

Report on Information/Training Day

Friday, 21 November 2008

September 20th 2008 Ba'hai Centre, Rutland Gate Morning The Chair was taken by Roya Keshefi as Tahirih Danesh was unfortunately unable to attend. Roya thanked Tahirih and the Ba'hai Centre for their hospitality and reminded us that the last Friday Prayers in Iran had called for the dismantling of the Ba'hai sect and the killing of its members. Elizabeth Sidney then gave a summary of MG3 activities so far and the next planned events. Reports of former meetings could be seen on www.wafe_women.com She also mentioned the upcoming UNIFEM meeting 'Helping Women Helps the Planet' for which leaflets were available. The Chair then introduced the speakers. Here are extracts of the speeches:

Miranda Suit, co-founder of Media March. Miranda began her campaign for a more responsible media 30 years ago. It is now largely accepted that violent 'entertainment' does affect behaviour, but 'freedom of expression' is still the over-riding concern. It's a long-term exercise but, she claimed, success is possible. Women are in an important position because of their influence on children. Julian Brazier MP worked with Media March on a recent Private Members bill and the Film Censor is also now working with them. Academic research confirms the harm done to children by violent. Media March has done 9 marches and delivered a petition with 120,000 signatures. Miranda believes that one day people will ask why we allowed our children to be damaged in this way. Chris Green, Director, White Ribbon Campaign: Men against Violence against Women Chris took us through an exercise which focussed our minds on what a culture free of violence of all kinds would be like. A solution is for men to stop needing to feel powerful, and to emphasise the benefits to them of sharing power. The White Ribbon 'Ambassadors' are crucial - in Australia there are 150 of them, in government, commerce and - most importantly - 'icons' of sport and culture. In England Chris signed up 10 Premiership football teams last year and is currently contacting 120 teams. Education is also very important. In Australia and Canada, respect for the other gender is embedded in the curriculum. In the UK there have been several pilot schemes but nothing more. The campaign is international. The Pakistan group is very active, and Chris is shortly to go to Russia. Roya reported that a new group of 15 men has started up in Iran - Chris pledged support for them. Dr Zaituna Shah, former Advisor to the United Nations on Training and Research Dr Shah gave us a fascinating account of her time with the UN. When Dr Shah joined the UN she found that attitudes towards women were reasonably progressive, due to the recent Declaration of Human Rights and the fact that women had begun to prove that they were capable of important roles. There was no outright discrimination, although there was still some bias. However, the figures for women's employment (which show a 40/60 proportion) are misleading, as many women are trapped in the 'General Services' category or, if they are in the 'Professional' category, they are mainly in the lower ranks. UNIFEM is headed by a woman and CEDAW is 96% women, but no UN Sessions are chaired by a woman. Globally, the UN has been over-sensitive to the different cultures of the member states and this has prevented them from speaking out against discrimination as strongly as they should. UNIFEM is very active, but resolutions are no use if they are not enforced and there is insufficient accountability. The November 8th Population Report by UNFPA will focus on the suffering of women and children and the need to change the culture in this respect. Changing a Culture Reviewing the three talks, your reporters drew out the following

Campaigning Points: 1. Engage the media ASAP 2. Aim to change 5% as a start 3. Define your aim precisely in practical terms 4. Define your audience 5. Ensure everything you say is backed by facts 6. Engage the decision-makers 7. Get the famous on board 8. Pursue the relevant Government Departments 9. Collect examples of successes 10. Deliver your message to your grandchildren 11. Keep affirming universal human rights 12. Stress new sources of self respect for both women and men 13. Develop a Code of Conduct 14. Don't promote power and dominance, but stress the many other fulfilling human roles

Afternoon Our afternoon speaker, Ambassador Mrs Marija Eframova, was unfortunately unable to attend. It was therefore agreed to hear from members of the audience about their experiences in reaching public decision-making positions. We heard from three Councillors, whose views are incorporated in the campaigning points above. It was heartening to hear how interesting and worthwhile they found their work. We then discussed the proposal to set up a Millennium 3 Club. Its members would consist of those who had signed their agreement to work for public office either for themselves or on behalf of other women. It was agreed that 'public office' would include senior decision-making positions in the professions and businesses. Elizabeth Sidney explained that the MG3 Convening Group hoped to run future meetings but could not undertake the development or administration of an additional club. A slot would be allocated to the Club at all future MG3 meetings, but the Club Programme would be determined by its members. It was agreed that club members would make a plan for themselves and report back at the next meeting.

Additional Note On 22nd October, MEPs approved a programme that aims to make Internet safer for children, 672 in favour, 9 against and 19 abstentions. This programme proposes the establishment in co-operation with online service suppliers of a common label "safe for children" that will be placed on web pages. Participants in the "Safer Internet" programme will be encouraged to set out a system of symbols or warning messages indicating age categories per content. MEPs suggested the creation of a training package for teachers and people who take care of children as well as parents.