

Women's Network Exchange

NPC Women's Working Party
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Good to meet some of you at the Women's TUC conference. Now I hope we will see many more of you joining the March and Rally on the 10th April. Come with your friends, your colleagues, your banners or just by yourself. You'll find plenty of others there. More about this in the newsletter.

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2010 TUC WOMEN'S CONFERENCE : EASTBOURNE

Women urge vigilance in run-up to general election

Several of our Women's Working Party were present along with delegates from the TUC Women's Conference at the NPC fringe meeting on "Defend the Welfare State and Public Services" chaired by Marion Wilson

Speakers Sharon Holder, GMB Equality Officer, Sue Bond, PCS Vice President and Dot Gibson, NPC General Secretary all emphasised the need for vigilance in the run up to the General Election in looking at what the political parties were offering.

Dot Gibson urged delegates to join the march and rally in London on 10 April being organised by a coalition of the NPC, trade unions and campaigning groups, and to sign the petition, which can be found on line at www.10410demo.co.uk

Deputy Prime Minister, Harriet Harman MP was received with serious attention when she addressed the WTUC. Among the many resolutions passed, the



left to right: Sharon Holder, Marion Wilson, Sue Bond and Dot Gibson

following are of especial interest

- Protect our pensions
- Flexible working
- Equal pay, promotion and the long hours culture
- A great many on Violence Against Women

WOMEN AND GIRLS MISS OUT AGAIN!

In an initiative called "Send my friend to school", in 2000 a number of countries, including the UK, agreed to achieve primary education for all, world wide, by 2015.

However, at a recent seminar in the House of Commons organised by Global Education for All, it was reported that ten years on there are still 72 million children of primary school age not in school.

Of those more than 55% are girls. Disabled children constitute one third of those not in school and many others face discrimination because they live on the street or their language is not used in school

Why don't children go to school that can?

Malcolm Bruce, a Lib Dem M.P., said it could be because "there was no water, no sanitation or no teachers"

Afghanistan has said they do not want more schools to be built but more teachers to put in them. Although VSO provides teachers there is still an 18 million shortage.

Other goals agreed in 2000 were adult literacy and gender equality, but two thirds of adults without access to literacy are women.

The seminar was a call for UK action and speakers from all three parties were there to support the initiative and call for a renewed commitment to the cause.

The football world cup in South Africa will be used to focus attention on international efforts to advance educational rights; so watch out for that even if you, like me, won't be watching the football

Marion Wilson

Angela Sinclair a constant campaigner

My friendship with Angela Sinclair started from her first attendance at Islington Pensioners' Forum (IPF) in the late eighties.

At the chair's suggestion each member turned to their neighbour and invited them to join and Angela readily responded.

The Illustrious Liz McKeon was secretary at that time, and Joe Harris (later to become general secretary of the NPC) was chairman. This was one of the most active pensioners' forums in the London area.

At the beginning of the nineties we secured an office with a paid part-time organiser and an active committee. Sadly Liz died and Angela was elected secretary. Her incredible memory of facts related to health and social problems enabled her to marshal facts and clinch solutions in discussion in favour of pensioners.



Islington Pensioners' Forum was one of the earliest pensioner organisations to be active in London. For a few years **Vera Zissimos** worked as paid part-time organiser. Vera describes here how Angela, a WWII nurse, was an inspiration for the Forum; she remains a leading light in campaigns that affect pensioners, and as a veteran peace campaigner and pacifist Angela is supporting Brian Haw's demonstration in Parliament Square against an illegal war.

She attended Community Health Council and Neighbourhood Council meetings and brought the issues discussed to the notice of all pensioners through the medium of her regular

monthly report in the IPF newsletter. Files of these are kept at the IPF Office and Liz McKeon Memorial Hall, now situated in Providence Place, N1 0RN.

Angela was active on other voluntary committees such as Liberty, but as time passed, increasing deafness and 'a silly little fall which resulted in a fractured hip' have curtailed her movements. Even so, you will find Angela quoted in local newspaper reports covering current campaigns such as defending the right to demonstrate in Parliament Square, and in defence of health services at the Finsbury Health Centre and Whittington Hospital.

Fortunately Angela made the IPF New Year Party 2010 'with her superb mulled wine'. Angela is a constant campaigner: you cannot keep a good woman down!

Just (?) ageing

A report, published in December 2009, of work carried out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and AGE UK highlights disadvantages that accumulate across all stages of life resulting in inequality in old age. Although spending on older members of the population may increase so could the range of contributions that older people could make if they were enabled to live longer, more active, healthier and happier lives.

Children born today have a one in four chance of living to 100. "The impact on society of increasing longevity will dwarf that of climate change and global terrorism" Gender differences create inequality throughout life. Women live longer than men but spend more years in poor health and are more likely than men to be poor when

So what are the authors going to do about it?

