

SOCIALIST WOMAN

NATIONAL PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WOMAN GROUPS No. 1-1972



BRANNAN BLACKLEG GETS HOWLED DOWN

WOMEN IN THE SOVIET UNION
"WOMAN'S ESTATE" - A REVIEW
LOW PAY-ACTION NEEDED NOW!
OBITUARY FOR MAIRIN KEEGAN

5p

EDITORIAL

At the present time the women's movement continues to grow. It is a broad movement made up of many different types of group, with different types of group, with different ideas of what women's liberation means and different ideas about how we should try to achieve it. The Skegness Conference in October showed this quite clearly; as it also showed that the extent of coordination and united action cannot, as yet, be very great.

As socialists we believe that the least contribution which we can make at the present time is to build a strong socialist current within the movement, and that we can best do this through the development of the Socialist Woman Groups. The groups, organised in support of this paper, try to combine discussion of the ideas of women's liberation and socialism with activity which gives priority to support for the struggles of working class women.

We are arranging the first Socialist Woman Conference in London on January 29th and 30th. This will provide an opportunity for members of Socialist Woman Groups in different parts of the country to meet, to discuss our ideas on women's liberation, to discuss the work we have been doing and to coordinate future activities. We hope that this conference will help us to strengthen Socialist Woman and the Socialist Woman Groups and to increase the contribution we can make and the influence we can have in the women's movement.

Printed below are details of the Conference. If you would like to come, get in touch with your nearest Socialist Woman Group (list at the back) or if there is not one near you, the Editorial Board.

In the three years since the paper *Socialist Woman* was started, the Socialist Woman Groups set up in support of its general political position have developed in number and in practice to the extent that the Editorial Board feels it is high time a stronger basis is established for coordination of activities and exchange of ideas. The Editorial Board are therefore calling a national conference of the Socialist Woman Groups for the purpose of jointly assessing the experience of the groups so far and to plan effective coordination of information, activities and plans for the future.

—The conference is intended primarily for the Socialist Woman Groups and it is hoped that as many members of SWGs as possible will be able to attend. In addition to this, attendance will be open to subscribers and sympathisers of *Socialist Woman* by invitation of their local SWG or where there is no local group by invitation of the Editorial Board.

—To ensure fair representation of all groups, voting will be on a delegate basis, with 1 delegate per 3 active members of a SWG, to be elected from each SWG.

—Priority in speaking will be given to delegates, then to SWG members and finally to observers.

—It is hoped that many SWG members will want to write papers for the conference in addition to the papers already commissioned, which will be circulated as soon as possible. SWGs should take responsibility for the production of papers by their members.

PROPOSED AGENDA

Saturday

- Voting on chairmen for all sessions.
- 10.45–11.15 "The women's liberation movement in Britain, the WNCC and the regional structure (including a historical analysis of women's organisations)"—Linda Smith.
- 11.15–11.45 "The relationship between women's liberation and revolutionary socialism"—Judith White.
- 11.45– 1.00 Workshop discussions
- 1.00– 2.00 Lunch
- 2.00– 2.15 Paper on economic background to women's movement—Joanna Griffiths
- 2.15– 3.30 Workshop discussions on Families, Nurseries, T.U.s, Rent Campaigns, and other papers received.
- 3.30– 4.00 Break.
- 4.00– 4.30 "Women & capitalism" and "Proposal for a Campaign for Equal Pay and Equal Work against Low Pay"—Margaret Coulson.
- 4.30– 6.00 Discussion.
- Evening Social.

Sunday

- 10.30–11.00 "Strategy for an Equal Pay/Low Pay Campaign"—Leonora Lloyd.
- 11.00– 1.00 T.U. Panel and discussion.
- 1.00– 2.00 Lunch
- 2.00– 2.30 "The structure of the Socialist Woman Groups and the paper"—Felicity Trodd
- 2.30– 3.00 Discussion
- 3.00– 3.30 Business report on *Socialist Woman*—Pat Masters.
- Election of editorial board.
- 3.30 Conclusion of conference

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Signed articles do not necessarily represent editorial opinion.

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THE TOBACCO GIANTS- and how they grow . . .

For anyone still in doubt, the days of the good old family firm are well and truly over, and if more proof were needed, take a look at the Imperial Tobacco Group Limited. The exploits of this combine spread far beyond the Tobacco Division, itself taking in four great neames in the manufacture of cigarettes, tobaccos, cigars and snuffs, namely W.D.&H.O.Wills, John Player & Sons, Ogden's, and Churchmans. But Imperial now has fingers in other pies! Its Food Division alone takes in Golden Wonder Ltd, HP Sauce Ltd, Ross Group Ltd, manufacturers of frozen foods, and National Canning Co. Ltd, one of its subsidiaries being Smedley's Ltd, manufacturers of canned and quick frozen foods, and this is to mention but a few! Its Paper and Board Division takes in St Ann's Board Mill Company Ltd and Robert Fletcher & Son Ltd. Its Distributive Trade Division includes Finlay & Company Ltd, Robert Sinclair Ltd. And its General Trade Division takes in manufacturers of glass bottles, plastic products, yarns and textiles, and also includes property owners. In addition the Imperial Tobacco Group has a host of associated companies, including Mardon, Son & Hall Ltd, folding cartons and colour printing, Celloglas Ltd film laminating and varnishing, and others, too many to mention. And not to forget, jointly owned with two others companies, E.S.L.(Bristol) Ltd, designers and manufacturers of teaching aids and special purpose electronic control equipment and film producers.

Well, that sets the scene, and shows the immense size and power of the Imperial Tobacco Group (I.T.G.) But I now want to focus particular attention on the Tobacco Division and see what tricks Imperial are up to in maintaining their empire and keeping the profits rolling in at a rate that affords the Chairman of the Board of Directors to be paid the mere sum of £36,000 a year, £692 a week for his efforts! Within the Tobacco Division I shall concentrate mainly on Wills as this Company is particularly expert in maintaining the myth of the paternal family firm which "takes care of its workers". If this should be doubted, the second paragraph of W.D.&H.O.Wills' pamphlet "Pacemakers in Tobacco" reads: "The firm takes its name from the two sons of the founder, Henry Overton Wills, whose family soon became well known not only for the quality of their products but as enlightened employers and benefactors of Bristol". And the sad truth is that this myth is still largely believed by the women at Wills, who see the firm as good employers; it is true they may appear more "enlightened" than many others but they are still only using the workers as instruments for their own end, which is to keep the profits rolling in. It is this myth that holds back class consciousness and helps prevent the workers from realizing that the only thing that will "take care" of them will be for them to take control of the factory and run it for themselves. And it is this myth that the *Socialist Woman Group* has tried to smash.

W.D.&H.O.Wills was founded in Bristol nearly 200 years ago. It is the largest member of the Imperial Tobacco Group with seven factories in Bristol, Glasgow, Newcastle and Swindon, and distribution centres in London and Belfast. It employs 11,000 workers the majority of whom are women, and it holds over one third of the British market in cigarettes, tobaccos and cigars.

"PAY PROFICIENCY"—OR CARROT & WHIP

What state of affairs exists in the factory to keep the myth of the "good employer" going? Well, lets look at one trick which might suggest that the boss is really quite a generous bloke for those who are willing to do their bit!—P.P.S. the Pay Proficiency Scheme—In affect Measured Day Work (M.D.W.) adopted by the whole Cigarette Industry several years ago. This works differently in different factories e.g. production in some jobs is determined by a machine not the operator, or else, in the case of the girls who are catchers, their production is determined by the cigarette machine operator, usually a man! For girls on the cigar making machines Production and "usings" (economic use of tobacco leaf) work together to determine grade and money. And they can work at their own rate and control their own production which can fluctuate between five grades. As well as the number of cigars they produce, also taken into account is efficiency on wrapper utilization, the biggest outlay for the firm being tobacco. So that the management asks for at least 95% usings, and if this is not met, higher production would be expected to compensate. If both are too low, dropping a grade is risked, with a drop in money.

