

womens voice

MONTHLY PAPER OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST WOMEN

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EIGHT cadet nurses at North Manchester general hospital have been fighting for their jobs since Christmas. One of the cadets, 18 year old Julie Smethurst, talked to Womens Voice:

'Nobody wanted to know when we first questioned the sackings, until we started organising ourselves, that is. We held meetings at work and at college, got in touch with the Cuts committee and got the joint shop stewards committee to sponsor a picket to publicise what was going on. It was well supported by other trade unionists.

'In the past sections like us have never stood up for themselves. That's why they're weak—now we've got to stick up for ourselves because nobody else will. I'm sick of this system. We're just statistics to them—they say they've no money so they just try and get rid of us. They don't realise what sort of psychological effect it has on you, feeling you're not good enough and that you've been sacked.

'Its not going to be easy to find another job. As for the people who are supposed to be fighting for you, one of them said 'if you've got a job to go to,

"I'M SICK OF THE SYSTEM...WE'RE JUST STATISTICS TO THEM"

go, cause there's nothing for you in the NHS'. That was after we started kicking up a fuss. Before that, they were saying there are no cuts.

Anyway they're not going to demoralise me into thinking we're not good enough. Our college reports and the responsibilities we take on the wards have proved that we are. They've had a

vital two years of us, like apprentices. They dress you up in uniform straight from school—innocent. They know you're going to do the dirty work because you want to nurse and you're looking forward, then they think then can chuck you on the scrap heap.

'It's not just us, we're just one of the weaker sections. They'll start on the

older women next. Who's going to do my work when I'm gone—a porter perhaps—an auxiliary or a qualified nurse. Then there's the college. They get rid of one lot—that means classes will be cut, and there's an excuse for getting rid of teachers.

'In the long term it's easy to see what it means to the NHS—fewer and fewer qualified staff, a poorer and poorer service for the working class.

'We've won two things by our actions. It looks like they daren't sack any more cadets who are already in jobs, although they may phase the scheme out altogether. And we've been told we can stay till we find new jobs.

We've learned a few things too: that you've got to fight for yourself. You can't trust the management to tell you anything, let alone the truth. And the 'union men' won't fight for you. I think other cadets should become more active trade unionists and fight for:

Proper job description

Contracts to include automatic entrance to training school

Proper disciplinary procedures with adequate warnings so they can't treat you like children and get rid of you because you've been 'naughty'.

Julie is the victim of the government's attack on working class women and men. She is not taking it lying down, nor are we. Don't let them wear you down! Fight for the Right to Work.



You'll get some jeers and wolf-whistles at first, and looks of disbelief. The novelty soon wears off. And the bosses will give you the dirtiest and hardest jobs to make you 'prove yourselves'—no doubt about that. Don't let them put you down.

If your first response is hostile, you men, then think again. These women are breaking through. They're joining the battle as equals.

THEY'RE STRIKING ONE MORE BLOW AGAINST THE DIVISIONS THAT HAVE KEPT US DOWN IN THE PAST. Against the reactionary ideas that have kept workers apart from one another.

Like craftism, which makes workers in one print union think that workers in another print union are a lower breed and could never tackle the same jobs.

Like racialism, making white workers think they are better than black workers, so while their eyes are turned in that direction they don't see the boss is walking over them.

When the first woman bus driver took up her job in Great Yarmouth eight years ago, the men bus-drivers came out on strike. They said she was stealing a man's job. They said the man is the breadwinner. They said a woman's place is at home.

It was a sad day for the whole trade union movement. Eight years is a long time. We've had eight years and longer to rehearse the arguments. Believing we could never do those jobs kept us 'in our place', and kept us down.

WOMEN ARE EQUAL

And now for the good news . . .

Well done, Mrs Ann Smith of Grimsby for being the first woman on to the waiting list for registered dockers. Well done, the first woman to ride as a National Hunt jockey. And the woman who's applied to be ship's cook in Lowestoft. And the first women school-bus drivers. Power to your elbow all women who are breaking into previously 'all male' jobs.