Their decisions are couched in very general policy terms such as challenging decision-makers in public, private and voluntary sectors to re-think their approach to ageing and equality but:

- The EHRC will encourage government and other political leaders to take a life-course perspective to the challenges posed by increasing longevity, work towards mainstreaming age equality, and work to improve policy and practice in social care.
- Age UK says it will work to close inequalities in later

they are older. Other factors which may affect women **in later life** are:-

- A good education is linked to the likelihood of being employed when older. This could affect women who often have lower educational attainments;
- Women in lower-classed occupations are less likely to be working;
- Divorce and widowhood increase women's chances of being poor;
- Women who had children before age 20 and women who were unmarried when they had their first child are at greater risk of poor health.

life by improving the pension and benefits system, tackle isolation and loneliness, fund research on social inequalities in longevity and morbidity-prevention, support people towards the end of their working lives, both to help their older relatives and to prepare for long, healthy later lives.

So we must all be vigilant and make sure they deliver what they promise.

Footnote: The document looked at inequalities throughout life, not just at older people.

Are you one in a million?

The Million Women Study started in 1996 to look at how various lifestyles and other factors affect the health of women in the UK.

Surveys conducted by Oxford University and funded by Cancer Research UK, The Health and Safety Executive and the Medical Research Council provide information for women and health care professionals to help prevent some of the major health problems in middle and later life.

Some recent results have found that:

- Obesity accounts for 1 in 20 cancers in women
- There is a greater risk of breast, throat, mouth and liver cancer the more alcohol women drink
- HRT brings an increased risk of breast cancer but there is a return to normal quickly after stopping HRT.

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE!

Budget in brief

- State pension rose by 2.5% in April -- £2.40 for those on a full pension. £1.40 for many women
- No increase in SERPS or graduated pension
- Winter fuel allowance frozen for the third year at £250 for the under 80s and £400 for the over 80s
- A new 50p per month levy on all telephone landlines
- Personal tax allowances frozen
- Default retirement age to be scrapped or raised
- Inheritance tax frozen for four years at £325,000

When the Chancellor announced in his pre-budget statement that the basic state pension would rise by 2.5% in April, he did not say that this would not include SERPS and graduated pension. The NPC has strongly protested at this slight of hand demanding that it does not become a precedent for future increases.

NIGHT WARDENS CAMPAIGN VICTORY

In the Autumn of 2009 Portsmouth City Council, *without full consultation* with the residents, took the decision, on financial grounds, to abolish the provision of sleep-in Night Wardens at their seven Sheltered Accommodation blocks in the city.

This affected 345 elderly, disabled and vulnerable residents.

The Wardens were to be replaced by two teams of two mobile wardens patrolling the blocks at night, with a distance of seven miles between those in the north of the city and those in the south.

The background to this is that a European Working Time Directive became law, and Night Wardens were to be employed, as opposed to the Resident Wardens being on call, with cost implications for Councils.

Councils therefore, then brought out a "Supporting People" plan whereby Residents were given the choice of what Care Support they wanted, after "consultation.", **cost of course, being the criteria.**

However, a very vocal resident, in Portsmouth, Ingrid Savir, decided that there would have to be resistance, and protested against the Council's decision. "Remember the Blitz" she said "AND you have

worked hard all your lives, and are entitled to "proper care"!

With the support of other residents, and advice from the local MP, "rogue" local councillors, and a member of Portsmouth Pensioners Association, she contacted SHUK-

"Well done, people of Portsmouth . You have demonstrated to the nation what can be achieved".

Sheltered Housing UK – who led her to contact lawyer Yvonne Hossack from Kettering, who specialises in defending older people.

With Yvonne's help, the residents finally got a hearing in the High Court in London, thanks to two male stalwarts who travelled up to plead the case.

The High Court ruled that Portsmouth City Council had to

return to a system of sleep-in Night Wardens, and commented "Well done, people of Portsmouth . You have demonstrated to the nation what can be achieved".

However, that was not the end of the story.

In December, Portsmouth City Council put in an appeal against the ruling, as they had already installed Mobile Wardens in November. Mercifully, this was withdrawn in January; **the residents could at last claim VICTORY !**

Sadly, there will of course, be a price to pay for this victory, namely that rents will have to rise to pay for the Night Warden service.

Congratulations must go to Ingrid Savir and her helpmate Beryl Jack, who did not falter in their fight for justice.

Thanks must also go to lawyer Yvonne Hossack, who took their campaign on, and to the two male residents who travelled to London for the Hearing.

A Victory for Grey Power in Portsmouth, and a "beacon win" to inspire all other residents up and down the country, in the fight to keep their Night Wardens.

June Clarkson