



NCW CONFERENCE NEWS

Ramada Hotel, Gloucester, October 2010

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN OF GREAT BRITAIN – ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Gloucester Cathedral, with its fan vaulted mediaeval cloisters, hosted Crucible in the Autumn, the largest exhibition of modern sculpture in the UK for over 10 years, featuring 70 works of art by many of Britain's most renowned sculptors as well as internationally famous artists. Most people, if asked what was made in Gloucestershire, would probably think of Gloucester Old Spot pork or Double Gloucester cheese and might associate the area with writers such as Dennis Potter, JK Rowling or Laurie Lee, but may not know that some of the best British sculpture is made at the Pangolin Editions foundry near Chalford. Delegates to the NCW Annual National Conference who found time to visit the Cathedral may have thought the exhibits stunningly beautiful, mystifying, or shocking but all must have considered the exhibition worthwhile. This historic waterfront city, with the U.K.'s most inland port, has a vibrant dock area where Victorian warehouses are now home to museums, shops, arts and crafts, antiques and restaurants. The South West and Midland Region had looked forward to greeting NCW members, Affiliates and guests arriving in Gloucester.

The 2010 Conference was opened by **The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Gloucester, Councillor Jan Lugg**, who warmly welcomed delegates gathered from around the country to the city. Following the traditional collection at our Assembly a collection was made for the Mayor's charity, the Pied Piper Fund.

Message from Her Majesty the Queen

The president, Sheila Eaton, read the following reply which she had received from the Director of her Majesty's Private Secretary's office:

I have been asked to thank you, the members of the National Council of Women of Great Britain and your nationally Affiliated organisations for your message of loyal greeting, sent on the occasion of your Annual Conference which is being held from the 15th to 17 October in Gloucester. Her Majesty much appreciates your kind words and was interested to learn about this year's programme. In return, the Queen sends her warm, good wishes to all concerned for a most successful and enjoyable meeting.

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

This has been an active but difficult year, for NCW and the country. Though we have a new government the tough economic situation continues, with more job losses expected and a drop in income for many people. It is reported a third of the charities in the Third Sector have no reserves and with severe government cutbacks, many Charities are likely to close. Though NCW has some reserves these will not last forever and as there is little prospect of obtaining any funding in this economic climate, my objectives this year has been to focus on internal matters: **improving efficiency, better communication, membership and cutting costs**. We have already been successful in some areas, as will be revealed at the AGM. Costs are down and work patterns improved. The use of electronic communication has assisted in this area. We are able to communicate with most of the membership and affiliates by pressing a key. They receive information quickly and can respond immediately if necessary. No letters to put in envelopes, no stamps or journey to the post. **The savings in time and money are tremendous.**



Group emails have been set up for Regional and Policy Committees to enable quick and easy dialogue. Information can be shared and work on joint projects etc. discussed. Electronic communication also creates the opportunity for greater membership involvement. Following Policy Chairmen/ Coordinator meetings, it was agreed they would work with sub-committees/ discussion groups around the country, some local groups have already been formed. These enable **more** members to air their views locally on a regular basis and email their findings to the National Policy Committees without time-consuming and expensive travel to London. Our International activities and information from the United Nations and ICW etc. can also be circulated quickly and easily without cost. The framework for Individual Member branches with voting rights,

has been established and a **new Website launched** with a private member's section; a presentation of the site will take place this afternoon at the membership meeting. News and Policy Matters has been combined into one publication. However we need to look for sponsors for both our Publications and Seminars in the future.

Internationally NCW has been busy with representation at conferences and meetings abroad, in addition to email communication. A highlight of the year was the Triennial International Council of Women's [ICW] Conference in Johannesburg, which six delegates from NCW attended. As members of the ICW this was an important event and the delegation played an active role throughout. We have an excellent booklet in production on the South Africa Conference, which will be circulated to all members. Nationally we have responded to government consultations, held seminars and produced a good selection of resolutions for conference, our achievements and activities are reported in the Directors and Financial Report. We continue to work with young women, providing excellent inter-generational seminars and the opportunity for them to contribute to our activities. We have also addressed many problems facing society during the year, including the care debate, equality, ageism, the sexualisation and exploitation of children and the *Myths of the Drink Culture*, our conference seminar.

