

WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE & FREEDOM

WILPF 100th anniversary

Tamaki Makaurau Branch

We will be having an afternoon tea at the Friends Meeting House, 115 Mount Eden Road, Auckland to commemorate WILPF's 100th anniversary.

Please join us at 3 pm.

WILPF members will speak about WILPF's proud history in New Zealand and we will be lighting candles on our 100th birthday cake.

Here are some items transcribed from newspapers, from the very early days of WILPF in New Zealand:

WELLINGTON BRANCH

The Women's International League states its objects:
To Ensure that in future National differences shall be settled by some means other than war.
To demand that women shall have a direct voice in the affairs of the nation.
Our Hope.—Universal peace WITH Justice
Our Aim.—To elevate and cement sisterhood.
Our Effort.—To serve and uplift humanity.

Maoriland Worker, 2 August 1916, p. 3

EXTEND HEARTY CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

to all Sympathisers and Friends.
We, as a Women's Organisation, are out for the cause of Humanity, not on Empire lines, but on a broad International basis.
We also extend our deepest sympathy to all women who have lost their loved ones through this awful curse of Militarism and War.

Aotearoa Section newsletter

April 2015



WILPF Aotearoa Section Notice of Annual General Meeting

*The Section AGM will be held in Auckland at
AUT University, Mayoral Drive on*

Saturday 30 May

9:30 am – 4 pm

As well as the usual AGM activities - election of officers, presentation of financial accounts, etc., - there will be a report back from the women who attended WILPF's 100th anniversary Congress and conference at The Hague in April.

Apologies to: joanmac@pl.net

REMINDER: 2015 subs are now due. Contact your branch for details: Helen Sumich (Tamaki Makaurau) helen.sumich@advocacy.co.nz or Joy Davies-Payne (Wellington): joydp@clear.net.nz or Prue Stringer (Otautahi): pruestringer@hotmail.com

Our League stands for the glorious Freedom for Women throughout the world to rear their children in peace and to teach them to love, not hate, always remembering that "The world is our country; to do good our religion."

Again wishing you all a Merry Christmas and hoping for a better New year.

Yours fraternally,

Mrs M. Matherson, President

Mrs A. Gadd, Secretary

Christchurch branch of Women's International League in *Maoriland Worker*, 12 December 1917, p. 11

The wives of some of the conscientious objectors now undergoing terms of imprisonment in New Zealand jails for refusing military service are in very needy circumstances; and the Women's International League has decided to open a fund to financially assist them. The League has already given assistance to one urgent case, and is in need of funds to continue the help. One man, sentenced to two years' hard labor, leaves a delicate wife with a young baby to support. The women's International League feels sure that there are many whose sympathies are with these men who are putting up a fight for liberty of conscience, and who will be ready to make their sympathy practical. All moneys collected will be devoted strictly to the purpose for which the fund is organised. All friends willing to assist are requested to forward donations to

MRS BECK, Sec, W.I.L., 227 Willis Street, Wellington
MISS MARY McCARTHY, Dunedin.

MRS. GADD, c/o Trades Hall, Christchurch.

MRS. MOORE, c/o Trades Hall, Auckland.

Maoriland Worker, 16 January 1918, p. 7

Here is a short biography of one of our foremothers:



Emily Gibson

Emily Ray was born in Dublin in the early 1860s and emigrated to New Zealand with her widowed sister, Clementine Kirkby and her two nieces in 1891. Emily had trained as a compositor and proof-reader in Ireland and had worked as a compositor for a newspaper in London's Fleet Street for 12 years. She lived in Auckland, where she married William Gibson in 1894, and worked as a compositor for the *Auckland Star* newspaper until the first of her three children was born.

Emily was involved in the women's suffrage movement in London, and she 'naturally' became involved in the campaign here in New Zealand after she arrived, joining

the Auckland Women's Franchise League. In November 1893 she went with a group of women to vote for the first time at the Army Hall in central Auckland, walking between two rows of jeering men. 'We were brave because we were together but not one of us was not trembling and trying to hold back tears.'

Emily considered herself to be politically a Liberal, and not long after the 1893 election she and some other women formed the Auckland Women's Liberal League, 'supporting the Government in every way possible'. The group met in the evening to encourage working women to attend and campaigned vigorously to get a compulsory half-day holiday for shop assistants and domestic workers. The poor working conditions of domestic servants was a subject close to Emily's heart and she delivered a paper on the subject to the annual conference of the National Council of Women of New Zealand held in Auckland in 1899.

