Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Aotearoa Section

Newsletter July 2020

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WILPF Aotearoa enters a new online era:
Our 2020 AGM in May was held online, rising to the COVID 19 lockdown challenge. To practise our Zoom skills, we met online for afternoon tea on Anzac Day, both online occasions were facilitated by Tamsin Kingston and Megan Hutching.

WILPF Aotearoa as two representatives on the International Women's Caucus (IWC): A Te Wai Pounamu/ South Island member and Suzanne Loughlin (Tāmaki Makaurau). They report

The International Women's Caucus is a meeting of NGO representatives convened by the Ministry for Women. It meets every three months and over the past year has covered such topics as: the gender pay gap in New Zealand, systemic financial barriers for women, trafficking in persons and forced labour, abortion law reform, creating a digital tool to monitor government departments implementation of CEDAW recommendations, and NZ's second national action plan (NAP) on women, peace, and security (WPS).

Suzanne and I have attended two meetings during our tenure, the first in November 2019 and the second in April 2020.

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Ministry for Women has decided not to host any meetings of the IWC until at least August, unless there is a significant change regarding the spread of the pandemic.

On April 16, we took part in a virtual meeting organised by civil society organisations through this network, to provide input into the report on New Zealand's first NAP on WPS that is currently being created by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and to also share our priorities for the second NAP on WPS that will be created by MFAT, after this initial report.
It was a very useful meeting and there will be a follow-up meeting in the next couple of weeks.

Being part of IWC and these WPS meetings, is a great opportunity for WILPF Aotearoa. It is a chance to find out other civil society actors' priorities for women in Aotearoa and for us to share our own unique standpoint. It is also a chance to contribute our feedback on the successes and failures of the first NAP for MFAT's upcoming formal report.

President's report for 2019

The Section Executive Committee in 2019 was Megan Hutching (president), Celine Kearney, Suzanne Loughlin and Edwina Hughes (co-ordinators), Tamsin Kingston (treasurer). As well we have Prue Stringer (Otautahi branch), Joy Davies-Payne and Pauline Tangiora (Wellington branch), and Ruth Coombes and Helen Sumich (TM branch). We have recently invited Meghan Stewart-Ward to join the group. We have been having regular meetings via Zoom.

In the afternoon of the 2019 AGM, we held a planning session to develop activities for the

Section that are aligned with the WILPF International Programme. As a result, we have been working on increasing our digital profile by using Facebook more. The website is not very vibrant or active – that is my fault. I have been responsible for keeping it up to date and have not been very good at doing so. Celine Kearney has recorded some brief interviews with long-term WILPF members in Tamaki Makaurau which she will edit so that they can be uploaded to the website. At last year's planning session, we also talked about hosting quarterly Section Zoom meetings. We are now able to do this so I hope many of us can participate in these sessions in future.

Another of the suggestions from the planning session was to try to engage more young women in WILPF. Meghan Stewart-Ward is now in the Section executive group and has been making contacts with Y-WILPF Australia.

The US Section of WILPF has produced a handout on the connections between militarism and climate change which they have kindly said we can adapt and use. We need feedback from you on wording changes so will circulate the leaflet to you soon for suggestions.

The decisions made at the end of our planning session last year were that in two years' time WILPF Aotearoa would have:
- doubled our membership
- started a Young WILPF network
- held quarterly online meetings for members
- expanded the profile of WILPF and climate change.

We are not there yet but we still have a year to go and will be working to make those decisions real.
I have asked Helen Sumich to look at the WILPF Aotearoa constitution as it is nearly 30 years old now.

Communications : Newsletters – Celine has produced three newsletters during the year which have been circulated to members by email. We no longer produce printed newsletters. We have also circulated information and notices of events by email and via Facebook.
I also circulate the monthly international WILPF News by email. Facebook – Edwina Hughes, Del Abcede, Suzanne Loughlin and I manage the Facebook page.
Website – I manage the website.
We are in the process of streamlining how messages are received and sent.

