

Union of Australian Women Newsletter

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WHAT'S ON

APRIL 2013

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| Monday 8 April
10.30 – 12.30 | UAW Organising Committee meeting
2nd floor meeting room Ross House |
| Thursday 11 April
10.30 – 12.30 | UAW Book Group
2nd floor meeting room Ross House |
| Thursday 18 April
11.00 – 2.00pm | UAW-Seniors Network
2nd floor meeting room Ross House |
| Saturday 20 April
2.00pm
Mordialloc | UAW Southern Branch
Mordialloc Neighbourhood House, Main St

Speaker and Discussion
Amy: 9547 6167 Mairi: 9587 8757
See enclosed flyer invitation |
| Monday 22 April | UAW Film Group |

MAY

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday 21 May
10.30 – 12.30
Centre | UAW COFFEE WITH A FOCUS
Speaker from the Asylum Seeker Resource

Further details May Newsletter
Put the date in your diary now! |
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ABORTION: VIGILANCE MUST NEVER CEASE

By Anne Sgro

Geoff Shaw, former Coalition MP for Frankston and a stated “committed Christian” has indicated that one of his aims as an Independent possibly holding the balance of power is to reverse the decriminalisation of abortion in Victoria.

I hadn't been aware, until reading Anne Summers (Age 16.3.13) that DLP Senator John Madigan also has his sights set on abortion – to prohibit the Medicare rebate being paid on abortions decided on the basis of the gender of the foetus. There is no evidence that this is happening in Australia, so why introduce a Bill about it that will not pass anyway? What is going on?

Are these men trying to be the Brian Harradines of the 21st century? And what of Tony Abbott? I, for one, would not trust him on any issue to do with women's control over their own bodies, however much he might protest that his religion will not influence his decision-making. How can it not?

But what is just as concerning is the fragility of such a service being available to women, particularly in rural and regional areas. Women in Victoria's North-West have been denied access to publicly funded abortions for more than a year because Bendigo Health's Choices clinic has not been able to recruit a doctor who does not have a conscientious objection to performing the procedure (Age 17.3.13). A pro-life group has a strong presence in the area. Women must therefore travel to Melbourne.

Catholic run health services-which represent a third of the state's public hospitals -do not offer terminations at all. So while there are political threats to turn back the clock there are also difficulties at service-provision level. The intention of the Parliament in 2008 was to decriminalise abortions, and make them safe, affordable and available. That intention is being thwarted.

INSPIRING STUFF FOR WOMEN

From Allie Dawe

There are a number of fairly new ventures by good women that you may not know about. I found these on the internet and I find them most inspiring.

AKIRACHIKS – a revolution for African women and technology. A small group of Kenyan women, all under 30 working together in IT who understand that technology is one of the key factors driving Africa's economic rise but women constitute only 15%. So these women also spread their knowledge by conducting free IT workshops for High School girls in different parts of the country and IT training attracting University students. One of them created an application for a mobile phone enabling poor farmers to find the world price for their product so that local traders could not rip them off. Here are significant role models with a grass roots approach to skills sharing. Be inspired: take a look. <http://akirachikx.com/index.html>

COLLECTIVE SHOUT – a grass roots campaigning movement against the objectification of women and the sexualisation of girls – a Facebook site challenging stereotypes – calling out nasty stuff like the shaming of fat people on The Biggest Loser – telling about how the objectification of women leads to a rape culture. I learn something every time I read on this site. Recommended – take a look. <https://www.facebook.com/collectiveshout>

The Environment, Food Security and the VITAL IMPORTANCE OF BEES.

Report by Anne Sgro

Heather Welsh fascinated members with her presentation about bees at the UAW's recent International Women's Day celebration. She outlined her varied background in environmental law, agricultural law and her work as artists' model. The latter helped her develop the sense of calm that is crucial to working with bees. Not an apiarist herself, she attended her first apiculture conference 30 years ago, and is now part of the Bee Aware Project, the Glen Eira Honeybee Interest Group and Rotary Club of Caulfield. Her remarkable knowledge and enthusiasm for bees was obvious to all.

European Honeybees are crucial to food production and security. In Australia, 65% of agriculture relies on them for pollination. Many crops, including apples, cherries, sunflowers, almonds and canola depend on pollination. In Europe, 70% of the 100 crop species providing food world-wide depends on pollination. Yet, the National Farmers' Federation in its "**Blueprint For Australian Agriculture 2013 – 2020**", doesn't even mention bees.

Loss of bees in New Zealand, South Africa and the US has raised serious concerns. Colony collapse disorder (CCD) is a phenomenon in which worker bees from a [beehive](#) or [European honey bee](#) colony abruptly disappear. While such disappearances have occurred throughout the history of [apiculture](#), the term "colony collapse disorder" was first applied to a drastic rise in the number of disappearances of honey bee colonies in [North America](#) in late 2006.