She became a member of the New Zealand Labour Party when it was formed in 1916, believing this to be the best means to achieve her social and humanitarian goals. She was also a founding member of what was to become the New Zealand Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), established in Auckland in 1916. In 1925 it became the Auckland women's branch of the Labour Party and it was through the efforts of Emily Gibson, who was corresponding secretary until 1930, that it kept in contact with WILPF's international body in Geneva.

When *Woman To-day*, a monthly magazine for women, began publication in 1937, Emily was a member of its advisory board, a position she kept until the magazine folded in October 1939. She contributed articles to *Woman To-day* as well as to the labour newspaper *Maoriland Worker*, mostly on issues concerning women, and also published poems. Her involvement with the New Zealand Section of the WILPF continued, despite its dwindling numbers, until it finally stopped functioning in 1946.

Emily came to call herself a socialist, but despite her lengthy involvement with WILPF she was not a pacifist, believing that there was such a thing as a just war. She also believed strongly in the League of Nations and is perhaps best considered an internationalist.

Emily Gibson died in Auckland on 24 April 1947. A tiny, gentle, yet fiery and determined woman, her life was spent working for the causes of peace and social justice.

Megan Hutching

WILPF Aotearoa

President: Celine Kearney

Vice president: Pauline Tangiora

Treasurer: Megan Hutching

Section Co-ordinators: Edwina Hughes; Joan Macdonald

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See us on Facebook

WILPF International, Geneva

www.wilpfinternational.org

Tracey Barnett

Last year, journalist Tracy Barnett spoke to WILPF Tamaki Makaurau about the government's change of policy towards refugees and asylum seekers. The Key government is negotiating with the Australian government to hold potential refugees offshore in detention camps in Nauru and Papua New Guinea. These are essentially prisons and have been sites of extreme violence. In the past people have been able to remain in the community in New Zealand while their case is heard.

In an effort to challenge the propaganda coming from the Australian and the current National Government Tracey highlighted three key points:

- Asylum is a legal right: Asylum seekers are not 'illegals.'
- There is no such thing as a queue: Cases are dealt with individually.
- Detention doesn't equal deterrence: People will choose life in the face of extremes.

She encouraged us to buy her book: *The Quiet War on Asylum* and share it with others.

Also to support the Auckland Refugee Council, and to write letters to the editor to refute the misinformation coming from across the Tasman.

More information on www.traceybarnett.co.nz

Tracey can be contacted at:

tracey.barnett@xtra.co.nz

Céline Kearney

Kiwis Should be Waging Peace Instead

WILPF member, Tracey Barnett writes:

Recently, a clinging, terrified eight-year-old refugee boy, locked away in Australia's offshore detention prison, collapsed in his mother's arms. Inconsolable, she asked him to draw what was troubling him so. He drew a Nauru guard with an erect penis.

This year alone, reports cite 19 cases of sexual



Photo: Tracey Barnett

assault, 44 on Australian mainland detention centres. A recent independent United Nations report confirms Australia now violates the United Nations Conventions on Torture.

News reports of terrible conditions and abuse are ominous. Even children are locked away indeterminately with their parents, with disastrous mental health results. Imprisoned children mimic their despondent parent's suicidal behaviour, self-harming in appalling numbers.

Four hundred people queue for hours for four toilets. There are reports of women having to strip in front of male guards to extend their one-minute showers in 40-degree heat. Sanitary napkins are rationed, considered a 'fire hazard'. Cleaning agents have been removed. People have been trying to drink them in utter despondency.

Yet New Zealand has remained decidedly mute to its closest trading partner.

Even back on our shores, our commitment to refugees, roughly half of whom are women, 43 percent children, is sadly lacking relative to the rest of the world.

New Zealand ranks 87th in the world for the total number of refugees and asylum seekers we host. If you count our relative wealth, we rank worse – at 113th. Indeed, our tiny annual refugee quota of 750 from the UNHCR has been stalled for 28 years now, even though our population has grown by 1.3 million. It seems that as we've grown, our humanitarian imperative toward refugees has shrunk.

