

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Aotearoa Section



Newsletter October 2012

Wellington Branch Report

Wellington Branch held its AGM on Saturday 5 May, the only meeting held so far in 2012. However, we keep in touch by email and plan to have another meeting before the end of the year. The economic climate is having a serious effect on the Branch finances and we need to concentrate on fund raising.

The AGM was followed by a public meeting, when a talk was given by economist Petrus Simons on the need for a financial transaction tax (FTT) to replace the Goods and Services Tax – one of the key branch initiatives. The other is support for a Depleted Uranium Prohibition Bill. Unfortunately the Depleted Uranium Prohibition Bill suffered a number of delays and was finally lost by the very narrow margin of one vote on 27 June, so will not proceed to the Select Committee stage.

Liaison with the National Consultative Committee on Disarmament (NCCD) continued. Their AGM was held on 26 March, followed by a discussion on the Small Arms Trade and the important upcoming treaty negotiations to bring in a global Arms Trade Treaty (ATT,) led by Luke Roughton of the Pacific Region Small Arms Action Group (PRSAAG). In the event the result of the Treaty negotiations was disappointing.

On 14 April Wellington City and peace groups celebrated 30 years as a nuclear

weapons free city in Civic Square, organized by SGI with financial assistance from the Wellington City Council, with musical groups creating a festive atmosphere.

WILPF members attended the 67th commemoration of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on Sunday 5 August at the Peace Flame in the Botanic Garden, organized by The City is Ours. Speakers included Grant Robertson MP, Marianne Street MP and pupils from Scots College.

WILPF members joined in a public meeting held at St, Andrews on The Terrace, on 7 August, organized by ICAN Aotearoa New Zealand. Two hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors), Ms Shigeko Sasamori and Mr Michi Hirata, spoke on their experiences and the Hiroshima/Nagasaki Peace Project, to the very well attended meeting.

NCW Conference Remits:-

These remits were put forward for discussion in October 2012

- 1) Hydraulic Fracturing
- 2) Free contraception for all women
- 3) Equal entitlement for all children with disabilities
- 4) Calculating beneficiaries' income.

On the International Day of Peace, 21 September, WILPF members joined with other kindred groups such as Aotearoa New Zealand Cluster Munitions Coalition and Campaign Against Land Mines Joint

Working Group (ANZCMC/CALM), Caritas, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Living Wage Aotearoa New Zealand, (a new movement), New Zealand Red Cross (NZRC), Pax Christi, Peace Movement Aotearoa (PMA), St. Andrews on the Terrace, and the United Nation Association New Zealand (UNANZ), to share information on their work for peace, security and disarmament, held at St Andrews and organized by PMA.

On 2 October ANZCMC/CALM Coordinator, Mary Wareham gave an excellent debrief covering the period since the last working group meeting in July 2011. Mary will soon be leaving for London to launch a report on cluster munitions, then on to Oslo for the Third Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The New Zealand entry has already been published online.

We record with regret, the loss of another long time member, Rosa Oliver, lately of Blenheim, who died on Wednesday 16 May and was actively working, sending letters to the Editor in the cause of peace and social justice right up to the time of her death at 90. The Section and Wellington Branch sent cards of condolence to Blenheim, to be sent on to Rosa's family in Britain.

Joy Davies-Payne

WILPF International

WILPF international has a updated the website at:

www.wilpfinternational.org

It is much more attractive and friendly than the old one and has useful links, as well as the opportunity to take part in discussions about issues of interest to us all.

A significant birthday

On 8 September 2012 the Ponsonby Bowling Club was the venue of much celebration as about 70 family and friends gathered under the twinkling lights with our own Joan Macdonald on the occasion of her 80th birthday.



Joan Macdonald. *Photo courtesy Del Abcede*

Reminiscent of a grand reunion of who's who from the local community of social activists and those working for peace and justice, others came from Dunedin and Christchurch, the far north and from around the island. Representatives of the numerous groups with which Joan is involved shared anecdotes about her and offered accolades.

It became apparent that, in these times of falling membership in traditional and activist groups, Joan remains a far from passive participant and gives masses of support and inspiration while fulfilling numerous roles, including minute taking and being at the front of the front line at many a meaningful protest downtown.

