

# Women Liberal Democrats

Winter Newsletter 2006



**Brighton 2006: Full report inside**

**Ming tells us about his equality drive**

**Diana Wallis MEP finds political equality - in the Arctic Circle**

**WLD/WLF 120th Anniversary celebrations planned for early 2007  
- more information inside**

**Welcome to the Winter WLD Newsletter, we hope you enjoy reading it. If you have any comments or ideas for future articles please let us know!**

## **What WLD does**

WLD is an organisation that exists to support women within the party, to work for changes to improve their opportunities and to represent the Liberal Democrats to outside groups concerned with women's issues. The main responsibilities include:

- supporting women taking up roles within the party
- ensuring that key policy issues are discussed
- providing networking opportunities
- being consulted by the Party on national policy

WLD also runs campaigns on issues that particularly affect women. Our most recent campaign is about rape and the need to tackle the low conviction rate for this crime. If you would like more information about this, or have ideas for future campaigns, please contact the office.

## **Executive Meetings**

Exec meetings are usually held in the Board Room in Cowley Street, starting at 1pm. All members are welcome to attend.

The last meeting of the current executive committee was held on Saturday the 11th of November (not the 18th as previously advertised).

The first meeting of the new executive committee for 2007 will be held on Saturday the 6th of January.

## **WLD Pin Badges**

As some of you may know, WLD has launched a stylish black and yellow pin badge (pictured below). We still have badges available. If you would like to show your support of WLD by wearing one please send £1.20 to the WLD office and we will send one out to you as soon as we can. (the price includes postage and packing)



## **In this Issue...**

- ❖ Lorely Burt MP gives us an update on the womens issues she is pursuing at the moment
- ❖ Marie Mannville, WLD Intern, reports back from the Brighton Federal Conference
- ❖ Diana Wallis MEP reports on an example of parliamentary equality for women
- ❖ Sir Menzies Campbell MP discusses the diversity and equality drive
- ❖ Emma Bone gives us some tips on getting selected as a PPC
- ❖ Dee Doocey WLD Member writes on child trafficking
- ❖ Jackie Bell tells us about the Scottish Conference and upcoming SWLD events



## **The WLD Executive**

### **President**

*Sue Doughty*

### **Vice Presidents**

*Sandra Gidley MP*

*Lorely Burt MP*

### **Chair**

*Liz Evans*

### **Vice-Chairs**

*Lizzie Jewkes*

*Miranda Whitehead*

### **Treasurer**

*Vera Head*

### **Voting Executive Members**

*Poddy Clark*

*Emma Coakley*

*Sheonaidh Cumming*

*Thoraya El-Rayyes*

*Margaret Fairman*

*Claire Jackson*

*Pauline Jenkins*

*Brenda Smith*

*Sue Vincent*

### **Non-Voting Executive Members**

*Ruth Coleman (International Rep)*

*Ros Kissell (WACUNA)*

*Monica Howes (Women's National Commission)*

### **Scottish Women Liberal Democrats**

**Convenor:** *Jacquie Bell*

**Exec Rep:** *Joanna Toomey*

## **WLD Office**

*The WLD Head of Office is temporarily Marie Mannveille until January 2007. You can contact Marie, or any of the Executive, at:*

*Women Liberal Democrats*

*4 Cowley Street*

*London*

*SW1P 3NB*

*020 7227 1208*

## **View from the Chair**

WLD had an extremely successful conference in Brighton where we held a fascinating fringe meeting on women's international participation in politics; won joint first prize



for best party stand; had our motion on rape debated on the conference floor; and signed up many new members.

I'm very much looking forward to continuing as Chair as we head into 2007 and celebrate the 120 year anniversary of the Women's Liberal Federation. We plan to run a programme of commemorative events celebrating women's involvement in the party, please get in touch with the office if you would like to be involved.

We are currently recruiting for a new Head of Office so please bear with us if you get a delayed response from the office. I would like to thank Rebecca Crosier for all her hard work and wish her the best of luck in her new position at Breakthrough for Breast Cancer. I would also like to thank our Intern Marie Mannveille who has been helping us for the past 6 months on a variety of projects and in 2007 will continue to be involved with WLD as an Executive Committee member.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and new year.

