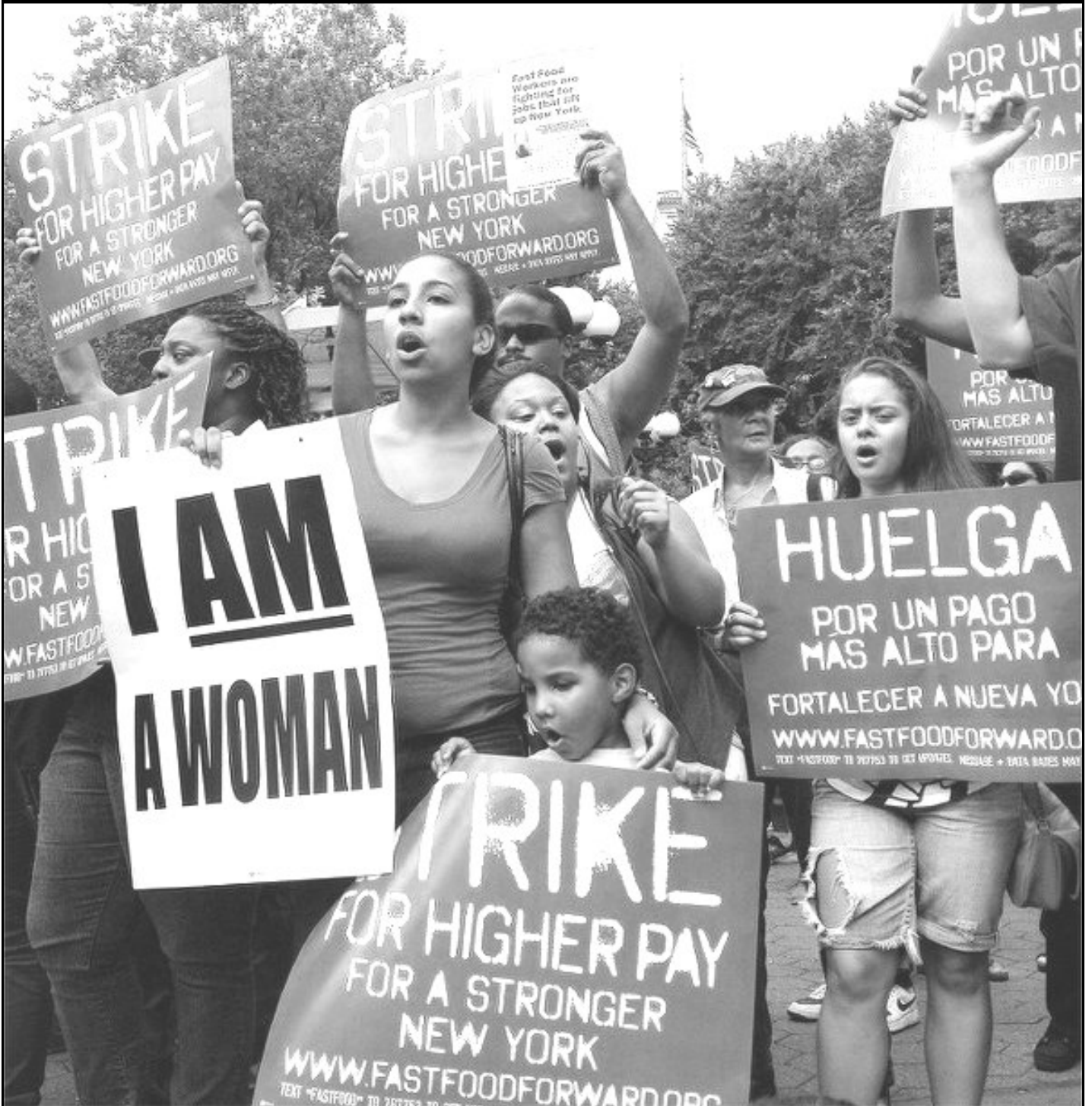


Liberation

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International Womens Day Issue

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**Also Inside – History of Liberation + Nigeria
Tamils + Tuna + West Papua + Book Review**

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Other than the editorial, the opinions in the articles inside are not necessarily those of Liberation.

The date of Aug. 26 was named Women's Equality Day in 1971 because that's the day in 1920 when women, after years of intense struggle, finally won the right to vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

That date is deeply ironic this year, given the recent Supreme Court ruling striking down key provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Already Texas and North Carolina have enacted severe restrictions on voting. Similar laws have already been passed in other states, so the ruling gives a green light for more. The ruling allows states to create obstacles that in effect deny voting rights to people of color, the elderly, youth and rural people the most — and to thousands of women in the process. It is a ruling that violates the 19th Amendment.

So it's hypocritical to commemorate Women's Equality Day when state and federal governments do not promote women's equality.

'Most misogynist U.S. governor'

Take the dirty deeds Texas Gov. Rick Perry has recently dealt women. Not only did Perry sign the Texas voting bill, but he vetoed a state bill mandating equal pay for women. (State bills, passed by 42 states, make it much less costly for women to bring discrimina-

tion suits in state court rather than in federal court.)

The *Houston Chronicle* revealed in early August that Perry had vetoed the bill after being lobbied by the Texas Retailers Association at the behest of million-dollar Macy's and Kroger Food stores. For that veto, Perry earns the title of "capitalist stooge."

For signing one of the most stringent anti-abortion laws in the nation, Perry wins the title of "most misogynist U.S. governor." The law will force 90 percent of abortion clinics in Texas — all but five out of 42 — to close because they do not meet totally irrelevant physical requirements as ambulatory health centres.

That means thousands of poor women, mostly those affected by the voting law, will also be denied many additional life-saving health care services provided at women's clinics. What adds lustre to Perry's misogynist crown is that he has also refused to expand Medicaid coverage to people in Texas as mandated by Obamacare, denying thousands of needy women no-cost health care coverage.

State governors in Wisconsin, North Carolina, Ohio and Colorado are runners up in the misogynist category, since they also signed laws limiting women's right to legal abortion.

According to a Guttmacher report released July 8, states

adopted 43 restrictions on access to abortion in the first half of 2013 — as many as enacted in all of 2012.

On June 18, the House of Representatives passed a bill (228-196) that would restrict abortions after 22 weeks on the unscientific supposition that a fetus feels pain at that point in its development. Since it is a direct challenge to the 1973 Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, the bill will never be passed by the Senate. The impetus for it, as noted by many sources, was to "energize" the Republicans' Tea Party base — as if limiting women's rights was an invigorating, kick-ass sport.

