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PRESIDENT OF OUR
SWEDISH SISTER
ORGANISATION SKV
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Sisters

65th anniversary of atomic bombings

JANETTE FERGUSON REPORTS ON MANCHESTER'S COMMEMORATION OF THE 65TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI ATOMIC BOMBINGS

AT 1.45am on 6 August 1945 a US bomber, named *Enola Gay*, took off from an airbase on the Mariana Islands. It carried the world's second atomic bomb (the first having been detonated three weeks earlier at a US test site in Alamogordo). The bomb named *Little Boy* was loaded with 12,500 tons of TNT. At 8.15am that same morning as Hiroshima was starting to awake its citizens could have no idea what was about to happen, for at that moment the bomber with 'Little Boy' on board flew over their city and dropped its horrific cargo. It fell for 43 seconds before detonating at 580 metres above Shima Hospital near the centre of the city. Here is a description from a pamphlet published by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum of what happened immediately after the explosion:

"The temperature of the air at the point of explosion reached several million degrees Celsius (the maximum temperature of conventional bombs is approximately 5,000 degrees Celsius). Several millionths of a second after the explosion a fireball appeared, radiating white heat. After 1/10,000th of a second the fireball reached a diameter of approximately 28 metres with a temperature of close to 300,000 degrees Celsius. At the instant of explosion, intense heat rays and radiation were released in all directions, and a blast erupted with incredible pressure on surrounding air."

As a result of the blast, heat and ensuing fires, the city of Hiroshima was levelled and some 90,000 people in it perished that day.

Three days after destroying Hiroshima and after failing to find its second target city of Kokura, a US B29 bomber attacked the city of Nagasaki with the world's third atomic weapon. This bomb had a plutonium core and an explosive force of some 22,000 tons of TNT. It had been named 'Fat Man'. The attack took place at 11.02am. It resulted in the immediate deaths of some 40,000 people.

Harry Truman, the then President of the United States, said of the destruction of Hiroshima "This is the greatest thing in history" and after the destruction of Nagasaki he referred to the "awful responsibility which has come to us" and to "thank God that it has come to us, instead of our enemies". He prayed that God "may guide us to use it in his ways and for his purpose". It was a chilling and prophetic prayer.

By the end of 1945, some 145,000 people had died in Hiroshima, and 75,000 people had died in Nagasaki.



NAW MEMBER
LYDIA MERYLL WITH
COUNCILLOR
AFZAL KHAN AND
TONY LLOYD MP

Tens of thousands more suffered serious injuries. Deaths among the survivors of the bombings (the Hibakusha) have continued over the years due primarily to the effects of radiation poisoning.

And that is why in Manchester (just one of the thousands of cities and towns worldwide) there was a 65th anniversary commemoration at the peace gardens, near the city centre.

This was attended by Pam Flynn (NAW EC) and Lydia Meryll (NAW). At the commemoration Sean Morris (NFLA Secretary and UK Mayors for Peace Secretary) talked about "Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki", and *The Hiroshima and Nagasaki 2008 Peace Declarations* were read by the Lord Mayor of Manchester Councillor Mark Hackett

and Councillor Afzal Khan, (Manchester's Mayors for Peace representative), and a recent goodwill challenge speech made by Tadatoshi Akiba (Mayor of Hiroshima) entitled *Living up to our Words* was read by Tony Lloyd (Manchester Central MP).

A wreath was laid in the peace gardens to honour the innocents who lost their lives, as a tribute to the 'Hibakusha' the survivors of the bombings, as a reminder of the Mayors of Peace Organisation and for all the innocents who have perished before and since 1945. A two minute silence was also observed.

A recital then took place of three poems taken from a famous book of poems called 'No More Hiroshimas' written in 1960 by James Kirkup (a renowned English poet, who was also

international women

a teacher in Japan in the 1950s), by three members of the Organising Committee of Septembers Manchester Peace and Justice Festival. Jacqui Burke read 'Umeboshi', Hazel Roy read 'White Shadows' and Lydia Meryll read 'Ghosts, Fire, Water'.

