



FABIANA

The Fabian Women's Network Magazine

ISSUE #7

AUTUMN 2013

Women **growing** the economy

*Articles by Seema Malhotra MP, Samira Hamidi,
Ivana Bartoletti, Kate Allen, Emily Darlington
and many others*

Issue 7

Editorial	
Sarah Hutchinson	3
Supporting female entrepreneurs	
Seema Malhotra MP	4
Women growing the economy	
Ivana Bartoletti	5
An incomplete revolution	
Samira Hamidi	6
Ada Salter – Forgotten feminist?	
Sheila Taylor	7
The confidence gap	
Barbara Govan	8
Unequal before the law	
Charlotte Rachael Proudman	9
Getting angry and stepping up	
Emily Darlington	10
Men promoting men	
Eva Tutchell	11
Rethinking equality	
Sarah Hutchinson	13
Shoulder to shoulder	
Kate Allen	14
More midwives!	
Abi Wood & Gabrielle Bourke	15
Back to basics	
Rhian E Jones	16
Empowering women	
Roxana	17

FABIAN WOMEN

FABIANA

Fabiana is the magazine of the Fabian Women's Network (FWN). The articles represent the views of the writers only and not the collective view of FWN.

Editors, Sarah Hutchinson and Ivana Bartoletti

Production editor, Sofie Jenkinson

Editorial team, Amy Trevethan; Elizabeth Hodson; Jim O'Connell

Email: fabianwomen@fabian-society.org.uk

Twitter: @FabianWomen

Website: <http://www.fabianwomen.co.uk>

FABIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK

c/o Fabian Society
61 Petty France
London SW1H 9EU
Telephone: 020 7227 4900 Fax: 020 7976 7153

FWN TEAM

Director, Seema Malhotra MP

Deputy Director, Ivana Bartoletti

Policy and Social Media, Sarah Hutchinson

Mentoring Scheme, Christine Megson

Childcare campaign, Shama Tatler

Public Speaking Club, Chloe Surowiec & Vicki Butler

Margaret Dantas Araujo
Louisa Douma
Sam Jury-Dada
Felicity Slater
Sofia Patel

Fabian Society General Secretary, Andrew Harrop

Fabian Society membership: Giles Wright 020 7227 4904

Young Fabians (under 31s): www.youngfabians.org.uk

Young Fabian Women: Claire Leigh, cleigh@youngfabians.co.uk

Cover image: subflux

Welcome to the seventh issue of Fabiana!



Sarah Hutchinson is a policy officer at a national women's charity, and helps to run the Fabian Women's Network.

Editor, Sarah Hutchinson

Earlier in the summer, I went to Labour HQ with the latest cohort of the Fabian Women's Network political education and mentoring scheme. They, like the two groups before them, are an incredible bunch of women: high achievers at work, dedicated to their communities, and with a huge array of interests and areas of expertise. Two of this group (Purna Sen and Josie Channer) have joined Suzy Stride in being selected as PPCS, with several more planning to go for selection, and more than a dozen selected as council candidates. Later that evening, we held our summer reception, and it was inspiring to spend the evening surrounded by talented and ambitious women listening to some great women speakers. Over the past year we've held events on pensions, sex education, gender stereotyping in the toy industry, childcare, human rights and international development, and One Nation Labour - all of which have featured several highly qualified women on the panel. We've published three issues of Fabiana, showcasing established and new women writers (and some fantastic men), and helped our members get published on blogs including LabourList, Fabian Review Online and Shifting Grounds.

All of this is done in our spare time, a group of enthusiastic volunteers coming together to promote women's voices and

to enable women to take part in public life and debate. Which raises the question, if we can do it, in time snatched around the day job, raising children, family and friends, why do organisations who are in the public arena full-time struggle to do the same? Parliament, local government, Europe, courts, NGOs, public bodies, think-tanks: all dominated by men.

A group of left-leaning think-tank directors has decided to try to do something about it, coming together to discuss ways to boost gender equality in their organisations and across think tanks more generally. A number have signed a statement committing to action, published here, along with a piece explaining just why it's needed. Let's hope other organisations follow suit.

Of course, women's leadership and engagement takes lots of forms, and we've tried to showcase some of these in this issue. Emily Darlington, PPC for Milton Keynes North writes about why women should stand for selection, while Rhian E. Jones' thoughtful piece on gender and class, following the release of her searing book 'Clampdown', highlights the powerful contribution women make to political theory and ideas. And we have a piece commemorating an oft-forgotten Labour heroine Ada Salter.

We'll be keeping a close eye on whether events at the Labour Party conference have

balanced and diverse panels, and will be letting @panelwatch know if we find any that haven't managed to find a woman to take part: we hope you'll help with this.

We're going to be very busy at Labour Conference this year, with three events on (these are listed elsewhere in the magazine). If you're not in Brighton, or want to find out more before we go along, we've got some great companion pieces in Fabiana. Our Director Seema Malhotra MP writes about supporting entrepreneurship amongst women, and Eva Tutchall explores how to increase women's leadership in business through quotas for boards. The NCT and WI write about the need for better maternity support ahead of our joint event with the Young Fabian Health Commission. And we're very excited to be teaming up with Amnesty International for a debate on women's human rights. We're very lucky to have pieces by Kate Allen, Head of Amnesty and one of the few women leaders of an NGO, as well as an insightful piece from an Afghan Women's Rights defender.

With further pieces on legal aid, employment and women in science and technology, this conference issue of Fabiana highlights the contribution women have to make. It's been an inspiring issue to put together, and I hope you enjoy reading these pieces as much as I have! **f**

Supporting female entrepreneurs

By Seema Malhotra MP

Great for women, great for Britain says

Seema Malhotra



Seema Malhotra MP is the Chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party BIS Group; Parliamentary Private Secretary to Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, Minister for Women and Equalities; and member of the Fabian Executive

As a nation, we are paying the price for not better supporting women at work. The UK Women's Business Council report 'Maximising women's contribution to future economic growth' published earlier this summer found that there are over 2.4 million women who are not in work but want to work, and over 1.3 million women who want to increase the number of hours they work. It also found that by equalising the labour force participation rates of men and women, the UK could further increase GDP per capita growth by 0.5% p.a., with potential gains of 10% of GDP by 2030.

There is an emerging consensus that the economy is not working in a way that recognises and responds to the true reality of women's lives and their needs. The levels of unemployment and underemployment are compounded by the fact that women have borne the brunt of public sector cuts which has had a significant effect on their personal and family income. Add to the mix the fact that women still take on the bulk of caring roles with varying levels of employer support. We still have a long way to go.

The Women's Business Council report also highlighted the gender gap in entrepreneurship. If women were setting up and running new businesses at the same rate as men, we could have an extra one million female entrepreneurs. In July 2013, an OECD report ("Entrepreneurship at a Glance") showed that "Women remain substantially underrepresented as entrepreneurs. Men are 2-3 times more likely to own businesses with employees as women." Of the 40 countries surveyed in the OECD research, the UK falls in the bottom quartile. The UK also has

a higher than average gender gap in earnings from self employment.

The challenge we face in tackling the gender gap in entrepreneurship is not just the setting up of women-led businesses, but supporting their development and growth. There are

federal contracting dollars are awarded to women-owned small businesses. Federal contracts may also be set aside for women-owned small businesses in certain industries where women are under-represented. This has had an impact on attitudes of large companies bidding for Government contracts who are now seeking women-led enterprises to be part of their supply base in order to have a better chance of winning federal contracts. It is not about greater spending, but it is about an attitude and an incentive to change a culture, and open up opportunities for women in business.

