



FORMER NAW PRESIDENT
BARBARA SWITZER AND
CAROLYN JONES WITH THE
NAW BANNER AT WORTLEY

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an extreme form of poverty...

A recent report showing a surge in child destitution was shocking in two respects. First was the scale of misery that is being inflicted on young people in this country, one which is easily rich enough to end poverty for good. But the second shock was the widespread indifference to the report in both media and political circles. Those who simply want to cover up and excuse this dreadful government are effectively now being joined by those who claim things are so bad that nothing can be done to improve them. We should never accept such a state of affairs, or the complacent indifference to them.

The report reckons from its survey evidence that there are now 120,000 children in this country experiencing "destitution". Destitution is an extreme form of poverty defined as regularly having to go without food, clothing, heating, hot running water or possessions.

The Buttle charity survey reports that it has risen to 60% of the children they work with, up from 36% just two years ago.

The charity cannot say so, but this extreme rise in the worst levels of poverty is a direct function of government policy. Unlike many other countries that introduced some form of price controls, this government simply allowed oligopolies in energy, in food distribution, in banking and in housing to charge whatever they could get away with. At the same time, they increased taxes on ordinary people by freezing the income tax thresholds. They also campaigned relentlessly against any pay rises trying to keep up with inflation. This has reached extremes in the rail industry, as, rather than settle the dispute, at far greater cost the government has been subsidising the rail companies with taxpayers' money to allow them to continue the dispute.

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the government has also cut benefits in seven of the last 10 years, even freezing them as prices were rising. The rise in poverty and even extreme poverty was not only predictable as a result, but the government was also warned it would happen. The labour movement should be clear – this has always been a part of Tory ideology and now it is widespread and dominant. It is the ideology which claims that boardroom and City fat cats must be "incentivised" to work through huge pay, workers and the poor must be made poorer to force them into work. Poverty is a policy, not an accident. Impoverishment is also affecting very broad layers of the population. It is widely known now that real average earnings (after taking inflation into account) have been falling for well over 18 months. But they also fell sharply, almost without interruption for the six years after the global financial crisis in 2008. This is one of the principal effects of the austerity policy which has never really gone away.

Yet this average also conceals a significant disparity between rich and poor. According to the Office for National Statistics last year alone, the real income of the top-earning 20% of households rose by 1.6%. But in the same year, the real income of the bottom 20% by earnings fell by 3.8%.

The spread of poverty is having widespread and detrimental effects on society. Shelter reports that millions of people are on a financial cliff edge, with one-third of all renters in work having less than one month's rent in savings, and over a million more having just that one month. The implications for relationship breakdowns, mental health, anxiety and job precariousness are dramatic. People in that position simply cannot afford to go on strike, a real factor which has hampered some disputes.

On a separate front, the government's strangulation of the NHS by underfunding has forced some who can afford it to reluctantly take up private medicine options. The Centre for Health and Public Interest reports the surreptitious growth in the privatisation of social care and health services. The report shows that over 30 years the numbers of people forced to make contributions to their own care have almost doubled. The biggest increases have been in the most recent years. The same is true in dentistry and the number of people paying for elective surgery such as knee and hip replacements is surging, even paying for them on credit.

There is also a hue and cry now about the rise in shoplifting. Of course, this can provide real difficulties for small shopkeepers. But it is a direct product of the rise in poverty itself. Tower Hamlets council has shown that the most shoplifted item is Calpol, which is heartbreaking.

It is no use for anyone on the front benches to talk about a clampdown on shoplifting if there are millions of potential defendants. The jails would quickly overflow. Instead of a war on the poor – cutting benefits, raising taxes, refusing pay rises and demonising them – there should instead be a war on poverty. There is money left. It just needs to be redirected.

In 2010 when austerity was first implemented, real GDP per head was £7,398 in this country. Now it is £8,220. We can



draw two important conclusions from these basic facts.

The first is that there is money left; the economic pie is a little bit bigger. Yet we have growth in both mass poverty and extreme destitution. The pie has grown but the mass of the population is getting a far smaller slice.

Redistribution must be part of our agenda, starting with the wealth and incomes of those who have taken a far greater share – big business and the rich. But the second conclusion is that austerity has completely failed to revive the economy, contrary to the claims of its supporters. Average per capita GDP growth has been well below 1% a year for the last 13 years. This is far lower than the pre-austerity average growth rates.

