

WOMENS VOICE

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PAPER OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS WOMEN

Nurses take to the streets

NURSES FROM the Oldham Royal Infirmary, members of COHSE, took to the streets of Oldham recently on a strike in support of their pay claim. Nearly all the nurses said that they had always been against strike action before, but that their living standards and working conditions had got so bad that this was now the only way. Particularly hard pressed are those struggling to bring up families. 'We just don't get a living wage,' said one sister on an intensive care unit. 'I'm trying to bring up my children on my own and pay a mortgage on £25 a week. We could just about cope with the unsocial hours and disruption to family life if we were decently paid.' (She only sees her children one weekend in five.)

One male student nurse with two children takes home less than £15. 'I had to borrow my brother's shoes to even come on this march. I can't afford £6 odd for the regulation hospital shoes,' he said.

Oldham's hospital conditions are among the worst in the country. The Royal Infirmary is grossly understaffed, two nurses regularly having to cope with 40 patients. 'We were due for a rise in April,' said the COHSE shop steward, 'but we haven't had it yet. Our board and lodging and canteen prices went up though. We just can't get by any more.'

Unions hold back

All the COHSE members are bitter about the lack of support from the leadership of the other nursing unions. 'The rank-and-file nurses in our wards are right behind militant action,' said one student nurse, 'it's their union executives who are keeping us back.'

Ancillary staff were out too. A cleaner whose hard and essential work servicing the wards is 'rewarded' by £10.50 a week take home pay, emphasised, 'We support the nurses' action all the way. Better pay and conditions for them means better for us too.'

The nurses' action highlights the problem of jobs staffed mainly by women. The employers have always thought they can get away with paying wages below subsistence level because they don't 'really' live off them. It's no excuse. Nurses, like all workers, must be paid the rate for the job, and they're showing that they are not prepared to have their sympathies played on any longer.

More on nurses on centre pages



Recent lobby of parliament

WOMEN FIGHT EXILE THREAT

JOAN HASSAN and Sue Malik have both been victims of a vicious law, introduced in 1969 by the Labour government. It shows the blatant discrimination against women in our society, and that hope for change only exists because of the energetic campaign that's been wages against it.

Joan Hassan

Joan Hassan has spent the last two years fighting to keep her family together—in her home country, Britain . . . because the law states that a woman who marries a British man can claim UK citizenship, but the husband of a British woman can't, and SHE must settle in her husband's country.

Joan's husband is a Turkish Cypriot who came over on a student permit over six years ago. He and Joan married, and when she was pregnant he left college and started work as a labourer. In January 1972 the Home Office wrote asking if Mr Hassan had left the country. They replied, asking if he could stay. After many letters, and 12 long and worrying months they were interviewed. He was refused the right to stay so they appealed. Joan explained:

'There is a hardship clause in the law, so that individual cases can appeal. My father had just died, and I said I didn't want to leave my mum on her own. But they said she was working, and in good health so there was no hardship. They suggested she retired to Cyprus. I asked, "What on?" They said she could sell her house. I'd already told them she lives in a council flat! Also we discovered from the Turkish community in Cyprus that employment prospects were poor for my husband unless he could afford to open a business. The only English school is the most expensive school in Cyprus, and the school leaving age is 13 in the state schools. But the Home Office got their own report, and rejected ours. I wasn't allowed into most of the hearing, although it was me that would've suffered the hardship!

Rejected

'Just before Christmas we heard that my husband was being deported. We were desperate, and turned to the UK Advisory Service, who got us another hearing on March 20th. We got a new lawyer from the NCCL, and they arranged a lot of publicity. Eventually we won our case. The new hearing said that all we suffered was due to Home Office inefficiency, but I know that many other girls suffered too. If we hadn't fought we wouldn't be in

England now.

Money

'It'd have been easier if we'd had money or good jobs. My husband knows of someone who had money tied up in this country, and he never had all the troubles we did. We've been treated like criminals.'

Racialist

But the law wasn't introduced to make women's lives difficult—it was to keep down the number of Asian males coming into Britain for arranged marriages. As Patricia Hewlett of the NCCL explained: 'This is a racialist law that exploits the idea that women are dependant on men. We've been campaigning for British women to have equal rights to British men on this issue. All the Home Office worries about is the number of names on housing lists, not about people's lives.'

Sue Malik

Sue Malik is married to a Kenyan Asian. She has two sisters-in-law in Britain who may have arranged marriages, but probably to Asian men already here. She explained:

'What the MPs choose to ignore is that young men living in India or Pakistan have been brought up very traditionally and would expect a wife to stay at home and lead a very restricted life. But girls who've been brought up here, and have been to British schools wouldn't accept that, and the young men don't want them as wives. Most of the girls who are here will undoubtedly marry boys who are already here—there will be some coming over from India and Pakistan, but not the 'hoardes' that the politicians speak of.'

(cont. on back page)



CHILD CARE ON THE CHEAP

Anna Pritchard, Hackney



I LIVE in an overpopulated area of Hackney in East London and have three children. I tried to get a place in a nursery and was almost laughed at by the Health Visitor. There are 800 children of priority one (un-supported mothers and other cases of serious need) on the council waiting list so an ordinary working woman doesn't stand a chance. I heard about a nursery which was being set up by mothers themselves so I tried to get a place in it. Eventually I became so involved that I got a job there.

It was assumed that the parents and other members of the community would do their share. They did try very hard to help—but the parents of our children were already overstretched as they worked all week. This is where the idea of self-help falls down. It's the people who most need help like unsupported mothers, working mothers and those with large families who are in the worst position to help themselves because they have no spare time or energy. This will always be so in a society where the people with no bargaining power are always neglected and ignored.

In an area like Stoke Newington there are so many parents who just cannot live unless they both work; as a result, baby minders are everywhere. Children are

thrust in at the door for 6 hours and collected. No doubt some of the baby minders try hard to do their best for the children, many of them are women desperate for the extra money and unable to work because they have children of their own, but there seem to be a lot of dazed and sadly backward children around, who are simply kept clean and stopped from damaging themselves. They get very little stimulation or personal attention—and think what happens to them when they join average children in the infant class. These children must be disadvantaged for the rest of their lives.

Secure

Most of our children have had at least one minder—so they come along to us very bewildered. They are very quiet at first, then gradually they start to test us out by being very demanding or aggressive. Most of them learn after a while that they are secure. What we do is combine playing with all the different things children have in playgroup or nursery class with the everyday routine of eating together and sleeping together, which makes us a bit like a large family. This is very good for the social development of the children as they all learn to care about each other. We only have 20 children which is much better for everybody. There is a lot of security for the children. The parents form the majority on the board of management so they are involved and aware of what is going on.

Most important, they have real control over what happens to their children.

Second Best

Although I think that in some ways our nursery is a step in the right direction, it is far from being perfect—we are short of money and equipment. I feel very frustrated about this and feel that we are being exploited by the social services department—for as long as we can cope they'll leave it to us—because what we do is better than nothing and saves them money. This will always be the case as long as nurseries are considered by the state to be an extra. But until the needs of all, children and parents, are given priority over financial considerations, our kids'll always get second best. That'll always be the case in a capitalist type of society. It's only if the factories need us as cheap labour, and they can't get us out of the home any other way, THEN they'll fork out for nurseries. It pays them then. But we demand nurseries because our kids NEED them and we need them.

