

Union of Australian Women(Vic.)

Newsletter

WHATS ON- MARCH 2016

HAPPY INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 8 MARCH!

March is a great month.

It is a time to celebrate, reflect, and gather energy for continued action.

**Wednesday 9 March
10.30 – 12.30**

**UAW Organising Committee
2nd floor meeting room Ross House**

**Thursday 10 March
10.30 – 12.30**

**UAW Book Group
R 4.2, fourth floor, Ross House**

**Thursday 10 March
6.00 – 8.00pm**

**Molly Hadfield Social Justice Oration
Preston Shire Hall, 286 Gower St Preston
Speaker: Celeste Liddle
Booking essential. Places limited 8470 8522**

**Sunday 20 March
2.00**

**Palm Sunday
WALK FOR JUSTICE FOR REFUGEES
State Library, Cnr Swanston & LaTrobe Sts
The UAW is a sponsor**

Celebrate International Women's Day with the UAW

Tuesday 22 March, 10.30 – 12.30

Speaker: Fiona Patten MLC

Leader, Australian Sex Party

THE POWER OF A VOICE IN PARLIAMENT

4th floor Ross House

247 Flinders Lane Melbourne \$5

RSVP 9654 7409; office@uaw.org.au

See attached flyer

FRANCES PERRY – A MOST REMARKABLE WOMAN**by Carmen Green**

On Thursday 21 January 2016, the National Council of Women of Victoria held their 55th Annual Women's Australia Day Ceremony at the Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden. This was a free event, honouring women pioneers.

The Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden is not far from the Myer Music Bowl and was created in 1935 by public donation as part of Melbourne's centenary celebrations, to commemorate women's contribution to the city and the state. It is a beautiful place to visit.

This year's speaker was Dr Liz Rushen of the National Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University, speaking on Frances Perry's legacy at the Royal Women's Hospital.

Francis Perry (1814-1892) was co-founder and president of the Melbourne Lying-in Hospital, the first maternity hospital for underprivileged women in Australia. The new private wing of the Royal Women's Hospital carries her name but Dr Rushen queried whether this was the best way to remember her given that her focus was on providing care for underprivileged women not women who were able to pay.

Dr Rushen said it is important to remember that Frances worked at a time when women were not allowed a public profile and yet she provided hands on leadership and management of the hospital. She also believes that reports of her work- especially those written by men-have diminished her contribution and extent of her influence. According to Dr Rushen, Frances has been wrongly represented as more concerned with judging the moral purity of the patients than with their welfare.

Frances had a genuine concern for women living in poverty and realised that they desperately needed a maternity hospital. To this end in 1856, she formed a committee with 20 other women under her leadership. At the same time as they were meeting two doctors – Dr John Maund and Dr Richard Tracey-were in the process of renting a house in East Melbourne as a maternity hospital. Francis's Committee joined forces with them, providing the finances and infrastructure to establish the hospital. On 19 August, 1856, the first patient was admitted.

Frances was president of the hospital's managing committee from its inception to 1874. Sayers – a male historian who wrote a history of the Royal Women's Hospital-in what Dr Rushen describes as an "appalling omission" attributed the founding of the hospital purely to Drs Maund and Tracey. Dr Rushen said that this gave us "a diminished image of this highly articulate, educated and spirited woman who, with a strong sense of both private and public duty, gave so much to the foundation of many services for the people of Victoria".

Frances was particularly concerned with the welfare of women and children and took a leadership role in a number of organisations including the Children's Hospital, the Melbourne Orphan Asylum and the Carlton Refuge for Homeless Women. In November 1863, Frances opened the Melbourne Home, a hostel for governesses and needlewomen and served as its President from its foundation in 1863 until she left Melbourne in 1874. Several years after she left Melbourne the Governesses' Institute Hostel moved and its building in Lonsdale Street was sold, becoming the Queen Victoria Hospital, entirely staffed by women.

Frances Perry was indeed a most remarkable woman.

UAW OUR WOMEN MAGAZINE : A LOOK BACK AT OUR PAST**Cath Morrison**

The State Library of Victoria has an online blog which covers a number of topics including life in earlier decades in Victoria. A recent edition (<http://blogs.slv.vic.gov.au/such-was-life/social-life-customs/>) is about the first national newsletter of the UAW: "Our Women", published 1953-1971. The State Library holds print copies of this publication.