Megan Hutching
President, WILPF Aotearoa Section

2019 Co-ordinators' Report

Letters and submissions
Stuart Nash, Minister of Police, re trial of armed Police patrols
Winston Peters, re West Papua, urging him to raise the issue of West Papuan independence in international forums
Winston Peters, re formal ending of Korean War
Winston Peters, re 'peace plan' for Palestine and Israel

Signed on to: an open letter opposing the RIMPAC military exercises; a letter to the Prime Minister re the situation in Gaza and Covid-19; an open letter supporting civil society's serious concern about the marginalization of the Women, and Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, and Peace and Security (YPS) agendas in the Beijing+ 25 processes.
Made submissions on the Arms Amendment Bill and to the Trade Committee on the APEC 2021 Bill. We contributed to: - a blog for WILPF International on WILPF and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); - Massey University's Security, Politics and Development Network publication on the government's Defence Capability Plan.
We continue our membership of Gun Control NZ. We followed the government inquiry into the New Zealand Armed Forces shooting of civilians. AGM Notes**:** recorded and circulated by Edwina Hughes

Sections Co-ordinators: Edwina Hughes, Celine Kearney, Suzanne Loughlin

Branch Reports

WILPF Otautahi/Christchurch 2019 report for AGM May 2020. Prue Stringer reports,

The Otautahi branch was once a fairly strong group, but with the deaths of many older members and the devastation of the earthquakes and their ongoing problems, it has shrunk to become a small, loosely-connected group of women involved in various peace-related activities keeping in touch and supporting each other.
We are working on growing a WILPF network over the whole of Te Wai Pounamu/South Island. Having national AGMs via Zoom may make it possible for more members to attend, without using up precious resources of money, time and carbon to travel.

We have always made sure that we organise the annual Hiroshima/Nagasaki commemorations, which have been very well attended each year. We also had our annual WILPF stall at the Christchurch Culture Galore Festival in February.

Kate Dewes has been working hard on handing the Disarmament and Security Centre (DSC) over to younger people to carry on its great work. She has also been archiving the DSC's resources. Lucy Stewart has taken on a major role in the DSC, but has been on maternity leave over the last few months. As reported in a previous newsletter, Lucy gave a public talk connecting nuclear disarmament with climate change. Another member is doing a Masters in Peace and Conflict Studies in Dunedin, and was supported by WILPF to attend a peace training programme Creating Cultures of Peace (see report in April Newsletter). She is also representing WILPF with Suzanne Loughlin, at the International Women's Caucus meetings (separate report earlier in this newsletter).

WILPF Tāmaki Makaurau branch report 2019. Megan Hutching, branch co-ordinator, reports

We combined our annual Matariki meeting with our branch AGM on 29 June. The branch co-ordinator is Megan Hutching, and committee members are Del Abcede, Ruth Coombes, Claire Gregory, Tamsin Kingston (treasurer), Nola Smith, Helen Sumich, and Angelina Weir.

We held a discussion series in August and September. We often start interesting discussions at our branch meetings but don't have the time to talk about topics in depth. Each session had a facilitator who gave a brief introduction and then opened up the floor for comments and discussion. The topics were:
What is white privilege?
What do 'peace' and 'security' mean to you?
What is the Women Peace and Security Agenda?

We ran our annual commemoration of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the Ellen Melville Centre on Sunday 11 August. Branch member, Kathy Ross co-ordinated a peace craft stall at the Festival of Roses in Parnell in November. Members helped out on the stalls which were a good opportunity to publicise WILPF and our work.

We held our usual celebration for women voting in New Zealand for the first time at the Devonport Library in late November. Thanks, as usual, to Ruth Coombes who organises the event.

Issues that we have worked on during the year are the compulsory teaching of Te Reo in schools, and Education Ministry firearms in schools guidelines. We have maintained our connection with SOUL (Save Our Unique Landscape) at Ihumaatao, who are struggling to reclaim their land which was confiscated during the New Zealand Wars, and has been sold to Fletchers for a housing development. WILPF TM members have attended events at the kaitiaki village there.