Women rising up

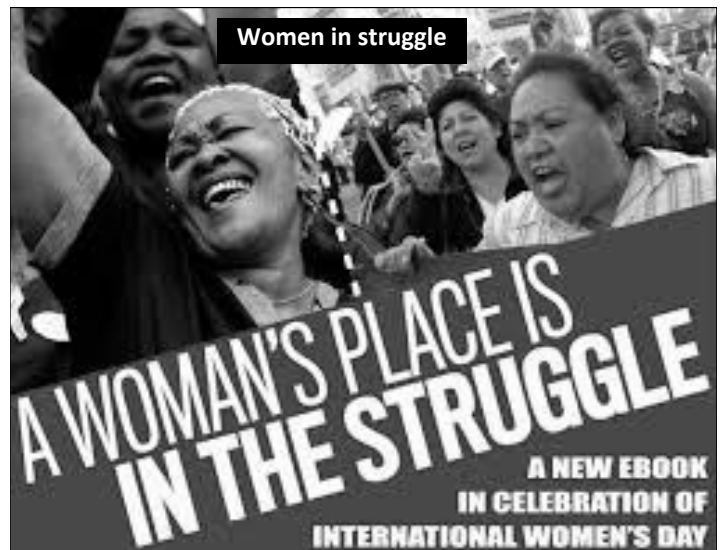
The fact that Sen. Wendy Davis conducted an 11-hour filibuster to try to stop the anti-abortion bill inspired a pro-choice upsurge lasting days at the Texas Capitol. Thousands of women, many wearing orange shirts, converged on Austin, with 1,200 signing up to testify at hearings against the bill on July 2. Meanwhile, 5,000 pro-choice protesters demonstrated outside. Their activism inspired women in states like Wisconsin and North Carolina to likewise defend their right to legal abortion.

One of the most far-reaching signs of an upsurge of women fighting for equality is their participation in the movement to end poverty-level wages in

the fast-food industry. Strikes at places like McDonald's, Burger King and Wendy's have mushroomed from seven cities a month ago to about 60 cities on Aug. 29. And it's women, often single mothers, who are leading chants like "We can't survive on \$7.25!" Women are also demanding living wages and benefits at Walmart.

Taking note of that and of the fact that women are now 49 percent of the workforce, with an increasing number being their families' primary breadwinners, the AFL-CIO, in preparation for its Los Angeles convention Sept. 8-12, held several sessions for women workers to discuss their most pressing issues. The list included things like good paying jobs for all; equal pay for equal work; paid family leave; and quality, free education, child care and health care with the full range of reproductive justice issues, including no discrimination against lesbians, transwomen and women with disabilities. These are topics the women's movement has demanded action on over the past 40 years.

What's significant is that the organized labour movement appears, at long last, to be seriously listening to women. But it will take a long, hard, united fight to destroy capitalism, an economic system based on oppression and exploitation, before U.S. women can truly celebrate equality.



Chris Braithwaite By Christian Hogsbjerg Bookmarks Stan Newens reviews



Chris Braithwaite

Communist Party, some trade unionists, journalists and other outspoken figures consistently promoted the idea of self-government for the colonies. They were joined in this work by increasing numbers of Asian, African and West Indian representatives like C.L.R. James, George Padmore, Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru.

Christian Hogsbjerg has produced a book on another of these, Chris Braithwaite, whose name has been largely forgotten because he died at 59 years of age in 1944, long before historians began to record the anti-imperialist struggle.

Born in 1885 in Barbados, the grandson of a slave, Chris Braithwaite was encouraged by his parents to read English classics but left home to go to sea at 17 or 18 years of age.

After spending a number of years in the United States, he came to London in the 1920s and obtained employment as an agent with the Shipping Federation, finding men to crew ships.

Racist discrimination against colonial seamen was not only practised by shipping companies at that time: it was supported by the National Sailors & Firemen's Union, which later became the National Union of Seamen.

Adopting the pseudonym Chris Jones, to avoid victimisation, Chris Braithwaite began to work with the Seamen's Minority Movement under the leadership of a well known Communist, George Hardy, and joined the Communist Party himself.

In addition to defending the interests of black seamen, he joined a fellow Caribbean mili-

tant, George Padmore, in efforts to defend the Scottsboro boys – nine negro youths charged in the USA on dubious grounds with the alleged rape of two white girls.

With another Caribbean, Arnold Ward, Chris Braithwaite formed the Negro Welfare Association and struck up a close friendship with the left wing activist Nancy Cunard, a great granddaughter of Sir Samuel Cunard, founder of the well known shipping line. They served on the NWA committee together.

Like George Padmore, Chris Braithwaite dropped out of the Communist Party when the Popular Front policy was launched by the USSR, as this involved damping down support in western Europe for the anti-colonial struggle.

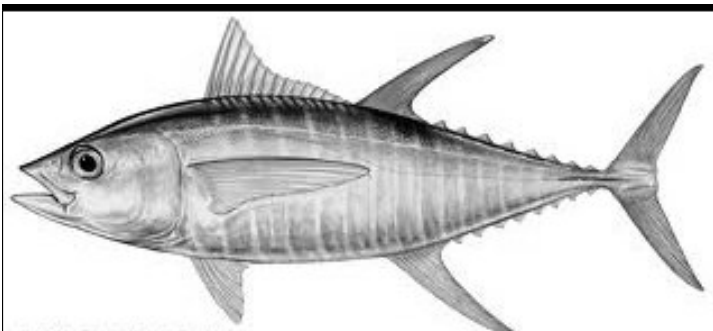
He then formed a new organisation, the Colonial Seamen's

Association, which he chaired, and spearheaded the campaign to oppose discrimination against colonial seamen. He also joined the International African Friends of Abyssinia and became secretary of the International African Service Bureau formed by George Padmore.

He was a powerful speaker and addressed numerous meetings. In summer 1935 he spoke at a rally in Trafalgar Square with C.L.R. James, George Padmore and Jomo Kenyatta. During World War II Chris Braithwaite continued his activities and spoke at a number of meetings organised by the Independent Labour Party.

His sudden death from pneumonia in 1944 left his widow and six children in bleak straits in their Stepney home, but his friends – particularly Ethel Mannin, her partner Reg Reynolds and John McNair of the ILP – raised money to assist them.

