

SISTERS

ON THE MOVE

Spring 2011



Journal of the
ASLEF Women's
Representative
Committee



ASLEF marks 100 years of International Women's Day



2011 sees the centenary year of International Women's Day and to celebrate the Women's Representative Committee decided to participate in a larger event.

On the 8th March a contingent from ASLEF joined hundreds of women in London to march across the Millennium Bridge and attend a rally on the Southbank. Women taking part paused on the Millennium Bridge to release doves to remember the plight of women in Afghanistan.

The occasion was not limited to London with women from all over the world also crossing bridges to highlight the day.

The day was organised by the charity Women for Women International who provide support to women survivors of war, civil strife and other conflicts. The women taking part were from a range of charities and trade unions along with individuals who just wanted to celebrate womanhood.

The proceedings were spearheaded by singer Annie Lennox who spoke passionately at the rally about the troubles faced by women across the world. She called on everyone to come together as one unified voice saying 'We are strong if we're united'.

Other speakers included Helen Pankhurst, the great granddaughter of the suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst and Shinkai Karokhali a women's rights activist in Afghanistan.

Whilst the sun was shining and the day was about celebrating women it also served as a timely reminder that there is still much to be achieved around the world for women to be classed as truly equal.

Sisters on the move



ASLEF's Women's Representative Committee have adopted the Street Talk charity which takes mental health care on to the streets to homeless women who do not have access to health care

WOMEN'S REPRESENTATIVE COMMITTEE AGM

ASLEF WRC backs Samaritans and Street Talk charities

The Women's Representative Committee held its AGM on 4 November. At the meeting Debbie Reay and Wendy Hurst were re-elected as the Chair and Secretary respectively.

At the meeting the WRC agreed to adopt The Samaritans and Street Talk as their chosen charities for the year.

The Samaritans provide a confidential, non-judgmental emotional support 24 hours a day. The committee felt that this charity was particularly worthy due to the increased numbers of suicides being

seen on the railways.

Street Talk is a charity which takes mental health care on to the streets to homeless women who do not have access to health care. Many of the women that they work with are involved in prostitution, have been trafficked or have drug and alcohol problems.

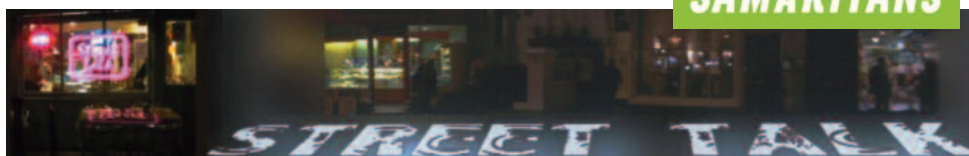
During the year the committee will highlight the work of each charity, including inviting speakers to their open meeting.

The WRC also sent targets which it hopes achieve

through the year. During 2012 the committee will be writing a best practice document on the menopause and updating the maternity policy. The major project for the year is a survey of all female members; the aim of this being to try and find out why women are train drivers and their experiences within the industry and ASLEF.

Your survey will be in the post soon and the WRC ask that you respond promptly to this so they can get a real sense of how members feel.

SAMARITANS



WOMEN A

THE WRC recently produced a representative's guide called **Women at Work** which addresses issues that women might face in the workplace.

The full guide can be found on the ASLEF web site under Women's Equality. <http://www.aslef.org.uk/files/119943/FileName/ASLEFWRCrepsguide2010.pdf>

One of the topics discussed is workers'



REPORT FROM STUC WOMEN



THE annual STUC Women's Committee Conference was held in Perth on 1st and 2nd November 2010. Around 150 women delegates attended the conference from the trade unions and trade union councils that are affiliated to STUC.

Elaine Dougall, STUC Women's Committee Chairperson, opened the 83rd Women's STUC conference and the floor was then given to the Provost of Perth and Kinross who addressed

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AT WORK: FERTILITY TREATMENT

rights in relation to fertility treatments. With fertility issues affecting one in seven couples this is likely impact on many train drivers, both male and female.

