

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

## PEACE AND FREEDOM UPDATE

JANUARY 2007



### WINTER CAMPAIGN 2007

Dear WILPF members



The immediate issue for all peace campaigners in the UK this winter is the opposition of the Government's desire to replace the Trident Nuclear Weapons System. There are many good arguments

against Trident renewal, such as the cost, contravention of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, ineffectiveness against non-state attacks, the absence of an 'enemy', and the control by the US of the targeting system.

WILPF has been working for 91 years to eradicate the root causes of war, and we have drafted the enclosed letters that stress the need for human security to remove the causes of war. Please send these letters to Tony Blair and to your MP, adding your own questions and comments, or write your own letters to send to them and to the press. At the end of February or the beginning of March, try to arrange to visit your MP locally or come to London on 1 March to see your MP at Westminster and to attend a WILPF meeting hosted by Joan Ruddock MP - in the House of Commons - on Human Security Without Trident, in the late afternoon.

If you are already working locally with other anti-Trident campaigners, introduce our leaflet and letters into your activities. WILPF branches may be able to organise a street stall to get members of the public signing letters which you can post for them. More copies of the letters and leaflets are available from the WILPF office together with lobbying advice and more background information. You can also make extra copies of the letters if you wish.

By the time you read this letter I hope that you will all have enjoyed a well earned rest after a very busy and active year for UK WILPF. In 2006 we initiated our own productive anti-trafficking postcard campaign; we hosted WILPF International meetings and seminars; we opened a WILPF office in London to support our increasing membership; we mounted two 'Connect' days for new members; and our vibrant Y-WILPF network organised an excellent 'Connect stage 2', to develop deeper campaigning understanding for committed members.

The next event on our calendar is our annual general meeting. This will be on Saturday 24 March at the Essex Hall, Essex Street, in central London. The business meeting will be followed by a keynote speech: How the UN can Empower Women. This will introduce workshops on key aspects of campaigning which will discuss and propose WILPF campaigns for the rest of 2007.

I wish you all a good year of effective campaigning with WILPF in 2007, and look forward to meeting many members at our future events.

In peace  
Sheila Triggs  
President, UK WILPF

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### Congratulations!

Mary Philips celebrated her 100th birthday in July. Still very much involved, she recently rescued some archive material from the Friends' House in Manchester which is now in the Women's Library. A few years ago Mary made a tape about her lifetime commitment to peace and her work as secretary of the flourishing Manchester branch of WILPF in the '60s. It is fascinating; let us know if you'd like to borrow it for your branch.

## WILPF @ TINDLEMANOR

Glen Lee

By the time you read this the holiday period will be past and hopefully we will all feel refreshed and ready to start campaigning in 2007.

The WILPF office - at Tindlemanor, 52/54 Featherstone Street, EC1Y 8RT - will be up and running on 8 January. Deborah Micheletti, our new volunteer, will be there on Mondays-Wednesdays from 0900 till 1.00pm. She is a postgraduate student working for a masters degree in Human Rights and has already shown a keen interest in WILPF's work, having attended both recent 'Connect' days, joined the 1325 working group and become involved in Y-WILPF. She is particularly interested in the international aspect of our programme and speaks Italian and Spanish, so will be able to contribute with translation.

One of her first jobs will be to coordinate the printing and posting of this mailing. Then there will be a series of deadlines to follow through, with an Executive Committee meeting on 18 February, the Winter Campaign and organising for the AGM.

We hope that every branch secretary or representative will keep in touch with the office, sending information about planned local events and actions so that Deborah can inform Lorraine and help keep the website up to date. Requests for merchandise and leaflets will also be dealt with from the office.

I would like to thank the enthusiastic band of members who have worked hard to get the office to this stage and the generous donors who have given us most of the furniture we have. We are reasonably well set-up but there are still things we need to make the office function well. Our growing list of volunteers encourages me and I trust that 2007 will show that WILPF continues to be a lively and growing organisation.