# THE SECRET TORTURE PERPETRATED ON WOMEN IN BRITAIN

**Lorely Burt MP, spokesperson for Women and Equality, tells us about a shocking issue she is currently working on that affects women in Britain today.**

We think of Female Genital Mutilation (also known as Female Circumcision or Female Genital Cutting) as something perpetrated on women in far-away, 'backward' countries. But the shocking truth is it is happening here in Britain every day to British Muslim girls and women born here.

A staggering estimated 279,000 British women have been subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) despite the fact that it is illegal to perform it here and also to take girls and women out of the country to have it performed overseas. What seems to make this even worse is that this procedure is carried out by women on women.

Although it is estimated that nearly 6,500 girls a year are at risk of being subjected to FGM, no prosecutions have ever been brought against someone for performing FGM or for having it performed on their child.

The Metropolitan Police have set up a special unit to work with other agencies and alert parents to the fact that even if they take their daughters out of the country to have this procedure performed it is still illegal.

The unit believes that it has successfully intervened in about 20 cases in the past year. That's 20 out of a potential 6,500 or 0.3% of the estimated number of young women at risk. That's hardly good enough.

One of the problems that the unit complains of is that the families and communities engaged in this practice do not speak of FGM outside of their communities and so it is difficult to obtain the necessary information. Even if the police can find out about the possibility that this is happening, no one is willing to come forward and bring formal charges.

FGM often takes place under terribly unhygienic circumstances and many young women who are subjected to this tradition, experience serious reproductive health problems, either at the time of the operation or at a later date, especially during childbirth.

Currently there are very few medical professionals who are trained to deal with the complex issues surrounding FGM, either the physical after-effects or the psychological consequences.

Tragically, many women who come from communities where FGM is practiced and who do not have this done to them are ostracised by their community, are felt to have brought shame on their family and are considered to be unmarriageable.

Clearly making these practises illegal doesn't solve this deep seated problem. But there are things we can do in Parliament.

Well done to the House of Lords Judicial Committee for overturning the Court of Appeal's ruling and granting Zainab Esther Fornah formal status as a refugee on the grounds that women who feared being forced to have FGM constituted an appropriate group under the asylum regulations.

What does make me wonder is why this case had to go that far and why Ms Fornah had to spend three years fighting for her right to not have her clitoris and both sets of labia removed by force.

I wonder if it had been a man who feared having his external genitalia removed, against his will and by force, whether this decision would have been so difficult to achieve!

I have tabled an Early Day Motion in Parliament calling for the Crown Prosecution Service to be able to prosecute without the need for a complaint to be made.

Waris Dirie, UN-Special Ambassador said "Female Genital Mutilation has nothing to do with culture, tradition or religion. It is a torture and a crime, which needs to be fought against."

So much more needs to be done. I'll be working with charities and agencies to develop awareness, re-educate communities and make this blight on the lives of women here and abroad a thing of the past.



# Brighton 2006



## Marie Mannveille, WLD's intern, gives us a summary of what was a very successful Autumn Conference for WLD

WLD enjoyed a highly successful conference in Brighton in September, with a fascinating and well-attended fringe event, a lively debate on our policy motion, a healthy number of visitors to our exhibition stand, and best of all, plenty of new members! A warm welcome to all those who joined us at Conference, and we hope you enjoy your first edition of the newsletter.

We were delighted at the end of the week to be presented with the award for 'Best Party Stand' by Elspeth Campbell; our theme this year was the international representation of women in government, with the stand covered in the flags of different countries with their respective percentages of female members of government. These proved something of a talking point for delegates as they passed, particularly as regards the more surprising statistics – few expected the USA to have nearly half the proportion of female representatives of Afghanistan!

### Rape Motion

Conference also saw the official launch of our rape campaign, introduced in the last newsletter, with the debate on our policy motion on the subject. WLD Vice-Chair Lizzie Jewkes took the stage to propose the motion, which calls for greater practical support for victims such as dedicated helplines and specialist prosecutors, and an effort to challenge the social myths surrounding rape. In a confident and highly effective speech, she highlighted the worryingly low conviction rate in rape trials in this country (around 5%), well

below the rest of Europe, the US, Canada or Australia, and drew attention to the myths that abound as to why rape happens and who is to blame, the other key point raised by the motion.

