

## WOMEN'S ATTITUDES TO POLITICS (1960s-1990s)

### **Karen**

*I supported women's rights, and thought nuclear war was abhorrent.*

### **Pam**

*I had a Ban the Bomb badge. I supported the Miners' strike. Am I a feminist? In the boxing gym, it was men only, that's not right. But I wouldn't want to go in a rugby tackle. I don't like 'women only' things, men might want to join. It's restrictive to have men or women only. I've never known a female docker. It was difficult to live on women's wage.*

### **Marilyn**

*I liked Maggie Thatcher. I think having women in political roles can impact on women.*

### **Sally**

*Having women in key political roles – women approach problems differently. I would prefer to work for a man, personally. I didn't identify with Barbara Castle, and I thought Margaret Thatcher was harder on women than a man would be. The Dagenham workers – I thought "good on them". I knew of the Women's Liberation Group and its campaign and that it was mocked. The women of Greenham Common, I supported, I was part of the Newport group. We visited, took supplies. The tents were in clusters, around camp fires. There was a feeling of solidarity. The wives of the miners' strike was different, though, their motive for demonstrating was different, so I didn't support them.*

*I remember men only bars – the Constitutional Club in Oakfield Road was the last one in Newport. Why do we need men only/women only spaces? Why men's talk and women's talk? It should be "human being bar". Men today having shared paternity is a good thing. They need to be involved in the early days.*

*Give women the jobs they want, rather than what's convenient, ie fitting in with hours of childcare, etc. More flexibility is needed in jobs, in university, etc. Men are not asked the same questions as women. Equality is equal pay. Money is all about respect. It is empowering once you're earning your own income. For women to become empowered, they*

*have to have money. Positive discrimination is the way forward, like with racial positive discrimination. We could liken feminism to a battle like racism.*

*We need to strip back equality, and more discussion on its meaning needs to be in the public domain. What does equality mean? How can we move forward and have freedom of choice and opportunity? Nicola Sturgeon isn't good because she's a woman, but she's good as a person. Girls today, I don't think they've got it easier, they have different pressures, eg being homeless. It's as hard for boys as it is for girls. It's political, not gender. It's all about control and contain, not exploring the reasons.*

### **Shirley**

*Equal Pay Act – I was in the union and pushed hard for it. I met Barbara Castle – very inspiring when she spoke to you. It was important to teachers. Women in key roles – we had Theresa May, didn't we? Women are not standing now due to harassment. I wasn't aware of the Dagenham women at the time. I went to Greenham every week. Took supplies, money, food. I was in the CND. Women were unbelievable. I hated the bailiffs who threw out tents and stuff. The Miners' strike – I would go out on Saturday with tins and go on picket lines. I was in the Labour Party, so I was always looking for a better way of life. Same today. Protest marches to Caerwent and back to Newport – There were RAF personnel there. The Orb Steel strike in 2019, it was the same feeling. The Union was very professional. Unison and Nalco. The first decision was whether to join TUC, the vote was yes. The TUC broadened out. I had a 6-month probation in the library. I joined the union before I joined the Labour Party. Managers etc were on the board of unions, chief officers, etc, were chair of union branches, so how could we complain then? Unions meant change for women.*

### **Jane**

*The Equal Pay Act – I never felt it directly connected to me. I was glad to have a job and money. I was wrapped up in my family. Barbara Castle, she was a strident woman. Margaret Thatcher – she was good, I liked the idea of a woman, not just men all the time. Yes – I think women think/are aware of problems and issues. Jobs were kept for men before. I wasn't aware of Dagenham strike at the time, nor the Women's Liberation Group. Greenham Common, yes. They were doing a marvellous job, I would have liked to have*

*joined them, but you can't, when you have a home and family, etc. I was pleased they went on for so long. The Miners' strike – I didn't know what to think. Coal didn't have a future, but there was hardship etc. A close-knit community, to have it quashed, men gave up their lives to work the industry and then to lose it all.*

### **Elaine**

*Naively, I didn't agree with the Equal Pay Act, as I thought my husband might not get a pay rise. Barbara Castle was powerful. I admired her. What do I think of shared paternity leave? If women have better jobs, then why not?*

### **Babs**

*I wasn't aware of anything like the Equal Pay Act, etc. You just accepted the law would be adhered to. Women's liberation had no impact on ordinary life. I can't remember any discrimination.*

### **Elaine B**

*The Equal Pay Act was important, but it had no impact. Barbara Castle's appointment, that was another stepping stone. Margaret Thatcher, though, I was angry, due to her politics - "Thatcher, the milk snatcher". The Alan Cairns case now – would he have stood by the aide if he was a woman? The Women's Liberation Group had nothing to do with burning bras. I was 100% behind the Greenham Common women. We need role models to show girls today that there's more to life than make up. We need more women and in times of austerity, we need both working.*

### **Melanie**

*Discrimination Act had no real impact that I was aware of. The Labour party in Newport was very active, there were lots of women involved. We were political. Women in my family were political, nan was Labour party, plus mum, on voting day, they were out canvassing. Mum was a councillor in the 1960s, and my aunt – dad took care of us kids. You have to be tough to put your head up (women in politics). Mum only did it as dad was there.*

*I had a CND badge, my uncle worked at Aldermaster and Greenham, so I saw both sides. I went to work at Orb Steelworks, I remember a man there broke the strike by accepting coal.*

*The miners got hold of the Transporter Bridge so the boat couldn't come with coal. I wasn't politically active as I was working.*

*We need three things for equality:*

- 1. Equal access to FE to progress careers*
- 2. Maternity and paternity rights*
- 3. Health and Safety at Work Act – conditions to be better, not necessarily gender-related.*