To be certain that there will not be an unreasonable demand on UK WILPF resources during this initial period, it was suggested that a special account be set up in the name of WILPF Office. Jenny agreed with this suggestion and Pat Pleasance has agreed to manage the account. Some members have already agreed to pay a set

amount each month or have made a donation. If you would like to contribute in any way please send cheques, made payable to WILPF Office, to Pat Pleasance, Briar Cottage, The Green, Frant, Tunbridge Wells, TN3 9DF or contact her on 01892 750 756.

## I am proud to call myself a feminist

Ella Page

Feminism. The dreaded F word. Why is it that people I meet would never think to call themselves feminists? When I tell them I'm a member of an international women's organisation, why do they pull a face and tell me that feminism and women-only groups died out with the '60s, and imply that I must be a bitter, man-hating, fun-hating, social outcast?

Now I would like to think that I am none of these things! For me, feminism is about empowerment; it's about the possibility of another way of living; it's about freedom and friendship and finding the confidence and space to say that I want the world to be different, something that is part of my heart.

I can understand that perhaps this is a feeling unique to me, yet when you discuss the issues that feminism is concerned with, there is a remarkable level of agreement. Equality is a good thing. Freedom is a good thing. Individuality is a good thing. Yet women don't name and recognise this as feminism. They don't relate women's struggle for the vote, for the right to own property and to an independent income, with the struggles we are still engaged in today.

The average pay gap between men and women full-time workers stands at 17%, and 38% for part-time workers. Only 20% of MPs are women. 4% of executive directors of the UK's top 100 companies are women. Only 6% of reported rapes end in conviction. (<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk>)

So feminism isn't about dungarees and man-hating, it's about making our world more equitable for everyone. Feminism is an ongoing project, a struggle, a criticism, a different way of thinking, remaking the structures and attitudes that affect the lives of men and women everywhere. This is why I'm proud to call myself a feminist and why I always will be!

## GOATs at Faslane!

Liz Brandow

When I read about a local initiative - called Golden Oldies Against Trident - planning a visit on 16/17 December, I thought, 'What a good idea! I might even stir myself ... but it's a long way, and cold, and ...' Then my 94-year-old mother, frail but indomitable - true WILPFer in spirit, even though she's a new member - phoned to say she was going. My own excuses faded like mist, and we started organising.



No minibuses and church halls - not at 94 - and we would need a wheelchair, and assistance on the journey, and accommodation as near as possible to Queen Street Station.

In time every problem was solved. The press release went out: we got marvellous publicity in the local paper, including a great photo, and Michele Hanson phoned for a chat, giving my mother almost half her column in the Guardian on 12 December. We borrowed an industrial-strength poncho - too heavy to wear when standing but it would keep her dry in the wheelchair - and off we went.

We flew to Glasgow - ungreen, but at 94 - checked into an hotel a few minutes' walk from the station and found the wheelchair from the Red Cross in the luggage room. We were on Glasgow radio the following morning, and got a wonderfully warm response from strangers in the hotel who wished us well. We met some of the other GOATs at the station and set off for Garelochhead, two miles from the base. We amused ourselves on the train by putting string through the multicoloured laminated placards with the WILPF or CND logo inside the GOAT name, ready for some illegal direct action at the base.

The first sight of Faslane, like many other military facilities, is so incongruous: beautiful countryside - hills, trees, water, spectacular views - and mountains of razor wire and dozens of police-people protecting acres of concrete. Our reception was wonderful: a heartfelt welcome from the sixty or so other people from Leicester who carried out

different lock-ons and blockades - the police were also helpful and courteous. My mother commented on the different response from the Nazi police in the '30s in Vienna. (While we mustn't be complacent, this isn't, as yet, a Fascist dictatorship.) As we put our own brilliant, very visible placards on the roundabout, the police were too busy with the blockades to remove them. My mother was definitely the focal point for publicity: a Press Association reporter took dozens of photos and interviewed her, with results in a Glasgow paper and the *Independent* as well as being on the BBC News website - great!

The weather wasn't too bad: alternating blue sky and showers, with amazing mountains of cloud and the occasional startlingly beautiful, very symbolic rainbow. We managed to keep reasonably dry and it wasn't too cold. However, by early afternoon, with people being cheerfully arrested all around us, we did make a move, to a rousing chorus of 'We're proud of you, we're proud of you' (tune of Auld Lang Syne) and got back to Glasgow with the help of a minibus and the train. That evening we joined the others at the church hall and again were thrilled by the encouragement of all the other determined anti-Trident activists.