My normal Presidential work has continued and includes meetings with the Women's National Commission [WNC] and the Six-O Group. Among topics under discussion are the implications of the new equality bill - **251 pages**. Some organisations will have to change their constitution, but I understand NCW will be unaffected. Due to government reorganisation the WNC is to close on December 31st. As a founder member of the WNC over forty-one years ago this is sad news. However the government is to set up something similar in the Equalities Office in 2011 and, after talks, it has been agreed NCW will be involved.

We have two retirements from the MC this year, Barbara Maddison as Vice President Affiliates retires after six years and Kath Hanson is retiring after twelve years as Company Secretary and National Treasurer. They have both done an excellent job for which we are most grateful. New Management Committee Members are established and adapting to their changed responsibilities.

This has been a period of transition for NCW, much has been achieved and I would like to thank you all for your contributions. Without your help and co-operation none of the progress could have been made. These are exciting, challenging times of change for NCW. There is still much to do and with your help and support we can do it!

I look forward to next year with anticipation and enthusiasm!

Sheila Eaton

SOCIAL EVENTS

Excellent after-dinner entertainment on Friday evening was organised by the South West and Midland Region who had invited 'Carmen's Angels' to sing for us. This is a recently formed trio of young professional singers in their twenties and their performance was entrancing. Holly Burt, Natasha Neckles and Daisy Burty sang a programme of varied popular music, all to their own special arrangements. This colourful a cappella trio showed us their new jazzy/bluesy/popular style in a varied programme which included such old favourites as 'Amazing Grace' and 'Danny Boy'. These three beautiful voices, all perfectly balanced, gave us a great deal of pleasure.

Our speaker at the Gala Dinner was Professor Patricia Broadfoot CBE who was until recently Vice Chancellor of the University of Gloucestershire. She holds degrees in Sociology and Education culminating in the award of a DSc from the University of Bristol in 1999 and an honorary LLD in 2010. She has published many books and over 100 articles in her specialist academic fields of educational assessment and comparative education. Professor Broadfoot was awarded the CBE for services to social science in 2006. Prof Broadfoot spoke of her own progress through her career and unusually entertained delegates with a lively quiz about the dates when women achieved the vote, were able to own property and achieved rights in our society. Many members were surprised at the results which have made us realise that we are sometimes unaware of women's progress.

CONFERENCE EXHIBITION STANDS

The stands were well patronised during breaks. These included a successful Bring and Buy table manned by members of Nottingham branch, which added to funds. Sheila Rosewell manned her publications table as successfully as usual. Anne Wilson, a member of the National Council of Young Women Committee, had designed an excellent display which helped to engage members interested in our programme with young women. There were albums reflecting the spirit of the intergenerational seminars and the NCYW report detailing its inspiration, history and development. Members were advised by committee members on how they could help in extending this programme in their own areas. Maureen Beauchamp's second hand book stall, an innovation, attracted much interest. The stands are a useful showcase for our Affiliates - our Affiliate the Trefoil Guild had their display as usual, celebrating Girl Guides' centenary year.

THE MYTHS OF THE DRINK CULTURE

The main points made at the Conference Seminar by these leading speakers in their fields are briefly summarised below.

Professor Sir Ian Gilmore Immediate Past President, Royal College of Physicians, described in his address the growth in the consumption of alcohol, and the subsequent medical implications. He said alcohol consumption had greatly increased overall in recent years, with the highest consumption in Europe being in Eastern Europe. However, within Western Europe, Britain was now top of the binge drinking league, both for men and women. This applied also to teen-age binge drinking, where even some 15-16 year olds in the UK were now drinking heavily.

Total *per capita* consumption had increased markedly since the 1970's in the UK whereas there had been a fall in countries like France, Spain and Italy. This increase is seen across the whole social scale, and most strikingly in women. The reasons for the increase in drinking vary. One survey showed that more than 80% of the women who exceeded recommended daily limits said that it was to unwind after a stressful day, while there had also been more successful and sophisticated marketing aimed specifically at women. Low cost selling in supermarkets had also no doubt contributed to the trend, and the move to drinking at home rather than in the pub or club has been a stark change in behaviour driven by the widening gap of alcohol prices to be consumed on or off-premises. Unsolicited pop-up advertisements on Facebook were also reported by some 30% of young people, and the hours of 4 -6 pm when young people had returned from school or college, were peak periods for television advertising of certain types of alcoholic drinks.