If we could have one or two nurseries like ours in every street—properly equipped and staffed, then women could really begin to have the choice of working or staying at home. It's about time the council started providing them, and giving really generous grants to groups like ours. In the long run nursery provision for our children cannot be care on the cheap.

In the last issue of Women's Voice there was a report of Jean Jepson's fight to get reinstated as a worker and convenor at Armstrongs in Beverly. Here Pat Lloyd, who was the deputy convenor and still works there, writes of a very different type of problem—the one she and Jean face as two women living in a society geared towards married couples.

Outcasts in Society

Pat Lloyd, Bridlington, Lancs

IT'S INTERESTING that when Armstrongs wanted to discredit Jean they even used the fact that she's not married, and living in the same house as another woman! They tried to give the impression that we are more than friends and that there's something very strange when two ladies live together. But the only really strange thing is that we fight for what we believe in, because we're not hampered by family responsibilities. We've got more time to think and act. And that's what worried Armstrongs.

Jealousy

BUT EVEN at home, where we've lived for some years we're not completely acceptable. We can always sense a bit of jealousy from women with husbands. We feel a bit fidgety because we think they feel we're after their husbands, but we're not—that's the least thing on our minds, because we're wanting to talk to the men as friends, as equals. So with some people we find ourselves outcasts in society, in our own working class community. We don't get invited to people's homes as much as other couples do because we're not a married couple.

Born to be wives

YOU SEE the whole society is geared to married couples. Women are born to be wives, not people. If you don't become a wife you're abnormal—a peculiar sort of person. I've been married—Jean hasn't—she felt she could never fit in to married life. I can't see anything wrong with thinking like that.

As Jean says, "If I married a bloke, we'd have clashed. I'd have wanted equal rights to him. And why should I bring kids up to a life of misery within a household? I'd never have cracked it. Remember if I'd been getting married it'd have been 20 years ago—and things have progressed in this last 20 years from the point of view of what was expected of a married woman."

Feminine

IT'S TRUE that many ordinary working class women housewives—and some women workers might think we're not feminine, living as we do, and being active politically and in our trade union. But I don't believe that being feminine means being docile and letting people trample all over you—you've got to fight for what you believe in. It's certainly easier for women with no family commitments to lead the fight that all working class women should join for a decent society for everyone's kids to grow up in.



Carol Miller at her Press Conference in Oxford.

Race Today

THE STRIKE AT IMPERIAL TYPEWRITERS: How 27 Asian women walked off the job and brought out 500 workers on the picket line. The full story of this important struggle is told in the July issue of RACE TODAY. Available at 15p from left bookshops, or £2.00 for an annual subscription from 184, King's Cross Road, London WC1.

I would like to know more about the International Socialists

Name _____

Address _____

Please post to: Womens Voice, 61, Tyhey Croft, Harlow, Essex.

'No' to Carol Miller

FEELING HAS BEEN running high amongst women over the last few months at the anti-union demonstrations of Carol Miller and her friends.

As though we need Carol Miller and her like to tell us about rising prices and the hardships caused by being on strike or laid off! As you know, Birmingham is one of the centres of the car industry and many workers, both men and women, have been feeling the pinch over the last few weeks with frequent lay-offs.

Here in Birmingham we have seen only too clearly how the press and mass media have leapt on women to use them as a tool to divide them against men, and to weaken workers in their struggle. About a month ago the Birmingham Evening Mail had a splash front-page headline of women from one Lucas factory marching to demonstrate against a strike at another Lucas plant (which caused them to be laid off).

Unfortunately for the press (who were premature with their headline) only eight women turned up!

BECAUSE OF the blatant way the media have sensationalised these kind of anti-union demonstrations we decided to hold a Women's Voice meeting on the subject. Hester Blewitt, formerly an AUEW shop steward and now a housewife, introduced the discussion. Many of the women had come from Women's Voice being sold on estates around Birmingham, and several of them were in fact housewives either because they had young children, or were unsupported mums trying to keep a family on Social Security. One of the main points that they brought up was the feeling of isolation felt by housewives. Cut off in their house, most of the information they get is from telly, papers, etc, and we know how dishonest they can be!

IT WAS felt that too many husbands didn't involve their wives enough in talking about what goes on at work.

"They're not interested" it is said, but let's be honest, all women are interested when their husband comes home with a pay rise.

Understandably a wife feels bitter that money is going to be short once more, when he comes home saying he's on strike. As Janet Worth said in Socialist Worker recently, 'No man goes on strike

for the hell of it. It is often the last resort in the struggle to get a decent wage and decent working conditions'.

Enemy

WHO IS the real enemy then? Shell's record £300 million profit for the first three months of this year was mentioned. How many of us will benefit from this money? Prices are rocketing, and the social services (the health service, schools, etc) are in a state of collapse. Who then is the real enemy we ask? The militants or the managing directors, speculators and the like who sit back lapping up the massive profits?

Perhaps militancy isn't as bad as Carol Miller would like us to believe. It was decided at the meeting that we must get organised wherever we are—at work or on estates. We gain confidence that things can be changed by meeting others that feel the same. Several women took a first step by taking Women's Voice to sell to their work-mates and neighbours, and we decided that it was very important that we should go on meeting as a regular group.

ITS ONLY HUMAN NATURE

Beryl Reilly, Harlow

MY GRAN brought up 14 kids on one man's wages. Today I can't even keep three kids on my own husband's wages. It's only by women going out to work and having less children that the working class have been able to think of buying their own houses and cars.

You get blokes coming on the tele, spouting about greedy trade unionists, when you know they'll be out drinking champagne and eating caviar when the programme's over. Blokes who think nothing of paying £18 for a meal when there's men in this country who can't even afford to give £18 a week to their wives.

This is the big con for me. These men have the illusion that the working class are a lower type of people who need *them* as leaders. Whether this is the only way they can live with themselves I don't know—but they do really have these illusions.

Tin Gods

I SOMETIMES look at them and think, they haven't got the sense to know any better. Give them a bit of authority and they think they're some kind of tin god.

They try to undermine your intelligence all the time. This is what really gets me mad. They're so patronising on the tele programmes. They talk as if the working class people are a species of their own—as if we've only got 6 cells to our brain for every 9 of theirs.

I'm always feeling that I'm the only one who does my nut about these things. When we were on the three-day week people could really see what was going on. They'd get heated up about things, we'd discuss it amongst ourselves, and then somebody'd say, "Well you'll never get a true society because you can never change human nature".

I get called a utopian because I think human nature can be changed. After all, let's face it, we've all been changed over evolution—it's not your nature to go out to work!

Prisoners

IF YOU go back to the animal stage, it's in your nature to hunt, kill and grow things. But going into work, and being shut up like a prisoner 8 hours a day, can't be anyone's nature. Man's been conditioned into this stage of evolution. So we obviously can change.

You see, if you had an equal society, you could turn to a crook who went out and robbed someone, and say "What right have you to take more than everyone else?" You'd have a definite point to aim at.

But when you're being conned all the time, people's moral levels will always be low. You look at the rich, greedy, grabbing people and think: Well if they're going to be catching me out all the time, I'll get what I can. If they're going to give me an extra pound in my change by mistake, then I'll pocket it.

