

Union of Australian Women Newsletter

Victoria Inc. A00021219R
Ross House, 2nd Floor
247 Flinders Lane
Melbourne 3000
Ph. /Fax 9654 7409
Email: uawv@vicnet.net.au



WHAT'S ON

Sunday 5 May
Assemble 1.00pm

May Day March
Cnr Victoria and Russell Sts
Followed by May Day Concert

Monday 6 May
12 noon-2pm

UAW Darebin Group
Northcote Town Hall meeting room

Thursday 9 May
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Monday 13 May
10.30 – 12.30

UAW Organising Committee meeting
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Thursday 16 May
11.00 – 2.00pm

UAW-Seniors Network
2nd floor meeting room Ross House

Tuesday 21 May
10.30 – 12.30

UAW COFFEE WITH A FOCUS
HOME AT LAST

Speaker: Gemma White

Community Education worker at
Housing for the Aged Action Group
(HAAG)

Home At Last aims to ensure that
older people have access to secure,
affordable and appropriate housing.

4th floor meeting room Ross House

247 Flinders Lane Melbourne

\$5

RSVP 9654 7409; email:uawv@vicnet.net.au

See attached invitation flyer

Monday 27 May

UAW Film Group

PREJUDICE and REASON: some AUSTRALIAN Women's Responses to War.

By Carmen Green

About 30 women attended the launch of Geraldine Robertson's *Prejudice and Reason some Australian Women's Responses to War*. The launch was chaired by Jacinda Woodhead from Overland who discussed the book with Geraldine Robertson and Professor Marilyn Lake from Melbourne University. The book is available from Readings.

The book consists of extracts from two very different women's journals. The first was women supporting WW1 –The Australian Women's National League (AWNL) –and the second was women opposing WW1- the Women's Political Association (WPA).

Eva Hughes and the AWNL left a record of their support for the war in their journal "**The Woman**". Similarly, Vida Goldstein and the WPA have left a record of their opposition to the war in their journal "**Woman Voter**". *Prejudice and Reason* covers two women, two organizations and two journals. Through the extracts included in the book, feminists and conservative women tell of their work and activism concentrating on WW1.

Professor Lake pointed out that the Australian Women's National League was formed by the Victorian Employers Federation because of their concerns that Labor was polling better as a result of women getting the vote. It was, of course, a conservative upper class women's organization. Its supporters were firm believers in the British Empire. Many of its members later went on to be active in the Liberal Party.

The women who opposed the war were part of an international suffrage movement and were passionate about peaceful means of ending international conflict. They believed that national and racial barriers produced wars. The number of women in the WPA was very small-much smaller than the AWNL but –according to Geraldine - they made up for their small numbers by their enthusiasm, exuberance, humour and confidence.

Professor Lake said that both journals had a significant impact given the time in which they were written. It was considered quite radical that women had the vote and could stand for parliament. Women's activism threatened male authority in what were very polarized times. WW1 was a very divisive war –with bitter conscription campaigns in 1916/17. Progressives won and conscription was defeated. These campaigns broadened opposition from the 1st WW to war in general and led to the formation of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Australia and internationally in 1919.

The Chair asked for a final comment from the two speakers. Geraldine emphasized her view that we can never say my country right or wrong. Marilyn Lake stressed the important role of activism in the past both on the left and the right and that it is important to understand why campaigns are successful in some situations and not in others.

Dr Clare Wright, historian, author and broadcaster summed up Geraldine's publication as follows:

"An awesome achievement... long silenced voices rise up again to tell an authentic story of war and peace. Geraldine Robertson's immaculate research sheds valuable light on a much neglected, but vitally important aspect of Australia's history".

ABORTION: THE AMERICANISATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN DEBATE

By Cath Morrison

I have just read an article by Clementine Ford "Could this happen here?" The Age, April 15, 2013, which has strengthened my conviction that the legal right to abortion in Victoria is by no means secure and we may need to fight again to keep it. I wrote a Newsletter article in 2012 describing changes to laws in the US which were –through the back door- attacking reproductive rights for women. These changes enshrined the notion of the foetus as a person and therefore opened the door to abortion being categorized as murder. There are more recent developments in the US which should send shivers down the spines of Australian women.

- a transvaginal ultrasound is now legal in Virginia. In Michigan, the Bill proposed requires the "performance of a diagnostic ultrasound examination of the foetus at least two hours before an abortion is performed". How horrible is that for already traumatised women?
- North Dakota recently passed the 'Heartbeat' bill, -that no abortion be allowed once a heartbeat has been detected. Given that this can be detected around the six week mark and that pregnancy is often detected at the same time it makes it impossible for most women to access legal abortion.

