

**LESE Joint Public Meeting organised by the Women's Rights and the Race Relations Committees, held at Congress House on 26 April 2018**

Chair : Betty Joseph, NUT

Speakers:

**Dawn Butler, MP Brent Central** and previously an officer of GMB – the first black woman to speak from the despatch box in parliament. She called for a united front in all areas for women black or white to support each other; the Windrush generation women need additional help. Ignoring the legacy of slavery in our society and education has failed many of these women and their families.

**Professor Mary Davies**, historian, author and researcher, specialising in the history of women's suffrage and also the place of BAME women in that history. Only in 1928 did all women get to vote under the same terms as men. Sylvia Pankhurst split from her sisters and mother who supported the government in WW1. She formed a party for working women Workers Suffrage Organisation and published the newspaper 'Dreadnaught'. Her research had discovered Sarah Parker Revenant, the only black woman known to have signed the 1918 agreement.

**Margaret Greer, National Officer**, Race Equality, UNISON recalled that the gender pay gap for black women is even more than that already published. Black women workers also have a higher rate of zero hour contracts and part-time work which are barriers to progression at work. There had been a successful campaign in the fight for employment tribunal fees being scrapped.

**Peggy-Anne Frazer** – Actor and Vice Chair Women's Rights Committee, pointed out that Enoch Powell was one of the main organisers of the migration of Caribbean workers coming to UK. She also spoke about the role of Claudia Jones, the first editor of a newspaper for black people and also organiser of the Notting Hill Carnival. There is a Windrush touring exhibition on at the moment featuring the suitcases and belongings that the first workers and later their families brought with them.

Many people at the meeting had parents and relatives from the Windrush generation and spoke of the hard work and menial jobs that were available to them then. In the light of all the cuts to services the audience were urged not to accept [the cuts but to engage in community care for the young with clubs, activities, sports facilities and co-operative groups. A National Enquiry into the treatment of the Windrush generation was called for – this has now happened. There was also a rally to be held on Saturday, 28 April. Positive action for women was felt to be good and the report by Baroness McGregor Smith 'Unbiased Training' was criticised as being extremely unhelpful. There were many contributors and stories to be told in the Question and Answer session at the end of the lively and informative meeting.

Anne Leech, Equalities Officer, Surrey NEU, NUT section

21 April, 2018