Other countries are also looking at initiatives which could make a big difference

'by equalising the labour force participation rates of men and women, the UK could further increase GDP per capita growth by 0.5% p.a., with potential gains of 10% of GDP by 2030.'

many small, good dispersed initiatives in the UK, but trying to find integrated support services as a nascent start-up is overwhelming and confusing.

The US Small Business Association (SBA) has lessons that Labour can learn from. Go onto the SBA site and you can start developing a business plan and get advice from a mentor as simply as logging on to do a tax return. The SBA website also is a good signposting for women and entrepreneurship support – a national strategy embedded within mainstream business support. The Women's Business Centres supported by the SBA offer a network of support and training at grassroots level. One Women's Business Centre in the UK in Newham, started in 2008 following the women's enterprise task force under Labour, has had similar successes.

In January the US Government introduced a statutory goal that 5% of

to the number and growth prospects of women led enterprise.

This year, India is planning to launch a new (state run) women's bank, outlined in the 2013 Federal Budget and likely to be operational by November. The bank will to lend mostly to women and women-run businesses, will employ predominantly women, and will address gender-related aspects of empowerment and financial inclusion. Whilst Britain's banks have some limited tailored services for women-led businesses - the potential could be so much greater.

To see a shift in scale of women's entrepreneurship and women's wider contribution to the economy will need a more integrated strategy and more coordinated support infrastructure. With Labour's track record in this space, it's an area for us to build on. It's not just good for women, but will be great for Britain. **f**

Women growing the economy

By Ivana Bartoletti

Women can be at the heart of an equal economic recovery, says Ivana Bartoletti



Ivana Bartoletti is the Deputy Director of the Fabian Women's Network and a London Labour candidate for the 2014 European elections

Sunday, 15th September marks the fifth anniversary of the collapse of Lehman Brothers, which triggered the financial crash.

I think we all remember how, in the aftermath of the crisis, meetings and media were brimming with enthusiasm for how finance could be reformed.

Five years later, the culture of finance remains unchallenged, and the underlying causes which led to its implosion have not been tackled.

City bonuses are back, with an increase of 81% from April of this year alone, at a time when ordinary people are struggling, and our communities are bearing the brunt of the Tories' divisive economic policy: for the few and not the many.

It is a shame that, five years on, we seem to have forgotten the root causes of

— I think people in Britain know how misleading this is. Not that growth should not be welcomed, of course, but shutting down the system for two years then reopening it does not constitute growth. What we are, in fact, witnessing is an unequal recovery, with increasing pay gaps and the use of precarious and unsafe contracts.

This frames the place where we have to be. How do we reform the foundations of the economy, including banks serving ordinary people, not vice versa? How can we put an end to the exploitation of zero-hours contracts? And how can we create an education system rooted in the principles of equality of access (and success), for those who pursue vocational training and those who go to university?

But these things will not be possible

at work; providing the stability and safety nets women need, as their lives are often a roller coaster; establishing a new culture in our business world, with more diversity in company boardrooms; introducing a sensible policy on affordable childcare; and encouraging more women to pursue technical vocations, as well as careers in science, innovation and technology, since we lag behind the rest of the world for women with trade skills as much as for those in scientific jobs.

The reality is that women can be at the heart of an equal economic recovery. And with so many women's organizations blossoming, as well as greater awareness right across the movement, we could really step it up. **f**

'we have been working hard in the last few months, on how women can grow the economy and grow in the economy...'

the financial crash and have left the system as it was, leaving it prone to collapse again at the next occasion.

This is why I believe it is very important for Labour to continue to talk about these issues: with the next general election looking to be fought on living standards, it is important that we present a vision of how we can reform the economy, to make it work for the many and not the few.

When George Osborne claims victory — stating how timid signs of growth are proving his economic plan has worked

on their own. As the recent Winning with Women conference pointed out, women voters can make the difference. How we are able to speak with women can help shape our electoral success, too.

At the Fabian Women's Network, we have been working hard in the last few months, on how women can grow the economy and grow in the economy, and this encompasses many issues: encouraging women's entrepreneurship, for which Seema Malhotra MP is campaigning; protecting women's rights

The Role of Women in Business and Economic Growth

Sunday, 22nd September, 2013
Time: 19:30–21:00
Norfolk Suite, Mercure Brighton
Seafrost Hotel, 149 King's Rd, Brighton

Featuring: Featuring: Ivana Bartoletti (Fabian Women's Network - Chair), Fiona Hathorn (Managing Director, Women on Boards UK), Katjia Hall (Chief Policy Director, CBI), Councillor Sarah Hayward (Leader, Camden Council), John Edmonds (Aldersgate Group), Seema Malhotra MP (Chair, Parliamentary Labour Party Business Group), Chuka Umunna MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills - invited)

In association with the Fabian Women's Network and the Labour Finance and Industry Group

An incomplete revolution

An Afghan woman human rights defender argues more needs to be done to protect Afghan women

Afghan women have experienced fairly obvious gains over the past twelve years. This has been possible due to the continuous efforts of women from various spheres of life, along with the Government of Afghanistan and its international allies, creating an enabling environment through providing opportunities, resources and support. Millions of girls now enjoy lower and higher education, 27% of women sit in the Afghan Upper and Lower Houses and women actively work in various humanitarian, service delivery and advocacy based government and non-government organizations in the capital and bigger cities.

However, the sustainability of these gains is at risk. 2013 has been a particularly distressing year for women

'girls' schools have suffered from poisoning and insecurity in several provinces in the country'

and girls. For example girls' schools have suffered from poisoning and insecurity in several provinces in the country and one of the few solid achievements of Afghan women, the Elimination of Violence against Women Law (EVAW), was recently labelled a 'western project' and almost rejected by conservative members of the Afghan parliament, despite it being essential to the protection of women's rights in the country. Levels of violence against women are high in Afghanistan and the justice system is either incapable or unwilling to rule in favour of women's rights, exemplified by the recent case of Sahar Gul, a 14 year old victim of forced marriage who experienced severe abuse at the hands of her in-law family because she refused to enter into prostitution. The case received worldwide media attention

but the perpetrators were found 'not guilty' and are yet to be held accountable.

Insecurity and risks to women working within the government and civil society also continue. For example, the

'to have the greatest impact, the UK must consult with Afghan women's organisations who are already working on these issues.'

Senator from Nimroz province in the west of the country recently survived an attack in which her daughter and driver were both killed and Islam Bibi, a prominent senior female police officer in Helmand province, was recently murdered. Although EU guidelines on providing support to women human rights defenders (WHRDs) who are at risk of violence do exist, and all EU member states should follow them, WHRDs in Afghanistan barely know of the existence of any provision for them. These women, who are some of the most active agents of change and protectors of human rights in their communities, face continuous threats directed at them and their families. Some of these activists have already fled the country or reduced their contribution, because protection which would enable them to continue their work is not available.

Despite these serious concerns, the withdrawal of international troops by 2014 has completely diverted the attention of the world. Though it is important to consider the transition of security to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which is a very important step for Afghanistan and its people, we should not forget that a lack of political will and negotiation with the Taliban and other ultra-conservative groups could seriously damage the fragile gains Afghan women have seen and prevent further improvement.

