

SOCIALIST WOMAN

NATIONAL PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WOMAN GROUPS

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Lancaster Cleaners Strike

EDITORIAL

It would be worthwhile in this period before the WNCC conference to take a look at the trends emerging in the women's liberation movement and the WNCC. These trends, which are only now becoming obvious, were inevitable from the beginning: any movement which encompasses such a wide spectrum of ideas must sooner or later face the fact and provide facilities for these differences to be openly and honestly discussed.

For those who have not attended WNCC meetings, or received material circulated there, the basic discussion has been on the nature of the women's movement and the role it should play in the political arena. The discussion has ranged between the two extreme positions of, on the one hand, that the women's movement can and should somehow become a revolutionary organisation, and, on the other, that we should keep the movement on a non-political basis, on the grounds that developing a specifically left-wing movement would exclude those women who are not politically inclined.

As usual, the truth is somewhere in the middle. The women's movement, which by its nature is open to a wide spectrum of opinion, and which is set up on the limited basis of organising women against their oppression, cannot become a revolutionary organisation; even if such a development were possible, it would be counter-productive. Revolutionary organisations exist; an alternative to the women's movement does not. If women want a revolutionary organisation, they have quite a wide choice; however, for many women their first tentative step towards politics is to join the women's movement. Those who are interested in politicising women in an overall sense should recognise the valuable role of the women's movement.

As for those who see such a trend as a move to make *their* movement exclusive and restricted to revolutionary women, they also have to look at the realities. Of course it would be stupid to refuse any woman entry into the women's movement on the grounds that she was not a fully-fledged socialist. However, for many of the women coming into the movement, this is the first groping towards an understanding of their oppression and of the society which creates this oppression. Such an understanding can only be reached on a political level. Any adequate explanation of women's oppression must involve an explanation of society, of capitalist society, and the use it makes of women as wives, as mothers, as bodies, as workers, etc. In other words it must be a political explanation, not just of women in this country, but internationally, to explain the international nature of capitalism, and therefore the need to fight it on an international scale. It must also take up the question of women in the non-capitalist states, to explain the bureaucratised nature of the Soviet Union, where the condition of women, drastically improved in the period following the revolution in 1917, degenerated drastically from the late 1920s onwards, to explain why the situation of women for example in Vietnam and Cuba is qualitatively

different from the pre-revolutionary situation in those countries, and in the case of Vietnam, why the women there have rights and benefits which many women in this country would envy.

Also, the comrades who are against the movement taking on a red tinge must recognise what women's oppression is and the enemy they are fighting. Capitalist society does not only oppress and exploit people, it also tries to reconcile them to their oppression, and to persuade them that there is nothing to be done but grin and bear it. In this they have succeeded, nowhere so well as among women. The vast number of women in this country have still to recognise their oppression, let alone work out how to fight it. Those who have learnt the first lesson have, by and large, not yet learnt the second. They see politics as having nothing to do with them and their struggle, as something too difficult for them to grasp, as being "male". This is a result of successful bourgeois propaganda. It means that these women have not yet realised the *nature* of their oppression, or how to fight it; they have not yet realised the strength of capitalist ideology.

To ignore the responsibility this places on the shoulders of politically-aware women to explain the oppression of these women in these terms, would not only be an omission, it would be a betrayal.

Of course you do not ram your analysis down people's throats; of course you do not attempt to exclude people who disagree with you; but one must recognise one's responsibilities. The women's movement is realising that to be effective it must organise national campaigns; it is also recognising that to be effective such actions must be backed by a certain analysis of their problems and how to tackle them. They must be able to provide an explanation for new members, and a cause of their oppression for them to aim at. This cannot be done on a half analysis or a half truth.

In the coming period, with the National Industrial Campaign School and the National Women's Conference coming up, there is every opportunity for these questions to be discussed, and we should use this opportunity not only to bind the movement together on a much firmer basis than previously, but also as an educational experience for all of us. Let us try to establish a friendly, comradely atmosphere in which to discuss our differences, so that the experience will be in the fullest sense a political education for us all.

EDITORIAL BOARD: Margaret Coulson, Linda Fryd, Lena Horvath, Leonora Lloyd, Linda Smith, Judith White.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent editorial opinion.

The Family in Capitalist Society

Since 1884, when Engels described the origins in private property of women's oppression and the forms of the family which maintain it, little has been done to develop a Marxist analysis of the family—a reflection on the backwardness of the socialist movement on this question. Only in recent years, as movements for women's liberation have begun to develop in advanced capitalist countries, have there been some initial attempts. We hope with this article to open the pages of our journal to a discussion which is the essential theoretical task of revolutionary Marxists in the women's liberation movement.

PRE-CAPITALIST SOCIETY

The institution of marriage developed in pre-capitalist society as a bargaining system for the accumulation of lands, kingdoms, and eventually capital; and to provide a recognised system of inheritance for these acquisitions. For the ruling class, the idealisation of women (medieval chivalry, for example) and the institutions of slavery, serfdom and prostitution, accompanied and complemented this form of family organisation. The nuclear family acquired a particular importance for the nascent bourgeoisie—it was an instrument for the accumulation of capital, and for training children in individualism and competition. It was no accident that Protestant ideology placed such emphasis on family and sexual mores, though prostitution as a corollary of rigid family organisation by no means disappeared in Protestant society.

In the feudal period the reproduction of the family unit among the lower classes was in a sense a result of the imposition of ruling class ideas—the enforcement of monogamy by early Christian kings—but it also corresponded to the economic needs of those classes, the peasantry and artisans also being obliged to strive to acquire property. In these families, however, the division of labour was not of the kind to be experienced by the proletariat in the period of industrialisation: a woman working in the fields beside her husband was in much the same relation to the means of production as the man, though she was oppressed by the burden of domestic duties. It was the appearance of generalised commodity production which disrupted this relationship, and created the proletarian family.

THE WORKING CLASS FAMILY

As the bourgeoisie assumed the dominant position in society, the forms and functions of the ruling class family were slowly changing. But it was on the lower class family that the capitalist mode of production had the most dramatic impact. The early industrial period was one of extreme exploitation of female labour, women and children being driven into the factory and the mine by the inadequacy of one man's wages—and moreover when the employer had the choice he would in many instances go for the cheaper kinds of labour. But the social consequences had dangers for the bourgeoisie, especially

in the context of the early crises of capitalist production. At such times, the mass of the working class, undivided, uncontrolled by the institutions of church or family, with the evidence of their exploitation everywhere about them, could present a terrible threat, as they did in Britain over the Charter and the 10 Hours movement. The stirring of the social conscience of the bourgeoisie coincided conveniently with the awakening of fears for property by the condition of the proletariat as it emerged from the first and crudest stages of factory production. From mid-century onwards, there was a tendency for women to be turned back into the home where economically possible, and at the same time bourgeois ideology elevated the nuclear family to a central place in the literature, religion and public mores of the epoch.

It is here that we encounter the more insidious forms of women's oppression in bourgeois society. "The worker is the slave of capitalist society," wrote James Connolly, "the woman is the slave of that slave." The division of labour in the proletarian home is far stricter than among the middle classes—where in the last century the bulk of the work was thrown onto the vast army of domestic servants, and in recent times a certain liberalisation has taken place. The difference has scarcely lessened in the present century, and relatively the oppression of the working class housewife has probably increased in some respects, for example, her increasing isolation in view of the atomisation of the extended family which reappeared in an urban context in older industrial areas in the late nineteenth century. The nuclear family is the only institution which capitalism has been able to offer the worker to care for his basic wants; the only place, moreover, in which he can be master. It has also provided some kind of goal to justify the need to sell his labour, so that the division between work and "life" might be maintained as though it were some natural phenomenon, the one being necessary even to the hope of enjoying the other. In this way the collective consciousness of the organised male workers is weakened, the family acting as a brake on trade union militancy.