Tracey Barnett began #WagePeaceNZ as an initiative to raise awareness to the deafening silence on these issues. Kindly consider 'liking' the Facebook page #WagePeaceNZ. She is more than happy to speak to groups if you want to learn more. FB: <https://www.facebook.com/wagepeacenz>

Tracey Barnett www.wagepeacenz.org

Obituaries

Helen Yensen

My 84 year old friend Helen died in Napier on 22 January 2015

We first met 32 years ago in the anti-nuclear movement which was instrumental in changing the government in 1984. She had been a very active member of H.A.R.T. (Halt All Racist Tours). She marched against the Springbok Tour in 1981, and was arrested – fortunately not beaten. Women in their fifties were treated with a bit more respect in those days.

She had already been deeply involved in the East Timor Independence movement for years. She hosted Jose Ramos Horta in her home many times and, in 1999, helped arrange a crucial meeting for Jose with the Foreign Affairs Dept while Bill Clinton was here for the APEC meeting. Clinton and the New Zealand government subsequently voiced their support for the people of East Timor, which helped them finally achieve independence from the military government of Indonesia.

Helen moved to Napier in 2011, after hearing me rave about Hawke's Bay. She quickly became active in the local community, including Don't Frack The Bay (petitions, information leaflets, her 'FrackOff' tee shirts, submission writing), Grey Power (her successful membership drive), a local Maori bi-lingual school (continuing her work with Books In Schools), and she was a committed supporter of Guardians Of The Aquifer.

She continued her support of Child Poverty Action, Poverty Action Committee, Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, Women's Refuge, and Pakeha Treaty Action. In 2013 she helped organise Maryan Street's speaking tour in Hawke's Bay promoting her 'End of Life Choices' private member's Bill (now in the hands of Iain Lees-Galloway).

I am overjoyed that Helen's wish to die has come to pass and she didn't have to face the knife for the inevitable gangrene which would have set in sooner or later, along with her worst fear – unbearable and uncontrollable pain. The whole process only took her nine days, seven of which she spent in her own home, dressed and sitting up talking to selected visitors. She loved good conversation. She only

wore her pyjamas for the last two days!
She has been a lifelong advocate against injustice and cruelty. She deserved to have end-of-life choices and to die a peaceful death.

Pauline Doyle

WILPF Tamaki Makaurau had a gathering to remember Helen's life on Saturday 14 February.

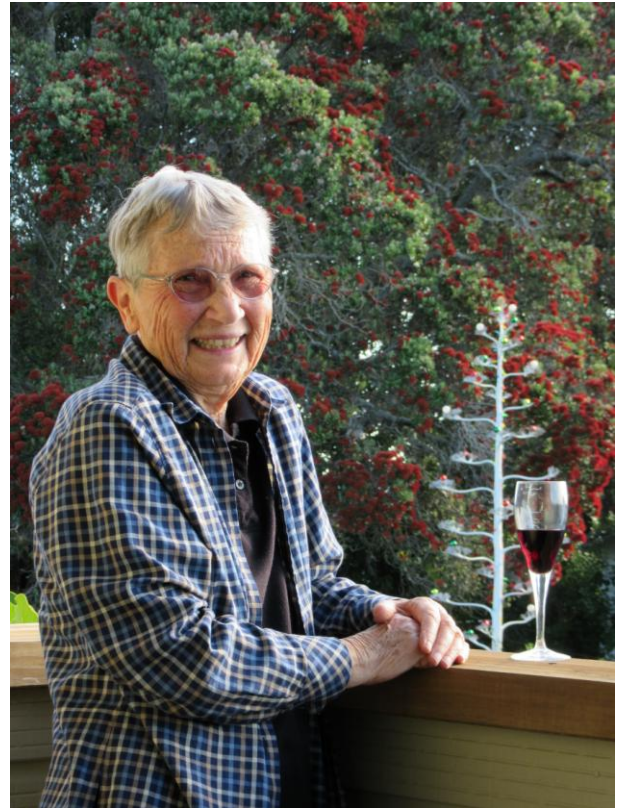
Maggie Glover

Margaret (Maggie) Glover died at Wanaka on 10 February. Maggie was a member of WILPF Otago.

She was diagnosed on Christmas Eve with a terminal illness and remained in her own home until close to the end.

Maggie was in good spirits and happy in the knowledge that she had pretty much everything ready and organised for when she went. She was very much at peace with herself and was ready to leave this world.