It's only by having an equal society that you can change human beings and their attitude to one another.

look elegant and uncommon when they accompany their often very fat businessmen husbands at social functions. The poorer you are, the more you depend on carbohydrate foods like bread and

potatoes, to fill you up, and then you are liable to get fat.

Work also affects weight. Overeating often comes from boredom and stress. In a factory, where you work at the same repetitive process over and over again in the noise and dust, the teabreak becomes one thing to look forward to. You often find yourself stuffing down a canteen roll and a cream bun just to take off the misery of the rest of the day, and not because you feel hungry. And then the extra snack turns into a lifelong habit. Working mums have to rush home and grab their meal. They depend heavily on prepackaged and tinned food. If you don't own a fridge, and you can't shop every day, then fresh food proves too wasteful. In this way you are exploited, since 'convenience' food is usually very low on protein and high on fat. It boils down to the fact that the different eating habits of working class people and upper class people are determined by TIME and MONEY, and eventually even of taste. You can just about get addicted to baked beans!!

or due to stress and feeling unloved. Also women eat to compensate themselves when their children grow up and leave home. Women prepare most of the food eaten by their families, so they have a ready temptation to taste and nibble. When a housewife gets lonely and bored, food may be the only thing she can turn to.

When it comes to exercise it's just as bad. Almost all the active participating sports in our society, such as football, and rugby, are for men. This is one reason why women go through tedious keep-fit routines, as an alternative to being just spectators. We are taught to look good, not to feel fit and strong.

Early

The system is largely to blame for our eating habits, right from childhood. Big firms advertise crisps and sweets and goodies in a way estimated to make children crave them. The chimes on the ice-cream van bring the problem right to your door. 'Everyone else is having one, why can't I mum?'

Even before they are three months old many babies are overweight—stuffed unnecessarily with cereals and tinned baby foods. Harassed mothers add more milkpowder to the water than they should, or make the food a little sweeter to make up for affection they are too tired to give. Commercial brand baby foods and nappies are a major cause of obesity. You make the fat cells inside your body in the first year of your life. If you make too many, you spend the rest of your life trying to satisfy them.

In the next issue we shall look at the slimming business itself, the false claims they make, the dangers to your health, and the profits.

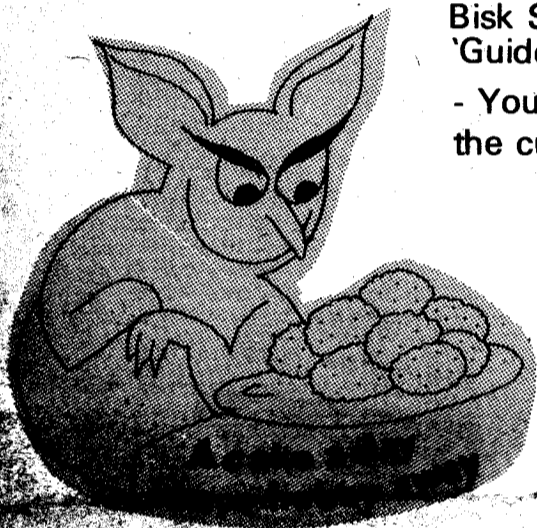
Womans Problem

But why is overweight especially a woman's problem? To begin with, we women are encouraged to be much more conscious of our appearance than men. We depend a lot on how good we look to get jobs and husbands, so naturally we take an interest. And then with advertising we can become obsessed with looking at ourselves in the mirror, hatching secret recipes for beauty, counting calories like crazy. It suits the system to have us that way. Then, a lot of women first put on excessive weight in pregnancy, or, strangely enough, when they have a hysterectomy. Some of this is due to bad medical advice,



Arletter Languiller, leader of the massive spring strike-wave in the Paris banks was the first ever woman and the first ever rank-and-file worker to stand for the Presidency of France. As candidate of the revolutionary socialists of Lutte Ouvriere (Workers' Struggle) she raised issues of the day to day problems of workers and of womens' oppression and succeeded in winning 595,000 votes.

Bisk Slimmers Club
'Guide to slimming'
- You stick it on
the cupboard door



SLIM FOR SUMMER

Judith Condon, Coventry

CAPITALISM is an ingenious system when it comes to taking money off us. First it profits from making us overweight. Then it profits from our efforts to get thin again. In the next part of this series I'll go into the multi-million rackets of the slimming business. But first, what is overweight all about anyway?

Average weight statistics, based on age and height, were first compiled by insurance companies. They wanted to calculate the risk to their money if they insured very fat people, since overweight can affect your health and make you die young. It is from this beginning that most of the popular and medical interest in obesity grew. Mind you its worth challenging the very idea of 'average weight', calculated basically to save the insurance companies money, and taking no account of our build, job or personality. Why should we all strive to be average? Some people are happier and nicer looking plump than they are when paying a lot of money to diet and be miserable.

Strain

It is a fact however, that if you get too fat, you are more liable to get ill with things like blood clots, haemorrhoids, and varicose veins. Obviously carrying a lot too much weight strains your heart. So what causes overweight? Why are more women overweight than men? And why are more working class people liable to get fat than the better off?

No matter what the adverts say, being too fat is mostly a social and not a personal problem. The shape and fitness of your body depends largely upon what you eat. Wealthy families can afford a better balanced diet, with a lot of protein, because protein comes in meat, fish and eggs, all of which are dear. Also upper-class women strive to be thin in order to



A quiet hard working *female* who cares for people AND NEVER COMPLAINS. So most people thought until recently. But there are nurses up and down the country who've never been so docile, nurses who have seen that if they really care

about patients then they must start to complain—complain about the staff shortages because of low wages, and complain about the cuts in money spent on hospital buildings and equipment.

ONE SUCH nurse works at Kings College Hospital, London. She writes:

'We've been waiting for three years for this pay settlement and during that time I've been working hard to get the nurses into a union. The mood among nurses has changed—I've seen that, but there's still a long way to go. So many worry about our 'image'. They think, because we deserve more money, somehow we'll get it in the end. It's up to girls like me to show that this doesn't happen and that we've got to be organised.

Action Committee

IN LONDON we've organised a co-ordinating committee to keep all the hospitals in touch with each other. Inside Kings we've formed a Joint Action Committee of people in all the unions. This includes nurses, radiographers, technicians, ancillary staff and the engineers. That's NUPE, COHSE, NALGO and AUEW. The hospital management refuses to recognise us at the moment, which is a problem, but I think they're going to have to because we've got a lot of support. The action committee started in mid-May. Since then we've concentrated on having meetings, getting more and more nurses involved, getting petitions round the wards and organising deputations.

Agency

AT OUR first big meeting we decided that the best action would be to ban

working with agency nurses. There's 300 in Kings and £12,500 a week is spent on them—the hospital would collapse without them. Of course it's hard on them—but if they're bothered about the state of nursing they should be in the National Health Service fighting with us—fighting for good rates for *all* hospital workers.

ONE OF the biggest problems is the inter-union rivalry. It's disgusting. All they care about is increasing their membership—not winning a good pay award for us. Luckily it's only at national level. In the hospital we're working together well. Some people say there should be one union for nurses, but I'm against that—it would turn into something like the Royal College of Nursing. We need one union for all the NHS workers—like now—it's not just nurses taking action. It's radiographers and technicians as well. The need is to co-ordinate our action and get us all fighting together.