It is completely ridiculous and hopelessly defeatist to argue that "things are so bad that nothing can be done", yet this seems to be an official political consensus. A little humility is needed. Every poor country which has developed significantly over the last 50 years began much poorer than this country is now. None of them achieved improvement by attacking their own poor. Instead, development means what it says: developing skills, infrastructure, education, public services, housing and transport – and taxing big business and borrowing for as much investment as we can to fund it.

BY DIANE ABBOTT, LABOUR MP FOR HACKNEY NORTH AND STOKE NEWINGTON

THIS ARTICLE WAS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED IN THE MORNING STAR ON 25 AUGUST 2023



time for us to face the future



MARIA EXALL, AN OFFICER IN THE GREATER LONDON BRANCH OF THE COMMUNICATION WORKERS' UNION (CWU), IS THIS YEAR'S TUC PRESIDENT. SHE WILL PRESIDE OVER THE TUC CONGRESS IN LIVERPOOL IN SEPTEMBER 2023

CONGRESS is taking place this year after a wave of industrial action unprecedented for a generation. Also unprecedented is the involvement of women, as trade union general secretaries of the unions taking action, as leaders of the industrial disputes, and as members standing and marching together in solidarity. Our diverse movement has come of age with picket lines and demonstrations often majority women, black and white, and with LGBT+ and disability contingents and many younger union members participating.

We have seen co-ordinated action within and across sectors greater than in previous periods of activity. Not since the 1980s have we seen such a national upsurge but the issues we have to face in 2023 are, in many ways, more acute. During the Miners' Strike, the battles at Wapping and at Warrington we saw a vindictive and anti-working-class Tory government aiding employers who were their billionaire friends and donors. No change there then!

However, the deterioration of local services and social security after 13 years of Tory austerity has caused a profound alienation in the country. And it is working class women who have to try and hold together our stretched and torn social fabric, providing the care when the State has withdrawn. The current poverty and cost of living crisis leaves many people and communities seemingly without hope.

We as a trade union movement have to ensure that this alienation does not lead to support for national populist politicians and their friends in the far right. As well as the usual far right targets – migrants and LGBT+ people – increasingly we are seeing overt sexism and misogyny expressed as part of the discourse of far-right media and political commentators and influencers.

Throughout the world the accumulation of capital has become even more concentrated. Multinational behemoths exploit platform economy employees and women workers are excluded from many of the new and emerging tech sectors of the economy. Low pay and casualisation are endemic for many women workers.

In our workplaces, ongoing gender job segregation, lack of access to childcare and attacks on our trade union rights have accelerated economic inequality. The evidence of how economic inequality has social and environmental consequences within the world of work are there to see, and also they threaten the future of humanity on the planet.

No State or trading block seems to have the power or the will to hold the likes of Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg or Elon Musk to account for their mega profits through the exploitation of the labour force. But we as a movement are responding.

There have been many private sector strikes in the past year several of them in the tech and platform economy. Thousands of new GMB members in the Amazon warehouses are challenging Jeff Bezos directly. And CWU members in BT Openreach have taken action to keep pay fair in the second most profitable industry in the world, communications.

Public ownership and public accountability are back on the political agenda. Public employees in the NHS and in education, the majority of whom are women, have taken effective industrial action to highlight the long-term downgrading of their pay and terms and conditions. There are renewed demands in our movement to stop outsourcing in the NHS, as well as demands for renationalisation of the failing privatised utilities such as water and energy industries as well as in the rail and postal industries.

Trade unionism is popular and getting more popular! The enthusiasm amongst

younger generations for unions is heartening, however our movement has to organise, organise, organise to prepare for the future.

We meet in Liverpool at a key political time. With a general election due and the current polls indicating a Labour victory, the thoughts of trade unionists turn towards the potential for improvements in workers' rights under a future Labour government.

Labour's affiliated unions have agreed a 'New Deal for Working People' with the Party. This contains crucial changes in union rights to bargain collectively, to organise and take industrial action and a host of other improvements including day one employment rights, outlawing fire and rehire, strengthening health and safety and other workplace laws, and their enforcement. Labour has also committed to legislating for predictable contracts of employment, not zero hours ones, that will help tackle insecure work, low pay and in work poverty.