MARCH 8th INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

FIGHT THE CUTS... AND

WE KEEP hearing of hospitals closing, nurseries being cut, schools with overcrowded classrooms, the price of school dinners going up. The cuts in the public sector are hitting at every working person.

And it is women who are the first to be hit.

To demand the 'right of all women to have a job', we must fight the cuts in public expenditure. It is pie in the sky to demand jobs for all women

Picture shows Direct Action in the Nursery Campaign. Student parents occupy rooms at the LSE

without adequate nursery facilities. Look what's happening to old people. They are no longer being looked after in hospitals but are being sent back to their families.

Fighting the cuts in the public sector also means fighting for the jobs that are being cut in hospitals and schools—in areas where the majority of those employed are women. It means demanding decent working conditions and equal pay. In the Abortion Campaign, women adopted the slogan, 'A Woman's Right to Choose' but

without the right to work there is no real choice.

Women must break with the old idea that sends women down the road first, labelled by the myth that women 'only work for pin money, anyway' and so don't deserve a job. Women are always the hardest hit in times of crisis. Unemployment among women is running three times higher than men. We mustn't feel that it is our fault that the housekeeping money can't go round. The blame must be laid on

the bosses and the public administrators who, for the sake of profits, throw working class families on the scrap heap.

We must be out in front in the fight against public sector cuts. We must take the initiative. We must fight threatened redundancies, and we must demand the support of the men when fighting to save jobs.

Every redundancy is a job lost, not only today, but for our children tomorrow. The fight is now. If anything is to be done, we are going to have to do it.

Conversion, a polite word for cut

BY JANET GEARY

THE DISTRICT management for North Hammersmith has recently put forward plans which, if unopposed, will mean a drastic cutback in services provided by Acton Hospital. Currently Acton Hospital provides casualty and other general facilities for the local community. Management's plans are to convert it to a geriatric/psychiatric hospital. This is much needed in this area, but *not* at the expense of the other general facilities provided by the hospital at present. Why has it happened? Because of instructions to cut spending as part of the general cuts in the National Health Service. A geriatric/psychiatric hospital is far cheaper to run than a general hospital.

If the hospital were 'converted' (a polite word for cut), the local community would not suffer only in terms of health. Many jobs would be lost in an area where hundreds of jobs are disappearing through factory closures. There is also the very real fear that if management are allowed to close the hospital to convert it, it may never reopen.

Many people who live and work in the Acton area packed a meeting in response to leafletting by local hospital workers. The leaflet was the first time many of them had heard of the plans to cut the hospital.

Everyone at the meeting spoke of the need to save Acton Hospital. A teacher from the school next to the hospital said that it is invaluable to them, as children often have to be taken to the casualty department for minor treatment. This was echoed by the Secretary of the South Acton Tenants Association who said that the estate relied on the hospital, particularly for children who have nowhere to play except on the dangerous stairs of the high rise flats.

Many of the children who spoke were former patients of Acton Hospital. They spoke of the need to campaign around the issue on the streets with leaflets and petitions, and to raise the issue inside trade unions.

A committee was set up from the meeting, including people from Acton Hospital, Hammersmith Hospital Joint Shop Stewards Committee, local trade unions, and the secretary of the tenants' association.

The fightback must be organised jointly by the workers who use the hospital and the workers who work in them. Only by fighting the cuts before they are implemented can we hope to win.



Picture: Peter Harrap (Report)

TODDLERS TAKE OVER

THE NURSERY at Middlesex Polytechnic was one of the first at a polytechnic. It was won as the result of a three-year campaign, including direct action when the Poly director's office was occupied in late 1973. It was accepted then that the nursery should be part of the services of the Polytechnic, like a library or a health service. But the fees policy made nonsense of this. The maximum fees were recently raised—from £2.96 a day, to £4.72 a day!

This bears no relation to the cost of running the nursery, it is arbitrarily tied to fees in the London Borough of Barnet. There is a Means Test under which fees can be reduced, but it only benefits single parents and student couples.

If one parent is earning anything like a normal wage, the assessment rises rapidly, so that a married woman

student can be paying the *whole* of her grant in nursery fees, and a clerical or library worker a large proportion of her own wages.

The parents' response to this unacceptable rise was a fees strike. This



persuaded the Poly management that they had better start negotiating a change quickly with the local authority.