The publicity has gone on: in *The Friend*, on paper, online worldwide and a brilliant few minutes on *Central News* a few days later. It was worth it. We never know how much good we do, but every bit of progress in the world starts with a few determined people. The GOATs will continue; plans are beginning for a trip to Aldermaston, with GOATs from all over the country: WILPF GOATs and CND GOATs and CAAT GOATs and Amnesty GOATs and anyone else!

## Sugar and spice and ... swollen black bruises?

Gillian Brown

'Guess what I'm made of!' My friend's five-year-old grandson was fair bursting with exuberance. 'Frogs and snails and puppy dogs' tails!' he shrieked gleefully, quoting the old saying that goes on to describe little girls as being made of sugar and spice and all things nice. Granny laughed and agreed. Later that day my neighbour's toddler daughter took a tumble. Unhurt, she looked around for her mum anyway. Mum ran to pick her up, commenting, 'I'm sure I wouldn't be so protective if she was a boy'.

Both grandmother and mother are strong, intelligent women who would describe themselves as feminists. With an age gap of forty years, they represent very different stages of feminism. Yet both dismissed my concerns about gender-stereotyping as 'over the top' and thought that making a fuss about it could only be detrimental to a carefree upbringing. Of course we must enjoy our children and grandchildren, but such 'harmless' incidents play an enormous part in conditioning children to take on traditional gender identities long before formal education begins.

I work with an organisation that uses creative drama in schools to explore attitudes towards domestic violence, and to find ways of building relationships built on mutual respect. Virtually all the teenagers say they think it is wrong for a man to hit a woman but, as we probe more deeply, we find contradictions. Some, both male and female, think violence may be an acceptable reaction if the woman has been unfaithful, or doesn't show respect to her man, or nags him. Such views can only stem from an acceptance of the predominant gender power imbalance. This was the starting point for Amnesty's 2004 campaign, *Problem? What problem?* which featured a DVD of short films called *Real Love*, highlighting the 'normalisation' of domestic violence within society.

One in four women will endure domestic violence; two women are killed each week in the UK by a present or former partner. Research is prolific and legislation is changing to take into account that domestic violence is real; that real men destroy the

lives of real women and must be stopped. Research and legislation are needed to uncover the whole story; laws that are blind to women's rights must be changed, and perpetrators must understand their actions are abhorrent. But domestic violence cannot be prevented unless attitudes that condone the right of a man to control a woman are changed. Amnesty states: 'According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, the greatest challenge to women's rights and the elimination of discriminatory laws and harmful practices comes from the doctrine of cultural relativism and can only be addressed with the active involvement of the people most affected'.

(<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=10257>)

We know it takes, on average, 35 beatings before a woman reports the offender to the police - involvement in tackling domestic crime is difficult if you are frightened, subdued and convinced you are being attacked because you are stupid. (Most abusers will have convinced their victims of this long before the 35th beating.) It is much more important that those of us not affected do not stand aside and take no responsibility for domestic violence. But how can we change the cultural assumptions that leave our little girls destined to be sugar and spice, nice, sweet, and subordinate?

Here are three ideas:

- 1 If you are aware of a violent domestic situation, do not ignore it - but be careful, contact Women's Aid for advice. (0808 2000 247 or [helpline@womensaid.org.uk](mailto:helpline@womensaid.org.uk))
- 2 Challenge the commodification of gender stereotypes. Complain when all the little girls' clothes in the shop are pink. Avoid giving overtly gender-specific toys.
- 3 If you have access to the education system, observe where gender discrimination takes place and challenge it.

It's important to remember that the majority of men are disgusted by violence against women, even whilst remaining oblivious to the cultural structures that condone it. Our campaigns must be aware of this. Men react negatively to anything that makes them feel guilty, embarrassed, ashamed or wrongly-blamed. The challenge is not about antagonising men, but changing the cultural norms and power structures that keep women vulnerable.