Enquiry

THERE'S A lot of talk about this enquiry, but I say we've been waiting for three years already and we feel that successive governments have been aware of it for a very long time. We don't need an enquiry to tell us that nurses are badly paid. There's no guarantee that at the end of the enquiry we'll get anything out of it and the danger is that in the meantime spirits will have died down.

We're very conscious of this. Also, why should it only be backdated to May, when we've been waiting three years, why not January?

We want the money now, it's now we have to pay increased rents, it's now we have to pay increased prices, and its coming up to summer—we want to be able to afford a summer holiday.

Social Compact

SO I don't see how the Labour government's Social Compact can work, because of the backlog of poorly paid groups of workers. We're getting support from so many people—especially patients, I don't think many people really believe it can work.

Solidarity

THERE HAVE been cases of other workers, like 4000 engineers in Newcastle, having token strikes to

support us. This is great as long as the nurses don't dit back and let other workers take action for them. There's a danger of going along to trades councils with deputations and getting trade union action on our behalf. Nurses have got to wake up to the fact that unless they take action for themselves they'll get nowhere. When the ancillary workers were on strike last year, nurses were doing the ancillary workers' work. There's quite a lot of suspicion to break down. We've got to show that we've got the courage to act too.

The initiative has to come from the nurses themselves this time.

Future

IT'S POSSIBLE we won't win this time—we need to build a much stronger organisation within our own hospitals and across the NHS. A paper like the Hospital Worker is very important—and then next time there'll be no stopping us.

What's a Nurse



Hello, new mothers, wherever you are

Hester Blewitt

HALLO first time Mum! This is your friendly neighbourhood baby food public relations man calling. Feeling all fingers and thumbs are you? WE understand. WE know you want to do what's best for your baby, but aren't quite sure. Oh dear, it's a pity the nurses and midwives were too over-worked to help you with your feeding problems. But perhaps you can spare a minute from your nappy-washing—yes, why not sit down for a cuppa and relax for a moment—and let's see if I can be of any assistance.

Recommended

Perhaps you already know something of our product Costleymilk? Oh yes of course, you've seen the adverts in the magazines for years. You did know too that eight out of 10 doctors recommended it, did you? Oh well, everyone knows that breast-feeding is best, but it is such an inconvenience, isn't it?

Oh, do you really do it in front of people? How interesting... Yes I know you pass on your immunity to infection when you feed him yourself, but I do assure you that if you buy our special sterilisation, all-day storage bottle 'n teat pack (only £7 plus a free initial bumper magnum of Costleymilk, there's no fear of

baby catching anything. Except your husband's cold, ha ha, yes of course.

Yes you do have to warm it up, but you can take it straight out of the fridge and put it into our special babywarmer unit (just £3 with this coupon). Oh, you haven't got a fridge? Well then, the milk needs to be made up each feed, but we've got a special eezi-measure scoop and jug (a mere £1)...

Disposable

Yes, you must measure absolutely exactly. Yes, you're right—otherwise the feed is too concentrated, the baby gets thirsty so you feed him again, and he ends up too fat. How the hell did you...? Oh, we are well informed aren't we?

What we recommend is, that you make up extra feed—yes I know it's wasted—in case the baby is hungry. How do you know if he still needs more? Well it's a good idea to always have by your side this table of amounts per feed and calculate according to baby's weight—would you like to take a look at our unique baby scales? No? You can't make head or tail of all these tables and formulae? Well how about our complete 0-12 months baby feeding unit, completely disposable, to fit under

Of the two best little packages you ever took home, ours is the Cow & Gate Babymilk.

When you take home the best thing you ever did, take home the best thing we ever did:

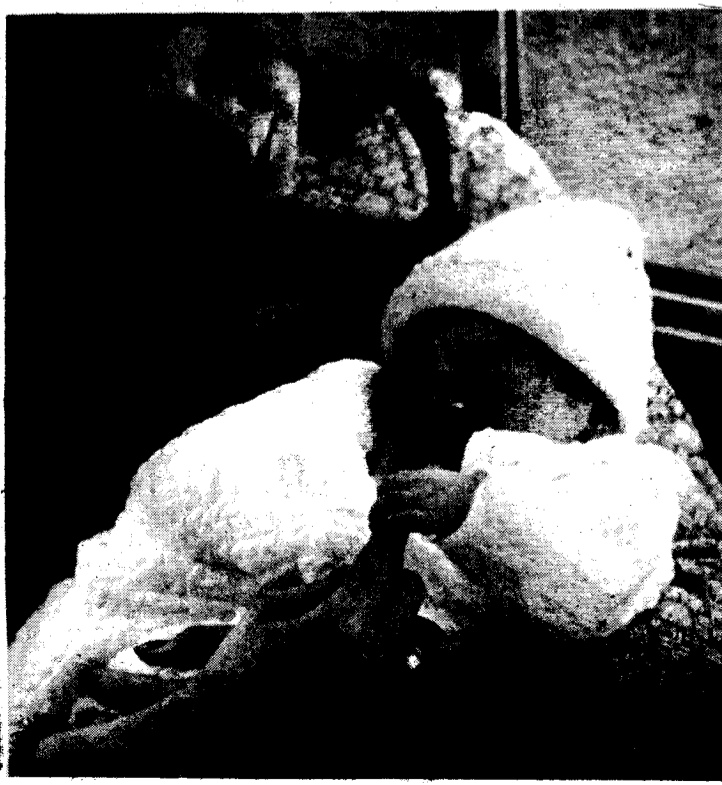
Cow & Gate Babymilk. Most hospitals, doctors and midwives will tell you it's for the best. They know it contains all the essential elements a growing

baby needs. Carefully balanced.

In a form that's easy to digest.

And they should know. They've been having babies for years.

You can't do better for your baby.



your sideboard 2' x 2' x 3'6"—a different pack for each birthweight, and a disposable bottle for every feed from birth to 12 months and menus of what solid foods in our Babifood range to use from one month onwards? (easy terms)

You can't afford it all at once? Oh dear. Well, we could arrange terms if you prefer? Look I'll tell you what, I'll leave this booklet, and free trial pack, your husband might be able to explain things with the booklet... You see here, all our products—Costleymilk 1 Costleymilk 2 and Mumsymilk complete food—are made up to an exact scientific formula with all the growth requirements provided by human milk and a special taste ingredient which makes them practically indistinguishable from mother's milk. Did you say, Why not give him mother's milk then? Why madam, what a stupid question? We wouldn't make any profit out of that, and then what would happen to the national economy?

It's for calves, not babies

Edith Khan

THE MANUFACTURERS of baby-milk don't even stop at advertising to make women believe it's just what their baby needs. In East Africa recently a European Company has been

employing women nurses to hand-out as if actually recommended a hospital nurse or present hard-pressed with this kind of sure and encouragement breast feed?

Bottle

Many inadequate mothers will say 'enough' milk, that sore, that they we baby wasn't getting when 'Mrs Bloggs' of the same weight ounces at each feed their milk isn't rich out a doubt mother perfect food for a of the correct proportions, is clean, venient—comes 're the essential vitamin is always at the co and contains antibi fection.

