Sponsored silence for Elaine

Members the CWU Women’s Advisory Committee (WAC) recently took part in a sponsored silence to raise money for CWU rep and multiple sclerosis sufferer Elaine Dagliesh.

postwoman in Preston for the past 20 years, Elaine was diagnosed with MS three years ago. Sadly her health has deteriorated further over the past 12 months, to the extent that she now needs assistance with many everyday tasks.

Pioneering stem cell treatment is available, but not currently in the UK – so in order to get treated Elaine needed to go to Moscow. The sponsored silence, which took place on August 14, was part of the ongoing effort to help fund Elaine’s treatment in Russia.

The fund-raising idea was initially floated by NEC WAC member Lynn Simpson, who is a very good friend of Elaine’s.

The event, held at the North Lancs and Cumbria Postal Branch, saw the theme/hashtag ‘Silence of the WAC’ and there was no doubt that the group had immense fun on the day, albeit in an eerily silent way!

Elaine came along to give the WAC a much-needed lift and it was great to see her in high spirits despite her personal health issues.

Elaine was due to fly out to Moscow in September and, after treatment, will be in isolation for a few weeks before flying back to the UK.

The fund-raising page can still be found on JustGiving (search Elaine Dagliesh).

How an exiled Indian princess joined the suffrage movement

Sharon Pratt, BAME officer of the South West No.7 Branch, tells the story of Sophia Duleep Singh – an unusual fighter for women’s suffrage.

Let me ask you a question. Have you heard of Emmeline Pankhurst or Emily Davison? You probably have, as Emmeline was one of the leaders of the Suffragette movement and Emily was the suffragette who sacrificed her life by standing in front of King George V’s horse at the Derby.

The Suffragette movement was set up in the late 19th century, advocating the right of women to vote in elections. Most of the women were members of the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). This year we celebrate 100 years of women getting the vote.

Sophia Duleep Singh will be a less familiar name.

She was from a privileged background – the daughter of an exiled Indian Prince, Maharaja Duleep Singh, who was a favourite of Queen Victoria. In fact, she was one of the Queen’s god-daughters. Sophia found herself involved with the women’s Tax Resistance League when she refused to pay her taxes in protest at not being able to vote. The Tax Resistance League reasoned quite rightly that if women didn’t have the right to vote, then they shouldn’t have to pay their taxes. Their rallying cry was: “No Taxation Without Representation.”

In her defiance of not paying her taxes, Sophia soon found herself as the most prominent woman of Indian heritage in the British suffragette movement.

She also led one of the big suffrage demonstrations in 1910, known as the Black Friday march, along with Emmeline Pankhurst.

Sophia was quite rich and privileged, but this did not stop her getting involved with a cause she strongly believed in. I feel resolutely that we must not forget women of colour and working-class women who contributed to the suffragette movement.

It has been 100 years since women got the vote, but the fight for equality goes on and women like Sophia are an inspiration to me to fight for what’s right, just and diverse.

CORRECTION: In the last edition of The Word an article about Matchwomen’s strike hero Sarah Chapman was wrongly credited to Karen Bosson. The story, headlined ‘Save the Grave of Sarah Chapman’, was, in fact, written by Chris Ingram, editor of the www.cwnorthwest.org website, where the article was first published.
**Our NHS**

Natalie Flemming gives a passionate defence of the NHS, as it passes its 70th anniversary

On 5 July 1948, the NHS was launched by the then Health Secretary, Aneurin Bevan, at Park Hospital in Manchester (known today as Trafford General Hospital).

For the first time hospitals, doctors, nurses, pharmacists, opticians and dentists were brought together under one umbrella to provide services for free at the point of delivery.

The initial budget for the NHS was £437m – about £15bn at today’s prices. The editorial in the Daily Mirror the day after the launch noted: “The National Health Service has got off to an encouraging start … an example of how the nation can cooperate in a great enterprise.”

The NHS has always been revolutionary. In 1958 vaccinations were introduced for polio and diphtheria to reduce deaths from both diseases.

Babies began being vaccinated against pneumococcal meningitis in 2006.

Ten years ago, girls aged 12 and 13 were offered jabs to protect themselves against the human papilloma virus, which causes most cases of cervical cancer.

