

Women's Network Exchange

NPC Women's Working Party
Issue 47 June 2019

We feature in this edition reports from the Women's TUC and rallies in support of the TV licence for the over 75s and the bus pass, the achievements of women working in transport, and the deplorable privatisation of the NHS so contrary to its noble history.

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The Women's TUC Conference March 2019

On the platform of the WTUC Conference, Marion Wilson, NPC vice president, holds up a copy of the recent NPC pamphlet

'Understanding Women's Pension Inequality.'

Marion reports:

I attended the conference on behalf of my Trades Council.

There were motions on the gender pay gap (17.1%) and on the massive gender pension gap, 39.5%.

I spoke on this and it was a good opportunity to draw attention to the brand new pamphlet, 'Understanding Women's Pension Inequality', especially prepared by Neil Duncan-Jordan, NPC National Office and his team.

I don't think any delegate escaped without taking away at least one copy.

It also gave me the chance to ask those present to sign the petition on saving the free TV licence since, as I pointed out, this goes along with women especially those getting old, less able to get out and relying on their television for company.

We got over 130 signatures.

I was horrified by some of the issues we had to debate, for example Poverty, not just as we normally think of it, but also food poverty, period poverty, and even shoe poverty.



Teachers spoke of having to wash uniforms and buy shoes for pupils There was even a box at the conference for people to donate sanitary products.

And is this the 21st Century?

Equally alarming was the problems facing pregnant women and those going through the menopause. We seem to be going backwards with 1 in every 20 women being made redundant either during pregnancy, maternity leave or on returning to work.

Redundant! Did that happen to you when you were pregnant?

Bullying and sexual harassment was debated appearing in many different professions with calls for mandatory training on sexual harassment to be introduced.

Continued overleaf:

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Report from the Women's TUC Conference

Mental health in both women at work and in young girls was also seen to be an issue; 1 in 4 teenage girls having experienced mental illness resulting in self harm or suicide attempts. In spite of all this gloom and doom it was an uplifting conference with good outside speakers and lots of interesting fringe meetings

Marion Wilson

Arlene Hansell and Sue Howe are seen here looking after the NPC WWP stall.



Campaign to Save the Over 75s TV Licence

Along with scores of pensioners, myself and other members of the NPC Women's Working Party joined the protest outside the Department for Media, Culture and Sport on Thursday the 7th March.



We were protesting at this Tory government breaking a manifesto promise to protect the free TV Licences for those over 75. The government's outsourcing of the concession for over 75s to the BBC will be fought robustly by the NPC who feel that the BBC is planning to either scrap or means test the benefit which would adversely affect millions of older people. Pensioner poverty is also on the rise for the first time in a number of years, and scrapping the concession will only make that worse.

It's been said that at least 50,000 more pensioners will fall into hardship if they end up having to pay for their TV licence.

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt stated that the main reasons the concession was

introduced in the first place was because Britain's state pension was so low and sadly that is still the case.

It is felt that the BBC were very foolish to cave in to the governments demands to take on the responsibility to fund this particular welfare policy. Had they stood firm and refused to take on this project they could have avoided this scenario

Lorene Fabian



Note that The consultation is over, but the **Campaign to Save the Over 75s TV Licence** goes on.

The TV licence is important to elderly people living alone. The concession should be paid by Government not the BBC.

The NPC has joined forces with Age UK and others to launch an online petition against the changes to the concession.

Please sign it and encourage others to do so. It can be found here: <https://campaigns.ageuk.org.uk/page/34266/petition/1?ea.tracking.id=1unr39mb>

DEFEND THE BUS PASS



UNISON Retired members in the Bath area had a successful stall one Saturday at the end of March in Bath Bus Station with placards and postcards.

Rather than standing outside on the pavement we were welcomed into the covered bus station.

We also had the full support of the Bus Station staff who are Unite members and are as concerned as ourselves about the loss of the bus pass as it is bound to result in fewer bus services.

This is because many of the bus routes and companies are subsidised by local authorities paying for journeys using the bus pass. The impact of this will not just be on pensioners and bus companies but on the local economy and is bound to lead to greater loneliness for those who rely on the bus.

It has the potential to increase journeys by private

car which will further harm the environment.

We gained plenty of signatures though more people took postcards and said they would sign them and post them at a later date because they were either rushing to catch a bus or going shopping!

Rosie Macgregor

NPC 2019 Biennial Delegate Conference – a woman's perspective

This was my first attendance at a BDC and, as is normal when venturing into new territory, I set off with some trepidation. The agenda looked very full – and the cover photo hinted at a predominately male environment. Would I fit in?