War

In the years following last war manufacturing was crazy, and it was for bottle fed babies was a condition due to their system caused of too much Vitamin interest is that mother gave birth in conce the war, and had no breast feed, did so

Comple

An adamant woman seen to protest to mothers who were babies were constantly or 'bringing back' their feed—'Well, we expect when you ing—that milk was calves, not new

Common Problem Common Fight

Leeds

ONE OF the most important achievements for the hospital ancillary workers, arising from the militant action of the nurses, has been the links built between members of all the unions in the National Health Service. When the hospital workers were on strike last year it was NUPE that most supported the strike. Now with the nurses it has been COHSE which has taken the initiative. Despite attempts to shuffle hospital workers from NUPE to COHSE in the last year, now that the nurses have taken action, it is the solidarity within the whole hospital, regardless of which union people belong to, which is important.

Unity

Cynthia Samuels is a shop steward at St James' Hospital, Leeds and she has been involved in persuading women to join NUPE from COHSE. Now she realises that despite differences in union leadership, the important thing is unity inside the hospital, amongst all the hospital workers, raising support for the nurses. Cynthia finds it hard as a shop steward trying to encourage women to attend union meetings, and finds it difficult herself with four children at home and the housework to do.

'At the moment we're bringing up the demand for union meetings within working time so that more women can attend, but this is the first attempt to integrate the women.'

Participate

Unless this is achieved, hospital workers, like cleaners of office blocks find their whole lives taken up with domestic chores, and have no way of determining their own lives, even a little, through participating in their union.

'Our work consists not only of cleaning the wards but also helping with breakfasts and lunches for the patients, emptying and distributing water jugs and bins, clearing plates and cutlery off the wards after meals. Then we go home exhausted and do the same thing there, especially if we have families.'

Impossible

It is understandable that for many women political work is an impossibility unless someone helps out at home and responsibilities are equally shared. But it is not only this. It is also the fact that unions on the whole don't consider these problems. The long hours, domestic type of work, and low pay that hospital ancillary workers have to put up with are, to some extent, the grievances of the nurses as well. In many ways the hospital workers' support for the nurses is based on common understanding of these problems as women and as low-paid workers, and on the experience of fighting for a better deal.



Manchester nurses halt traffic

Judy Jones is a NUPE shop steward at Salford Royal Hospital and secretary of Manchester and District Nurses Action Group. Here she tells us how the nurses in her district have organised themselves.

Unwilling

I BECAME a steward only three weeks ago. At that time there was a small inactive COHSE branch. Since I became steward 40 nurses at my hospital have joined NUPE and the COHSE nurse membership has also increased. I'm sure they suddenly became willing to join because they heard of strikes in other places and they therefore wanted to join a union. NUPE then called a meeting of the North-West Region in Manchester to discuss the nurses' case.

Militancy

THE MEETING was called on a vague basis to 'demonstrate' about

nurses pay. It was very boring. The hall held 900. They squeezed in 1000 and there were another 1500 in the street outside. An official was going on about 'Unity is Strength' and someone shouted from the floor, 'Let's unite with the others outside!'

Stormed

Nurses stormed out onto the street where everyone sat down and stopped the traffic for half an hour. Then they marched to Piccadilly, in the centre of Manchester, and drew up a list of demands—the main ones being for a £30 basic wage and 35 hours plus proper overtime pay. The nurses then besieged and entered the Granada Studios and later held another meeting at which the officials were forced to look on while Brother Jack Sutton, an ancillary worker NUPE steward at Manchester Royal Infirmary, led the meeting into setting up the Nurses Action Group. It was agreed that the union leaders

should play no part in it because they were divisive.

Action Group

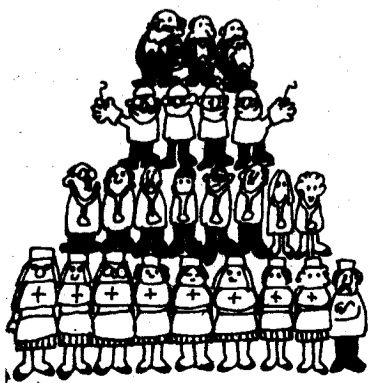
SINCE THEN the Nurses Action Group has held weekly meetings to co-ordinate action, and about 40 nurses representing 10 hospitals have attended. We decided to call for a one-hour stoppage on Monday 3 June as part of the National Week of Action and also to support the Rank and File Conference and to send coaches to the London rally on 6 June. We are also beginning to send nurses to factories to get industrial support and stoppages but we are finding this difficult because of the nurses' shift system. We have the official support of the AUEW District Committee which we picketed. Some hospitals, mainly psychiatric, have already had stoppages and we expect about six more to do so shortly.

We in the Action Group decided to carry on the campaign rather than

wait for the results of the enquiry because we think it is most effective to fight before the decision is made to force the government to pay a bigger amount. We remember that the miners were on strike at the time of their enquiry and draw the obvious conclusions.

Support

THE NURSES need messages of support and stoppages in factories. People should make a point of signing nurses' petitions and contacting their local Nurses Action Group. When the nurses militancy rises they will be accused by the press of killing the patients and all sorts of lies will be told. All socialist women should defend the nurses who are fighting to stop the total destruction of the National Health Service. Nurses have to unite at a rank and file level with other workers to defend the NHS. Our unions will not do the job for us unless we force them to.



The Medical Profession



All letters & correspondence for Womens Voice to - Barbara Kerr, Tylney Croft, Harlow, Essex

Claimants

I NOTE with interest your correspondence on mothers and social security. It seems astonishing that no one has seen fit to mention the fact that there is a permanent people's organisation which successfully fights these battles every day of the week - The Claimants Union. It may be that members of the Womens Voice group doubt the effectiveness of the Claimants Union, or think that we are some sort of dead end, in a political sense. Let me assure you that this is not so.

The only effective way of tackling the DHSS is through Claimants Unions. Many unsupported mothers are active in the local groups, as well as other claimants such as the sick and disabled, unemployed people and pensioners. and the situations described by your readers could have been successfully dealt with by a local group. The Claimants Union is not in the blind alley of 'Welfare Rights', which would merely be to help the SS system run more smoothly, but we stand together in a National Federation with the aim of destroying the means - test and building a socialist society.

Anyone wanting further information should send for: 'Unsupported Mothers Handbook' and 'Claimants Unite' (How to organise a Claimants Union). These are 5p each plus 6p postage. Single copies from: Claimants Publications Library, 19 Caryle Road, Birmingham B16 9HB. They will also supply you with an up-to-date list of Claimants Unions. Newtown (Birmingham) Claimants Union.

Mortgage

MY HUSBAND recently joined the International Socialists, from which I was introduced to your paper. It is a most interesting paper for women, the subjects are numerous and concern all women. I read in one woman's letter that she thought housewives should be paid for staying at home. I could not agree more with her. I have to go to work to support

two growing sons and a large mortgage, which I might add, has doubled itself in just over two years. It is about time there was help for those who wish to buy their own homes. If I was not at work we would be on the poverty line existing from one week to the next. This should not be in this day and age. The government should think less about themselves and more about the workers of Britain who keep them. They are nothing but pimps taking our poor measly earnings in tax. Thank you Womens Voice for letting me blow off steam.

Keep up the good work.
Mrs J Staff - Great Yarmouth

Non-union

I WORK for a non-union Manufacturing Chemist, the working conditions are poor, and the pay structure non-existent.

For example, a girl five years my junior came to work on the same job as myself and was offered £16 per week. I had been working there for three months and had been offered £13 per week when I initially started, which has since risen to £15.