So what is the UK government's role in all of this? The UK supports the Afghan government and civil society through



Samira Hamidi was the Director of the Afghan Women's Network (AWN), which includes more than 91 women's organizations and 5,000 individuals. She is currently studying International Human Rights Law at the University of York, UK.

By Samira Hamidi

long-term international commitments. Last year the international community agreed to continue providing development funding to Afghanistan until 2017 at least, as long as the Afghan government agreed

to make progress in several key areas. One of these key areas was women's rights and particularly the implementation of the EVAW law. So the UK government must support the Afghan authorities to meet the demands of the agreement and hold them accountable if they do not.

The UK also recently committed to prioritising initiatives and programs which will tackle violence against women in Afghanistan. To have the greatest impact, the UK must consult with Afghan women's organisations who are already working on these issues. The UK must also recognise the importance of shelters for women victims. Women's shelters need sustainable financial support to function actively, improve the quality of their services and be helpful to women victims. Financing women's organizations can be important in addressing the root causes of violence against women, addressing it locally at the community level and involving men and elders.

As an Afghan woman human rights defender about to return to Afghanistan, I highly encourage the UK government to support a mechanism that provides protection and support to WHRDs locally and internationally. This mechanism is only possible if WHRDs are consulted and their needs are taken into consideration. The UK government should take the lead in implementing the EU guidelines and other mechanisms to improve protection and ensure WHRDs are aware of the protection mechanisms available to them. **f**

Ada Salter – Forgotten feminist?

A new campaign aims to recognise a London Labour great

Hardly anyone has heard of Ada Salter (1866-1942) and her husband, Dr Alfred Salter (1873-1945). Yet in Bermondsey their memory is treasured for the way they transformed their slum area with model housing, tree-lined streets and a comprehensive health service that prefigured the NHS. Alfred, who became the local MP, was commemorated in a biography, schools, medical centres and housing named after him, and a statue erected on the Thames Path. But Ada, just as famous in her day, seemed to disappear from history, as so many women do.



When Alfred's statue was stolen by metal thieves in winter 2011, the local community was devastated. A campaign was set up to replace it, and a decision was taken that this time Ada would get a statue too.

Born in Northamptonshire, Ada Brown came to London aged 30, inspired by religious ideals and radical politics to help the poor. She settled in the slums of Bermondsey, teaching, running girls' clubs and doing social work. There she fell in love with a brilliant, young, socialist doctor. They married and, rather than move to a comfortable life in a healthy suburban area, together they decided to devote their lives to their deprived community.

Ada was a tireless political and community activist. In 1909 she became

the first Labour councillor in Bermondsey, and one of the first women councillors in the country. She championed women's membership of trade unions and organised

'way they transformed their slum area with model housing, tree-lined streets and a comprehensive health service that prefigured the NHS'

support for local women strikers. She campaigned for peace, becoming President of the Women's International League. And as President of the Women's Labour League she was a leader in the struggle for socialism and votes for women.

A passionate gardener, Ada believed in the health-giving power of nature and created her own 'garden room' for outdoor living. In 1922 she became the first woman mayor in London. She established and chaired a 'Beautification Committee' which covered the area with trees, flowers and children's playgrounds. Bermondsey became famous nationally, and visitors even came from abroad to see its cottage housing and outstanding health facilities.

'Ada, just as famous in her day, seemed to disappear from history, as so many women do.'



Sheila Taylor, trustee of the Salter Statues Campaign.

By Sheila Taylor

Ada spread the concept of beautification across the whole of London. From 1925 she was a councillor on the LCC, working on Parks and Open Spaces

and helping to create the 'Green Belt' around the capital. When she became President of the National Gardens Guild, she was able to promote beautification all over Britain.



Tragically, the Salters' only child Joyce died aged 8, from scarlet fever caught by living amidst the slums. The old statue showed Alfred dreaming of Joyce. The new statues, commissioned from the original artist, Diane Gorvin, will be a family ensemble, with Ada standing at a planter, trowel in hand, in a tree-lined garden room setting

The Campaign is already halfway towards the £50,000 needed for statues plus security, and Southwark Labour Council is match-funding all money raised. Help us to add Ada! Donate online at: www.salterstatues.co.uk or send a cheque to the address below. (With Gift Aid, every £50 donated is worth £60. With match-funding, it becomes £120.) Thank you! **f**

The confidence gap

Raising women's profiles in public life

Women whose profiles are raised through campaigning, achievement or speaking out are vilified and abused by twitter trolls in a way explicitly aimed at their gender. Yet we also desperately need to encourage more women to step up to public life. How are we to respond?

At the time of writing it is historian Mary Beard, MPs Claire Perry and Stella Creasey and the brilliant bank note campaigner, Caroline Criado- Perez being targeted. But they won't be the last. To what extent does the opportunity that Twitter provides to the intemperate represent opinions more widely held, namely that women should ideally remain invisible; that equality is the most they can hope for, whilst a trailblazing, thought – leading position in public life is the cue to “cut ‘em down” and threaten rape or murder?

Women make up more than 50% of the UK population, so you'd hope that the trolls would have more targets than they could keep up with. Yet why in 2013 do we even have to fight for the visibility of what is the UK's greatest and most wasted natural resource, our women?

It's over a year since I went to a Fabian Women's event at the Commons which asked “Where are the women?” about the science and technology sectors. But it could equally have been about their absence in parliament, public office, the boardroom, the media, and elsewhere.

On the panel were high achieving women who have no problem with their profile, great role models to anyone with the imagination to be inspired: Cambridge experimental physics Professor Dame Athene Donald, the MP for Newcastle Central, Chi Onwurah and campaigning neuroscientist Dr. Laura Nelson.

I was particularly struck by the group of articulate students from a London school who asked for more diverse role models to help show them the way. How will this social media aware generation respond to the treatment of prominent women on Twitter?

I wanted to take action.

As a TV producer I've worked with fantastic communicators who happen to be women. As a trainer I know that

men and women need the same skills to be good at holding an audience; that in neither sphere are men innately better.

It was a counter intuitive decision but I fixed on trying to run a role model led, presentation training event to help women make themselves more visible. It felt a bit

'here were nearly 20 high achieving women from science, politics and the public sector taking a day out of their schedules for what our workshop was promising; they were getting on trains and planes from all over the UK because they wanted to become more visible to a host of different audiences'

risky as a business venture – why go for only half the market? But I was also curious to see if it might be in demand, and who would come forward?

First, I needed an inspiring role model to lead off the day. Luckily space scientist and TV presenter Dr. Maggie Aderin-Pocock MBE was also in campaigning mode. Maggie overcame sexism, dyslexia and other difficulties to succeed. Then, the University of York supported the cause by providing a prestigious venue.

The date we had fixed was already really close and I wondered if I had let feminism mix too closely with business. Were there enough women out there who wanted to invest in presentation skills, keen to accept invitations to speak at conferences, to put themselves forward for selection, step up to a media request or promotion panel. Or would they prove “invisible”?

I needn't have worried. In less than a week our course was full and reluctantly I turned some away.

Looking at the backgrounds of those who had signed up, it suddenly felt daunting for different reasons. Here were nearly 20 high achieving women from science, politics and the public sector taking a day out of their schedules for



Barbara Govan is CEO of Screenhouse Productions Ltd and also runs presentation courses for academics, executives and other professionals'

By Barbara Govan

what our workshop was promising; they were getting on trains and planes from all over the UK because they wanted to become more visible to a host of different audiences. I'd trained similar, mixed professional groups many times, but this felt different and somehow more pressing.

