

Women's Network Exchange

NPC Women's Working Party
Issue 27: February 2013

Unfortunately our chair, Pat Barrett can no longer attend meetings of the Women's Working Party and has to stand down. We thank her for her work and hope that she will soon return to active NPC campaigning. I have been asked to take the chair and anticipate a busy year.

Janet Shapiro.

apurshouse@npcuk.org

Walkden House, 10 Melton Street, London NW1 2EJ

Frances O'Grady FIRST WOMAN GENERAL SECRETARY FOR THE TUC!

Frances has been an active trade unionist and campaigner all her working life. She has been employed in a range of jobs from shop work to the voluntary sector.

Before the TUC, Frances worked for the Transport and General Workers Union where she worked on successful campaigns to stop the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board and for the introduction of a national minimum wage, equal pay for women, and on a range of industrial wage claims.

In 1994 Frances was appointed as TUC Campaigns Officer and ran campaigns for equal rights for part-timers and against low pay. In 1997, she was appointed to head up the New Unionism campaign and launched the TUC's Organising Academy. As well as driving new recruitment campaigns in call centres, supermarkets and new media, the Academy set out to attract a generation of new 'young guns' into the trade union movement and shift the 'male, pale and stale' stereotype to a profile that better fits a six million plus membership that is now 50:50 men and women.

Frances went on to head up the TUC's organisation department in 1999 and reorganised local bargaining for skills projects into the unified national brand of unionlearn which has grown to help a quarter of a million workers into learning every year - a track record of success that continues to attract the support of hundreds of employers and



public funding from the government.

As Deputy General Secretary since 2003, Frances led on winning the 2012 Principles of Co-operation Agreement with the Olympic Authorities, guaranteeing on-site minimum standards for local jobs, health and safety and the London living wage. Frances has also led on industrial policy arguing the case for a strategic approach to rebalancing the economy in the wake of the financial crash.

In January 2013 Frances became the General Secretary of the TUC, the first woman ever to hold this post. Fair pay remains a core ambition and she is on the Resolution

Foundation's Commission on Living Standards, and has been a member of the Low Pay and the High Pay Commissions. Frances is a strong believer in protecting the public service ethos, opposes privatisation and leads the TUC campaign to save the NHS.

Frances, aged 53, was born in Oxford, has two adult children and lives in North London.

Source: http://www.tuc.org.uk/the_tuc/about_fogrady.cfm

We are looking forward to meeting and hearing from Frances as she has agreed to come and speak at this year's Pensioners' Parliament at Blackpool.

Follow the example set by Frances!
Help is needed to get more women in roles of responsibility in the NPC. See Page 2.

Are women under represented in NPC?

The Women's Working Party (WWP) conducted a survey of NPC Regional Groups asking questions relating to gender balance and length of tenure for Regional Executive boards. The survey showed that women are under represented in roles of responsibility in regional groups; it also indicated a low turn-over of chair and secretary roles.

The interim results were:

Ten regions out of 17 responded.

On **gender** the responses indicate a need for women to be encouraged to take a greater part. Not many regions have women taking leading roles.

Our information gives a percentage of females serving on Regional Boards well below 50%, the female participation average being 34% (50%, only attained by Wales). Also the posts of chair and secretary are mainly filled by men, only 3 women out of 20.

On **tenure** responses indicate that there is little turnover of members holding officer posts. 8 out of 20 chair and secretary posts have the same person serving for 4 years or more.

Yes—Overall the proportions of women in roles of responsibility do not match the proportions attending the annual pensioner parliament.

What sort of person should take a role of responsibility?

The WWP believes that achieving a gender balance both in affiliated organisations and in NPC decision bodies should not be at the expense of good leadership. Leadership skills can develop with help and encouragement; these include: confidence, ability to communicate and inspire, understanding and adhering to NPC Policy, and general experience in handling meetings at which democratic decisions are made. In addition, those in responsible positions should be reliable and tolerant; they should respect others' views and generally have an inclusive attitude.