Vaccination has become a key part of NHS health prevention work. According to NHS.uk, “cases of polio in the UK fell dramatically when routine vaccination was introduced in the mid-1950s. There hasn’t been a case of polio caught in the UK since the mid-80s. But the infection is still found in some parts of the world, and there remains a very small risk it could be brought back to the UK.”

We all need the NHS and the CWU has always been vocal in its campaign to stop the cuts. A motion declaring the need to “campaign vigorously against NHS cuts, outsourcing initiatives and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) projects that are effectively privatising parts of the health service,” was overwhelmingly reaffirmed at this year’s CWU Annual Conference – the only bone of contention being an associated demand to bring the NHS’s big pharmaceutical company suppliers into public ownership.

The NHS has always been revolutionary...

In 1958 vaccinations were introduced for polio and diphtheria to reduce deaths from both diseases...

Highlighting the issue of massive profits being made by the NHS’s major drugs suppliers, Judy Griffiths of Coventry Branch pointed out: “The NHS is the most monumental of the achievements of the working class and the labour movement in the UK, and it’s our job as part of that movement to protect, sustain and grow the NHS. “We have to end the disgraceful development of private companies making billions out of our health service.”

Throughout the years, many of the CWU’s Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) members have given personal accounts about what the NHS has meant to them and the important role that it has played in their lives.

DAC chair, Tony Sneddon, has spoken of his own experience and the help and support that he received from his medical team, especially the scientists at King College Hospital, London. “You always hear the worst about the NHS, but they’re the best service in the world, despite the pressures on them,” said Tony.

Fellow DAC member Lee Starr-Elliott, backs this, explaining: “Without the NHS and my hearing aids, I would be lost in the world of silence, so thank you to all the amazing staff for everything you do.”

The CWU has and will continue to campaign against cuts in the NHS and members must continue to support the service – one that is rightly envied the world over.
Confronting fascism on the streets

Karen Gower of Essex Amal, reports from the front line of the struggle against fascism

On June 9 I attended the counter-demonstration to the “Free Tommy Robinson” protest in London.

There, myself and a colleague witnessed thugs clashing with the police trying to get to our demonstration. We saw men making Nazi salutes, with shouts directed at black and Asian people nearby of “go back to your own countries.”

The protest was clearly racist and contained a large fascist presence. This had nothing to do with free speech, as the organisers had claimed.

The contrast with our demonstration was stark. We had banners from local trade union branches, including Unison and the NUT, held by a diverse range of people. It was clear who really represented the working class.

But there were not enough of us. Our demonstration was in the hundreds but far greater numbers are needed to defeat this latest threat.

We brought our local union banner but Essex Amal was the only CWU banner on the demonstration. A union of our size, and the labour movement as a whole, can do better. The Labour Party has more than 500,000 members and the trade union movement more than 6 million. We have to mobilise before things get worse.

The real target of fascism has always been the left and the labour movement. Using the scapegoat of the day (Jews, Blacks or Muslims, Lesbian or Gay), once they reach a sufficient size, their true colours are revealed.

Finsbury Park terrorist, Darren Osborne, said that his initial plan was to murder Jeremy Corbyn. And tragically we saw the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox at the hands of fascist Thomas Mair.

Tommy Robinson is well aware of such tactics; starting as a BNP member, he has been around fascism for a number of years. The idea that he is standing up for women against grooming is laughable.

The thugs trying to break police lines to get to our demo certainly weren’t there with a view to protecting women like me.

It’s essential for all trade unionists to deal with this latest fascist offensive while we still can, so I’ll be back at the next demonstration.

Helping refugees in Calais

Care4Calais is a humanitarian charity based in Northern France. The organisation has been working tirelessly, since 2015, to help the many refugees that reach Calais. Most of the refugees have escaped from war torn and politically unstable environments to which they can’t return.

Hundreds of volunteers have helped along the way and Care4Calais continues to thrive, despite the deteriorating conditions for refugees in the region.

The news that the UK has supported Italy and the rest of the EU, in its refusal to help migrant boats arriving from Libya, is unacceptable.

Day in and day out Care4Calais hears stories of torture and violence in lawless Libya – people fleeing are doing so because they have to.