At the same time as these developments, Ford writes that an unlicensed doctor is on trial in the United States for running an illegal abortion clinic in which untrained assistants were allowed to anaesthetise patients. The doctor is facing eight charges of murder. The majority of his patients were poor African American women for it is poorer women who need to turn to such "clinics" for help. Middle class women have better options and this has always been the case. Nevertheless driving abortion underground is a threat to all women everywhere and a direct result of regressive legislation which criminalises abortion or which by stealth makes it a criminal act. We do not want this to happen here.

Ford says "*You might wonder why the state of American reproductive law reform is of relevance to us in Australia. Abortion laws around the country vary, but it still sits in the criminal code in both Queensland and NSW*". In NSW MLC Fred Nile's proposal known as "Zoe's Law" to criminalise harm done to an unborn child will instead punish pregnant women. Similar laws in the US have been a boon for anti-choice zealots, writes Cate Faehrmann, NSW Green MP, in New Matilda, March 1, 2013. *The "Zoe's Law" Crimes Amendment Bill, which seeks to "establish a separate offence for conduct causing serious harm to, or destruction of a child in utero" could see [Australian women](#) guilty of a range of criminal offences. Although Zoe's law is nominally not anti-abortion legislation, its impact would be devastating for women's rights in a state where abortion is still criminal.*

Anne Sgro wrote in the April 2013 Newsletter of the threat to abortion rights in Victoria posed by MP Geoff Shaw, now a loose cannon as an Independent and she also mentioned Senator John Madigan of the DLP and his anti-abortion views.

Senator Madigan may well hold the balance of power in the Senate after the federal election on September 14. This makes Senator Madigan a potentially very powerful person. According to Stephanie Peatling, (SMH February 27, 2013) Madigan has acknowledged Harradine as a

Continued Page 4

ABORTION: THE AMERICANISATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN DEBATE

Continued from Page 3

["personal hero and a "model senator"](#).^{*} Will he use the "Harradine approach" to advance his anti-abortion agenda? The Federal government does not have jurisdiction over abortion which is why we have vastly different laws depending on the state. Where the Commonwealth does have a role is Medicare funding. Senator Madigan's motion seeks to rule out public funding for abortions on the basis of gender selection. This Bill would open the door for further restrictions and hair splitting about what terminations Medicare would fund. It won't succeed but it is a taste of the future.

It's not just Madigan. At Federal level people from Family First Senator Steve Fielding to National Party stalwart Ron Boswell have talked about the need for more action to wind back abortion rights. There is a Labor Party group called Labor for Life, which connects MPs with pro-life views on a range of issues including abortion ^{*}(Peatling)

Clearly, reproductive rights are not a matter which women in Australia should take for granted. Clementine Ford puts it like this: *We often hear that abortion rights in Australia are safe, and that a conservative government would have little chance of threatening rights that are essential and have been hard won. But with a Tony Abbott government looming, it's vital that we begin to ask questions of our potential political representatives.*

As Federal election time approaches, UAW members could write to their local members and candidates asking whether they support continuing Medicare funding for abortion.

The UAW would then publish a list of candidates and their responses in a pre-election Newsletter. UAW members and their friends may then cast their vote with this in mind when the time comes.

Ref: Peatling <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/echoes-of-harradine-in-madigans-meddling-on-abortion-20130227-2f59t.html#ixzz2QbFcoZdt>

Notes from the Organising Committee April 2013.

Continued from Page 8

UAW-Seniors Network.

Mary Owen reported on the first meeting held in March. *Fifteen women turned up yesterday for our inaugural meeting and they had so much to say to each other – it was hard to get a word in edgeways. There was a lot of discussion on the report of one member about her experience when visiting the office of a senior minister of the last ALP Victorian Government. She said that she was made to feel 2nd rate because she was a senior.*

Another member reported her concern about the attention given to inmates of some nursing homes. When visiting a friend in such an institution she observed lack of care in the administration of her medication There was a notice in her friend's room stating that medication for this person should be administered about 8am and 6pm. Yet she saw it offered at 3pm. She wondered what other mistakes might be made. We all felt these matters were of great concern to people of our age and we resolved to follow them up.

The Network will meet four times rather than monthly. Next meeting: May 17.