These promises are for all workers but they include demands women trade unionists have been making for decades. There are specific commitments on tackling pay discrimination and workplace harassment, giving statutory rights to equality reps, strengthening rights to work flexibly and more rights for carers at work.

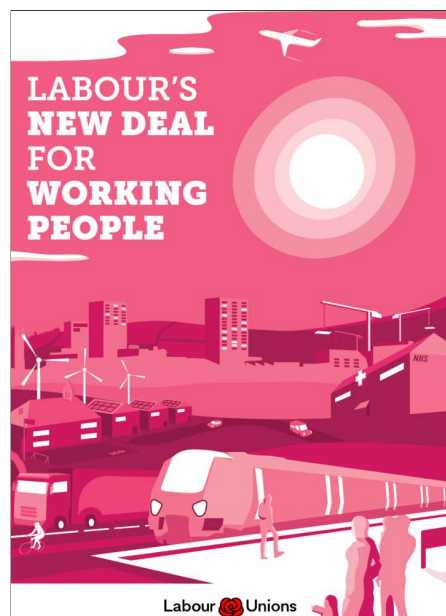
This year marks the 100th anniversary of Margaret Bondfield being elected TUC president. She was one of only three women elected as Labour MPs in the 1923 General Election, and the only one who had not been to university. During her activist years in the Women's Labour League she campaigned with socialists and feminists including Mary Macarthur. Her mixed political legacy has been reassessed in a pamphlet by Sue Dockett which is well worth a read.

Bondfield saw her trade unionism and socialist ideas as part of the same vision. A perennial lesson for us, though a hard one for to demand political change in a system stacked against us means we have to fight against powerful forces.

We have to renew the case for a working-class political representation as fundamental in a society where our interests are ignored, belittled and trampled on. As trade unionists we have to do politics to improve the lives of our members and all working-class people. Any Labour government which aspires to deliver transformative change has to listen to the trade unions.

WWW.LABOURUNIONS.ORG.UK/NEWDEAL

SUE DOCKETT 'OUT OF THE WILDERNESS – THE MARGARET BONDFIELD STORY'
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childcare – a grim tale



IN a desperate attempt by the government to show it cares about families and children, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt announced a £4 billion increase for childcare reform in the spring budget. It included plans to increase the number of childminders by piloting incentive payments of £600 to anyone signing up to the profession, rising to £1,200 if joining via an agency. The plan backfired when it was revealed that the prime minister's wife, Akshata Murty, is a shareholder in Koru Kids, which is among the private childcare providers likely to benefit from the scheme, a fact that Rishi Sunak failed to declare.

Behind this seemingly minor embarrassment for the prime minister is a much bigger story. The frightening reality is that having plundered the NHS and adult social care, with disastrous results, private equity companies have now firmly got their sights on the childcare sector.

profiteering in childcare.

The Guardian newspaper revealed in August that private equity firms have more than doubled their stake in the childcare sector. In 2022 at least 1,048 Ofsted registered nurseries were fully or partially controlled by investment companies, including private equity and venture capital firms – 75% of all nursery places, up from 4% in 2018.

In January 2022, University College London (UCL) published a report spelling out the dangers of private-profit financing of childcare. Dr Antonia Simon, lead author of the report, explained: "Many of the companies that are able to buy up parts of the nursery sector, because of the government's funding model, are heavily reliant on private equity funding and have growing debts and low to negative operating reserves, placing such provision at risk of collapse.

"The complex financial structures of these companies involve foreign investors and shareholders which are

used, alongside public money, to expand their market share. While shareholders in the private equity companies and their senior executives may profit from investing in such companies, little of this money is being reinvested back into the sector."