People are apparently being employed at higher rates of pay now than they were six months ago but the wages of the existing employees have not risen accordingly. Management, when tackled on this issue, gave various excuses, age for example, none of which hold water, but being a non-union firm we feel there is very little that we can do. We must attempt the long, slow process of unionisation before we can fight for any changes.
Sue Scott, Derby.

Biased

I WAS very interested to receive a leaflet yesterday advertising a new women's paper. This morning, these papers were on sale outside my office so I bought one

being anxious to know what the situation is at present on women's rights and what progress is being made.

What a disappointment it was to me. Your paper is just another vehicle for Socialist propaganda. Why, oh why do you assume that all women interested in equal rights for women etc, have left-wing ideals.

I am a very right-wing Tory, so you can imagine my reaction when I read the first sentence in your paper - 'Thank goodness we've got rid of the Tories'. In making this wrong assumption and working on this fallacy, you will fail to gain the interest of thousands of women whose political ideas are very different from your own.

In your article on landlords, you seem to take the view that all landlords are evil monsters extracting every penny from poor old ladies. The opposite is in fact true in a lot of cases. I am not defending the actions of the people you mention, indeed they are quite monstrous, but on the other hand there are landlords like my father who inherited a few houses from his mother, keeps them in good repair, installed bathrooms and hot and cold water, and charges a rent of less than £5 per house! These rents barely cover the tax he has to pay on them' but he refuses to put up the rent in case it might cause hardship to his tenants!

No, I shall not buy another copy of your paper. I'm sure your hearts are in the right place, but until you drop the political bias, you will lose the support of Conservative women like myself - and don't forget more women vote Conservative than men.
Doreen M Clayton, Leicester.

Ed. Comment: We are not fighting for women to have EQUALLY low pay, EQUALLY bad working conditions and EQUALLY hard lives. We don't believe that women will get a fair deal until we have a society where every human being is equal at birth. This will never happen under Toryism - only after a socialist revolution.

We would be interested to hear from readers on why they think more women vote Tory than men.

a woman's place...?

WHILE AGREEING with Jean Clark in 'Till Death us Do Part' about the very early sex-role conditioning of children, and about the lousy jobs available to women, I think she, like many feminists, is most unfair to men. Of course, like her probably, I haven't done any research to see exactly how much work men do round the house, but my guess is that many men do a fair bit in the way of gardening, painting, joinery, washing-up and maybe even a bit of cleaning.

Comparing straight housework and bringing up children to a 40 hour week in a factory, I much prefer the former. You can sit down when you want, do as much or as little as you feel like. Maybe the children do climb all over you when you sit down, but they will also kiss and cuddle you when you're really down which is more than my husband's boss would do for him on a bad day.

We all like a good grumble and laugh about how idle men are round the house but we should be careful that antagonism to housework as such does not just leave us feeling aggressive and resentful to the men and children we live with. This sort of resentment could result in action like that of the wives of the Cowley car workers.
Pat Hughes, St Helens, Lancs.

PS Typed with a five year old asking how to spell words and a three year old trying to type too! I wasn't so convinced by the end!

the ways in which children act, the things they play with (tanks for boys, dolls for girls) is instinctive, and also learnt from other small children. My child had some 'girl toys' when he was small, but took very little interest in them, and now at the age of 7 has rejected them altogether.

I also believe many men are as keen to get married (or live with someone) as some women, although boys are given more training for 'good jobs', they often end up in factories bored and lonely, and want to have someone to give them a reason to go on and to share with. And if women are so put on as to be expected to stay in everytime, while HE goes out, and have the dinner ready every time HE walks through the door, and agree to sex every time HE wants it, she only has herself to blame for being so gutless. But of course things will only be better when the lousy system under which we live is smashed for ever.
Carol Leeke, Totnes, Devon.

PS I think your paper is great. I only wish all working class women would read it.



WAGES

Instinct

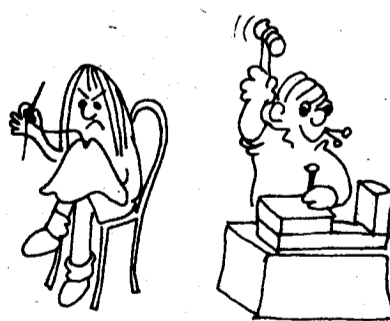
ALTHOUGH I agree with most of what Jean Clarke said in her article in Womens Voice No 10, and hope I don't indoctrinate my son with reactionary standards, even so, I feel, watching my child that some of

HERE IS a short article sent in by Miss Christine Ayley, a student at the Thames Polytechnic. While we don't agree with most of it, we think it should be a good way to open up a discussion among readers about why women lead the lives they do in our society. So if you too disagree - write in to say why!

I FEEL I must wholly disagree with Jean Clark's article 'Till Death us Do Part?' Speaking from a personal view, I would say I never suffered from an indoctrinated mother, she dressed me in whatever was available whether it was dresses or trousers. She never felt I had to look beautiful and accepted the fact that little girls are as likely to get dirty as little boys. One Christmas I was unfortunate enough to receive three dolls, in fact, I can clearly remember being so ashamed of possessing these things that I pushed them to the back of a cupboard and there they stayed. Maybe this was partly because I was fortunate enough to have two brothers and consequently mixed with their friends, preferring 'masculine' games rather than so called 'feminine' games. My mother did not like children, maybe that is why I escaped the 'indoctrination' process. It all boils down to an awareness of society, if a woman goes about life with a closed mind then ob-

Once again, at school these days there is a wide choice of sub-

jects available to study. The first three years of secondary education are important as they form a basic introduction to the adult world. Cookery and needlework are not to be scorned, they are useful even if you do not believe in marriage. When I reached the fourth year I dropped these subjects and concentrated on the academic subjects; I also did metal work. Needless to say there was a flourishing cookery club for boys too.



A woman's place is where she wants to be and not in the home. A good education today is essential for women if they wish to succeed. Effort is required in order to obtain the necessary qualifications for a good job or career and this is what a lot of women lack. A lazy woman cannot expect to succeed, you have to work hard in this world, too many women give up. I suggest the main reason for so many girls ending up in

second rate jobs with second rate pay is laziness and apathy. All you need is basic intelligence which everybody possesses, where you go from there is up to you. There are very few barriers, occupation-wise, to women today, and they can easily train for a skilled job, if they have the determination to continue their education as far as possible. It does not require brains but perseverance, as the saying goes, 'where there's a will there's a way'.

Jean Clarke seems to presume all women in second-rate jobs get married, this is probably true, they lack the gumption to do otherwise. The most important point I have to make is that even if women do get married there is nothing that forces them to have children. She also assumes that women have children as if there was nothing to prevent them doing so. Most women today have surely heard of contraception. This surely is the most logical action to take if a woman wants to be free from 'mewling and puking' children. For a marriage to succeed it needs two understanding and sympathetic people. If a man refuses to cooperate or help with the housework or shopping, refuse to cook and do his washing, he will either come round to your way of thinking or leave you. If he starts helping you with the chores all well and good, even if he leaves you you're probably better off without the lazy individual.

If women have the willpower to think for themselves, to strive for what they really desire, instead of wallowing in self-pity, then the world would be a happier place. Remember determination will bring success, there are too many apathetic women in this country, get up off your back-sides and do something now.