WHO ASSESSES THE BOSS?

Now, the rate for the job is worked out by job assessment, which has been going in Wills for years. Under job assessment, so many points are given to: job knowledge, mental requirements, responsibility, working conditions and physical demands. Each of these is assessed, and the total is worked out to categories of scale, points awarded then



places them in a category with a corresponding rate of pay. At present there are seven categories for women and ten for men, both different rates of pay for men and women with the same points, but in preparation for Equal Pay in 1975, it is assumed these categories will be lumped together to make ten categories for both men and women. However, evaluating the job in this way is a dodge for the employer, as in the process of production, a cleaner is of equal necessity, value and worth as a mechanic, and so should be equally rewarded. It is this principle that the employers will no doubt totally ignore when it comes to assessing the jobs that are especially reserved for women!

A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR

Still, if this rouses suspicions that the firm isn't quite so generous as it makes out to be, it'll soon try to put that to rights with its annual bonus—called the "gift" from the Company to all employees. In fact this is less a charity than downright blackmail! After a percentage cut in the profits has been worked out for the shareholders, it's decided what percentage of each worker's gross wages, say 14½%, over the last financial year shall be given back out of the fruits of her labour as a bonus or gift! (which is taxed)—(it might be pointed out that the workers have worked for their humble share of the profits, whereas only the capital of the shareholders has earned theirs!). So the higher an employee's annual earnings i.e. production i.e. hard work and overtime, the more the "gift". This money can be withdrawn or withheld by the management and is non-negotiable. What's more, this money, probably round about £100, is stopped if strike action is taken without giving 21 days notice. It is therefore used by the firm as a threat over the employees' heads, as a means of taking away the most important day-to-day weapon the workers have in fighting their class enemy—the withholding of their labour.

D.D.S.—THE DIRTY DISGUSTING SWINDLE

Now, all these bribes and blackmails don't appear to be keeping up production high enough for the firm, as the management recently had a go in Bristol No.1 and No.4 factories at introducing a productivity deal in disguise! D.D.S. Double Day Shift. In a four page pamphlet to the workers, called "D.D.S.—What's in it for me?" the management listed "the Pros and Cons". Needless to say, there were more reasons why workers should, rather than shouldn't choose D.D.S., the management trying to bribe the workers with monetary rewards, into utterly disrupting their lives to push up output for the firm. The offer this time was a 17½% shift premium on top of the agreed consolidated rate. Thus, a woman production employee in job group 3 with a basic wage of £18.65p, would receive an extra £3.26p (17½%), totalling £21.91p. In addition to this, employees changing to D.D.S. would qualify for a "once only" lump sum payment of £110 for men and £90 for women (ours is just for the little extra, girls!). The Bristol Socialist Woman Group put out a leaflet to the workers—"D.D.S.—Dirty Disgusting Swindle—What's really in it for you?" which we hope roused some suspicion of the dirty deal the management were trying to push onto them. The management's justification for D.D.S. was twofold: "to have enough spare capacity to carry out maintenance and overhaul programmes and still meet our sales commitments; and to maintain full production whilst reinstalling machinery at Hartcliffe". But they both mean the same thing—increased exploitation. Girls! take the increased money and tell them to stuff D.D.S. and any other conditions!

WHAT'S THE FUTURE?

What's the future for the tobacco industry? This is very hard to say. Cigarettes were holding their own until the health scare, when sales dropped a bit, but they have picked up since. Cigars are doing all right and in fact Wills can't make enough of them and have asked Churchmans in Ipswich to help them out in meeting their schedule. On the



other hand, Churchmans in Bristol, always the poor relation to Wills, recently made 32 workers redundant on the basis that they did not have enough work. Bristol Socialist Woman Group campaigned on behalf of these women—"Are you the Cinderellas of the tobacco world?", suggesting that they demand their union, in this case the Transport & General Workers Union, fight for no redundancies and work-sharing within the Imperial Tobacco Group. There was much angry feeling about the redundancies amongst the workers, expressed at a factory gate meeting with Bristol SWG one dinner out. But to prevent a further advance in rank-and-file militancy, after a meeting with union officials inside the factory, jobs were found for the redundant workers at Wills (the big brother to Churchman). So we can see that industrial groups like Imperial Tobacco can still find room for manoeuvre when pushed!

TRUE COLOURS(?)—COMMON MARKET

So though the union bureaucrats and bosses managed to fulfill this very basic demand, future disputes may not be solved so peacefully. With the present economic crisis and the entry of Britain into the Common Market, the firm will be forced to push the workers further and further, and so take the glint off its "enlightened" reputation. Entry into the Common Market could go either way for the tobacco industry, cigarettes unlikely to be greatly affected as continental flavours are not easily adopted, but cigars, more alike in taste, are likely to come under a threat from cheaper and lesser quality cigars made in Holland for instance. Wills' high quality (no dusting, dyeing or additives on the continent), in this situation, could get the better of their rivals' lower price, and they may even push up sales by gaining markets on the continent. But if not, and even if so, with the economic crisis hitting the whole of Western Europe, the firm will be forced to attempt to improve efficiency and push up its schedule. In this situation the workers will be forced to defend themselves, and their unions, mainly the Tobacco Workers Union and also the small Cigarette Operators and Mechanics Society, should be made to fight to protect their members' interests. But more than this, instead of merely being in a position of defence, as consciousness of class conflict develops, it would be hoped that growing shop-floor rank-and-file militancy and organisation would go on the attack against the employers, and finally get rid of the myth that there exists any such thing as a "good employer"!

Peggy Davies.

Bristol Socialist Woman Group

JUST AS A MATTER OF INTEREST: Figures just published in the Financial Times on changes in company profits and dividends over the last year put Tobacco top of the league, with trading profits of £308,488,000—a rise of 18.7% over 1970 (the average rise was 8.1%)—and dividends paid out of £64,313,000—a rise of 6.7% compared with the average rise in dividends of 3%. Over double the average in both cases.

WOMEN'S T.U.s - What does it mean?

Last May women at a Lucas electrical component factory in Burnley opted out of the General and Municipal Workers Union—which has the largest female membership—and formed the Women's Industrial Union, throwing its membership open to all women in industry and the services. So far it has 300 members. The specific grievances against the GMWU are that it is male-dominated and that there is no internal democracy. Both of these criticisms are entirely justified, but should women create their own trade unions or fight within the existing ones? Nina Thomas of the Lancaster Socialist Woman Group examines the issue.

The objective conditions of capitalism are the conditions out of which the organisation of men and women into Trade Unions has developed. The fact that these organisations, however bureaucratic and inefficient, are the only means through which any group of workers can defend their interests against the employers is the reason why the employers' class attacks them and tries to strangle them in a period of capitalist economic crisis. It is on the shop floor, through militant shop stewards' committees, strike committees, etc. that the struggle against the employer is waged. Within the context of workers' struggles for economic demands, in defence of Union principles and so on, we should raise more generalised political issues which expose the nature and contradictions of capitalist society. I think this is central to understanding our work; militant and political action springs out of the existing Trade Union organisation.

Then, within this framework, there are the particular sorts of problems that affect women workers, which I think can be broadly divided into three areas:

1. By the very nature of their oppression, women Trade Unionists are in the minority and find the Unions male-dominated. They have to fight for recognition of themselves and their own concerns.
2. In any working-class struggle women will inevitably be faced by issues which affect them personally; their family lives will be changed, they step outside their usual roles, their consciousness of themselves as women and workers changes.
3. A struggle may be one which only affects women, such as a fight for equal pay, nurseries, etc. (only affects women because they are the only people who will fight for such things).