## Outreach @ Avery Hill

Glen Lee

Avery Hill Training College had not been a feature of my life for many years until September 2006. As many of you will know, I went college there nearly sixty years ago and it just so happened that they were able, and more than willing, to have us there for the IEC. To my surprise I received an invitation in October 2006 to attend the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the foundation of Avery Hill in 1906. This was followed a few days later by a phone call asking if I was attending and, if so, would I represent the former students of the late 1940s and speak at the ceremony opening the buildings that we had seen in the final stages of construction in September. I felt obliged to accept, but not without concern.

What influence did that women's college have on the way I live my life now was the puzzle I tried to resolve and reflect in my speech, along with the nostalgic tales of way-back-when. During my speech, I explained what a profound effect the English lecturer in 1948 had on me by encouraging me to read Virginia Woolfe, Vita Sackville-West and other women writers who helped me on my journey towards an awareness of women's struggle for emancipation. We have come a long way along that road but, as we know, women in 2006 still have an unfinished agenda. During my speech I was able to mention WILPF's seminar at the international gathering we held at the college in September.

Some of the present-day students were at the ceremony and had seen the main building in all its glory when it was decorated it with those wonderful women's banners.

Opening the new buildings - one of which is named after Mary Seacole (1805-1881) and the other, a sports hall, bearing the name of Madame Bergman Osterberg (1849-1915) who founded Britain's first PE college in 1885 - gave me the opportunity to comment on WILPF's beginnings, to mention Bertha Von Suttner (1843-1914), Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch and to draw attention to those indomitable women who had the foresight, determination, energy and optimism to carry women's emancipation forward.

Following the ceremony I had to plant the first of 100 new trees that are to be planted at Avery Hill to mark the centenary of higher education there. Being a miner's daughter I have a nifty way with a shovel!



I was looking forward to the reception but was ambushed on my way there by students, old and new, who wanted to talk about our historic past and the connections, but also about this WILPF organisation to which I have given my 'retirement years'. My throat was dry from talking about UK WILPF, our Y-WILPF and the planned WILPF international congress in Bolivia. There was much interest in Y-WILPF and its electronic international connections.

I have arranged to go back to see the president of the Student Union who has promised a stall at the next Freshers' Fair, but before that we would like to set up a meeting with some of the enthusiastic young women who escorted me on a grand tour of the Mansion Site and to the Marble Hall where we were served hot chocolate at 11am in 1948.

I gave out more than two dozen application forms at this event including one to the Vice Chancellor of Greenwich University, Tessa Blackstone. Watch this space for new members. It will not be for the want of trying if there's no response. NEVER GIVE UP - from little acorns large oak trees grow.

## **Gendering the agenda - UN Security Council 1325 women, peace and security**

Amy Barrow, 1325 working group

During October 2006, a number of events marked the anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325).<sup>1</sup> Members of the 1325 working group attended a Q&A session on UNSCR 1325 with Joan Ruddock, MP (Chair of the Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security) and Dr Shatha Besarani of Iraqi Women for Peace and Democracy.<sup>2</sup>

On the anniversary of UNSCR 1325 itself, WOMANKIND Worldwide<sup>3</sup> held a research presentation on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan at the House of Commons, which showed exclusive film footage of Afghani women's experiences five years on from the fall of the Taliban regime.

One particular problem that arose during the WOMANKIND Worldwide research presentation was the fact that conflict prevention initiatives are often missed in planning and that responses tend to be reactive, responding to conflict rather than preventing the escalation of violence. In Afghanistan - where there is a lack of adequate shelters for women who encounter domestic gender-based violence - private violence, which simmers under the surface of society, undermines the security of men and women in the public sphere. Both these events highlighted that whilst UNSCR 1325 has gained momentum during the past six years, implementation has, at best, been inconsistent and piecemeal.

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<sup>1</sup> S/Res/1325 (2000) adopted in October 2000, UNSCR 1325 addresses four thematic areas: access to decision-making, violence against women, peacekeeping operations and DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration). It is the first Security Council Resolution that specifically considers women and armed conflict. The Resolution calls on existing human rights and humanitarian law provisions and aims to both protect and empower women during and after conflict.

