

Women's Network Exchange

NPC Women's Working Party
Issue 45 November 2018

This edition features reports on our recent successful seminar in Liverpool and the National Assembly of Women's conference. Also included are the women celebrated in October's Black History month.

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Women's Health Matters Seminar 8 September 2018

Arriving in Liverpool was a slightly surreal experience because the city centre was full of nuns and Catholic priests who were there for a Catholic symposium.

Our seminar at Unite the Union's Jack Jones House was a great success with more than 35 women in attendance. Subjects covered included Social Care and Loneliness as well as the National Assembly of Women's Charter for Women.



Rosie chaired the meeting.

Lesley Mahmood from the campaign to Save Liverpool Women's Hospital spoke of the need to prevent the planned closure of the hospital and the harm that would result from splitting up the services. Not only would this be harmful to women but opens the door to greater privatisation of the NHS.

During the afternoon we watched the film 'Kind to Women' about how women were harmed by illegal terminations prior to the 1967 Abortion Act.

Many women in the audience were in tears to hear

the stories of desperation and death.

Afterwards the panel debate led by the film's director Lisa Hallgarten and Dilys Cossey, one of the women who appeared in the film, was equally emotional.

There is a link to the website where the film can be viewed. www.kindtowomen.com. The film lasts about 40 minutes and we would urge anyone to watch it on line and encourage other groups to show it.

Afterwards everyone said how worthwhile and inspirational the day had been. It has done much to raise the profile of the NPC.

Rosie MacGregor

Thanks to Rosie who organised this seminar during the time when the NPC office was without staff; thanks also to Julie Lyon Taylor who arranged the venue, catering and speakers from Save Liverpool Women's Hospital. Julie is seen below with Ellen Lebethe, NPC vice-president while we socialised over lunch in the café.

Janet Shapiro, editor



The National Assembly of Women: Weekend Seminar for women

www.sisters.org.uk

On Saturday the 29th September. I was fortunate enough, along with Sisters Sandra Durkin and Marion Wilson to attend the National Assembly of Women (NAW) seminar at Wortley Hall, Sheffield, a beautiful building - 'The Workers Stately Home' set in fantastic grounds.

The three of us are pictured in the sunshine.

Our first session started with a film from 1978 explaining the Lucas Aerospace plan 'We've always done it this way'. Lucas Aerospace Shop Stewards when in danger of redundancies produced a plan that involved many innovative ideas to keep their plant open by producing many new inventions such as cars that could run on rail or road. They also developed prototypes for kidney machines which would save lives. These were dismissed, plants closed while some ideas were taken up and developed by other countries, a great loss to our economy. The film can be downloaded here for a small charge <http://www.concordmedia.org.uk/products/weve-always-done-it-this-way-1087/>

Artificial Intelligence (AI) had already reared its head in the wake of Harold Wilson's 'White heat of technology' speech. Leisure time would be paramount and we could all enjoy full employment, early retirement and many hours to spend with our families. Sadly we know that didn't happen. However they warned then in 1978 that skills would be lost and we would eventually end up as a robotic society with the possible catastrophic effect on jobs and working people.

We had an MEP, Julie Ward, who spoke of her many roles within the European Parliament. Clearly in the room, there were many different views on this subject.

Our next speaker was Sharon Graham, Unite Executive Officer who led a very interesting and worrying presentation around AI in 2018.

Many documents around AI had been produced by right wing think tanks which were making the mainstream debate. We as trade unionists need to monitor the whole situation and put our own plans and discussions forward. For instance in one sector as much as three quarters of jobs could go. We need to look at a shorter working week with no loss of pay. Earlier retirement, investment in research and development and the banning of zero hours contracts. That was an excellent presentation.



On Sunday, we had Kiri Tunks, the President of the NUT section of the National Education Union who gave an overall picture as to where she believes we are as women today. Not very far actually although some things have changed. We still haven't got 50/50 parity and those rights we have can be taken away. Young people need to learn that it won't just happen by having meetings. Those young women who are seeking change need to listen to their older counterparts. We need to understand our history. For instance the Matchwomen's action preceded the great dock strike but we hear far more of the latter. The pay gap is getting worse. Domestic Violence is a national disgrace, causing the death of three women a week. Fifty four thousand women lose their jobs every year through pregnancy. Rights are OK if you know them or have a union to fight for you. Tribunals should be easier to access.