Since all these aspects of militant Trade Unionism are particular to women and relate immediately to the general subordination of women we need to focus attention on them. But it is essential to recognise that disillusionment with the Trade Unions is not confined to women, and that the existing Trade Unions are the largest and most substantial working class organisations. It is then, the nature of the present Unions that is at fault, rather than the principle of unionisation. Indeed, most working class struggles are not specifically women's struggles in a qualitatively different way. It would therefore be disastrous for women to opt out of the working class movement; their power would thereby be severely weakened.

This then gives us the springboard for our work. In the Unions we want to change the power structure; we want more militant control by women and men on the shop floor, less red tape and less well-paid immobile officials. This is where we can be effective and fight to get things changed. However, I think I have shown that we need more than this in the current struggle. There is a necessity for organisations of women which can analyse and generalise the particular issues which affect women, coordinate struggles, and work for the recognition and action around these issues within the Trade Union movement, and in all spheres of society. Whoever these sorts of organisations constitute, they must be politically motivated and perform this additional and vital function, rather than try to substitute themselves for the existing Trade Unions.



An article in the *Irish Sunday Press*, the largest-selling newspaper in the 26 counties, quotes at length from Rosemary Sales's account of the role that women are playing in the Irish struggle for national liberation, published in the last issue of *Socialist Woman*.

On 19 December, Proinsias Mac Aonghusa wrote in the *Sunday Press*: "The anti-Irish propaganda campaign continues unabated in the British press. The *Daily Mirror*, *Sun* and *Daily Mail* compete with one another in distorting Irish news for the masses, while in a somewhat more subtle fashion the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Guardian* do the same for top people.... In one area only in British journalism does Ireland get consistent and strong support: the radical left-wing press." The article then goes on to mention the militant support and analysis of the *Irish Citizen*, published by the Irish Solidarity Campaign and quotes long extracts from the *Socialist Woman* article. Practically all of the Irish men and women actively involved in the struggle will have read this write-up, and been encouraged by our solidarity with them. But of course, solidarity means more than simply writing sympathetic articles: it means taking an active part in persuading the British proletariat that British imperialism along with its army of thugs, must be kicked out of Ireland. ISC is the forefront of this campaign, and details of its activities can be obtained from: 22 Duncan Terrace, London N.1.

It was hoped that this conference would show a positive development in the theory and organization of the Women's Lib movement but the opposite happened. The Conference presented a very true picture of the movement which is at a stage of fragmentation and incoherence rather than reflecting some sort of political advance since the Ruskin Conference.

One of the most important things which emerged from the Conference was that the structure of the W.N.C.C. however satisfactory at its formation, was clearly undemocratic and unrepresentative of the W.L. movement at this present time. The groups involved in the W.N.C.C. meetings at which the format of the conference was decided had different ideas from the groups who eventually turned up. Consequently dissatisfaction with the agenda arose very soon and by Saturday afternoon, about half the women had formed their own small work-shops after the alienating atmosphere of the large seminars in the morning. By Saturday evening the original programme of the Conference had been abandoned in the face of such obvious hostility to it, and a general session in which all the groups had a chance to speak on their ideas for the rest of the Conference. From this emerged the Sunday morning workshops on whatever topics people were prepared to talk on, and a general session in the afternoon.

The range of topics on Sunday morning covered the four campaigns, Lesbianism, Sexuality and the future of the W.N.C.C. The last session of the conference was the most constructive one. From the events of the Conference it was obvious that a new structure would have to be set up. Although it was decided at the W.N.C.C. that no voting would take place, the Conference over-ruled this so it was voted to abolish the W.N.C.C. A regional structure was set up instead of the W.N.C.C. because it was felt that more people could get to regional meetings and would be able to participate more in the decisions made. Each region is to arrange meetings in their locality between now and March, to discuss national organization and local campaigns. It is hoped that in March another national conference will be held at which some more progress as far as national organization of the W.L. movement can be made.

It is clear from the outcome of this Conference that the apparent agreement in the W.L. movement which was sometimes seen at W.N.C.Cs does not exist in reality. Among all the groups which attended the Conference there are real disagreements over theoretical issues such as the nature of women's oppression and the way to achieve liberation as well as over organization and function of a national Women's Lib. movement. It is to be hoped that over the next three months, groups can thoroughly discuss all these issues in their regions, and that the next national conference, a coherent programme and organization can emerge. Otherwise the W.L. as a movement is going to collapse in the near future although no doubt individual groups will continue to flourish.

Wanda Mariuszko

What boys and girls come out to say

Girls and boys as young as five years old use language differently, and this reflects the different socialisation processes that they undergo.

That is the finding of some recent research by Basil Bernstein and his colleagues, well known for their work on the relations between language and social class.

GIRLS TIED TO MOTHERS' LANGUAGE USE

Middle-class girls were much more strongly affected by the way their mothers used language than were middle class boys.

The mother's use of language with the child was measured on a Maternal Communication Index, based on the combined scores of two types of tests. The first assessed the willingness of the mother to talk to her child in a variety of situations; the second assessed the extent to which the mother would avoid answering difficult questions asked by the child. So a high score on the Index represented a mother who would reply to her child's attempts to chat to her in a range of contexts, and who would explain rather than avoid difficult questions asked by the child. Middle class mothers tended to score much higher on the Index than working class mothers.

Middle class girls aged five were given various language tasks—describing pictures, completing stories, explaining games, etc. The working class girls with mothers who scored high on the Maternal Communication Index use far more words on

these tasks than middle class girls with low-scoring mothers—an average proportionate word-score of 10 as against 3. These differences did not appear in the boys' scores. The differences in the girls' case arise from the greater reliance of the daughter on her mother. The male child is more likely to be developing relationships with other boys of his own age who will influence his language use, while the five year old middle-class girl is tied to the home. The middle class boy's general environment is more stimulating than that of the girl, and thus the girl is more dependent on the stimulation of her mother's language. Those girls with mothers who have high Index scores will develop a greater range of language ability than boys; on the other hand, those girls with low-scoring mothers will suffer greater disadvantage than boys.

MORE SUBMISSIVE ROLE OF GIRLS

Middle class mothers also tended to be more coercive and to give less explanations to the girl than to the boy. These sex differences did not appear in working class families. Bernstein suggests that there is a tendency for middle class parents to socialise the girl into a more submissive social role than that of the boy.

LOOKING AFTER BROTHERS AND SISTERS

A large sex difference was found in the use of different adjectives. Five year old girls used more adjectives than boys

Priorities For Women's Liberation in the U.S. & Britain

In the United States the main mobilising focus of the women's liberation movement is the Campaign for repeal of all abortion laws in all the States. Such a campaign is seen as capable of involving broad masses of women on an issue that affects them all—the right and the ability to control their own lives (sic) through controlling their own body. It brings in the question of community control over institutions that directly affect the lives of the masses in the community and this provides a link with the struggles of the Black community—indeed there is considerable overlap in this respect, involving solidarity between different oppressed groupings. This applies particularly with regard to Abortion Clinics and child-care facilities. It brings in questions of finance as well as those of control and accountability. There is much of highly educational value for the working class in such a campaign, much that can be learnt in terms of demands. (Though these, let it not be forgotten, have been learnt from struggles of the working class).

How is it that the U.S. abortion campaign has become the key issue in building a mass women's movement? First, it is still a capital offence in some States to have one's child aborted. Over the last few years there have been a number of successful attempts to liberalise the antiquated and brutalising abortion laws. But different States vary enormously in the stages of reform that they have reached. Some are very reactionary, having considered and rejected quite mild proposals for reform. Others have introduced reforms which favourably affect the wealthier articulate middle class women and totally exclude the less articulate and the more ill-informed among the working class women, particularly those who are black.

How should we regard this campaign? Obviously as women suffering the same oppression at the hands of the same system, we unconditionally support the attempts to win, through "democratic" constitutional channels and through litigation the necessary reforms that may alleviate, in however small a way, the oppression suffered by women, here and now.