While there was a broad consensus among subsequent speakers in support of the motion, the only dissent coming from those who did not believe it went far enough, the proposed amendment regarding giving men accused of rape anonymity unless found guilty caused far more controversy. Essentially, the arguments concerned the impact of 'trial by media' on men publicly accused of rape, and the damage done affecting them for the rest of their lives, against the point that it is inappropriate to allow anonymity in rape cases when paedophiles and murderers continue to be named, and the importance of preserving the openness of the British justice system. A counter argument was also made that publicly naming rapists enabled previous victims to come forward and strengthen the case against the accused. While WLD did not take a formal position on the amendment during the debate to ensure the passing of the motion as a whole, the Executive had voted against it in their meeting the previous day, and while Sue Vincent and Pauline Jenkins put in cards to speak during the debate, unfortunately neither was called, and the amendment was passed.

Importantly, the motion itself was passed near-unanimously, a great success for the campaign and a very positive start on which to build in the future as it now forms part of Lib Dem policy. We will be continuing to promote the rape issue actively, and if you would like to get involved with our campaign, please contact the office for a copy of our Campaign Pack. Alternatively, this can be downloaded from the members area of our website [www.wld.org.uk](http://www.wld.org.uk).



# Brighton 2006



## Equal i ty and Di versi ty

Monday afternoon also brought good news for women as a result of the statement made by the Federal Executive about the issues of Diversity and Equality. Simon Hughes MP, who affirmed the general point that the under-representation of women and other minority groups in elected public office is unhealthy for democracy, proposed the motion, which included the statement that 'the gender, disability and ethnicity of selected candidates should be considered when assigning target status to UK parliamentary constituencies.' This element proved highly controversial and was opposed by an amendment, with many and various speakers debating both the amendment and the motion as a whole. The issue of 'positive discrimination' has always been a controversial one for the Party, and while the leadership maintains this policy is an incentive rather than bribery, this was clearly not the view of many delegates. However the amendment was voted down, and the motion itself was passed un-amended, which is good news for all minority groups including women. To co-incide with this decision, Ming also announced provision of a £200 000 fund to be used to support ethnic minority and female candidates in the parliamentary selection process. Rest assured we will be lobbying vigorously to ensure that our views on how this money should be used are taken full account of!

The diversity and equality theme was continued in the evening when Ming hosted a drinks reception for Liberal Democrat Women, where he made a speech commending the hard work of the women in attendance and encouraging them to put themselves forward to stand for election. Baroness Shirley Williams also spoke, as did Jo Swinson MP. Those present were encouraged to take a CGB contact card to fill in to take the first step towards putting themselves forward, or if not for themselves then to give it to someone they thought would make a good MP.



**Baroness Shirley Williams who spoke at Mings drinks reception for women**

## Fri nge Event

We held our fringe event on the evening of Tuesday the 19<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton Metropole. The event, chaired by our President Sue Doughty, was well attended despite being held in the basement! The theme of the event was the level of representation of women in national parliaments across the world, looking at what lessons the UK might learn from other nations with higher representation, and each of our four speakers brought a unique and informative perspective on the topic.

Lorely Burt MP was first to take the floor, and she began by reminding us of the context of the situation, highlighting the levels of representation of women in other countries. She noted that one might expect Sweden to be high up the list (as it is with 45% women) however we may not have realised that countries like Mozambique (34%), Cuba (36%) and Iraq (25%) chart significantly higher than the UK in this area; we come in at



# Brighton 2006

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a poor 51st with only 19% women in parliament. Lorely went on to entertain us with anecdotes about some of her early experiences as an MP taking on the 'boys' club' atmosphere of the House of Commons and the "penguin" suits in Portcullis House, which met with a hearty round of applause!

Next to speak was Jenny Watson, Chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission. She focused on the findings of the 2006 Sex and Power index (a report on women's representation in the UK produced by EOC). According to their statistics, if the election of women to parliament continues at the current rate, it will take up to 200 years to achieve an equal number of women and men. She made a particular point of the fact that the Sex Discrimination Act was amended in 2002 to exempt political parties selection procedures in order to make it legal to take positive action, but this only provides a window of opportunity until 2015. Therefore if we want to see more women in parliament in less than 200 years then we need to act now.