At the same time as she fulfils this function without cost to employer or state, the woman remains part of a reserve pool of labour. This pool has been drawn upon in particular conditions—in the two world wars (as a result of which certain minimal concessions had to be granted to them); in conditions of high demand for labour, such as the post-war boom, lasting until recent years; and in a different context, in periods of slump, when women are forced out into menial jobs in order to provide any family income, or employers (in backward sectors of industry) replace men with cheaper women workers, as happened in some areas in the '30s. Because of the peripheral nature of this oppressed section of workers, the trade union movement has traditionally been backward on the question of their organisation: the working

class woman remains relatively isolated.

DOES CAPITALISM NEED THE FAMILY?

The bourgeois family, meanwhile, continues to fulfil the function of training children in competition, and perpetuating the idea of a separation of social roles between the sexes. But this role is increasingly fulfilled by other social institutions, notably the whole educational system; and the importance of the family in bourgeois society seems increasingly to depend on the ideological and economic function it has in relation to the working class. There are contradictions here in the experience of recent years in the advanced capitalist countries. The family has taken on new roles in relation to consumption, most notably in the commercial exploitation of the family, of the mother-figure and sex-object. But at the same time, and till recently, the living standards of large sections of the working class—and petit bourgeoisie—have risen, and the physical burdens on the housewife have lessened; a capitalism which has proved unable to provide full employment, and could find an adequate reserve army of labour within a less rapidly growing population, has been able to tolerate the advocacy and use on an increasing scale, of contraceptives. The reserve of female labour has been drawn on increasingly; and women have turned increasingly to employment outside the home to raise their standard of living and in many cases to provide them with a certain independence. The possibility that capitalism can do away with the family begins to appear. And indeed this is not beyond the bounds of possibility: in certain conditions of production, notably plantation slavery, it has occurred before—and we know well enough that the basic contradiction of capitalism, the fundamental, irreconcilable antagonism, is between labour and capital, not between the components of any form of social organisation, such as the nuclear family, which is appropriate to capitalism at a particular period.

But when capitalism which has not yet reached such a level of sophistication is plunged back into crisis, in the way we are experiencing at the present time, then the use of the proletarian family in specific ways is again increased, and the ruling class seeks to exploit it both economically and politically. We have only to look at the anti-strike propaganda of the Tory government to see this. And they are not entirely unsuccessful: a working class housewife, isolated from the collective institutions of the class (even if she works she may not be in a union, or she may be in one which neglects her and her workmates), and burdened with the increasing problems of managing the family budget, can be quite susceptible to intimidation of this kind at a time when the class as a whole has not yet found a way of responding independently and politically to the ruling class offensive.

TASKS OF THE PRESENT PERIOD

Historically there have been two main kinds of upsurge of political protest among women. In periods of sharp political struggle, in revolutionary situations, women have taken a very militant part—the Paris Commune, the liberation struggles in our own times. At other times protest movements have tended to emerge from among middle-class, radical women, who because of their greater opportunities are better able to articulate their discontent. Their political scope has

generally been much more limited. The suffragette movement, or at least the most militant sections of it, had possibilities of developing a broader political programme, but they were cut off by world war and the series of heavy defeats for the working class which followed it. In recent years a new revolt has begun to stir in the form of the women's liberation movement, which has emerged in the process of a radicalisation of youth throughout the advanced capitalist countries. The rejection of bourgeois norms of social organisation has had a key place in this process; the absence of great working class defeats, the ideological impact of struggles against imperialism on the advanced capitalist countries, have brought sections of youth to revolutionary politics. Because of the very strength of bourgeois ideology, it is relatively late in this process that women have begun to see the need for them, as being oppressed in particular ways, to organise independently: and the strong tendencies within the women's movement which see the need to relate this new area of struggle to the generalised class struggle are only just beginning to develop the theory which is an indispensable part of that practice. Central to this theory is an analysis of the role of the family in contemporary capitalism, on the basis of which we can develop the demands which best relate to the struggles of working class women, both at the point of production (including demands which relate to the concrete problems of working women with family obligations) and with more difficulty, away from it. We need to understand the restrictive role of the nuclear family—unlike the Stalinists, we do not pretend that the nuclear family can somehow be turned into an instrument for revolution—but in order to intervene in and give support to actual struggles, we also need to understand in what way the family nexus contributes at the present conjuncture of the class struggle to the formation of existing levels of consciousness. The ending of bourgeois family forms of social organisation is a part of our whole perspective for socialist revolution, but in working towards the objective of socialist revolution we have to work from and raise existing levels of consciousness. Work among working class women requires that we raise and accept some demands which relate not just to women alone, but are a part of the struggle of the working class as a whole: because, we repeat, the fundamental contradiction, the contradiction which will lead to socialist revolution, is that between labour and capital, between the proletariat and capitalist classes, and not between the nuclear family and sexual liberation: socialist revolution will open the possibility direct struggle for the latter.

Our immediate task is to help overcome the divisions among the working class, the brakes on consciousness, for which the nuclear family is responsible; and this of course involves an appreciation of women's oppression within the family.

This article aims only to give some guidelines for the work that needs to be done: we hope that contributions in the coming months will make the discussion much more concrete.

Judith White



LNS

The following poem was sent in to DATA Journal (paper of the Draughtsmen's & Allied Technicians' union; July 1971) by a reader after it had published a letter which argued that married women should not be allowed to work, as this increased unemployment:

Sir,-

"Working Wives"

Unions, politics, and working too,
are things that only SOME can do.
If one is married it must stop,
and never envy another's lot.

One must not look for horizons wide,
Just at the one who's by our side.
Around him all the world must spin,
or we will be accused of sin.

The things we did, when we were young,
Are things that NOW must NOT be done.
Must all life cease outside the shell
of marriage??? God, a living HELL!!

- J. McIntosh

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SOCIALIST WOMAN - ARTICLE IN PRARIE FIRE.

The fame of "Socialist Woman" is spreading far and wide. The latest example of this the article in the Saskatchewan community paper, Prarie Fire, which describes the magazine in glowing terms; "a richly documented presentation of the struggles of women. It speaks to and for working class women, particularly working class working women, who are among the most exploited, and who, of all women, 'have the potential power along with other workers to create the basis for our liberation' "

As the magazine and it's popularity spread, and as its value to the women's movement in terms of it's working class orientation and class analysis becomes more important, so the need for reports, articles, photographs, etc., on topics relating specifically to working and working class women becomes greater.

We welcome articles and letters from all our readers, and that more local reports and features will help spread the magazine even further afield.

Part-Time Work: Full Scale Exploitation

"Fine, that's the breadcrumb
but where is
the whole loaf".

Woman at home; cooking, cleaning floors, making beds, shopping, washing, cleaning clothes, collecting and amusing children, talking to them, mending clothes, fighting through the daily labours and chores, gradually stultifying the mind, hand and back "toned" by lifting, stooping, carrying, holding, walking, obsessed with money....the small amounts which are the difference between managing and not.

Why? love of man? of children? wanting to do the best for them all? being compelled to go on till the sheets are whiter than whiter than grey; enjoying the liberation involved in the boring repetitive tasks?

Articulate middle class women on the box and in the papers explain the ease with which they "cope" with the chores, - aided by machines which take away work, easy-to-cook foods, money that solves the problems they face; other women to take on the burdens of scrubbing and other heavy, time-consuming jobs; possibly a husband sufficiently educated in the demands to take some share in the work. But for the working class woman there is no release from the problems which the family faces. No gadgets, no time, jumble sales for odiments, grocers that give credit and consequently charge higher rates...all her time is spent organising and working for the family, her husband, her children, herself. 80 hours per week on her "labours of love", done unpaid - the unpaid woman's lot. And for about 50% of women between 15 and 59 this is all their lives.



From: *Woman, Society & Change*

We have another 50% who are doubly worked - housewife and worker. In a society where there are at least a million families living "in poverty", obviously large numbers of women are forced to go out to work to supplement the family income, not just for luxuries but also to help with the income, as their husbands' incomes are insufficient to support the family without help. Some work to gain luxuries for the family, holidays, furniture, etc.