Freed from the compulsion of child-bearing and all the inescapable pressures and obligations that this forces them

to face, women can make more positive and autonomous decisions as to how they will lead their life. They can find a degree of fulfilment in a direction of their own choosing, even if this happens to be child-birth and child-rearing. Free contraception and abortion on demand are absolute preconditions for such freedom and are demands which every man or woman calling themselves socialist should support.

Nevertheless, against such a focus we must weigh other alternatives if we are to arrive at a realistic perspective for the women's liberation movement in these islands, and if we are to make an evaluation of the correctness or otherwise of socialists in the U.S. who have adopted this campaign as the main axis of their intervention in the women's liberation movement.

It is not only a question of which campaign is capable of mobilising the broadest mass of women—indeed it is even questionable for revolutionaries as to whether the main task for them is mobilising broadest masses ("broadest" in the sense of crossing all class and ideological boundaries). It is also, and more importantly, do we think the women's liberation movement stands to gain most concretely by campaigning solely as a movement, on a single campaign; abortion in particular; or even on a handful of campaigns, to remove some of the most glaring aspects of oppression which do indeed have severe economic and social repercussions on the lives and livelihood of thousands upon thousands of women? Or do we think the women's liberation movement would gain more by going direct to where oppression weighs the heaviest, where it is coupled with undiluted exploitation; i.e. in the work situation of working class women, particularly with children to support, or other dependents. Now unless working class women, a substantial proportion of the working class, can be organised around revolutionary socialist demands and led to support a revolutionary programme for all workers, then their support for the limited campaigns like that adopted by the U.S. movement is likely to remain peripheral to the revolutionary struggle and to that extent even somewhat diversionary—though clearly such a campaign cries out for support from anybody.

However, once organised and militant around industrial questions capable of eliciting widespread support from the industrial working class—e.g. questions of low pay, opposition to unequal grading structures, bourgeois job evaluation schemes, productivity deals and so on—not to mention the right to work, right to unionise, right to picket and propagate the issues—working class women will support other aspects of the struggle for women's liberation from a clear perspective, a clear understanding of the class nature of the family, its function in a capitalist society, etc. They will be able then to demand and get wide industrial support for these demands. However, the industrial and the abortion campaign issue struggles should not be posed as alternatives so much as a question of priorities, and groups must choose, given the shortness of time and the scarceness of human and material resources.



Every year, the Government examines in great detail the pay and conditions (holidays, time off, etc) of a representative selection of workers. The results are published as the "New Earnings Survey". The first results of the 1971 survey (which is taken in April each year) show clearly that women have once again become relatively worse off than they were the previous year, although, as we shall see, the civil servants who compile the figures draw precisely the opposite conclusion. The table shows that in *real money terms women are relatively worse off than they were two years ago* and that non-manual women workers have made no progress this year. But the Dept. of Employment says "percentage increases in this period were much higher for women than for men, particularly among manual women". This remark comes below a table which shows that men had average increases of 8.2p/hr between April 1970 and April 1971, whilst for women the corresponding increase was 6.3p/hr.

The operative word, or course, is *percentage*. As long as men and women start from a different level of pay (with women at the lowest level, of course) percentage across the board increases will always leave women worse off. Before examining some detailed examples of low pay, we should consider why both management and union negotiators go for percentage increases.

% INCREASE - WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

First it is much easier for management to calculate the costs of increases on a percentage basis, and easier to justify raising prices as a result. Second, because it gives more to higher-paid workers, it maintains differentials, increases divisions amongst the workers, and cuts the cost of wage increases in many cases, because there are usually fewer workers in the higher paid category. Thus, instead of giving £3 to all workers, a few get £5 and many get £1 and some get in between. For both management and union, it simplifies negotiations if individual increases for each class of worker do not have to be worked out. Also, from the unions' point of view, it is the skilled craftsmen who represent the most vocal section of the union, are usually the section from which the officials have themselves come and who pay the highest dues. And the Government sets wage norms in terms of % increase—for the reasons outlined above, of course. The majority of workers are confused by these tactics and are accustomed to thinking in terms of % rises, without thinking through to the long-term results.

There have, of course, been cases of unions negotiating equal rises for women: the net result is that women do not then actually worsen their position in money terms and they improve it in % terms. However, this happens all too seldom. Thus, there was a big fuss because the little Bakers' Union took a stand and demanded a higher rise for women a little while back. Unfortunately, their courage has now deserted them and the latest rises have been *smaller* for women, with a promise to re-negotiate women's wages later in the year. Meantime, women bakers will have to eat cake.

This story can be repeated in industry after industry. Just to give a few examples: (the following are the hourly increases in certain industries as a result of awards between April 1970-71). Food manufacturing: (manual) men 7.1p women 5.9, footwear (manual) men 6.9, women 5.1p; retail co-operative societies (manual and non-manual) men 7.1p, women 5.6p (this in spite of the much-vaunted recent Equal-Pay agreement); local authorities (England and Wales, manual) men 8.4p women 6.4p. In the case of

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non-manual women in the public sector (civil service, teachers etc.) there were examples of women getting larger increases, but not large enough to bring them up to the men's level of earnings.

It is important to distinguish between pay and earnings. Thus, in many cases where equal pay applies, in reality women will be earning a lot less than men, because of unequal opportunity. Thus, male primary and secondary school teachers in England and Wales in April 1971 were earning £36.2 a week; their female colleagues earned a mere £29.3. It makes one wonder why the Schoolmaster Association is expending so much energy trying to ensure that teaching is made safer for the "careerist male". The men's higher earnings in this case cannot be attributed to their longer hours or greater productivity, or even their

	Increases in weekly earnings (non-manual)		Increases in hourly earnings (manual)	
	men £	women £	men np	women np
Oct.69-Oct.70	4.1	2.5	8.0	5.1
Oct.70-April 71	3.0	0.2	0.8	1.2
Total increase	7.1	2.7	8.8	6.3
Av. earnings April 71	39.1	19.8	62.2	38.1

greater qualifications—whilst there are many better-paying outlets for male graduates, teaching is one of the few openings for women graduates. Male teachers earn more because they occupy more of the higher-paid positions, and in spite of the SMA's concern for career teachers, are often promoted over the heads of better-qualified and longer-serving women teachers to reach those positions.

LOW-PAID WOMEN WORKERS vs A QUIET LIFE FOR THE UNION BUREAUCRACY

If these are women workers with good education, demonstrably equal jobs, apparently equal pay and a union to represent them, what of those with none of these things, those at the other end of the pay scale? After all, 87% of all manual women workers earned less than £20 in April 1971, compared to the 87% of all male manual workers who earned £20 or more. Although union membership amongst

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women workers is rising half as fast again as among men, the majority of women workers are still unorganised, and especially so with the worse paid. Unions have never really worried too much about low paid women workers, except when they seem to threaten men's jobs and security. Thus, in the 1880s the unions refused to accept women members, who were then organised into women-only unions, the male unions giving them help only when they found women workers in direct competition (through lower wages) with their members. Remnants of this attitude still remain, with women in women-only occupations being the last to be organised, if at all. Against this, it has now become acceptable for unions to put effort into recruiting women and to campaign for equal pay. But it is not surprising that the fewer the number of women members a union has, the

pay too. Union officials like the quiet life and it is hard enough to get what the men want without trying to make up for two centuries of injustice and exploitation of women.

So the first step in trying to change this state of affairs is to ensure that the union officials are told that they will not get a quiet life until every woman worker is organised, every woman worker is getting the rate for the job and every woman worker has as much chance of getting training and skilled work as a man (and that's little enough). The attitude of the TGWU towards the cleaners, when they told the women helping the cleaners, that they were not prepared to do any active recruiting themselves, is typical of many unions. Unfortunately, women work all sorts of awkward shifts and thousands of them work part-time. It may be inconvenient for unions to organise these women, but they need union membership as much as the next worker.