Mary Ann Stephenson, Democracy Consultant to the Women's National Council, then took her turn to add to the debate. Her remarks centred on the fact that the countries that have achieved high levels of representation of women have only managed to do so due to targeted policies such as quotas. She noted that 'new' democracies had an easier task as they can write the rule book with representation in mind, whereas established democracies like our own find it more difficult, a significant factor in understanding trends in female representation in government. She suggested that we can only hope to make a

real impact on levels of representation of women in this country with the use of quotas. While it is true that quotas are a very unpopular idea with the majority of the Liberal Democrat membership, the current situation, and the future as described by Jenny's statistics mean we may have to again revisit the idea of positive action in the future.

Last but by no means least to speak on the subject was Natasha Stott Despoja, the Democrat senator for South Australia. As former leader of the Australian Democrats and the youngest person, let alone woman, ever to be elected to the Australian senate, she is certainly an authority on the subject, and had even worse horror stories to share than Lorely! She described her experiences of women's struggle for representation in Australia, including a memorable point about the extent to which women's issues get neglected by a male dominated parliament; the government of Australia decided to take away a significant amount from the budget for dealing with domestic violence in order to give every home in the country a fridge magnet with a terrorism hotline on. Natasha was an absolute inspiration to all present and a prime example of what can be achieved by talented women in politics, and we are extremely grateful to her for speaking at the event.



At the end, a few questions were taken by the panel, relating mostly to challenging the attitudes of individuals yet to be convinced of the need for greater female representation. Overall the discussion was very well received, and we have since had a lot of positive feedback on the event. I for one found the speakers inspiring, and as a result am more determined than ever to campaign for greater representation of women in parliament. I hope you will join me.

# Equality Achieved.....in the Arctic Circle!

**Diana Wallis MEP discovers that genuine equality of representation does exist in government.**

The Sami are an indigenous people of Norway and Finland, living as reindeer herdsman in the Arctic Circle.

The sami live in the polar region in what today comprises the northern area of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia's Kola Peninsula. Norway has the largest Sami population. The Sami population is estimated to be around 75,000, though estimates vary depending on criteria used.

The Sami Parliament in Norway has 43 representatives of which 51 percent are women. This is thought to be a record for any legislature in the world. The Sami Parliament in Norway was first convened on the 9th of October 1989. The representatives are elected every four years by direct vote from 13 constituencies. It was also around this time that the Sami women formed their own organisation called Sarahkka.



**Diana Wallis MEP with Sami Council President Aili Keskitalo**

**Map of where the Sami people live**



Liberal Democrat Euro MP, Diana Wallis, met the President of the Sami Council, Ms. Aili Keskitalo, in Oslo recently as part of a European Parliament visit to Norway focusing on climate change. Aili Keskitalo, who became president in 2005, is the first Sami woman to be president of a Sami Parliament.

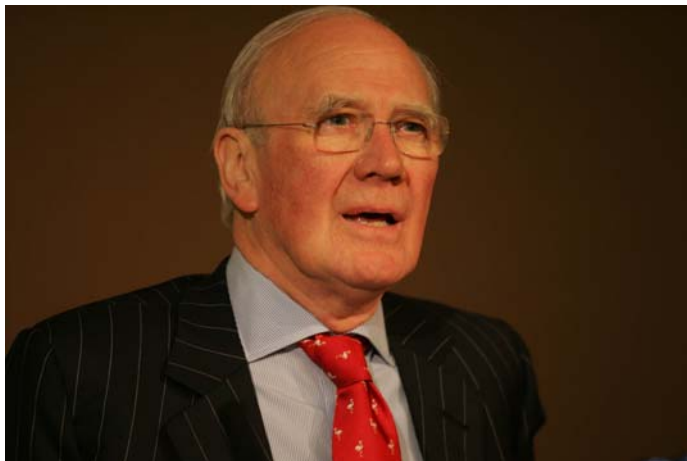
Diana, the President of the European Parliament's delegation to Norway, said after the meeting:

"The Sami people along with other indigenous groups in the Arctic are in the frontline as far as climate change is concerned. It is important to hear from these peoples just how climate change is affecting their often fragile livelihoods."