From the survey for Women's Employment 1968; 81% of women want work for the financial considerations; 38% for company; 29% to stop boredom; 11% because it gives them independence; 6% to get away from the home and children. All women, for whatever reason that they work, have to face housework as well.

he progressive qualities of work are obvious to all and this is not to make a fetishism of work, but women in homes are isolated from each other, individualised and noncorporate, totally consumed by the social unit of the family; her ideas and feelings, her expressions are contained by the family. If she is to change her position in the family, she must first recognise it and then become conscious of the potential of change. The possibilities of change are not found when she has her arms up to the elbows in water. It is not personal liberation that is possible, it must be through her liberation as part of a group, a class. When the woman goes out to work, as part of the work force there is a greater chance she will become conscious and organised

Throughout the capitalist countries of Western Europe and North America, we have seen over the last ten to fifteen years a huge increase in the educational institutions, particularly in further education. Despite the obvious present downswing in the employment figures, there is still a demand for labour, particularly in the technical grades. In the next few years the availability of labour will be gradually reduced by the raising of the school leaving age in '73 and with the continuation of the trend to extend the length of time in full time education, the supply of workers will not be increased. The only sector of the population that is able to fill these places will be the married women - in the present climate of government there is no prospect of the demand being met by increased immigration. The pressures on a woman to work will be not only from the family, but there will be a demand for them from the employers. But working does not solve her problem of housework... "adjustments that are most desirable and practicable enable women to perform their dual functions efficiently and with a minimum of stress"... and Klein who did a study on this came to the conclusion that it was PART-TIME WORK.

This is work that is done for paid employment for over four hours a week. It can be by its nature

part-time work eg canteen work, attendants at cinemas etc, office or shop cleaning, traffic wardens, or it may be work that is done because there is a shortage of full time staff. The advantages of part-time work to a married woman in the present system are easily recognised; she is able to cope more easily with her two jobs. But what are the disadvantages? Many of the women who work part-time do so to supplement the family income, and there is nothing else that they gain from working. The woman still views the family as all important and there is no development in her consciousness. Consequently her work is unimportant and she will not be prepared to enter into any action or movement that may alter her view of the world. In the Post Office strike many of the scabs were married women who had returned to work after their families had grown up and their money was for the luxuries. These women did not feel any solidarity with their work mates, no identification with their struggle. If we allow the increase of part-time work there is a real possibility of increasing the potential scab force that is employed. (The P.O. management have asked the U.P.W. to allow more part-time workers to be employed. Why? Future blacklegs?)

For the capitalist, part-time work produces some pleasant prospects. As long as women can be kept responsible for the socially necessary tasks of cosseting and caring for the male productive workers and the future generation of workers, the work that they can do in the part-time jobs is the added labour to the economy...it is the productivity deal for the employers. Klein's assessment of the situation is very accurate, the woman can be exploited more efficiently if she is allowed the concession to work part-time. Not only do women actually do more production of values, but she, if a part-time worker, can work more efficiently in the short time worked. The Peak-Frean survey demonstrated that the part-time women workers were more efficient, fresher, more hardworking and happier in their work. There is little likelihood to be any pressure for change. And apart from the part-time unequal pay that she receives what else does she get for her labours? Far less possibility of getting a skilled or technical job. (Whereas 52% of all fulltime women workers were unskilled, 67% of part-time workers were unskilled.)

Usually part-time women workers are not trained and are seldom involved in the training schemes at work. They are usually viewed with suspicion by the trade unions, and they are often not members. Partly due to the nature of the work that they do there is often great fragmentation of the work force. Consequently, these workers, often unorganised, are open to the worst kinds of exploitation. In lay-offs of workers the part-time workers are often the first to go. This was seen in a relatively secure job like teaching where the part-time teachers have relatively little job security. Often these women will take odd shifts, and this is particularly true in the pre-Christmas period when there are even "twilight shifts" which employ women from 5.00 or 6.00 pm till 10.00pm.

The part-time worker has little security in the job, and as she is seldom covered by collective agreements, is not involved in holiday or pension schemes.

The worst exploitation is that found in occasional and out work. The occasional worker is often a woman with children, who, prior to the family, had worked in a small sweat-shop, usually clothing. They will drop in odd days, and without any insurance cover or stamp, work occasionally. The out-worker, taking work on piecework rates, usually again in the clothing or toys industry, at the mercy of the boss, who will deliver work at any time. This type of work affects not only the woman who is employed, but often the whole family is engaged in the operation...and this naturally leads on to the exploitation of the children, whatever the intentions of the mother. This type of employment should be abolished; women and men should not have to give over their homes to the work situation.

Part-time work is a blessing for the woman to manage. She becomes a more efficient juggler, but the most important reasons why a woman should work are often not even approached. If women do not become involved in the workers' organisations, there is little possibility of involving them in action and in developing consciousness. But it must also be recognised that the unions must take up the fight for socialisation of some of the household tasks and thus enable the women to participate fully in the union and in its activities. The women should not just fight for a bit of a job so that they earn a little bit more, or they relieve the tedium of the home, but they must be fighting for equal work opportunities, the opportunity to work full time, the right to work.

Jane Porter

BOOKS on Women in the Commune

[These should have been included in the May-June 1971 issue with the article on "Women of the Commune"]

Edith Thomas: *The Women Incendiaries* (available from your library.)

Lenin: *State & Revolution*

Marx: *The Civil War in France*

Trotsky: *Leon Trotsky on the Commune* (pamphlet by Merit publishers)

Louise Michel: *La Commune*

C. Talès: *La Commune de 1871.*

—Available from Red Books, 182 Pentonville Road, London N1.

The Permissive Society

Almost everything you don't like about today's society can be put down to 'permissiveness'. If twelve-year-olds get pregnant, or somebody swears on telly - it's that old permissiveness again. If on the other hand, those of us in women's lib. say anything against some of the manifestations of this permissiveness, we are liable to be called prudes by some and over-interested in sexuality by others.

Just what should be our attitude to the many manifestations around us of the relaxations of the old censorship (legal and otherwise), to the girlie mags and the nudie films? What about the Mrs. Whitehouses, smelling of Mother's Union and Mrs. Grundy, not to mention the Lord Longferds and St. John Stevas?

Let's get one thing straight. Today's permissiveness has got about as much to do with women's liberation as the plight of Jackie Onassis. The trendy underground magazines with their pictures of nude busty girls on one page and articles about women's liberation on another are just trying to have their cake and eat it. Like all the others, they know that sex - female sex, that is - sells. They are turning women into sexual objects in the same way as 'Penthouse' or 'Mayfair', only with a 'lefty' look.

Women in the movement are in a cleft stick. They are in the same old problem as the teenager who writes to Evelyn Home with her 'Should I or should I say no?' In their relationships with men, are they being prudent or prudish if they refuse to jump into bed straight away? Any they any freer, in other words, just because they have the pill and 'everyone knows' that women have just as much sexuality as men, just as much right to be promiscuous.

There is no doubt that on the left, some men are 'for' women's lib. because they believe that it means that girls may be 'swingers'. The vision of women's lib., carefully cultivated by the media, as groups of women talking about their sexuality, the pamphlets on vaginal orgasms all help to encourage such beliefs.

The subject can be broken down into two broad categories, though each impinges on the other - public and private. In the case of the first, there is no doubt that sex is big business. Few of us would accept that it is right that women should be exploited through beauty contests, girlie calendars, or even fully dressed in washing powder adverts. The two aspects of this which sicken are the portrayal of women as purely sexual objects - the photo caption that says: 'Anyone can see that Patty is a good actress' (i.e., she's got big tits), and the cold-blooded exploitation of women for profits and publicity (the nude on the motor-show car.)

Of course, the over-emphasis on sex in every area of our lives affects us all. The women-as-a-sexual object is hard to escape for any of us. Even those of us in the movement find it difficult to

stop judging women as we have been conditioned to judge them - by their appearance, their clothes, their 'attractiveness'. So much is woman the erotic symbol of our times that except perhaps for a short period during adolescence, or occasionally at times afterwards, we look at other women in the street, etc. Any man that thought about other men in the terms that many women think about members of their own sex, would be considered 'perverted'. Few of us can escape from over-concern for our own appearance, the desire to have the body beautiful and the lovely face - in the terms dictated to us by those who stand to make a profit from our anxieties. To pretend otherwise is to believe that somehow we can escape from the all-pervading mores of capitalist society, that we can build our little liberated island.