<sup>2</sup> Facilitated by the Westminster Branch of the United Nations Association.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.womankind.org.uk/>

While NGOs and women's organisations have seized the opportunity to lobby governments and advocate conflict prevention, resolution and reconstruction policies that reflect both men and women's experience of conflict, some UN member states' response to UNSCR 1325 has been apathetic. In 2005, Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, mandated member states to initiate National Action Plans to implement UNSCR 1325.<sup>4</sup> In the UK context, a 12-point National Action Plan was adopted on International Women's Day - 8 March 2006.

Principally, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Department for International Development (DFID) are equal stakeholders, sharing responsibility for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The plan includes commitments from the UK Government to incorporate a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations; provide financial support to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to mainstream gender and continued liaison with civil society actors and NGOs on gender-related issues.

Joan Ruddock MP has been instrumental in keeping UNSCR 1325 on the agenda. The Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security is innovative because it operates as a tripartite group and brings together Parliamentarians, Civil Servants and Civil Society, including the Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS)<sup>5</sup> network. This initiative is to be commended for involving civil society actors who often have firsthand experience of the situation on the ground and whose local knowledge and insight should be drawn upon.

Although the UK is taking positive steps to ensure a gendered understanding of armed conflict, the National Action Plan came into effect six years after the adoption of UNSCR 1325 which is a considerable time-lag and

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<sup>4</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security (S/2005/636)

<sup>5</sup> GAPS stands for Gender Action for Peace and Security and brings together NGOs, consultants and academics working on peace and security related issues including WOMANKIND Worldwide, WILPF, and International Alert amongst other organisations.

could hinder effective implementation. For the 1325 group and WILPF it is vitally important to hold the Government to account and monitor implementation of UNSCR 1325. Recent initiatives include DFID's draft Conflict Policy paper, which invited feedback from NGOs and civil society organizations.

The paper sets out DFID's vision for how conflict should be addressed, working towards how DFID will operate by 2015. Three policy goals are outlined:

- policy goal 1: an increased focus on preventing conflict work
- policy goal 2: improving the effectiveness of our conflict work
- policy goal 3: considering conflict fully in all our development work<sup>6</sup>

Within the paper, DFID fails to mention UNSCR 1325 or gender, missing a gendered understanding of how governments and non-state actors should respond to conflict. As DFID moves towards more preventative policy goals, it is important to recognize both men and women's contribution to this process and how a gender perspective should shape the overall conflict policy. WILPF's submission is structured around set questions which include how DFID should better engage with civil society actors, and how the UK Government should work with partner agencies including the United Nations and the European Union.

Primarily the 1325 working group wanted to draw attention to DFID's role in securing the full implementation of UNSCR 1325. Existing international human rights and humanitarian law instruments should be considered when conflict work is monitored and evaluated. Encouraging clear cross-departmental communication was particularly important. At present the communication between departments does not seem cohesive and a strong partnership between the FCO, MOD and DFID will help to ensure a more coordinated response when implementing UNSCR 1325.

In addition, the 1325 working group wanted to encourage DFID, in its conflict budget, to

ensure that partner agencies including international financial institutions such as the World Bank and multilateral donor agencies also adopt a gender perspective. This is a particularly important point as some donor agencies operate DDR camps, which have not traditionally accounted for the needs of both men and women.

There is little guidance within UNSCR 1325 on female combatants, and in WILPF's submission the 1325 working group advised clearer guidelines on female combatants which would ensure that in any DDR planning women receive adequate support, including psycho-sexual trauma counselling and care, vocational training for economic independence, HIV/AIDS and STD testing and security from further harassment and sexual abuse.

At present DDR processes often fail to consider the position of female combatants who may not carry arms. Women often play more of a supportive role to male combatants; sometimes married to male combatants, which effectively masks sexual exploitation and abuse. Further details of the 1325 working group's submission can be found at the UK WILPF website.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to responding to DFID, the 1325 working group sent the draft submission to Milkah Kihunah and Sam Cook at WILPF's PeaceWomen project in New York for feedback. This interaction is important and links national sections directly with WILPF's international programmes. In the coming months there are significant challenges ahead. As Ban Ki-moon is sworn in as the next Secretary-General, it is a pivotal time for the direction of the United Nations. Along with PeaceWomen, UK WILPF needs to ensure that 1325 stays on the agenda.