# Ming on achieving equality in our Party

**Our Leader, Sir Menzies Campbell, gives us an insight into his plans for greater equality in the party.**



You might recall that during last year's Liberal Democrats leadership election, I made a commitment to improve the diversity of our parliamentary party in the House of Commons at the next election.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to update you on the progress that has been made, and to highlight the role that you can play in taking this project forward.

Since my election as party leader, I have established a fund to ensure that in our target seats there is additional financial support where female candidates are selected. In the summer I appointed Steve Hitchins to administer this fund. He is working both with the Candidates Office and the Campaigns Department at Cowley Street as well as other Party bodies, notably Women Liberal Democrats. I am pleased to say we are already seeing more women being selected in winnable seats.

This is very important for our future. A democratic, representative body that is not drawing its best talent from the widest pool

won't appeal to the full breadth of the electorate. That is why we must act now.

Of course this is not a new issue for our party. We have been debating how to deliver a more diverse House of Commons team for some years. A long list of ideas has been rejected by conference. But I sense that the mood in the party has changed. Without interfering with the authority and responsibility of our members to select their parliamentary candidates I am certain we will have a more diverse team.

I would like as many WLD members as possible to be active; and you can help.

First, I want you to make your voice heard at a local level. There is still a minority of members that do not appreciate the full potential of women members to shape the future of our party. Many of my fellow MPs are doing fantastic work mentoring and supporting women and ethnic minority candidates to ensure that the next generation is more diverse. These and other promising new candidates will need the support of local members to be selected and to win seats in the Commons. I hope they can count on you.

Second, you can encourage, foster, support and 'talent spot' women of potential both inside and outside our party who have the qualities that would make them good MPs. This initiative will not be completed in the space of one election cycle. It is a process that will grow and develop, but we must make rapid progress now.

Of the many talented women who could be future parliamentarians, many will not yet be party members - but with proper encouragement and support they could play a very great role in our party's future.

# Guide to Getting Selected as a PPC

**Ellie Cumbo, administrator for the CGB introduces us to what the CGB do, and PPC Emma Bone provides some advise about getting selected.**

At the Campaign for Gender Balance (formerly the Gender Balance Task Force), we're currently celebrating a number of recent successes, with women we have helped being selected as Prospective Parliamentary Candidates in seats as diverse as South West Surrey, Broadlands, Oldham East and Saddleworth, and Aberdeen South. With several high-profile selections coming up very soon, there's plenty of work to keep us occupied, but that doesn't mean we're satisfied with the number of women coming forward.

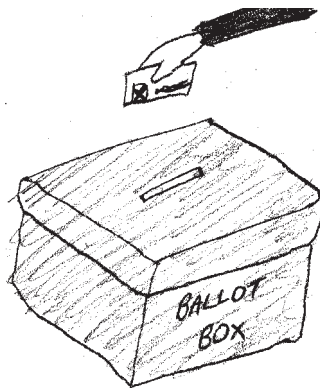
Not many people know that women make up only 22% of the List of Approved Parliamentary Candidates, the database of people who have been assessed as having the required knowledge and skills to make good Liberal Democrat MPs. Only Approved Candidates may stand in any seat, and so this low figure means that it's hard work finding female applicants no matter how supportive the local party may be.

Emma Bone, the new PPC for Filton and Bradley Stoke, is determined that politics can be a woman's world too. This is her honest expert advice on getting selected; if you're interested, get in touch with the Candidates' Office on 0207 222 7999, or at [candidates.office@libdems.org.uk](mailto:candidates.office@libdems.org.uk), for more information about becoming an Approved Candidate. To find out more about what the Campaign for Gender Balance does, see our website at [www.genderbalance.org.uk](http://www.genderbalance.org.uk).

## 1. Find your seat

Get a Map. Yes, simple, but when your geography is as bad as mine (I thought Hartlepool was in Norfolk!!!) a good map of the area and surrounding areas is essential.

If you live in the area, or have a family or work connection then you already know why the seat matters to you. But if you're moving further afield this is a critical question. Every member will ask you. The reason is up to you.



I knew that in my process of looking for somewhere to live I needed certain things in the constituency: good shops! No, seriously, I have always lived in villages outside towns. I need a mixture of environments. I love country villages, but I need a mixture to remind me why I want to do this job. There is no right answer but you must know yours.