Suggestions from the Women's Working Party

Reasons why women are under represented

- Women, more than men are occupied with domestic activities and caring for older relatives and grand-children.
- Access to meetings may be difficult where public transport inadequate and a car is needed.
- Women may be less likely to have access to email at home.
- Women may be short of funds to attend meetings.
- Those women unfamiliar with trade union formal procedures may find the culture of meetings off-putting. Men experienced in trade union procedures may hold officer posts and stay in post.
- General lack of confidence.

Suggested ways to encourage participation.

- Active encouragement for women to stand for office.
- Create new posts that shadow those in office to help new people get experience.
- More job share posts.
- In general a quota system is not recommended.

Tenure policies

Having a clear policy that limits the number of consecutive years that an officer can stay in office may encourage new recruits including women.

What are your views on why women are under represented? Also see the request from Scarlet Harris on page 6.

The issue was raised on November 6th at the National Executive Council where the WWP presented the survey results, suggesting that the movement could be strengthened by encouraging more women to take on roles of responsibility. This would help the NPC to take on more effectively the concerns raised each year at the Pensioners Parliament in Blackpool where women certainly outnumber men. It is also suggested that greater efforts are needed to encourage new recruits to responsible roles and this

would also strengthen our campaigns.

The National Executive Committee was supportive, but real progress can only be made if women in the regions volunteer to take on roles of responsibility. At the **Biennial Delegate Conference** to be held on March 26th & 27th at Southport, a motion will be put calling for regions to actively encourage greater involvement of women.

Janet Shapiro

Report of the FERPA Women's Committee meeting 27-28 September 2012

FERPA is the FÉDÉRATION EUROPÉENNE DES RETRAITÉS ET DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES (FERPA). The meeting was attended by 37 delegates from 14 different countries

Jasna Petrovic, the chair of the women's committee, gave a PowerPoint presentation on How to narrow the Gender Pay Gap. Jasna outlined the difference in patterns of work between men and women resulting in lower pay and pensions. In Germany women receive 59.6% less pension than men. In the UK it is 43.1% compared to Denmark with only a 16.8% difference. Although some countries give credit for caring this still does not even out the gap and perpetuates the women's role as a carer rather than a worker.

This was followed by a talk by **Anne Galand** from the Gender Equality unit of the EU Commission on active ageing and how to get old people to work longer (hopefully only if they want to!) Anne did appreciate that this could lead to fewer jobs for younger people. There is a big difference in work between men and women being higher for older men (55-65% compared to 42%) and there is widespread discrimination against older women in work opportunities. People near to retirement may be too ill to work but too young to get a pension

Mary Collins, the policy officer for European Women's lobby, (EWL present in 30 countries). said that the Europe 2010 Strategy sets a new target of 75% of women and men to be employed by 2020 ETUC thinks that more needs to be done to achieve this and integrated strategies are required to promote gender equality in the labour markets Mainstream-

ing gender equality in collective bargaining demands stronger co-operation with industry federations and branch unions at all levels.

Noel Whiteside of Warwick University talked about personal pension pots and pointed out that under the DEF contribution scheme, if the husband die, the wife gets nothing. The pension pot is used to buy an annuity but markets are to say the least dodgy and if you are young and healthy you get a worse annuity Women pensioners are not well off and single women over 75 are the worst . The UK pension is well below the government's own poverty line and is one of the worst in Europe

Friday saw a discussion of the future of the committee and a number of alternative suggestions were put forward. In my mind a group that meets once a year is not a committee but a conference. This once a year meeting makes it difficult to follow up on suggestions or resolutions put forward to the FERPA Executive committee The alternative is to have a smaller committee with just one representative from each country who could organise the Conference and follow up on action required This however would cause difficulties with France and Italy especially as their trade union structure is politically based not work based All spoke against the elimination of the women's committee and we received an assurance from the Gen Sec. that this would not happen. The Women's Working Party are now looking at a way forward to make the FERPA women's committee more effective. There was a call for an action plan on gender equality from FERPA

Marion Wilson, September 2012

The following recommendations by the NPC Women's Working Party on the Future of FERPA Women's Committee were approved by the EC on 15 January 2013 and forwarded to FERPA.