Rae Street, (co-founder of Campaign Against Depleted Uranium) talked about the ongoing work being carried out in this campaign, and reminded everyone that weapons either made from or containing uranium are still being used in wars and conflicts to this day and thousands of people are becoming ill when coming in contact with it.

Mai Chatham, (Chernobyl Children's Project) talked about bringing children from Belarus to the UK for recuperative holidays that can sometimes make a life or death difference and it also funds medical projects. Next year is the 25th anniversary of the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster.

The message from 1945 couldn't be any clearer because it's been written in the blood of the victims of Hiroshima, of Nagasaki and all the other cities, towns and villages which have been dragged into the horrific 'wars' before and since then. Are we ever going to learn from history's mistakes!! Why can't we live together in harmony? Why can't we work together to stop Starvation, Famine, Cruelty, Poverty, Global Warming? Why can't we stop building Nuclear Weapons and fighting amongst ourselves? What about our future generations? Are we ever going to grow up and start behaving like responsible adults?

I would like to share something with you before I finish and that is a contribution made by a 12 year old Canadian girl called 'Severn Suzuki' to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. "At school even in nursery, you teach us how to behave in the world. You teach us: not to fight with others, to work things out, to respect others, to clean up our mess, not to hurt other creatures, to share and not to be greedy. Then why do you go out and do the things you tell us not to do?"

"Do not forget why you are here today, who you are doing this for – we are your own children.

"You are deciding what kind of world we will grow up in". She concluded by saying

"I challenge you, please make your actions reflect your words".

I think that we should all take up that challenge, don't you? And just maybe, when we work together we can bequeath a 'Nuclear Weapon Free World' to our children by 2020.

FURTHER INFORMATION
NFLA: WWW.NUCLEARPOLICY.INFO
MAYORS FOR PEACE:
WWW.MAYORSFORPEACE.ORG

THE WIDF issued a statement in support of the Hibakusha (the survivors of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 65 years ago) and a call for action in solidarity to finally achieve a world without nuclear weapons. They said:

"Public opinion and anti-nuclear peace movements are bringing changes in international politics, and wide-ranging sectors of people, including senior political and military figures are voicing their support to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Marking a historic turn for the abolition of nuclear weapons with the NPT Review Conference, we developed international actions demanding the start of negotiations on a convention to totally ban nuclear weapons. The Final Document agreed upon by the Review Conference reaffirmed the "unequivocal undertaking" on the elimination of nuclear weapons, which nuclear weapons states accepted in 2000. It urged all nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states to make "special efforts to establish the necessary framework" to reach this goal, noting the proposal of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on the start of negotiations of a nuclear weapons Convention.

It was also agreed that a conference on establishing a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East, a core of international tension, be convened in 2012 with all invited.

Given that "a world without nuclear weapons" is now an established goal of international politics, what are needed next are concrete plans to attain the objective. We call for negotiations and early conclusion of a convention for a total ban, we propose to plan and develop actions everywhere in the world to demand the start of negotiations without delay. Focusing on the session of the UN General Assembly, let us rally public support internationally. The ratifications and the entry force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the start of negotiations of the Fissile Cut-off Treaty, the entry into force of the NEW START between Russia and the US and deeper reduction in their nuclear arsenals, and a ban on use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states, should also be achieved without further delay.

We oppose the build up and modernisation of the nuclear arsenal, as well as the Missile Defence programs, which are designed to reinforce preparations for 'first strike'. We further demand the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from foreign territories and from the high seas. We support the creation and expansion of a nuclear weapons-free zone in other areas and

support a new world order of peace based on the UN Charter.

It is no longer the time when a handful of big powers can rule the world. We are at the threshold of a new world where all countries respect international law, play their roles equally, and are supported by active contributions of the society.

On the 65th anniversary of the atomic bombings, we call for increased support for the Hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and nuclear victims of the world. Let us inherit and carry forward the experiences and struggles of the Hibakusha as the "undertaking of humanity". Let us rise in action now with the Hibakusha and with the younger generations of people who bear the future of humanity.

NAW notes

■ **Correction from the Editor** In the Summer 2010 issue of *Sisters* on page 6, column 2, in the AGM update by Ute Navidi we printed "the Violence Against Women campaign had folded" this is not the case. It is the "End Child Poverty campaign" that is folding because of the withdrawal of sponsorship funding, and is reportedly opening up under a different 'umbrella'. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused.

