Albert Hall pledging to fight so future generations would be free from the horrors of fascism and war.

“After 71 years of life the message of WFDY remains the same – the goal to overthrow imperialism is our duty,” the federation declared in a message to mark the historic day. The demands for the end of occupations, wars, foreign interventions, exploitation and oppression remain untouchable in the positions of WFDY.”

The UN-recognised youth body called on its international affiliates to ensure massive participation in next year’s World Festival of Youth and Students in Russia. The event – the 19th world youth festival organised by WFDY – in Sochi will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

WWW.WFDY.ORG

free Narges Mohammadi

LIZ PAYNE REPORTS ON THE CAMPAIGN TO
FREE IRANIAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER

PHILIP Luther, Amnesty International's Director of Middle East and North Africa Programmes, said recently, "It is shameful for the Iranian authorities to treat as a criminal a prominent human rights defender who has been lauded as a beacon of hope". He was referring to Narges Mohammadi, a political prisoner in Tehran's notorious Evin jail. She is, without doubt, one of the most courageous women. She was already serving a six-year sentence for her human rights campaigning, working with the Defenders of Human Rights Centre (DHRC) in Iran on human rights reform and in defence of prisoners of conscience. Earlier this year, she was hoping against hope that she would be released and reunited with her husband, also a former long term political prisoner now living in exile in France, and their nine-year-old twins, Ali and Kiana. The authorities had another view.

Narges was tried on 20 April this year by the Revolutionary Court in Tehran but the verdict was not conveyed to her lawyer until 17 May – 16 more years in prison on trumped up charges – "founding an illegal group" (this being Legam, 'Step by Step to Stop the Death Penalty'), "colluding to commit crimes against national security" and "spreading propaganda against the system". Narges prepared an appeal but was never allowed to lodge it. By the time she came to court, they said on 19 September 2016, that the case had already been decided. Her 16 years was confirmed and she would serve a minimum of 10.

This brave woman has been a campaigner since her youth. While she was a university student of physics she wrote and published articles on women's rights. After graduating she went on to develop a career in journalism, a path well-suited to the stalwart campaigner she was fast becoming. In 2008 Narges Mohammadi was elected president of the Executive Committee of the National Council of Peace in Iran. She then took on the role of vice-president of the Defenders of Human Rights Centre, working with its president, Shirin Ebadi.

Iran has the highest per capita execution rate in the world. Narges went on to found the campaign, Legam, to put a stop to the death penalty forever. Even in prison she continued fighting for rights, in this case her right to speak by telephone with her two young children with whom contact was being denied. She went on hunger-strike and won.

But the cruel conditions of her detention have taken a huge toll on

Narges' health. She is a sick woman and is being denied the medical attention she needs. She has a pulmonary embolism and a neurological disorder, exacerbated by her prison environment, which causes seizures and temporary paralysis.

The National Assembly of Women is joining others worldwide to condemn the appalling human rights record of Iran's theocratic regime and to demand the immediate release of Narges Mohammadi and all political prisoners. It is the right of the people of Iran to determine their own destiny free from the threat of imprisonment and torture when speaking out for equality and justice.

Please write calling for the immediate release of Narges Mohammadi and all political prisoners in Iran to:

The Iranian Ambassador to the United Kingdom

The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran

16 Princes Gate, London SW7 1PT



underwater drones

JENNY CLEGG IS AN ELECTED MEMBER OF
CND NATIONAL COUNCIL, A MEMBER OF THE
INTERNATIONAL PEACE BUREAU AND AN
EXPERT ON CHINA AND THE ASIA-PACIFIC
REGION

HERE, SHE WRITES ABOUT SO-CALLED
MISSILE DEFENCE AND CONSIDERATION BY
THE UNITED STATES OF DEPLOYING
UNDERWATER DRONES AS PART OF ITS
SURVEILLANCE IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.
AT THE RECENT CND CONFERENCE, THIS
ISSUE FORMED PART OF DISCUSSION ABOUT
ADVANCES IN DRONE TECHNOLOGY
MEANING THAT TRIDENT SUBMARINES ARE
VULNERABLE TO DETECTION AND ATTACK

THE US 'Asian pivot', launched in 2011, involves a shift in the US balance of military deployment into the Pacific region in order to contain the rise of China. It has now entered into a third phase in which emphasis will be placed on the deployment of underwater drones, according to a speech by the US Defence Secretary, Ash Carter, September. His statement followed just days after another keynote address in which he not only confirmed the US nuclear modernisation programme but also (chillingly) suggested a preparedness to lower the threshold for use of nuclear weapons.