As a deeply committed socialist, opponent of racism and advocate of colonial freedom, Chris Braithwaite deserves to be remembered. The author and the Socialist History Society are to be congratulated on the publication of this book, which is available from Bookmarks, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London, WC1B 3QE.



Tesco & Tuna

If you could close your eyes and let your imagination transport you to anywhere in the world, I bet you wouldn't chose your local Tesco.

But bear with me a moment and let's imagine ourselves walking down the tinned tuna

aisle. Even though the tins all look pretty similar, there's a huge difference in what's inside. <https://secure.greenpeace.org.uk/page/m/583071c3/6408149f/6387901c/2050634e/2481742085/VEsH/>

If you were walking through this tinned tuna aisle a few years ago, you would have

seen a different picture. Back then, we'd just won huge commitments from all major supermarkets on their own-brand tinned tuna.

But now it looks like unsustainability is back on the shelves, dressed up in a different coloured can. A new brand called Oriental and Pacific, which is fished with destructive methods that kill turtles, sharks and rays alongside the tuna, has been spotted in Tesco shops all across the UK.

If supermarkets begin to replace sustainable brands on their shelves with cheap, dodgy tuna, then the commitments aren't worth the paper they're printed on.

Greenpeace

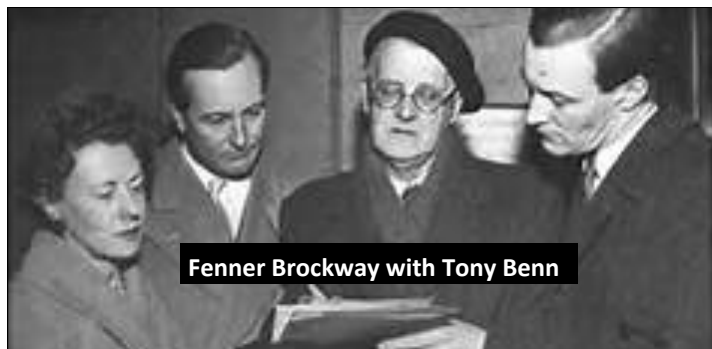
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British centre against imperialism

Marika Sherwood on the birth of Liberation



Fenner Brockway with Tony Benn

According to a letter from Frank Horrabin, Fenner Brockway and Arthur Bollard to 'Dear friend', the British Centre Against Imperialism (BCAI) had been formed in 1937 to

help subject peoples in their struggle for independence. Conferences and meetings were held and many pamphlets published. In 1938 the Anti-Imperialism Exhibition was organised in Glasgow and London....Most colonial organisations here were represented on the committee and close contact maintained with organisations in other countries, including the French Centre Against Imperialism in Paris... [T]emporary suspension during the war...but in 1942 arrest of Congress Leaders in India resulted in the formation of a subsidiary, the Indian Freedom Campaign Committee... It is essential for the British Centre to renew its activities without delay...'

The letter is dated 1 December 1945 and enclosed a flyer for a conference on 23 & 24 February. So what was the BCAI? Below is what is not much more than an outline of its work. However, before moving onto the BCAI, we have to note that one of its members, George Padmore, and the International African Service Bureau, had organised two All Colonial Peoples' (or Subject Peoples') Conferences in London in June 1945 and October 1945. The aim of the Conferences was 'the setting up of some permanent organisation for the co-ordination of the

Colonial struggle.... a sort of "Colonial International"'. Fenner Brockway spoke at the October conference. It would therefore appear that Brockway was following up on the success of Padmore's conferences to reinvigorate the BCAI.

Why did Padmore and his colleagues hand over the organising of this work to Brockway? Perhaps because he had more contacts with White anti-colonial activists and with parliamentarians, and easier access and funds?

1937-8

Fenner Brockway was clearly concerned with colonial issues very early in his long career. At its inauguration in 1927 he was appointed International Chairman of the League Against Imperialism. In his inaugural speech on election to Parliament in 1929, he denounced the Bill for Colonial Development which permitted the use of forced labour and even child labour'. By 1937 he had been involved with anti-colonial/imperialist meetings for some time.

For example, on 24 March 1937 he had spoken at a meeting organised by the League of Coloured Peoples and the Pan-African Federation regarding the invasion of Abyssinia by Italy. George Padmore noted that he had been 'active on behalf of Indian freedom' and was a 'socialist with pronounced anti-imperialist views'.

Was it Brockway, then a member of the Independent Labour Party, who persuaded it

to support the counter-exhibition to the state-sponsored British Empire Exhibition in Glasgow? It was announced in the International African Service Bureau (IASB)'s *International African Opinion* on July 1938 that 'the Independent Labour Party working with the co-operation of the IASB will stage an anti-imperialist exhibition in Glasgow side-by-side with the Imperialist one [which] is designed...to deceive the world that all is going well within the Empire'. The Workers Empire Exhibition in Glasgow was held in August 1938 to counteract the government's Exhibition, which aimed to 'show the potentialities of the Empire..., to stimulate Scottish production'. According to the chronicler of the Exhibition, the 'live exhibits' evoked 'blatant contempt'. Twelve and half million people attended and historian Robert Crampsey notes that there were many enquiries about emigration!

Ethel Mannin, who was one of the speakers at the opening of the Workers' Exhibition, reported that the exhibition was 'a gesture from the workers and an attempt to show the other side of the face of the British Empire'. The exhibition aimed not only to present the information carefully omitted from the main exhibition, but to counteract the misinformation being purveyed there.

Among those sending messages of support were Jawaharlal Nehru and Reg Reynolds, then a member of the Indian Freedom Committee. The exhibition was later also mounted in Friends' House in London.

On the back page of the pamphlet, *Come and see the Empire by the all red route*, the advice is to read the ILP's *New Leader*, as it was the only political party putting up an uncompromising struggle against

Imperialism'. The pamphlet informs readers, for example, on the working conditions of Lascars (Indian seamen); the 'ring that owns the trading and transport industries' and cocoa production in West Africa; the 'pass system' in South Africa.