Currently there is no legal right to time off for the purposes of fertility treatment and given that receiving fertility treatments can be a lengthy and stressful process it is very likely that the employee(s) will need support in the workplace.

Employers are reluctant to implement a policy which could lead to an indefinite amount of absence only then to be followed by a potential 52 weeks of maternity leave depending on whether their employee is male or female.

If you are in this situation and need support and advise in the first instance you should contact your local rep who can help when dealing with management and HR locally. You can also contact the WRC member for your district.



Although maternity leave is statutory, some employers are reluctant to provide adequate time off for fertility treatment.

'S CONFERENCE



ASLEF women call for more support for public health campaign

General Secretary of the STUC, presented the "There is a Better Way" campaign to the conference; a campaign challenging the budget cuts and the reasoning behind them. Mr Smith called for conference to fully support this.

ASLEF submitted one motion relating to the increase in HIV rates in women over 50 and calling for the need for a new public health campaign. This was fully supported by conference. We also seconded motions on childcare for transport workers and outsourcing.

Alison Miller, Women's Representative Committee Member, District 2

conference and welcomed all the delegates to his constituency. The conference this year was very much focused on the newly-elected government, the budget cuts and how this would affect the women of Scotland. Throughout the two days, speaker after speaker gave impassioned speeches on the likely negative affects the new budget could have on the lives of women. Grahame Smith,


WANTED

WOMEN MEMBERS
interested in being sponsored to attend conferences as visitors

GET MORE INVOLVED **learn more about the union and see how conferences work**

UPCOMING CONFERENCES INCLUDE the unions annual conference, scottish trade union congress, labour party and the TUC congress

CONTACT **Wendy Hurst, Secretary of ASLEF's women's committee**
Tel: 07788 153 932 or email wendy.hurst3@ntlworld.com

Women in Health & Safety

WHEN you think of Health & Safety what springs to mind? According to the delegates at a recent TUC Seminar on Gender and Occupational Health & Safety (GOSH) health & safety (H&S) has a poor image. Geeky, boring, dull and technical were among some of the words used to describe the image of H&S.

The unions on the whole have a reasonably balanced representation of membership. UCU for example, has a typical gender mix of H&S Reps. In ASLEF however, we have only 5 female H&S reps nationally, that's just 2% of reps.

So what stops female drivers putting themselves forward for H&S positions? There is a perception that all union positions tend to be 'jobs for the boys' (not just in ASLEF!) and a belief that women will not be taken seriously and will just be seen as 'whinging'. It is also true that many women have other roles in life which take priority and they do not believe they could find the time for union work.

But women can play an invaluable role in the field of H&S. There may be technical aspects to the role but there is training and support. However let's not forget the

Health side of the job. Protecting the health of your colleagues is equally important and often overlooked amongst the safety walks and problems that Driver's raise. And legislation allows for H&S reps to have reasonable release from work to attend to their duties.

H&S is an interesting and invaluable role that is essential to help protect us in the work place. We should not be afraid to make our voices heard and put ourselves forward.

Collette Gibson, Womens Representative Committee Member, District 7

ASLEF Annual Assembly of Delegates 2011

THIS year Alison Miller from District 2 is the WRC delegate to ASLEF's Annual Assembly of Delegates being held on 24 - 27th May in Swansea.

The WRC submitted the full quota of three motions to the conference this year; the first is calling for free sanitary wear to be available in all staff toilet facilities.

The second motion submitted calls for any driver who is displaced from the driving grade due to a fatality to retain their full salary if redeployed into another grade.

The final motion is suggesting that one of the extra district council meetings be utilised to educate students in the role of trade unions today and as an introduction to the rail industry.

BRANCH VISITS

The members of the Women's Representative Committee are happy to attend branch meetings, work commitments permitting. Please speak to your branch about inviting your district representative to a meeting.

CALENDAR

May 23-27th AAD

June 20/21st

District Council Meeting

June 27th

WRC Open Meeting

September 5/6th District Council Meeting

Labour Party Conference

November 9th WRC AGM

December 5/6th District Council Meeting



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