ONLY THE FIRST STEP

Of course, joining a union is only a first step and in itself does not guarantee a better deal. But generally, workers who have shown the militancy and determination necessary to get themselves organised are also prepared to fight for decent wages and better conditions. What this amounts to in practical terms can be illustrated by two cases in West London. One factory making school uniforms pays £9 for a 43½ hour week to 19-year old machinists. Another garment factory, a few miles away, pays £15 "time-rate" (i.e. a basic wage payable even when no work is available) for a 40 hour week and £25 for the average full week's work. Guess which factory has 80% union membership.

For some strange reason, it seems that the worse-off workers are the ones most afraid of losing their jobs. Presumably, they would not take such jobs in the first place unless they were desperate. So any campaign to get them organised must involve the entire trade union movement in the locality. They must be assured of the support of other trade unionists, not least in their own trade. But the union bureaucracy have always avoided this kind of co-operation and it usually results from rank and file initiative.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Socialist Woman Groups cannot themselves undertake more than a tiny part of the work involved. They must find ways of involving the unions, whose job this is in any case and ensuring that they vigorously pursue the task of organising women workers. The fact is that few people know of the existence of these groups of underpaid women. Of course, they exist somewhere, but surely not on our own doorstep. But SWGs who have been doing surveys in different parts of the country are discovering that they exist on everybody's doorstep. We must coordinate the results of such surveys to show that behind the figures and statistics published nationally are truly horrific stories of super-exploitation too often ignored by the unions. The surveys should not be used as an end in themselves, but as weapons to use in a campaign. We have always known that certain groups of women are badly off even in comparison with other women workers, but emotive statements to that effect not



re militant it is likely to be. For example, at a recent C, DATA proposed an amendment to the equal pay resolution, calling for strike action where necessary. However, DATA has very few draughtswomen members, most of their female membership being tracers, who would qualify for the same pay as draughtsmen. With those unions having large numbers of women members, a lot of about equal pay goes on, especially at the top levels, it seems to be in the middle ranks of union bureaucracy the buck gets stuck. A TGWU official refused to negotiate equal pay for women workers in a West London house, who made up a mere 1% of the labour force, on the grounds that it would "open the floodgates". Presumably, he was thinking of all the other women he represented" who might think they were entitled to equal



backed up by actual cases and figures will not impress anyone. Given the facts, we will find that trade-union militants are prepared to give help generously. The Brannon's strike is just one in a long proud history of working-class solidarity.

A campaign against low pay, for equal pay and equal work, for the right to work, is vitally necessary. Surveys are being made by various unions, and the TUC itself, into the progress of equal pay (if any), but we already know that the longer action is delayed, the harder it will be for women to catch up. We also know that the problem is not simply an economic one, nor can it be solved by the unions. Only the militant action of rank-and-file workers, especially the women themselves, can begin to turn the situation. But, as has been said before, women have special problems (not least the antagonism of the men) to contend with. This is where the women's movement comes in and the SWGs have already shown themselves many times capable of helping women workers to overcome some of these problems and push the unions into (reluctant) activity. We must learn from each experience and put the lessons learnt into practice.

SOME LESSONS

What are some of the lessons we have already learnt? First, the importance of involving the trade union movement. The first activities of the SWGs consisted of publicising and collecting for women's struggles. Second, linking up the various struggles. The best example of this has been the cleaners' campaign, which has been linked up in various ways, both between groups of cleaners and between cleaners and other sections of workers (e.g. the telephonists). One of the most important aspects of women going out to work is that, instead of being isolated in the home, they become potentially part of the working-class movement, and it is important that they see the results of unity within that movement. Third, never underestimate the obstinacy of the trade-union bureaucracy, with whom one is likely to have as many battles as with the bosses! Equally, never underestimate the potential for militancy and courage of women workers.

LINKING UP

Fourth, to involve the women right from the start in their own campaign. We know all about the special problems of women workers, and the temptation is to take over from them all the time-consuming jobs concerned with recruitment, etc. but this is putting off the day when the women are going to have to manage for themselves. We should instead find ways of helping them to overcome these problems. Fifth, we must never forget just why we are involving ourselves in such campaigns. Of course, we want women to join trade unions, to get decent pay, to have the chance to do better work. But we want much more than this. We want the struggles to get these desirable things to open the eyes of all workers to the nature of the society we live in, in particular the position of women in that society. This means going beyond the struggles, linking them up with the need for nurseries, the attacks on the working-class in the form of increased medical charges, school meals, milk, higher rents and prices, the immigration act, etc. It means that in *Socialist Woman* we must consistently link-up these various aspects, putting them into an historical and international context. It means that SWGs must not get bogged down in the minutiae of union organisation, but must take time to have an educational programme. Sixth, if there is to be any advantage in belonging to an organisation having many different groups, our experiences must be written up, however briefly so that both our mistakes and successes can be learnt from by other groups. The first stage of the campaign is for the groups in every part of the country to investigate the problems of women workers in their own area and to publicise the results through public meetings and information sent to trade unions, the local press, etc. This should be followed up by putting pressure on trade unions, through the rank-and-file,

to organise these women. In the course of their investigation groups will find sections of women workers who want to become unionised, but do not know how to go about it. It is these women whom the groups will want to work with. Certain areas of work are already emerging. Thus, tobacco workers are written about elsewhere in this issue and several SWGs have made contact with tobacco workers. SWGs in universities are working with women workers in the colleges. Other industries include the jewellery trade, where mass redundancies among women are threatened as a result of the introduction of equal pay, and the garment trade, where at long last link-ups between the sections producing cloth and those make-up cloth are beginning to emerge.

Just as the equal pay campaign aroused a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and militancy amongst women, and a great deal of support among men, three or four years ago, so will this campaign. But we must avoid the weaknesses and mistakes of that former campaign. (This will be examined in the next issue). Let us make 1972 the year in which the trade union movement could no longer shut its eyes to the problem of low pay. We believe the SWGs have an important part to play.

Leonora Lloyd.



The Brannans strike (reported in the last *Socialist Woman*) is now in its seventh month. The pictures on the next two pages show the women picketing the factory as scabs (with police assistance) are driven past.

Help is badly needed. Socialist Woman Groups in Bristol, Glasgow, Lancaster and London have organised collections for the strikers. Please send whatever assistance you can to:

Sister Muriel Hillon
Shop Steward
34 Greystone Place
Cleator Moor
Cumberland.

"WOMAN'S ESTATE" - A REVIEW

by Margaret Coulson

Although the literature on women's liberation has been growing none of the recently published books provides a socialist analysis of the oppression of women and the means to liberation. Juliet Mitchell's book does not fill this gap. *Woman's Estate* provides some explanation and description of the women's movement in Britain and elsewhere, outlines a framework for analysing women's oppression and discusses how the movement is developing; in the process it reflects some of the confusions and uncertainties which are to be found in the movement to-day.

Mitchell considers both radical feminism and socialism as the basis for analysis and strategy; but in trying to look in these two directions she succeeds in focusing nowhere. Radical feminism is criticised for its inability to develop from a recognition that women have been oppressed in many forms of society to an understanding of the particular forms of oppression in capitalist society to-day, and the failure of Shulamith Firestone's⁽¹⁾ attempt to show that sexual inequality is at the source of all social inequality is examined. On the other hand socialist theory is criticised for giving too little and inadequate attention to the oppression of women; a comprehensive theory has still to be developed. Besides this the practice of most left wing and revolutionary groupings reflects the subordination of women in the wider society.

To this point there is little to disagree with in what Mitchell has to say; the differences arise as the argument develops.

