

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom



Aotearoa Section newsletter February 2010

Aotearoa Section AGM

The 2010 AGM will be held in Wellington at the Friends Meeting House, Moncrieff Street from Friday evening 26 March to Saturday 27 March. There will be an executive committee meeting on Sunday 27 March.

We will start with a shared meal on Friday evening at 6 p.m. followed by a discussion on Depleted Uranium beginning at 7:30. This will be open to the public, so please encourage people to attend. Among the speakers will be MPs Keith Locke and Phil Twyford.

The meeting proper will start at 9:00 a.m on Saturday 27th and will follow the usual format of a business meeting. At 3 o'clock landmine and cluster munitions campaigner Mary Wareham will lead a discussion for WILPF members on the possibilities and challenges of establishing an Aotearoa New Zealand version of the ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons).

We look forward to seeing you in Wellington.
Megan Hutching, Section President

We Refuse to be Enemies

Lois Griffiths is an active WILPF member in Otautahi. She shared her experience of a tour to Israel and the occupied West Bank she and her husband went on, at the end of year WILPF brunch fundraiser in December. Below she shares one particular story:

"You know, the demolition of a house means the demolition of a family. Everything changes after that. Demolition is the violent violation of the very essence of a family and of every person in it."

These are Salim Shawamreh's words as he tries to express the effect of the demolition of his house, with only a 15 minute warning to get out, had on him,

his wife and kids and on the tens of thousands of other East Jerusalem Palestinian families who have been victims of the State rush to 'Judaize' all of Jerusalem.

"My wife, Arabiya, has not returned to herself. She has lost the joy of living, and sometimes I can see she is leaving me; she drifts off and becomes very silent. My kids are scared all the time."

Martin and I were fortunate to be part of an Education Tour last November, that met Salim and Arabiya in what used to be their house but is now used as a meeting place for peace groups and is called The House of Peace, and also, Beit Arabiya, Arabiya's House. Salim's story is important as, by chance, it was witnessed and photographed by ICAHD

(Israeli Committee Against House Demotions www.icahd.org) and other activist groups, both Israeli and Palestinian. The activists happened to be having a demo against house demolitions nearby. Salim managed to phone ICAHD before he was knocked to the ground.



L-R: Linda the tour leader, Arabiya and Salim

ICAHD decided to organize a rebuilding of Salim's house. Israeli, Palestinian and international volunteers worked together. For many of the Israeli volunteers, this was the first time they witnessed firsthand what was being done in their name. For the Palestinian children, this was their first contact with Jews who weren't pointing guns at them.

The house was rebuilt, re-demolished, four times! The Shawamreh family know they will never be allowed by the Civil Administration (euphemism for the Israeli military) to live on their land. ICAHD has helped them find a small apartment. After the recent rebuilding, it was decided to dedicate the building as a meeting place for 'peace people', the House of Peace.

And so it was here, in the House of Peace that Martin and I and our Education Tour Group were served a fantastic evening meal by Salim and Arabiya as we listened to the story of how Salim, at considerable expense, had tried to get justice through the court system. A notice on the wall says, "Kafka is alive and well. His address is: the Civil Administration". Unfortunately the House of Peace is still under threat of demolition. The nearby settlers who want to expand are not going to give up. There will be no justice for Palestinians without outside help from around the world, including New Zealand. The issue isn't Judaism; it is the Zionist agenda. The Israeli peace activists' slogan is, "We refuse to be enemies." They need and deserve our help.



A dance troupe from a nearby refugee camp performs at the dedication of Beit Arabiya, The House of Peace, in August 2003.

A WILPF inspiration

Ruth Coombes, Tamaki Makaurau

Long time peace activist, WILPF member Kara (Kit) Nelson did something really spectacular to celebrate her 90th birthday. Not content with a party and cake, she fulfilled a thirty year desire to leap out of a plane. Strapped to Arron of Blueskydiving she leapt out of a plane at 12,000 feet.

She experienced free fall, and loved it. 'It was beautiful, I want to be a bird. I

thought I'd better get on and do it now as I might not make it to 100." Congratulations Kara, a truly amazing woman. Kara Nelson a real inspiration to all of us 'mature women'.



The photo is from the article published in the *Waiheke Marketplace*, the local paper.

Lest We Forget

As a member of the Devonport Peace Group I participated in the Passchendaele exhibition held recently at Fort Takapuna. This was a touring exhibition organised by the people of Flanders in Belgium, who have never forgotten the 18,000 casualties, including around 5,000 deaths suffered by the New Zealand division, in defence of their land. We think that at these commemorations of the horrific waste of human life it is important to have a presence, however small, to offer an opportunity to reflect on alternatives to conflict.



