

Scottish Women's Suffrage Procession October 1909 Centenary re-enactment 2009

Background

The demonstration organised in April 2007 immediately before the Scottish Parliamentary Elections was called for the purpose of encouraging women to re-engage with the political process, and at least go out and use the vote, which less than ninety years ago, was so dearly won.

The event was organised by Janet Fenton of the Peace and Justice Centre with scarcely a week's notice. However, it struck a chord with the several hundred women who turned up, marched along Princes Street, and climbed the Calton Hill to sing 'Bread and Roses'. It also struck a chord with the thousands in Edinburgh on that day who witnessed it, and conveyed the message to all that an important election was on, and that the future could be different.

For the past thirty years, the political parties have worked hard at spreading apathy, and getting political action off the streets, out of the meeting rooms and into the more managed and cost effective area of the television studios. Media management is now a main strategy of most of the political parties, rather than seeking to engage the public with issues at a personal level. The net result is that thousands believe that voting does not matter, is not for them, and will not make a difference.

At the April 2007 demonstration, there was a strong feeling that with more time and planning, a major demonstration could be organised to mirror the women's suffrage demonstration of last century.

Why a re-enactment, commemorative procession / demonstration in 2009?

1. To pay tribute to the struggle of the women in Scotland, 1800 – 1928, to obtain the franchise.
2. To deliver a memorable event in which all women can participate and which will be well – documented and reported.
3. To deliver a history lesson in the streets of Edinburgh and chart the milestones in women's lives in the past 200 years.
4. To provide an energising focus for the hundreds of women's groups, and groups of services run by women, which often have no direct public acknowledgement or recognition.
5. To demonstrate the force of women's contribution to society, culture, health, education, sport and all aspects of public and private life in 21st century Scotland.

6. To act as a catalyst for the women's movement which has been silent and dormant for so many years, so that we can find a common cause to deal with the problems, from local to global, which face us.

Cheeky Girls Rule OK – Are we not in the Post – Feminist Era?

When you see who can turn out at a week's notice, the death of feminism has been greatly mis-reported. The need for feminist action and co-operation is greater than ever. Here is a summary list of the problems which face us:

- War is constantly waged in our name. None of us voted for it. The new war memorial at Stoke on Trent commemorates 16,000 people who have been killed since 1945. There is space for 16,000 more names. This is a crime against humanity.
- Scotland still has weapons of mass destruction. Three out of four of us do not want them here.
- The planet is being wrecked through greed, abuse and war. Locally the face of Scotland is being slashed with a scar of giant pylons from Beaulay to Denny, to save the power companies money.
- We have sex slavery on our doorsteps with the abuse of female refugees and wage slavery throughout the immigrant population.
- The arranged marriages and "honour" killings of women from the Indian sub continent needs to be tackled world wide.
- The murder of young women in the sex industry needs to be halted.
- Violence against women is unabated. Even David Cameron is shocked by the rape statistics.
- Thirty years after the Equal Pay Act, many women, the poorest in our society, are still waiting for equal pay.
- There is a crisis in nursing and midwifery and even the 'Nurse of the Year' resigned earlier this year.
- We have a young generation of 'laddettes' who think that equality of opportunity is getting drunk like the men and contracting the same STDs
- We now live in a society fuelled by credit and cheap alcohol and driven by gambling and Lottery. All of this is government created.

There is a greater need than ever to have women working together and taking control of the situation – and doing so from a feminist perspective. If the 2009 event could catalyse this, it will be worth the huge efforts all of us will have to make.

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