So the constant bombardment of advertising, of sexy pictures setting standards we can never attain to, spills over into our private lives, making us a prey to anxieties we didn't know existed - how many of us even suspected that our very sex smelt nasty until they invented something to cure it? In addition, the massive production of sex manuals, articles in the press, sex-shops, etc, convinces us that unless we are having sex with orgasm, of course - n times a week, we are missing out. But why? Perhaps we don't use the right perfume, or shampoo, or whatever - or perhaps we just haven't read the right sex manual.

And for men, too, the constant barrage on their sexual emotions must make it very difficult for all but the most determined to treat women as whole people. They are told to pick a woman as they would any other possession, any status symbol. For the younger man, in particular, the big city is a place of constant titillation, from the real life girls, as well as the ones on the hoardings. And you are told that all girls do, so what are they to think of the one who won't?



The Permissive Society as seen in "Sunday, Bloody Sunday"

No wonder it is difficult for most people to achieve a relationship which progresses naturally, without traumas without guilt. The forms of sex education most of us get are no help, either, coming too late, telling us too little, and designed generally to increase the guilt. Apart from the elderly woman doctor who occasionally airs her views in the press, few believe that sex education actually causes the troubles. Those who seek for a solution to the teenage pregnancies and abortions usually do so in the twin formulas of more parental love and more sex education.

It is too easy to say that socialism solves all problems, and these personal ones least of all. We are not like Reich, who could not find his way out of the dilemma: No socialist revolution without a sexual revolution - no sexual revolution without a socialist revolution' and committed suicide as a result. Of course, we must hope that once we break out of the stifling family system, once we learn how to love and educate our children properly, we will begin to solve the problem; but it would be over-optimistic to believe that it will take only a short time to eradicate the thousands of years of distortion of the human personality. We can never hope to go back to a state of nature - that is an idealistic dream that was shattered 500,000 years ago when man became man - but perhaps one day mankind will learn to accept its own nature, sex and all, without at the same time distorting the one aspect beyond recognition.

In the meantime, this does not help us one little bit to lead fuller and happier lives - but does that matter? We are back at the same old roundabout - which should we concentrate on: personal liberation or social revolution? Can the unliberated person preach liberation, fight for it? Rather, the question should be, can we be liberated at all in this society? Is it liberated to insist on your husband doing the washing-up, or on achieving an orgasm every time? If it is, we do not need a movement. Those personal niceties may help our personal organisation of our life, or make us happier and more relaxed - well, fine. But let us not confuse them with liberation, which is the right to be a whole person, which capitalism denies to everyone, of all ages and sexes, except the privileged few, and which is not possible for any one to achieve on their own, for themselves. Liberation is not an abstract concept, divorced from the nature of our society, but is intimately bound up with every aspect of it. The slave-master may have been free from manual labour, but was he liberated, as long as he kept others in chains? But, undeniably, the slave was the more oppressed: that is why there were no slave-master's revolts! As long as slavery exists, we may all be slaves, and the freedom of us all is diminished.

Nora Vange



Members of the National Federation of Women Workers, whose amalgamation with the National Union of General and Municipal Workers was subsequently negotiated by Mary MacArthur.

The struggle against unemployment in 1971, as in times past, is of the greatest importance to women militants.

Equal Pay

the fight goes on

Quite a lot has been written on the Equal Pay movement, and its support among women workers. Encouraging statistics show a healthy trend towards unionization by women, which puts them in a position to talk about Equal Pay and other such demands. However, the percentage of women workers who are not unionized is still enormous. This is particularly true in areas of work traditionally considered women's work. For these women, the immediate problem is not equal pay, but the fight for the right to unionize, for union recognition and for a closed shop. Until these battles are won, these women are in no position to fight on the question of wages or conditions, because they cannot use the traditional weapon of the unionized worker, withdrawal of labour.

And this fight is no easy one. It takes great determination and courage on the part of women threatened with victimisation even to begin such a fight. One problem is that many women have a very ambivalent attitude towards their job. It is too important to the family budget to lose it over the question of a union. But at the same time it is supplementary to the family income, therefore there is no desperate need to fight for improvements. Also, many women do not have a trade union consciousness, far less a class consciousness. They tend to see themselves as units separate from one another; their central focus is the home, not their place of work, therefore they lack the sense of identification and solidarity necessary to wage such a fight.

However, there are different levels of consciousness within the one factory, in the one shop, as well as on a larger scale. What happens here? One concrete example is taken from a relatively small family firm in Glasgow (which went public last year) specialising in scarves, ties, cravats, etc. In the last two years there have been two attempts to establish a union there. In each case, a young girl took responsibility for signing people up, etc., and in each case the girl was called before the management to stop it, or collect her cards. The unemployment situation in Glasgow being what it is, each girl dropped the issue. The problem here was not only the threat of victimisation, but the lack of support from many of the other women, some because they had been with the firm for umpteen years and identified with it rather than with their fellow workers, some because they came in to the category described above, i.e. wage was supplementary but also necessary to the family income. A third group consisted of young girls willing to put up with the very poor wages and conditions in exchange for a very lax attitude to time keeping, absenteeism, etc. which exists in the factory.

However, let's not be pessimistic. The problems are there and they are very great, but they can be overcome, as the women at BSR in East Kilbride last year proved, by staying out for 13 weeks until they got union recognition. The London night cleaners, for their part, have established a precedent which will, we hope, have repercussions up and down the country, among this very badly paid and badly treated sector of women workers.

One point that must be mentioned, and which was part of the experience in both the former examples, is the lack of interest on the part of the trade unions. If women want unionization, they should get every possible support from the Trade Union movement. The unions have been complaining for very many years about the reactionary influence of women, about the backwardness of women. Their officials have done precious little about it. Thousands of women want union membership and recognition. But they are in a very weak position; poorly paid, unorganised, no tradition of organisation, etc., and they will be in an even weaker position when the Tory anti-union legislation gets through. In many industries which have a closed shop already, a worker would not dare opt out of the unions, legally or otherwise, because of the reaction of work-mates for whom he would be endangering years of hard-fought gains. However, in the traditionally backward sectors, e.g. the female-dominated ones, the fight for unionisation and for a trade union consciousness will become ten times more difficult. So, if the unions want to expand their membership, and consolidate their strength, they must take this question seriously.

Of course, we cannot expect the unions to do a sudden about-face and begin to recruit women workers in a determined way. In most unions, women not earning equal pay, pay less union dues, they work in smaller units and, once roused, are more militant. So to the union official, who likes his quiet life, they spell too much trouble for too little return. For those of us in women's liberation, it is not enough merely to join our own union; we must learn practical ways of helping other women workers to put the necessary pressure on the union officials. This means we must write up our experiences for the movement to use; it means building the W.N.C.C.'s Industrial Campaign into a real instrument of activity, education and pressure. Only in this way can we ensure that when we enter a struggle we do so armed with the necessary knowledge and skill we need to win.

Linda Smith

WOMEN AS A FORCE IN HISTORY

Women Imprisoned For Supporting N.A.L.U. Strikers

The agricultural labourers' movement that swept across the English countryside in the spring of 1872 signalled the rise of unskilled unionism which took place in the boom of the early 1870s. This came at the end of a long period of growth of new model unionism. The agricultural depression of the mid-1870s led to the reversal of this growth, but at its height the National Union of Agricultural Labourers led by Joseph Arch, a Warwickshire farm labourer, champion hedge-cutter and lay-preacher, organised 100,000 agricultural labourers.