The findings highlight the stark contrast in the way not-for-profit childcare companies are run, with charitable nurseries supplying transparent accounts to the Charity Commission, compared to the more limited accounts larger private companies need to file with Companies House. Not-for-profit companies cannot carry substantial debts and must also reinvest any surplus into the childcare business. The UCL report also shows that staff costs in these not-for-profit companies could be as much as 14% higher than in the for-profit childcare sector. Indicating how low pay for staff, who are mostly women is built into the private childcare sector.

government sowed the seeds for privatisation

Since the 1970s, local authorities have seen a steady erosion of their strategic and financial autonomy. Increased central government control has resulted in local authorities no longer being seen as the primary service provider in their areas. The introduction of the nursery voucher scheme in 1997 which gave parents £1,100 to help with childcare, paved the way for the rapid development of the private childcare sector. Conservative MP Gillian Shepherd, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, heralded the introduction of the scheme by saying: "The point of the nursery voucher scheme is that it will encourage many providers to register for it, as has already happened. 600 providers have joined the scheme from the private and voluntary sector, 40 of them new providers."

But the voucher scheme cost £20 million and failed to increase provision. The incoming Labour government abolished it

in 1998 replacing it with an "entitlement" of 12.5 hours free part-time nursery education for four-year-olds. To ensure sufficient number of childcare places, for the first-time joint planning at local level was required between councils and the private/voluntary/independent sector (PVI). This created tensions and an element of competition between the various providers who up until then had not had to work together.

Since 2010, successive Tory governments have found a variety of ways to make local authorities fund maintained and non-maintained childcare providers at the same rate. This attempt to create a level playing field, takes no account of the different staffing costs or the quality of provision on offer. By 2017 the PVI sector was providing 62% of free places for 3-year-olds compared to 35% in the maintained sector. When the entitlement was raised to 15 hours per week in 2010 then to 30 hours for working parents in 2017 it put further strain on local authority funding. The UCL report found that opening up the childcare market to private investors has not led to an increase in places. Their incentive is profit so they are unlikely to invest in areas of deprivation where low income families are unable to financial top-up on the basic provision.

soaring costs and shortage of places

There is no government childcare support for children under the age of three unless they have additional special needs. The charity Coram Family and Childcare found that a part-time place (25 hours per week) for a child under two now costs an average of £151 a week. Putting it out of reach for many families. Price Waterhouse Cooper showed that childcare costs in the UK relative to average income were one of the highest out of the 38 OECD countries and represented almost a third of the income of a family on the average UK wage (£32k full time) compared with as little as 1% in Germany.

In addition to rising costs many families are finding it impossible to find a nursery place. Of the local authorities in England only 48% have enough childcare places to meet the demands of parents working full time, down from 59% in 2022. Between March 2021 and March 2022, 4,000 providers closed down and according to the Early Years Alliance the sector is facing its worst recruitment crisis, unsurprisingly given that working with children is undervalued and pay is low.

women priced out of the workplace

The TUC estimates that 1.46 million women are prevented from working because of caring responsibilities, with 450,000 of them in their thirties. Only 1% of men in this age group are affected in

childcare facts...

this way. The lack of free, flexible childcare affects women throughout their working life, impacting on pay, promotion, training and pension. A report this year by Pregnant Then Screwed into the childcare crisis revealed that a staggering three in four mothers (76%) who pay for childcare, say it no longer makes financial sense for them to work. The survey of more than 24,000 parents showed that increased costs now takes up the same as or more than their take home pay per day. As well as detrimentally impacting on the life choices of millions of women and depriving young children of valuable early years experiences it makes no economic sense.

equality and economics

For too long, childcare has been seen as a “women’s issue” and clearly the lack of free childcare has had a greater impact on women than men. Back in 1980, Sir George Young, Secretary of State for Social Services in Margaret Thatcher’s government made his views clear by saying “I do not accept that it is the State’s job to provide daycare to enable parents of young children to go out to work.” Echoing the dominant social and political view in government at the time – that women should stay at home to look after the children. But this wasn’t always the case.

During the Second World War, it was the Ministry of Labour that called for the setting up of nurseries so that women could support the war effort and the economy. By September 1944 there were 1,450 full time nurseries (0 to 5 year olds); 109 part time nurseries (2 to 5 year olds) and 784 nursery classes in schools (2 to 5 year olds). Dr Paul Smethwick, Chief Medical Officer at the time also noted how the nurseries helped to maintain the health and wellbeing of the children.