Suffra- gettes

THE BBC 2 'Shoulder to Shoulder' series on the suffragettes was certainly a contribution to women learning about their political 'hidden history'. However, throughout the series Sylvia Pankhurst's developing socialist politics were distorted and working class women fighting with her were shown as music hall characters. The split between Sylvia's East London Federation and the Women's Social and Political Union was treated as a family quarrel; with Sylvia envious of her mother's preference for Christabel, rather than a fundamental difference in politics. Sylvia herself said that the split was inevitable because she wanted to build from the 'bottom up'—the organised working class. Her mother, on the other hand, wanted to build from the 'Top down'—rich women with 'influence'.

This was not the first time this kind of split had occurred in the WSPU. Teresa Billington-Greig, an Independent Labour Party member, shown in the earlier episodes and curiously absent in the later ones without explanation, broke with the Pankhursts to form the Women's Freedom League over the issues of democracy and opposition to driving working class women from the organisation and using militant tactics, not to mobilise women, but as a publicity stunt.

But it was in the last episode that the real political cop-out occurred. Why didn't the series end in 1928, rather than 1918, when all women over twenty-one and without property qualifications got the vote? Had it done so it would have revealed Christabel Pankhurst's and Annie Kenney's move from Women's suffrage to right-wing evangelical Christianity and Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst standing as a Conservative in the 1928 General Election! It could have also shown how, during the 1914-18 war Sylvia not only moved from women's suffrage and pacifism to what now would be called Womens Liberation, but also from seeing the working class simply as oppressed to regarding them as the main agent of human liberation—and the need for socialist revolution. She became a founder-member of the British Communist Party, which at that time was a revolutionary party. She came to realise what socialists in today's women's movement believe; not only is socialism necessary for women's liberation, but the women's liberation movement, as well as the revolutionary party, is necessary for socialist revolution. Sylvia's story only begins in 1914 and is just as dramatic as that of the WSPU.

Viewers who would like to read about the real history of the suffragette movement could read two very well-known books strangely omitted from the BBC publication on the series: Marion Ramelson's *The Petticoat Rebellion* (Lawrence and Wishart 1969) a paperback at £1.50, and Sylvia's own account, *The Suffragette Movement* (Longmans 1931). Keep your eyes open for the series when it's repeated on BBC 1. Bob Kornreich and Eve Brook, Bradford.



THE SHOPWORKER IS NEVER RIGHT

Sue Jones -
N. W. London Retail USDAW



Sue Jones

WAGES FOR shopworkers, despite improvement in the last few years, are still very low, and unless you're working for Boots or Marks, there is no wage structure. Each person has to go to the management to decide his or her wages, not even knowing what the last person earned for the same job. As for prospects, unless you're a man they're virtually nil. Unlike most other jobs, where a pay structure exists it works on the basis of age. You may be promoted (head of counter and that's as far as most of us get), but the scale of wages for each position increases by age. This is true of most chain stores and so necessarily for most other shops in order to compete for staff. What this means is that the older you are, the less profitable your employment and the less likely!

FIRE RISK

THE CONDITIONS are also generally poor. One example—a shop newly opened had no fire alarm or extinguisher, and the escape was locked. Following objections by staff the escape was unlocked; following the fire officer extinguishers were in-

stalled. Most shopworkers are women. Either they are women with kids (supposedly earning pin money), or are girls straight from school (supposedly only waiting to get married). For the most part these women have little or no experience of unions—some not even knowing that there is a union for shopworkers. In the past shops have been notorious for sacking people who tried to unionise them. Now more and more people are beginning to join in the hope of being able to improve conditions. But we find we are also having to struggle within the unions.

HOURS

RECENTLY I have been trying to unionise my own workplace, but an incident last week shows that we are not strong enough yet! My shop is open every day from 9am to 10pm. Regular hours are in 2 shifts, 9-6 or 10-7. The shop is kept open after 7pm, and on Sundays by part-time workers and normal day staff doing overtime. The directors of the company decided that this was not profitable enough, and set about increasing profitability. They proposed to change the hours—on four days a week staff would work the old hours, on the 5th they would work from 1pm to 10pm thus cutting out overtime (a necessary boost to wages) and leading to the sacking of most of the part-timers.

THEY TALK about women not being interested or active, but what encouragement do they give? In my branch for example, a branch specifically for the retail trade, the monthly branch meetings begin at 6.00pm. As most shop workers don't finish work till that time, it's very difficult to get to them.

CON

THE STAFF refused to accept this, saying they would rather leave. I was asked to see the personnel manager on their behalf. But he wasn't there, and having discovered the 'plot', the manager took each person into his office—asked them what hours they were prepared to work and what'd they say if everyone else agreed to the new timetable? Needless to say, he then reported that nearly everyone replied that if everyone else agreed then they would. The personnel manager came in the following week and I saw him for an hour, but it was too late. So, if we want to improve our conditions, or just to keep them as they are, we must unionise. We have to have solidarity wherever we are employed, or we can be taken one by one and beaten. We must gain the right to negotiate through elected representatives without fear of dismissal, and our union (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers) must also be made to support us. We should demand better pay and conditions, and equal pay for men and women.

Rotten

HAVING JUST read letters by readers, relating their experiences with the SS, I felt prompted to write this. I work in the DHSS as a member of the counter staff on the Supplementary Benefit side. In no way can I provide any real answers to the treatment that many people receive as claimants. I can only say that many individuals are involved in giving decisions on claims. Their knowledge, experience and attitudes vary greatly and hence, so do their decisions.

The law regarding Supplementary Benefits is very complex. The codes of practice, (which are secret and used only within the department) are difficult to comprehend.

Interpretation also varies. The overall result of this (as I am sure many of you will agree) is that too little rather than too much is given. This shows itself up more with claims for exceptional need ie grants.

One might say why is this so? I have already mentioned some reasons—the difficulties in regard to the law and the reactions of individuals in given situations. To give further insight I'll tell you just what it's like being a counter clerk.

I am one of a staff of six excluding a supervisor. We deal with 80-100 callers daily. There are just three interviewing officers. We also have a 'spare' if we are lucky. He or she deals with callers who have not made an appointment for interview. Often we do not have such a person to deal with these 'immediate' interviews. Thus people can sometimes wait in your office for six or seven hours. Mostly they are women with children. A staff shortage frequently threatens us. Payments do not go out on time. People often phone and call due to this, often more than once before they get payment. The whole of the DHSS is just one rotten mess for both staff and claimants.

I do not intend to defend all staff

when I say that the system in which we work makes us nasty and embittered, demoralised and defeated. To put it in a nutshell, it poisons your mind. It can definitely get the better of you. The pressure of work is not helped by the indifferent attitude of management. It's the same old story. Workers versus management. The Civil Service certainly suffers from this. Any illusions one might have on entering the Department do not last long. The individual is stifled. Unless you go along with the system you are soon counted out ie unlikely to get promotion. All these difficulties need to be pointed out. The feeling which came over in the letters I read was very much a 'them and us' attitude. A lot of them, more than you probably think, hate it. Although some are bastards, the question you might ask yourself is why? We all suffer from the hang-ups of this rotten society—and together we must fight to change it. Name Withheld - Cardiff

VITAL READING

FOR EVERY WOMAN

(AND MAN!)