■ **NAW web site** The reconstruction of the web site is ongoing but it will go live on 1 October: www.sisters.org.uk
BARBARA SWITZER SWITZER@GN.APC.ORG

■ **South Yorkshire NAW Branch** meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of every month at the Friends Meeting House, Sheffield, from 7.15pm to 9pm, all welcome.
PAT PETERS PETERSPAT@BLUEYONDER.CO.UK

■ **World Wide Women** are organising three public meetings around Poverty. Speakers to be confirmed, at the Friends Meeting House, Sheffield. All are welcome.

1. Domestic Workers' – Saturday 29 January 2011, at 2pm

2. International Workers and Poverty – Thursday 10 February 2011 at 7pm

3. Facing the Cuts – Saturday 12 March 2011, at 2pm

PAT PETERS PETERSPAT@BLUEYONDER.CO.UK

This issue has been edited by
Janette Ferguson

a fair society, not a bogus 'big' society

WHEN the NAW's AGM was held in April, we determined to oppose the public service cuts that all three largest political parties were proposing to impose "to balance the books". Our opposition was based on the likelihood that cuts would have a greater impact on women than men, both women working in the public sector and using public services to meet their families' needs.

Over the next few weeks of the General Election campaign, we noted that none of the parties published any assessment of how the budget proposals in their manifestos would impact on gender equality, although the Labour Party did commit to doing this in future. The lack of this alongside the abstract nature of debate about which services, which benefits, which jobs, which projects the parties intended to cut, meant that the electorate could not scrutinise the manifestos and make informed choices. The unsurprising outcome was that no party won the trust of the people and there was no victor. And then the men in grey suits pushed the women aside, locked themselves in closed rooms for days on end and then emerged smirking with a new coalition manifesto written by Conservative and Liberal Dem men, a manifesto with no democratic legitimacy, and no attempt at all to conduct any equality impact assessment of its proposals.

Obviously worried about these proposals drifting into the Coalition's budget due on 22 June, the Minister for Women and Equalities, Theresa May, wrote to Messrs Cameron, Clegg and Osborne on 9 June to "remind col-

leagues of the legal requirements to additionally consider how women, disabled people and ethnic minorities are affected". She went on to warn "there is a real risk of successful legal challenge by for instance recipients of public services". **And well done to the Fawcett Society for standing up for women and mounting a legal challenge straightaway:** we hope it succeeds.

And shame on Nick Clegg for telling his Lib Dem colleagues in June that fairness was "hard-wired" into the Budget. That'll be the same double-speak that says we're all in this together sharing the pain, would it Nick?

The reality is that the unelected coalition plans to share the pain among less well-off people and women and to bulldoze all these cuts through now before people have the time to see how each proposed cut would affect them and their families and campaign against it. They want to rush all this through because they figure that the cover of an unelected coalition acting in the national interest against financial Armageddon will not last long and they are right. A bare majority seem to support the cuts programme at present, but this will melt away if we can expose the inherent unfairness and lack of democracy in their plans. Let's just look at the impact of the budget on women (figures from House of Commons, commissioned by Yvette Cooper) and ask "who voted for this?"

- 600,000 public sector jobs lost by 2016; 2/3rds of these women's jobs
- Abolishing the health in pregnancy grant

- Abolishing the Sure Start maternity grants
- Freezing Child benefit for three years
- Requiring single parents whose youngest child starts school to look for paid employment even if they are not ready to do so
- Cutting benefits, tax credits and pensions in line with the Consumer Price Index in place of the Retail Price Index
- Raising VAT from 17.5% to 20%
- Making women carry 72% of the budget cuts

The short answer is that "no-one did". This matters hugely to an unelected coalition government with such an unstable base. It could be destabilised by Lib Dem activists throwing rotten apples at Nick Clegg at their conference this year, or by Liam Fox taking the row with George Osborne over Trident costs to Parliament, or Iain Duncan Smith taking his row about reshaping the welfare state or whatever!!