Over the past 10 – 15 years there has been a weakening of bee numbers worldwide, with the exception of Australia. France, Belgium, Italy, Britain, USA have been among those countries where the worrying trend has been observed. Since 2005 there are fewer bees than at any time in the last 50 years. Why? Contributing factors are diseases, predators, parasites, environmental stresses, loss of habitat, malnutrition, migratory beekeeping and insecticides e.g . neonicitoids, also play a role in the decline. In France, a particular insecticide used to treat corn has been restricted. It causes bees to get lost, to lose the ability to return home to the hive. Human greed also plays its part: Many beekeepers take all the honey from the hive thereby removing sustenance from the bees and using corn syrup as a substitute. A more speculative possibility is mobile phone radiation. A member asked if genetically modified crops had a negative effect on the health of bees, but there is not enough data on the issue at present to be able to make any decisive comments. It has been postulated that genetically modified crops with pest control characteristics are having an impact.

Australia is the only country in the world free of the [Varroa](#) mite. But, Heather says, it is "when" and not "if" the mite reaches our shores. There are also diseases such as the small hive beetle which can adversely affect bees. There is a host of government entities undertaking surveillance of the situation, and state and federal governments are working together.

Australia is fortunate to have beautiful native bees. The Kimberley Bee makes small hives in hollow logs. They are generalist bees that do not suffer from the same diseases that knock out the Europeans.

Researchers in Broome are studying the possibility of domesticating them, and there is also the possibility of creating an indigenous industry based on bees and honey production.

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The Environment, Food Security and THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF BEES continued

There are damaging foreign species, for which there are checks at our ports, their main entry to the country. The English Bumblebee is one such aggressive “enemy”.

One nest arrived on a coil of rope on a ship a few years ago in Tasmania. The state is now infested.

In Australia, clear-felling of forest land is a concern, together with a lack of bee-friendly plants. Many municipal councils are careful of what they plant in public spaces for fear of litigation due to either allergy e.g. reaction to wattles, or bee stings.

Interestingly, there are over 40 hives in Melbourne CBD, in rooftop gardens. Many of the enterprising beekeepers have agreements with city restaurants which are eager to use the very local honey. www.rooftophoney.com.au

Heather explained why swarms happen and urged us not to call in pest control but to contact the local council or a local apiarist. She emphasised the importance of providing water for bees in our gardens so that they don't become dehydrated. And she recommended that we purchase locally produced honey from Department of Primary Industries registered beekeepers.

The benefits of bees, apart from the major issue of pollination and food security, were too numerous to list, but included: beeswax polish, Manuka Honey (Ancient Egyptians would soak bandages in **honey** because of its anti-bacterial properties) Jarrah produces honey of intense bacterial properties. Bees have reversible DNA – scientists are studying them for information related to mood disorders, for example.

Heather explained how hives work, and had brought jars of honey and other bee products to taste and/or discuss.

The vital importance of bees to the survival of humankind was made clear, and we were left with increased knowledge about and respect for these warm, furry, buzzing creatures that we have so often just taken for granted.

For further honeybee information: www.vicbeekeepers.com.au Other useful websites are: www.amazingbees.com.au and www.greenlivingaustralia.com.au

Interestingly, my local paper, the Moreland Leader, profiled a city beekeeper in its 18 March 2013 issue.

Lyndon Fenlon has bees in the city at 25 sites, including four rooftops, and is based at CERES in Brunswick. He says that European studies have found urban bees are healthier than their rural counterparts because there are fewer pesticides and artificial fertilisers in the environment and they don't have to travel so far to access a variety of pollen.

The inner city also offers a veritable feast of nectar, which is found in weeds like clover and oxalis, native shrubs and trees and the thousands of exotic species in home gardens. That diversity comes through in the honey.

Altogether, Heather's presentation was gripping and informative.

NOTES FROM THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE 18 March

Membership. Reminder letters are ready to be mailed to members who have forgotten to pay their dues.

ERA (Equality Rights Alliance). There will be a 2 day face-to-face meeting in Melbourne in May, which Allie and probably others will attend. One of the issues that we will raise is what is happening with safe, affordable housing for women, an issue on which ERA has been working. To be further discussed at our April meeting.

Ross House Association. The meeting was sorry to hear from Jenny that Ross House manager, Sarah Day, has resigned. We will write to the Committee of Management expressing our appreciation of her. Sarah had helped create a change of ethos in the building when she took over at a difficult time. The UAW found her to be inclusive and helpful. We would like our thanks to be passed on, and wish her well.