"Our Women" was established in 1953 and according to Morag Loh, writing in *Left-Wing Ladies* (2013) its aim was "to be an appealing introduction to the UAW and a means of building the organisation". Based in Sydney, with contributions from all parts of Australia and although with a "mainstream women's magazine format", the content of *Our Women* was different. Katharine Pritchard wrote in the 1963 10th anniversary edition, (p. 13), "*So many glossy and gaudy illustrated women's magazines treat women as puppets, interested chiefly in fripperies and fashions. They use women as bait for the advertisers of cosmetics, exotic furniture and food stuffs. But 'Our Women' considers the needs of women as intelligent citizens, workers and the wives of men on whose earnings a household depends: women whose equal rights with their menfolk must be recognised.* Nevertheless there were practical articles on lighter topics as well.

As the writer of the State Library of Victoria blog Paul Dee notes: ... *regular topics include the fight for equal pay, the Vietnam war and regular articles on Aboriginals. The article The door is open, looks at the life of Aboriginal women and children on farming stations. The women often worked 'from dawn till dark, and often till 9 o'clock, for five shillings a week' ... "What happened to a woman who couldn't work or didn't want to work?" "No work no eat. You get thrown out."* (April-June, 1967; p. 8). *The magazine also contains recipes, gardening tips, short stories and regular columns such as 'Over a cuppa' and 'Your garden', as well as feature articles like 'A five-day shopping week' and 'Prepare your child for school.' Indeed some covers juxtapose such headlines as 'Australian woman in Antarctica,' with 'How to home perm'.*

UAW members put immense efforts into selling the magazine and it was a source of great pride for members. The 1957 issue sold 2500 copies in Victoria alone, although it existed on a financial knife edge for much of the time (*Left-Wing Ladies*, p44).

It is interesting to see that many of the 'equal opportunity' issues dealt with in *Our Women* are still matters which our current UAW (Vic) Newsletter features each year, dealing with equal pay, gender equity, domestic violence and support to increase the participation of women in the workforce such as affordable childcare and parental leave. ***For those who are interested in learning more of the history of the UAW, Left-Wing Ladies: the UAW in Victoria 1950-2012, 2nd ed. by Morag Loh and Suzanne Fabian is available from our office. Cost \$25.***

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE FOR 2016

The Newsletter contains a membership renewal form for 2016. Subscriptions are for a calendar year Jan. 2016 -December 2016. We know that some members have renewed for 2016 already. Thanks!

If you haven't already renewed we hope that you will support us by sending your cheque for \$20 (unwaged) or \$30 (waged) together with the Form to: Treasurer, UAW, 2nd Floor Ross House, 247 Flinders Lane, Melbourne.

You may also pay by EFT to UAW, NAB, BSB 083-004 Account 515 107 210 or pay by cash at the IWD celebration of the UAW on March 22 (see flyer in this Newsletter).

ASYLUM SEEKERS: reckless indifference and calculated cruelty*

by Anne Sgro

The campaign to prevent the return of 267 refugee babies, children and adults to Nauru continues to grow. The UAW has written to Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, on his offer to settle them in Victoria: *thank you for your compassion and the political courage of your decision to offer refuge and a new life to the 267 asylum seekers who are threatened with deportation to Nauru. Empathy and decency have been sadly lacking from policies concerning asylum seekers. We applaud your leadership, and the flow-on effect that it had on other Premiers. May it all contribute to a more humane treatment of desperate people who are seeking our help and support.*

Doctors are increasingly speaking out, hospitals are refusing to release patients into harmful situations, GetUp and ASRC petitions combined have garnered over 11,000 signatures in a short time, GetUp is co-ordinating events around the **Let them stay** slogan – including the recent climb up the Melbourne Arts Centre by two young women – doctors are proposing a possible boycott of detention centres, churches have offered sanctuary and Grandmothers are going to Canberra. But we are going to have to ramp up the campaign. While there has been a shift in the number of individuals and organisations speaking out against the cruelty of Australia’s asylum seeker policy, there are still far too many Australians who either support that policy, or are indifferent to it. As Dr John-Paul Sanggaran recently wrote (Age 19.2.16), the fate of the 267 being sent back to a place of certain harm is just the latest in a long line of unconscionable events.

Is the government blatantly xenophobic as well as punitive? New Zealand has offered to accept some of the asylum seekers who are to be returned to Nauru. That offer has been soundly rejected in the name of not encouraging people smugglers. But what about the 12,000 Syrian refugees that Australia promised to accept from camps in Lebanon and Jordan, “as quickly as possible”? Canada has resettled 800 times more Syrian refugees in three months than Australia has in almost six. The Canadian government has flown in 20, 490 Syrian refugees since 4 November. A total of 25,000 were due to arrive by the end of February (Age 18.2.16). Only 26 have arrived in Australia. According to Minister Dutton’s spokesperson, this is because the government is conducting rigorous security and other checks that cannot be rushed. Well the Canadians managed to do it, including in-depth family interviews, the collection of biographical information and biometrics such as fingerprints and digital photos, checked against databases. Obviously, where there is a will there is a way. So what is the holdup?