We were able to place the peace dove and white poppy on some of the crosses that were placed on the cliff top. The sight of the rows of white

crosses, each representing one of the 5,000 individuals killed at Flanders was a graphic illustration of the human cost of war and very emotionally affecting.

We also had a folder with WILPF leaflets and information about the Maori conscientious objectors from the Waikato who were incarcerated there after refusing to enlist. A part of the history of the camp that few are aware of. (Google ref.: Maori objection - conscientious objection in the first world war). Many descendants of those who died also placed photos, mementoes and flowers on the crosses. I have had good feedback from some of those who saw the folder and the doves, so perhaps Anzac Day would be another opportunity for us to promote peaceful conflict resolution.

The great photo (sadly not mine) was taken on the cliff top in question at the close of the Passchendaele exhibition. The children are from Vauxhall school organised by Yvonne Duncan from the Peace Foundation.



Remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Celine Kearney, Otautahi

The Otautahi WILPF group has been marking this memorial for over 30 years. In 2009 we were joined by several classes of children from a local intermediate school.

We made a few changes to the usual format which deepened the experience and the impact for many people. For the first time we gathered in the late afternoon of Sunday, August 9th, at the Peace Bell in the Botanical Gardens. Kate Dewes spoke about Ban Ki Moon's

plans for disarmament and Chrissie Williams a Christchurch City Councillor about what the council could do if people made their voices heard and kept the pressure on councillors. We were invited



Floating lanterns on the Avon. Preparing the lanterns each year is done with the support of the Quaker community, with a leadership role taken by WILPF member Mia Tay. Picture: Irinka Britnell

as individuals to ring the bell, and as each person, including some representatives of the Japanese community rang the bell, it was a powerful reminder in sound of those people who died. The time chosen to gather at the bell co-incided with ceremonies being held in Japan and around the world. Carrying our banners we walked back to the WEA rooms where about 100 people gathered, shared a warm drink, listened to music and singers and speakers. A local Japanese choir sang and helped with making paper cranes. Among the speakers was a young WILPF supporter who has recently completed her Masters in a peace related area, Natasha Barnes.



WILPF member, Anne Marie Thompson leads a song at the WEA. Picture: Irinka Britnell

Peace March in Christchurch

This event on 3 October 3 2009 connected the South Island to the celebrations for the launching of the World March in New Zealand. It was



(L-R) Prue Stringer, Kate Dewes, Rob Green, Anne Marie, another WILPF supporter, Maggie Glover and Celine Kearney. Picture: Irinka Britnell

organized by Dr Kate Dewes and Robert Green of the Peace Foundation Disarmament and Security Centre and a local group keen to support the March. They involved many associations and local personalities like Brendan Burns (Labour MP, Central Christchurch), Lianne Dalziel (Former Minister of Justice and Immigration), Ruth Dyson (former ACC Minister), Kennedy Graham (Green MP and sponsor of the Non Aggression Bill), Garry Moore (former Mayor of Christchurch and former Vice President of Mayors for Peace) and Chrissie Williams (City Councillor). Montserrat Prieto, participated representing the Core Team of the World March. The torch carried from Hiroshima by Bob Harvey accompanied the march which lasted 3 hours. It started at a sacred Maori pa site where Maori elders and church leaders said prayers for the international and local marchers. It then followed some of the Christchurch Peace City walk past a Fire Fighters' Memorial made from steel taken from the ashes of the World Trade Centre, past the Elsie Locke Park, to the ancient site of the Waitaha pa of Puari. Here a Waitaha grandmother spoke of her peoples' peace tradition of hundreds of years. She also spoke about the peace heritage of Parihaka as she is also from there.

Kate Dewes conveyed greetings from the Moriori as requested by the elders there.



Makere Ruka Te Korako speaking as a representative of Waitaha and Parikaka, with two of her grandchildren.

The March passed the place where the Lantern Ceremony has been held every year since 1975 to mark Hiroshima and Nagasaki Days on 6 and 9 August during Peace Week. The 100 or so walkers then viewed an exhibition of Gandhi photos at the WEA and listened to peace songs and speeches outside the Art Gallery. The March ended in the Botanical Gardens where all the participants gathered in a circle holding hands while the 'World Peace Bell' was rung and peace songs performed by well known Maori singer Ariana Tikao. Speeches were given by City Councillor Chrissie Williams and the former Mayor Garry Moore who spoke about the Peace City and Mayors for Peace, and Kate Dewes who spoke about the UN Secretary General's 'We Must Disarm' campaign.

Written by Kate Dewes for the Peace Foundation Newsletter



Kate Dewes with the We Must Disarm banner made by Otautahi WILPF member, Jeanie Murtagh, which she took to the launch in Wellington of the World Peace March

WILPF Aotearoa

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Subs

2010 subs are now due.

You could check the status of your subs with your branch treasurer:

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