Closer inspection of the agenda was reassuring – some very positive motions eg the NHS and Social Care, Digital Inclusion and Environmental Issues. Proposals to set up new working parties on key issues – NPC Housing Policy, Digital Inclusion and LGBT. And a hint of some lively debate to be had on the motion referring to 'party-political neutrality'!

My first impression was that it was predominately male but as the proceedings moved forward I felt very positive. It was evident that the majority of delegates had strong trade union backgrounds and there was a high standard of debate. And despite

being in a minority, women delegates made their voices heard – including Rosie and Meg from the WWP. Meg made an excellent contribution to the debate on health and social care and Rosie was cheered for her views on the motion on 'party-political neutrality' which was (quite rightly in my view) overwhelmingly defeated.

Although there was some disappointing opposition to the LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual & Transgender) motion it was carried with a significant majority. The BDC exceeded my expectations – good debate and heartening to see the commitment to improving the lives of older people.

The Women's Working Party has a key role to play in encouraging more women to get involved in the movement and I will be thinking about possible motions for the 2021 BDC!

Sandra Durkin

Can we see progress on gender balance within the NPC since 2013?

See overleaf the motion passed at the 2013 BDC

This **2013 Biennial Delegate Conference** notes the findings of the NPC Women's Working Party that indicate that the proportion of women taking roles of responsibility within the NPC does not reflect the gender balance of the retired population as a whole.

This 2013 Biennial Delegate Conference notes that the NPC Constitution 4e states "The NPC and its affiliated organisations should work towards a position where one half of the National Council and the Executive Committee members are women"

In the spirit of this clause, this 2013 Biennial Delegate Conference recommends that steps are taken at regional level to encourage greater participation of women throughout the NPC. In particular member organisations

are requested to ensure that their delegations to the NEC and BDC have a gender balance that reflects their membership.

In addition, this 2013 Biennial Delegate Conference recommends that regional organisations should appoint a Regional Women's Officer to encourage women to take part in decision making roles. She should be given support to:

- Lead a discussion on the issue of local under-representation of women.

- Identify local reasons for low participation.

Put in place measures that will encourage greater involvement of women.

Changing vision for the NHS or gradual disintegration?

You are reminded of the WWP seminar on Nov 1st 2014 held in Bristol at which Sharon Graham from UNITE addressed the serious gradual privatisation of the NHS. Quoting from Exchange 33

'Sharon presented us with information from their "Preliminary Leverage Report" "In Defence of the NHS", in which Royal College of Physicians research has been used to trace the origins of government strategy back to the Thatcher Government plan of 1987, to alter the NHS. MPs Oliver Letwin and John Redwood together with David Willets took up the plan and they have apparently

been working on it ever since. Their intention being to introduce an American style insurance system, much of which has now happened. The chair of NHS England is quoted as talking about "new user charges for the NHS unless the economy strengthens".

Meg McDonald traces the dates of key events for the NHS up to 2018.

She asks whether the 1987 plans have now been finally realised.

Janet Shapiro

The dates of key events for the NHS

1939 A country wide emergency medical service created during WWII

1942 Sir William Beveridge report, 'Social Issues and the Welfare State' published by wartime coalition government. This laid the foundation for the British Welfare State.

1945 Discussion on whether an NHS it should be run by councils or separately on a regional basis.

1948 Aneurhan Bevan presented a radically different plan favouring nationalisation of all hospitals with a regional framework. Financed almost 100% from taxation it provided free health care for all at the point of use. The National Health Service was born.

1955 GPs were funded to form group practice, but small prescription charges were introduced in 1958.

1967 The Salmon Report raises the profile of the nursing profession in hospital management.

1974 Creation of 14 Regional Health Authorities for the NHS. Administrative structure changes and Social Care introduced.

1987 Government White paper 'Promoting better

health' aiming for a shift away from hospital treatment to primary care with greater funding for GPs paid for through loss of free eye tests and dental treatment. GPs allowed greater freedom for private collaboration. Further freedoms for GPs in 1990

1997 Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs) whereby private companies contracted to run parts of the NHS used more widely.

1997 White Paper, 'The New NHS' set out to abolish the internal market but kept the purchaser-provider split with commissioning.

GP fundholding was to be abolished, instead primary care groups were to be set up, later to be called trusts, with the aim of building care around community services. The primary care groups, later became the 300 primary care trusts in existence today, with the aim of building the NHS around local services.

2012 The Health and Social Care Act was passed proposing a new structure to the NHS.

Dates of key events for the NHS continued overleaf:

Continued: Dates of key events for the NHS

2013 National Health Service England was created under the Chief Executive Simon Stevens taking the NHS away from government control.

2014 New service models created calling for Sustainability and Transformation Plans and Giving the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) the majority

of the NHS budget for hospital services.

2018 New plans by NHSE to reorganise health and social care allowing Integrated Care Providers (ICPs) to be commissioned or sold off to private companies. This will be irreversible by any future governments.