The NAW is working to undermine the government's credibility as a champion of fairness and equality because we believe that this is its only claim to legitimacy and if we can expose this as a lie, it will lose people's support. You can see how much this matters, as even today (25 August) the Treasury is still saying that it stands by its "robust analysis" of a "progressive" budget, in response to the Institute of Fiscal Studies report labelling it a "regressive" budget.

The NAW will be doing everything we can to get the message out to all organisations and women we work with that this government has no commitment to fairness and equality and is prepared to make real cuts to women's incomes and jobs even if it means ignoring the advice of its Minister for Women and Equalities. They have made the mistake of claiming to be progressive, committed to fairness and to the whole country working together, all of us sharing the pain. This makes them very vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy, especially as so many of them are millionaires!!

The NAW's revamped website is going live on 1 October 2010 so please watch it and contribute any ideas you have on this campaign. We'll be carrying a report and campaign themes from the Charter for Women Conference "Cutting women out of the picture - Where are we in the new political landscape?" taking place on Saturday 30 October on the website and in next *Sisters* so watch this space!!

BY MARGARET BOYLE
NAW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER
WWW.SISTERS.ORG.UK

Charter for Women conference "Cutting women out of the picture; where are we in the new political landscape?"

Saturday 30 October 2010, 10am to 4pm

NUJ Offices, London

Affiliated organisations may nominate up to 5 delegates at a cost of £20 each (this includes lunch).

further information contact the Secretary, Sharon Allen, at RMT Unity House, 39 Chalton Street, London NW1 1JD, 07533 125 166, s.allen@rmt.org.uk

children's right to play

"PLAY IS WHAT I DO WHEN EVERYONE ELSE HAS STOPPED TELLING ME WHAT TO DO."

This child's definition of play does not sit easily with adults today. Parents and carers, teachers, after school club organisers and government often like to structure children's free time and fill it with other – more "useful ('positive')" – activities.

But children need time and space to be themselves. This applies to toddlers as much as teenagers. Play is a fundamental human need; it defines childhood.

time and space to play

Previous generations of children had much more time to play than those today, according to a poll of 2,000 parents commissioned by Play England and the British Toy and Hobby Association. A quarter of parents said their own childhood was far less structured, spending hours playing with friends. Parents today also have less time to play with their children. Many blame work pressures and sheer exhaustion.

Ask yourself what you got up to as a child: roaming around without mum knowing where you were until teatime; having playfights with kids in the neighbourhood; playing street games; and yes, even smashing a window, and ringing doorbells and running away.

Today, such activities are seen and punished as anti-social behaviour. Society has become much less tolerant of children and young people in public spaces (remember the notorious sonic device 'Mosquito?').

Parents who give their children the freedoms they once enjoyed face peer pressure from other parents. Remember the public outrage over the Schonrocks of West Dulwich who allowed their eight-year old daughter and five-year old son to cycle the mile-long journey from home to the local school because they 'wanted their children to enjoy life and understand the risks'.

play and the government

Play finally made it onto the government agenda less than two years ago when the Labour government created the first ever – even internationally – National Play Strategy backed by £235m investment in play.

Together with earlier funding by the Big Lottery of £200m, a large number of play spaces were built around the country. You may have seen them spring up in your neighbourhood, or noticed the make-over of existing play-spaces. Children's satisfaction with their local parks and play areas began to grow. Consultations about the design and maintenance of playspaces raised children's and communities'



expectations. More disabled children could now access mainstream play provision.

attack on play

One of the first decisions by the new Con-Lib coalition government was to make 'savings' in play provision. The remaining £75m of the £235m dedicated by the previous Department for Children, Schools and Families to new and refurbished play facilities was 'freed up' to allow local authorities to use it as they pleased. The coalition government also de-ringfenced £40.8m allocated to the youth opportunity fund for projects and facilities.

On 16 June 2010 new Secretary of State at the swiftly re-named Department of Education Michael Gove told local authority Directors of Children's Services and Chief Executives that there would be 'reduced funding'. Another letter from the DfE (15 July) asked local authorities to 'avoid incurring any new contractual liabilities' and restated that 'playbuilder' local authorities 'will receive no revenue grant this year' – thus being unable to employ playworkers.

no day without play!

The last government had a 10 year strategy to improve play opportunities for children; this programme of spend was only the first stage. The cuts are a big disappointment to those communities whose plans will now not be realised.