But they also tried to scare parents off their fees strike. They expelled from the nursery a child whose mother had been unable to afford the old fees last term! The nursery was immediately occupied by students and parents. We ran it for four days ourselves until the management backed down. They promised no victimisation and readmitted the children, while the negotiations carry on.

Many boroughs are getting away with this kind of policy on nursery fees: they can say that their existing nurseries are under used although everyone knows women are crying out for facilities. Only those families they condescend to describe as 'at risk' manage to get nursery places, and *no one* can afford nearly five pounds a day.

Playgroups: A Welfare Service

MANCHESTER Playgroup workers are trying to solve the puzzle that the local Director of Social Services has set them. How to exist on the money given by the Social Services, while being refused a pay rise because we're self-employed!

It might seem as though the Councillors want our *work*—but no responsibility for our conditions. Yet they are proud of the work we do. They tell conferences how Manchester 'pioneered play schemes' in deprived areas as a welfare service, so poorer families could let children play in safe places away from the high rise flats and dangerous streets.

We know that the department set up to supervise the groups takes a keen interest in what we do, but it seems we are on our own now.

We learned this at a Social Services Committee meeting when we listened to the answer to our request for more money. Our union (since last July we'd formed a branch of the National Union of Public Employees) had asked for 15p

an hour on wages that had been 40p and 60p an hour for two years.

The Director of Social Services said we could spend the grants given to us how we liked. The councillors also listened in silence when he said that we could raise what money we liked. We

IN 1949 there were 43,000 nursery places.

In 1973/74 of four million children under school age, only 40,000 managed to get places in nursery schools. 75 per cent of these went to the children of middle class and professional parents.

This was the first sector to be hit as local authorities trimmed their budgets. Examples? In March 1975, Clwyd had several completed nursery units, but no staff, and some of the buildings were being used by the infant school. In Croydon the whole programme was cancelled.

thought our play groups were a welfare service, not a means tested benefit!

The playgroup workers and some of the mothers left this meeting even more determined to get a fair deal for the responsible and valuable work they do. They've affiliated to the Manchester Fight the Cuts Committee and the Trades Council.

They know some of the Labour councillors and are spreading as much information about the playgroups as they can to anyone and any paper who'll listen. With the support of the parents and other trade unionists, they're determined not to let the cost-conscious authority pick off women and children as the first of the cuts in the public services.

They were even more determined when the local paper reported that the same local authority had approved themselves an *increase* of £32,000 in the expenses bill. We're having problems explaining that away in terms of the social justice they spoke about two years ago.

A one-day conference on Women and the Cuts is being held on Saturday 28 February at the Friends House, Euston Road, NW1 from 10am-6pm. The conference is being called by the Working Women's Charter Group (London Co-ordinating Committee). Although you should try and get delegated from your Trade Union branch, the conference is open to everyone who supports the fight against the cuts.

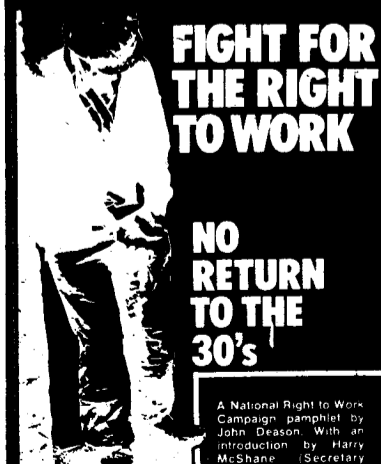
The Women and the Cuts Conference will give us a chance to discuss how we should organise the fight back. Generalised statements against the cuts are no help at all to us where it counts, at local and work-place level. What we want from this conference is a plan of action which we can take back to our trade unions and trade councils which will get the support of the people we work with and live next door to.

There are many strategies we can adopt to fit particular situations: pickets, demonstrations, meetings, petitions, leaflets, occupations. But we must not limit our fight to the cuts alone—that's only part of the problem. One result of the attack in social services is redundancies for the workers in that service and especially women workers. The fight to defend the jobs of women workers both full-time and part-time, has hardly begun, yet the rate of unemployment for women is rocketing.