In February this year, Labour MP Stella Creasy, a long-standing campaigner on childcare, led a cross party debate on the

- Average cost for 25 hours for a child under two is £148.63 a week
- Government support for 3 to 4 year old childcare is for only 38 weeks per year
- Average top-up fees for extra 20 hours is £117.60 a week
- Average price of a childminder term-time to 6pm is £72.36 a week
- Average cost for after-school club is £67.42 a week
- 1 in 4 parents spend 75% of their income on childcare

- Only 5% of companies offer on-site creches
- Only 23% companies provide paid time off for emergency childcare

- Government underfunding caused 87% increase in nursery closures
- These closures cared for 5,656 children who had to find another place
- 38% nurseries are running at a loss – 45% in deprived areas
- 43% childcare providers reduced the number of places due to rising costs

- 24% of early years workforce earning at or below minimum wage
- 96% of early years workforce are women
- 77% childcare staff thinking of leaving as felt undervalued by government

www.familyandchildcaretrust.org
www.childcarechoices.gov.uk

issue. Powerfully making the point that investing in childcare is good for economic growth: “There is no area of economic policy in which investing leads to saving so clearly as in childcare, yet in this country we still act as if it were an add-on to an economy that is already struggling with productivity issues.” Drawing attention to the complicated systems that parents have to use to claim support, she called on the Treasury to use the £2.8 billion of unclaimed tax-free childcare money to be spent right now on improving childcare. With a government only

interested in personal gain and private profit, we are unlikely to see any real improvements in childcare, and Jeremy Hunt’s latest promises are merely a cheap attempt to buy votes at the next election. What we need is a complete overhaul of the current childcare sector and a plan to create a system that works in the interests of parents and children, not big business. Which is what the newly formed Early Education and Childcare Coalition is trying to do. Hosted by the Women’s Budget Group and being launched on 7 September 2023, it brings together 30 organisations, representing parents, children, providers, early years workers and the wider business community. It aims to build public and political support for an early education and childcare system that works for all children and parents as well as the wider economy. Something we have been demanding for far too long. Let’s hope the next government listens.

ANITA WRIGHT IS AN NAW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER AND FORMER PRIMARY HEADTEACHER

WWW.EARLYEDUCATIONCHILDCARE.ORG
WWW.UCL.AC.UK/NEWS/2022/JAN/NURSERY-SECTOR-RISKS-BEING-DAMAGED-LARGE-CORPORATE-TAKEOVERS
WWW.NUFFIELDFUNDATION.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2016/09/REPORT-PUBLIC-FUNDING-OF-EARLY-YEARS-EDUCATION-IN-ENGLAND-AN-HISTORICAL-PERSPECTIVE.PDF



for a warless world

HAWLIO HEDDWGCH / WELSH WOMEN'S
PEACE APPEAL CENTENARY 2023-24
WWW.HEDDWGCH.CYMRU



“
May we hand
down to the
generations
who come after
us, the proud
heritage of a
Warless World
”

Welsh Women's Peace
Appeal to America, 1923

IN 1923, galvanised by the horrors of World War One, the Women's Committee of the Welsh League of Nations Union (WLNU) organised a campaign for world peace. During the WLNU conference held at Aberystwyth University in 1923, they agreed that the best way would be to appeal to the women of the US to work with them for a world without war. It was agreed that a Memorial Petition be launched appealing to the women of America "from home to home" and "hearth to hearth" to join the women of Wales in a call for "LAW NOT WAR" and for the United States to join and lead the new League of Nations. They then set about the huge task of collecting names from every woman in every community in Wales.

A beautiful gilded, Moroccan leather and vellum Memorial Binding was illuminated by Cecily West and produced through the Cardiff School of Arts & Crafts, for presentation to the US President along with a carved oak chest to contain the signature sheets.

Within seven months, Annie Hughes-Griffiths, Mary Ellis, Elined Prys and Gladys Thomas had reached the USA with the oak chest containing the petition signed by 390,296 Welsh women. The New York press noted that the final petition presented to the women of America was over seven miles long.

Since then, the chest has been preserved and exhibited at the National Museum of American History, in Washington DC. Until, in 2019, the Women of Wales for a World without War Partnership began working with the National Library of Wales to borrow the chest and some of the petitions. The sub-

sequent discussions with the National Museum of American History eventually resulted in the 100 year old Peace Petition being welcomed back to Wales, coinciding with the announcement of an award of nearly £250,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to bring the story to life.