The right to organise and belong to a trade union was always at the centre of the N.A.L.U.'s struggles. To break from the deferential ideology of the village dominated by squires and Anglican parsons was a big step for a very depressed part of the Victorian working-class. While the local ruling class were at first surprised by the combativity of the men, they soon launched a counter attack, and the history of those years is of bitter strikes, lock-outs, struggles against blacklegging, and migration and emigration of labourers. Despite their great difficulties, solidarity and comradeship was always in the best tradition of the working-class. The most famous struggle of the agricultural workers which won the support of the whole English working class was the fight against the imprisonment in May 1875 of sixteen working women of Ascot-under-Wychwood. A farmer by the name of Hambridge, whose men had struck for an increase in pay, attempted to bring blackleg labour into his farm. A number of women, some of whose husbands were locked out, assembled to try and induce the men to leave. The women were accused of trying to intimidate them with sticks and were summoned. The women denied the charge, and despite the evidence of the black-legs themselves that the women had offered to take them to the village for a drink, the women were sent to prison by parson magistrates, seven of them for ten days and nine of them for seven days.

The action of the magistrates set off a wave of anger in the labourers' ranks. The Chipping Norton police station where the women were held was besieged by 1200 villagers. Attempts by the mayor to restore order were greeted by chants of 'Union, Union!'

In itself, the women's action was significant as an act of class solidarity, particularly because at least one of the militants was not even an agricultural labourer, but the wife of a journeyman wheelwright. But it threatened to spread in the direction of wider agitation.

The charges against the Ascot women were brought under the hated Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871,

which as good as forbade all actions in support of strikes and was only repealed in 1875 through the pressure of the London Trades Council. The Ascot case showed the vicious consequences of this law.

The N.A.L.U. conference, which was meeting as the women were imprisoned, suspended its proceedings to express its 'abhorrence of the conduct of the Chipping Norton Magistrates in straining the law to commit sixteen women to prison and hard labour in Oxford gaol for an act that they were unaware was illegal. The conference further attacked 'that tyrannical peice of class legislation under which these women suffered - the Criminal Law Amendment Act - and calls for its immediate repeal.'

The example of the Ascot women had two further repercussions. Firstly, it brought about an active alliance between the town and country workers. In the riots sparked off by the arrests, shoemakers, stone masons, a tailor, a railway ganger and a socialist chimney sweep called 'Bill' Hines were arrested for breaking windows and shouting union



Arch's union and its activities infuriated the squires, who raged "with indelible bitterness" against these "meetings of rural labourers - meetings positively where men made speeches".

slogans. Secondly, it raised a hue and cry against the undemocratic appointment of magistrates, and for the franchise of the country poor: so as Joseph Arch said at a meeting of 2,000 to welcome the women on their release: 'We won't ask Messrs. Harris and Carter (the magistrates) what we shall consider from them, we will have them off the bench.'

B. Reaney

Cleaners Strike Again!

On June 14th the women day cleaners at Lancaster University began a series of one-hour token strikes and pickets of the University Administration building. Their action was supported by a student demonstration and an occupation of the Administration building. Strike action was taken after a long battle with the university management for a very basic demand—the right to free adequate transport to the University, which is situated three miles out of Lancaster at the top of a long steep hill. It is of course common practice in out-of-the-way factories, colleges and universities to provide this service, but although there is an adequate service for students, a similar service had not been put on for the university workers in the vacations. Although students can claim fares from the education authorities, the workers have to pay the high fares, which in the case of the cleaners takes 10%-20% of their very low wages.

CLEANERS IN THE UNION

The Lancaster Socialist Woman Group, collecting information for a pamphlet about women at work, began to talk to the cleaners about their work conditions and it was clear that the inadequate transport was a very general complaint. The cleaners were not in a union and had made their complaints individually, not as a group. This meant that they were intimidated by the management who could afford to ignore this and other complaints. It also meant that they were afraid to raise grievances for fear of victimisation. The Socialist Woman Group arranged a meeting for the cleaners with May Hobbs, a leading militant night cleaner in London. She discussed their demands with them and the importance of making these demands more effectively in an organised way through the union. She also explained from her experience with the T&GWU in London that rank and file members must not rely on their union officials to get their demands met but must themselves constantly push for their demands through these officials. The Socialist Woman Group and the cleaners arranged weekly lunch-hour meetings to discuss their grievances. Audrey Wise, a leading militant in USDAW, the shopworkers' union, also came to speak with them. In March, 22 out of the 35 women cleaners joined the T&GWU and one of them, Mrs. Lancaster, became their shop steward. The union put their demands to management. The cleaners from the beginning have been very active in the union (nearly all the unionised cleaners attend the weekly branch meeting). A union official attempted to put in a lesser claim (for better, but not free, transport facilities) but the cleaners were firm in their demands. The university prevaricated and used the officials' demand which he had already retracted to confuse the issue. They continued with their policy of referring the matter back to a series of committees. The cleaners decided to take strike action until they had a guarantee of free transport in order to push the university into a decision before the students left for the vacation, when there would be no transport and they would be in a weaker position without active student support.

STUDENT SUPPORT

The cleaners had a large amount of student support. The Socialist Woman Group kept the students and people in the town informed by a series of leaflets and letters to the local press. When the cleaners went on strike the group mobilised student demonstrations to support the picket and proposed a motion which was carried almost unanimously by the Students Union that the students should occupy the university administration building, thus effectively bringing the work of the university to a standstill until the cleaners' demands were met.

EFFECTS OF THE STRIKE AND THE STUDENT SOLIDARITY ACTION

After one day of strike action the administration put on a minibus up and down the university hill. The cleaners were not impressed by this as it did nothing to solve the problem of the cost of public transport. On the second day the administration offered the T&GWU negotiating rights at the university—something they had been fighting for for a long time. On the third day when the students occupied the administration building, the management who previously refused to meet the cleaners offered to see them. Negotiations took place on the fifth day and the cleaners accepted an offer of a £1.20 increase for transport costs as well as the use of minibus. This was seen as a great victory for the cleaners in winning a demand which had been ignored for years.

The reactionary nature of the university was also effectively exposed to both university workers and students. The administration, which described itself as a "model employer" and had previously shown a fairly liberal face to the students, showed that it would not extend this liberality to the university workers. The university does not give the cleaners such basic rights as sick pay, holiday pay and cover money and all sections of the workers are badly paid and complain about their conditions. In the paternalistic bodies which the university sets up to discuss pay and conditions, workers have been told when they make complaints that if they don't like the conditions they can leave—a very real threat in a high unemployment area. Any decisions made in this body can in any case be reversed by the management committee to which they referred. In fact at the moment this management committee has decided to change the decision of the union negotiations so that the wage rise is smaller and becomes a rise towards equal pay and not for transport costs. In this way the management is attempting to avoid responsibility for transport for any section of workers and to give a rise which the cleaners would have got anyway with the Equal Pay Act. They are blatantly going back on the decision of the negotiations, and although the union officials are wavering, the cleaners will only accept this if they can claim separately for transport costs. The administration also attempted, after the students had left and when the shop steward was away on holiday, to sack a cleaner who was involved in the strike, but this was withdrawn after the other cleaners, including men night cleaners, with students and members of the Socialist Woman Group and May Hobbs, demanded that she be reinstated. The university has exploited the fact that the cleaners are weakened now that the students are away to reverse decisions made earlier and to victimise this cleaner. It is important that Lancaster students come back next term

Women Wage-slaves make Our Wigs

A recent issue of Free Hong Kong quoted an interesting article which appeared in the Hong Kong Standard resulting from a series of investigations by the Christian Industrial Committee into cases of grossly exploitative practices on the part of employers, in particular the enforcement of excessive overtime upon employees. Five such cases concerned wig manufacturers, involving a total of some 400 employees, according to the Director of the C.I. Committee, Mr. R. Fung, who stressed that these were only the cases which had been reported to the Committee. It may well be only the tip of the iceberg. The article goes on:

'One of the most recent reports..... involved a factory where 41 female workers were locked into one floor of a wig factory and made to work 11½ hours a day.

"They were made to work like this for about a month", Mr. Fung said.