There had also been a striking increase in the incidence of admissions to hospital as a result of alcohol-related illnesses or accidents, shortly to top over a million each year, and this does not include visits to Accident and Emergency Units not resulting in admission. There are estimated to be about 30,000 deaths each year from alcohol-related causes, often at a relatively young and productive age. There are also disproportionately more deaths in deprived groups. Liver disease is now a major cause of death in the UK, and stands out as rising rapidly. Interestingly this is against the trend in the rest of the European Union, where deaths from liver disease are now going down.

In the case of misuse of illegal drugs, the Government response in the 1970s had been towards prohibition and criminalisation, but in the case of alcohol, our favourite drug, strategies were less clear-cut. It was tempting to portray drinking as a life-style choice, and attempts to modify public behaviour through health education have been disappointing. There was a serious need now to tackle this major public health problem with regulation, particularly as alcohol was currently costing society, in terms of illness and accident, considerably more than it brings in to the public purse in tax. A contributory factor to lack of action was the failure to accept that in many people alcohol is an addictive substance. The reasons for individual predisposition to both addiction and physical harm are complex and a mixture of genetic and environmental factors not yet fully understood. There seemed to be at present no way to give a warning of the clear risks of alcohol consumption in individual cases, though it seemed possible that this might be related to genetic make-up. However the fact remained that dependence and physical harm, including cirrhosis were on the increase.

Among actions which Sir Ian indicated might be of help included setting a minimum unit price for alcohol, probably about 50p, with health warnings labels, e.g. to pregnant women and under-age drinkers; and seeking agreements to limit the amount of low-cost alcohol offered for sale in supermarkets and many other outlets. There also needed to be tougher controls on marketing and sponsorship by alcohol producers and retailers. Customers should understand that the use of subsidised promotional sales of alcohol by retailers had a hidden financial effect on the cost of the family weekly shopping basket.

Dr Timothy Brain, recently retired Chief Constable of Gloucestershire, gave an illustrated talk in which he warned against the use of simplistic headlines analysis of the contemporary drink culture and night time economy in the UK.

Historically, the British, more specifically the English, were a nation of beer drinkers and public intoxication was a very limited phenomenon. This changed at the end of the 17th century with the arrival of cheap gin. The Temperance Movement of the 19th century was a reaction, but a more subtle one than many imagine. The movement sought to discourage drinking and encourage social enjoyment by creating a whole new set of recreational social connections. It was highly successful in political terms, with the adoption of the Nonconformist/Temperance agenda by the Liberal Party in the late 19th century. The disciplined employment requirements of the First World War led to the introduction of even stricter licensing laws and together with relatively high duties on wine and spirits tended to limit public drinking excess. This was especially so in the 1950s and 1960s.

However, the improving economy, leading to increasing disposable domestic income, allowed people to spend more on alcohol. This coincided almost simultaneously with the UK joining the European Union and the increased availability of wine at a price most people could afford. Personal alcohol consumption increased steadily from then, aided by successive government policy decisions to relax licensing hours, leading to the phenomenon of the '24-hour city', even the 24-hour

town. Put simply, more alcohol was available, for longer periods to more people, including the young and, increasingly, young women.

Drinking habits also changed over time, with young people now drinking wine at home before going out and 'topping up' with more expensively priced drinks at night clubs and discos. The night time economy is big business, but the adverse social and economic consequences are seldom recognised in the public credit and debit sheet.

However, it is important to see the phenomenon in context. So-called 'binge drinking' does exist, but is far less prevalent than supposed in the popular media. Similarly, alcohol remains at the root of much violent crime but despite some notably tragic incidents, the incidence of drink-related violent crime has declined in recent years. Even so, there remains enough anti-social behaviour, violence and self-generated physical and psychological harm to require public policing and personal health responses in increasing degree.

The situation was far from hopeless. Increasingly sophisticated policing strategies, such as Gloucestershire's extended 'StreetSafe' strategy and the Government's health education programme had produced mitigating effects. However, with duties on alcohol high in relation to most other countries it seemed unlikely that Britain could tax its way to more moderate drinking.

Dr Brain concluded by saying that by standard definitions there was evidence of a drink culture, but it belied simple description and was far from universal, even amongst young people. Equally, there were no simple solutions but it was necessary to persist with strategies which reduce harm, for which there was some evidence of success.