- * The FERPA Women's Committee should have a stronger role and recognition from all: women pensioners' activities should not be confined to the Women's Committee, they are relevant to FERPA as a whole.
- * The FERPA Women's Committee needs strengthened resources and support from the secretariat.
- * An elected Officers/Women's committee consisting of the Chair plus six others should meet four times a year to keep the work done by working groups under review. This would enable the Chair to give more focused input into FERPA Executive Committee meetings.

- * Working groups are needed to focus in depth on relevant issues. They must be able to hold meetings and discussions.
- * The annual meeting should be renamed a FERPA Women's Conference (rather than committee) and should continue to take place once a year for one and a half days at a suitable timing (to allow reports etc to be written up in time) before a meeting of the full FERPA executive.
- * The two top issues to be focused on need to be equalisation of pensions, with member states reporting on the current situation and focusing on what needs to be done to improve women's pensions. The second issue needs to be health including the role of prevention especially for very elderly women and an examination of the most common health problems facing older women in Europe.

Lobby of Parliament on October 31st 2012

The photograph shows a party of pensioners that trekked up from Portsmouth to London for the Lobby of Parliament on October 31st to make it clear that means testing of universal benefits for pensioners was a NO-NO policy. The Portsmouth contingent joined a 300 odd-strong demonstration at Old Palace Yard, opposite the House of Lords that concentrated on our absolute need for the Bus Pass.



We were joined by our Chair and a visitor from Help the Aged, Ethiopia. The Group was singled out for an interview by the Media – and later got a slot on Meridian TV and a quote in the Morning Star!

The group joined the queue to for the rally in Committee Room 14 at the Houses of Parliament. This room was packed with many standing; another room was arranged for the overflow where Norman Jemison and Neil Duncan-Jordan chaired a supplementary discussion.

Speakers in committee room 14 were all MP's although many other speakers had been invited. After Frank Cooper the NPC President's introductions, Dot Gibson, the General Secretary Dot Gibson opened the rally. She said that although those in power are mooting the idea that pensioners' universal benefits should be means tested, the logistics are that the bureaucracy involved would far outweigh the savings. She also said that if the Basic State Pension was above the Poverty Level of £178, pensioners would not need additional benefits.

David Causby MP spoke to defend pensioner universal benefits and urged people to get their MP to sign his EDM 2665 to keep the Bus Pass, introduced by the Labour Party!

Kelvin Hopkins MP had booked the committee room for us. He said that energy companies must be

brought back into public ownership so that fuel prices could be affordable. He added that means-testing of the fuel allowance would spell disaster for many pensioners.

Diane Abbott MP forcibly concluded that this present government is slowly and surely dismantling the Welfare State, and that the threatened means testing of benefits is a sure indication of this.

In his wind up speech, Frank Cooper indicated the £40b contributed to the economy in taxes, unpaid caring and voluntary work by pensioners; he said that universal benefits are affordable.

Sadly, neither of the Portsmouth MP's were available for lobbying, so a submission will be sent to them, seeking their views on universal benefits for pensioners. The submission will also make it plain that means testing at whatever level, would spell disaster for many pensioners.

We had a very busy but enjoyable day. It was a first-time lobby for some members - but all agreed it was a memorable occasion and a real opportunity to join with so many other pensioners in a show of strength!

One other memorable event –three members unwittingly wandered into the Members' Tea Room after the Rally –but were served Tea anyway.

June Clarkson

'Sir Alan Sugar and the Missing Bus Pass: The case for universal pensioner benefits'

This NPC report acknowledges that many of the universal benefits had been introduced because the UK state pension was abysmally low, one of the least adequate in Europe, but argues that withdrawal or means testing of benefits would cause hardship.