Meg McDonald

Extra costs associated with NHS care.

One extra financial burden of ageing is that of travel to and from health care service, where these are not available close to home for those on basic or low pensions; these people are already struggling and these extra costs can be worrying.

"Ask a friend or neighbour to take you" is the answer from the health professionals. They do not realise that, as we age and become less mobile, our friends may be in the same position and no longer able to give us a lift.

Health services may not be close to home, and where there is no public transport older people face the costs of taxis.

Nowadays many of these services and treatments are provided by private companies. Some of the providers are based in the countryside, miles from public transport. Yes, there may be a team of volunteer drivers but, though probably cheaper than a taxi, it is not free.

In some areas those patients who have to undergo several courses of chemotherapy stay in hospital

for each course of treatment. Most, however, have no option but to travel each day. If they feel too unwell to drive or use public transport, and if there is no one to take them, the costs can be considerable, adding to the stress.

The last example is about the toe-nail cutting service for those unable to do it themselves. My local Community Health Service provides a limited service but users have to get to one of two centres. The service itself costs £13. The only provision for housebound elderly persons is for them to use a private service, costing in the range of £40 per time, a price greater than some can afford.

The government seems to be reducing NHS services available locally. Also alternative services are confined to specialist centres or hospitals in ever fewer locations, so the situation can only get worse.

Arlene Hansell

Women in Transport

**What's On
Oct—
Dec 2018**

Free Entry,
Please Donate

Graves Gallery
Millennium Gallery
Weston Park Museum

Find out more at
museums-sheffield.org.uk

Museum Sheffield



The exhibition '**Who We Are: photographs by Martin Jenkinson**' at Weston Park Museum Sheffield at the Groves Gallery, in Sheffield was well worth a visit. It was a retrospective of photographs taken by Martin Jenkinson over four decades that chronicled the drama and detail of our everyday lives.

In particular his photographs give a comprehensive overview of the struggles of ordinary people during the Miners' Strike that included documentation of the support given by women opposing pit closures.

The **London Transport Museum** conducted a project in January this year, seeking stories from females who carried out important activities in a male-dominated workforce. For instance, in 1942 women were working as lathe operators at Acton Works.

Several women were featured by name: The design created by Joy Jarvis, textile designer in the 1940s, was used on the refurbished 1938 & 1940 trains displayed in the museum. Ellen Bulfield worked on the London General Omnibus Company during WWI, (Apparently 45% of London Transport workers were female in 1948 but were forced to hand over to men when demobbed). Hannah Dadds, joined as a station-woman in 1969 and qualified as a Tube driver in 1978.

It is possible that the museum would still be interested in stories from those employed in transport, but the official deadline has passed.

Arlene Hansell & Janet Shapiro

Generations United



Photographed together at UNISON Women's Conference earlier this year, Rosie Macgregor, Chair of UNISON's Retired Members and Kendal Bromley-Bewes, Chair of UNISON's Young Members Forum.

The theme of the photograph was 'Generations United'.

Young members and retired members in UNISON work well together and support each other in various campaigns.

Rosie Macgregor

Loneliness affects all generations

Although loneliness in old age is currently a high profile topic for discussion, many of the reasons for loneliness in older persons actually begin in childhood.

Examples include being abused as a child.

Domestic abuse of women can also cause loneliness and a feeling of isolation, disfigurement and children being taken into care.

The latter often results in the child being moved from one area to another. This lack of stability and the resultant absence of opportunity to form long-term relationships can cause lifelong loneliness.

Social media now bring increasing pressures on young people that did not exist when we were children. This is shown by mental health problems, such as self-harm and suicide that are increasing at an alarming rate.

This suggest that, unfortunately, loneliness of both young and old will only increase in the future.

Arlene Hansell

WOMEN'S WORKING PARTY

Fringe Meeting

NPC Pensioners' Parliament

The Impact of Local
Government Cuts on
Women

Wednesday 12th June '19

Lunchtime 12.30 - 1.30

Renaissance Room
Winter Gardens

Blackpool

All Welcome

Speaker

Anita Wright

President of the National Assembly of Women

A good read: '**No surrender**' by Constance Maud,
Persephone Books www.persephonebooks.co.uk

While a book of fiction, it documents realistically the social history of the time, and the arguments for and against female suffrage. It was published when there was hope of imminent victory in 1911, before the delaying effects of WWI; full equal franchise was not granted until 1928. It was re-published in 2011, 100 years after, but the 2017 edition is worth reading for the excellent preface that explains the various factions including the anti-suffrage movement.

Janet Shapiro

Please tell your friends and neighbours about this newsletter. If you would like to receive the Exchange regularly by email, please contact the NPC office giving your email address.

info@npcuk.org

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