We need more data and research and monitoring. In case of sexual harassment, we could maybe fight for a third party culpability. For instance if sexual harassment is taking place in the workplace, employers should also be held to account. Lastly but very importantly, training for both men and women union reps is vital.

Lorene Fabian & Sandra Durken

The Campaign to End Loneliness: 'Be More Us: Belonging and Community'

NPC vice-presidents, Marion Wilson and Ellen Lebeth attended the Annual Conference of the Campaign to End Loneliness on October 9th at the British Library. Building on the momentum created by the campaign, '**Be More Us: Belonging and Community**' has been launched.

'Be More Us' will bring together people and organisations of all ages, and showcase innovative approaches to tackling loneliness from across the world.

It will include exploration of

- sustainable and future-proofed communities;
- the role of culture, sport and the arts in tackling loneliness;
- intergenerational relations,
- and what we can share with and learn from other countries, communities and cultures.

www.campaigntoendloneliness.org



Janet

An Evening with Wendy Savage

This event was held on November 8th at University College London. It was important to attend as Wendy Savage was one of those interviewed on the film 'Kind to Women' that was shown at the WWP seminar on September 8th.

Looking back into our archive for the Exchange I found that a profile of Wendy had been published in issue 16, June 2010. (ask if you want a copy)

The event was organised by Doctors for Choice UK, a group of UK based doctors and medical students that is committed to comprehensive, evidence-based reproductive healthcare. www.doctorsforchoiceuk.org

They campaign for the decriminalisation of abortion in the UK. Wendy is their Co-Chair.

Wendy was interviewed, invited to describe how she came to be a doctor and how she came to take a leading role in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

Apparently her experiences abroad, particularly in Kenya and Nigeria, had early on led her to question and deplore the many unnecessary deaths of pregnant women, who in desperation had sought back-street

abortions.

Her staunch defence of women's rights had threatened her own career, but in spite of this Wendy gained respect. She was an elected member of the General Medical Council for more than 16 years and was also shortlisted for the BMJ Group Lifetime Achievement Award in 2009.

The audience was mixed, with young doctors, older colleagues and some ex patients. There were many questions. One person reported how he had defended her at the enquiry when her job was at risk. The enquiry had an independent chair and Wendy was vindicated.

Since I know Wendy as co-chair of Keep Our NHS Public (KONP), my question was about the current threats to both maternity and abortion services from creeping privatisation.

The event concluded with a reception in another building of UCL, and that enabled me to talk to members of Doctors for Choice and make contacts.

Janet Shapiro

Women of Glasgow demand equal pay

Scotland's largest city was brought to a standstill on Tuesday October 23rd, when council staff went on strike. Care workers, cleaners and school dinner ladies made up the 8,000 female council workers who staged a two day walkout. In law women should expect pay

equal to their male colleagues since the 1970 Equal Pay Act, but it has not worked. In solidarity, male dustman workers refused to cross GMB picket lines.

Around 12,000 women have lodged legal claims against the council that they receive £3 an hour less than men doing the same work, but Glasgow City Council claim that the strike was unnecessary.

Janet Shapiro

Land Grabs and Sell Offs

The aftermath of the devastating Grenfell Tower fire together with repercussions and recriminations are still being felt and there continues to be a lack of confidence in local authorities who continue to fail to invest in social housing and social care. Furthermore, councils around the country are selling off their assets, their land and buildings, at an alarming rate.

Yet even as we await the outcome of the Public Inquiry into Grenfell Tower we learn that Kensington and Chelsea allegedly sold off its only remaining care home, Thamesbrook, for a

staggering £70 million with hollow promises of building 150 new homes for older residents that have not as yet materialised.

The site of Thamesbrook has been developed into a luxury complex of flats for older people with prices starting at an eye-watering £3million for a one bed flat and an annual service charges of nearly £17,000.