*If men were injured, what impact was there on the wife? Unionisation helped. In 1970s, for an injury, you had 6 months full pay, 6 months half pay. Then they'd find you another job to suit. My interest was in Health & Safety, occupational health. It was related to mum, she was a shop steward and a councillor...did I hear conversations?*

## **Ruth**

*Dad was a trade unionist. That was my way into politics. Mum was very proud of me; she still lives in the same house I was born in. There are 51% of women in the Labour party. I went to a parliamentary meeting on aviation recently, and there was only 4/25 women there. Sometimes, having a woman is tokenism.*

*I am a product of an all-woman selection process. Ideally, we wouldn't have it. If all-woman short list is the answer...we need to represent diversity...we're making a start. Conservative party has three women in Wales. Equality? No. It's subtle. In physiotherapy, we had equal pay, but you realise women have the power to change it....the justice system, domestic abuse, manipulative behaviour of men, Women's Aid refuges, there are desperate women, so yes, there is still inequality.*

*I'm happy to champion a cause, but I need to know the cause. E.g. legal aid, the impact on women and family. Women who are oppressed, we shouldn't stand idly by.*

*There is 'Valuing Everyone', a course in parliament on abuse of power, etc. When do we speak out? There are lot of men of a certain age who have had the rug pulled out from under them. They need help adjusting. Their values and ideas are challenged.*

*We need to treat everyone equally, just put all the skills together.*

## **Pippa**

*I was aware of the Equal Pay Act, but no one followed through. It was meaningless, “virtue-signalling”. I was more concerned with rights of LGBT+. Having an Act doesn’t change the way people think. Barbara Castle was a war horse. It was a great moment. When I was young, we didn’t have political discussions, although my dad was a Conservative councillor. I tended to lean to the left. In our village, small fishing fleets had been decimated by industrial ships – it was impossible to compete. There was no work, alcoholism, etc. I was there. It was like the miners. Loss of respect, social loss. It terrifies me.*

*Climate change – no one must be left behind.*

*I’m pleased we had a female prime minister. She had a lot of respect...But she played a man’s game to get respect – a female-man, in a suit and tie. A disservice to working women. Women need to be themselves to get power. Women bring something to the party that men don’t – a caring, nurturing and fragile logic, it’s not about weaponizing language. Lack of this – war, hardship, sanctions, death, destruction. There are not enough women at a high level in society or to be themselves to talk down a fractured society. We definitely need women in key political roles. They’re not judged now, they can be themselves. “Social terrorism” is inflicted on women for not fitting norms...*

*I wish I had been involved in Greenham Common, Miners’ strike, WAM – I totally supported and understood. Women have practical difficulties, we have psychological difficulties regarding our place in society, things are changing...women bear the brunt of it.*

*I resented any government putting thousands of families into a position of being thrown on the scrap heap.*

*What started it for me? Water. Privatisation of water companies. Thatcher privatising water, that was the biggest rip-off, con-trick. It was a public service, water is a human right.*

*Palestine – the on-going injustice of the Israeli government, going on 70 years, the conscious calculated abuse is blood on hands of every government since 1945. I’ve been to Gaza, drove from Newport, and experienced for a few days their lives. I had some cheap chocolate, offered it to a lady in Gaza. She unwrapped it. Chocolate is banned. She held it, closed her lips, smelt it. A tragedy, they’re not allowed cinnamon, sewing thread, it’s so cruel. Upset so much on a human level. I spoke about it in New York and asked, “How can you starve people...?” Leaving Gaza, but they couldn’t leave. Like prison. It’s an open-air prison camp.*

*There is no oppression greater than that causing pain over decades of normal human beings. Over the wall, watering their gardens, and in Palestine, nothing.*

*The other crime is eco-crime. It's been gradual.*

*I went into schools, and spoke about human rights, Amnesty International, then Violence against women. Two women a week die in this country. Domestic crime and safe-guarding was only recently put into practice. Women protect their children before themselves.*

*I had awareness beyond my family and the politics on TV. I lived in Cuba for many months, went on holiday with my eldest son. I had an interest in communism, I learned Spanish and went back again. What was good was the sense of community, what was bad was as a result of the sanctions. I thought there's got to be a better way of doing it. My son printed out the philosophy of the Green Party and I joined that day. I was 56. I shared their core philosophy. I became active in the Green Party. I had a personal distaste for waste, but didn't understand the environmental cost until I joined, of importing more food than we need. I led the Green Party in Wales. Always knew it would be an up-hill struggle, as I'd seen the attitude towards the Greens. Climate catastrophe is urgent, dealing with that will deal with other issues.*

*Rhetoric sounds good, but in terms of reality, we need to stop punishing developing countries, stop free-trade agreements and have fair trade. Stop racism, for instance, Coronavirus and abuse of Chinese people. We are all partners in this catastrophe, need to fight as one.*

*Post-feminism is a fabrication that tries to bury feminism.*

*Today, I'm hopeful. I'm part of Extinction Rebellion, I've seen women and men on the streets, risking their futures, job prospects, across the world. How many more are going to risk?*

*Risky, but so heartening. In Cardiff last summer, we blocked the road for three days. A woman, 93, joined us. Small stories show society is changing. I saw good in humanity on the streets. Even the police said, "We support you."*

*Feminism has had an impact. When canvassing, I knocked two doors on a street. One man slammed the door, a woman was washing dishes, and he said, "She'll vote how I tell her."*

*Next door, the man said, "I don't vote Green, but someone in the house may want to speak to you" and called his wife. Such a difference. The impact on men, they realise the value of women. In the household, you need two taxpayers to have mortgage. Women are deciding*

*not to have a family, for instance. It's been subtle. The emergence of women in business and politics. We're not like men, we do things differently. Men are learning to listen.*