The theoretical framework which Mitchell uses is a re-working of her article *Women the Longest Revolution*,⁽²⁾ but the additions and amendments weaken the perspective of the earlier article. There are four elements which combine to define women's position at any time; these are production, reproduction, sexuality and the socialization of children. "In a complex totality each independent sector has its own autonomous reality, though each is ultimately determined, but only ultimately, by the economic factor. Because the unity of women's condition is in this way the product of several structures, moving at different paces, it is always overdetermined." (p.101). By emphasising these four structures Mitchell enables us to go beyond the family as an abstract idea and to examine the significance of the particular forms of the family which have existed at different historical periods. But she seems unable to develop such an analysis herself; there is a lack of understanding of the inter-relationships between these four structures, and of the way in which they rest ultimately on the economic structure. Instead the "autonomous reality" of each is outlined, the idea of "over-determination"⁽³⁾ doesn't seem to mean very much more than adding them together to find the situation of women now. Thus Mitchell uses Marxist ideas and terminology but fails to produce a Marxist analysis. Why? Because her idea of how a socialist theory of women's oppression must be developed—"We must ask the feminist questions but try to come up with some Marxist answers."(p.99).—inevitably leads her away from Marxism. 11



The idea that women are like peasants which has appealed to several women's liberation writers appears again here. Women's consciousness-raising meetings are compared to the assemblies of Chinese peasants "speaking bitterness"; but while both these may involve speaking out what has previously been unspoken it is also important to recognise—as Mitchell does not—that such meetings of peasants were organised by the Communist Party with the well formulated political aim of mobilising the peasants not merely to recognise how the landlords had exploited them but to move into action against the landlords⁽⁴⁾ Perhaps consciousness-raising could be developed as such a political tool but at present it is often far removed from this. The individualism and competitiveness of women stemming from their position of isolation in the family is compared to similar characteristics amongst the peasantry. But these comparisons don't lead us anywhere; Mitchell stops short of any conclusions which might follow from them (as for example the mistaken view that women constitute a class⁽⁵⁾)

Mitchell considers the potential of women workers for militant action to be very limited. She gives great weight to the attitudes to work expressed by groups of women workers to whom she talked. They saw their position at work as subordinate to their position in the family and so tended to be complacent about their work situation. In fact the position of women at work is examined only in terms of their position as women (who accept the view that their "real place" is in the home). Thus at work "There is no possibility of comradeship or unity in struggle—the relationship of women workers is simply the counterpart of the loneliness of the home, it is a friendliness or its opposite. Because the economic role of women is obscured (its cheapness obscures it) women workers do not have the precondition for class-consciousness." (P. 139—my italics). Because women are rarely economically independent, because their "primary identification is as maintained

persons within the family women cannot become class conscious. Thus women suffer, according to Mitchell first last and always because they are women; the task is to develop feminist consciousness: "In the home the social, function and psychic identity of women as a group is found. Class differences at work (which anyway never produce class consciousness) are here obliterated for status differences: wealthy, middling, poor. This is not to underestimate these. But the position of women as women takes precedence: oppressed whatever their particular circumstances. Hence the importance of feminist consciousness in any revolution... Hence Woman's Liberation." (P. 182). So Mitchell is herself so overwhelmed by the strength of established ideas about "woman's place" that she ignores the *objective* relationships at work. She seems not to understand that the basic pre-condition for class consciousness is the fact of being a worker, selling one's labour in a capitalist society. Women workers do tend to relate, subjectively to the work situation in a different way from male workers because of their position in the family, with all the ideas which surround that. But this does not mean that they are incapable of class consciousness; it does mean that the logic of the development of their consciousness will be somewhat different than in the case of male workers. Women on strike at Brannon's at Cleator Moor (see article in last *Socialist Woman*) have developed a very high degree of militancy and solidarity in a strike which began on 3rd June and still continues. The film *Women and the Bill* made earlier this year illustrated the way in which women workers can become conscious of their position as *workers* fighting the Industrial Relations Bill and as *women workers* struggling to achieve equal pay.



Mitchell's feminist questions get feminist answers. Even when the questions she actually raises are not feminist ones she fails to provide Marxist answers: "We have to see why and how our oppression is structurally necessary to-day in order to fight for its overthrow" (p.95) - is not satisfactorily answered in this book. Nor is the question: who oppresses women? adequately dealt with. In order to develop a socialist theory and practice we have to examine the way in which class exploitation and sex oppression are related. This means that we must consider in what ways and to what extent women actually suffer in this society



(-and here we must recognise that working class women are in the worst position); who gains most from the subordination of women? (-not men in general, or even men in particular roles, although they may get some satisfaction from a sense of personal superiority and personal power). The great weight of the advantages goes to those who own and control the wealth of this society-who are able to draw on a cheap, poorly organized reserve pool of labour, who can make divisive propaganda appeals setting the housewife with her shopping basket against the militant trade unionist who "causes" rising prices etc etc) And in addition to this who will be most crucial if we are to change the situations? (-working class women, as a part of the class having the potential power to challenge the existing structures of this society.)

The debate over theory and practice in the women's movement continues. In *Women's Estate* Juliet Mitchell has contributed another book to the feminist case. The development of a comprehensive Marxist analysis is still an urgent task.

Margaret Coulson

NOTES

1. Shulamith Firestone-*THE DIALECTICS OF SEX*. Cape 1971.
2. Juliet Mitchell-"Women: the Longest Revolution". *NEW LEFT REVIEW*, December 1966.
3. For development of the concept of over-determination, see Louis Althusser: "On Contradiction". *NEW LEFT REVIEW*, Jan. 1967.
4. See William Hinton: *FANSHEN*. Merlin Books 1968, Ch. 13.
5. See for example Margaret Benston: "Political Economy of Women's Liberation". *MONTHLY REVIEW*, Vol. 21, No. 4, Sept. 1969.

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WOMEN IN THE SOVIET UNION

In 1917 the Russian working class made a revolution, and the changes that followed were largely determined by the programme of the Bolshevik Party. Many of the leaders of the party had realised the fundamental importance of liberating the women of Russia, not only from capitalist exploitation along with the rest of the working class, but that it was necessary to liberate women from their subjected position within relationships, which demanded new forms of relationships and thus the removal of all vestiges of the bourgeois family. Consequently some of the first decrees that were passed after October 1917 were the marriage decrees of December 1917. These established the equality of contracting parties in any marriage, and women were in future to determine their own surname and their domicile. More importantly, however, it was no longer necessary to register the relationship, and this ended the old distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children for in future all children were the same status, whatever the relationship of their parents. Marriage was thus to be a legal union, which need no longer apply, and by 1919 a decree of the People's Commissaires established that divorces could be had on demand; "divorce ceased to be a luxury accessible only to the rich; henceforth the working women would not have to petition for months or even for years for a separate credential, entitling her to make herself independent of a brutish or drunken husband, accustomed to beat her. Henceforth, divorce may be amicably obtained within a period of a week or two at most." — *Communism and the Family*, A. Kollontai.

In 1919 Lenin wrote, "We actually razed to the ground the infamous laws placing women in a position of inequality, restricting divorce and surrounding it with disgusting formalities, denying recognition to children born out of wedlock, enforcing a search for their fathers, etc., laws, numerous survivals of which, to the shame of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, are to be found in all civilised countries ... But the more thoroughly we clear the ground of all the lumber of the old bourgeois law and institutions, the more we realise that we have only cleared the ground to build on, but are not building."