Linda Duberley, freelance writer, broadcaster and TV presenter, began by referring to Professor David Nutt who said that alcohol addiction is a greater threat to society than heroin. When Professor Nutt first laid his advice before the Brown government he was pilloried and then forced to leave office. Since then he has been proved to be right: not just factually right but morally right too. The tragedy of alcohol dependency in the United Kingdom has become profound and unrelenting. The latest figures show that alcohol addiction is growing faster among women - particularly young ones. We are all used to seeing footage of girls on a night out, rampaging through city centres, causing mayhem and losing control. What we don't see is the distress and misery of women who slowly descend into alcohol dependency behind closed doors.

In twenty years of covering women's health and lifestyle, writer and broadcaster, Linda Duberley has spoken to many of the women whose lives have been wrecked by alcohol and to the experts and doctors who are attempting to deal with the UK's worsening problem

One of the most compelling stories was about a 35-year-old mother of two children who became an alcoholic during her mid-twenties. The woman, who was not identified in the session, did not drink as a teenager and her horrifying descent into addiction started when she began drinking with her husband after work every evening. Within eighteen months she was drinking at least two bottles of wine a night. The hand brake really came off when they left their jobs and worked from home, the conference heard. Two years and two children later the woman lost her husband to stomach cancer and her decline became more rapid. Hospital treatment began after her mother found her lying at home in her own excrement. Several rounds of treatment followed and her children were taken into care. Her story was part of a current affairs programme for ITV's Tonight. Although she was recovering at the time of the broadcast, Linda believes her battle with booze will be a lifelong struggle. Linda told the conference that although the social problems surrounding inner city drinking were often the focus of media attention, it was the silent epidemic of so-called 'middle class' drinking that sometimes presented society with its biggest problems.



Three past Presidents enjoying Conference



Delegates gather for the next session

THE SUPERGRID

Lois Hainsworth MBE said that her presentation was inspired by a Resolution at the 2009 annual conference of the United Nations Association UK and an article in "The New Civil Engineer", followed by a search of the Internet, but the majority of the information has been provided by Dr Gregor Czisch, the scientist who leads the research on this project.

The need for renewable energy is now universally understood. And scientists in Europe are already working on a very wide concept – to link together all forms of renewable energy: hydro-power, solar-power and wind-power, operating from Siberia to Senegal, including the deserts of North Africa and the Arabian Peninsular, tied together and using a high voltage direct current (HVDC) network - a grid superimposed on the existing electricity grid. Under this system, with a proper mix of renewable energies and a Super-Grid infrastructure embracing Europe, Siberia and Northern Africa, electricity could be provided to all countries in the area at a lower cost than at present, freeing the system from fossil fuel with no impact upon the environment.

Dr Czisch considers - based on his research on a totally renewable electricity supply for Europe and its African neighbourhood that the aim should be for a fully renewable supply and the enabling Super-Grid to be in place in about twenty years' time. Energy policy is increasingly characterised by diminishing fossil fuel resources, rapidly expanding energy demand, and increasing prices, coupled with the threat of climate change. With this in mind, the European Union has elected to increase the use of renewable energy, but the potential for renewable energy in Europe is limited and unevenly distributed. One option is to utilise the enormous potential for solar and wind energy in the deserts of North Africa. A renewable Super-Grid would use High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) technology to transmit renewably generated electricity over vast distances between points in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and Europe.

Although the opportunity exists to harness all forms of renewable power across Europe, the deserts of Northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsular, there must be rules and agreements but they do not necessarily need to involve every country in the area. The system could be built step by step and there could be bilateral and trilateral approaches.

Setting this dream in motion will involve continuing and great diplomatic efforts from many countries. It will be a tremendously exciting enterprise as, quite apart from the obvious advantages, the effect on the work for world peace of many nations working together for their mutual benefit is almost unimaginable. The possibilities of this important development cannot be ignored by an organisation such as the National Council of Women.

GOLDEN BOOK

This book, which is always displayed at Conference, is a wonderful record of the outstanding contributions and dedication of members to NCW's work and development and includes those who are currently active. It is with pride that we note the entries for two distinguished members whose deaths took place since our last Conference. Moving tributes were expressed during Assembly by Patience Purdy about Sylvia Owen and by Hilary Sillars about Daphne Glick.