1939

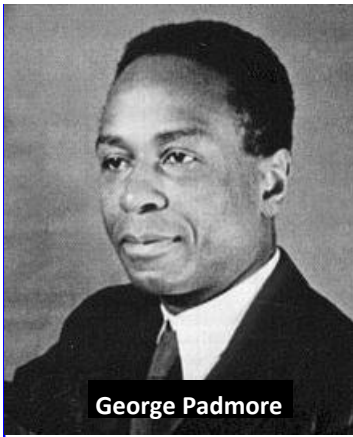
At a conference organised by Fenner Brockway and George Padmore in January, J.H. Hudson of the Independent Labour Party argued that the 'British Empire was the greatest threat to peace ... The emancipation of subject peoples is an essential condition for full democracy at home'. The Centre was now organised with a Council of 19, comprising 10 colonials and 9 'imperialists'. Daniel Guérin, a Parisian anarchist/marxist/anti-colonial activist, attended and undertook setting up a similar organisation in France. The two organisations issued 'A Warning to Colonial People' in August 1939:

The colonial masses in war, as in peace, can have only one aim, one goal – INDEPENDENCE. And we summon you in whatever country – India, Ceylon, Burma, Palestine, Africa – all people who fight for this end, to unite against the warmongers, both Democratic and Fascist, and all those who at this hour pledge in your name your living in defence of the Imperialists...

We denounce the whole gang of European robbers and enslavers of the colonial peoples... all are the same IMPERIALIST BANDITS whose common aim is the enslavement of humanity throughout the world.



Sybil Thorndike



George Padmore

On 15 May 1939 Arthur Ballard, writing on BCAI letterhead paper, advised 'Dear Vera Brittain', that he was sending information on the Centre which was established at the Colonial Conference early this year'. On the letterhead Ballard is noted as Secretary, Brockway as Chairman, Horrabin as Treasurer and K. Lamb as Assistant Secretary. (Horrabin, a socialist, ex-editor of *The Plebs*, in the early 1940s collaborated with Rita Hinden and Arthur Creech Jones to create the Fabian Colonial Bureau and published its journal *Empire*.)

1939

The letter concludes by asking for her support and also advises that 'we are compiling a Colonial Manifesto in conjunction with a French Centre which is being formed'.

The information on the Centre in the letter listed:

- A conference held in January, regarding the situation in Palestine; a resolution was passed to 'pressure the government to send a Commission to enquire into the conditions prevailing'. Almost 2,000 houses had been destroyed; 758 Arabs and 367 Jews had been killed; c. £40,000 imposed as fines 'in connection with political disturbances'; 148 Arabs had death sentences imposed on them.

The Under-Secretary of State refused to comply with the request.

- The Board of Trade was approached regarding the allegations by Lascars that they had to bribe the serang, who recruited them, for a job.

The Board replied that the issue had to be taken up in

India, so it was 'calling the attention of the India Office to the cases that have been reported'.

- A demonstration was being arranged in Hyde Park which will be 'attended by well-known speakers'.

The flyer for this Empire Day rally in Hyde Park on 24 May was very outspoken:

Millions of 'subject' peoples will be experiencing just what this Empire means in terms of semi-starvation, imprisonment, concentration camps and racial segregation.

Democracy is non-existent. Freedom of speech, assembly and organisation are a mockery. Yet the colonial peoples will be asked to defend 'democracy' against 'fascism'.

Down with British Imperialism!

Long live the movements for Colonial Liberation!

Your task is to demonstrate your solidarity with the colonial workers and peasants in their struggle for COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE.

On 29 August 1939, with the war imminent, the BCAI and the IASB issued a 'Warning to the Colonial Peoples': the real reason for the war was that Germany wanted more colonies.

The aim of the colonised peoples should be 'one goal – INDEPENDENCE. ...We denounce the whole gang of European robbers and enslavers ... IMPERIALIST BANDITS whose common aim is the enslavement of humanity around the world.

The war years

As political activists could easily have been charged with 'sedition', little could be done. Nevertheless, an Indian Freedom Campaign Committee was established; it 'was the only wider body which stood by India when Congress was suppressed in 1942 and Gandhi and Nehru were imprisoned. It did splendid work at the time of the famine in Bengal and raised a considerable sum for Mrs Gandhi's fund... It won recognition that Indian nationalists conviction came within

the scope of conscientious objection'.

From the letterheads we learn that Ethel Mannin was Treasurer in 1943; the only person on the Committee whom I recognise as being a 'colonial' is George Padmore.

1946

On 27 January Swaraj House, which had been set up by Surat Ali and other activists in 1942 as a meeting place for Indian activists in Britain, organised 'celebrations' for the eagerly anticipated independence of India. Among those attending were Brockway, Padmore, Dr N. Gangulee, and Dr K.D. Kumria. Brockway is reported by Scotland Yard as stating that he hoped 'the British Centre Against Imperialism would achieve much in the future'. A few months later, representing the BCAI, he attended the celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi's 77th birthday.

It was announced in the *Socialist Leader* on 2 February, 1946 that the Centre was being 'reformed', with support from, for example, left-wing politicians Michael Foot, Harold Laski and John McNair. Among the 'supporters' listed in the flyer for the Conference was Dr Milliard, a British Guiana-born political activist in Manchester. The Pan-African Federation had 'promised its co-operation'. The 1947 Report on its activities listed nine MPs among the sponsors as well as three women: Vera Brittain, Cicely Cook and Sybil Thorn-dyke. Brockway was Treasurer; Douglas and Margaret Rogers were Secretaries and John Aplin was the Treasurer. There are no colonial activists on Committee, but there is a list of 'Observers from Coloured Peoples' Organizations': included are Padmore and Peter Abrahams of the PAF; Surat Ali (sometimes Alley) of the Federation of Indian Organizations in Britain; David Pinto and Dr Bannerjee of Swaraj House; B. Renner of the West African National Secretariat.

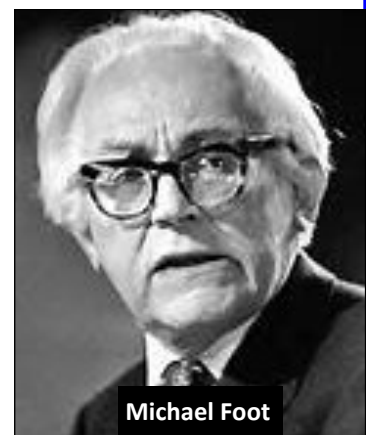
Also 'associated with the Centre' were the LCP, the Indian Workers' Association, the

West Indian Students Unions and the West African Students' Union. The Indian Freedom Campaign Committee was closed down and merged with BCAI.

From a letter dated 4 April from BCAI to John Collier of the Institute of Ethnic Affairs in Washington, we learn that Brockway had been asked to set up an American Centre Against Imperialism, but I can find no evidence of this ever existing.