Over the next year, the petition will be catalogued, digitised, and opened to the public to crowdsource its transcription, along with several exhibitions at Amgueddfa Cymru – St Fagans, Wrexham Museum, and the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

Mererid Hopwood, Peace Petition

Partnership Chair said: "Against the backdrop of today's troubled world, it's an enormous privilege to remember how the women of Wales, a century ago, were bold enough to work for global peace. It's our hope that through the Peace Petition project this spirit of international co-operation, focussed on creating a fair and violence-free world, will find new voices."

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE WELSH CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, THE WELSH LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION AND THE PEACE PETITION VISIT: WWW.WCIA.ORG.UK/PEACE-HERITAGE/WOMENS-PEACE-PETITION



THE CHEST AND PETITION ARRIVED AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES IN APRIL 2023 TO A WARM WELCOME BY THE WOMEN'S PEACE PETITION PARTNERSHIP. THIS SIGNALS THE FIRST STEP IN MAKING IT ACCESSIBLE TO THE PEOPLE OF WALES. OVER THE NEXT YEAR, THE PETITION WILL BE CATALOGUED, DIGITISED, AND OPENED TO THE PUBLIC TO CROWDSOURCE ITS TRANSCRIPTION, ALONG WITH SEVERAL EXHIBITIONS AT AMGUEDDFA CYMRU – ST FAGANS, WREXHAM MUSEUM, AND THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES IN ABERYSTWYTH

woman, life, freedom

DR AZAR SEPEHRIS IS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DEMOCRATIC ORGANISATION OF IRANIAN WOMEN (DOIW). SHE REPORTS ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE WOMAN, LIFE, FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN IRAN

In Iran the struggle of women against exploitation has been compounded by reactionary 'Political Islam' and its agenda of enforcing a socially backward system of mediaeval rules with one individual acting as the 'Supreme Leader' and Jurist. Curtailing women's rights in all spheres is the defining feature of the Islamic Republic of Iran and its ideology. The regime's law of retribution which deems a woman's worth to be half a man, is another defining characteristic. The introduction of this law has had destructive consequences for women in the home, the social arena, in education, the judiciary and political life. The regime's stance towards women is misogynistic, with all the aggression and violence that it entails.

It was against this backdrop that the nationwide protests of Woman, Life, Freedom began in September 2022 following the killing of Mahsa Amini in the custody of the Guidance Patrol. The regime's brutal response to the protesters, led mainly by women and supported by students, turned the protests into a widespread uprising drawing support from all social strata, calling for an end to the mandatory hejab, and soon encompassing demands for social and political change.

Tens of thousands of people were arrested during the protests, including schoolchildren who took part in the demonstrations. Between 500 and 600 have been reported killed. An unknown number have been injured and maimed by the regime's security forces and plainclothes thugs, or in prisons and under torture.

The Islamic regime has responded to the people's protests by digging its heels in. Not too long after the start of the chain of executions, it announced the resumption of the Guidance Patrol, and new punitive schemes such as imposing fines on women with no 'hejab', or those with so-called bad hejab. It has emboldened its vigilantes who use the state policy of 'enjoining good and forbidding the banned' to harass women in public spaces. The 'fire at will' agenda which has come from the Supreme Leader is meant to terrorise women into submission.

Despite their continued persecution,

women are continuing their acts of civil disobedience by refusing to wear the hejab, wherever they can. In response the regime shuts down businesses that serve women without hejab. Female students who try to enter their university without the scarf are refused entry. Hundreds of students have been suspended from their studies.

We witnessed the deeply disturbing spread of incidents where girls in their schools, and female students in university dormitories, were poisoned by gas attacks. The regime has made little effort to investigate these events. It has been clear to all that these crimes are the regime's response to the prominent role that girls and women played in the uprising. More than 1,200 children are reported to have been affected by poison gas attacks. The regime shamelessly beat and abused the parents who complained at the school gates.

Women, alongside men, have joined protests at their working and living conditions, as well as at the dictatorship and corruption of the state. They have done so as nurses, teachers, workers, university students, lawyers, journalists, artists, actors, athletes. The prisons have been another scene of struggle, where reports of torture and rape is commonplace.