I suspect this is way beyond the means of most pensioners!!

The staggering inequality and unfairness of this leaves me almost speechless at a time when urgent action is needed to end the housing crisis.

Rosie MacGregor

October 2018 Black History Month: focus on Black Women

Global Justice Now publishes the magazine *Ninety-Nine*.

Issue 12, September 2018 included an article *Windrush Women*. This was to mark the 70th anniversary of the Windrush arriving in Britain and featured five women who represented leading lights in the fields of activism, politics and social change.

These were:

Ingrid Pollard, photographer, artist and researcher, born in Georgetown, Guyana 1952, and moved to England in 1956.

Rt. Hon. Diane Abbott MP, born in London to Jamaican parents. She is now Shadow Home Secretary and MP for Hackney and Stoke Newington. Diane was the first black woman to hold a seat in the House of Commons.

Dr Gail Lewis, a sociologist and member of Brixton's Black Women's Group.

Marcia Rigg, an activist, public speaker and campaigner for criminal justice. She is sister to Sean Rigg, who died while in police custody. Marcia is Co-chair of the 'United Family and Friends Campaign' that helps other families struggling for justice.

Olive Morris (1952-1979), a Jamaican born community leader and activist, founder member of 'Brixton Black Women's Group' and a member of the 'Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent'. Morris was chosen as the first person to go on a Brixton Pound, a local currency designed to support Brixton businesses.

<https://www.globaljustice.org.uk>

Arlene Hansell

The magazine for **Black History Month, B:M 360**, was published in October 2018 officially supported by the Prime Minister, MPs and the Home Office.

As it coincided with the 100th anniversary of the Armistice, Mary Seacole and Walter Tull appeared in 'A Legacy of Valour'.

B:M 360 was Packed with evidence on how immigrants had influenced Britain in many different ways. A significant number of women appeared in this issue and a few are selected at random here:

Dame Jocelyn Barrow OBE, born Trinidad 1929, she moved to Britain in 1959. Jocelyn was influential in 'Each One Teach One' that helped children of Caribbean heritage to study effectively. She was a founding member and General Secretary of Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), all the while teaching at Furzedown College and the Institute of Education, London University. She was appointed to public positions such as governor at the BBC.

Selena Carty, Afro Centrist Genealogist www.yiwae.org Selena founded the Black Poppy noglory.org/index.php

Jacqueline McKenzie, immigration lawyer and Director of the Organisation of Migration Advice and Research (OMAR). She was also Chief executive of the Female Prisoners Welfare Association until 2014.

Continued:

Black History month continued

Millie Small, born Jamaica 1946, began singing career in Kinston, but moved to Forest Hill London, where her 4th recording of an Ernest Ranglin rearrangement of “My Boy Lollipop” became a hit in Britain.

Tola Dabiri, has managed the Carnival Archive Project since 1995 toladabiriconsulting.co.uk

Joy White PhD, author of “Urban Music and Entrepreneurship: Beats, Rhymes and Young People’s Enterprise”

Cassie McFarlane and **Carmen Munroe**, actresses

Angie Greaves, British Radio presenter and producer.

Laureen Sylvestre, a writer in the project ‘African Stories from Hull and East Yorkshire’.

<https://www.africansinyorkshireproject.com/laureen-sylvestre.html>

The Heritage Lottery Fund sponsored many of the projects mentioned.

Women scientists were included:

Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock MBE, space scientist.

Prof. Kathlenn Adebola Okikiolu, mathematician at John Hopkins University USA.

Dr Melrose Stewart, Chartered Physiotherapist and university teacher.

Of course there are many more women of colour that deserve a mention.

Janet Shapiro

The Medical Women’s Federation

The MWF was set up in London in 1879 with 9 women who were the most qualified women in the UK at that time. As more women qualified in medicine, MWFs were set up around the country.

By 1916 the federations came together as one body to speak out about the needs of all medical women and women patients. At this time the government was reluctant to sign up women doctors for the war effort.

In 1917 the MWF set up a medical register and were involved with the health of women working in the war, in munitions factories, prostitution maternity and infant welfare.