CONFLICT IN SYRIA

SOUTHERN GROUP REPORT APRIL 2013

By Mairi Neil

We were a small group on Saturday 22nd April which was unfortunate because our speaker Susan Day Dirgham, a longtime peace activist, shared her personal experience of living and working as an ESL teacher in Syria and her in-depth current knowledge kept up-to-date by friends and access to local Syrian television via satellite. The more Susan, the national coordinator for Australians for Reconciliation for Syria, spoke, coupled with the printed matter she distributed, the more we realised how little we knew or understood the situation in Syria, and how our media is failing us by their selective reporting.

Our session began by watching a short DVD of an interview with Mother Agnes Mariam, a sixty-year old Carmelite nun forced to flee her monastery near Homs, Syria after witnessing horrific massacres of women and children. She decided she must inform the world it is not a civil war but a reign of terror by imported extremists paid to destabilize Syria. She came to Australia to raise awareness through Australians for Mussalaha (Reconciliation) in Syria. (AMRIS)

After a brief history of modern Syria and a description of its diverse people, Susan explained how peaceful demonstrations for reform in Syria have been hijacked by extremists and a violent 'third force' referred to by Mother Agnes Mariam. It is not a situation of evil President Assad against his own people - that narrative suits the journalists embedded with the imported rebels and foreign troops purporting to be the 'opposition' when in reality they are Al Qaeda. There are grave fears the Muslim Brotherhood, which has taken power in other Arab states will not guarantee social cohesion and equality among the many different religious and ethnic groups in Syrian society if they are successful in gaining power.

Syria is a secular society and state but Islamist mercenaries paid for by the Wahhabi (fundamentalist) Islamic states of Saudi Arabia and Qatar have invaded to terrorize, massacre, and intimidate. Access to recently discovered Syrian gas reserves and encouraging a fundamentalist Islamic state their agenda with extremist clerics issuing fatwas against Syria. It is difficult to get accurate news from the country because Syrian satellite channels have been censored by the Arab League dominated by Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Susan suggests the Syria described and presented in the Western media is a manufactured one created so the real Syria can be torn apart and religious tolerance will be a thing of the past.

Syria is fighting to resist imperial power and the dictates of its super-rich Gulf neighbours and to maintain its strong independent voice in the Middle East. The war has been sponsored by outside powers. Sadly, strong voices in the West failed to condemn the extremism and expose the fighters and weapons streaming across Syria's borders and instead repeat the standard narrative of civil war between the Alawai minority and oppressed Sunni majority. Selective reporting, manipulated photographs confuse people within and outside the country.

The majority of Syrians want to keep their country secular because they are aware religion can be used to tear society apart and justify shocking crimes. Israel, Saudi Arabia and Qatar rely on religion to maintain power and use tribal loyalties to divide and conquer. Susan is fearful Syria will be fragmented and the segregation of women seen in the Gulf countries will become the norm.

Continued Page 6

CONFLICT IN SYRIA. SOUTHERN GROUP REPORT APRIL 2013 *continued from page 6*

Susan urged us to seek news from a variety of sources and not rely on mainstream media's interpretation with even the ABC and usually reliable BBC guilty of selective reporting. Al-Jazeera is owned by the emir of Qatar. Like the war in Iraq there are lies and distortions with western governments and the Arab League involved in the propaganda war and censorship of news.

Here are links challenging the disinformation <http://www.globalresearch.ca/frances-media-admits-that-the-syrian-opposition-is-al-qaida-then-justifies-french-government-support-to-the-terrorists/5331289>

<http://socratesandsyria.com/uncle-of-syrian-australian-killed-by-terrorists-in-april-2011-amnesty-international-silence/>

<http://al-bushra-updates.blogspot.ie/2012/06/nobel-peace-laureate-mairead-maguire.html>

Susan can be contacted on susan.dirgham51@gmail.com and is happy to speak to any groups to help spread the word for peace and to find a political solution that retains Syria's enshrined secularism.

There are also many informative articles by Australian archaeologist and anthropologist Dr Fiona Hill who has been visiting Syria for nearly 30 years and her articles outline aspects of the Syrian conflict seldom highlighted in the Western mainstream media plus the online comments on these articles make interesting reading:

<http://newmatilda.com/2011/11/17/syrians-deserve-better-deal>,

<http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/3827746.html>,

<http://newmatilda.com/2012/02/17/blindness-road-damascus>,

<http://theconversation.edu.au/syrians-ask-why-not-give-democracy-a-chance-5776>,

<http://abc.net.au/unleashed/3926840.html>,

<http://theconversation.edu.au/the-west-must-quit-the-theatrics-and-tell-the-truth-on-syria-7303>,

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/the-question/is-it-time-the-west-intervened-in-syria-20120629-217rv.html>

Before the meeting ended members were asked to send a prepared letter to our new premier Dr Denis Napthine to revise many current decisions about the environment especially regarding the expansion of the mining of brown coal.