Daphne Glick

Daphne was president of NCW 1998 to 2000, during which time she travelled widely, speaking to branches throughout the country. Daphne was extremely interested in the problems women face in employment and was particularly concerned by the lack of financial understanding she found in many women. She became Chair of the Social and Employment Committee and continued after retiring from Management Committee to contribute to social and employment Government consultation papers. Daphne had a keen interest in history and a love of archives and research and wrote a book, to commemorate NCW's centenary -- entitled *National Council of Women of Great Britain – The First Hundred Years*. The comment in the Golden book that we can no longer 'ask Daphne' when problems arise will resonate with many of us.

Sylvia Owen

Sylvia Owen joined NCW when she retired from the headship of Polam Hall School in Darlington. She served as Chair of Darlington branch and for 18 years as an inspirational Co-chair of the Science and Technology Committee and also became National Vice President Policy. Sylvia was widely admired and respected, having a working relationship with many official organisations. Over 20 years she travelled many miles representing NCW at significant events. At a time of rapid progress in science, with new ethical and safety issues, Sylvia played a major role in responses to government consultation. She invited speakers of the highest calibre and organised excellent seminars. Her work for women and particularly for education and science was exemplary. As Patience Purdy said "The House of Lords would be much better informed on scientific matters had she been a member."

RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions were proposed, seconded and debated at Conference. Many Members present took advantage of the opportunity to air their views and to add different perspectives to the points made by proposers and this added to the body of knowledge on these issues. The Resolutions were all carried, generally by a substantial majority. These results were ratified by Council Members at the AGM and as a result the following have become NCW policy. These resolutions will now therefore be vigorously pursued. The following is an outline of the resolutions. More detail and also the Proposers' speeches are contained in the following NCW publication, available from the NCW Administrative office:

Resolutions - Speeches and Summaries Annual Conference 15th – 17th October 2010

Fuller details of the resolutions can also be accessed on the NCW website www.ncwgb.org

Resolutions

The Sexualisation and Exploitation of Children Submitted by: Management Committee NCW

NCW calls upon the government to ensure that, recognising the importance of childhood, the regulations relating to children are strengthened and improved, halting the excessive commercialisation of children by banning manipulative marketing techniques; and that an open dialogue with the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) and the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) is maintained.

Funding of Museums and Galleries Submitted by: Arts Committee NCW

The National Council of Women (GB), concerned about the funding of museums and galleries in the present economic climate, urges Her Majesty's Government to prioritise funding of existing museums and galleries, and of their collections, which may be considered part of our National Heritage.

Protection of Women and Children from Rape in Post-disaster and Post-conflict Situations

Submitted by: ICWGB

The National Council of Women calls upon Her Majesty's Government to:

1. recognise the prevalence of rape of women and children in post-disaster and post-conflict situations
2. recognise the serious effects of rape on the physical and mental health and future well-being of rape victims
3. make the protection of women and children from rape and all other forms of sexual abuse as high a priority as the provision of food and medical assistance in post-disaster and post-conflict situations
4. make the education of men in the consequences of rape and other forms of sexual violence an integral part of the training of military and UN personnel.

Malnutrition in Hospitals Submitted by: The Health Committee NCW

NCW calls upon the Department of Health to require all hospitals to check patients' weight on admission and to monitor it throughout their stay using the MUST (Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool.) which should be made mandatory in England as it is in Scotland. Thus malnutrition could be identified and supervised. Appropriate nutrition and hydration should then be addressed. In the event of insufficient staffing levels, consideration could be given to the involvement of relatives.

Protecting the Health and Welfare of Consumers, Animals and the Environment

Submitted by: Science and Technology Committee NCW

NCW, concerned at the proliferation of new substances which may affect life in all its forms, urges HMG and decision-makers to protect humans, animals and the environment by refusing or revoking licences for the production and use of these substances when there is evidence from doctors, scientists and/or consumers showing serious concerns and doubts as to their safety. The health and welfare of current and future life must take priority over commercial and political interests.

Gender Equality in Parliamentary Representation Submitted by: NCW Management Committee

The National Council of Women:

1. concerned that political parties in the United Kingdom have taken few steps to ensure greater representation of women in Parliamentary democracy;
2. noting that the UK is lagging behind many other countries in the representation of women in Parliament;
3. aware, too, that no significant improvement in the representation of women has resulted from the recent Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom;

calls upon Her Majesty's Government and all political parties in the UK to take immediate steps to rectify this position, to ensure greater representation of women in Parliament and all decision-making bodies, and to introduce the concept of gender equality into all Parliamentary Committees.