Left Wing Ladies. The chapter that will bring our history up to date is almost complete. Many thanks to Morag Loh, who will attend the April meeting and will seek feedback.

We will investigate the possibility and cost of joining the SEARCH Foundation.

We agreed to support in principle and auspice the Friends of the Women's Peace Garden and to provide a signatory to the organisation. The Friends have done a great job in establishing and organising ongoing maintenance for the park in Kensington.

Molly Hadfield Honored in Darebin.

At the recent International Women's Day event in Darebin our new Councillor Julie Williams presented an engraved plaque honouring the work of Mollie Hadfield to her daughter Sue Marino. Councillor Williams had attended Molly's funeral and was keen to honour her at the International Women's Day celebration. It was a happy and moving occasion also attended by Molly's old friend Eileen Capocchi.

NB UAW Darebin Group will not meet in April as the regular meeting day falls on Easter Monday.

VALE JOAN CHILD (3.8.1921 – 23.2.2013)

Joan Child was a trailblazer - **the first woman Speaker of the Australian House of Representatives 1986 – 1989**, under the Hawke Government.

In the 1960s, Joan was a young widow in Melbourne with 5 sons to raise. She worked in shops, factories and as a cleaner to support them then, when her youngest was school age, she worked in the office of Jim Cairns, and later became the Member for Henty 1974-75. She was re-elected to Henty in 1980.

Joan was a member of the UAW in the 60s, attracted by our campaigns around women, peace and living standards. When campaigning in Swanston St against Australian involvement in the Vietnam War, and against conscription, she was told to move on by a policeman and to stop obstructing the public. **"I am the public"** she replied. (Left Wing Ladies") page 64. I love that attitude!

Joan retired in 1990 when her seat was abolished. She acted with grace, dignity, determination and strength of character and was greatly respected for her down to earth realism. She provided a very positive image of a woman in a "new" and powerful role.

WOMEN'S PEACE GARDEN UPDATE March 2013 By Sheila Byard

Members of the Australia Garden History Society chose the Stock Route and the Women's Peace Garden as the place for their December 2012 evening outing. Malcolm Faul, AGHS organiser arranged for Mary Chapman, Project Manager Capital Works with the City of Melbourne, to meet the group. Mary was able to present a detailed overview of her City of Melbourne work along the Stock Route and in refurbishment of adjacent small parks (for example on Liddy St), in terms of heritage conservation of old trees, pavements, fences and management of new plantings in a time of drought. It was very interesting to see how the considerable sums spent on the Women's Peace Garden recently, at the time of its 20th anniversary have contributed to a most effective garden setting in an area of relatively high residential density, in line with the original statement of aims, as a place "to express the concern, commitment & contribution of women to peace, caring & creativity".

The Women's Peace Garden was created when the former Newmarket cattle sale yards & abattoirs complex were being redeveloped for housing in the 1980s. It happened that it could be funded as part of Victoria's celebration of International Year of Peace in 1986, with the assistance of some left over funds from International Women's Year 1975.

The site for the WPG south of Epsom Road is steeply sloping, with a rocky outcrop close to Epsom Road, and view across the Maribyrnong Valley, leading down to a grassed area with the symbols for women and peace shown in pathways and the shape of the pergola.

Oliver Pohls, Senior Tree Planner in the Urban Landscape Section of the City of Melbourne and Mary Chapman recently met with representative of the Friends of the Women's Peace Garden to discuss declining health of some of the original Olive trees and the need for tree removal and replacement. This has been deferred for the time being while soil tests are carried out, but an assurance has been given that the new planting will be Olives, consistent with the peace symbolism of the original design.

The Peace Garden is a public garden maintained by the City of Melbourne, located in Epsom Road Kensington not far from the intersection with Smithfield Road. You can get there by catching the Williamstown bus from Moonee Ponds, by getting off at Kensington Railway Station on the Craigieburn/Broadmeadows line, via the 57 West Maribyrnong tram from Elizabeth St in the City or via the 302 bus running between St Vincent's Hospital and Footscray.

"Victoria has many war memorials but only one peace garden" (The Hon. Joan Kirner, speaking at Women's Peace Garden, 2000)

WOMEN'S POWER TO STOP WAR is a movement created and led by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. It is creating an international community of women activists who believe conflicts and wars cannot be stopped without the participation of women – and that it is time to stop the war on all humans, who wish to live in peace and freedom.

Their weapons are dialogue, knowledge and insistence.

In 1915, visionary women came together in The Hague, Netherlands, to stop World War 1 and on April 28 they founded WILPF.