Branch members also organised and participated in Anzac Day vigils and Armistice Day vigils to remind passers by that war is not the solution to international conflict.
Two of our members Beverley Turner and Jane Prichard were appointed to the NZ Order of Merit for their work with women, especially Pacific Women's Watch NZ.

Ruth Coombes and Del Abcede attend the monthly meetings of the Auckland branch of NCWNZ on our behalf. Branch members Nola Smith and Beverley Turner manage the Human Rights Network email message list.

Governments around the world have allocated increased spending for the military. **Peace Movement Aotearoa provides details:**

"Global military expenditure increased for the fifth year in a row to according to figures released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). World military expenditure totalled an estimated $1,917 billion (US) in 2019 - an increase of 3.6% from 2018 and the largest annual growth in spending since 2010.

Last year's global military spending averaged out to more than $5.25 billion (US) every day, while an average of more than 14,520 children under the age of five died every day from mainly preventable causes - lack of access to adequate food, clean water and basic medicines. That is one of the prices paid, the collateral damage that is seldom talked about, for maintaining armed forces in a state of combat readiness around the world.
This year, perhaps more than ever before, as health and social welfare systems around the world collapse as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses, it is painfully obvious that military spending does nothing to address the major global threats, whether a pandemic, obscene levels of poverty and social inequality, or climate change - instead, military spending diverts resources that could be put to far better use. ..." Read the full release on the Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign on Military Spending page:
http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm

Welfare or warfare? Military spending in Budget 2020', Peace Movement Aotearoa, 14 May 2020.

"Military spending in the 2020 'Rebuilding Together' Budget is a total of $4,621,354,000, that is an average of more than $88.8 million every week.

While this is a small decrease when compared with the record amount of military spending allocated in Budget 2019, it does not go far enough. This year's allocation shows that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the government still has the same old thinking about 'security' - a focus on outdated narrow military security concepts rather than real security that meets the needs of all New Zealanders.

If there is any lesson to be learnt from the current pandemic, surely it is that new thinking about how best to meet our real security needs is essential. Instead of relying on an ideology that focuses on outdated narrow military security concepts, New Zealand could - and should - lead the way. Instead of continuing down the path of spending $20 billion plus (in addition to

the annual military budget) over the next decade for increased combat capability, including new military aircraft and warships, this is an opportune time to choose a new and better way forward."

Read the full release on the Aotearoa New Zealand Campaign on Military Spending page, http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/gdams.htm

Online forums on peace, disarmament and human rights: Peace Movement Aotearoa is hosting fortnightly online discussions on a range of peace, humanitarian disarmament and human rights topics, including: the women, peace and security agenda; military spending; human rights and the COVID-19 pandemic, and disarmament and human rights. If you would like to be involved, please contact Peace Movement Aotearoa, email, icanz@xtra.co.nz

Asia Pacific Regional Report

Celine Kearney, Megan Hutching and Suzanne Loughlin took part in an Asia Pacific regional zoom meeting, where WILPF representatives from Tahiti Polynesia, Japan and Australia shared their experiences of the current situation with COVID-19.

WILPF International

WILPF Congress: No decision has yet been made about the next WILPF Congress, scheduled for June 2021 in Brisbane. It seems unlikely that it will happen physically then, but the international constitution allows up to 48 months between Congresses, so it may be postponed a year – to June 2022.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki: To mark the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, WILPF International has set up a web page, '4 Days of Action Against Nuclear Spending': https://www.wilpf.org/hiroshima-nagasaki-2020/

WILPF has also set up a Trello page with useful articles about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic: https://trello.com/b/bmAYRVvs/covid-19-what-wilpf-is-following

A call for action about the proposed Israeli annexation of the West Bank: https://www.wilpf.org/call-for-action-against-the-israeli-annexation-plan-of-the-west-bank/

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Young WILPF – YWILPF
https://www.wilpf.org/our-members/#young

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Section Treasurer: Tamsin Kingston
Section Co-ordinators:
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