Badgers and the Protection of Cattle Submitted by: South West and Midland Region NCW

The National Council of Women, aware of the recent economic and personal problems arising from tuberculosis in cattle, welcomes the proposals, set out in a public consultation exercise which ends in December, whereby farmers in areas of

heavy TB infestation would be allowed to apply for licences to cull badgers by cage-trapping and shooting them, or – a much cheaper option – by “free shooting” as animals emerge from their setts in the evening, in an attempt to halt the serious and growing problems of this disease in badgers and its spread from them to a worrying range of other wild and domestic animals, as well as pets.

Providing More Affordable Homes Submitted by: Housing Committee NCW

The National Council of Women urges Her Majesty’s Government to address the shortage of affordable housing by:

1. encouraging the refurbishment of empty homes and the conversion of redundant commercial property into homes
2. the removal of VAT from renovation and conversion work in order to withdraw the effective subsidy given to new build housing by its VAT-free status

Withdrawal of Cheques Submitted by: Sevenoaks Branch NCW

The National Council of Women urges Her Majesty’s Government to ensure that transactions by cheque will be continued.

Affirmation

ECICW Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of ECICW in Parma, Italy in April 2010

Commercial Manipulation of Children

Being concerned with the proliferation of advertising, merchandising and media material presenting sexualized images of children as well as hidden messages such as dress codes, eating habits and sexual behaviour negatively influencing the self image and healthy development of children,

Being concerned too, that parents and societies may not be aware that the values promoted by these messages present risks to the physical, emotional, social and sexual development of their children, and therefore to the future of society,

Being aware that children cannot be protected only through changes in legislation or by banning such advertising:

We urge the European institutions, member governments and consumer organisations on the 20th anniversary of the Convention on Exploitation of Children to take action on this issue by raising awareness of the potential damage to children, and of the risk that advertising material, merchandise and media portrayal of children as sexual objects deprives them of their childhood and adversely influences their physical and social development.

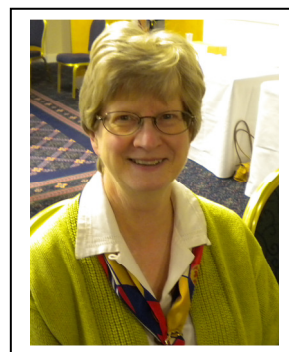
Reaffirmation

Dangerous breeds of Dog - 2008 - submitted by Great Ayton Branch

NCW, concerned that dogs of certain breeds have been responsible for deaths and serious injuries in domestic situations, urges Her Majesty’s Government to undertake a reappraisal of the Dangerous Dogs legislation, especially with regard to the:

1. unsuitability of domestic premises for such breeds, both for the welfare of the dog and for the safety of the public
2. desirability of permitting ownership of such breeds only on the granting of a licence, subject to stringent conditions including official regular monitoring of the dog’s health and behaviour.

Barbara Maddison and Anne Wilson ready to share information with members at the NCYW exhibition stand



Janette Walls, retiring representative of Affiliate the Trefoil Guild, whose contribution to NCW Committees has been much appreciated

TWO PRESENTATIONS on NCW'S INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The International Work of NCW

Grace Wedekind, former President of NCW and now President of ECICW, reminded members of the background to the international work of NCWGB, which had been a founder member of the International Council of Women in 1897, together with Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA, under the leadership of Lady Aberdeen, then wife of the British Governor-General of Canada.

Today National Councils of Women in some 65 countries are affiliated to ICW world-wide, with three Regional networks and a major ICW Conference every 3 years. NCWGB is a part of the European network, ECICW or the European Centre of the International Council of Women. ICW last met in Johannesburg in 2009, and the next Triennial Conference will be held in South Korea in 2012. A mid-term Executive meeting will be held in Barcelona in 2011. ECICW, which was founded in 1961, will celebrate its 50th Anniversary next year. With 23 member countries, both within and outside the EU, ECICW meets twice yearly in member countries, most recently in 2010 in Parma, Italy and in Istanbul. The other established regional networks of ICW cover the Asia/Pacific Region, and South America. Additionally NCW is a member of the European Women's Lobby, which reviews and comments on issues affecting women within the EU.

It should not be forgotten that it is this active international involvement, a vital sector of NCWGB work since the beginning, which sets us aside from most women's organisations in Britain, and gives our responses to Government a valuable international dimension. It is also interesting to note that in the regular discussions with other European National Councils we have been able to work jointly on many issues of joint concern and to raise issues such as domestic violence and child abuse with the Council of Europe, within which ECICW has been granted participatory status.