In 2015 visionary women will again come together to participate in the second women's peace and security conference of a century. The conference: 26-29 April 2015 in the World Forum in The Hague.

AFGHANISTAN: WHAT ARE WE LEAVING BEHIND?

By Anne Sgro

Finally, thanks to Fairfax journalist Paul McGeogh, we are getting a more realist account of the situation in Afghanistan. McGeogh's claims (Age 16.3.2013) that, on a recent visit, he and photographer Kate Geraghty were impeded at every turn by the Australian Defence Forces hardly comes as a surprise. Independent scrutiny is would not be welcomed at a time when the rhetoric obviously doesn't match the reality. McGeogh confirms what the Australian public already knows – that we will leave a mess behind.

In the February 2010 Newsletter I called for public debate about Australia's involvement in Afghanistan. By November, we were reporting that Independent Andrew Wilkie and the Greens had forced debate in the Parliament, but that both the Government and the Coalition were singing from the same song-sheet: we were there to bring peace and democracy to the country. The public didn't believe it: 21 Australians had died, as had countless Afghan civilians, including children. 50% of Australians opposed our involvement and wanted our troops withdrawn. Fast forward to April 2013 and 39 Australians are dead, and the "accidental" deaths of Afghans continue. A wedding party was bombed in 2002, and just recently two little boys collecting firewood were mistaken for insurgents and killed.

The United States is now trying to cobble together some kind of alliance that can govern when the foreign troops depart, and somehow ensure that it can continue its influence and interests. It is necessary to talk to the Taliban, it says.

Malalai Joya has worked tirelessly for women, and to end the occupation of her country. She has spoken out publicly against the domination of the war-lords. In 2005 she was elected to the National Assembly, and in 2007 was suspended from it for calling many of those war-lords present in the chamber "war criminals". Her life is in danger, and she constantly travels, guarded against those who would see her dead. She has received international recognition. In March 2011, the Guardian listed her among "Top 100 women: activists and campaigners". She was recently interviewed by Elsa Rassbach, a US journalist and film-maker based in Berlin. From "Common Dreams", 10.1.2013, reprinted on the Malalai Joya website.

She says: "The Taliban and the Northern Alliance war-lords are responsible for much of the suffering of the Afghan people. They are like a wolf and a vulture and can never be regarded part of a 'solution' to Afghanistan's tragedy. Our people want them prosecuted as traitors and war criminals" Further, "...all talk of democracy, human rights and women's rights is a joke. Afghanistan is the second most corrupt country in the world. And Afghanistan is the worst place to be a woman, according to a recent international study. They are looting our rich mineral deposits worth 3 trillion dollars, and they are raking money in from the drug trade. For the US government, the well-being of the Afghan people has no value at all".

Neither the US nor its allies understand the Afghan people, their history or their background. And they don't learn from their mistakes. Why do so many so-called rogue policemen and soldiers attack the Australians from within? How come our leaders don't understand the tribal rivalries that dominate politics and power? It means that they will continue to act on misinformation e.g. when told that the wedding party was a house full of insurgents. How could that be?

Australia joined the intervention after political pressure from America. There is no altruism involved. The US wants to maintain a military presence because of Afghanistan's "geopolitical location" (Malalai Joya), to be able to influence other Asian powers. We are involved in an inglorious military operation that will have served only to entrench the power of ruthless, rapacious war-lords while propping up an incompetent and corrupt government. What a continuing waste of human life! What a mess!

Leadership NOT Treachery and Ego; Policies NOT Polls.

Another upheaval. What a week in politics! Let's hope that Julia Gillard will now be allowed, by her colleagues and by the media, to focus on governing. So much happened last week that was good: legislation was passed to create the National Disability Insurance Scheme; there were increased wages for child care workers; pilot programs for child care; an increase in age pensions; an apology for forced adoptions; the House passed a bill to require coal seam gas proposals to face environmental impact on their use of water; legislation was introduced to require employers to consult with employees about changes to rosters and working hours; legislation was introduced to establish an agency to try to eradicate asbestos; and to require financial planners and advisors to be licensed; and the list goes on.

Important stuff! Who knows about it?

Independent MP Tony Windsor has said that he will continue to support the government **because it is governing.**

The egos and ambitions of powerful Labor men have been dominant for too long. While there can be criticism of policy, for example, re asylum seekers; and strategies and processes have not always been wise, the government has created considerable achievements given its minority status and the need to continually negotiate.

Julia Gillard has achieved a huge amount under a continual barrage of criticism, often misogynist. The media has focused on polls, not policies. There has been disloyalty and treachery from her colleagues. I feel that the Parliamentary Labor Party has let us all down. It has been a period of sad comment on politics and the media. **Anne Sgro**

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