Under present working hours legislation, women and young people employed in industry are only supposed to work 8 hours and 20 minutes a day with a maximum permissible overtime of 270 hours a year, (between 5 and 6 hours a week).

The wig industry employees were also given very short notice about working overtime. This was probably because the proprietors received sudden orders for more wigs.'

ready to support the cleaners again.

The cleaners' action has been important in showing the very clearcut difference of interests between management and workers. This has been particularly clear to the cleaners themselves whose militancy has increased with the prevarication and hostility of the management. Students also saw that there was a change from a liberal attitude by the university when their actions were in support of workers. The Vice-Chancellor went to the length, unprecedented at this university, of taking out injunctions naming three students involved in the occupation.

The cleaners' action has also been important in showing to other university workers, many of whom are not unionised, that workers must use unions effectively by actively participating in them.

Women have traditionally been a passive section of the working class. The Lancaster cleaners are making a fine start in establishing a new tradition.

Cathy Ryde,
Lancaster Socialist Woman Group.

Thus the imposition of overtime, presumably accompanied by a threat of dismissal if the order was not complied which was dictated by the immediate productivity (and profit) requirements of the firm.

Clearly then the last people whose needs and welfare are considered by the directors and managers are the women who sweat to produce the goods. They have no say or control over how many wigs they will make and at what time they will knock off. Such decisions are dictated by the needs and whims of those who stand to take the lions share of the profits; the men and women who own the capital that is invested in this highly profitable enterprise.

Here we see yet another example of how girls and women through a lifetime of psychological and social conditioning, are forced into accepting working conditions that men are now generally in a position to refuse, thanks to trade union organisation and militancy, and thanks to the fact that wives, sisters and mothers are still willing to provide (at their own expense) the small comforts (regular meals, clean clothes, tidy home, sexual gratification, sympathy and companionship, kids who embody their unfulfilled potential) which enable them to remain in good working order and fighting condition while maintaining a sense (albeit false) of personal dignity and worth.

But it is not only in Hong Kong, as the Free Hong Kong report suggests, that such practices occur - they are in fact a feature



STOP PRESS

The administration finally offered £1.20 rise for transport (for those who work 30 hours per week or less). In addition the agreement which was signed involved recognition of the union and the establishment of procedures for dealing with disputes and negotiations. The University has promised to work towards the institution of a check off system for collection of union dues in the autumn.

of every capitalist economy which is undergoing severe structural crisis, faced with recurrent inflationary crises and the need to rationalise and modernise the means of production to compete with other national competitors on the international market. The article is especially interesting in view of the light it throws on the way the capitalist system will use women in conditions of rapidly rising unemployment - a situation which immediately threatens British workers right now. By making jobs scarce, i.e. creating a high demand for each one, employers can force a small (often reduced) female work force to work very long hours for a pittance, denying them any rights that male workers have won through struggle and treading rough-shod over any protective legislation. Women workers, especially the unskilled can be used in this way as a source of cheap labour, especially in a context of high unemployment, as part of the capitalists' strategy of squeezing the maximum productivity and hence profit out of the workers at the lowest possible expense. Such a strategy also serves to disunite the working class, setting one sector (women) against another (men) - the same applies to immigrant workers and nationals - and to disorientate and confuse people, to undermine their growing class awareness and replace this with jealous rivalry and competitiveness within the working class at its own expense, and at the expense of the class struggle.

The lessons that Socialist Women should be putting across are clear. The only protection women workers can have against such exploitation and denial of basic rights is in their own militancy, through organisation. This may in the short term be at the expense of domestic peace, it may mean strained family relationships: but husbands, boyfriends, fathers and sons will have to learn that their liberation, the liberation of the working class as a whole, requires an alternative socialisation process of a new kind of woman worker a class conscious woman, ready and able to act in struggle alongside the men who at present determine the pace and direction of the class struggle. Women have a lot to learn and a lot to give. But we must take the initiative which means being aggressive and forceful - at work and at home.

Linda Fryd

WOMEN'S INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

"Socialist Woman" was asked at the 26th-27th June meeting of the Women's National Coordinating Committee to hold an Industrial School for the movement, as convener of the WNCC's Industrial Campaign. We hope to hold this school in the first half of September, in London; proposed subjects so far include: *Why an Industrial Campaign? - the present context; How will the Industrial Relations Bill, the Immigration Bill, the Equal Pay Bill affect women?; Strategy for Industrial Campaigns; Women & Unemployment; Women, the family and capitalist society; Women & the unions - action on childcare.* We plan to centre the next issue of *Socialist Woman* around this school. Ring 01-837 6954 for further details.

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

We publish here extracts from a statement from the IMG Women's Caucus printed in the June 1971 issue of *Women's Struggle* in reply to a statement distributed at the Leeds WNCC by the Nottingham Women's Liberation Group. The gist of the latter statement was that:

1. The London Socialist Woman Group was not justified in regarding *Socialist Woman* as the journal of the Socialist Women Groups set up under IMG initiative, as the IMG had taken little interest in the founding or development of the paper.
2. London Socialist Woman Group had not communicated with the non-IMG members of the Nottingham Women's Liberation Group (then Nottingham Socialist Women's Committee) about the enlarging of the editorial board to a national one, and had ignored letters sent.
3. *Socialist Woman* was mistaken in claiming that "it is impossible to unite all women"; Nottingham Women's Liberation Group believes that all women can be united against this social system.

Nottingham Women's Liberation Group believed that *Socialist Woman*, concentrating on the needs of working class women, and the Nottingham Women's Liberation Group's paper, aimed at women outside the movement and new members, could coexist.

"STATEMENT ON SOCIALIST WOMAN BY IMG WOMEN'S CAUCUS:

"[IMG Women's Caucus had proposed a meeting with the Nottingham Socialist Women's Committee long before the Leeds statement was issued, and had received a letter rejecting this. Further attempts had been made at the Leeds WNCC to arrange a meeting. IMG Women's Caucus had therefore made several efforts to resolve the situation in a friendly manner. A more detailed reply had been sent to Nottingham, which the present statement summarises; copies of the original letter and the letter from the Nottingham Group rejecting a meeting are available to those who want them.]

"1. *Socialist Woman* and the Nottingham Socialist Women's Committee were established through the initiative of IMG; the first publicity, appeals for materials and funds, etc. were in the IMG's theoretical journal *International*.

"2. Our journals have consistently advertised *Socialist Woman*; our comrades have always sold the paper, written for it, and regarded it as their journal in the Women's field.

"3. 'A Programme for Women's Liberation' was published (Feb. 1970) in *Socialist Woman* in the name of the IMG Women's Caucus.

"4. The comrades on the editorial board (who were all IMG members in recent months, having been recruited) accepted the right of the IMG to discuss their work on *SW* and accepted majority decisions in regard to (e.g. to freeze the membership of the editorial board). They were present at and voted for a resolution declaring that democratic centralism - whereby all comrades participate in, vote upon and then accept, decisions - should include their work in *SW*.

"Two other points should be made clear. First, our concern was only with the IMG comrades in Nottingham SWC and with their work on the editorial board. Second, any perusal of early numbers of the journal will show that it was always the intention to promote the formation of many Socialist Woman groups and to use the paper as the unifying organising force.

"We believe that there is room for many journals including a socialist-oriented one. But with the growth in the women's liberation movement and especially in Socialist Woman groups, it was not, in our opinion, possible for the paper to continue to grow and develop politically without taking this national growth into account and becoming a national paper as we had always envisaged, drawing on the experience of all the Socialist Woman groups and with a nationally elected editorial board. We now have a national editorial board and will be consolidating our experience and electing a more permanent board at our national conference in October. We understand that for some time now the Nottingham group had in any case been considering changing the name of their group and the character of the paper; we wish them well in this new venture and hope that we can both be part of an ever-growing movement working towards a common cause - a socialist society and women's liberation.

-IMG Women's Caucus, 1971"



Whitehall Whitewash

A REVIEW OF THE P.I.B. REPORT ON THE CONTRACT CLEANING TRADE. HMSO PIB. Report No. 168 45p.