Thus early on the Bolsheviks had attempted to nail the legal oppression of women, but they recognised that it was not the solution, only a necessary first step. They were still not able to radically alter the pattern of woman's existence as long as the woman accepted the responsibility of caring for the children. As she was the one who gave birth, she was the one who looked after. It was not only the child caring that restricted her, it was the domestic slavery ... "Notwithstanding all the laws emancipating women, she continues to be a *domestic slave* because *petty housework* crushes, strangles, stultifies and degrades her, chains her to the kitchen and the nursery, and she wastes her labour on barbarously unproductive, petty, nervewracking, stultifying and crushing drudgery." (Lenin, 1919)

It was necessary for the Communists to devote resources to this area. In urban areas, particularly in Moscow and Petrograd, public catering establishments were set up. Nurseries and kindergartens were needed to release women for productive labour, particularly in the period of the civil war, when there were huge labour shortages. (Some measures along these lines had to be taken by the bourgeois government in Russia during the First World War, as they had to service the needs of their largely female labour force, the women replacing the men who were fighting). Thus some of the domestic, private tasks of the women were gradually being taken over by the state. It was recognised that only when these forms of labour were taken from the shoulders of women could they start to take their share of productive activity (although many women had previously coped with both lots of work!). But it was not just the production side, of paramount importance was the task to involve the women of Russia in the political activity. If the revolution was to be maintained, it was essential for all workers, both men and women, to take an active part in the democratic processes. "Equality before the law is not necessarily equality in fact. We want the working woman to be the equal of the working man not only before the law but in fact. For this the working woman must take an increasing part in the administration of socialised enterprises and in the administration of the state. Elect more working women to the Soviet, both Communist and non-party women ... Send more women to the Moscow Soviet! Let the Moscow proletariat show that it is prepared to do everything, to fight for victory, to fight the old inequality, the old bourgeois humiliation of women." (Lenin, 1920, in *Pravda*)

But if they were to seize these opportunities they had to be released from the burdens of housework, there had to be socialised services. The problem that the Bolsheviks faced was resources.

In the sphere of education the attitude to the family and how best to overthrow its hold was one of the main differences between two main sections of Narkompros [the commissariat in charge of Education and the Arts]. The Muscovite section put the emphasis on the school commune (*shkola-kommuna*) which was to be the child's total environment, seven days per week, twelve months a year—if possible! The communalists were above all hostile to the family and it was to be that on which the education of the child was to be premised—of secondary interest was the development of the child. In fact this was not the way that the schools developed, although during the first few years of the revolution many schools were set up along experimental lines attempting this type of education). But changes were occurring in attitudes. Although Kollontai tends to be optimistic in her writings of the early period, there is evidence of fairly deep changes. In a book written about Soviet Education by Pinkevich (1929 edition), he quotes a survey that was taken in 1925 of the ideas that students held on how they would like to organise their future sex lives ... Of the women interviewed, only 1.7% said that they would like "normal" marital relations. 67.3% said that they envisaged a series of prolonged love affairs. (The equivalent numbers for men answering the same categories were 2.4% and 50.8%). The survey was taken at

Further Education institutes in Moscow (and it was not being quoted approvingly by Pinkevich!).

During the early years after the Revolution, the Bolsheviks attempted to fulfil their obligations to the women, and had attempted to start the loosening of the grip on the family. But as Trotsky was to argue later in *The Revolution Betrayed*, it was impossible to take the family by storm ... not because the will was lacking, but because the society was too poor. The real resources of the state did not correspond to the plans and intentions of the Communist Party ... it was not possible to "abolish" the family, it had to be replaced, and given that the society was too poor the liberation of women was unrealisable at that time.

Throughout the early '20s the Bolsheviks faced huge economic problems and they were forced at times to make retreats. However, these retreats were always on the understanding that if for any reason there was to be a return to bourgeois forms, that this was to be a temporary return, and was to be undertaken only to underpin the gains of the revolution. (In education, the early '20s saw the reintroduction into the schools of specialisation, fought against by Lunacharsky and Krupskaya, but in the end reintroduced as a temporary measure). But through the '20s with the establishment of the power with Stalin and his clique, the temporary retreats on principle became solidified into an actual change of principle and this can be seen clearly in relation to the position of women in the Soviet Union throughout the '30s and '40s. Through the '30s there was an erosion of the gains that had been made in the sphere of socialisation of the household tasks; communal kitchens began to be closed down, throwing the burden of food preparation once again squarely on the shoulders of the woman. Homeless children who had been a huge problem during the period of the civil war and the years after had been cared for in state orphanages. In 1933 the Central Committee had decided that the children should be placed into private hands. An area that the state should have been able to deal with was once again returning to the family. And throughout the '30s the Family was gradually being reinstated. (Obviously there were large areas of the Soviet Union that had hardly been touched by the changes relating to the family, notably in the rural areas, but the towns had seen gains made by women). In 1933 a law was passed punishing homosexual acts (1919 had seen the laws altered to allow homosexual relations); and this marked the squeezing back towards "normal marital relations". By 1936 abortions had been made illegal and divorces became increasingly difficult to obtain. It was automatic that at some stage the old categories of legitimate/illegitimate would be resurrected by the bureaucracy, and in 1944 a marriage decree was passed stating that "only legally recognised marriages entailed rights and duties for both the man and his wife". Illegitimacy had returned. The depths were found in 1949, when Stalin introduced the honours of maternity medals for five or six children, the Glory to Motherhood decoration when the woman produced between seven and nine children, and for all who succeeded in bringing forth ten or more, the Heroine Mother of the Soviet Union. Thirty years after the first blows were struck against the family, it was back with a vengeance.

Since 1949 there have been few significant changes in the position of women. Due to the pressure from the huge numbers of illegal abortions that were taking place in Russia, abortion was legalised in 1955. There is a declining birth rate and the problem for the bureaucracy was highlighted in the year 1958 to 1959 when the number of abortions exceeded the number of live births, consequently there have been alterations in the amount of time allowed for maternity

leave and the women now have 56 days' paid leave before and after the birth; they can also take a year's unpaid leave if they wish after the birth, unprejudiced. But the woman still does the housework and the shopping. And there is still a shortage in the most basic of services, the childcare facilities; in 1960 only 13% of the children in the age group one to six could be accommodated. As for the development of laundries, eating places, creches, all are inadequate, and the woman is still doing two jobs.

If we look at the figures for the membership of the CPSU, we find that women number 3 million amongst about 14 million members, only about 20%. (The proportion of women members of the party has fluctuated around the 15% to the 20% levels since the '30s). As there are more women than men in the USSR, it is obvious that women are not taking their full part in the political life of the state. In employment there are definite "feminised" industries, similar to Eastern Europe, e.g. textiles, light engineering. Of specialists with higher education, the women make up 72% of the doctors, 68% of the teachers and cultural workers, and 63% of the economists. They are under-represented on the managerial levels, and large numbers of women are in heavy manual categories, particularly in agriculture. There are still fewer chances for women to get education, skills and experience, and 77% of all women workers are "physical workers". [In 1922 a decree was passed prohibiting women from performing mining jobs and controlling the shift work that women could do. In the 1960s women are still found in mining jobs.]

It is apparent, even from this brief survey of the changing position of women in the Soviet Union, that many of the advances made in the early years of the revolution have been whittled and chopped away. The degeneration of the revolution started in the '20s when the Communists were facing huge economic problems internally—shortages of food, raw materials, skilled labour, many of these the result of the civil war and the intervention; the fact that Russia was relatively underdeveloped in 1917; the loss of large numbers of cadres in the war; and the problem of forging connections with the working class became increasingly difficult. Externally the Soviet Union was facing a hostile world, and Comintern policies led to defeats of the proletariats in other

PREMA MANAMPERI—MURDERED BY THE CEYLONESE GOVERNMENT

This poster of one of the many women members of the JVP (Ceylonese revolutionary organisation) raped and killed by government forces in last year's repression, is being sold to raise money for the defence of Ceylonese prisoners.



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countries, which would have been the only way to maintain the October Revolution, by breaking through the isolation.