At present the joint work programme agreed by ECICW member Councils at the last meeting in Istanbul covers the issues of most pressing concern to women here and in our neighbouring NCWs: e.g. the need for more women in Parliaments, the effects of the economic recession on women and families (with rise in domestic violence and child abuse), the gender pay gap, the ICW and ECICW resolutions on sexualisation of children, and commercial manipulation of children, and concern about an increase in discrimination against women.

NCW at the United Nations

Monica Tolman, immediate Past President of NCW and ICW Co-ordinator on Status of Women, referred to the work of NCWGB at the annual sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. NCWGB was granted Special Consultative Status within the United Nations in its own right in 2000, but previously we had attended CSW under the general sponsorship of ICW. Relatively few of the ICW member Councils have achieved consultative status, so this is a mark of recognition of our work. At meetings of CSW, NCWGB has worked with other women's organisations and takes part in briefing meetings on the topics of concern run by the British Mission, and by the EU mission to the UN. In 2011, the subject of concern will be Women's Education, and the participation of women and girls in Science and Technology. NCWGB hopes to run a special event at the United Nations on this subject in co-operation with ICW.

A feature of special interest this year is the proposed formation of a special unit within the UN, to be named UN Women – designed to replace the other departments, such as UNIFEM dealing with women in the UN, in the hope that work will be more co-ordinated and less fragmented.

International work on the UN Millennium Goals to relieve poverty in the Third World also continues, and within ICW there are a number of Action Plans covering the major problems facing women across the world. The ICW Status of Women Committee, of which Monica is Co-ordinator, has drawn up an action Plan towards which member Councils are intended to work and to press for improvements. The present Action Plan covers:

Representation of women at all levels, and in peace-making and peace-keeping

Violence against women. In this context Monica commented that the UN CEDAW Committee had recently said that the level of violence against women in the UK was unacceptable in a developed nation. To encourage a culturally sensitive approach by men, and to engage men's support in work for equality for women.

Empowerment of women through education
Capacity building to develop skills

To change women's own mind-sets in support of other women

The Canvas Prison

*No delegate could fail to be moved by the DVD, made by women themselves, which reflected the horror and the difficulties women in Afghanistan experience through wearing the Burka. They still have to wear the Burka in childbirth because the doctors are men. Widows are often turned out of the family home and may lose their children. They cannot earn money and have to resort to begging so it is not surprising that committing suicide becomes an option. The film ended with a plea to all men and women to work together to abolish the practice of wearing the Burka. And members welcomed the offer of **Lois Hainsworth**, who made the presentation, to circulate the DVD.*

DIRECTORS Report 2008-2009

The Annual Directors Report, distributed to all members, is a summary of NCW's activities of the previous year and includes our developments and concerns. Members also received the Treasurer's Annual Report. Some points noted from the Directors Report are:

Nationally and internationally NCW continues to be very active. The membership continued to work in a variety of ways to research, seek reliable information and discuss the issues which lead to the formation of our policy. Small discussion groups focusing on particular subjects have been introduced which allow members more active involvement and result in valuable data being passed to the hard-working national committees. Submissions made to government include the Speaker's conference enquiry into representation in parliament and shaping the future of care. Responses were received from various sectors of government which was sent copies of the resolutions passed at the 2009 annual conference. These included service personnel and post-traumatic stress disorder, addressing the needs and supporting the crucial role of widows in society. The seminar at the 2009 conference explored the crucial challenge of supplying power in this country.

Members are kept informed on a wide range of national and international issues through the quarterly newsletter NCW NEWS together with Work and Policy Matters which will provide members with more background detail and comment related to policy issues in particular on work being addressed by the national committees. Significant reports have been published on seminars held around the country which are used to support issues taken forward to government. Reports include The Politics of Food and Women's Health Issues. In the present economic climate funding is difficult. We are therefore striving to be more efficient; we increasingly make use of electronic communication and the website has been re-launched with an updated format and its contents are being developed.

Affiliates are involved in all our activities with representatives on our policy committees contributing effectively; many of them have found value in the strength of mutual engagement. NCW has continued to involve young women in seminars and workshops around the country where NCW branch members have been able to take part and help the young participants to progress their analysis and debating skills. The NCW initiative has led to the formation of Links in schools and colleges. These are groups of young women receiving the NCW newsletters and questionnaires to which they have responded with apposite views on major issues, such as children in prison and the sexualisation of children in the media and marketing. A young women's viewpoint page was introduced in the March edition of our quarterly newsletter. The voice of young women now plays a part in formulating NCW policy and resolutions which are taken forward to Government.