It is claimed 'that the actual cost of paying universal pensioner benefits is massively outweighed by both the amount that older people contribute back to the economy (either directly or indirectly) and the money such benefits save by reducing need on other state support.'

The report is packed with evidence to confirm the merits of both universal benefits and a redistributive tax system. Ask if you want a copy to be sent by email.

WOMEN ON TOP. Are there any left?

A recent article looked at how many of the FTSE 100 companies had women as their Chief Executive Officers. With the CEO, Dame Margaret Scandino, of Pearson, the publisher company, stepping down, there are now just 3 women left in post, at Burberry, Imperial Tobacco and Anglo American.

Dame Margaret became CEO 15 years ago (the first woman in charge of a blue chip company) and was expecting many more to follow in her footsteps as CEO or Chair of the Board. Well there are now more women on Boards but mainly as non-executive directors who have little say in the running of the company.

Currently 82% of FTSE 100 companies do not have a single female executive director. "Many years of tapping away at the glass ceiling have left it substantially intact" said Ceri Goddard, chief executive of the Fawcett Society. "In fact women's representation at the top is stagnating and in some cases regressing"

Vicky Price, the city economist, says "The emphasis has to be on executives. Focusing on the number of women on Boards doesn't really change the company culture" She believes attitudes towards female staff is holding them back. "Women are not encouraged to push themselves and compete in the workplace as men are" She believes women should network more (but of course this is often done in the wine bar after work and women may have family responsibilities) It is also true to say that where a man is thrusting at work it is regarded as a good sign but in a woman it is often seen as aggressive.

Of the CEOs at the three companies mentioned above all are mothers but two of them have house husbands. As one of them said "In the UK, children are seen as

being a women's concern. In more enlightened countries they remember that both parents have a child" One answer would be to increase the number of women executives on the Board as a first step to becoming the CEO. Many headhunters are paying lip service to the recruitment of women by including them on "long" lists without any realistic expectation of them being appointed. Research from Dow Jones showed that venture backed companies with female senior executives were more likely to succeed than those where only men were in charge. "Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good" said feminist Charlotte Whitton.

(Since that article was written the Chief executive of Anglo American has quit)

Sadly this situation is reflected throughout our society at all levels not just in business but in organisations such as ours. This is why the Women's Working Party of the NPC is trying to find out how many women hold posts of responsibility in our regions and what we can do to persuade them to come forward as officers in their region or delegates to NPC whether at Council, Executive committee, working parties or at the Biennial Delegate Conference.

Happily in the Trade union sector we will soon have Frances O'Grady as General Secretary of the TUC and several of the teaching unions have women as their General Secretary. And we must not forget to mention Dot Gibson, our own general secretary who does such a magnificent job of representing us.

Marion Wilson

As from 8th November 2012, Women working in London were working for FREE for the rest of the year

So says the Fawcett Society, it is their way of interpreting the gender pay gap in wages which still exist over 40 years after the Equal Pay Act was passed.

The difference in London is 23% and in the rest of the country 14.9% The Fawcett Society and the TUC say that this is likely to widen in the public sector where the majority of staff are female and it is mainly the women that are being hit by job cuts, or forced to become part time.

Girls usually do better at school than boys and are more likely to go to University and get better degrees. When they start work they may well get a better salary than men in similar jobs but once they hit thirty it's all change, especially if they take time off work to have a family. It will be interesting to see what impact the Government's shared parenting will have in the future.

Many women prefer to work part time after maternity leave which leaves them lagging behind on the career ladder. Those who stay at work think they are

overlooked at that age because of the possibility that they might start a family, not that anyone can ask them that! When one high flyer queried why a male colleague had a higher salary and bonus although on the same grade as her she was told by her line manager "But he has a wife and family to support and you are a single woman" It is amazing that that sort of attitude still persists in the 21st century. Equal pay is for equal work and should be seen as such.

Sadly a UNESCO report shows even at apprenticeship level girls only get a fifth of what boys do.