With their ground breaking research, their passion for political change, or their ambition for the future it seemed more urgent that these talented people should be seen, heard, promoted, selected, published, and invested in.

The day was a resounding success, not least because the women themselves were so expert, so passionate and keen to learn.

The women, of course, were as talented and articulate as any of the men that we train (and trolls take note, there were one or two I would tip for future high profile).

But it also left me seriously concerned. If we are not promoting, selecting, investing in, listening to or being inspired by these women, we - men and women in the UK - are all the losers. Surely we would sprint out of recession if we had the best from 100% of our talent base, rather than limping along on less than half of it.

Perhaps misogynist twitter trolls are just the yapping dogs at the new rise of women. If so, then let's make sure the gatekeepers of our society (still mostly white men), open the doors good and wide so we can let all of the talented women through! **f**

Unequal before the law

Legal aid cuts threaten gender equality

Women have always been at heart of the Labour party. As early as the 1900s Labour was evolving as a 'women's party.' Working with the moderate National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, Labour pushed for women's suffrage. The introduction of the Legal Aid and Advice Act 1949 by Clement Attlee's Labour government was vital in ensuring that women were provided with legal representation and access to justice. The basic principle advocated by Labour was that justice and gender equality are inextricably linked. Without access to justice for women, gender equality would continue to be undermined.

In an attempt to save £220 million per year by 2018, Chris Grayling, the justice secretary, has proposed further severe cuts to legal aid. The cuts will have a disproportionate affect on women and erode the steps Labour has taken in striving for gender equality. There is a real risk the cuts proposed could breach the UN committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and as a signatory to the convention, the UK is legally required to fully implement the convention. Furthermore the UK could be in breach of Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states "all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law."

The proposals are made soon after the implementation of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders (LASPO) reforms on 1st April 2013, which cut legal aid in family, housing, education and immigration law. The LASPO reforms have damaged access to justice for domestic violence victims. For instance, many victims of domestic violence are being denied legal representation in family proceedings because the definition of domestic abuse is too narrow and the evidence required to prove they are victims of abuse is too onerous. Without legal aid, victims of domestic violence are forced to cross-examine or to be cross-

examined by their abusers in court causing delays, costs and further psychological abuse for women.

Contrary to public opinion, Grayling declared "the [legal aid] system has lost much of its credibility with the public". However, a poll from the Bar Council of over 2,000 people conducted by ComRes in May 2013 found seven out of 10 people were concerned that cuts to legal aid could lead to innocent people being convicted and 67 per cent agreed legal aid is a price worth paying for living in a fair society.

Grayling's proposals sparked fierce opposition from judges, solicitors and barristers who took to the streets to protest. Over 16,000 responded to the government's recent 'transforming legal aid' consultation. Grayling announced on 5 September 2013 that he planned to drop the most controversial proposal to introduce price-competitive tendering for criminal legal aid contracts. However, Grayling still intends to pursue other drastic legal aid cuts in a bid to save money.

Grayling's proposals include introducing a residence test, which will mean that anyone who has not lawfully resided in the UK for a continuous 12-month period, with the exception of British armed service personnel abroad, and some asylum seekers, will no longer be eligible to civil legal aid. The residence test will restrict access to justice for thousands of women. The following three groups of vulnerable women will be priced out of justice:

- **Women trafficked into the country and sold for sex will no longer be eligible for legal aid.**
- **Women who have arrived into the country through marriage to a British spouse and have found themselves abused will not be eligible for legal aid for protection and support from domestic violence.**
- **Girls trafficked into the country or girls who arrive to seek asylum with false documents claiming they are adults and**



Charlotte Rachael Proudman is a barrister at 1 Mitre Court Buildings and policy advisor to Rob Flello MP, Shadow Minister for Justice

By Charlotte Rachael Proudman

are treated as such by local authorities will be left without an education or accommodation. Victims will not have recourse to judicial review to challenge local authorities decisions and obtain the resources they are entitled to.

Funding for Judicial review, which holds the government and public bodies to account will be curtailed. The government's proposed cuts to legal aid will erode the accountability of public bodies to ensure equality and fairness. Various cases and reports, such as the Stephen Lawrence case and the Scarman Report in 1981, show that gender and race, among many other inequalities occur in policing, sentencing and the treatment of prisoners. The criminal justice system is deeply ingrained with gender inequalities and without access to legal aid women will be left without recourse to the law while public bodies responsible for such victimisation will not be held to account.

In a bid to restrict legal aid for prisoners, it is proposed prisoners will no longer be eligible for legal aid unless their case directly relates to whether they should be in custody. A young mother for instance, who has given birth in prison, and been denied the right to care for her baby in a mother and baby unit would not be eligible for legal aid to challenge the decision. The child's right and mother's right to family life (Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights) could potentially be breached without scrutiny and accountability.

In opposing the government's proposals, Labour has taken a pragmatic approach. Labour accept financial savings need to be made but unlike Grayling, Sadiq Khan, the shadow justice secretary, has drawn on his experience as a solicitor and devised counter-proposals which preserve justice, support gender equality and make financial savings. Such proposals include addressing the cause of money loss in the justice system by reviewing the courts, crown prosecution service and judiciary to cut out inefficiency and bureaucracy. Labour's counter-proposals show that it is possible to prioritise justice for all in times of austerity. **f**

Getting angry and stepping up

One of a growing team of women selected as PPCs explains why she stood in the pipeline *By Emily Darlington*



Emily Darlington is the Labour Parliamentary Candidate for Milton Keynes North

What is the trigger that makes a member want to put themselves forward to be a candidate? For me it was getting angry. Angry enough to turn my family's life upside down and do the hardest volunteer job I have ever done. But it's worth it. Because since I got selected, I've met people who should be a lot more angry than me. Yet too often, what people express is despair and an overriding sense that politics is pointless and that all politicians are the same.

'if I thought times were tough, door knocking during the 2012 council elections in Milton Keynes showed me that those that are the most vulnerable were hit even harder.'

On one level they may have a point. Too often politics and politicians look too male, pale and stale. Too often they don't speak a language we can relate to. That is why when I got angry, friends of mine told me to stand up and be counted.

Women are 51% of the electorate yet only 22% of MPs. How can we convince people that Westminster is representative when it looks nothing like society? It is great to hear Ed Milliband's commitment

to 50/50 representation in Cabinet but we need more women on the backbenches as well.

My story is similar to many working mums with young children. I was balancing raising a child with running a small business when services were being cut and confidence was being sucked out of the economy by the Conservative-led coalition.

But if I thought times were tough, door knocking during the 2012 council elections in Milton Keynes showed me that those that are the most vulnerable were hit even harder. Doorstep after doorstep revealed people suffering unemployment being treated like a number by the job centre Work Programme; young people losing their EMAs and quitting college only to discover that they could not find jobs; businesses struggling to stay afloat; and mums like me losing support at a time when we felt at our most vulnerable.

The angry ones I could commiserate with (and urge them to get involved), but the people who have given up on politicians and politics broke my heart.

So when Milton Keynes North came up for selection, I was in two minds about whether I could do it and whether I could reorder my life to manage the impact on my family. It is a hard decision and one that no one should take lightly. You are putting yourself forward to be a super campaigner, the face of the campaign and the chief motivator for activists.