The P.I.B. report makes very interesting reading, not only for those who have been involved in the Nightcleaners Campaign, but also for those who have not; because it shows the way faulty reasoning and invalid interpretation of statistics is used in Government White Papers for the purposes of white-washing and misrepresentation. The statistics collected by the P.I.B. from a sample of firms, women cleaners, and office building occupiers are very useful and completely support the basic analysis of the structure, pay and conditions in the industry presented in the Nightcleaners Campaign pamphlet. It might be useful to quote some of the statistics here.

As we noted in our study the industry has grown enormously in the last two decades, especially since '65, in fact the rate has doubled from 5% to 10%. There are large numbers of small firms, because of the low amount of capital needed to start, but eleven firms employ 60% of the workers. The industry employs 90,000 cleaners, 2,000 of whom are nightcleaners, and 4,000 staff. The turnover is £54 million. Office cleaning is largely centred in London where 75% of the offices are contract cleaned. The reason why companies get their buildings cleaned by contractors is for administrative convenience.

The faulty reasoning of the report is first made evident in its analysis of the functions and role of the 'Contract Cleaning and Maintenance Association', CCMA. The PIB maintains that concentration in the industry is diminishing because the larger companies now employ a smaller percentage of the work-force than previously. This is certainly no proof; surely a more accurate criterion of concentration is the number and size of the contracts awarded to the bigger firms, and their percentage financial stake in the industry. The CCMA, set up by its own admission to "act as a forum for its members to discuss matters of common interest and to make representations to other bodies on behalf

of the trade", in reality acts as a price fixing syndicate, a role not mentioned by the PIB! The PIB further blandly points out that the profits of the larger firms are bigger than the smaller firms, and also that because contract cleaning costs are 30% lower than direct cleaning costs, the government offices have, over the last 10 years, changed from employing their own direct labour to being two-thirds contract cleaned.

The Civil Service Union report on the contract cleaning industry, quoted by the PIB, says that "The main reason for the difference in costs between direct cleaning and contract cleaning ... is that contractors pay lower wages and give poorer conditions than the government." The CSU also noted that while government cleaners clean 1,000 sq ft per hour, contract cleaners clean 1,500 sq ft. The PIB note with surprise that the return on capital in the industry is 40%, a much higher rate than in productive industry.

What they then fail to see is the obvious, what even their own statistics confirm - that the rate of exploitation amongst contract cleaners is higher than for directly employed cleaners, and that the larger the firm, the higher the rate of exploitation per worker. The PIB statistics on the work-force and their pay and conditions are also useful. 88% of the work-force are women, 75% of whom have dependents and most of whom are part-timers. Wage rates vary between regions and also within them; in London they are from 22.50p to 60p perhour. Male and female workers' part-time rates are roughly equal, but the male full-time workers earn double the female full-time workers' rate, (male: £20. 98, female: £9. 62). Female full-time workers in this field are almost exclusively nightcleaners. 78% of women, when asked why they worked, said it was for the money. 64% have to do cleaning work in order to supplement their family's income. 25% of the cleaners were their family's sole source of income at the time of the survey. 40% thought they were poorly paid. The PIB calmly notes that

"with wages forming such a large part of the total costs, those responsible for hiring labour tend to set rates at levels just adequate to

attract the necessary labour."

However, the PIB, incredibly, goes on to reject the notion that these workers are low paid, and it is worth quoting the relevant section at length in order to reveal the general attitude of the report.

"Overall, while contract cleaners are not among the well paid groups, they are not, contrary to what has been suggested ... particularly low paid except to the extent that THE PAY OF WOMEN IN GENERAL IS LOW." (our emphasis) Nevertheless, they do say that sick pay, holiday pay and pensions are virtually non-existent, redundancy pay nil, and cover money inadequate. "Night workers in particular are poorly paid." For those who have been involved with the negotiations with the T&G undertaken by the Cleaners Action Group, the PIB comments on the unions are of particular interest.

The PIB, in its recommendations, urges the unions to take up the case of the cleaners; it estimates unionisation at being only 3%, the unions involved being the T&G, G&M, NUPE, and CSU. As the report notes -

"Generally unions do not appear to have made much effort to recruit on a large scale in the trade." They also state that the contractors are not in general against their workers joining unions. In our experience the first statement is true, while the second a complete lie.

The Recommendations

Although the employers recommend to the PIB that a wages council should be set up for the industry the PIB rejects this as unsuitable, since wages councils have not in the past improved the position of low paid workers. The PIB says that since "the most pressing immediate problem concerns full time women nightcleaners...at least one union should now make a determined effort to organise them - preferably appointing a full time female organiser specifically for the purpose." We hope that the T&G will take note of this point. The PIB also rejects the TUC idea that there should be a joint council of employers and unions supported by the proposals of the TUC for the amendment to the "FAIR WAGES RESOLUTION". It is worth quoting their reasons for rejecting the union proposal in full.

"We understand that the government has taken the view that the TUC proposal would not be compatible with the principle of fair comparisons in which civil service pay determination is itself based, and that it would be inflationary for the government to bring pressure to bear on outside employers to bring their rates up to the government rate or to use service pay policy to further social and political objectives. Moreover, we see no reason why the work and payments system in this trade should follow public sector systems which are designed to meet different needs and circumstances, and we think that the practical consequences in the trade of making any such attempt would be confused and arbitrary!"

Thus the PIB makes no positive recommendations apart from telling the unions to start recruit-



ing cleaners. It is interesting to see that in its last paragraph the report calls for higher productivity and improved quality of cleaning and says that the CCMA has made a useful start in this area!!!

I recommend that everyone interested in this subject read this report for the useful statistics, and because it is an excellent illustration of how they can be misused and misinterpreted.

Joanna Griffiths



Sweetie Pie in the Sky

What makes a passenger choose one airline rather than the other? The majority of customers are those who travel for business, rather than pleasure, and if the films and TV are to be believed, businessmen merely tell their secretaries to book a seat on tomorrow's 10 o'clock plane to Toronto. Because of international agreements about food, drinks for first-class passengers, fares, and even things like the amount of space between seats, it is not possible for the major airlines to push these aspects of their services too much. So they boast about having the latest, quietest plane (though not the one that is quietest for the people underneath) the fastest, or the one with the most flights per week. No matter at what time your flight is, if it is over, say, an hour in duration, you will get a meal, drinks, etc., and on longer flights on the more competitive routes, filmshows and music.

Planes travel one-tenth full on average, though the cheap charter flights are generally always full - they have to be to make a profit. The purchase by the companies of even bigger and emptier planes every now and then ensures that a ten-year-cycle of profit and loss follows - with more good years than bad, if the airline is to succeed. The majority of passengers - those going on business - are men. And it is to them that the advertising is directed. It is based on the illusion, common to all men it would seem, and one certainly fostered by most advertising, that is possible to magically produce the physically perfect woman. One airline promises "the beauties of South America" even as soon as you step outside the plane door. Another praises its good sense in having chosen a new, sexier uniform.

But that's not all. The airline's prize customers are among the world's most cosseted men. At work, they have attentive secretaries, at home, wives largely free from the petty details of day-to-day living, with "dailies" and au pairs. So the airlines compete to give their passengers the most attentive stewardess. To read some of the ads, it hardly seems possible that in the airline hierarchy, the stewardess ranks lowest. Above her comes the steward, head steward, not to mention the cabin crew. In the days when stewardesses had to have some nursing experience, and often had to prepare food on board, they performed a vital function. Because few people travelled abroad, the "romance" of the job compensated for low pay, irregular hours and hard work. The airlines were able to pick and choose from many prospective sky-waitresses, who in addition to their nursing (or catering) training usually were expected to be able to speak a foreign language.