Play has been a soft target, being first in line for cuts – perhaps to help test the water for worse to come with the Comprehensive Spending Review in October. To make the cuts more palatable, Prime Minister David Cameron will chair a new Task Force for Families and Children this autumn; play is one of several priorities. No

doubt there will be much lipservice paid to why play is important, while slashing funding for play and other children's services. No doubt, little Florence Rose Endellion will enjoy growing up playing in lovely back gardens.

Big Society

Local people, parents and carers have often joined forces to transform derelict land into imaginative play-spaces ('oases for children') such as Glamis Road Adventure Playground in Tower Hamlets. They don't need lessons on the Big Society. They don't need Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg telling them that "every parent understands the importance of a secure environment for their children. Spaces where they can play; where they can feel completely free; where they can safely push at the boundaries, learning and experimenting."

The 'Big Society' will be sold to the public as being about community empowerment and getting people to volunteer – no doubt drawing in the hundreds of thousands who will be made unemployed.

play fights back

Make no mistake: the changing policy context for the play agenda under the coalition government is part of a wider ideological agenda – and we need to counter it.

The National Assembly of Women recognises and supports the progression and efforts being made by local, regional and national organisations, in saying enough is enough. The attack on children's play is deeply unfair. Like the 'welfare' measures announced so far, cutting children's play provision hits the poorest families and communities hardest. It increases inequalities. Even now, children in deprived areas suffer far higher rates of traffic accidents leading to death and injury.

Play is a basic human right, enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 31). A 2010 global consultation by the International Play Association shows that in many countries, children face enormous barriers to exercising this right, such as toxic environments and being abducted and turned into child soldiers (see www.ipaworld.org).

In this country, the main barrier to play is now the Con-Lib coalition government that puts profits before people, city banks before children's playgrounds. Fight the attack on children, stand up and defend play provision and playworkers. It's not fair to make children pay the price for the economic mess capitalism has created.

getting on (in age)

I have decided to put pen to paper because I am becoming increasingly irate over my age group being perceived as a greedy bunch who have stolen all the dosh from the public purse. I felt I should explain how my life has been since I joined the labour market in 1964. I expect it is a similar story to other women's experience (and in some cases men's).

Being born in 1948, the same year the NHS came into being, I was constantly told by my parents how lucky we were and how bad it had been before the 2nd world war, so I was under no illusion that the NHS and all the other publicly owned services were by far the best way to look after the country's citizens. This public understanding of just what collectivism did for workers was very clear. Unfortunately, it had taken a world war for us to get this far. No matter, we understood very well what we wanted

I failed my "11 plus", which immediately pitched me into the 'lower order' and I was educated in a girls only secondary modern. The target for us girls was put quite low and we were never encouraged to aim high in the job market. As for the boys, apprenticeships were offered in the majority of cases. Living in Luton, there was an abundance of jobs available. Fortunately, I was able to attend a secretarial college to do shorthand and typing. I must say, this has always stood me in good stead throughout my working life. Starting work at 16, as I did, was very unusual. I secured a position at the Electrolux factory in Luton. Most of my friends started work at 15, many of them at the Vauxhall Motor's plant or at the many manufacturing firms in the area.

Sounds quite ordered and nice doesn't it? Well in a way it was. Of course the down side was that much of the work was monotonous and physically demanding, and also remember we started work as I said above at 15, I did not know one person who went on to study at University, we might as well have aspired to go to the moon. Thanks goodness, there has been change there. Our children have, encouraged by us, pursued further education after the age of 16.

I had several breaks from work because I had children (a mostly unrecognised contribution to society). There was no maternity leave and no right to return to your job. Childcare for me was slightly better than today because I lived near a surviving council nursery. You received child benefit for the first child only and the pay gap between men and women was wide (no change there then!)

