

**Women's
Day
Special**

Arlene McCarthy MEP

March 09 European Report



Labour raises toy safety standards for parents & children

As European Consumer Protection champion, Arlene McCarthy has introduced tough new rules and standards to protect children from toxic and dangerous toys.

The current toy safety law is 20 years old and does not deal with the new risks and threats. In particular it does not tackle the risks with imported toys given that 95% of UK toys are imported from overseas countries such as China. Importers will now have the responsibility to ensure the toys they bring into the EU are safe.

The new law raises safety standards and introduces clearer, more effective warning labels for toys. It is designed to ensure dangerous toys never make it on to our shop and supermarket shelves.

“We can stop women developing cervical cancer with screenings and the HPV vaccine” says Arlene

In the UK alone around 2,800 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year. It is the second most common cancer in women under 35 years old.

A vaccine to prevent the HPV infection has now been licensed for use within the European Union. The vaccine prevents against the strains of the HPV that are most likely to cause cervical cancer.

In the UK we have already begun to routinely offer all girls aged 12 or 13 in England the HPV vaccines, and a two year catch up programme in Autumn 2009 will vaccinate girls under 18.

Labour Euro MPs are pushing for an EU Cancer Taskforce to be set up to look at what can be done to cure and prevent cancer at a European level. The taskforce would work across Europe sharing research and new cutting edge cancer treatments, to ensure the most successful developments and techniques are taken up across Europe quickly.

Closing the pay gap!

Labour Euro MPs in partnership with the trade union movement are determined to tackle the pay gap head on. We have had equal pay legislation in place for over 30 years now, yet across the European Union women earn on average 17.4% less than men.

Ahead of International Women's Day the EU has launched a campaign to promote “equal pay for work of equal value”, aimed at raising awareness of the pay gap, its causes and how we can tackle it.

At a time of economic recession it is more important than ever to tackle this inequality. The pay gap also reduces women's lifetime earnings and pensions causing poverty in later life. 21% of women aged 65 and over are at risk of poverty compared to 16% of men.

Only last November, British Tories in the European Parliament abstained in a vote on reducing the gender pay gap.

Find out more: <http://ec.europa.eu/equalpay>

VOTE 2009

Ensure that women's voices continue to be heard in Europe



support Labour's European team
help turn out the Labour vote in the
European elections on June 4th!

to pledge your support email:

northwest.euroteam@googlemail.com

or call Labour North West to find out what is going on
in your area T: 01925 574913

Maternal Mortality Campaign

Fighting for our sisters in the developing world

As Labour women, we fight for the right for all women to have care in pregnancy and childbirth, and for safe abortion. How can it be that half a million women die as a direct result of pregnancy and childbirth? 90% of deaths occur in Sub-Saharan Africa - the equivalent of three full jumbo jets of women dying every day.

Yet behind the statistics, lie lost lives, lost opportunities and lost loves. Lives lost overwhelmingly as a result of poverty and discrimination - illustrating the low status and low value accorded to women. It would cost £3.2 billion to stop these women dying - that surely pails in comparison with the \$700 billion dollar Wall Street bailout.

Nine British Tories voted against the resolution which included cutting global maternal deaths by 75%, a campaign supported by Oxfam. They had previously tried to remove all references to abortion and to women's sexual and reproductive health. Incredibly, they even objected to the use of the words "rights" and "services".

Thank EU

What has Europe done for women?

Many of Labour's greatest successes for women are thanks to Labour MEPs working in Europe:

Domestic abuse

The EU Daphne Programme is supporting organisations tackling violence against women.

Parental leave

Parents with children under 5 have the right to 13 weeks of parental leave over the 5 year period.

Maternity benefits

More than 70,000 mothers in the UK have benefited from increased entitlement to maternity leave.

Equal pay

Laws guaranteeing equal pay for equal work have enabled pay claims for thousands of women.

Right to return to work

Discrimination against pregnant women is outlawed and a women's job must be held open.

Part-time workers rights

European laws gave equal rights to part-time workers. More than 6m, mostly women, have benefited.

The minimum wage

Reduced gender pay gap by over 5% overnight and currently stands at £5.73 an hour.

Paid holidays

Since 2000 millions of women workers have been given the automatic right to paid annual holiday.

Pension reform

EU laws now prevent discrimination against women and guarantee equal rights to all benefits.

David Cameron and the Tories would put all this at risk if they got into power by pulling the UK out of the Social Chapter.

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