Womens Voice readers and supporters should argue in their trade union branches, tenants associations and women's action groups for immediate action over the linked menace of cuts and unemployment and argue for the following resolution at the Women and the Cuts Conference:

- 1) We defend totally a woman's right to work.
- 2) We oppose all cuts in education, health and social services and will organise to support action against any threatened cuts.
- 3) We oppose all attempts at hidden cuts where out-put is increased without an increase in jobs.
- 4) All vacancies full and part-time must be filled.
- 5) No over-time—any extra work should provide more jobs for others.
- 6) 5 days work or 5 days pay.

We will be fighting for the Working Women's Charter Women and the Cuts Conference to affiliate to the National Right to Work Campaign, as we believe that in the situation we face today, the fight against unemployment is central in the fight for women's rights.



FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK

NO RETURN TO THE 30's

A National Right to Work Campaign pamphlet by John Deason. With an introduction by Harry McShane, Secretary

What the Right to Work Campaign is all about. An important new pamphlet by John Deason, secretary of the Campaign.

19p inc postage (orders over 10 copies post free, 10p a copy) from Right to Work Campaign, 46 Prince George Road, London, N16.

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK

Right to Work: What we can do

WE WANT to involve as many people as possible in the march and the Right to Work Campaign. Wherever you are, whatever you do, *talk* about the issues. Talk about unemployment, about how we are refusing to take it lying down, about a woman's right to work, about what we can all do to make the campaign a success.

There are leaflets available, issued by the National Right to Work Campaign, called 'A Woman's Right to Work'. Use them where you work, give them out at factories in your area where women work, get the men who support us to use them with the women they work with.

There is also a letter to trade union bodies asking for sponsorships for women marchers, any women trade unionists can get one sent to their union branch.

We can all participate—the Right to Work Campaign needs us all.

It's up to each of us to get sponsorships for the marchers, from our trade union branches, shop stewards' committees—whatever. We must go to every factory and demand to see the convenor or shop steward and argue the case for them to sponsor the National Right to Work Campaign, and sponsor a marcher.

Any of us who live on the route of the march can help with the reception committees, and by getting food for the marchers from factory canteens, etc.

And we can all go to the Rally in the Albert Hall on 20 March. Join the marchers on the last day of the march, from Shepherds Bush to the Albert Hall. Come yourself, bring your friends, try and get a delegation from your workplace.

Remember the Womens Voice Rally, and what an inspiration it was? Well, the Albert Hall Rally is a chance for us to get together with our brothers—we're fighting the same struggle, so let's work it out together!

They fill the Albert Hall for Miss World—we can fill it with women and men determined to win a decent living for ourselves and our children.

KEEP THE MONEY ROLLING IN . . .

THE MARCH costs an enormous amount of money to organise. Leaflets, posters, boots, and food along the way, they all cost hard cash. Women's Voice supports the campaign fully and in raising money for Tina and Kerry, two of the marchers, and we want to give as much money as we can.

WHAT WE CAN DO:

Organise a jumble sale or social (like Hackney Women's Voice Group—see page 6).

Sell 'Right to Work' badges at 10p each. They are available from Right to Work Campaign, 46, Prince George Road, London, N16.

Have a whip round at work. Raise it at staff meetings and shop stewards committees.

Go to your trade union branch and trades council and ask them to sponsor a marcher.

Approach your local National Abortion Campaign group or Womens Group and offer a speaker on A Woman's Right to Work, and the march. Ask them to sponsor a marcher, or just have a collection.

Make postal orders and cheques payable to Women's Voice, and send to 8 Cottons Gardens, London, E2 8DN.

We will pass the money straight on to the Right to Work Committee.

These are some of the women who will be marching from Manchester to London. They are marching for the Right to Work theirs, ours, and our children's.



Picture shows Nancy Kelly, Sam Strudwick, Tina Dickinson and Kerry Abram

Pictures: Chris Davies (Report)

by JEAN CLARK

I AM GOING to the Right to Work Rally at the Albert Hall on 20 March because my little girl has just started school dinners. I know that sounds ridiculous but you'll understand what I mean when you read this. It's about what many, many women have experienced—the day when the youngest of your children 'leave you' to start children.