**Emma Bone PPC for Filton and Bradley Stoke**

## 2. Apply

A bit obvious, but even if you change your mind before the interview, apply anyway. It's important to take each step in turn. There is no advantage in worrying about how you'll get a job in your new constituency, when you haven't sent the form off yet.

Spend time on your application. The form is pretty standard so make yours your own. Put the things about you that matter on there. Tell the selection panel something about you. It's always a good idea to pass it past a friend as well. An outside perspective can come up with things you've missed, or point out sentences that are over-complicated.

## 3. The shortlisting.

Arrive early. It'll keep you cool and calm. Have water with you (but not too much). You've done most of the preparation in writing the application. This process is about you finding out about them too. Be yourself. It's no good fighting to be selected and saying what you think they want to hear because that'll trip you up when you become the candidate - there is no turning back then.

## 4. The manifesto

The rules – read the rules. Then read them again. Then ask the Returning Officer anything at all you're not clear about. Most of them don't bite!

Who are you and why should they select you: These are the only questions you need to answer on

the manifesto. Keep it simple and clearly laid out. And get it in on time!

### 5. The members

As with canvassing, the first door is always the hardest. The best bit is they are unlikely to be rabidly anti Lib Dem. Be yourself. Be relaxed and be confident.

If you have a friend who can go in the car with you it helps. You're not left looking at the street map whilst driving. I got lost countless times and ended up driving round and round. The friend also helps when someone tells you they're voting for another candidate.

### 6. The Husting

OK, so this was one of the things I was most worried about. The speech went through so many variations, I lost count, as I asked friends to read through mine. Although I recommend doing this, too many cooks can spoil the broth and stress you out. Different people change different things so keep the editors to a minimum. As it happened one of the people who had input to the script was very much "on message" with me and a lot of their ideas went into the final version.

When meeting members, make a note of the issues that are raised as they are likely to come up in the questions at the hustings.

Prepare and practise your speech so that you don't look at the paper too much. And when you get there, take a deep breath and just enjoy the event. One tip is to ask the friend you take with you to sit at the back. That way you are likely to look at them, and this will bring your head up and help your projection, posture and confidence.

### 7. Places to get help

I wouldn't be the PPC for Filton and Bradley Stoke if I hadn't had so much support from friends, family and colleagues in the Liberal Democrats. Ask your friends for help.

It's not always easy to ask - we know how busy our friends are. Do it anyway. I was really lucky that one of my closest friends made the time to ring me, and it was always on days when I thought things were going badly. Not every friend had psychic powers and they won't know you need them if you don't ask. It really does help with perspective.

There is training available through WLD and the Campaign for Gender Balance on most of the things I've mentioned here. Just ask someone!



## Historical Interest

WLD treasurer Vera Head recently discovered an interesting pamphlet from the early days of the womens liberal organisation. It is a booklet of recipes, presumably compiled from contributions by WLA members at the time. Printed on the front of the booklet is the event they were produced for: the Grand Liberal Bazaar held at Windsor Halls, Bradford on the 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st of March 1928. We think the booklet would have been produced and sold at this early equivalent of a conference to raise funds for the accredited 'north and central division women's liberal associations'.

The recipes included make for an interesting read, including instructions for 'bachelors omelette', 'ginger beer' and 'apricot souffle'. However, the recipe that delighted the WLD office the most was the one reprinted below. Nearly eighty years on this recipe is still relevant today!

### Recipe for Making and Preserving Friends

Select some sound hearts, be very careful not to bruise them with unfeeling words. Take the milk of human kindness, one heartful; add to this plenty of tact, warm the mixture with sympathy, but do not let it get too hot at first, else it will only ferment mischief. Knead it with plenty of the oil of unselfishness to make all smooth, and beware of jars. The mixture should be kept in a warm corner of the heart, and years only serve to improve the flavour of friends thus preserved.



recipe by Mrs. J. Hoyle, 254 Washington Street, Bradford.

# SWLD News

## SWLD Convenor Jacquie Bell updates us on events from north of the border.

Jacquie has continued to be a member of the Scottish Health policy working group and she is a member of the Federal Working Party on Tackling, Poverty, Inequality and Lack of Opportunity.