The Shadow Minister Richard Marles has expressed mealy-mouthed concern for the “pitiful” number. But he presumably condones the action. The UAW has written to Bill Shorten, seeking a change of policy and heart on the question of asylum seekers. *Churches have offered sanctuary, the Human Rights Commission has documented the trauma, medical practitioners have indicated the damage that will be inevitably done to children, teachers have spoken out for their students, and Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has led the call by other state premiers to leave these vulnerable people in Australia. The UAW has campaigned for peace and social justice for over 65 years... We ask that the Opposition rethink its policies and strategies, and act now with compassion, humanity and decency. Like many in the Australian community, we want leadership on this issue.*

Silence confirms. While it is not always easy to get out, there is always pen and paper, the email and the telephone. As UAW members we cannot remain silent.

**Dr Michael Dudley, Sydney Children’s Hospital (Age 19.2.16)*

EQUALITY RIGHTS ALLIANCE (ERA): Federal budget submission by Carmen Green

ERA currently has 61 women's organisations as members and is therefore the largest women's network in Australia advocating on behalf of women. Earlier this month ERA forwarded to its members its draft budget submission for consideration and possible endorsement. The submission covers Commonwealth housing policy, gender budgeting and tax reform. Since then the submission has been endorsed by member organisations –including the UAW-and forwarded to the Federal Government.

OVERVIEW of SUBMISSION:

The submission outlines recommendations to strengthen the consideration of gender impacts in the budget process, boost revenue and invest in affordable housing measures to increase women's safety and participation.

The document stresses that an overarching housing affordability framework is a crucial building block for the elimination of violence against women and their children & for the advancement of gender equality in Australia.

GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING: Australia has a strong history of gender responsive budgeting & has previously been a world leader in the practice. However in recent years the practice has regressed and is at a standstill.

TAX REFORM PROPOSALS MUST CONSIDER EFFECTS ON WOMEN:

- Gender impacts of a GST
- Retirement system must work for women

Recommendation 1: Restructure the taxation concessions for super to maximise benefits to low income earners.

Recommendation 2: Limit negative gearing to income from investment & grandfather current arrangements.

Recommendation 10: Reinstate the low income super contribution

ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY REQUIRES A STRONGER APPROACH TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Women are hit hardest by unaffordable housing due to gender wage and superannuation gaps. Women are the primary users of housing and homelessness services. Improving and strengthening housing affordability services and infrastructure is critical to progressing a gender equal society.

Recommendation 3: Establish an affordable housing growth fund as part of a broader National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA).

Recommendation 4: All Commonwealth funding for States and Territories for new build housing must meet the Silver Standard in the Liveable Housing Australia Guidelines.

Recommendations 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 & 9: Are all concerned with housing and homelessness and the maintenance & increases in funding to specified agencies working effectively in this area.

The UAW is pleased that it was able to support ERA's excellent Budget Submission to the Federal Government.

WHAT IS THE ECONOMY FOR?

by Anne Sgro

The metaphorical table that supposedly holds all proposals for debate about taxation reform by the Turnbull government has become a standing joke. It is obvious that the Coalition will not take any measures that will adversely affect the rich (who mostly deny their wealth, apparently), while cuts to health and education that affect the majority aren't discussed - but there they are, along with Abbott era policies on climate change and same-sex marriage. Labor has at least put forward reasonable though by no means radical, policies on negative gearing and capital gains tax.

But where is the discussion about what sort of society we want and how to fund it? Health and education are two fundamental bases for a healthy, happy, forward-looking society but our politicians are in defence mode in regard to both. Australia's universal, accessible health system is under continual attack by the conservatives, and it is obvious that increasingly tax-payer dollars are being funneled into private education to the detriment of public. Where is the discussion about affordable housing, about housing for the homeless? Where do other services come into the equation? What are governments raising taxes for is surely a fairly basic question. I am one who has resisted a deep understanding of how the economy works in detail but I do know that we are heading down the wrong path towards a society that denies the greater good in favour of the well-being and prosperity of the rich. That is who the Coalition represents, after all.

I recently attended an interview with Peter Stuckler, Professor of Political Economy at Oxford University. He has co-authored *The Body Economic*, which measures the relationship between the economy and health with the latter understood in the broad sense of well-being, nutrition, clean air, access to exercise, etc. He made a number of comparisons.

In Eastern Europe in the 1990s, Russia was encouraged by the International Monetary Fund to make rapid change to Capitalism with devastating effects on public health, a huge toll on the Russian people and a big spike in mortality. Belarus, by contrast, was slower to change, and didn't suffer the same effects. Why, he asked, is austerity the first call?