In March 2007, it will be a year since the UK Government's adoption of a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. It will be important to ask how the Government has been using the National Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325 and what progress has been made. UK WILPF needs to ensure that the agenda is actually gendered.

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<sup>6</sup> DFID draft Conflict Policy paper and consultation questions

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<sup>7</sup> <http://ukwilpf.gn.apc.org/>

## Greenham: learning from our daughters - it changed my life

Sheila Triggs

The media have been marking the 25th anniversary of the start of the Greenham Common peace camps. The Guardian mounted a restrained exhibition of photographs and ephemera. But some WILPF women will know that Greenham was not just history/herstory - it initiated a new way of campaigning. Greenham didn't start as a women-only action; it became women only in response to confrontation/violence amongst the male 'peace activists'. Greenham women were autonomous, owing allegiance to no pre-existing organisation or group. They were leaderless, which totally stumped the authorities. They were composed of often young women with no other political or campaigning credentials. This gave rise to spontaneous and anarchic actions: constantly invading the base; roving around central London to congregate suddenly, and sing; invading the stones at Stonehenge at night; abseiling into the House of Commons.

The peace camps at Greenham had an international influence, with women from many countries staying. Their presence, way of working and strength had a tremendous network/spiderweb effect. They were an example on the one hand to suburban women - in Orpington, for example, who formed Greenham support groups - and to the miners' wives of the Women Against Pit Closures, who were strengthened by coming to Greenham during the miners' strike.

But Greenham Women were also a challenge to other peace activists because of the way they dressed/behaved/related to - or failed to relate to - outside supporters. And some people in existing organisations, like CND, could not accept this. Some (Orpington) men could not accept a women-only movement; they felt rejected. The Greenham women lived their commitment totally, not just to getting rid of Cruise missiles by constantly challenging authority and getting into the base, but also to challenging society's norms.

I don't look back on Greenham just because it was an exciting and demanding time, and a different way of acting/challenging authority. I don't look back on Greenham just because

of the spirit of the women on big actions when we surrounded the base and shook down bits of the fence or turned mirrors on the Military Police and soldiers. I don't look back just to say I was there. And I don't look back because this is one we ultimately won - the military left the common altogether. I look back on Greenham as an experience that changed my life.

From a background of general activism - CND marches from the early 1960s - my understanding and support for Greenham *started* as an acceptance of the value of working with other women. It *became* a realisation that there could be a different, more cooperative way of working in a women-only group. Only after the Greenham experience did this grow into a feminist awareness and analysis, and the dawning of an understanding of the patriarchal values at the roots of militarism and war; of the constant need to challenge the assumption that the macho ethos proposes (that war could be an answer to the world's problems) and that we need to listen to women for a change.

A collection of tastefully mounted and captioned photographs from the Guardian's archive is *not* the Greenham legacy. The legacy is the young women in the photographs who have now become significant agents of change in society, and the rest of us who were personally empowered by our experiences.

Greenham greatly strengthened the women's movement. In the long term Greenham has influenced the whole activist campaigning movement, men as well as women.

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## Connect 2

Ella Page

'Connect 2' was organised by Y-WILPF as a follow up to the successful 'Connect' day. It took place the following weekend and the aim of the day was to learn from each other. We looked at the international work of WILPF and at how members can become involved in campaigning and working groups in the UK. We benefited from the expertise of Martha and Shelia, and the international perspective of our newest members. Overall, a very educational and empowering day for us all.



## Hiroshima - building a just and sustainable peace

Lorna Archer

A visit to Hiroshima, seeing Japanese friends who have stayed with us over a number of years; a visit to Oak Ridge, Tennessee, where the atomic bomb was developed in the 1940s; and now the British Government's determination to replace its nuclear weapons, inspired me to provide members of UK WILPF with the conclusions of *Building a Just and Sustainable Peace*, the global conference which took place over four days in the Memorial Hall of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in September 2006.