It can be hard to find women role models. And hardest still is to find women who have not compromised their roles as mothers to be part of politics. But these role models are out there. Rachel Reeves, Kirsty McNeill, Polly Billington and Anna Turley to name just a few. There are also

brilliant support networks like the Fabian Women's network, Labour Women's Network and the Cooperative Party. Not to mention fabulous non-political women friends that urged me to just go for it. And I had amazing support from men too, like Andrew Pakes (my fellow MK candidate), Pete Marland, leader of the MK Labour group and my husband.

'there is no language of 'we' in selection, instead you must learn to say 'I'.'

They helped me through the toughest part of the selection process. Selection is not about how dedicated you are to the party or even how well you know party policy. Ultimately the members are picking someone they can trust to represent them. They need to be proud of you and confident that you can fight for them. Nothing is off limits from your childrearing decisions to age old border disputes in far off countries, members want to know what you think. And even if they don't agree with you, they want to know that you have heard them and understand their perspective. There is no language of 'we' in selection, instead you must learn to say 'I'.

It is a privilege to have been picked by the members but the hard work has now started. Times are getting even tougher for families. Rail fares are going up. Childcare is more expensive. Our local hospital is being stretched to breaking point. And one of our major employers went into administration putting people out of work because the government refused a bridging loan. So I'm still angry but I am now part of a team that is campaigning to get Milton Keynes a better council and get Britain a better government. Families and businesses in Milton Keynes deserve better. The country deserves better. So get angry and get selected. **f**

Men promoting men *By Eva Tutchell*

A magistrate argues that reforms constitute a wasted opportunity



Eva Tutchell, a long-standing adviser to public authorities on gender issues, and John Edmonds, formerly General Secretary of GMB trade union, will be publishing their book later this year.

It was the invisibility of women in the 2010 General Election that prompted our research into why so few women hold positions of power in Britain. I have nothing against Sarah Brown but it cannot be right that the wife of the Prime Minister was the only female face that seemed to appear regularly on television during the campaign.

In our research we decided to talk to over 100 successful women to find out just what it takes for a woman to get to the top in twenty first century Britain. An inspiring and often humbling experience.

The stories we have been told confirm what many of us have always suspected. Britain is a society built by men, and for men.

The imbalance of power is startling. The two most powerful people in British

At the top, hours are long and unpredictable. Career structures assume unbroken employment with no gaps for childbirth or childrearing.

What women want is maternity leave that lasts long enough to fulfil their often visceral need to be with their new babies. And women on maternity leave need regular updates on what is going on in their workplace and a sympathetic procedure for easing them back into work. That level of support is rarely available.

I remember, only too vividly, my own feelings of insecurity and inadequacy when I returned to teaching after 5 years at home bringing up my daughters. Although I had been considered a successful teacher and had been active in the

subtle and sometimes unconscious. The effect of sexist jokes, for example, is insidious and harder to combat than open hostility. If a woman does not respond with a smile she is told "It was only a joke. You shouldn't take it so personally"

Our culture makes it hard for women to find the right style. What women wear to work still defines them in the eyes of most male colleagues. While she was Home Secretary, Jaqui

'it cannot be right that the wife of the Prime Minister was the only female face that seemed to appear regularly on television during the 2010 campaign.'

'in our 350 largest companies only 30 women occupy one or other of those top jobs, compared with 670 men. This means that 96% of the most powerful'

companies are the Chief Executive and the Chief Finance Officer. In our 350 largest companies only 30 women occupy one or other of those top jobs, compared with 670 men. This means that 96% of the most powerful positions in British business are held by men.

Job appointments at senior level are often based not on open competition but on personal contacts. So men get together to promote other men.

community during my years away from paid work, I felt anxious and alarmed at the thought of standing up in front of a class of secondary school pupils. "I'm just a mum. Why should they listen to me? I've forgotten the techniques and things have moved on..."

Some progress has been made on gender equality in the workplace but we found that sexism is still rife. Nowadays it tends to be low level,

Smith's cleavage provoked more comment than her policies.

Women are expected to be 'communal' and generally non confrontational, which can make them appear tentative. On the other hand, if they act firmly they are often accused of being strident. A woman showing anger is dismissed as emotional while a man is praised for being single-minded and committed.

Substantial odds are stacked against women in our society. Yet in the last year we have met many intelligent and talented women who, with exceptional determination, have achieved great success.

Our task is to change Britain so that many more women can follow them to the top. **f**

Think Tanks & Gender Equality

As we seek to influence society for the better through research and policy, we believe we have a responsibility to actively promote gender equality and equal citizenship in the work that we do.

In addition to individual commitments at an organisational level, we believe that a collective effort can help to break down the gender inequalities and power dynamics that continue to exist in British politics and society.

Therefore at all times we will commit to:

- Ensure that what we do and how we work reflects the need to tackle unequal power dynamics that still exist between women and men within our society
- Work together, as individuals and organisations, to track and reflect on our progress in changing our practices and culture
- Monitor women's participation in work (eg employment, governance, volunteering, writing and speaking) and take steps to tackle under-representation
- See that there is female representation on all speaking panels with three or more speakers and wherever possible ensure a gender balance is reached
- Actively encourage both men and women to contribute in terms of participation at events and seminars

Rethinking equality

Public debate is weakened when women's voices are not involved

The gender imbalance in politics has been widely noted, but this year's Sex and Power Report set the numbers out in stark detail. Women make up barely a fifth (22.5%) of Parliament, and only this because Labour has made concerted efforts to increase their representation. 32.4% of Labour MPs, but only 16% of Tories and a mere 12% of Liberal Democrats are women. Women make up just over a fifth of the Lords (21.7%) and just below (18.2%) of the government, while only 17.4% of the Cabinet are women. Women are less likely than men to be councillors, and to lead councils as Chief Execs or as Council leaders, or to be members of the European Parliament or national assemblies. The civil service is 53% female, but only 16.7% of the powerful Permanent Secretaries are women.

While women's under-representation in political decision-making is often recognised, their relative absence from the wider policy and political debate often goes unnoticed. Only 28% of Trade Union General Secretaries are women, though this falls to 25% when you focus on larger trade unions. 8% of charity chairs are women, and 24% of charity chief execs are women.

In the media, where debates are held and public opinion formed, women are similarly absent. Only 5% of national newspaper editors are women, and 23% of lobby print journalists and 32% of broadcast lobby journalists. There are no political editors who are women, and only 11% of political bloggers are women. Research by Women in Journalism revealed that in an average month, only 22% of articles in national papers were written by women. Of the 668 people mentioned or quoted in lead articles, 16% were women. 16% of reporters and guests on Today were women; 28% of Question Time contributors.

Think tanks are an essential element of British political debate, generating research, testing policy ideas, organising debates, publishing established and new thinkers. But here, too, men dominate. While the Sex and Power report could not include think tanks, only three of the 23 we contacted to sign the statement, across the political spectrum, were headed by

women. Browsing think tank staff pages, it's clear that women are in the minority in most organisations, and very often are concentrated in operational rather than research roles, or in junior positions.

This has implications for women's political power, especially when you consider how frequently think tank researchers are co-opted as political advisers (and vice-versa). It means that women are less likely to be defending research and new ideas in the media. And it may explain why more 'female' issues such as childcare and caring have taken so long to move into the broader political agenda.

But there are other ways in which think tanks can become male preserves, if participants in roundtables, panels at events, audiences, and those who ask questions are mostly men. Too often, think tanks which send out roundups of 'what they're reading' link only or mainly to work written by men.