In 1921 the CPSU banned factions in the Party, as a necessary, *temporary* measure, in 1924 the death of Lenin, and the highly successful manoeuvring of Stalin, ensured that the CPSU would become bureaucratised. The development of the theory of socialism in one country and the ensuing sacrifice of the revolutionary struggle in other countries in subordination to the interests of the Soviet Bureaucracy, cut off much of the internationalism and quality of the heritage of the October Revolution. Through the '30s the policies of of Soviet bureaucracy towards the family developed in response to two major needs. One was the need for increased labour, the birth rate had to be forced up; and secondly the family was needed as a hold on the youth. Where the hierarchical structure of the family had broken down and disintegrated, children and young adults would be developing with an independence and self-confidence that would run counter to the interests of the bureaucracy, which needed to keep control over the workers. Discipline had to be imposed from an early age. The family and the education system were the means by which this could be achieved.

One of the major contradictions of the Soviet Union is, however, the essential fact that all of the population are aware of Marxism, and, albeit in a distorted form, Leninism. In the writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, they analysed the bourgeois state and the bourgeois system of social relations, and developed the method by which capitalism could be overthrown. It is necessary that the Russian workers extend the method so that they can analyse the Soviet bureaucracy, and as Trotsky did in the '30s, develop the theories that can release them from their present position. The seeds of the bureaucracy's destruction lies in the workers of the Soviet Union, and the destruction of the bureaucracy would release the energies of the workers to develop a socialist man and socialist women.

—Jane Porter

Continued from page 6

did, allowing them greater precision in describing things. The difference was greatest between working class girls and boys. Bernstein suggests that these differences arise out of their different social roles. Older girls in working class families are likely to look after younger brothers and sisters, and to mediate between them and their parents. Girls are more likely to rely on using language rather than physical coercion to control younger children. They are less tied than boys to an activity-dominated peer group structure, for example a street gang or a football team. This, together with more varied roles they play, develops in the girl a more differentiated and individuated use of a language. Younger sisters will tend to copy the language model of their older sisters.

CONCLUSIONS

The social roles of children determine their language use, and the different socialisation of girls and boys of even five years old is evidenced in their different language use. On the one hand, middle class girls are more tied to their mothers' apron strings and therefore more dependent on how their mothers talk to them. In any case, their mothers will explain and reason with them less than with boys. On the other hand, boys play a less varied role within the family, because looking after younger children is regarded as a girl's job, and develop a less individualised and discriminating use of language as a result.

—Richard Hatcher

[This article draws on two books under the general editorship of Basil Bernstein:

A Linguistic Description and Computer Program for Children's Speech by Turner and Mohan, 1970.

Social Class, Language and Communication by Brandis and Henderson, 1970.]

MAIRIN KEEGAN—DIED, DUBLIN 7th January 1972

The death took place in Dublin on January 7th of Mairin Keegan, a member of the Irish Fourth International Group. *Sean Reed writes:* Mairin first entered politics through the Republican movement in Dublin in the mid-fifties, when she played an active part in setting up Sinn Fein branches in that city.

Working in the North in the 1955 election which saw the return of two imprisoned Republicans as members of the "Mother of Parliaments", she later took a prominent part in the Prisoners Defence Fund throughout the '50s and early '60s.

Following the end of the border campaign, Mairin was one of those Republicans who saw the need to transcend Republicanism and move towards a revolutionary socialist position. She was one of those who helped to form the Irish Workers Group in London, and worked for the group until ill-health forced inactivity for a period. Following an operation for cancer of the womb, Mairin moved to France where she took an active part in the May-June events.

The rise of the Civil Rights movement in the North brought Mairin back post-haste—stopping only in London for a quick briefing, she moved straight into the thick of the struggle in the North. Returning first to Belfast where she did secretarial work in the opening phase of the Peoples Democracy election campaign in 1969, she moved on to

Fermanagh, where she helped in the election for the three P.D. candidates in that county.

After the election, Mairin moved back to Dublin where she worked to build the Young Socialist movement.

While rejecting mere feminism, she was always conscious that she was a member of an oppressed sex, so while continuing to play her part in the struggle of her class and her people, she integrated into that the struggle for the full emancipation of women, taking part in the new women's movement in Dublin.

After the pogroms of August 1969, when armed defence came clearly on the agenda, Mairin was one of those who took steps to acquire the necessary finance to make this possible. She represented Saor Eire on the committee of the Socialist Labour Alliance.

Mairin was one of those comrades who realised that a revolutionary socialist organisation in Ireland could not be built in isolation from the international socialist movement, and her energies up to her recent illness were devoted to the foundation of an Irish section of the Fourth International.

Revolutionary upheavals make it possible to strut across the stage of history achieving the adulation of the masses. Mairin was a true revolutionary. As such a large part of her political work had to be done under cover. She was in the best sense of the word a backroom girl—a liberated woman because she was a true revolutionary.

S W Groups

- BIRMINGHAM: Sandra Cooper, 72 Cambridge Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham 4.
BRISTOL: Viv Prior, 7 Ravenswood Road, Redland, Bristol 6.
*BOLTON: Joyce Leman, 6 Mornington Road, Bolton.
*CANTERBURY: Liz Lawrence, Darwin College, University of Kent.
*CARDIFF: Sue Lukes, 92 Llandaff Road, Canton CF1 9NN.
*COVENTRY: Maureen Draper, c/o 27 Paynes Lane, Hillfields, Coventry CV1 4BH.
*CHORLEY: Kath Young, Flat 3, Chorcliffe House, Hollinshead Street.
*COLCHESTER: Celia Pugh, c/o 16 Church Hill Lane, Rowhedge, Essex.
GLASGOW: Shelley Charlesworth, 61 Fergus Drive, NW.
*KINGSTON: Jane Cullen, 61 Kings Road, Kingston.
LANCASTER: Margaret Coulson, 35 West Road.
*LEEDS: Val Jones, 69 Bagby Road, Leeds 2.
LEICESTER: Jean Holman, 7 College Street.

- LONDON (North & Central): Pat Masters, c/o 182 Pentonville Road, N.1. (Ring 340 7031 or Jackie Hayman, 607 3553).
LONDON (West): Leonora Lloyd, 40 Inverness Road, Southall, Middlesex. (01-574 7407)
MANCHESTER: Sheila Cohen, 43 Brantingham Road, Whalley Range, Manchester 16.
*NORWICH: Rhona Ball, 140 Earlham Road, Norwich.
NOTTINGHAM: Val Graham, 100 Tavistock Drive, Mapperley Park.
*PRESTON: Kath Ryde, 246 Leyland Road, Penwortham, Preston.
READING: Carolyn Rice, c/o 50 Basingstoke Road, Reading.
*RICKMANSWORTH: Leslie Richardson, 111 Frankland Road, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Herts.
SHEFFIELD: Catherine Cirket, 7 Bannan Street, Sheffield S6 3GE.
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**If you are interested in forming a group in this area, please contact the address given.*

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WHAT IS SOCIALIST WOMAN?

The paper *Socialist Woman* was established in early 1969 in Nottingham on the initiative of the IMG (International Marxist Group) with the aim of establishing Socialist Woman Groups around it. Women members and sympathisers of the IMG in Nottingham and other parts of the country distributed, wrote for and supported the paper, and have taken the initiative in setting up Socialist Woman Groups in many different areas.

The IMG sees the struggle for women's liberation as an integral part of its work in helping to build the revolutionary left in Britain, and expresses its politics in relation to women's liberation through the activity of its members in the Socialist Woman Groups. It recognises that the non-IMG women comrades working in Socialist Woman Groups may not wish to commit themselves to all aspects of the IMG's programme and activities, and welcomes into the Socialist Woman Groups those socialist women who wish to work with the IMG comrades on this aspect of their politics as expressed in the paper *Socialist Woman*.

This publication is on file at the International Women's History Archive, 2325 Oak Street, Berkeley, Calif. 94708, and is available on microfilm through Bell and Howell, Wooster, Ohio.