To regain control, the regime uses chain executions across Iran as an instrument of terror and crown control. In a statement in May, a group of 16 women activists, pointed out that in 12 days since mid-April the regime had executed 64 people in different parts of the country charged with different crimes. These have continued unabated. These killings add to those who have died under torture in the prisons or during street demonstrations. The people of Kurdistan and Sistan and Baluchestan are the targets of indiscriminate brutality by the regime.

In Kurdistan and Sistan and Baluchestan provinces, in protests and strikes by the workers, teachers, retirees, students, and even in political prisons, the people of Iran are calling for an end to dictatorship and for democracy, freedom and social justice.

On the eve of the anniversary of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, in September, the misogynistic regime has started to intensify its attacks on activists and dissenters. In the past few days (mid-August), the regime's security forces have arrested several women and civil movement activists simultaneously in different cities, mostly in Gilan province. These brutal attacks are attempts to

allow the regime to survive a little longer, by acts of force, terror, and repression, all the while being incapable of responding to the legitimate demands of various sections of the society, including workers, retirees, students, journalists, artists, and especially Iranian women who fight for their rights with their acts of civil resistance.

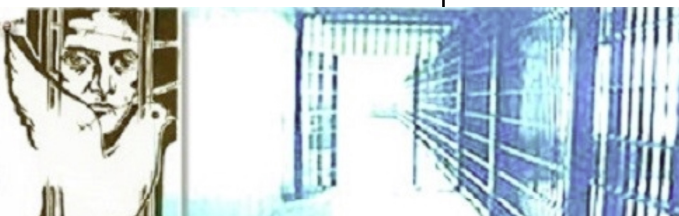
The Hejab and Chastity bill which has been proposed recently by the Supreme Leader, Aya-tollah Khamene'i, is another cynical attempt at thwarting the people's demand for change and transition from this corrupt regime. The truth of political Islam has been laid bare in the last 43 years, misogynistic attitude towards women enshrined in the law of the land, discrimination and violence against women and girls, total disregard for the working people of the country, rampant inflation and unprecedented poverty have also exposed the neoliberal economic agenda and ideology of this regime.

There is news of intensified action against activists in recent weeks. These range from the harassment of the families who seek justice for political prisoners or those who have been killed by the regime, to attacks on the demonstrations of retirees, or exerting pressure on progressive students and professors. There are reports that more than 2,800 students have been summoned to disciplinary committees recently. At the same time, educators are sentenced to heavy sentences or are forced into early retirement.

In addition to the extensive arrest of women activists in recent days, the arrests and detentions and summonses of environmental activists continue. Torture and sexual abuse are rampant in prisons as testified by Narges Mohammadi, human rights activist and political prisoner.

The Democratic Organisation of Iranian Women condemns the mass arrest of women's rights activists and calls for their immediate and unconditional release alongside all political-ideological prisoners, and calls on all progressive forces, especially progressive international women's organisations, to raise their voices in support of the Iranian women and political prisoners.

THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE JOURNAL OF CODIR (COMMITTEE FOR DEFENCE OF THE IRANIAN PEOPLES RIGHTS)





the naw at wortley hall

Sisters (and brothers) gathered at the NAW stall at the South Yorkshire Festival in August. The weather can best be described as “adequate” with the down-pour waiting until packing up time!

Many thanks to Mavis and Brian Clark for taking leftover goods for local refugee and homeless charities.

BELOW: ANITA, MEGAN, BARBARA, LYLIE AND MARIE AT THE STALL



what's on...

NAW Executive Committee meetings are open to *all* members.

The next meeting is (online) Thursday 7 September at 4pm.

For more information about meetings please contact the Secretary, Sandra Durkin, on naw@sisters.org.uk or at NAW, 72 Beaconsfield Road Coventry CV2 4AR

sylvia pankhurst memorial lecture



THE NAW SPONSORS THE ANNUAL SPML. LEFT TO RIGHT: CHAIR MARY DAVIS, SPEAKERS HELEN CRICKARD AND LYNDIA WALKER

the NAW's annual seminar will be Saturday-Sunday 27-28 January 2024 at the NASUWT's education centre near Birmingham striking women – combatting the stereotype

watch the website for further information 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

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Organisation

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Send to: Carolyn Simpson, 13 Wren Gardens, Hornchurch RM12 4DT