It was an uneasy awareness that think tanks have a gender problem that prompted think tank directors to start discussing how to ensure more women move up the ranks in think tanks, and how to engage women in the wider discussions they are leading. A group of directors, think tank staff and others interested in engaging women in politics (such as Fabian Women's Network and the Labour Women's Network) came together to try to identify the causes of the gender inequality in think tanks, and find solutions.

It's clear that there is no simple fix, just as there is no single, obvious cause. Change has to come from both sides, with women raising their voices, putting themselves forward for research and policy roles and promotions, but also attending and speaking up at seminars, asking to attend roundtables, and invite-only events, and writing political blog pieces.

But the culture also has to change to accommodate them, and those already in positions of influence need to ensure



Sarah Hutchinson is a policy officer at a national women's charity, and helps to run the Fabian Women's Network.

By Sarah Hutchinson

that they are reaching out, and listening to, women's and other diverse voices.

So what can think tanks do to ensure a better representation of women in their ranks, at their events and engaging with their ideas? On recruitment and retention, ensuring that you're mentoring and supporting women at the start of their careers, ensuring if you're approaching individuals to stand for a position, or take on ad hoc research and contracts you're speaking to women as well as men. Offering the training and support staff need to gain the confidence to go for promotion, and finding innovative ways to enable staff to balance work and family, while maintaining contact during periods of parental and caring leave.

Including women more in public debates - in seminars and publications should show younger women that think tanks offer them career opportunities. With databases such as the Women's Room and HerSay, and with organisations such as FWN and LWN building strong networks of women, and always happy to share ideas, there's no excuse for male-only panels, or the reliance on a sole woman 'nannying' the event from the chair. Not a prominent woman available in the subject area? Ask someone who's starting out, and be part of how they become prominent. Ensuring that events and research have broad appeal, or that it covers diverse issues, and promoting events and opportunities through different channels (such as our newsletter) for example, will help engage new people, and let people outside the Westminster village know what's going on. And when you

We very much welcome the efforts of those think tanks who have signed the statement and are supporting the ongoing work. I am hopeful that those organisations involved are recognised for their efforts. And we need to put pressure on those who don't recognise there's a problem, and don't care. And it raises the question that if they're unwilling to make an effort to, to listen to different voices, to challenge the status quo, and to reach beyond their comfort zone, why are they even in the think tank business? **f**

Shoulder to shoulder

Defending women's rights at home and abroad

This year has been an important one for women's rights in the UK. We've seen a number of high-profile male figures investigated for sexual abuse against young girls, so-called "lads mags" told to cover up objectifying images of naked women, and an immense furore around a simple campaign, led by Caroline Criado-Perez and Stella Creasy MP, to get a woman featured on a British bank note.

I would usually be delighted to see women's rights issues splashed across the front pages and on every news channel. But along with media coverage, or perhaps because of it, we have seen a disturbing backlash against women campaigning for equality.

The misogynistic abuse and threats of rape experienced by Criado-Perez, Creasy and others on Twitter for example, demonstrates how far we still have to go in the fight for gender equality in the UK.

But this backlash, I believe, should be seen as part of a broader struggle; tackling violence against women and abuse of women's rights are global issues which need a global strategy.

The UK government should be at the forefront of championing women's rights both at home and abroad: not only because it's the right thing to do, but also because it's the smart thing to do. A world in which women contribute equally (politically, socially and economically) and a world in which women live free from violence and abuse, will be a more prosperous and peaceful world for us all.

Nowhere is this challenge more evident than in Afghanistan, where the UK government's stated objective is a stable, secure and peaceful state which will offer no threat to the UK's own security. But a stable and secure Afghanistan is impossible without the participation and security of Afghan women. Despite having achieved significant gains over the past ten years, they still experience extreme levels of inequality and are regularly and violently targeted merely for taking some part in public life.

Afghan women have a legal right to participate in decision-making processes which will affect their lives. Moreover, their experience and understanding - not just of the conflict but of all aspects of Afghan life - will be invaluable in achieving a genuine and sustainable peace for the whole country. The UK government must prioritise their participation in all of its operations in the country if it truly wishes to achieve a sustainable peace in the country.

'one in three women in the world will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime.'

Genuine prioritisation of women's rights is not entirely absent in UK government foreign policy. Positive initiatives, such as the Foreign Secretary's Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), already exist. What is lacking, though, is genuine commitment to those principles across and throughout government.

The PSVI emphasises the importance of tackling sexual violence in conflict through improving accountability and supporting survivors. Supporting local women human rights defenders and civil society organisations already working on these issues is a central element of the PSVI, as is delivering appropriate, gender-sensitive training to security forces. However, it isn't clear that these central tenants are reflected in the UK's own operations in Afghanistan and other countries.

So in Afghanistan the UK government must consult with and support women's human rights defenders and civil society organisations; and it must prioritise women's rights throughout the training and support it delivers to the Afghan National Police and Army, therefore



Director of Amnesty International UK since 2000 Kate Allen has been the prominent champion of Amnesty International's campaigns.

By Kate Allen

reflecting the principles of the PSVI.

A similar approach should be central to the UK's policy in other countries, for example in Egypt where sexual violence against women protestors appears to be a systematic attempt to force women into silence and submission. The extremely concerning and precarious situation in Egypt since President Morsi was forced from office demands a serious response from the UK and international community, and this response must include action on the sexual violence against women that has been perpetrated.

Attempts in Egypt to silence women through sexual harassment and violence is perhaps an extreme reflection of the recent abuse suffered by Criado-Perez, Creasy and other women here in the UK. But the parallels are compelling. We at Amnesty International have witnessed the challenges that women often face when they stand up for their rights, we know that such actions are often met with anything from derision to murder.

A recent survey by the World Health Organisation highlighted that one in three women in the world will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. This is a truly shocking statistic and is something all of us must challenge. Responses to such abuse must be holistic, but as Director of a membership organisation made up of ordinary people passionate about defending human rights, I know how important activism can be, both in achieving change and expressing solidarity.

As an organisation that included Beatrice Webb, Virginia Woolf, Annie Besant and Emmeline Pankhurst amongst its original members, the Fabian Society has historically offered a platform to further women's human rights.

Today the Fabian Women's Network and its members can continue this legacy and join with us to support women's rights globally and to press the UK government to ensure that these rights are pursued in foreign policy as well as domestic policy. The more that we can make those calls in a common voice, the more our voices will be heard. **f**

More midwives!

By Abi Wood & Gabrielle Bourke

Research by the NCT and WI show that new mothers are missing out



Abi Wood is Public Affairs Manager for the NCT. Gabrielle Bourke is Research and Campaigns Officer at the National Federation of Women's Institutes.

Over the last ten years, England and Wales have experienced a baby-boom, and the number of midwives simply hasn't kept up. Almost 80% of NHS trusts don't meet the recommended ratio of one midwife to 28 births, and despite the on-going baby-boom, fifty trusts and boards employed fewer midwives in 2012 than 2011. The Royal College of Midwives

'the government must turn the recent surge of interest in midwifery into more student midwives, as well as retaining existing staff and encouraging a return to practice by those who've left'

estimates that England is currently short of 5,000 midwives.

The WI, the UK's largest voluntary organisation for women, and NCT, the UK's largest charity supporting new parents, decided to investigate what the shortage of midwives really means for women who have given birth recently.