On 6 August 1945, at 0815, the first atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima. Instantly, most of the city crumbled and burned. Over 140,000 people perished, either immediately or within a few months. Those who managed to survive suffered grievous mental and physical trauma, from which many continue to suffer today.

Since then Hiroshima has become a centre for the movement to ban nuclear weapons. The Peace Memorial Museum was opened in August 1955 to convey the facts of the bombing and to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons. A coalition of international institutions and organisations has continued to work together to achieve a just and sustainable world peace. Two years ago a major conference took place in New York: *The Role of Women in World Peace and the Role of Men and Boys in Gender Equity*.

At this year's Conference, two Nobel Peace Laureates, Shirin Ebadi (2003) from Iran and Jody Williams (1997) from the USA, made significant contributions. They led participants through the Peace Memorial Park to see some of the sculptures and peace monuments. Shirin Ebadi is leader of the Association for the Support of Children's Rights in Iran and Jody Williams is Founding Coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Mrs Ebadi, a lawyer, continues to defend political prisoners, 70% of whom would otherwise have no legal representation. 'I have been told that if I continue I will be prosecuted but we will continue our work

regardless, and we will not close our shop.' She was asked about ways to advance the human rights agenda to make it a priority in the world. She explained that there were two possibilities: the first to educate people into a culture of peace and the second the international criminal court.

Professor Williams called on American citizens to help eliminate the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world, and criticised the US government's actions after 9/11. She said that Americans should have engaged in a national debate but instead were silenced, not only by terrorists but by their own government. She did not support the Bush administration's decision for war, will support those who stand against the war and those who question their governments. 'Ignorance in history makes it repeat, but there is no excuse for ignorance in America. If you care about something, do something; if not, then you are part of the problem.'

She felt that her biggest contribution to the world would be to inspire one person to do what she does, and to share the same goal. 'You have to think positively even in the midst of doom but I don't like doom and I am doing something about it.'

The final day of the conference heard from Hibakusha, who survived the atomic blast. She described what she saw and how she assisted some of the wounded, including her mother who bled to death in front of her. 'I saw a baby dying while trying to suck his mother's nipple. I will never forget that image, or the image of people walking like ghosts, bleeding, with no hair or parts of their bodies missing, and the mountains of dead bodies.' She said there was so much devastation that many survivors became insensitive to pain. 'The bomb knocked us off our senses.'

Mitsuko Horiuchi, member of the House of Representatives in the Japanese Parliament and President of the Japanese Parliamentarians' League on the International Labour Organisation Activities, made the important point that the sustenance of peace is essential to the survival of the world. She drew attention to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals Towards Peace by the year 2015. She believes that gender equality is the foundation of the

labour market, and drew attention to child labour practices which must be abolished in order to promote peace. 'Today, many countries use child labour in agriculture, textiles, as domestic workers. They are trafficked, become child soldiers and are involved in child prostitution and quarry clearing.'

At the concluding session of the conference The Honorable Yunsook Lee, former South Korean Minister of Public Affairs, focused on rooting peace in the minds of people. She saw education as the key to sustaining peace by building a society to enhance tolerance and peace. She considered it an unfortunate concept that peace is sought through war. She spoke of the culture of peace being deeply rooted in the world, and urged the creation of a strong melting pot because peace is fragile. She is currently involved in a venture to create a memorial made from metal war shells, collected from around the world, melted together to make a bell.

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### **To his mother from a boy in Gaza**

by Constance Fraser (Brighton WILPF)

I was just telling you  
What I wanted to do  
When I'm a grown man.

I was just telling you  
How I wanted to go  
To a college to learn  
All from A through to Z,  
When a sniper unknown  
Aimed his rifle and fired -  
And a shot stopped my tongue.

What a shame I won't know  
What I'd grow up to do  
And the nice things I'd buy you  
From the money I'd earn  
As a clever big man.

It's a good thing I'd said  
All from A through to Z -  
Now you'll have to imagine  
Everything I could do  
If I was not dead.  
You'll never get through them,  
They'll take too much time  
I'm sorry for you  
I'm so sorry for you.