For the first week when Kellie started, it didn't really upset me that much because I was too busy taking her to school in the mornings, collecting her dinner-time, taking her back again and then collecting her again in the evening. It made a total of running round to the school eight times a day.

Then the day came when she started school dinners.

When she walked into the class-room with her dinner money, I got a lump in my throat and had a fight to hold back the tears. My son Terry had started school three years ago but that wasn't too bad because I had Kellie to go back home to.

I needed her to make me feel secure, as well as giving me something to do, apart from the fact it gave me a reason for not having to face the outside world. I had an excuse to stay behind the door

and the four walls I was so used to. After a while, you just accept being shut in with children, it's part of a 'woman's role' so that when the time comes for you to have to face going outside on your own, it's terrifying.

I got home at 9.30, sat down in the armchair till 12.30 and didn't move. The house was silent, no kids around to need you, you're on your own for the first time. I got panic-stricken.

I looked around me and thought I've got nothing to do except house-work. Before I was a prisoner with two kids, now I'm in solitary confinement. I could feel myself screaming inside: 'Please help me, I'm scared.'

As luck would have it, a very good friend of mine happened to drop in and he comforted me and talked to me

about it. I also rang my husband when I was really panicking and he tried to calm me down. Later on he came home during his lunch break to talk to me as well.

For ages I'd been looking forward to this time so that I could get out, go back to work, live my own life. The system has locked women and children together for so long that when the time comes to 'give them up' it's actually heart-breaking.

It's hard to cope with looking at yourself. Like I did, you lose all confidence in other things you may be able to do outside the house. You never had the chance to experience doing what you wanted to do because of the kids hanging on your skirts, so when you've 'done your time' it's a big shock to be let out! You have a new life staring you in the face and you don't know what

COME TO THE ALBERT HALL

it's going to be like out there.

If Kellie had had the opportunity of getting into full-time nursery much earlier, not only would it have been better for herself and her education. I wouldn't be feeling the way I am now, lonely, scared, and lacking in confidence.

I have given so much of myself to the family, I've got to get to know myself again, as a person who has gained a certain amount of independence. I know the only way to really get that independence is to get a job. If we had more nurseries to take our children full-time so that we could get a job right from the start, before we're destroyed as people, we wouldn't have to go through this hell.

I see this as one of the many put downs for women in this system. There are a lot of things us women are going to have to fight for to get rid of this repression. We can't do it as individuals, we've got to work together. We all need each other's help.

The Right to Work Campaign is about me getting a full-time or part-time job to fit in with the kids coming home from school. Everyone knows what it's like trying to find work at the moment. It's about fighting the cuts in nurseries and education as well.

The Campaign and the Rally is about me getting together with other people—see you at the Albert Hall!

They marched—15,000 strong—demanding an end to sweatshop conditions and the right to organise into trade unions.

They were young, mostly under 21, foreign born and speaking many different languages. Yet they were united and militant. Many were revolutionary socialists.

And they were women.

On 8 March 1908, in New York, 15,000 women garment workers proved that women too are part of the struggle and can fight and win. Their lives were misery.

They worked 10 or 12 hours a day in tiny, dirty, suffocating factories. The doors and windows were locked from the outside. There were no toilets or tea-breaks. Talking to each other was forbidden.

Their pay was so low that after a long day many took home extra work.

Some went blind by the age of 25—sewing tiny beads onto the finery of the very rich.

But they knew hope as well as drudgery. They understood that together they could fight back.

In 1908, the women's section of the Socialist Party called for a

A DAY TO REMEMBER

demonstration to be held on 8 March to protest against dangerous sweatshop conditions.

Thousands of women responded, demanding equal pay, nurseries for working mothers, an end to sweated labour and the right to vote.

The militancy of these young women was so inspiring that the Socialist Party proclaimed 8 March 'Working Women's Day'. Two years later, Clara Zetkin, revolutionary leader of the German working women's movement, called on all socialists to celebrate that day as 'International Women's Day'. She argued it should be a working class

holiday, like May Day, but it would pay tribute to the struggles of ordinary working class women.