The first BCAI Conference was held in February, as noted above. According to the conference flyer, 'the main purpose is to link up anti-imperialist movements in this and other metropolitan countries and anti-imperialist movements in the colonies... Representatives of French, Dutch and American movements have also been invited'.

The police reported that 'about 300 people attended the conference'. The first session, 'India and the Far East', was chaired by W.G. Cove MP and the speaker was Professor N. Gangulee; the second session, on 'Africa and the West Indies', was chaired by Frank Horrabin and the speaker was George Padmore. In the evening there was a 'Public Social, which was free to delegates, but visitors had to pay one shilling'. The third session, on Sunday February 24, was on 'The near and Middle East'; it was chaired by R.W.G. Mackay MP and the speaker was Eward Atiyah. The fourth session, on 'The anti-imperialist struggle in its world-wide aspect', was chaired by F.Lt. John Haire, MP and the speaker was Fenner Brockway.



Michael Foot



Ethel Mannin

- The Centre must be a point at which information of what is occurring in the subject countries can be dealt with technical efficiency so that it gets about Britain through the press and other means.

- It must be linked with a panel of M.P.s, each specialising on a particular country, who could raise issues promptly in the House of Commons.

- It must be an agitational means of creating pressure amongst the masses in the working-class movement to end Imperialism.

How these aims were propagated I do not know. The one newspaper report I have is a paragraph in the *Manchester Guardian*, 22/7/1946, on Brockway speaking at a BCAI meeting in Manchester: 'It had been said that there would be no export of foodstuffs from India, but newspaper reports and customs returns showed that food which was urgently needed in India was being exported'. (This was a repetition of the Bengal Famine of 1943, in which c. 3-5 million people died and food from India was still being exported by the British government.)

1947

The undated report sent to the Fabian Colonial Bureau at the end of the year stated that the 'main purpose of the British Centre is to give assistance to the movements in India and the Colonies and their associated groups in this country in their struggle for political, social, and economic freedom.' The Centre had approached 'various Coloured Peoples' Associations for names... for a panel of colonial speakers to British organisations'.

The Report then summarises the work carried out in the past year:

- India:** for independence; freedom for the imprisoned nationalists and socialists; the unequal treatment of Indians in the navy; withdrawal of British troops, etc. 'The Centre has co-operated at many meetings held by Swaraj House'.

- Burma:** re the assassination of the Premier and Cabinet members.

- Ceylon:** re democratisation of the Constitution and repressive measures on participants in the general strike.

- Indonesia:** Supporting the Secretary of the Indonesian Republic re suppressions by their Dutch overlords; public meetings on this.

- Indo-China:** correspondence with the French government re Viet Nam; contact with Indo-Chinese organisations in France.

- Nigeria:** support for the Nigerian TUC's protest re severe penalties for strikers. Brockway spoke at a Trafalgar Square meeting organised by Nigerians demanding 'a new constitution embodying democratic rights'.

- Gold Coast:** Protest re prohibition of Padmore's *How Russia Transformed Her Colonial Empire* succeeded.

- Liberia:** attended centenary celebrations; Liberian Consul attends BCAI meetings.

- Kenya:** re confiscation of land for European settlers and appalling working conditions of postmen.

- Ethiopia:** support for merging Eritrea.

- Sudan:** support for plea from Sudan Nationalist Party for negotiations with Egypt for independence. 'Associated' with public meeting.

- Southern Rhodesia:** re disenfranchisement of Africans. Working with PAF, LCP, WASU and WISU.

- South Africa:** protest to UN re incorporation of S-W Africa and re food shortages/hunger among 'native populations'.

- Cyprus:** support for Cyprus delegation in London.

- Trinidad:** protest re re-introduction of flogging.

- Bermuda:** support for demand for official investigation of political and social situation.

- Leeward Islands:** seeking information on situation.

- Colour Bar:** many issues taken up re the bar in Britain.

1948

Brockway recounts that in 1948 he attended the conference in Puteaux, France, called by the Movement for a United Socialist Europe. 'The object' he reports', was to unite 'the socialist movements of Africa and Asia with European Socialists in a coordinated economic policy....There were representative delegations from the colonial territories...

The Africans and Asians called a separate meeting inviting a few of us to attend, and decided to establish the Congress of Peoples against Imperialism... Paris and London should be the headquarters and Jean Rous, columnist in the radical *Combatant* was appointed secretary and myself chairman. In the next two or three years the Congress became almost a legend for its activity in the struggle for colonial freedom...

The intensified Algerian war cut off Paris, and the Movement for Colonial Freedom replaced it in London.' Very sadly, Brockway says nothing in this autobiography about the replacement of BCAI by the new Congress.

Marika Sherwood has done extensive research to produce this article.



Anti-imperialist demonstration

 COMMUNICATION
WORKERS UNION

International Women's Day Greetings

Billy Hayes Jane Loftus
General Secretary President

www.cwu.org



**Solidarity
with
Liberation
from RMT**

General Secretary Bob Crow
President Peter Pinkney

www.rmt.org.uk



ASLEF sends greetings to Liberation

Mick Whelan
General Secretary

Alan Donnelly
President

ASLEF the train drivers' union

www.aslef.org.uk

In impoverished West Papua, women suffer the most

Carmel Budiardjo reports on an appalling situation



Begging in the streets

West Papua, the most easterly part of the Indonesian archipelago, is a land blessed with abundant natural resources which provide western corporations with huge profits. The US multinational corporation Freeport has been exploiting their mineral resources - copper and gold - for more than four decades, since the days when Sukarno was still the president of Indonesia, making it one of the most profitable mining corporations in the world. However, the Papuan people who inhabit this vast territory are among the most deprived people in Indonesia.

For them, these abundant resources are not a blessing but a curse. Yet, there are few Indonesians who have the slightest idea of the extent and depth of the glaring contrast between abundant mineral wealth and the widespread poverty of the Papuan people.

It is the indigenous Papuan women who suffer lives of marginalisation, deprivation and discrimination on a scale that boggles the mind. Observers who have been able to visit the territory despite the fact that West Papua is officially closed to foreign journalists and human rights activists, report that Papuan inhabitants are rapidly being outnumbered by in-migration from other

parts of Indonesia. They live in small isolated hamlets across the vast territory where food is produced in small gardens round their homes which are mostly tended and harvested by the women while the men stay at home or occasionally venture into the forests to hunt wild animals.

