

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Aotearoa Section



Newsletter May 2012



(L to R) Pauline Tangiora (Vice president) Mayra Gomez (Wellington), Edna Butterworth (retiring national treasurer), Rae Martell (Tamaki Makaurau) and Prue Stringer (Otautahi) raise the energy levels, singing at the section AGM in Christchurch in March. The meeting went well despite a building being demolished across the road the entire weekend.



Green MP, Jan Logie, spoke at the AGM about the current position of women in New Zealand. After her speech a useful conversation about related issues carried on for over an hour, facilitated by Edwina Hughes.

Walk away from uranium mining, towards aboriginal sovereignty: Wiluna to Perth, Western Australia, 2011.

By Anna-Claire Hunter, Otautahi

In August 2011, I left a snow storm in the shaky city to join a group of international walkers campaigning to stop uranium mines opening in Western Australia (WA). It was 30 degrees when I got to Wiluna, a remote desert town. The heat, dryness, beauty and expansiveness of the desert was a shock – there is nothing on this earth like the springtime explosion of colourful desert wildflowers, and the red earth contrasting with an open blue sky. It is a harsh environment, but well worth fighting to save. The traditional owners of the area, like indigenous people the world over, have been taking up that fight for decades. The personal cost of colonisation is massive here for aboriginal people. There were two funerals in the week we arrived, the bleak reality of poor health statistics, poverty, addiction and mental illness problems that racist oppression has brought to these communities.

The latest assault is in the form of proposed uranium mines. In 2008, the WA state government removed a ban on mining uranium, and since then five mines are in the approval process.



Members of the group Anna Claire walked with.

We started our walk 'Footprints for Peace' at Wiluna to bring attention to Toro Energy's proposed mine at Lake Way, 45km from Wiluna and on Martu land. In the first week we walked with over 60 people to Yeelirrie, a sacred site and another proposed mine, where BHP hope to make a profit digging up yellowcake. Here we were joined by traditional owners Kado and his family, and Nana Gay, Auntie Geraldine and her mum, who walked with us, told us stories about the land and about their struggle to stop mining here 40 years ago. And they have been remarkably successful, the area is unindustrialised and unscarred compared to the country closer to Kalgoorlie, where mines cover the land. It was inspiring and an incredible privilege to meet and walk with these traditional owners and witness their resilience and perseverance.

From Wiluna to Kalgoorlie the walking was hard, 25-35 kms a day in the sun. Despite the challenges of supply – we didn't pass a town with a shop until Leonora, three weeks into the walk – the food was amazing, the combined effort of super organiser Kerri-Ann, donations from supporters and camp cooks with an imaginative flair and ability to work under demanding circumstances. We all helped,

cooking, setting up and packing down camp, driving support vehicles and acting as safety people on the road. Half of this part of the walk was on dirt roads and the other half on highways used by huge mining supply vehicles and road trains. It was at times dangerous, and with nine children with us on the walk, we all had to keep our wits about us, despite being tired and sore at times. The children were an absolute highlight, keeping spirits up. One 9 year old walked the whole way. Through all the challenges, a close and supportive community of walkers came together, united by a common cause.

Kalgoorlie marked the halfway point for the walk, and the landscape changed with our direction as we started heading west towards Perth. Now we were walking over a land scarred by mining, the mineral rich goldfields area, devastated by an industry based on raping the land for all its worth. Then came the wheatbelt, where field after field showed the effects of salinisation – where deforestation for farms has led to salty water rising to the surface, making growing crops or pasture impossible. All the water in Kalgoorlie, and for much of way along our route west, is pumped from Perth, up to 600kms. We followed the pipeline at times, a welcome relief from the busy highway, but with our flags still visible to cars and trucks passing by.

Ten weeks and 1250 kms since we started in Wiluna, we arrived in Perth in time for CHOGM, with a clear message in support of aboriginal sovereignty and a nuclear free future. By the end of the walk people had participated from around Australia, including indigenous people from Martu, Wangai, Nyoongar and Arabunna countries, and international walkers from Chile, U.S., Dine/ Navajo nation, Sri Lanka, Germany, Holland, France, Italy, Kenya, and Iran.

