

News Line 9

December 1999

Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli's first year as President of the ESC.

Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli has completed, in October, her first year as President of the EU's Economic and Social Committee.

A true militant, she has campaigned all her life to improve the lot of individuals. And to promote access by different interest groups to political decision making. That commitment was very much in evidence when the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) held the first civil society convention to be organised at European level. With former European Commission President Jacques Delors as a keynote speaker.

After almost two decades in the ESC, Rangoni Machiavelli is clear that the institution 'is the prime forum in which the organisation of civil society in the European Union can have their views represented. We see the future of the ESC as primarily more a voice for European organisations that do not represent economic interests and do not have a home.' That should require changes to the EU's treaties. The ESC president, who believes that they should be overhauled anyway to include firm guarantees for human and citizen rights, is hoping that the next year's Intergovernmental Conference on treaty reform will, at the very least, address the issue of civil society representation in the EU.

Rangoni Machiavelli is a very committed European. Her goal is to make Europe more democratic and more participatory. (extracts from "European Voice", No. 14, 1999)

Albanian Liberal Democrat Women's Organisation

INLW was very pleased to receive, on December 1st, an invitation to the Founding Conference of the women's group of the Albanian Democratic Alliance for December 4th. The short notice has prevented INLW attendance but we have sent our congratulations and good wishes.

Campaign against Gender Discrimination

INLW has supported Dahlia Sommer and the Women's Forum of Shinui in their campaign against the dismissal of Roni Penso, a senior chef at the Jerusalem Hilton. The dismissal, in the words of the Women's Forum was because "the Hilton gave in to religious blackmail out of fear of losing (the hotel's) Kashrut (dietary laws) licence...Her dismissal was clearly on the grounds of her sex..men received reprimands".

INLW has backed this campaign because the Women's Forum of Shinui has provided considerable evidence that this was a case of gender discrimination. The Hilton Hotel chain is quite powerful enough to oppose such discrimination. If it had done so, it would have promoted liberal values in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action.

Liberal International Human Rights Seminar

On Friday 5 November, a seminar of the Human Rights Committee of Liberal International took place in the House of Lords, London. The meeting was intended to develop ideas for future activities of the Human Rights Committee. The seminar was presided by John Alderdice, chair of the Human Rights Committee.

Liberal International was represented by President Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck. Other participants included Mobina Jaffer, Beatrice Rangoni Machiavelli and Elizabeth Sidney from INLW.

Violation of Human Rights in Iran

The UNA U.K. held a meeting in the House of Commons on 24 November 1999 concerning the violation of human rights in Iran. The speakers were Malcolm Harper, Chair of UNA O.K., Dowlat Nowrouzi from the National Council of Resistance of Iran, and Elizabeth Sidney, Chair of INLW. Elizabeth Sidney gave evidence that since the election of President Khatami in 1997, violation of women's human rights has increased, not diminished. Notably, in April 1998, the supreme Council decided not to sign CEDAW (the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women). Since President Khatami's election, Iran has upheld various discriminatory laws and done nothing to rescind them.

INLW members are asked to ascertain their own country's relationship with Iran and to consider whether they need to take action.

God the Mother

God will be described as a mother in a prayer overwhelming approved by the Church of England General Synod, on November 19, as bishops vehemently denied that they were victims of modern feminist fashions.

Woman of the Century

The Women of the Year Assembly , meeting in London, UK, nominated Emmeline Pankhurst -with her campaigning daughters Christabel, Sylvia and Adela- as woman of the Century. She was honoured for helping women to win the vote in 1928, in the UK, and for acting as "the catalyst...that enabled women to leave their household chores and establish their own place in modern society."

France elects its first woman leader of a mainstream political party

Michele Alliot-Marie, member of the French Parliament was elected, on December 4, president of the RPR, the Gaullist party. She is the first woman to be leader of a mainstream political party in France.

She defeated the candidate who had the support of the President of the French Republic, Jacques Chirac.

Publications

States, Markets, Families. Gender, Liberalism and Social Policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States. Julia O'Connor and Ann Shola Orlof. CUP, Cambridge 1999.

The 1990's have seen dramatic restructuring of state social provision in the US, the UK, Canada and Australia. This has occurred largely because of the rise of market liberalism, which challenges the role of the state. This book examines the impact of changes in social policy regimes on gender roles and relations. Structured thematically and systematically comparative, it analyses three key policy areas: labour markets, income maintenance and reproductive rights.

A Field of One's Own. Gender and Land Rights in South Asia. Bina Agarwal. CUP. Cambridge. 1996.

This is the first major study of gender and property in south Asia. In a pioneering and comprehensive analysis Bina Agarwal argues that the single most important economic factor affecting women's situation is the gender gap in command over property.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

FELICES FIESTAS

MEILLEURS VOEUX