



Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

**Aotearoa Section
Newsletter June
2016**



Above: Delegation from Aotearoa to the WILPF Centennial Congress, April 2015: L-R Del Abcede, Ruth Coombes, Celine Kearney, Irinka Britnell and Megan Hutching outside the Peace Palace, The Hague, with Dutch bicycle.

Celebrating 100 years of WILPF, 22-25 April 2015

European and American women originally met in The Hague, the capital city of the Netherlands, in April 1915, to discuss strategies to stop the fighting that had already begun, and which descended into World War One. They were the early members of WILPF.

One hundred years later, in April 2015, 300 women from around the world, including our delegation from Aotearoa, met at The Hague for WILPF's Centennial Congress. It was organised under the theme of 'Women's Power to Stop War.'

Our kaupapa as a delegation was climate change and the impact of rising Pacific Ocean waters on Pacific peoples. Our remit which called for recognition of 'Climate Refugee' as a category in international law was adopted by the congress, with the help of Liz Remmerswaal, who was able to negotiate with the women tasked to deal with remits.



*(Back left to front right) Liz Remmerswaal Hughes, Deirdra MacMenamin, Celine Kearney, Megan Hutching, Del Abcede and Ruth Coombes
Photo: Del Abcede/PMC*

Essentially a meeting to decide policy and business decisions, the congress adopted a new manifesto (link below) and an international programme of work which will take the organisation into the next hundred years.

WILPF's offices in Geneva and New York work closely with United Nations bodies on international programmes addressing Human Rights; Disarmament; Women, Peace and Security, and Crisis Response. The latter brings women together from situations of war and conflict to support women in similar

situations of conflict. A new environmental programme was adopted at the congress, in response to repeated calls from delegates for a closer focus on pressures on the natural environment.

International President from the Asia Pacific Areas

The congress voted for a new president, Kozue Akibayashi, from Japan and four new vice presidents, from Pakistan, Norway, the United States and Nigeria. Megan facilitated the session for voting in the new position holders. She did it with steady and quiet aplomb, which is no small achievement in an auditorium of strong and vocal women.



WILPF International office holders (L to R) Joy Onyesoh (VP), Margrethe Tingstad (VP), Sameena Nazir (VP), Kozue Akibayashi (President), Catia Confortini (VP), Kerry McGovern (Treasurer) Photo: WILPF UK 2015

WILPF International is developing a regionalisation strategy so international staff can communicate more directly with members and vice versa. Aotearoa is part of the Asia Pacific region which covers the Philippines, Japan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, Micronesian and Melanesian nations, Australia and Polynesia. We had a meeting of representatives from this very large area of the world at the Congress and elected a South Asia representative within the wider area.

Remembering the ANZACs

Women from the New Zealand and Australian groups in The Hague attended a commemoration for Anzac soldiers at a Commonwealth war cemetery just out of the

city. Out of respect for the occasion they left behind banners and slogans and took an olive tree which was eventually planted at the Peace Palace, remembering both the soldiers and the women's campaign for peace.

Dr Aletta Jacobs

Women from the Congress also attended the installation of the bust of Dr Aletta Jacobs, an eminent Dutch physician, and one of the women responsible for organising the first meeting of WILPF in April 1915, in the Peace Palace (pictured below) which houses the International Court of Justice and the International Court of Arbitration.



My personal favourite at the International Court of Justice was a carved statue of a cat. The story goes... the cat had adopted the court judges, who used to live in the castle, helping itself to their breakfast croissant and jam. When a fire broke out one night it alerted the judges and they escaped, but the cat was nowhere to be seen. Eventually it was found breathing with great difficulty in the gardens nearby, and later died. They have honoured its faithfulness and bravery.

Celine Kearney

The new manifesto can be found at:
<http://www.wilpfinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/WILPF-2015-Manifesto.pdf>

A YWILPF perspective

WILPF member, Law and Politics student, Emily Watson writes her own blog, called *politicspersonified*, which she describes as ‘a place where I share stories and ideas from my political world.’ She aims to challenge engage and inspire readers. She writes on a variety of topics posts, recently on oil and gas and water issues in New Zealand.

She recorded her experience at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, in New York, in May 2015, where WILPF office staff were able to provide her some support. Emily is pictured at left: in the centre with blue jacket and black trousers, at the NPT Review.

In her blogs last year she included the picture and piece below about Rae Acheson who works in WILPF’s New York office:



‘Ray Acheson, head of WILPF’s Reaching Critical Will, is a firm advocate of disarmament and in particular a nuclear weapons ban treaty. She is also committed to ensuring that gender issues are discussed as part of these talks - she has criticised the continued negative use of gendered language in security speak, and she frequently draws attention to the under-representation of women on panels of experts.’

***You will be informed and inspired at:
<http://www.politicspersonified.com>***



Photo: <http://www.politicspersonified>.

WILPF member Helen Varley Jamieson reports on a women’s festival in India

Recently I had the privilege of attending Tantidhatri, an international festival of women’s performance, held from 17-21 February in Bengaluru, India. Tantidhatri is part of the Magdalena Project, an international network of women in theatre and performance, and its programme combined a variety traditional and contemporary work. Following is an extract from my blog post about the festival.