Things improved somewhat in the late '60s and early '70s. Class sizes

began to reduce quite dramatically and pre-school education was taken more seriously. The class ridden "11 plus" was abandoned and the comprehensive school system came into being and of course we were so proud of our NHS which has served my family very well. Although I have to say that when I see the '70s being described as drab and dull, I am surprised, because I thought they were quite good. We had a solid manufacturing base which greatly assisted the wealth of the country and of course pre-Thatcher, all authorities had to provide council housing. As there was full employment in the '70s, young and old alike were paying large amounts in tax and national insurance contributions. The legacy of that money is now being wasted on wars. We, the baby boomers, created what society is today for the bankers to waste.

However, life was also very hard. We worked very long hours and desperately tried to improve our lot. Most of my peers, if I am doing the sums right have worked for 45 to 50 years. Quite a contribution, don't you think?

Along the way, I became involved, firstly in the Labour Party and then the trade union movement who fought tirelessly for better conditions for men and women, some of which have been achieved, and yes we still have a long way to go!!! The one thing we had to look forward to was retirement at 65 for men and 60 for women (actually far too high). If you were lucky to work in a well organised place, you might receive an occupational pension, plus a full state pension. Yes and some of us have benefited from inheriting property

However, the majority of people who have already retired, are not living life high on the hog. Many, in fact, live in abject poverty, (more women than men).

So when I hear so called economists talk about the need to either take away or means test us for even the most basic thing such as bus passes or prescriptions, I feel outraged. In fact, if, after doing an economics degree, that's all they can come up with I feel perhaps they have learnt nothing. Maybe that's a bit harsh as I firmly believe education is beneficial

We are involved in wars that are either illegal or a complete waste of time, costing billions. We intend to build Trident at a cost of billions. Tax avoidance due to us by our so called entrepreneurial sector and the rich is apparently over £100 billion pounds. We will be giving money away to some of the middle classes to build their own schools which working children haven't a hope in hell of attending. What a disgrace!

history

PAM FLYNN, NAW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER, REPORTS ON AN HISTORIC STEP FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

ON Friday, 2 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously decided to establish **UN Women**, the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

On 6 July, UNIFEM Executive Director Inés Alberdi commented:

"This is a historic moment. The creation of a strong UN organisation that will be a champion to promote and advance the rights of women and girls worldwide has been a goal we have been advocating for many years, and I know that you will join me in celebrating and embracing this momentous achievement.

"The new organisation, UN Women, will merge UNIFEM with its three existing sister UN entities working on gender issues – the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW); the Office of the Special Advisor for Gender Issues (OSAGI); and the UN International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). For many years, we have effectively worked with national, regional and global partners to generate a stronger international public policy response to previously under-recognised women's rights issues, such as ending violence against women, increasing women's political partici-

And yet all the media (excluding the *Morning Star* and sometimes *The Guardian* and *Observer*) can do is back this Con/Lib pack in their vendetta against the poorest and most vulnerable in society

And what if we are enjoying our later years, benefitting from the NHS, benefitting, if we are lucky, to have amassed a small amount of spare cash.

SO WHAT!!!!

Why should we be penalised. I have no guilt in enjoying myself. I know that life will be difficult for the next generation, for my children and for my grandchildren, and I intend, like many other activists to fight for them too, but let's get things in perspective, us over 60s, us so-called baby boomers have not ruined it for everyone else. Bob Crow said that the only way pensioners are going to get a fair deal is for them to block the M1 and bring the country to a halt, you know what. I'll go for that. What do you think Sisters?

BY LORENE FABIAN

is made!

pation, and prioritising women's leadership in forging peace and security.

"At the same time, we have faced serious challenges in our efforts to support countries to implement commitments to gender equality, in part because of inadequate funding and because there was no single recognized driver to lead the UN response for gender equality support. This is why we wholeheartedly joined women's rights advocates and UN Member States in the call to **strengthen the UN system** to render even stronger support to the advancement of gender equality.

"The creation of UN Women marks a great new beginning, not an end. The kind of work that UNIFEM has supported will continue as we merge into an institution that will be more robust and coherent, better positioned and resourced than the sum of its constituent parts. Through UN Women, we will be stronger in our mutual goal to end violence against women. Let's seize this moment, and the momentum, and work with renewed energy and enthusiasm."

chainmakers' centenary

JANETTE FERGUSON REPORTS ON THE CRADLEY WOMEN CHAINMAKERS CENTENARY YEAR

WE can't have an edition of *Sisters* in 2010 without mentioning the Women Chainmaker's Strike in 1910. I would be very surprised if there was a woman who has campaigned for equal pay in any capacity who has not heard of or been told about this earth shattering event.