The revolutionary movement of the time believed that the working class struggle could not be won without the active involvement of working women. So International Women's Day also aimed at making working women more conscious of themselves as fighters for women's liberation and revolution.

The first demonstrations took place in March, 1911, in France, Germany, and Austria, with tens of thousands turning out. After 1911, the celebrations spread to many more countries in Europe and the United States.

Women round the world are still fighting for most of the demands the New York garment workers raised. Those young women went on to lead the 'Uprising of the 40,000'—a general strike in the clothing industry in 1912. Their action paved the way for the founding of one of the first industrial unions in the United States.

And even today, their story is an inspiration to us as we carry on the struggle.

The first thing that hit me about the streets of Lisbon is that they were being cleaned up.

When I was there in September the streets were alive, plastered with slogans and posters, street sellers with revolutionary postcards and souvenirs; crammed with people who, finding anything going on, joined in.

Now, nearly all that has gone. Lisbon is almost back to being the poor, shabby town it used to be, one-fifth shanty town. All historical monuments are being 'cleaned' of posters, and all that's left on the streets is the porn.

Times have changed since November 25th, when the paratroopers seized a number of airbases and the national television stations—when the right-wing staged a counter-coup, when the left wing military units were disarmed, and disbanded, in an attempt to cut the links between the army and the workers' struggles.

On the face of it the right wing have a hold, and are digging their claws in. The Luar clinic, which turned a rich man's house into a welfare centre for mothers and

Letter from Portugal

By PENNY SIMMONS, Manchester Hospital Worker

children, has been raided. The police are becoming trigger-happy through fear.

Set against this dismal background, a new struggle is growing. The workers of Portugal have not been swallowed up by the bosses' brand of 'democracy'. They are fighting more and more over wages and conditions. They know they have to—unemployment runs at 10 per cent, cheese costs £1 a pound, fares and rents are rocketing, and yet the minimum wage is about £66 a month.

To illustrate what's going on, I'd like to tell a story. It's all about the multi-national company Timex,

who employed nearly 2000 workers in Lisbon. 70 per cent of the workers were manual, and 90 per cent were women. Many women left the factory after a couple of years because the work is so close and fiddling that their eyesight began to go. Timex decided to sack 750 workers in Lisbon, most of them the women whose eyes were failing.

The fight back came fast. The workers occupied the factory. They elected a workers' commission, refused to accept loss of jobs, and everyone joined the union.

But they left negotiations to the union and the government, believing it was a 'people's government.'

Now they find themselves locked out, all of them, offered work on a temporary basis only when the company says so. What is happening in Portugal, happening today, is not just a story though. For now, the Portuguese struggle has become an economic one. The workers have learnt the treachery of the sixth Provisional Government, and often of their own unions too. Timex shows the need for the workers to build their own strength, and take their destiny in their own hands. We in Britain can learn the same lesson.