Russia and China are also developing underwater drones to detect the movement of ocean-going vessels and anti-Trident campaigners argue that our nuclear weapons are now therefore obsolete. But Russia and China lack the extensive spy system that the US is able to mobilise with its missile defence systems ringed around the world.

The US is already able to track Chinese nuclear-capable submarines

as they leave or re-enter their base on China's southern coast. (China has a policy of 'no first use' so these submarines will not actually carry nuclear warheads). The US flies around 500 reconnaissance missions up and down China's coast each year, and last year it carried out over 1,000 surveillance operations over the South China Sea. This information-gathering feeds into the US missile defence systems in the Asia Pacific region, and the deployment of underwater drones would enhance the effectiveness of missile defence even further.

So-called 'missile defence' is of course the 'shield' that conceals the 'sword' of strike capacity.

The Pentagon has been quietly devising a scheme to launch an all-or-nothing war with China, an Air Sea Battle (ASB) plan to take out all of China's key military installations, destroying many of its major cities in the process. We saw the 'shock and awe' attack on Baghdad in 2003; ASB would be 20 or 30 times that scale.

Underwater drones are very much part of the US pursuit of full spectrum domination (FSD) – the military dominance of land, sea, air and space. This would allow the US to carry out a pre-emptive strike with impunity, without fear of retaliation. We are now moving beyond the realm of mutually assured destruction into the realm of 'one side assures the total annihilation of the other'. It is this that is making the world more and more dangerous. Underwater drones must be understood in this context.

Russian Revolution

THE Russian Revolution changed the course of human history and heralded the establishment of the world's first socialist state – the Soviet Union. Under the political leadership of the Bolsheviks, the Revolution overthrew the Provisional Government that had replaced the hated regime of Tsar Nicholas II in February 1917. Greeted with enthusiasm by millions around the world, the Revolution has inspired many popular movements for progressive social change as well as oppressed peoples struggling against colonialism and imperialism.

The National Assembly of Women has been invited to join the Russian Revolution Centenary Committee, which is a broad-based coalition of labour movement, heritage and cultural organisations that includes the Marx

Memorial Library, the Society for the Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies and the Southern and Eastern Region of the TUC with the aim of not only marking the anniversary but also informing debate about its continued relevance to politics and society today. We hope our participation will help to highlight the role of women in this revolutionary period and their contribution to building the new Soviet socialist society.

A diverse programme of events celebrating the centenary is being organised with the main event taking place in Congress Hall at the TUC on Saturday 4 November 2017.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT:
[HTTP://1917.ORG.UK/RUSSIAN-REVOLUTION](http://1917.org.uk/russian-revolution)

seasonal
greetings

Seasonal greetings from the NAW to all our members, affiliates and friends and here's to the continued fight for peace, progress and equality in 2017

save the NHS!



Do you pay your NAW membership by standing order?

If you currently pay your NAW membership by standing order into our Co-operative Bank Account we would like you to cancel it and take out a new standing order into our new **Unity Trust Bank Account**:

Account Number 20364894
National Assembly of Women
Sort Code 60-83-01

Membership runs from 1st January to 31st December

Please consider making a regular monthly contribution to cover your membership fee plus a donation to the work of the NAW

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 or at NAW, Bridge House, Newport Street, Hay on Wye, Powys HR3 5BG

The next meeting will be on Saturday 28 January in London.

A colour pdf of Sisters can be downloaded at 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