During the 19th century the Black Country, in particular the Cradley Heath area, became the centre for chain making in Britain. Heavy to medium chains were produced by men in factories, however the smaller chains (often known as 'hand-hammered' or 'country-work' chains) were often hand-worked by women or children in small cramped forges in out-buildings next to the home. The work was hot, physically demanding and poorly paid. Like other home-working, chain-making was an example of a 'sweated' trade, where workers (often women) were paid a pittance to produce cheap goods at home.

At the start of the 20th century the campaign to end exploitation of 'sweated' labour gained increasing popular support. In 1909 the Liberal government passed the Trade Boards Act to set up regulatory boards to establish and enforce minimum rates of pay for workers in four of the most exploited industries – chain-making, box-making, lace-making and the production of ready-made clothing. In the spring of 1910, the Chain Trade Board announced a minimum wage for hand-hammered chain-workers of two and a

half pence an hour – for many women this was nearly double the existing rate. At the end of the Trade Board's consultation in August 1910, many employers refused to pay the increase. In response, the women's union, The National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW), called a strike.

The strike lasted 10 weeks and attracted immense popular support from all sections of society – nearly £4,000 of donations were received by the end of the dispute from individual workers, trade unions, politicians, members of the aristocracy, business community and the clergy. The founder of the NFWW Mary Macarthur, used mass meetings and the media – including the new medium, cinema – to bring the situation of the striking women to a wider audience and the strike became an international cause celebre. Within a month 60 per cent of employers had signed the 'White List' and agreed to pay minimum rate, the dispute finally ended on 22 October when the last employer signed the list. This action laid the foundations for the introduction of a 'National Minimum Wage' in 1999 – unfortunately it was to take some 89 years to do so!!

The centenary year is being celebrated at festivals, parades and exhibitions throughout the UK.

SEE [HTTP://CHAINMAKERSSTRIKE.CO.UK/2010/08/CHAINMAKERS-FESTIVAL/](http://CHAINMAKERSSTRIKE.CO.UK/2010/08/CHAINMAKERS-FESTIVAL/) FOR INFORMATION ON THIS YEAR'S CELEBRATION AT THE BLACK COUNTRY LIVING MUSEUM, DUDLEY 18 SEPTEMBER 2010

news from abortion rights

■ **A majority of gynaecologists in Northern Ireland do not support abortion law as it stands**, a new academic study has shown. The research conducted by Middlesex University, involved interviews with 37 of the 42 practising gynaecologists in Northern Ireland revealed 57% support liberalising current abortion laws, with many willing to carry out abortions under certain circumstances. Dr Audrey Simpson OBE, Director of fpa NI adds "A woman's right to choose cannot continue to be ignored. When faced with an un-planned pregnancy they deserve and have a right to access health care services that are freely available in the rest of the UK."

■ **Irish anti-choice groups offer rogue 'Pregnancy Crisis Service'**. Alarming evidence has emerged this month about the tactics used by anti-choice groups claiming to provide coun-

selling to women facing unplanned pregnancies, eg – Distress caused by counselling techniques, (3-4 hour sessions, the use of lurid US produced videos and disturbing images, providing inaccurate and misleading medical advice, (claims that having an abortion will often result in women needing a hysterectomy, developing cervical cancer, becoming infertile, promiscuous or frigid and that their risk of developing breast cancer will double). None of which is supported by any medical evidence. Alison Begas, CE of the Well Women Centre, is also critical of the methods used by these organisation, whilst the Irish Health Executive advises women to visit the 'Positive Options' website.

■ **Abortion in Wales is a 'postcode lottery'**, women in Wales are experiencing serious difficulties in accessing abortions due to uneven service provi-

sions around the country, lack of provisions means that many women are having to wait until later in pregnancy to get an abortion. Vivienne Rose, of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service said that because of this, women were travelling longer distances to get to the only specialist clinic based in Cardiff, and if someone comes here after 20 weeks we can give them counselling but then have to send them out of Wales.