Apart from me, others from Aotearoa included Winiata, long time Aboriginal tent embassy resident and Ngati Porou man, and Mayra

Gomez of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) and the Peace Foundation office in Wellington. The walk brought together so many people and played a role in progressing the international movement away from uranium mining, while keeping aboriginal sovereignty at the heart of the discussion. The fight to keep WA uranium mining free continues, and another walk is planned for August of this year, from Yeelirrie to Leonora. Come and join the fight!

WILPF Coordinators' Report 2011-12
Edwina Hughes, Megan Hutching, Joan Macdonald

Most of our work has consisted of letter-writing, making submissions, keeping in touch with the International Office and relaying information.

Letters were written to the Japan Section of WILPF expressing sympathy following the earthquake and tsunami; to the Minister of Education regarding the cessation of production of the Pasifika language reading series; to the Minister of Defence about the increase in government spending in the defence budget; to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Prime Ministers of all the Pacific Islands States requesting the granting of observer status to West Papua at the Pacific Islands Forum; to the Minister of Social Development supporting the Child Poverty Action Group campaign to improve the economic situation for children and their families who are living on the lowest incomes; to the Minister of Foreign Affairs supporting the nomination of Dame Silvia Cartwright to the International Criminal Court; to MFAT re New Zealand's implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325; to the International WILPF Office with information about NZ government spending on the armed forces and community services; to the President of NCWNZ regarding her media release in support of the government welfare reforms.

Submissions were made to the WILPF International Congress responding to questions regarding promoting peace, demilitarisation and disarmament, strengthening the UNO, development of WILPF and the situation in the Pacific; to the Maori Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into the Determinants of the Status and Wellbeing of Maori Children; to the Minister of Social Development on the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children; and an oral submission on the Alcohol Reform Bill.

We also responded to NCWNZ Action Items on the Minimum Wage review Consultation and the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children.

Auckland Branch Report: Pat Jackman



Joan Macdonald, Pat Jackman and Del Robie leafletting about military spending in Central Auckland

The branch 2012 AGM was held on 17 April at Helen Sumich's lovely home. All committee members were unanimously re-elected.

After a round robin introducing ourselves, a general discussion followed with various members giving updates on issues they are involved in or concerned about. We enjoyed a shared lunch and bought generously from the trading table – the proceeds from this go into our funds.

We celebrated Matariki/Winter Solstice in June last year. After the lunch, iCAN Aotearoa New Zealand was launched. The numbers attending increased as many people came just for the launching which was well received. Edwina Hughes did a great job of presenting the campaign, giving facts and figures as to why it is so necessary to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

The highlight of Hiroshima-Nagasaki commemorations was the speech from two young Peace Pals from One People-One Planet. They had previously spoken to the Auckland Council about their vision for Auckland as a Peace City. After they spoke, we lit candles and floated them on the pond in the Wintergarden in the Auckland Domain.

Our last meeting of the year was once again held at Helen Sumich's. Our speaker was Fahmid from the Refugee Centre who spoke of her work and of some of the difficulties refugees have in adjusting to everyday life in a new culture. She made an appeal for contributions of fabric, trimmings and other sewing paraphernalia. They are put to use in a sewing group which helps mothers and daughters bridge differences that arise as the young ones adapt to their new culture far more rapidly than their elders.

Some of our members have been involved in lobbying for Auckland to become a City of Peace and this has now been endorsed by the Council. Members are actively involved in several other organisations including Auckland NCW, Auckland Human Rights Network, Indonesia Human Rights Committee, Pacific Women's Watch and UNANZ.

Sadly we farewelled one of our active committee members in July as Helen Yensen left Auckland to start a new life in Napier. We have also had a number of bereavements during the year: Betty Tennet, Dawn and Jim Forbes, Adele Brandt, Eve Holland, Dorothy Brown and Joyce Browne. They were valued members of our group and are sadly missed.



Maynie and Kit (centre), long time WILPF members still active at 90, on Waiheke Island, opposing the Transpacific Partnership.

Wellington Branch Report: Helena McMullin

In 2011, we lost two longstanding members: Tonny Jansen and Kathleen Loncar, both ardent peace supporters who did not mince their words, and we remember them in this report. Following the Government's misguided decision to increase the military budget by \$78 million, we wrote to the Minister of Defence. The reply was less than satisfactory and in our second branch meeting last year we resolved to annually comment on the military budget and become a kind of military budget watchdog. The depleted uranium (DU) situation sadly remains unchanged here in NZ, where the proposed bill remains blocked for political

reasons. Overseas however, this issue continues to gain traction and there is an increasing amount of research on the dangers of DU.