Jo Swinson, the minister for women and equalities says "The gender pay gap represents wasted talent---Good progress is being made but it's clear much more needs to be done" But the Fawcett Society says the Government is not doing enough and calls for a review of the law. Companies should be forced to publish staff salaries and reveal (and explain) any pay gaps.

Marion Wilson

Did You Know That:-Loneliness is as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day?

The Campaign to end Loneliness is a national campaign led by Age UK Oxfordshire, Independent Age, Manchester City Council, Sense and WRVS. Research has shown that loneliness does more than result in depression. It can lead to cardio vascular problems. The number of old people living on their own is increasing and with it the possibility of loneliness, especially if old people lose their bus pass. The campaign is currently running pilot schemes in Essex and Cornwall to raise awareness of the problem and to mobilise local residents into taking action. What can you do about it in your area? Well the Health and Well Being Boards which have been set up, will work with those who allocate health and social care resources. They have a duty to

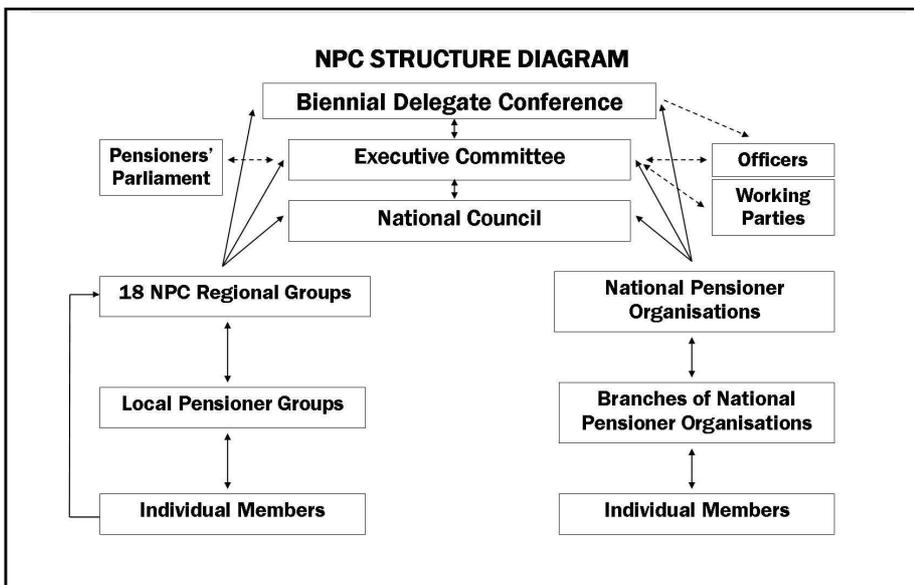
involve people in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and in the development of Health and Wellbeing Strategies.

The campaign have produced an excellent step by step action pack which can be downloaded from www.campaigntoendloneliness.org.uk This tells you how to contact your Health and Well Being Board, gives a model letter to write to your M.P. or newspaper and even a list of questions if you want to conduct your own survey. This is a problem which is only just being recognised and is not going to go away unless we all do something about it now

Marion Wilson

How policy is made

The diagram from www.ncpuk.org shows NPC's democratic structure.



Individual members belong to groups or trade union branches that affiliate to a Regional Group.

National organisations may also affiliate directly to the NPC.

Affiliates send delegates to the BDC. This conference, held every two years, is where national officers are elected and NPC policy decided.

CALL for CASE STUDIES

Scarlet Harris, TUC Women's Equality Officer wants to hear from women who can tell their story about problems facing women over 50 in the workplace. These could include the pressures of caring, inadequacy of pension etc.

Email sharris@tuc.org.uk
Telephone 0207 467 1303.

Don't miss WOW

Women of the World Festival

Wednesday 6 – Sunday 10 March.
Contact Katherine Leedale 020 7921 0713.
Southbank Centre.
www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Do you want to receive the Exchange regularly?

If so ,contact Alison Purshouse
NPC Walkden House, 10 Melton Street, London
NW1 2EJ,
or send an email to apurshouse@npcuk.org

If you currently get this by post please let us know if you now have an email address.