In the towns where in-migration from Indonesia has been most devastatingly felt, economic activities are largely centred around markets where the migrants have established a firm control over commerce, it is the migrants who are able to offer their products in well-built markets with well-protected stalls and shops while

Papuan women are forced to offer their wares sitting out in the open on the ground and on scraps of plastic, with no protection from the blazing sun and the rain.

According to Jubi, one of the few local newspapers functioning in West Papua, Papuan women traders have for years been demanding that the authorities build them a decent building where they can offer their goods for sale. In January this year, dozens of women traders held a demonstration outside the provincial administration office seeking clarification about why nothing had been done to construct a

properly built market place where they could sell their wares, make a living, feed their families and educate their children.

"We have waited for over ten years," they said, "for the government to keep their promise to build a permanent market. We have asked the government to show concern about a market for mothers who are the ones who give birth and rear children." They said that they were tired of waiting and shouting because nothing had been done. Now they were simply demanding that the frequently promised building should be built before the end of 2014. One woman is quoted as speaking about "our long fight to make a living and pay for our children's schooling but the government has failed to understand us."

In another report, the same newspaper quoted a representative of the Indigenous Women's Human Rights Network as complaining about their increasing marginalisation in marketing activities. "The indigenous women are now facing competition from non-Papuan traders who dominate the traditional markets."

The Papuan women also deeply resent the fact that they had lost access to the production and sale of the betel nut, which represents an important part of the Papuan people's

cultural identity. The demonstrators said that they had been "neglected and stigmatised".

But it is not only in the markets that indigenous Papuan women confront never-ending difficulties. The crime of domestic violence is another factor bearing down heavily on the lives of indigenous women.

The news agency IRIN reported in December last year that in 2012, an investigation had revealed that "there had been 1,360 cases per 10,000 women of gender-based violence among indigenous women. Many people still resort to violence to solve their problems." A UNICEF survey which was conducted in three of West Papua's 29 districts revealed that as many as 79% of children under 15 of age had said that they had been physically punished. Some of the respondents even talked about 'severe' physical punishment, which suggests that even those in charge of protecting children often perpetrate acts of violence.

Whereas in Jakarta and other parts of Indonesia, women have much greater access to information about where they should report incidents of violence against themselves or their children, "in Papua there is less awareness and advocacy on the issue, alongside the lack of formal education.



Living in the street



Living on the streets

Domestic Violence

The Asian Human Rights Commission in May 2011 conducted a survey which found that indigenous women had reported alarming rates of domestic violence perpetrated by their husbands or partners while the women had little protection from the police or state agencies.

Alcohol consumption was recognised as being widespread among Papuan men. "When people are under the

influence of drink, they engage in violence which "even includes forcing women to participate in sexual intercourse". Investigations by a UN agency last year revealed that the incidence of rape is appallingly high in West Papua. No fewer than 46.8 per cent of men interviewed admitted that they had raped women and had not faced any consequences for doing so. A by-law was enacted by the Papuan provincial assembly in

July 2013 which provided for treatment for anyone claiming to have been subjected to physical violence which included counselling, rehabilitation and mediation. One official was quoted as saying that the by-law sought to protect and provide greater access to people "who are weak, vulnerable and marginalised, who make up a large part of the Papuan people".

For decades, indigenous Papuan women have been subjected to marginalisation, discrimination and domestic violence. But they have used every possible occasion to make their voices heard on those rare occasions when journalists or NGOs from abroad have been allowed to enter the territory

Last year, when representatives from the Melanesian Spearhead Group visited the territory under tight scrutiny from the local army and police,

Papuan women bravely demonstrated and made it clear to the visitors that many of their basic rights were being violated constantly, even though by doing so they faced the threat of retaliation from the well-armed security authorities.

Carmel Budjiardo writes on behalf of TAPOL.
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Global Tamil Forum (GTF) International Women's Day statement

Stuart Drakes on the insecurity of Tamil women in Sri Lanka



Demonstrating for missing relatives

This year, International Women's Day celebrates the theme of "Equality for women is progress for all". This idea should be at the core of a drive towards fairer societies and a better world. However, in many countries the rights of women continue to be denied, ignored and undermined.



Campaigning for the missing

Sri Lanka is one such place where women's rights – particularly those of Tamils who reside in the former armed conflict areas of the North and East – are under sustained assault.

The Nobel prize nominated work of the 'Sri Lanka Killing Fields' and 'No-Fire Zone' documentaries revealed shocking evidence of systematic murder, abuse and sexual violence from the end of the war.

Dead Tamil female fighters appeared to have been sexually assaulted. Witnesses described surrendering to the Sri Lankan military only to be raped, and footage showed Tamil women's corpses stripped of their

In their joint statement from February on the need to prevent sexual violence, US Secretary of State, John Kerry, and UK Foreign Secretary, William Hague, said that not only does this egregious act destroy lives but *"is often perpetrated alongside other human rights abuses, including forced marriage, sexual slavery and human trafficking. It undermines reconciliation and traps survivors in conflict, poverty and insecurity."* The militarisation of Tamil areas in Sri Lanka, by state security forces who are almost entirely ethnically Sinhalese, since the end of the war in 2009, provides a textbook illustration of this argument.

In 2011, the International Crisis Group released a com-

prehensive report on women's insecurity, in the North and East, which detailed cases of sexual violence and the trafficking and exploitation of women. By October 2013, levels of insecurity and sexual violence were on the increase, according to Minority Rights Group (MRG). In the same year, a report commissioned by the UN Secretary-General revealed grave concerns regarding the on-going incidents of human rights violations committed against Tamil women and girls, as well as the lack of accountability for sexual violence crimes.

