

# Women win the Nobel Peace Prize - and Women win an apology from David Cameron.

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Last month three events with the rights of women at their core took place.

Firstly, the Nobel Peace Prize this year is to be shared between three women in recognition of their work in the " non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work".

The three women are :

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, the first woman to have been elected as head of state in Africa,

Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian activist,

Tawakul Karman from Yemen , the first Arab woman to have won the prize, for her role in the struggle for women's rights and for democracy in Yemen, and who has been the victim of several jail sentences.

In awarding the Peace prize to three women, the Nobel committee hoped that it would

"help to bring an end to the suppression of women that still occurs in many countries, and to realise the great potential for democracy and peace that women can represent".

It added,

"We cannot achieve democracy and lasting peace in the world unless women achieve the same opportunities as men to influence developments at all levels of society,"

Secondly at the same time, the Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt referred the United Nations General Assembly to the "unmet human, economic and social rights" of 3.5 billion women and girls across the world.

He said that women do more work than men, produce 50 per cent of the food, but earn just 10 per cent of the income and 1 per cent of the property.

" They are not allowed to fulfil their potential as powerful drivers of economic development, as well as of peace and security, " he continued.

"I see gender equality not as a crucial human rights issue, but also a question of smart economics.

"I would urge all representatives sitting in this room: Imagine what it would mean in terms of economic growth for your countries if women were allowed to fully participate in society."

And then thirdly, Prime Minister David Cameron apologised for patronising remarks which he made towards two female MPs.

These were Angela Neagle during a Commons debate - telling her to "calm down, dear".

His remarks has been made months earlier - in April - which Mr. Cameron had described initially as "light hearted" and for which he then made no apology.

The other was Nadine Dorries whom he described in the Commons as " extremely frustrated ", an adolescent double-entendre, which provoked Ms Dorries to storm out of the Commons.

The ritual apology followed on from the contents of a leaked Downing Street memo which indicated real unease amongst the Tories about their grasp on the votes of women which is now slipping away from them alarmingly.

The high-water mark of Tory support in polls in May 2010 indicated women's preferred voting choices, with some thoroughly surprising results

The socio-economic groups are ranged from the highest ( AB) to the lowest (DE) :

AB Labour 32% Tory 30 %

C1 Labour 27 % Tory 42%

C2 Labour 19% Tory 49%

DE Labour 50 % Tory 29%

However in just over one year of austerity programmes, following child benefit being frozen for three years, the scrapping of the £190 health in maternity grant for all pregnant women past their 25<sup>th</sup>. week, the withdrawal of child tax credits for the highest earners, the ending of the long-term investment that baby bonds promised with a £250 trust fund payment at birth, these have all ensured that only a third of women now say that they are prepared to consider voting for the Tories.

The explanation is fairly simple.

The Tories came back into power to slash social services to "pay for" the public funding that Labour used to shore up the economy against the global crisis created by the reckless, profit-hungry banks.

Women and their families are the main users of public services from nursery schools, the NHS, and care for the elderly.

They've experienced at first hand the effects of the "too fast and too deep" cuts and they abhor them.

So while some Bullingdon Club behaviour from the Prime Minister has entangled him in unwanted headlines over his treatment of women, larger minds on the world stage of politics have been celebrating the achievements of women.

And in Europe, there's been another blow for the Cameron-Osborne austerity doctrine from Denmark, which like Britain has retained its own currency.

The new Danish Government is to spend almost £1 billion on public investment in roads, railways, housing repairs, raising environmental standards, and temporary tax credits for companies that invest in research and development, all part of a stimulus package to create over 130,000 new jobs.

The new Danish Prime Minister leading the plan for economic recovery is Helle Thorning-Schmidt, a woman.