Congratulations for supporting the 140-turbine Macarthur wind farm in your electorate. I hope, as the Herald Sun reported last week that you truly believe "those opportunities should be pursued at every opportunity."

and...

Finally, it is disappointing Victoria is going to be known as the 'Brown Coal Capital of the World' - the majority of scientists are not wrong. Climate change is a reality - we owe it to our children to do as you suggested to your electorate, "I am very proud and will, at every opportunity, advocate that southwest Victoria is not only the home of renewable energy, but we've only just started in terms of the potential for renewable energy in this area."

Please extend this concept to all of Victoria because you are now Premier and govern for us all. We must stop the reliance and further production of brown coal.

We enjoyed a delightful if less glamorous afternoon tea and I'd like to thank Barbara Davis for helping me survive the meeting without Amy.

VWLLFA's 30th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION by Jean Taylor

The 30th Anniversary celebration for the Victorian Women's Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archives Inc was held on Sunday 24 March 2013. Approximately 30 people turned up, mostly members of the lesbian community who had either donated their material or were in support of the Archives, as well as a representative from the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives and someone from the University of Melbourne Archives where the Archives are stored. Ardy did a great job of MCing the event and we acknowledged that we were on the land of the Wurundjeri people. Joan Nestle gave an inspiring speech about her involvement with the Lesbian Herstory Archives in New York and how her research into the Archives had shown her just how actively engaged lesbian feminists and radical feminists had been in the Women's Liberation Movement in Victoria from the 1970s on.

Three of the four founding members, Vig Geddes, Marg Jacobs and Barb Friday (Sue Jackson in absentia), recalled the impetus for setting up the Women's Liberation Archives, as it was called back in 1983, in the first place and how they'd documented some of the significant womyn's groups and important issues by putting out three calendars in conjunction with Sybylla Press and ended their interesting segment with a community sing-along of one of the songs sung by the Women's Theatre Group's street theatre performances about abortions and freely available contraceptives. Several womyn then spoke about their own involvement in the Archives and the WLM generally and the late Thelma Solomon was remembered as an active member of the Archives collective during the 1980s and again in the noughties.

My job was to thank everyone for their contributions, including the previous collective members as well as the current collective members, Ardy, Sara, Barbary and Fi, and Pat for our website at www.vwllfa.org.au and gave a very brief overview of the Archives 30 years herstory up to the present day which then led into us singing a couple of the old feminist songs from *Something Good: A Feminist Sing-a-long Songbook* compiled by Andy Malone and Di Otto: *The Conference is Over* and *Shameless Hussies*. By which time Ardy had lit the 3 candles on the chocolate ripple cake, we sang Happy Birthday to the Archives, Marg, Vig and Barb blew out the candles and we ate the cake, the pavlova and other goodies.

Many thanks to all those who attended and contributed on the day to make this a worthy 30th birthday celebration. The VWLLFA has not only survived longer than most feminist ventures but holds the written and visual documentation as well as the memorabilia of one of Victoria's most important social and political revolutions.

Climate Change. From Mary Robinson's memoir *Everybody Matters*, P317.

At a conference on climate change held in Rwanda in 2007 I learned that the whole African continent was responsible for less four percent of greenhouse gas emissions, yet I knew from my own experiences that the impact was much more serious than in richer countries.... These communities are not responsible for the emissions causing climate change, and yet they are disproportionately affected because of their already vulnerable geographic locations and their lack of climate resilience. This, too, is an issue of justice, and needs to be addressed.

NOTES FROM THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE APRIL 2013

By Anne Sgro

Membership can now be renewed on-line and the Newsletter is available to members online or by email. (see Page 9).

Equality Rights Alliance (ERA): a mini-conference will be held in Melbourne 1 and 2 May. The UAW will have members participating.

SEARCH Foundation. Organisations cannot join, but Carmen Green will join as an individual on our behalf and report back.

Ross House Association. Interesting workshops are available through the Learning Hub Series. Held at lunchtime on the first Wednesday of each month, they cover a broad range of issues, from effective communication to reading music for beginners. Contact Nathalie Michel or call 9650 1599 if you are interested.

UAW-Seniors Network. See Page 4.

Left Wing Ladies up-date chapter. Morag Loh came towards the end of the meeting to begin discussion of her work and to seek our input. She has done a huge amount of work to bring our history up-to-date, and there was lively discussion to be followed up at a later meeting.