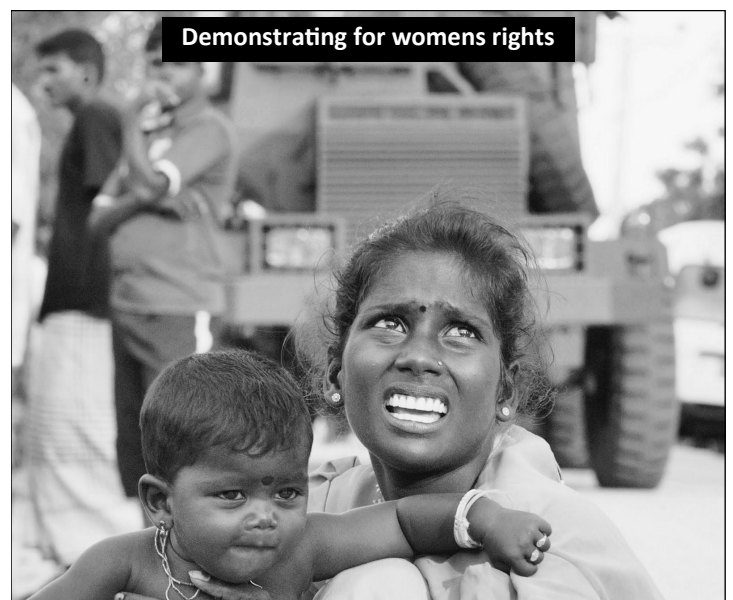
Despite the seriousness of these issues and the consequent damage done to the advancement of equality in the North and East, the Government of Sri Lanka has taken no measures to stop this abuse. A culture of impunity exists and many women are afraid to report cases of intimidation and ill-treatment to the authorities. Whilst Tamil women are particularly vulnerable, due to underlying ethnic tensions, the issue of gender inequality goes beyond the North and East.

A UN multi-country study on men and violence in Asia and the Pacific found that 97% of rapists in Sri Lanka faced no legal consequences for their actions. This abysmal attitude to the prevention of abuse is reinforced by the Government of Sri Lanka's unwillingness to join over 140 other countries in endorsing the UN's 2013 'Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict' and for recently refusing a visa to the US Ambassador on Women's Affairs.

The denial of women's rights in the North and East also means that they are often shut out from key decisions made regarding the rehabilitation and reconstruction processes. This is a particular issue of concern for the estimated 89,000 war widows and tens of thousands of female headed households, who live in these areas.

Whilst the Government may claim that progress has been made in terms of peace and development, as MRG notes, *"women are not benefiting from the peace dividend, are marginalized from development programmes, and struggle to access basic livelihoods to support their families"*.

Despite and because of these terrible conditions, it is important to celebrate the courage and resolve of women in the North and East who seek to act as agents of change in their communities.



Demonstrating for women's rights



Demonstrating for womens rights

Groups such as Women's Action Network (WAN) - a collective of 11 women's organisations from the North and the East - have played a key role in highlighting the abuse suffered by women, particularly Tamils coerced into joining the army. Their work has helped to illuminate issues that are often ignored by the mainstream media.

Without any material assistance from the Government, a By seeking to give a political voice to thousands of Tamil war widows, she has faced constant intimidation from the security forces and was threatened with a period of incarceration in a 'rehabilitation facility' earlier this year.

All these efforts, and those of many other organisations and individuals in the North and East, are about seeking to empower women and trying to transform a dire situation into



Campaigning for womens rights

number of women in the North and East have formed or are a part of co-operative thrift and credit societies, which seek to work around and alleviate the harsh economic realities. Of the 1350 such societies in the North, 75% of members are women of which an estimated 3000 are war widows.

Individuals are making an impact too. The Northern Provincial Councillor, Ananthi Sasitharan, has been at the forefront of calls for truth and justice regarding cases of enforced disappearances and abductions at the hands of the military.

one in which respect and equality are commonplace. They should be commended for their actions and supported in their attempts to both challenge the culture of impunity and to call for truth, justice and accountability for all human rights violations.

"Equality for women is progress for all". It is a disgrace that the Government of Sri Lanka does not accept this truth.

GTF calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to:

Promote and protect women's rights; take concrete actions to end gender based vio-

lence; cease and desist the coercion of Tamil women into the military.

- Fulfil its commitments to the 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women' and support the provisions of Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for women's full and equal participation in post conflict governance and reconciliation measures.

- Sign the UN's 'Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict'; and attend the Global Summit on this issue in London, in June 2014.

- Demilitarise the Tamil majority areas; restore complete civil administration to all militarised government departments and national institutions; and ensure that the military desist from involvement in any economic activities which undermine the livelihood opportunities for inhabitants, particularly women, in Tamil areas.

- Facilitate adequate witness protection so that the perpetrators of human rights violations can be held accountable for their actions. Release immediately all those who remain in arbitrary detention.

- Grant full access to the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international aid agencies to the North and East to help facilitate the rehabilitation process.

GTF calls on the international community, including the United Nations to:

Support the establishment, at the 25th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in March

**A History of
Struggle
Commemorating
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Anniversary of
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2014, of an independent, international war crimes inquiry in Sri Lanka.

- Ensure accountability and justice for the sexual violence committed against Tamil women during the conflict as well as for the on-going cases of gender-based violence.

- Remain seized of the situation in Sri Lanka; call for the demilitarisation of Tamil majority areas; and ask the UN country team to monitor the ground realities for women in the North and East.

- Place conditions on aid and investment into Sri Lanka, which call explicitly for the promotion and protection of women's rights.

Stuart Drakes, Senior Research Officer, writes on behalf of the Global Tamil Forum .



Campaigning for missing relatives

Child Not Bride; Outrage over Under-Age Marriage in Nigeria

Adedamola Nadia on why the problem still persists



Protesting against child brides

July 2013 saw a wave of anger-fuelled protests across Nigeria and diaspora about the issue of child marriage in the country. The tag “childnotbride” swept across all social media platforms encouraging people to sign petitions in the bid to stop the Nigerian senate from legalizing child marriage. A Change.org petition which has gathered over 140,000 signatures urged the United Nations to “Stop the Nigerian Senate from Making Under-Age Marriage Law!”

However, a closer examination of the situation reveals that the outrage was partly misdirected...

On the 18th of July 2013, the Nigerian Senate voted on the removal of a clause in Chapter 3, Section 29, Sub-section 4b of the Nigerian Constitution. This section relates to the issue of citizenship and in particular, the renunciation of the Nigerian Citizenship. Section 29 of the constitution reads...

“(1) Any citizen of Nigeria of full age who wishes to renounce his Nigerian citizenship shall make a declaration in the prescribed manner for the renunciation.

(2) The President shall cause the declaration made under subsection (1) of this section to be registered and upon such registration, the person who made the declaration shall cease to be a citizen of Nigeria.

(3) The President may withhold the registration of any declaration made under subsection (1) of this section if-

(a) the declaration is made during any war in which Nigeria is physically involved; or

(b) in his opinion, it is otherwise contrary to public policy.

(4) For the purposes of subsection (1) of this section.

(a) “full age” means the age of eighteen years and above;

(b) any woman who is married shall be deemed to be of full age”

-Chapter 3, Section 29 of The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.

