

Australian Federation of University Women

A Voice for Graduate Women



Newsletter

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President's Report on 29th IFUW Conference

Official proceedings of the 29th IFUW Conference in Manchester began on the evening of 10 August with the Opening Ceremony, at which guest speaker Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, spoke eloquently of the importance for the world's future of the principles that IFUW stands for. The following day, delegates were confronted by the full range of Conference activities: receiving Reports, debating Resolutions, electing Board and Committee members, listening to Seminar papers, participating in Workshops, and attending Plenary Sessions, which included both IFUW business (open forums on resolutions, constitutional amendments, dues and the next Program for Action) and further guest speakers, the most impressive of which was Elizabeth Rehn, well-qualified to speak about '*Women as Peace Builders*' by her extraordinary career as past Finnish Minister for Defence, and present UN Under-Secretary General and Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. Not that it was all hard work and no play: we celebrated the 100th Birthday of the British Federation, enjoyed a Mayoral Reception in the Victorian-Gothic splendour of Manchester's City Hall and the conviviality of the Gala Dinner that closed the Conference on the evening of 16 August.

Major Internal Issues: Dues and Membership:

Conference had been preceded by an all-day Council Meeting on 10 August, and the two major items brought forward to Conference were membership and dues. Work has been going on for some time to devise a simpler and more predictable system for setting the IFUW dues. The end result was presented for endorsement by Council so that it could go to Conference as a recommended constitutional amendment. The proposed system, based on the combined factors of an NFA's GNI and its membership numbers, had already been considered by AFUW Council and given provisional approval. While its operation may ultimately prove simpler, understanding its implications presented considerable difficulty for Conference delegates and Council members. For the moment, AFUW members may be most interested in knowing that there will be no immediate change in IFUW dues, as the new system will not operate until 2010, and also that AFUW's dues remain the same if calculated under the current parameters of the new system. One way we could reduce dues would be to increase membership, so let that be a further incentive to that end! But it was exactly this element that caused considerable anxiety about equity, since it seemed to work against the interests of NFAs with a small population pool—a matter of concern to PGWNet members such as Tonga. The need for working out some system of alleviation for such groups was recognized by the Board, but it is going to conflict with the push for simplicity.

Membership: Although declining membership numbers remain a problem across the board, new NFAs continue to emerge. The Board reported that Georgia, Kazakhstan and Kenya had achieved membership during the year, and at Conference full membership was accorded to the Scottish Federation (previously part of the British Federation) and Rwanda, which has made astonishingly rapid progress in membership numbers. Graduating from associate to full membership were North Cyprus and Fiji, which received a particularly warm welcome from its Australian and New Zealand colleagues. The drawn-out matter of AAUW membership was finally concluded and the American Association is no longer with IFUW, but a new American group is already forming with the intention of seeking IFUW membership.

Membership qualifications: Membership qualifications continued to be contentious, and attempts to broaden them achieved some success at this Conference. AFUW has no problem with giving eligibility to any woman accepted for a master's or doctoral programme on the basis of experience other than the conventional completion of an undergraduate degree. It is concerned, however, that the main eligibility clause now reads: *The requirements for individual membership in a national federation or association shall be study at an institution of higher education, followed by the award of a degree, diploma or equivalent qualification.*

The substitution of the phrase 'institution of higher education' for 'university or institution of comparable academic standing' makes the range of institutions to be considered wider. Moreover, Conference's rejection of AFUW's proposal that institutions must be recognised by IFUW throws a greater degree of responsibility for determining eligibility on NFAs. A new clause in the Terms of Reference of the Membership Committee states specifically that 'It is up to each IFUW national affiliate to determine which of the degrees, diplomas or equivalent qualifications offered in its country meet these criteria'—that is, the criteria of the preceding clauses, which have also been amended to recognise two years as an adequate length for a qualifying course or programme. Since every NFA must have constitutional requirements that are not in conflict with those of IFUW, we will need to scrutinise our membership eligibility requirements.