WOMEN FIGHT

BACK

by Kath Ennis

Available from
IS Books
265 Seven Sisters
Road
London N4

Social Help -Not Killing Gerry Byrne, Leicester

'SOCIAL HELP-NOT KILLING': that's a slogan no socialist would disagree with. But this time, it was on a placard carried by anti-abortion demonstrators on a rally organised by SPUC (Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child). So what do they mean by it?

S.P.U.C.

SPUC wants to repeal the 1967 Abortion Act and make abortion illegal. In countries where abortion is illegal, the greatest single cause of death for women of childbearing age is from botched abortions. If SPUC succeeds women will be driven to possibly fatal back-street abortions or to having children they do not want or cannot afford. SPUC talks about the 'right to live' but does not say what sort of life an unwanted child can expect. Especially if its parents have a large family and a small income. SPUC talks about 'social help' but what does that mean in practice? One of its executive members is the Marchioness of Salisbury. I am sure she has a lot in common with working class women who dread the thought of bringing another child into the world when they can't support the children they already have. Her husband, Lord Salisbury is president of the Anglo-Rhodesian Society and owns a 50,000 acre farm in Rhodesia. No doubt he gives a lot of 'social help' to the black workers there living on starvation wages!



"What is to be done?"

Another leading supporter of SPUC is Jill Knight, MP. You may remember her on TV during the miners strike, saying that strikers' families should not get social security. If that's what SPUC calls 'social help', we are a lot better off without it.

It is clear from the people involved in it that SPUC is an anti-working class organisation. Rich women have always been able to get abortions one way or another.

It is working class women who most need abortions who have the greatest difficulty in getting them. Most women do not even try for an NHS abortion because they are sure they won't get one, and must try to scrape together the £100 or so demanded by the profiteers in the private sector.

One of the most worrying things is the support SPUC has got among the doctors and gynaecologists. Under the law, they have the final word on whether a woman can have an abortion. Why should they have the right to decide for us? Surely we know our own circumstances and whether we could cope with the child better than they do. Yet at the moment, if a doctor refuses you an abortion, your only hope is changing your doctor, which can take months.

About a quarter of the demonstration earlier this year, was made up of kids (including a large group from my old school. I kept thinking if it had been five years earlier I might have been with them). It is not surprising that they can get schoolgirls out, when SPUC and 'Life' (which has close links with SPUC) are invited into schools to show horrific slides of aborted foetuses, blown up to show they are really 'human'. SPUC attracts people with emotional arguments and horror stories. But there are just as many horror stories on the other side—women dying in backstreet abortions, unwanted babies growing up to be battered babies.

We must not let these people, Marchionesses, MPs and the churches, take away one of our most basic rights, to decide how many, if any, children we want.



Women workers from NSF factory, Keighley

Keighley, Yorks

WOMEN FIGHT FOR MEN

AFTER EIGHT days on strike the feeling of the women working at the National Switch Factory in Keighley, Yorkshire was one of excitement. This was the first time in 19 years that the women had come out unanimously. The strike was first called by the 450 women on 6 May when they decided to stand up to management's refusal to keep to the Union's (AUEW) national agreement of a rise of £3.75 for women, £3.50 for skilled men and £3.10 for unskilled men. The women called a mass meeting on the Monday and decided on the following day to strike. The men joined the women on the Tuesday. On the Thursday management's offer was an immediate rise of £1.70 for the women and a further £1.70 in August (towards equal pay). There was to be nothing for the men. This just wasn't good enough for the women so they decided at another mass meeting to come out on the men's behalf. It wasn't until six days after this that management caved in and offered an immediate £2.62 rise for women with £1.70 in the Autumn, £3.25 for skilled men and £3.10 for unskilled men.

Confidence

Much more important than the money the women had managed to gain for themselves and the men was the newly won confidence and solidarity. Winnifred Allen, Irene Chilton (shop-steward) and others talked about these feelings: 'This was the first time the whole factory was united and it was the women who voiced their opinion first. When manage-

ment granted us a rise but nothing for the men we knew our cause was lost if we didn't get the support of the men as well.

'The gains were much more than money, though. First of all we've gained the respect of the men and the Union. Before they just treated us with amusement. Because we did repetitious work they all thought we were just cabbages and only fit for Bingo. When the manager talked to us he always used to say first of all, "Alright lassies, eyes down on the red number five." As if that's the only thing we were interested in. Now they're just going to have to treat us with some seriousness and respect.

Professional

'The only way women are going to get equality is not through management just giving us equal pay but through women proving they can't be manipulated. The majority of women are still servile—mentally servile to men and they're only going to be awakened very gradually. It has to sink in slowly with women—like an over-night soak.

'Another thing is that we have now got three women shop-stewards out of the strike and many more women have joined the Union. Only 30 per cent were in the Union before. This isn't because the Union necessarily did anything for us when we were on strike but because we realise we need to voice our opinion in the Union and make it represent us.'

Winnifred Allen, herself, and some of

the leading women in the strike are single women and feel the strength that comes from independence but also the hardship. 'I brought up four children on my own and now they're grown up I'm taxed as a single woman, and I don't get any help at all, although I burn the same light and don't get half fare on the buses. I don't have a collar round my neck saying I'm self-supporting. So it's tough unless we fight not just for more pay but also our rights.'

Another woman said how she was also single and bringing up a child on her own: 'Now my child's at school but before I had to leave the factory at 4.00 pm to pick up the child from the nursery at 4.15 when the nursery closed. I don't want to get National Assistance. I want to be independent and work.'

Creches

With a child to bring up on one's own it means there's little time for Union meetings and even a full-time job. What this strike has achieved is more solidarity in the Union, amongst women and better representation by women shop-stewards. This means that the possibility of bringing up demands in the Union for the things important to women, such as creches in the factory and Union meetings in working time, is much more likely than it was before. These common real demands women have to make on Unions and management can only come from a feeling of strength such as has arisen in this strike in Keighley.

Sue Malik and her husband.



WOMEN FIGHT EXILE THREAT

(from front page)

'I've been involved in the campaign to change the law since I came back here in February. We married two years ago, knowing it'd be hard to settle in England. I had a good job in Nairobi, and was prepared to stay, but the social pressures were terrible. There are three separate communities in Kenya—black, brown and white, and they don't mix. Life for a mixed marriage couple is very hard, and what's more they're making it difficult for Asian men to get jobs. Anyway we decided to return to Britain and fight the law. I didn't know there already was a campaign, and I was soon up to my eyes in interviews, radio and TV appearances etc.

Professional

'With our own case—there's not really been a problem. I'm a qualified accountant, and we're buying a house—there's a lot in our favour. I joined the fight because it's wrong that only professional people

win their cases. And so when the bill to change the law was talked out of parliament on May 10th we didn't give up—we stepped up the campaign. You see there are a lot of girls all over the world, who married before 1969, and decided to stay abroad for a couple of years. The law made them into exiles.'

'We get letters all the time,' stated Tricia Hewlett, 'and if we'd made no publicity no one would've thought to change the law.'

The Labour government doesn't like to be shown up discriminating against women, but it'll allow it to happen if no one murmurs. Keeping women dependent on men (and therefore accepting low pay) is a way of keeping a massive pool of cheap labour.

'At least the campaign's done a good job of education,' added Tricia. 'Letters from ordinary people everywhere say things like—"I never believed all this women's lib stuff about women being second class citizens, but this business has really opened my eyes".'

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