The above section stipulates the conditions and process for the renunciation of the Nigerian citizenship. A Nigerian may renounce his/her citizenship if he/she is of “full age”. The bone of contention lies in sub-section 4a and 4b which defined what is meant by “full age” and suggests that any woman, regardless of her age, as long as she is married shall be considered to be of “full age” and may renounce her citizenship.

Initial votes in the Senate were in favour of the removal of the clause (4b) with the required amount (two-thirds of the Senate) for a constitutional amendment. However, one Senator, Ahmed Yerima (who married his fourth wife at the age of 14), demanded a re-vote

on the basis that the removal of the clause was against traditional Islamic beliefs which allows for the marriage of women under the age of eighteen as long as the women are deemed “mature”. The second vote still reflected the will of the majority of the members of the Senate to remove the clause but however, some senators were swayed by Ahmed Yerima’s sentiments and thus, the required two-thirds for a constitutional amendment was not reached.

This led to the outrage which gave birth to the protests, petitions and e-petitions which garnered support from many across the globe. Aljazeera, on the 3rd of September 2013 broadcasted a heated live debate which featured Senator Ahmed Yerima himself and Stella Damasus, a popular actress in Nigeria and Africa. This debate went viral on various social media platforms. In a country where the civil society at large has been hijacked by the government and soiled in corruption, it was indeed refreshing to see various Human Rights groups and Women’s groups rise and speak up with one voice against the political system. Unfortunately, the clause and its implication for young Nigerian girls remain till today.

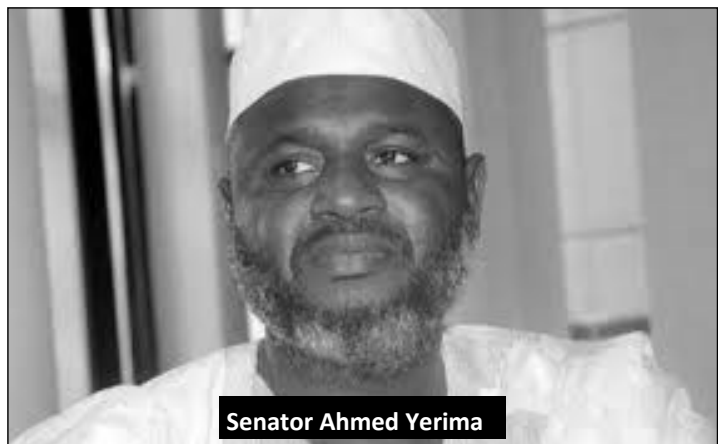
Why the protests failed

A number of factors led to the subsequent insignificance of the initially promising pro-

tests. First, majority of the activists were not properly informed and thus, passed on the wrong information to the public. Many claimed that a “new law”, legalizing child marriage has been passed by the Senate; some stated that the majority of the members of Senate was deliberating on making child marriage legal. It is important to note that the Senate was not passing a new law nor was the Senate thinking about passing a new law on marriage in July 2013.

The 18th of July vote was primarily about the renunciation of the Nigerian Citizenship. Although clause 4b touched on the issue of marriage and age, it was not the primary focus. This made it easy for the government to play down the public outcry as many government officials dismissed the accusation that child marriage has been made legal based on the simple fact that the section of the constitution in question was about Citizenship and not marriage.

Secondly, the lack of constitutional knowledge on the part of the civil society meant that the protests’ emphasis was misplaced. WELA (Women Empowerment and Legal Aid Initiative), a women’s rights group in Nigeria, called for the prosecution of Senator Ahmed Yerima but did not make it clear why the Senator should be prosecuted when he had not actually committed any crime.



Senator Ahmed Yerima



Stella Damasus

It is important to note that the Senator did not call for an addition to the constitution but wanted the constitution to be left as it is, not amended. The 18th of July vote was primarily about the renunciation of the Nigerian Citizenship. Although clause 4b touched on the issue of marriage and age, it was not the primary focus.

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but wanted the constitution to be left as it is, not amended. Upon close examination of the constitution, it can be argued that child marriage has always been legal in Nigeria even though the Child Rights Act of 2003 forbids marriage under the age of eighteen.

The Second Schedule of the Nigerian Constitution which deals with legislative powers removes the legislation on marriages under Islamic and Customary Law from the government. Thus, any marriage conducted under Islamic of Customary law is not subject to government legislation and the Child Rights Act cannot apply. Furthermore, Section 277 of the Constitution confers upon the Islamic courts any question relating to Islamic marriage.

In light of the provisions of the constitution, Senator Ahmed Yerima has not committed any crime to be prosecuted for. It is evident that there is a provision in the constitution for Islamic marriages which the government cannot legislate upon. This loophole is being used in Nigeria to conduct under-age marriages and a misinterpretation of Islam used to justify it by the likes of Senator

Yerima. Moreover, Senator Yerima's view on marriage under Islamic law is flawed according to a senior Saudi cleric who said that there is no religious reason for child brides in this day and age.

Looking back, the July 2013 protests should have addressed the root of the problem by demanding a review of the flawed constitution. Nigeria adopted the Child Rights Act of 2003 which protects the rights of children including girls. The country has also adopted the Protocol to the Africa Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa which integrates international Human Rights instruments which should take pre-eminence over any outlandish interpretation of any religion. However, it seems the country's constitution is holding it back from putting into practice the instruments, agreements and commitments towards protecting the rights of the girl child. Legal loopholes in the constitution leave room for child marriages and the associated health and social ills.

Child marriage denies girls the right to an education. In Nigeria, it is estimated that over fifty% of girls in the North are married by the age of 16 and are expected to bear children within a year of marriage. A report published by Maryam

Uwais of Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative in Nigeria identified that over seventy per cent of young women aged 20 – 29 in Northern Nigeria cannot read or write and this is due to the deprivation of education, a fundamental human right, as a result of early marriage. There are also health problems associated with child marriages, the most common being Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF) which occurs mostly in girls as a result of early child birth. This health is proven to be serious in Nigeria as the country holds 10% of the worlds' VVF patients while constituting only 2% of the world's total population.

Although the protests and activism did not result in the desired change, which would be the enacting of a new law that outlaws ALL marriages with brides under the age of eighteen or a constitutional review/amendment, it opened up the debate around the issue and publicised it. Women's rights groups now enjoy more support from the public and the citizens have become more informed about the dangers of under-age marriage. This is a small but important step towards the overall aim of outlawing the practice in the country, particularly in the North.

Adedamola Nadia writes for Liberation.



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March 8th

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Gloria Steinem

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