The WILPF catering team provided a finger food meal. Joan would normally have been one of the team but was given the day off in the circumstances! Among the tasty array of favourites were handcrafted sushi and, would you believe, freshly smoked salmon from the Waikato River.

I know all readers of this newsletter will join us in Tamaki Makaurau in wishing Joan continued good health and friendship as she continues with her work towards peace and social justice in New Zealand and abroad.

Rae Martell

Theatre and Civil Society

Wellington Branch member Helen Varley Jamieson reports

In June, I had the opportunity to participate in the Theatre and Civil Society Institute at the Brown International Advanced Research Institutes (BIARI), on the theme of 'Theater and Civil Society: Politics, Public Space, and Performance'.

Organised by Brown University (R.I., U.S.A), BIARI¹ brought together 140 academics, and artists from around the world for two weeks of exchange around topics of current global interest (the other Institutes were Global Health and HIV, Population and Development, and Climate Change). The 24 Theatre participants hailed from the USA, Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Brasil, China, India, New Zealand, Spain, Kosovo, Romania, Iraq, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Kenya. Presentations ranged from the songs of the Ethiopian revolution to 'dark tourism' in Aotearoa, the birth of Kosovo, Chilean students' protests, the Occupy movement and more.

The idea of the performer as witness, giving testimony for those who cannot speak, was central to many talks. Megan Debin presented artists Lorena Wolffer² and Nayla Altamirano³, whose work addresses the femicides in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. Ana Correo of the Peruvian theatre company Yuyachkani⁴ performed her solo 'Rosa Cuchillo', representing mothers of disappeared sons. Rukmini Sen spoke about use of street theatre by the

Indian women's movement, in particular Maya Krishna Rao⁵ who created street performances on topics including dowry and rape during the 1970s and 80s.

Queer selfhood in India was discussed by Jisha Memon, referencing gay (male) plays, the Hijdahs (eunuchs) and one lesbian play from the 1940s, which later became the basis for Deepa Metha's film *Fire*. In Cuba, theatre creates a temporary community for marginalised gay men: Bretton White's examples included 'Parajos' about AIDS/HIV, directed by Nelda Castillo⁶ (which I saw in 2008 at the Magdalena Sin Fronteras Festival in Cuba).



(l to r) Vanessa Gilbert, Violeta Luna, Helen Varley Jamieson, Ana Correa Photo courtesy Helen Varley Jamieson

Mexican performer Violeta Luna⁷ spoke about performance as a space for resistance and reflection; her work explores borders, migration, drug trafficking and genetic engineering. She presented her solo 'NK603: Action for Performer and e-Maiz' – a reflection on the reality of genetically modified corn, introduced to Mexico following the NAFTA agreement (beware the TPP!).

It was interesting to learn that participants from Iraq and China experienced less censorship than those working in the USA – Violeta cannot perform 'NK603' there. Qing Hui Hou and

Shen Lian both said that their work was too small for Chinese authorities to notice, while in Iraq, playwright Amir al Azraqi works within an English university and writes in English; this avoids censorship, but also limits his audience.

A common theme was memory and imagination. Theatre enables both the preservation of memory and the freedom to imagine, which are fundamental for creating change: when we accept the past, it's possible to imagine and move towards a better future.

My own contribution was a make-shift⁸ performance. My collaborator Paula Crutchlow was in the UK at the 'Home and the World Summit', which addressed similar themes to BIARI; we connected the two events telematically for a couple of

hours through our performance and the ensuing discussion.

BIARI was an intense two-weeks of learning and exchange, tasting the diversity of political theatre from around the world and discovering many common threads, expanding my understanding as well as meeting new friends and colleagues.

¹brown.edu/about/administration/international-affairs/biari/

² www.lorenawolfffer.net

³vimeo.com/channels/videodanca/27545858

⁴ www.yuyachkani.org/

⁵ mayakrishnarao.blogspot.de/

⁶ www.teatrociervo.com/

⁷ www.violetaluna.com/

⁸ www.make-shift.net

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