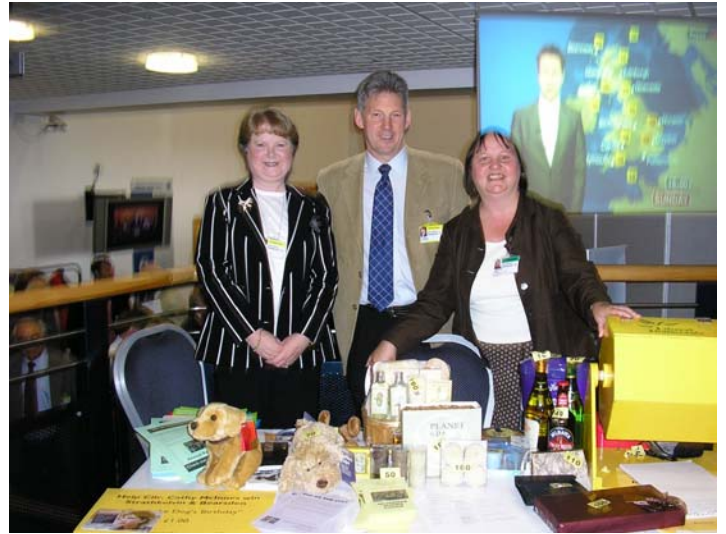
### SWLD AGM

The AGM will be held at Clifton Terrace at 2 pm on December 2nd. Prior to this members will be sharing a buffet lunch with Scottish Executive members. The AGM speaker will be committee member Amy Rodger who works for the Electoral Reform Society. She will be speaking on campaigning in the new STV style elections.

### Brighton

A very encouraging number of members attended Federal Conference in Brighton. While I was there I successfully promoted the new policy on Hospital Nutrition. The motion was summated by Steve Webb and was welcomed by Age Concern and Help the Aged amongst others.

### Jacquie Bell and Steve Webb MP discuss the hospital nutrition policy motion in Brighton



**Cathy McInnes PPC and Jacquie Bell encouraging George Lyon MSP to have a go on the Autumn Conference stall.**

### Scottish Conference

At the recent Scottish Autumn Conference money was successfully raised for general funds by a "Find the Liberal Democrat Lady Peer" tombola, as well as a special competition for Cathy McInness who is fighting Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Jo Swinson's area) for Holyrood.

### Holyrood Campaign

The Holyrood campaign is hotting up alongside the first STV Scottish Council elections. May is getting nearer and a number of SWLD members will be fighting as candidates. A training day for women candidates will be held on the 6th of January in Edinburgh (at the County Hotel Dalkeith) with Sal Brinton as trainer. The cost of the day will be around £20 including refreshments and buffet lunch. A number of people have already signed up but contact Jacquie if you want more information. ([sbell@easynet.co.uk](mailto:sbell@easynet.co.uk))



# The Scandal of Child Trafficking

**Former WLD Chair Dee Doocey, Liberal Democrat member of the London Assembly and a member of the Metropolitan Police Authority, highlights the problem of child trafficking in this country.**

It's hard to believe but, six years into the twenty-first century, child slavery is still going strong in Britain. It remains a big problem but the responsible authorities have barely begun to deal with it.

The number of children brought into Britain as domestic slaves is alarming. Some are put to work as childminders or cleaners. Some are forced, Oliver Twist style, into street crime. Others are used for benefit fraud or are sexually exploited.

The children's parents are tricked into sending them to the UK with promises of a good education. But instead, their children are condemned to a life of slavery.

The current system is totally unequipped to deal with the problem.

Three years ago, there was a pilot project between Police and Immigration Officers at Heathrow Airport called Operation Paladin Child. It was set up to investigate the extent of child trafficking. In just three months, 1800 unaccompanied children came through the airport. The team judged that at least one in three were vulnerable, and nearly half were under eleven years old.

In one incident, an Eastern European woman admitted that she had been paid to deliver three children, that weren't hers, to a central London address. But before she was caught she had made the same trip three times. Who knows what fate awaited these children?

There's now a small Paladin team working at Heathrow. I spent a day with them recently, and was shocked to hear of what they're uncovering. I'll give you just three examples:

- A Vietnamese boy of 14 was brought into Britain and put to work to grow cannabis. He was given a mattress, a rice boiler and a mobile phone – and left completely alone imprisoned in a flat.