Overall, women in England and Wales now enjoy some of the highest quality maternity services in the world and many women receive excellent care. Certainly, the contrast between women's experiences when NCT was founded in 1956 and today is striking in terms of women's own

involvement in their care: the organisation campaigned for women to have access to information about what happens during childbirth, more choice over where they give birth, to be able to have their partner present and to end the routine use of interventions such as episiotomies and shaving of pubic hair.

Yet of the 2,000 women who will give birth today, many will still be denied the opportunity to make choices or be involved in decisions about their care. Even more find themselves without the support they need during the first few weeks following birth.

Following a resolution approved by the WI at their 2012 annual meeting calling for the employment of more midwives, they decided to carry out a piece of research with NCT to look at the experiences of over 5,000 women who gave birth in the past five years, three quarters of them in 2012.

Despite clear evidence about the importance of a woman's relationship with her midwife, and NICE guidance to support this, we found that 88% of women had not met the midwives who cared for them during labour and birth before going into labour and a third of women wanted their midwife to give them or their baby more attention.

Offering women a choice over where they give birth is an important element of patient-centred maternity care, and it's encouraging that over a third of trusts and boards in our sample had recently completed building projects or had plans to expand location options by building new freestanding or co-located maternity units, or funding home birth services.

However, only 23% of women reported a choice of four places to give birth, as recommended by NICE. Less than half of all the women who intended to give birth outside

obstetric units actually did so, and one in eight women did not get their choice of birth location because of a lack of staff or beds.

The situation is worse when it comes to postnatal care. While one in five said that they wanted more support during birth, 60% said they wanted more support in the postnatal period. Freedom of Information requests revealed that many trusts are unable to state how many visits women were actually receiving: some said a certain number of visits was aimed for because of NICE guidance; others said the guidance specified there should not be a set number of visits at all.

It is likely that where only one home visit is offered women will be invited to a local clinic. However, those new mothers who are lacking confidence, feeling unwell, or experiencing difficulties in feeding or caring for the baby, may not be able to get out of the house and find the clinic. Unfortunately, they are the parents who may be most desperately in need of care and support.

Midwives report some of the lowest levels of satisfaction with their job out of all the professionals working in the NHS. The pressure on them is immense. The government must turn the recent surge of interest in midwifery into more student midwives, as well as retaining existing staff and encouraging a return to practice by those who've left - and then there must be a rewarding, valued career ahead for them.

To address these problems, the WI and NCT are calling on maternity planners to urgently review staffing levels with a view to fulfilling the recommended level of one midwife to every 28 women in a hospital setting, as well as reviewing staffing levels to boost standards of postnatal care.

We urge Clinical Commissioning Groups in England and Health Boards in Wales to make maternity care a high priority and to recognise the role of midwives in improving public health and reducing health inequalities. While the current economic climate means funding is scarce, investing in services to support women during birth and the first few weeks of parenthood is one of the most effective forms of health spending. **f**

Back to basics?

Challenging the resurrection of Victorian views of working class women



Rhian E Jones writes on history, politics and popular culture at Velvet Coalmine. She is the author of *Clampdown: Pop-Cultural Wars on Class and Gender* (Zero Books, 2013).

By Rhian E Jones

In *Bad Girls in Britain*, a study of the role of gender in debates on justice and welfare, Pamela Cox argues that young women have been cast as a threatening and destabilising force in Britain since at least the early 19th century – a process fuelled by anxieties including the advance of feminism and the increasing social and financial independence of working-class girls. According to Cox ‘young single women with no domestic responsibilities to restrain their spending or their morals have been seen as irresponsible, sexually precocious pleasure-seekers who threaten the future of the family and the long-term stability of the state’. With their economic and sexual emancipation presented as the root of their declining morality, the process of reforming ‘delinquent’ girls was ‘geared to the production of respectable working-class women’, and the private sexual choices of working-class girls were publically scrutinised and judged in debates on welfare reform (Cox, p.3, p.10, p.165).

Sound familiar? Like much present-day political rhetoric, the current critical media presentation of young working-class women is a peculiar turbo-charged variant on its Victorian forerunner, seemingly intent on resurrecting stereotypes of the disresponsible, undeserving poor. Instrumental in this is the continuing representation of women who claim state support as feckless, irresponsible and threatening, their behaviour pathologised and in need of policing. As anxieties over how to manage working-class women’s growing independence influenced historical discussions on welfare and delinquency, so the current media and cultural demonization of working-class women has been used to justify the cutting of state benefits and services.

The most obvious example of this has been the rise of the ‘chav’ as media and political folk-devil. As noted by several observers, including Owen Jones and Imogen Tyler, the fine distinctions

present within working-class identity have been eroded in contemporary cultural presentations, with ‘the poor’ increasingly lumped together as ‘chavs’ regardless of their own resistance to or rejection of the label. Tyler concludes, examining a cross-section of recent newspaper reports, that Little Britain’s ‘chav’ character Vicky Pollard has become ‘figurative shorthand for “Broken Britain”

'unemployed single mothers are among the worst-hit by cuts, but government rhetoric insistently plays on the stereotype of the idle and recklessly promiscuous single mother'

and the underclass’, eclipsing more nuanced portrayals of working-class identity. She further notes how such ‘fictional fabrications’ can ‘come to shape perceptual realities’ which in turn ‘come to organise “public opinion” and incite “consent” for punishing the poor through the rollback of welfare systems’ (Tyler, p.164-5).

Stereotypes of the female ‘chav’, in particular, fit into historical narratives in which promiscuity, irresponsibility, and vulgarity in dress, speech and behaviour are attributed to working-class women as signs of ‘disrespectable’ femininity, with this disrespectability then justifying a withdrawal of support in the form of housing or child benefit. Anti-‘chav’ commentary often reveals a disquieting obsession with damaging stereotypes of working-class women. Their alleged promiscuity and precociousness, their numerous pregnancies – presumed to

result from a thoughtless or scheming failure to use contraception – as well as their status outside traditional family roles, deriving financial support from the state rather than a husband, are used to imply an undeserving irresponsibility, aggressive lack of deference, and refusal of family and community hierarchies. This intersection of sexism and class prejudice makes explicit the revival of the Victorian and Edwardian spectre of working-class women, with their hazardous lack of morality, taste and discrimination and their unregulated, untrammelled sexuality, spawning hundreds of equally depraved and financially burdensome children.

The post-2008 economic crisis, and the subsequent imposition of austerity, has had a significant impact on women, from job losses in sectors in which women are disproportionately represented, to cuts in childcare services and women’s refuges. Unemployed single mothers are among the worst-hit by cuts, but government rhetoric insistently plays on the stereotype of the idle and recklessly promiscuous single mother – invariably characterising her as working-class – and the moral decline, sexual depravity, and social disintegration she is held to represent, to validate the reduction or removal of state support in general. All this with barely a glance at context or circumstance, with the working-class ‘bad girl’ understood not in terms of poverty or social exclusion but in neoliberal terms of individual moral degeneracy, and the inadequacies of single mothers viewed as purely individual failings or pathology rather than related to their demoralising lack of adequate financial and material resources.