■ **The G8 Summit: abortion excluded from the policy goals** – the results of the summit – the Muskoka Initiative for Maternal and Child Health – have been released. The report details a five year, \$7.3bn package for improving maternal, newborn and child health and increasing access to productive health. G8 countries have pledged approx. \$7.3 billion, but the initiative omits any mention of abortion services.

sylvia pankhurst memorial lecture

THE EIGHTH LECTURE TOOK PLACE ON FRIDAY 13 AUGUST 2010 AT WORTLEY HALL, SHEFFIELD. BARBARA SWITZER REPORTS:

IRENE Cockroft, exhibition curator, author and lecturer, spoke on *How the Vote was Won* illustrated with wonderful slides some of which were taken from Richard Pankhurst's book, *Sylvia Pankhurst – Artist and Crusader*. The room was full once again and her approach inspired many questions and comments from people wishing to know more and adding their own observations from history. Irene traced the campaign through all its stages, the difficulties and tragedies and the backbreaking hard work for generations of militant suffragettes, law abiding suffragists and thousands of people whose determination won the day. The following are extracts from the lecture but you can request a hard copy on 01923 674 662, or download at www.gn.apc.org/sylviapankhurst.

how the vote was won

In 1918 British women over 30 voted for the first time. There was little rejoicing. The price included the sacrifice of thousands of lives in the First World War. Women had earned the right to vote, serving their country both on the home front and in the theatre of war. Another decade was to pass before universal male and female suffrage became law in Britain.

How does a public-spirited family cope with the ups and downs of private life? Adults and children must commit to sacrifice! The concept of putting others first was the underpinning of Sylvia's life as it was for the many women and men who together

Aase Bang

Barbara Switzer writes: I am saddened to advise members that Aase Bang died on 9 August 2010 aged 80 following a short illness. I first met Aase in Afghanistan, in 1988 whilst representing the NAW as part of the WIDF delegation to a Conference on Resolving Regional Conflicts. Aase, President of SKV (Svenska Kvinnors Vasterforbund) the Left Federation of Swedish Women, was deeply committed to peace and disarmament and to the international anti-apartheid movement. Many NAW activists met her over many years and in many countries. Both Megan Dobney (EC) and Terry Marsland knew her well and have expressed their gratitude for her unstinting support of NAW during a difficult period in the early '90s. Aase will be greatly missed by SKV, WIDF and the wider international progressive movement. *Sisters* and its readers send condolences to her family, friends and comrades.



wrought the early twentieth century women's revolution.

Most striking is the way Sylvia's family dealt with personal grief. In the teeth of the most terrible tragedies, they kept on working for others.

I don't think the parents, Emmeline and Richard Marsden Pankhurst, consciously registered the need for time for themselves. Perhaps, although intentions were good, they were unable to allow sufficient time for their children either. In an era of large families, high infant mortality and long working hours, this was normal.

My own family history to some extent runs parallel with that of the Pankhurst's. I hope that, by highlighting similar events in the lives of two radical families, I can make Sylvia more real to you as a person. Inevitably, there's much of the Sylvia story I'll have to leave out.

the Evans Bell connection

In 1866 my great, great-aunt Emily Bell

was one of 1,499 courageous women who signed the first major petition requesting votes for women. The petition was initiated by artist Barbara Bodichon and signatures were collected by the Kensington Society. Sympathetic Member of Parliament John Stuart Mill presented the petition to the all-male House of Commons. It was thrown out and marked the beginning of sustained agitation by women to establish equal voting rights.

Emily and Thomas Evans Bell, and lawyer Dr Richard Marsden Pankhurst, served together on the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage. In the 1860s Pankhurst had drafted the first women's suffrage bill (unsuccessful) and the amendment moved by radical MP Jacob Bright that granted women the franchise in municipal elections. The name of Pankhurst and the cause of women's suffrage were firmly linked long before the founding of the Women's Social and Political Union.

join the NAW now!

*I would like to join the NAW. Here is £15 for the annual subscription (£5 unwaged) which includes my subscription to **sisters**, the journal of the NAW.*

Our organisation would like to affiliate to the NAW. Enclosed is: £15 (local organisation/NAW branch), £30 (regional organisation), £45 (national)

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