*Please sign the petition to get the EU to reverse its position - http://petitions.care4calais.org

Care4Calais is always looking for volunteers and fundraisers – if you think you can help then please get in touch. To find out more visit www.care4calais.org

Trade unionists rally in defence of Bookmarks

Trade unionists joined a solidarity action day in August, after Bookmarks bookshop in central London was attacked by fascists the preceding weekend.

The TUC helped rally trade unionists in defence of democratic freedom, following the attacks. The solidarity day held outside Bookmarks in Bloomsbury Street on 11 August was well attended, with members of the CWU and GMB Race playing a prominent part.
CWU members come out in force for Pride

Members of the CWU’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Advisory Committee joined local CWU members in Northern Ireland to celebrate Belfast Pride on Saturday August 4.

Organisers of the colourful parade event – now in its 27th year – estimated that 50,000 people took part or watched the parade on the streets of Belfast. Also joining the parade were groups from BT and the Royal Mail.

The LGBT Advisory Committee members in attendance wore badges in support of the ‘Love Equality’ campaign, which aims to bring marriage equality to Northern Ireland and is a key campaign that the advisory committee is supporting.

Other Pride activities enthusiastically supported by the CWU included:

- **Liverpool Pride,** where an impressive CWU contingent joined Liverpool’s biggest Pride event yet. An estimated 50,000 people took part, with the 10,000 people who commenced the march at St George’s Hall joined by around 40,000 more as the joyous parade made its way through the city. “We’ve already been in contact with the Liverpool Pride organisation with a view to offering even greater support in 2019,” said Emma Garner, of Preston Brook, Bury and Retail Branch.

- **Manchester Pride,** where no fewer than 45 CWU activists and family members from across the North West took part, joined by special guests from Northern Ireland and the Midlands. The CWU laid on its very own Samba band, organised and performed by CWU assistant branch secretary Angela Teeling, her three children and Mersey Branch young worker officer Erin Brett. “The band played non-stop for over 2 hours and were amazing,” North West regional secretary Carl Webb told The Voice. “My regional assistant secretary Karen Kendrick also did a brilliant job organising our participation and our specially themed ‘Circus of Acceptance’ t-shirts.”

- **Plymouth Pride** – joined by CWU NEC member Carl Maden, members of Plymouth and East Cornwall Branch and the South West Regional Equality Committee

- **Cornwall Pride** (in Newquay) – joined by members of Plymouth and East Cornwall Branch, and the South West Regional Equality Committee

- **London Pride** – joined by members from Greater London Combined Branch

- **Canterbury Pride** – joined by members from the CWU’s Meridian and South London, Surrey and North Hampshire branches

- **Croydon Pride** – joined by CWU members from across South London

- **Edinburgh Pride** – joined by members from Scotland No.2 Branch

- **Grampian Pride** (in Aberdeen) – joined by members from Grampian and Shetland Branch.

Proud roots of Pride

_**Emma Garner** of Preston Brook, Bury and Retail Branch, looks at the roots of Pride – beginning with an inspired LGBT link-up with striking miners_

The film, Pride, tells the story of how the Lesbian and Gay community came to support the miners’ strike in South Wales.

In the early 80s, an era of prolific homophobia and union bashing, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) was founded by Mark Ashton and his friends.

Mark, a gay rights activist, and member of the Communist Party, wanted to show solidarity with another victimised community – the miners in South Wales.

LGSM extended the hand of friendship, unsure of the reception that they would receive. Despite uncertainty and some dissent amongst both communities they forged a remarkable union.

Vilified as “the pits and perverts” by The Sun newspaper, they responded by raising over £5,000 for the miners by organising the Pits and Perverts gig in 1984.

One grateful South Wales miner Dai Donovan took to the stage to say: “You have worn our badge ‘Coal not Dole’ and you know what harassment means as we do. Now we will pin your badge on us and we will support you.”

In 1985 South Wales coal miners and their families, together with LGSM, led the parade that would become London Pride. They were asked to lead the march because they were the largest group at the event.

This was just the beginning of NUM support for LGBT rights, leading to a strong affiliation with the Labour Party.

Thankfully society has changed, meaning that Pride events now can be more celebratory – but we should never forget the origins of the Pride movement.