Acknowledging that the discourse around ‘chavs’ can be disingenuous, and provides a cover for denigrating the social agency and sexual autonomy of working-class women, as well as for wider political attacks on the unemployed and working poor, would significantly enrich the kind of mainstream feminist debate which often ignores these fundamental issues. **f**

Empowering women

Access to power in the workplace will strengthen women's position in society

In societies around the world, women have less access to, and influence over, decisions that affect their lives than men. Whether made in local or national parliament, within business or communities, women are within a minority amongst decision-makers. Women still lack power and influence in key business and public roles and this is something we should be committed to changing. Women's unemployment has risen to a 26 year high whilst men's is decreasing and government's plans for growth are leaving women behind. This still remains the case across the world, where women still remain undervalued and invisible due to domestic work such as household chores still being undermined.

Despite women having the potential to contribute so much to our economy, the Equality and Human Rights Commission found just two of Welsh top 50 companies employed female chief executives. Businesses should support women's progression in business and encourage aspiring women to reach their full potential by working

'women make up 97% of childcare apprentices and 92% hairdressing, apprentices but only 3% of engineering apprentices or 1% construction.'

with them. According to 2011 data, 26% of secondary school head teachers are women, despite 75% of all teachers being women. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission Report, 23% of local government chief executives are women, despite 68% of local authority workers being women. Women shouldn't be appointed according to gender, but according to merit and their gained achievement - it should be the best person for the job. Employment should be based on skills, knowledge,

and experience and not on gender. These figures suggest this is not the case.

Private sector jobs growth has favoured men, with only 40% of new jobs going to women. Areas targeted by government are predominantly science, technology, engineering and manufacturing which are mostly dominated by men - areas where the pay is significantly higher, although

'women have borne the brunt of cuts to the public sector workforce so far and if the current pattern of women making up the majority of those losing their jobs but the minority of those benefitting from new employment opportunities continues, the worst case scenario would see some 1.48 million women unemployed by 2018'

the focus on sectors dominated by women should be just as strong. It is essential that women are encouraged to achieve their full potential.

While men dominate in the private sector, 65% of public sector employees are women, meaning they are particularly at risk to changes in government policy. Women have borne the brunt of cuts to the public sector workforce so far and if the current pattern of women making up the majority of those losing their jobs but the minority of those benefitting from new employment opportunities continues, the worst case scenario would see some 1.48 million women unemployed by 2018. It is a worrying that since the start of 2013, men's unemployment has fallen by 15,000 and women's has increased by 40,000.

Investment in high quality services providing information, advice and guidance on career and study choices to women and girls which eliminate the current gender stereotyping, bias and discrimination is needed. We need women role models, and women in leadership roles in order to inspire our future generation of women, and women



Roxana is Vice Chair for Hampshire and Isle of Wight Young Labour, UK Global Poverty Ambassador, part of the UK Youth Leadership Team and former Chair for Southampton City Youth Parliament

By Roxana

need lifelong access to high quality careers information and training to reskill. Women need guidance about which industries offer the best pay, and gender assumptions need to be challenged further: a TUC report revealed that women make up 97% of childcare apprentices and 92% hairdressing, apprentices but only 3% of engineering apprentices or 1% construction. As a society, we need

to increase the number of opportunities available for women in sectors such as engineering and change the perceived image of being a male dominated area only.

On a positive note, the government has welcomed to double the number of women in FTSE company boardrooms, as Business Secretary Vince Cable has committed to promoting gender equality in UK listed companies. It is true that we have made significant gains in empowering women, such as reducing the disparities in school enrolment with increasing access to paid work.

It is important that we realise the importance of women having an equal say and influence in society. We are much more likely to achieve more as a country whilst advocating and placing in action gender equality rights. Educating women does help to contribute to the quality, size, and productivity of the workforce, but we need to ensure that they are properly represented at the top of industry, and in all industries. If we do, women's talents will be an effective driver in getting the UK's economy back on its feet. **f**

The Fabian Women's Network is a network of over 1500 women, working to support and encourage women's engagement in policy and politics.

We take a lead in promoting policy that has the needs of women at its heart.

We bring women from across the country, from politics, industry, education and the media together to share knowledge, skills and opportunities.

Fabiana

We established Fabiana in 2011 on a new wave of British feminism and the magazine is now leading cutting edge debates on how to equip the UK for growth, reform our economy and the state, and how to encourage more women in science.

Events

We hold events on a range of subjects as well as regular receptions attracting up to 300 women. FWN held women's hustings for both the 2010 Labour party leadership election and the 2007 deputy leadership elections. Our events are attended by movers and shakers from all sectors.

Political education and mentoring programme

We are proud of our mentoring programme, now in its second year. The programme lasts one year and is open to women who want to move forward in political or public life. FWN mentees thrive both in politics, as they apply for parliamentary selections, and in many other sectors.

Networking

We offer our members a unique opportunity to build networks and share ideas, skills and opportunities. In addition to our annual receptions we have recently launched our monthly informal networking drinks in central London. There are plans to extend these to other parts of the country.

Find out more:



@FabianWomen



facebook.com/
FabianWomen

Or sign up to our newsletter by emailing fabianwomen@fabians.org.uk

Join the Fabian Women

£3
a month

Your details

Please complete both sections and return to:

Fabian Membership, FREEPOST SW1 570, 11 Dartmouth St, London, SW1H 9BN

Title Name

Address

Postcode

Email

Telephone

Date of Birth / /

£3 per month Standard Rate

£1.50 per month Reduced Rate
(unwaged/student/retired)

Instruction to bank

Originator's ID: 971666

Name of bank



Address

Postcode

Acct Holder

Acct no. Sort code - -

I instruct you to pay direct debits from my account at the request of the Fabian Society.
The instruction is subject to the safeguards of the Direct Debit guarantee.

Signature Date / /

FABIAN WOMEN'S NETWORK AT LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

FABIAN
WOMEN

The Role of Women in Business and Economic Growth

Sunday 22 September 19:30 - 21.00

Norfolk Suite, Mercure Brighton Seafront Hotel, Brighton

Featuring: Ivana Bartoletti (Fabian Women's Network) (Chair), Katja Hall (CBI), Fiona Hathorn (Managing Director, Women on Boards UK), Councillor Sarah Hayward (Leader, Camden Council), Seema Malhotra MP (Chair, Parliamentary Labour Party Business Group), Deborah Mattinson (Co-founder, BritainThinks), Chuka Umunna MP (Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills – *invited*)

*In association with: Fabian Women's Network
Labour Finance and Industry Group*



Giving Birth in Austerity Britain: The Future of Maternal Health

Monday 23 September 08:30 – 09:30

Norfolk Suite, Mercure Brighton Seafront Hotel, Brighton

Featuring: Ade Adeyemi (Chair, Young Fabians Health Network) (Chair), Rosalind Bragg (Director, Maternity Action), Elizabeth Duff (Senior Policy Adviser, NCT), Samara Hammond (Chief Executive, AMREF UK), Jamie Reed MP (Shadow Health Minister)

*In association with: Fabian Women's Network
Young Fabians Health Network*



What Next for Women's Rights and Foreign Policy?

Tuesday 24 September 12:30 – 13:30

Hall 7, Room D, Hilton Metropole, Brighton

Featuring: Sarah Hutchinson (FWN) (Chair), Kerry McCarthy MP (Shadow Foreign Office Minister), Kate Allen (Director, Amnesty International UK), Stella Creasy MP, Samira Hamidi (Afghan Women's Network),

*In association with: Fabian Women's Network
Amnesty International*



Join FWN for as little as £1.50 a month fabianwomen.co.uk/join



twitter.com/fabianwomen



facebook.com/fabianwomen