As a result of information about family violence that she included in the chapter, a letter of concern has been sent to Edward O'Donohue, Victorian Minister for Crime Prevention.

Dear Minister,

The headlines in yesterday's Age (22.4.13) highlight the Chief Commissioner's horror that family violence is far worse than police had believed, and state that he believes the situation to be "quite frightening". We are in no doubt that family violence is a crime that confronts the entire community.

We were recently made aware of a decision made by your predecessor Andrew McIntosh regarding \$50 million to be spent combating family violence in 2011 – funds that he did not retain in his portfolio, but for which he made the administration the responsibility of the Minister for Women's Affairs(ABC Ballarat Statewide Drive 24.8.11).

We have spent many years campaigning to have family violence treated as the crime that it is. Can you please assure us that violence against women and children is not seen by your government as a "women's issue"? That it is a crime, to be treated as such? And that funding will be made available to ensure that police and the courts can do combat it?

We look forward to your reassurance.

We saw the decision by Andrew McIntosh as a retrograde step. Christine Nixon was the first Commissioner to ensure that violence against women was seen and treated as a crime. Is the government in step with the police and the community on this issue?

Continued on page 4

NEWSLETTER NOW AVAILABLE BY EMAIL OR ON UAW WEBSITE

by Cath Morrison

Note: *The print Newsletter will still continue to be mailed out to the many members who prefer to receive it that way. These members do not need to take any action.*

EMAILED NEWSLETTER

Members who use email and the internet regularly are now able to have **their Newsletter delivered by email** or **access it through the website** if they choose to do so. Institutions may prefer to do this.

Members who use our electronic Newsletter service will reduce the UAW's use of paper, save the UAW the cost of printing and postage thus saving precious resources.

If you want to **have the newsletter emailed to you each month** email me on [hannmorr610 \(at\) yahoo.com.au](mailto:hannmorr610@yahoo.com.au). I will then organize the Newsletter to be emailed out to you each month. It comes as an Adobe PDF document.

NEWSLETTER ON THE WEBSITE

Alternatively, members who use the UAW website may like to know that the latest Newsletter can now be accessed from the Members Only section at the bottom of the UAW home page. This is the link to the UAW web page:

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~uawvic/index.htm>

Clicking on the **Members** link at the bottom of that page will take you to a user name and password area and thence to the Newsletter. To obtain your user name and password if you want to use this service instead, email me at the address above to obtain your user name and password.. Then you will be able to access the latest Newsletter every month and also back issues starting with April 2013.

Members who opt for emailed or website Newsletters will no longer receive a printed Newsletter by post. You can change your mind if this no longer suits your needs. Just notify us in time so that you don't miss an issue.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL ONLINE

Members may also renew their membership on line if they wish. The UAW webpage JOIN has a renewal form which can be filled out and by clicking SUBMIT will go to the UAW office email address. Bank details are provided on this page for members to enable members to transfer their membership fee electronically. Again, only a few may wish to use this facility but we are pleased to be able to make this possible for these members.

EQUAL PAY – HOW MEN RESPOND TO GETTING LESS

From Allie Dawe

9th of April is Equal Pay day in Switzerland where women's pay is approximately 20% below what men are paid. This year a Swiss bank cooperated with a women's group to "highlight the problem" When men went to the ATM they received 20% less than the amount they requested. Various angry bewildered & violent reactions ensued. until the ATM receipts explain the prank — priceless. saying "Heite 1st Equal Pay Day" – the 20% was not deducted from their accounts. Watch the video <http://jezebel.com/swiss-bank-awesomely-tricks-men-on-equal-pay-day-472145417>

The Facebook site Keep Calm and Destroy the Joint – a great women's response to that awful shock jock who said that is what women are doing to society – is dedicated to 'calling out' sexism wherever it occurs, raising instant awareness and sometimes fast-track action.

<https://www.facebook.com/DestroyTheJoint>

MAY INDEX

What's On	Page 1
Prejudice and Reason: some Australian Women's Responses to War	Page 2
Abortion: The Americanisation of the Australian Debate	Pages 3 -4
UAW-Seniors Network Report	Page 4
Conflict in Syria. Southern Branch April Report	Pages 5-6
VWLLFA: 30 th Anniversary Celebration; Climate Change	Page 7
Notes from the Organising Committee April 2013	Page 8
Newsletter by Email or on the UAW Website	Page 9
Equal Pay – How Men Respond to Getting Less; Index	Page 10