NCW was represented by a delegation led by President Sheila Eaton at the International Council of Women Triennial Conference in Johannesburg. Taking as its theme "Equality for Women is Equality for All", the conference included discussions on women's empowerment and equality in decision-making, sexualisation and commercial exploitation of children, domestic violence and rape. An excellent seminar was held on AIDS and its effect on women as carers and victims. Discussions also included action in support of widows in war-torn zones and projects taking place to assist orphans, child victims of AIDS, and street children. The European Centre of the International Council of women met to review issues which include equality in Parliamentary representation and also trafficking, domestic violence, contemporary forms of child abuse, and the effect on women of the global financial crisis.

President Sheila Eaton commented "much has been achieved, however there is still more to do"

AGM - 2010

The Annual General Meeting of the National Council of Women of Great Britain was held at the Ramada Hotel in Gloucester following Conference, with the **President, Sheila Eaton** in the chair and **Margaret Field, Company Secretary, Gillian Weston, National Treasurer** and **Sue Peaty** (Thurston Watts & Co) in attendance.

The President's Report and the statutory Annual Directors' Report, the Report of the Reporting Accountant, and the statement of financial activities for the year ended 30th June 2010 were received.

The election or re-election of Management Committee members, Policy Committee Chairmen and Regional Chairmen was confirmed.

The Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30th June 2010 was adopted. This included the Report of the Directors.

The Resolutions which had been passed by Conference were ratified by Council members.

The following Resolution was approved:

That the Management Committee be authorised to set up Individual Members' Regional Branches, each having one representative to be a member of the Council of NCW as specified in the Article 5(D) of the Articles of Association.

Thanks.....

Conference is the highlight of the year for NCW; a time when our work is brought to fruition and we make resolutions which become policy. The resolutions are sent to Ministers and relevant Heads of Government Departments with letters asking for action to be taken. In addition we have a seminar with first class speakers, experts in their field, providing information on a topic of concern in society. Conference also affords the opportunity to meet members from other parts of the country, see old friends and make new ones. This year we used the Assembly to pay tribute to two members Sylvia Owen and Daphne Glick and for this I would like to thank Patience Purdy and Hilary Sillars.

However Conference could not have taken place without a great deal of hard work by many members. I am extremely grateful to the South West and Midland Region for their support, especially the officers, Lois Hainsworth, Heather Bell and Joan Jenkins. I also appreciate the branches' unstinting efforts and the work of individuals mentioned elsewhere in this publication. My thanks to the Management Committee for all their help, with special thanks to our office administrator Sheila Rosewell, who delivered our publications on time, despite computer problems and manned the busy stand so cheerfully.

Finally a big thank you to Gillian Weston, our Conference Organiser, for pulling everything together, giving me excellent support and staying calm throughout.

Sheila Eaton, President

TELLERS and STEWARDS

The President and members were very grateful to all who helped in an administrative role, organised by Heather Bell, for their dedication to their tasks which ensured the smooth running of debates and all the formal activities.

Stewards

Beryl Archer
Maureen Beauchamp
Maureen Clifforth
Lois Davies
Sheila Ellison
Maggie Emes
Pat Haigh
Barbara Jones
Daphne Johnson
Joyce Lloyd
Janet Moulton
Patricia Pryce

Tellers

Heather Bell
Joan Jenkins

Registration

Ann Bullers
Marion Hooper
Lois Davies

RAFFLE

The President thanks members of Hereford branch for organising a raffle which successfully contributed to funds.

Next Annual Conference

GATEWAY HOTEL, NOTTINGHAM

14th, 15th, 16th October 2011

Thank you to all contributors and proof readers for your help. Gwenda Nicholas, Editor

MEMBERSHIP OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN

If you have found some items of interest in this report, and you are not already a member of NCW, you are invited to find out more about the benefits of membership from our Office Administrator. NCW can keep you better informed and enable you to participate in policy-making either through Branch or Individual Membership. Information about our Organisation is available on our website: www.ncwgb.org

For membership information, write or telephone:

Administrative Office at 72 Victoria Road, Darlington, DL1 5JG, telephone 01325 367375

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