Our branch proposed two NCW remits: one to eliminate slavery in the chocolate industry and the other to help stabilise our vulnerable global financial system. The chocolate slavery remit was unanimously accepted by the NCW National Conference and accordingly, we plan to work more on this issue this year. Our financial transaction tax remit unfortunately proved too tricky for many to understand, showing us there is work to do here to educate the public. Our branch was involved in preparing WILPF's submission on the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children, the launch of iCAN ANZ and has been collecting signatures for the iCAN petition. Branch members represent WILPF on the National Consultative Committee for Disarmament (NCCD), the Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munition Coalition / Campaign Against Land Mines combined Working Group, and UNANZ, and have been involved in numerous other initiatives. On International Women's Day, we supported the Wellington Women's Walk for Peace and Women Say NO to War.

Our membership increased marginally last year, though we have work to do in this area and it would be great if we could increase awareness of WILPF among university students.

In recent news, our Nelson member Sharyn Black has set up a civics education group, and Nancy Pollock welcomes comments on her research paper about food contamination as a result of US nuclear tests in Marshall Islands. The proposed European US missile shield was raised as an issue of concern. Closer to our

shores, we would like to raise awareness of the US military base being built on Jeju Island in South Korea.

We are grateful to our branch office holders, our members, our local NCW branch, the Tamaki Makaurau and Otautahi WILPF branches and the Section for the time, hard work and great ideas in the name of advancing peace and we look forward to our continued work together this year.

UNANZ: UNANZ continues to run smoothly and working to raise awareness of the UN, with an increasing focus on cooperating with UN Youth in doing so. They are currently organising a seminar about North Korea.

UN WOMEN: UN Women continues to run smoothly. One current goal is to increase women participation in Pacific parliaments. Good news include the recent Papua New Guinea legislation to create 22 special seats (one for each province) reserved for women. Specific focus this year is on ending violence against women in the Solomon Islands, a project that will be the recipient of funds raised at Walk for Women this year.

Otautahi Branch Report: *Celine Kearney*

Our WILPF stalwart Patricia Morrison died in September, possibly partly as a result of the stress and dislocation she suffered because of the earthquakes. She was in her ninetieth year and Kate Dewes delivered a tribute at her funeral.

The year has been one of considerable loss and grief for us all in Christchurch, particularly after the 22 February quakes. That shock was compounded by the news of the earthquake and tsunami which devastated parts of Japan

and caused nuclear contamination after a nuclear power station was put out of operation. We kept in touch with peace worker and survivor of the Hiroshima nuclear bomb, Bun (Hashizume Bun Fumiko), as she responded to the disaster in her country.

In June we had our one group gathering for the year. In August we organized an Hiroshima and Nagasaki memorial, though were unable to float lanterns in the Avon as a result of the quakes. We supported WILPF remits at our local NCW, on ethical chocolate and a Financial Transaction Tax. A submission was sent to the Christchurch City council to encourage it to continue to support the Peace City concept as Christchurch rebuilds.

We sent a letter to the Minister for the Environment calling for a moratorium on fracking in Canterbury. Towards the end of the year, Anna Claire, an active WILPF supporter, joined a walk in Western Australia to publicise the effects of uranium mining. As part of the section initiative to support women in prison, we made contact with the Canterbury PART Trust which supports women who are in or have been through the prison system.

Members continue to actively support a range of issues including initiatives for justice for Palestinians; the Green movement for ecological and social justice; and the Disarmament and Security Centre. We are grateful to the local Quakers who continue to support us financially. We were unable to pay fees to the section for the year as our time and energy has been taken up mostly in our personal lives dealing with the consequences of repeated quakes and aftershocks.



Ann-Marie Thompson at a recent cultural festival, keeping WILPF's name in the Christchurch community.

WILPF Aotearoa

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Vice presidents: Pauline Tangiora and Céline Kearney

Treasurer: Megan Hutching

Co-ordinators: Joan Macdonald and Edwina Hughes

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