A lot has happened since then. The number of "glamour" jobs has multiplied. With the fantas-

tic growth of the rag trade, any young girl with nice legs aspires to be a model. The would-be film star may have to be prepared to show more, but that does not stop them multiplying as fast as the film industry is shrinking. Girls hope to earn enough to be able to travel abroad under their own steam. The number of airlines has proliferated. For these reasons and many others, the number of girls that airlines can choose from has shrunk. At one time, they would turn down 95 out of 100 eager applicants - now they would like to see 100 replies to their recruitment ads turn up at one time. Their recruitment officers place ads in local papers in parts of the country where there are few "glamour" jobs for young women, and bring the successful applicants to London for their training. This mainly consists of learning about the plane (though not as much as the steward has to learn - on some lines he may even be taught how to handle a plane in an emergency) and handling such eventualities as sickness, unexpected births, and so on, as well as the boring routine of the plane-trip itself, endlessly enacted in a mock-up. But above all the girls learn that, although they have been chosen largely on the basis of their looks and personality, these are sadly deficient and have to be made over. Although the planes they will serve on will be mostly empty, it seems that overweight stewardesses would be unsafe at any speed, so they must watch their figures. They must learn how to do their make-up and hair. Expensive consultants from Bond Street salons are called in to advise the girls. They and their carefully chosen uniforms epitomise the airlines's image and both must be perfect. (The girls may be told not only what shoes to buy, but just where - and they are not cheap.) Eventually, they go on their first flight, first as a passenger, to watch the experienced stewardess, but soon as a stewardess themselves. Once they have passed their formal exams (based on the regulations about safety, etc. they must know) they are in. Of course, their real exam they face is not what is in their heads, but the image they present to the outside world.

Behind the endless smiles, the plastic dolls are human beings exploited in the name of big business. The truth is, the job entails so much drudgery, so little glamour, that the advertising aimed apparently at the passenger, is really aimed at the girls. No business man really chooses an airline because the girls are prettier. But perhaps the girls do. It's nice to know someone wants you.

Leonora Lloyd

LETTERS

IRISH WOMEN'S LIB. MOVEMENT GROWS

I've just finished reading the copy of Socialist Woman you sent to our women's group (Socialist Women's Organising Project) and find it really exciting. The socialist women's movement in this country, and particularly in the Los Angeles area, is having serious problems and we're now in the process of trying to put the movement in some kind of perspective. Your paper was helpful.

We would like copies of your booklist and of anything else that you publish, particularly the series of specials you are starting. We have a monthly newsletter with articles written by various committees; I'll send some on as soon as the next issue comes out.

Yours in Struggle,
Ruth Kupers,
Venice, Calif.

A reader in Dublin has sent in a report of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement. It was founded about six months ago by a few women journalists, housewives and students and held a very successful public meeting on 15th April, to which over 1,000 women turned up. Fourteen local groups have since been set up in Dublin on a federal basis, and have been involved in research and agitation around such issues as contraception and the Forcible Entry Bill. They plan to hold a seminar in October to discuss further coordination.



REVIEW

Three Lives

Review: Film by Kate Millett

Kate Millett recently showed her film for the first time in England, at a meeting organised by the Women's Liberation Workshop. The crowded showing was followed by a discussion.

The film consisted of three women talking separately, straight at the camera, about their lives, chiefly their experiences with men. The first woman used to sit around all day, with nothing to do, waiting for her husband to die. Victim of the feminine mystique, only when she left her husband did she begin to live her life for herself. The second woman was an older woman, who was living a "happily married life". She had battled with her parents to allow her to continue her education, and then had given up her job as soon as her first child was on the way. The third woman was the only one who was able to recount her experiences in anything like an interesting way. She was an ex-hippie and a lesbian - this fact is not disclosed until the end to enable it to make a suitable impression. The film was produced entirely by women.

Apparently, Kate Millett was hoping that in the discussion following the film there would be some response in the form of reminding the audience of similar experiences they had had. Instead, ques-

tions and criticisms were levelled at the film. She was asked why she had chosen these three women. They had been well known to Miss Millett, were easily accessible, and fitted her requirements of different ages and backgrounds, especially as one was gay. She did not pick a black woman, as such a woman should be filmed by black women. Somebody felt she should have shown women who were actively oppressed by men, another was worried that the men in the audience had laughed in the wrong places and then left as soon as the film ended!

One woman thought that the film should have appealed to working-class women, but this remark was refuted by another who felt they should make an impact on themselves before they could make contact with the working class.

It seemed to me that too many of the audience were concerned overmuch with their personal hang-ups, resulting in an exclusiveness and inability to take action. During the discussion even the concept of sisterhood went somewhat overboard as hostile feelings became evident.

Kate Millett was asked why she had made the film. Because she had wanted to see the experiences of women in a film for the first time filmed by women; films had always shown women living through and for others. And yet, in my opinion, this film showed all three women's complete dependence on men. It merely depicts the individual experiences of three middle-class women and shows their inadequacies without relating these inadequacies to the system which helps to produce them. If this film is shown to the public as a product of "women's liberation", it will do little to gain sympathy for the movement, or to further the understanding of the nature and cause of women's oppression.

Socialist Woman Groups

BIRMINGHAM: Phyllis Tinsley, 102 Arden Grove, Edgbaston.

BRISTOL: Viv Prior, 7 Ravenswood Road, Redland, Bristol 6.

CARDIFF: Susan Lukes, 92 Llandaff Road, Canton.

***COVENTRY:** Pauline Walsh, 6 Cannon Close.

***EDINBURGH (area):** Anne McLellan, 5 Victoria Place, Bo'ness, West Lothian.

GLASGOW: Shelley Charlesworth, 61 Fergus Drive, Glasgow N.W.

HULL: c/o M. Ball, 305 Beverley Road, HU5 1LG.

LANCASTER: Margaret Coulson, 35 West Road.

LEICESTER: Jean Holman, 7 College Street.

LONDON (North & Central): Felicity Trodd, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1. (Ring 01-837 6954, daytime, or Jackie Hayman, 01-607 3553, evenings).

LONDON (West): Leonora Lloyd, 40 Inverness Road, Southall, Middx. (01-574 7407).

MANCHESTER: Sheila Cohen, 43 Brantingham Road, Whalley Range, Manchester 16.

***NORWICH:** Fiona Fadenburgh, 199b Unthank Road.

***NOTTINGHAM:** Sue Lee, 8 Derby Grove, Lenton.

OXFORD: Judy White, 27 Southmoor Road.

STAFFORD: Mrs. Anna Booton, Flat 7, 28 Crescent Road, Rowley Park.

***YORK:** Julia Baldersam, 1 Longfield Terrace (off Bootham).

*If you are interested in forming a group in this area, please write to the address given.

EDITORIAL STATEMENT

There has been a misunderstanding involving a report from the I.S. Women's Conference that *Socialist Woman* had invited the I.S. women to be represented on the board of *Socialist Woman*. Just to set the record straight, we haven't in fact issued such an invitation to the I.S. women—at present, our Editorial Board is made up of an elected core, plus one representative from those Socialist Woman Groups who wish to send one. A new board will be elected at our National Conference, and there is no intention at present for the board's make-up to be changed.

HELP WANTED

Can you help us in any of the following ways?—

1. Taking a bulk order. This will be sent post free.
2. Sending us the names of bookshops & newsagents in your area likely to take *Socialist Woman*.
3. Being a reporter. Keep an eye on your local paper, send in relevant cuttings and photos. Follow up strikes, etc. with interviews, stories, pictures.
4. Sending in articles, letters, cartoons, etc.

STOP PRESS

We have just received a report from a Ceylonese woman socialist of the extreme repression there by the Bandaranaike government following the recent revolutionary upsurge. She writes:

"... The systematic torture, arrest, detention, is continuing ... There are 13,000 people held in concentration camps ... Women members of the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna—People's Liberation Front) have been raped and viciously attacked ... A leading woman member at Matara was raped and shot by the Army ..."

We will publish more information as we receive it. The almost total news blackout on these events by the press and radio in this country makes it all the more essential for all socialists to make public the actions of the Ceylonese government and to undertake solidarity actions on behalf of the victims of the repression, for the immediate restoration of democratic rights and the release of all political prisoners.

SOCIALIST WOMAN SPECIALS

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