AFUW Participation in Conference

The sixteen Australian members present at Conference were kept busy and I thank them all for their enthusiastic participation. In the preliminaries to Conference, the Leadership Training session was attended by AFUW Secretary, Tricia Blombery, Anita Earle (AFUW-Q) and Michelle Webb, the Indigenous member sponsored by Curtin University. Michelle, who also attended the Young Leaders session, received a procedural baptism of fire when called on to act as a time-keeper during the opening business session.

At both pre-and post-Conference Council meetings, AFUW's voting representative was CIR, Dalma Jacobs. Apart from her valuable clarification of issues in the discussions on dues, Dalma took part, with four other CIRs in a Conference Plenary Session on 'The Advocacy Role of CIRs'. Dalma spoke on AFUW's advocacy for Cultural Diversity in Education, and earned AFUW a round of applause as advocacy activists.

Marshalling Conference attendees into their various categories of voting and non-voting delegates was under the capable direction of member-at-large Kathy Mumford, who had already worked for months as convener of several Education sessions of the Interdisciplinary Seminars. I was overall Co-ordinator for these Seminars, of which there were 12 sessions programmed, although this became 11 as the original number of 72 presenters shrank because of problems with funding and visas, especially from some African countries. As one of the conveners was such a casualty, I had to step in to chair her session and was very grateful to Anita Earle, who agreed to act as an emergency Rapporteur for the session. Marion Jones and Madeleine Laming took on a similar role for Kathy Mumford's sessions. AFUW members presenting papers were May Kentish in the Peace and Human Security section and Madeleine Laming and Nereda White in the Education section. Nereda's attendance was made possible by sponsorship from the Brisbane campus of the Australian Catholic University, to whom we are very grateful. Watch the IFUW website for eventual postings of a selection of Seminar presentations.

Presentation of the Programme for Action is always a feature of Conference. The theme for the new Triennium is *Building Sustainable Futures*. Members of the Status of Women Committee prepare and present the programme. I was responsible for the section on Human Rights and much beholden to Tricia Blombery and Madeleine Laming for their spirited rendering of the role-play script I'd

prepared. The Programme brochure comes with this Newsletter, but for further material on the issues and available resources see the IFUW website at www.ifuw.org/programme/index.htm

In sessions where votes were required, voting delegates, Tricia Blombery, Dalma Jacobs, Barbara Hale, Marion Jones and myself duly displayed our red cards to cast our votes, while alternates Jane Baker, May Kentish, Madeleine Laming, Kath Watson and Barbara Williams stood ready to step in if needed. Of our candidates for various Committees, these were successful: Marion Jones for Fellowships, Michelle Imison for Projects, and myself for Status of Women. In addition, Anita Earle was appointed to the Hegg Hoffett Committee.

It was in the sessions on Resolutions that AFUW was most visible, as we had proposed 4 policy resolutions and one Internal Resolution— only rivalled by Canada. The process for attending to Resolutions was lengthy, considering that there had already been pre-Conference opportunities to negotiate possible changes, and further presentation and negotiation sessions at Conference. When it came to the final voting, however, time was so short that only one speaker for and one against were allowed. While some delegates were undoubtedly quite pleased at this truncation of debate, I personally thought that the denial of opportunity for fuller arguments on serious intellectual issues was a defect. What was clear in the speeches heard was a disagreement between those who wanted IFUW to focus almost exclusively on education issues (even exclusively on higher education issues) and those who re-iterated that the purpose of the founders of IFUW had been to use education to advance the status of women and to facilitate their role in working for peace. It's a tension AFUW members will recognise as we have similar disagreements. Accommodating difference is not really so difficult, as there is considerable freedom for each NFA (and for each of its associations or branches) to be selective in the issues it is most interested in and best able to pursue. A list of the Policy Resolutions proposed by AFUW and passed at Conference, and a list of the topics of other Resolutions, is on the following page. Those on women's health, armaments containing depleted uranium and Global Warming passed with some agreed amendments, while the one on UN Peace-Keeping passed only in the part recorded. Thanks are especially due to Rosemary Everett, who was unable to attend Conference, but did such valuable work in preparing the policy resolutions and in enabling delegates to be ready for voting on Constitutional amendments (the most important of these, dues and membership, are mentioned above).