As per her wishes, she had a simple cremation. Her ashes are destined for the garden of the Wandsworth Quaker Meeting House in the United Kingdom.



Helen celebrating her life 'before she completed her final campaign'. Photo: Pauline Doyle



WILPF Tamaki Makaurau members, Joan Macdonald (left) and Ruth Coombes at a vigil in Auckland's Aotea Square to protest the government's decision to send New Zealand troops to Iraq, 5 March 2015

Photo: Del Abcede

WILPF Tamaki Makaurau Branch Report 2013-14

On 24 May 2013 – International Women's Day for Disarmament we held an event at AUT University where we showed the film *I came to Testify* about the conflict in the Balkans and about some of the women who testified at the International Criminal Court about the rapes committed at the time. We received a grant from International WILPF to hold this event on IWDD. Our AGM was held on 25 May at the home of Helen Sumich and this was followed by a shared lunch.

We held our usual Matariki Winter Solstice lunch in mid June with speaker Dr Pat Neuwelt Senior Lecturer in Public Health, the School of Population Health, University of Auckland, who spoke on the topic *Is Health a Public Good*.

On 11 August we held our Hiroshima Day commemoration at the Wintergarden in Auckland Domain, with crane making, candle floating and speakers, including this year the Japanese consul.

As supporters of the Living Wage Campaign we were involved in organizing a candidate's meeting before the local body elections in October. The meeting was held in September and 14 women's groups' representatives attended and were able to speak briefly to a packed hall, about their organisation and why they support the Living Wage.

On 30 November we held a branch meeting at the Friends Meeting House where we showed the documentary "Helen" and the producer /director Claudia Pond Eyley attended and spoke about the making of the film.

We have continued our representation at the local National Council of Women, the Auckland Human Rights Network, Tamaki Treaty Workers and a new group the Asia Pacific Human Rights Coalition and our continue our support for the Philippines.

Several of us attended the International Council of 13 Indigenous Grandmothers hui in Gisborne in December which was held to honour Pauline Tangiora, one of the grandmothers.

We have done several catering jobs which have been a great help to our funds.

During the latter part of the year we have been holding meetings to organise for the WILPF Asia Pacific Regional Meeting to be held in Auckland in April 2014

Several of our members passed away during the year.

Jean Stewart who had been very active in the Movement for Alternatives to Prison and the Puriri Foundation and Freda Kirkwood (104 years) who was a regular attender for many years and an earlier representative at NCW.

Joan Macdonald

ANZAC DAY VIGIL 2015

On Saturday 25 April, Anzac Day, a candlelit vigil is being held outside the Friends Meeting House, 113 Mt Eden Road from 6-6.30pm in memory of all those affected by the tragedy of the First World War.

This Vigil is being organised by Mt Eden Quakers and WILPF, and is open to all.

Enquiries Tel: 09 630 6834 or 09 360 8001

WILPF International

How far can we go in justifying the use of violence with "collective security"? And what happens when military intervention becomes the default "solution" to every conflict, subordinated to compliance with international law?

WILPF Secretary General, Madeleine Rees writes on the military intervention in Yemen and concludes that the international system is in crisis:

www.opendemocracy.net/5050/madeleine-rees/military-intervention-in-yemen-international-system-in-crisis

WILPF recently decided to leave the UN Conference on Disarmament due to its inactivity. WILPF's statement here:

www.reachingcriticalwill.org/news/latest-news/9559-wilpf-statement-to-the-conference-on-disarmament-on-international-women-s-day-2015

and an interesting article on the issue by WILPF US Section member, Robin Lloyd on p. 6 of *Peace & Justice News* here:

www.pjcv.org/dbpic/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/AprilMayJune2015.pdf

If you cannot go to the WILPF 100th anniversary conference, Women's Power to Stop War at The Hague, sessions will be streamed live. More information here:

www.womenstopwar.org

And don't forget to take the anniversary pledge:

<http://www.womenstopwar.org/take-the-pledge/>



WILPF Tamaki
Makaurau member,
Ruth Coombes at a vigil
in Auckland's Aotea
Square to protest the
government's decision
to send New Zealand
troops to Iraq, 5 March
2015



Women protesting
against the
government's decision,
5 March 2015

Photos: Del Abcede