A highpoint of the festival for me was a day of presentations entitled "Interactions with Social Change", with four feminist activists. Kamla Bhasin is currently the South Asia coordinator of One Billion Rising, and showed footage from the campaign’s global dance action on Valentine’s Day.

Nobel Peace Prize nominee Khushi Kabir is involved in projects that empower rural working-class communities in Bangladesh. Vandana Shiva is an environmental and anti-globalisation activist and author who advocates for the integration of traditional wisdom in contemporary practices.

Transgender activist A. Revathi works on and writes about sexual minorities' human rights issues. They all spoke candidly about their lives, both personal and political, giving us insight into their work over many decades and numerous issues. Kamla and Revathi both spoke about using performance and the arts in their work - theatre, songs, dance and street theatre (and Kamla reminded me very much of my grandmother, Sydney WILPFer Margaret Holmes, with her great slogans and her strong, positive approach).

Vandana talked about the terrible impact of Monsanto's genetically modified seeds on Indian farming communities (some statistics I noted down: the price of cotton seed jumped by %80,000 when Monsanto entered the market, Monsanto has collected \$90 million in royalties from Indian peasant farmers, and 300,000 farmers have committed suicide as a result of being in impossible debt to Monsanto).

She also mentioned New Zealander Marilyn Waring's book "If Women Counted" as an influential text for her.



Photo: Magdalena Project

My own presentation was in the "Experiencing the process" part of the programme; I spoke about the process of my project *We have a situation!*, specifically about the "situation" at the [Multicidade Festival](#) last year in Rio de Janeiro on the topic of water pollution.

I was the last speaker on the last afternoon of the festival, in a hot room, so I was impressed that people stayed to listen and remained engaged despite the heat. I had been very inspired by the "Interactions with Social Change" presentations the day before, as much (all?) of it resonated with my ideas underpinning *We have a situation!* I was also making connections with the reading I'd been doing in the previous few months around ideas of post-democracy and proto-political engagement as I had been writing a chapter about *We have a situation!* for a forthcoming book on the arts and global civic engagement.

I had based my presentation on this chapter, then wove in themes from the talks the day before as I was delivering it. Three remote performers joined my presentation online and provided some humorous antics and work demonstration elements in UpStage (the online cyberformance platform).

The full blog post, including links to people and projects, can be found at <http://themagdalenaproject.org/en/content/tanidhatri-2016-magical-bubble-joy> and <http://creative-catalyst.com/serendipity/index.php?/archives/188-floating-in-a-magical-bubble-of-joy.html>

International news

On 6 June 2016, in New York, WILPF's Disarmament programme, Reaching Critical Will, launched a report, *Preventing gender-based violence through arms control*.

Report (68pp) here:

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/preventing-gbv.pdf>

Summary (5pp) here:

<http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Publications/preventing-gbv-executive-summary.pdf>

2015 activities - Branch reports

Otautahi/Christchurch WILPF report

The members of the Otautahi WILPF group are still preoccupied with getting through post-quake issues, and sadly have had little energy for other activities. However we still keep in touch, and support each other in any peace-related activities we are doing individually.

Organising our annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki commemoration brought us together in August, and we had a moving evening at the Peace Bell in the Botanic Gardens, with speakers, music and lanterns. As always, a good-sized crowd gathered, including local MPs and the mayor. An indoor gathering afterwards with soup and hot drinks warmed us and gave us a chance to socialise.

A joint project with DSC saw Kate Dewes showing the series of films on Women, War and Peace at WEA, and these were followed by discussions.

Kate together with Margie Lovell-Smith has been researching what Canterbury women were saying around the time of WW1 opposing war, and found links to WILPF. Letters were written from WILPF International to local suffragists, and there was a WILPF branch here.

Work is being done towards marking the 20th anniversary in July of the advisory opinion from the ICJ on nuclear weapons.

Prue Stringer

WILPF Wellington branch report

2015 appeared to start well. I was invited to a lunch with speakers, given by UNANZ prior to a forum at Parliament in the evening, entitled Three Minutes to Midnight, which I had arranged to go to.

Unfortunately, straight after the lunch, I had an accident and badly damaged my knee and the nerve supplying my ankle and foot. Since then it has been a succession of hospitals and

physiotherapy, and having to endure crutches yet again, after the accident in 2013.

Though there were no meetings arranged by the Wellington Branch. I was able to go to a few NCW meetings and keep the finances in order We can only hope things will improve!
Joy Davies-Payne

Edwina Hughes adds: Individual Wellington Branch members continue to be actively involved in a range of peace and related events organised by other organisations (NCW, Peace Movement Aotearoa, UNANZ, White Poppies for Peace, World War One Centenary Peace Project, among others), and we have plans to reactivate the Branch in the year ahead.