### **Why the law on prostitution needs changing**

Alexandra Murrell

It is estimated that 80% of Britain's prostitutes are from overseas, and many were trafficked. There are laws to protect them and organisations to help them, but so long as prostitution is partly illegal, the market for trafficked women will remain buoyant. In Britain, prostitution is still largely hidden and there is debate about legalising brothels. Research by the Poppy Project on the situation in the Netherlands and Germany has found that legalising brothels is counter-productive: more women are trafficked, the tolerance zones become no-go areas and crime increases. It argues that prostitution is emotionally, mentally and physically unhealthy, and sanctioning it leaves fewer incentives for women to seek help to combat their addictions.

In 1999 Sweden became the first country to punish the buyer rather than the seller. This has created a paradigm shift from the acceptance that sex is a commodity to be bought, to an activity that must be negotiated by other means. Since the law changed many women have sought help and found different work; crime is reduced and no-go areas are eliminated. Of course prostitution continues but a criminal record and a fine are adequate deterrents for most Swedes.

Opponents say this simply moves the problem to other countries, but there is no escape for Swedish citizens: they will be prosecuted under this law no matter where they are caught.

So should the law be adopted in Britain? At present police rely on men who go to brothels to find out if a woman is trafficked - not a wholly efficient system. UK WILPF can take the lead by lobbying for a change in the law which will help protect vulnerable women and children from one form of abuse.

The Women's Library in Aldgate has an exhibition on Prostitution until 31 March. It marks the centenary of the death of Josephine Butler, the Victorian social reformer and campaigner for the rights of prostituted women. She believed that legitimising prostitution stimulates the market - only Sweden has taken her views seriously.

## South Wales branch members at the Welsh Assembly



Rosemary Butler, Assembly Member for Newport East, is on the left at the back

The Assembly has more women members than men - 31:29 - and the First Minister's Cabinet has four women and four men. WILPFers heard Rosemary raise questions with Ministers in a plenary meeting on energy efficiency, action on unoccupied housing and employment. She arranged a tour of The Senedd -The National Assembly for Wales' new building - designed by the Richard Rogers Partnership to reflect the National Assembly's core philosophy of openness and transparency. The building incorporates local materials and achieves high standards of environmental performance: energy consumption and waste is minimised by the application of renewable technologies.



South Wales branch members celebrating the publication of *WILPF - 90 years of Working for Peace in Wales*

A presentation was given by author Katrina Gass at a day conference jointly organised by Llafur, the Welsh People's History Society, the Women's Archive of Wales and the West of England and South Wales Women's History Network.

## A Citizens' Complaint

Four members of the Brighton, Hove & District Branch, presented a Citizens' Complaint at Brighton Police Station. The complaint was regarding the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and, by its nuclear policy, the UK Government and NATO violation of the rules of international humanitarian law.

The Sussex Peace Alliance, to which the Brighton branch of WILPF is affiliated, organised a county-wide campaign to coincide with the NATO summit in Latvia on 28 and 29 November, to put pressure on the meeting to discuss nuclear disarmament.



From left to right: Jennifer Lyall, Eileen Daffern, Molly Beirne and Constance Fraser

Although the nuclear base in Faslane was amongst other sites mentioned in the Complaint, the reply received from Brighton Police Station was headed, 'Complaint regarding alleged illegal activity at Faslane, Scotland' and said that our complaint had been 'passed to colleagues at Faslane for initial investigation as the alleged offences do not apparently occur in the force area of Sussex'.

Our branch replied, 'We think you have completely misunderstood the contents of the Complaint which was not solely relevant to the Faslane facility, but to violations of the rules of international humanitarian law.'

We look forward to the reply.

## Norwich Gallery

### The Lakenheath Protest



Laughing in the rain



Davida Higgin addresses the crowd

### NATO Complaint Day in Norwich



Thanks to Peter Lanyon for our banner



Cordial relations

### Norwich Branch



Dr Nicola Pratt speaks on the Middle East conflict



Ruth Osborn, former UK WILPF Vice-President

**Y-WILPF's meeting on 24 February - at 1400 in the new office - will be followed by a social event.**