- Another 14-year old boy, this time from South Africa, was smuggled here in a container on a ship, repeatedly raped, and put to work in a Lonon factory by his uncle. When he complained, he was shown a photo of his mother, dead from gunshot wounds, and told he'd have to carry on working otherwise the rest of his family would suffer the same fate.
- And who can forget the tragic case of Victoria Clombia, brought into Britain by her aunt for benefit fraud.

Yet despite the scale of the problem, the Paladin team could be closed down at any time due to a lack of funding.

Three key changes are needed:

- Independent funding for the Paladin team and the resources to allow it to cover other points of entry besides Heathrow.
- An increase in the minimum age for children to travel alone internationally. On most airlines, children over the age of twelve can travel unaccompanied, with no checks on where they go after they land.
- A public awareness campaign to encourage people to report suspected cases of child trafficking.

I am determined to shame the government into taking action on this disgraceful practice and have set up an online petition at [www.stopchildtrafficking.org.uk](http://www.stopchildtrafficking.org.uk)

We need as many signatures as possible to make the government take this issue seriously. Please sign yourself and, if possible, ask other people you know to do the same. If you produce your own website, blog or e-newsletter, please link to my website and encourage more people to sign.





**Annual Dinner to celebrate  
the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
of the  
Womens Liberal Federation**

**Venue: The National Liberal Club**

**Date: Thursday the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2007**

**arrive 6.45 for Dinner at 7.30pm**

**Tickets: £45 each**

The ticket price will include a superb three course dinner with wine, and the event will be attended by many high-profile Parliamentarians.

Tickets for this event will be available shortly for seats at tables for 8 or 10 people, all are welcome. Tickets can be reserved by returning the form at the bottom of the page to our office at the following address:  
WLD, 4 Cowley Street, London, SW1P 3NB.

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I would like to reserve..... tickets to the 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner at £45 per ticket (incl.Wine)

Name.....

Address.....

.....

I enclose a cheque for £..... dated.....(after 01/01/2007)

## Local Elections - Can You Help?

Local Government Elections are coming up, and WLD would like to encourage its members to help out in their local area. Any way you can contribute would be greatly appreciated, from canvassing door to door, to phone calling, leafleting or any other assistance. Womens help is needed at all levels in the party and we hope you would like to get involved. If you would like assistance finding out who to contact in your local area, please contact the WLD office and we will point you in the right direction!

## Anniversary Dinner Reminder

120 years is something to really celebrate. At the dinner will be a number of members who were executive members of the Womens Liberal Federation at the time of the party becoming The Social & Liberal Democrats.

Reading some of the past history of how it all started is fascinating. Communication was all handwritten, the post office must have been a great deal more efficient than today! We are very interested in any records, leaflets or photos which may be tucked away in your family history, we would like to borrow items to display at the dinner. We promise to return them immediately afterwards. I really do hope that we are able to fill The Lloyd George room at the National Liberal Club, reservations are coming in, please add yours as soon as possible.

## The Membership Challenge!



Sir Menzies Campbell challenged us to double our membership to 1000 members by the end of the year. We still need more members to hit this target, and there is still time, so keep recruiting!



Remember, all new members who have joined since January 2006 will be put in a prize draw to win Tea for Two on the Terrace. The member who wins can therefore bring the member who signed them up! Prize will be drawn in January. Happy recruiting....

## WLD MEMBERSHIP FORM

Title — Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Tel Nos \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Party Member No \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Fee (*Please tick the appropriate amount*)

£20.00 (recommended)

£7.00 (minimum)

Other £ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to pay by cash/cheque (payable to: Women Liberal Democrats)

I would like to pay by Standing Order (see box below)

Please return this form to: WLD, 4 Cowley Street, London, SW1P 3NB

# www.wld.org.uk

## BANKERS ORDER FORM

To The Manager \_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Bank)

Acct No \_\_\_\_\_ Sort Code \_\_\_\_\_

Branch Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay: £ \_\_\_\_\_ Annually/Quarterly starting on \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make any missed payments immediately and cancel any previous standing orders to this account.**

To: Women Liberal Democrats, 4 Cowley Street, London SW1P 3NB

c/o Royal bank of Scotland, London Victoria A Branch

119-121 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6RA

Sort Code 15-30-00 Account No 71574175

Name of Account \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Account Holder \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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