In the 1920’s many medical schools closed the doors on women who wanted to study medicine; the war had finished and it was thought that there was no need for women doctors. Many hospitals wouldn’t allow married women to study and practise or enter the profession..

The MWF continued to fight for women’s health issues such as nutrition, mental health law reform, women pilots, the menopause, registration of nursing homes, women’s health in India, birth control and assault.

They were progressive in that they asked for birth control to be taught at medical training schools.

1930 saw the first woman commissioner to the Board of Control and the first Chief Medical Officer of a London Borough. The LCC reported that all medical appointments were open to both men and women.

In 1937 at the outbreak of war the War Office agreed to appoint women doctors and to pay them the same amount as men although women weren’t allowed commissions like men.

1946 saw the first women members appointed to the British Medical Association Council.

In 1948 women were allowed in all medical schools but only a quota of 20% was allowed.

The MWF continued to fight for social medicine, childbirth, health of school girls and family planning in the NHS.

The MWF have since campaigned through other bodies and women’s organisations resulting in The Women’s Group on Public Welfare and The Women’s National Cancer Control Campaign. A survey of medical women with the BMA in was conducted in 1963.

The MWF was granted charitable status in 1970 and continued its role in the career development and training of women as well as issues such as abortion, rape, sexual assault, sex education, fertility and child health.

Women are now 66% of medical students, but the MWF continues to campaign for the rights of women working in the NHS, such as fair pay and the right to take part time work to enable family care.

This article references Dr Marjorie Semmens Honorary Archivist at the Wellcome Library. www.medicalwomensfederation.org.uk/

Meg McDonald

Celebrating women in STEM

Ada Lovelace Day (ALD) is an international celebration of the achievements of women in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). It aims to increase the profile of women in STEM and, in doing so, create new role models who will encourage more girls into STEM careers and support women already working in STEM.

Founded in 2009 by Suw Charman-Anderson, it is now held every year on the second Tuesday of October. It features a flagship *Ada Lovelace Day Live!* 'science cabaret' event in London, UK, at which women in STEM give short talks about their work or about other women who have inspired them, or perform short comedy or musical interludes with a STEM focus.

Marion Wilson

Echoes of Holloway Prison

The exhibition at the Islington Museum ended on October 8th but I managed to visit before it closed.

Holloway Prison has been an important landmark in Islington for over 150 years. Thousands of women passed through its doors until it closed in 2016. This exhibition illustrated what it was like to be an inmate and explored their stories.

<https://echoesofhollowayprison.com>

The exhibition also dealt with the wider issues of why these women were incarcerated. Were they helped? Was prison the best way to help them avoid breaking the law?

The [Holloway Prison Stories](#) project continues. It shares stories about HMP Holloway, collected and contributed by those who have known it. Their aim is to offer a realistic and recognisable Holloway through the stories. A few are from suffragettes.

One example is Postcards from Prison

Erika discovered herself in Art following her arrest.

She drew at least one postcard every day for the last 3 months of her 6 month period of her time on Bail and throughout her whole period of incarceration and subsequent release. Erika was held at Holloway Prison until its closure. Her postcards were on display in the exhibition and can be seen on the website.

Erika received a Koestler award. Such awards can encourage prisoners in their artwork. Submissions are judged by established artists and there are prizes.

<https://www.koestlertrust.org.uk>

Janet Shapiro

Saturday 17th November 2018 10.30-4.00pm

RECLAIM SOCIAL CARE

BIRMINGHAM

Carrs Lane Conference Centre, Carrs Lane B4 7SX
Opposite Moor St Station. Direct line from London Marylebone,
Close to New Street Station. Direct from Euston
Note that the venue is changed to allow mobility access.

Speakers will include Health Campaigns Together, the Labour Party, trade unions, DPAC, National Pensioners Convention, Relatives and Residents Association, and a speaker on the Scottish experience.

Help build the campaign for publicly provided, publicly accountable social care funded through general taxation and free to all at point of use.

Book at <https://www.healthcampaignstogether>.

The next issue Exchange 46 will include articles on Social Care, Informal Carers, the History of the NHS and an examination as to why women fair worse financially when they retire.

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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