In regard to the Global Financial Crisis, Iceland was a remarkable example of not following the rules. The three biggest banks collapsed, the IMF called for austerity but a referendum returned a resounding NO vote to a proposal that taxpayers pay for the banks' mistakes. The state instead jailed the bankers and invested in public schools and health. There was no rise in suicide rates. The speaker acknowledged that Iceland is a small, homogenous society with a remarkable degree of political participation. In Greece, by comparison, austerity cuts harmed people's health: malaria has returned as a significant health issue; HIV has increased. Programs for both had been cut. Costs to control the situation are now greater. The UK bailed out the banks but pushed austerity to the detriment of ordinary people. Health and education are fiscal multipliers, according to Stuckler - investment is beneficial as it gives a return. Defence, for example, does not.

The Wheeler Centre was booked out for this discussion with a good representation of age groups. People are interested.

In discussion of the economy and the Budget, I object to the focus on tax cuts. How do we provide health, education, transport, pensions and essential services if not by taxation? Are we really so self-centred that we don't care about the common good? Australia's public spending is low by OECD standards. There is no evidence that lowering tax rates increases economic growth. We would do well to emulate the Scandinavians who pay higher taxes but receive better services and seem to have a kinder society. But I also want taxes to be fair and focused. I know what kind of society I want, and it's not what Turnbull has on offer.

RECONCILIATION AND RECOGNITION

by Anne Sgro

Indigenous leaders are expressing disillusionment and despair at the glacial pace of improvement in Aboriginal lives. *Closing the Gap* has become little more than rhetoric: life expectancy is still far below that for other Australians, and while formal education levels may be creeping up, the percentage of incarceration of indigenous people, particularly youth, is not only unacceptable, it is appalling. Noel Pearson has castigated funding changes under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy: “most Australians have no idea that the greatest beneficiaries of investment of indigenous funds are non-indigenous organisations not based in the communities in whose name the expenditure has been justified by parliament” (The Monthly Dec 2015). He has expressed regret that he didn’t stand for parliament when younger, as direct representation may have been more powerful than being a voice in the community. Patrick Dodson has expressed concern about lack of progress on Recognition, and a certain disillusion with the process. Stan Grant is considering standing at the next election, possibly for the ALP. As Megan Davis asks in The Monthly article re recognition: “*First, what is the problem the nation is trying to fix? And second, how is the upbeat and hyperbolic narrative of ‘recognition’ related to the chaotic public policy and facts on the ground?*”

I recently attended a lecture at the Wheeler Centre, Melbourne in conjunction with Deakin University, by Audra Simpson, a First Nations scholar from Columbia University: **Reconciliation and its Discontents**. She studies alternative notions of sovereignty and cultural recognition among indigenous peoples, and particularly a story of settlement in the US and Canada. She spoke of land, life and sovereignty, and the suffering that has been the result of settler sovereignty. It resulted in the elimination of indigenous peoples’ bodies and their systems, but also of their land – land that has been plundered for what it holds, e.g. oil. She spoke of the apology made by the previous Prime Minister, which aimed for the transition from an injured past to a new state, but felt that it was “*market forces sympathy*”. In relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (which she compared unfavourably with that held in South Africa), she felt that it was taking their stories of suffering: “*it was done for them, not for us*”.

Reference was made to the sexual abuse of children in the Residential Schools for Natives, established in the late 19th century to assimilate children, run by the churches until the 1970s. She regarded them as “*institutionalized paedophilia*” under the sign of state civilization and benevolence. A chief in Manitoba had spoken out about his experience of abuse, thereby encouraging others to do likewise, so that it became not only a story of dispossession but also of resistance.

She spoke also of the resistance of 55 people (including 10 children) who, in 1990 in the town of Oka, Quebec, resisted a land grab of territory that contained a cemetery of indigenous people and sacred pine trees. The land was to be appropriated to extend a golf course near Quebec. They armed themselves with AA47 guns, which resulted in a 78 day stand-off. The Emergencies Act was invoked and 2,600 soldiers were sent in. Millions of dollars were released to buy the land for the government to hold in trust for the Mohawks. It is known as the Oka Crisis. The speaker commented that indigenous people are surrounded by a lot of white people who hate us. She concluded: “*Reconciliation is a promissory note – talking about pain but not about dispossession. It is spectator politics, not healing*”.

It was interesting to hear such a forthright point of view, and worth following up. Audra Simpson is here for a 2 day workshop, and asks: *Should Indigenous peoples refuse state “recognition”?*

Look out for a new book to be launched early March: **The Intervention: an Anthology**. Award-winning writers Rosie Scott and Dr Anita Heiss have gathered together the work of twenty Australian writers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, together with powerful statements from Northern Territory Elders, to bring a new dimension and urgency to a social justice issue that has struggled to find a place on the national agenda.

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