The IFUW Board, 2007–2010

The new IFUW Board elected at Conference consists of Louise Croote (New Zealand) as President, Sushil Bhardwaj (India), Marianne Haslegrave (Britain), Shirley Randell (Rwanda) and Phyllis Scott (Canada) as Vice-Presidents, and Catherine Bell (South Africa) as Treasurer.

Jennifer Strauss
1 October, 2007

Some News Flashes from the Home Front

Congratulations to Colleen Forrester, elected as President at the recent AFUW-Q AGM and to Margaret James, re-elected for a second term as AFUW-Vic President. Thanks to Marion Jones, the outgoing AFUW-Q President, for all her hard work during her term of office.

Congratulations also to the 2007 AFUW Fellow, Jennifer Giles, who is completing her PhD in the School of Integrative Biology in the Faculty of Biological and Chemical Sciences at the University of Queensland. There will be more details about Jennifer, and about other recent scholarship winners from around the States, in the 2007 issue of *Graduate Women*.

Vale: *Graduate Women* will also carry obituaries for three longstanding and much-missed members, Barbara Wright of the Central West Branch, AFUW-NSW, Marion Specht of AFUW-Q, and Margaret Maxwell (AFUW-NSW), whose death occurred at the beginning of this year.

Change of Date for AFUW Triennial Conference 2009: It has proved necessary to move the proposed date of the 2009 Triennial Conference from October. Remember to keep 26–29 November 2009 free for this important event.

Policy Resolutions Proposed by AFUW and Passed at the 29th IFUW Conference

Further Resolutions were passed on Women in Leadership and Decision-Making Positions; Religious Beliefs and Women's Health; Commitment to the UN Millennium Development Goals; Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and Averting the Weaponization of Space; and Remedying the Environmental Damage of Military Activities.

All these, and the Plans of Action for all Resolutions, are now available on the IFUW website at <http://www.ifuw.org/ifuw2007/resolutions/29conf-resolutions-adopted.doc>

WOMEN'S ROLE IN DISEASE PREVENTION

The 29th IFUW Conference resolves:

1. to direct the IFUW Board of Officers to advocate through its Representatives to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) that priority be given to programmes which develop women's knowledge of health and hygiene, and their capacity to influence behaviour in their families and communities;
2. to recommend to national federations and associations (NFAs) that they advocate to their governments to fund programmes which will ensure that women and girls are comprehensively educated in all facets of health, hygiene and disease prevention; and
3. to recommend to NFAs that they advocate to their governments to enact a legislative framework that protects women's autonomous control of their health.

PREVENTION OF ARMAMENTS CONTAINING DEPLETED URANIUM: A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

The 29th IFUW Conference resolves:

1. that the IFUW Board of Officers urge the appropriate United Nations bodies to establish an independent international investigation to establish definitively the short and long-term effects of depleted uranium on human populations and the environment; and,
2. that national federations and associations (NFAs) advocate that their respective governments, pending the outcome of such an investigation, prohibit their armed forces from using weaponry containing depleted uranium, and take action in the U.N. to have the use of depleted uranium in armaments declared illegal under the international laws of war and hence liable to prosecution in the International Criminal Court.

UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING

The 29th IFUW Conference resolves:

that IFUW, through its representatives at the United Nations, argue

1. that increased training in sensitivity to gender issues and to women's and children's rights be given to all U.N. peacekeeping personnel; and,
2. that implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325 be strictly enforced, particularly with regard to its directions giving women an enhanced role in peacekeeping contingents.

GLOBAL WARMING

The 29th IFUW Conference resolves:

1. to direct the IFUW Board of Officers through its representatives to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to encourage the establishment of fora in which creative artists and scientists, cognizant of the effects of global warming, co-operate to present to the general populace works of the imagination, comprehensible and persuasive of the urgency of global warming; and
2. to recommend to NFAs that they support such programmes and events in their own countries.