WILPF Tamaki Makaurau branch report

On 5 March 2015 we organised a peace vigil at Aotea Square to oppose the military deployment to Iraq and in support of humanitarian aid and diplomatic support for peace processes in the Middle East. On Anzac Day 2015 we combined with Quakers for a candlelit vigil outside the Friends Meeting House to remember all the victims of war and some WILPF members also joined in their peace walk earlier in the day.

Four of our members, Ruth Coombes, Del Abcede, Celine Kearney and Megan Hutching attended the WILPF centennial Congress at The Hague in the Netherlands and two members, Janfrie Wakim and Anna Lee attended the international peace conference organised by WILPF which followed the Congress.

An afternoon tea was held at the Friends Meeting House to mark the WILPF centennial, with about 50 people attending. There was also a small display at the Auckland central library organised by Megan Hutching.

The branch hosted a visit by WILPF International Secretary General, Madeleine

Rees in May. We organised meetings with members and a public meeting, and arranged some media interviews with Madeleine. Everyone appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity to meet Madeleine and hear her speak about the Women Peace and Security agenda and other work which WILPF is involved with at an international level.

The branch AGM was held on 27 June at the Friends Meeting House as part of our annual Matariki winter solstice gathering. The meeting began with a poetry reading by Whaitiri Mikaere. We lit a candle in remembrance of Pat Jackman, Mary Woodward, Jean Smith, Cecil Fowler, Helen Yensen.

Helen Yensen has left a sizeable bequest to the branch. Some has been used for a donation to WILPF International for help with the costs of the 2015 centennial Congress; some will be used to produce a history booklet to update the history of the Section written by Betty Holt in the 1980s. We are extremely grateful for the bequest.

We continued with our fundraising activities by catering for other organisations.

Rae Martell and Kathy Ross contributed squares for a British Quaker peace quilt.

Ruth Coombes organised another well-attended candle floating ceremony in the Wintergarden in Auckland Domain on 9 August to mark the 70th anniversary of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The branch co-sponsored a public meeting with WILPF Wellington member, Emily Watson at AUT on 13 August. Emily spoke about the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Conference which she had attended in New York where she worked with WILPF's Reaching Critical Will team, and about the humanitarian movement for nuclear disarmament.

Members attended the Peace Conference organised by the Foundation for Peace Studies on 19 September, and Claire Gregory read Anna Lee's presentation on WILPF.

Branch member Janfrie Wakim led a workshop at the National Council of Women NZ annual meeting on end of life choices and drafted a submission from the Section to a parliamentary select committee on the subject.

The branch has set up a letter-writing group. Members are Joan Macdonald, Ruth Coombes, Nola Smith, Diane Winder, Megan Hutching and Del Abcede. It has been productive and letters have been sent to appropriate Ministers on the subjects of:

- proposed sale of State housing stock
- situation between Israel and Palestine
- nuclear disarmament
- New Zealand's National Action Plan for the Women Peace and Security agenda

Ruth Coombes organised an event in Devonport on 28 November to mark the day that women first voted in a general election in New Zealand in 1893. It was a great happy occasion with singing and speeches and white camellias.

Our final meeting of the year was held on 5 December at Helen Sumich's house where we discussed how we could use the bequest from Helen Yensen, and divided up the tasks which Joan Macdonald is giving up because of ill health.

We have continued with WILPF representation and taken an active part at the Auckland Branch of the National Council of Women, the Auckland Human Rights Network, the Living Wage, the Pay Equity Coalition, UN Women, Pacific Women's Watch (NZ) and Asia Pacific Human Rights Coalition and Tamaki Treaty Workers.

Megan Hutching

Peace Movement Aotearoa responds to the government announcement it has plans for \$20 billion for the military:

We were shocked by the \$580,053,000 increase in military spending in the 2016 Budget. That is more than three and a half times the amount allocated per annum for "social investment", the new funding "to support vulnerable New Zealanders and help them live better lives" - taking the total allocated to the armed forces to more than \$3.69 billion this year.

But the announcement, in the 2016 Defence White Paper, released recently, of \$20 billion new military spending over the next 15 years for increased combat capability, offensive weapons systems, and cyber warfare, is absolutely unbelievable.

Is this how the NZ government responds to the critical need for increased social spending for housing, health, and education ... by prioritising militarisation over social wellbeing?

It's also a totally wasted opportunity to think about what this country's real security needs are, and how to move beyond militarised notions of security.

During the public submissions process that led to the White Paper, Peace Movement Aotearoa and others identified the threats posed by such outdated concepts - threats to public spending, social wellbeing, the environment and more - and suggested replacing the armed forces with a coast guard with inshore and offshore capabilities for fisheries protection and maritime search / rescue. This would free up billions of dollars each year that could be used for socially useful spending here and increased spending on humanitarian assistance for communities overseas... (Read more at the link below). ***Write/Email your MP and tell them how you would prefer our tax money to be spent.*** <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/afrev15.pdf>

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Have you thought of making a regular financial contribution to WILPF?

If you are able and would like to please contact :

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We have a letter writing group.
Would you like to be part of it?

Contact us on
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