SPAIN: WOMEN JOIN THE FIGHT

By JOANNA ROLLO

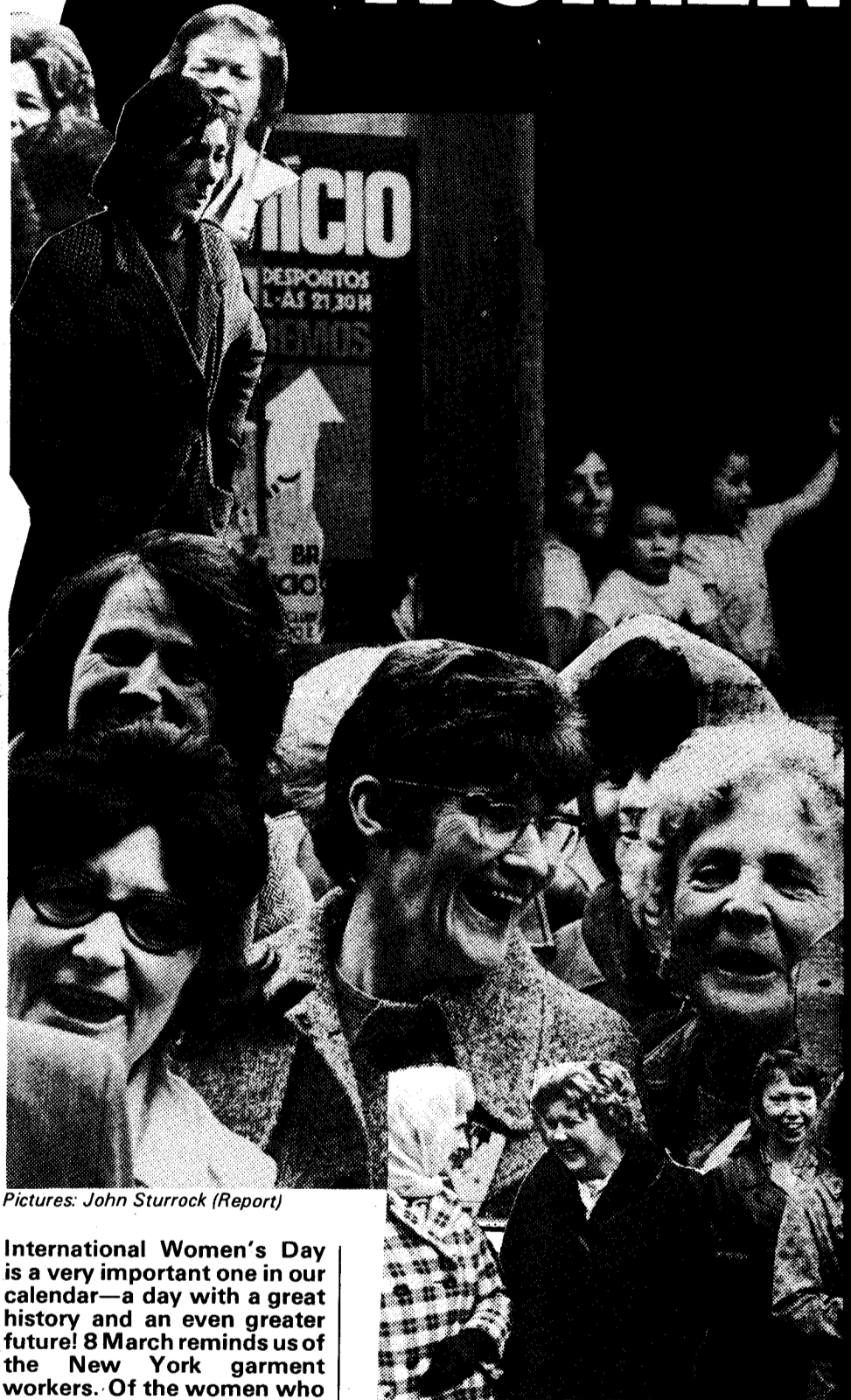
The regime didn't discriminate in the way it treated the women's demonstration. Like the other demonstrators and those on strike, they were attacked, beaten up and dispersed by hundreds of police armed with cudgels and tear gas.

Franco may be dead, but the spirit of the regime he created lives on. The new Spanish government includes most of the fascists who did his dirty work in the past. They have promis-

ed reforms of a sort but are terrified of making any real concessions to the workers' movement. These last few weeks have shown how powerful and courageous that movement is. So the arrests continue, the vast majority of Franco's political prisoners are still locked up. Trade unions are still illegal, strikes are illegal, workers' organisations are illegal. The brutal police machine which kept Franco in power is being used to keep those laws intact.

Like everywhere else, Spain has been hit hard by the crisis. And like every other government, Franco's successors are trying to make the workers pay for it. Over the last year the government held wages down and let unemployment soar. The new Finance Minister Villar Mir, has called for further cuts in living standards. The strike wave was a direct response to those threats. Spanish workers have shown the regime Franco spawned that they are not going to pay for its crisis.

MARCH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN



Pictures: John Sturrock (Report)

International Women's Day is a very important one in our calendar—a day with a great history and an even greater future! 8 March reminds us of the New York garment workers. Of the women who came out onto the streets of St Petersburg in 1917 and precipitated the Russian revolution. And all those women who have fought in the past for true liberation, against oppression and exploitation.

It's a day when we express solidarity with our sisters in all countries. Fighting fascism in Chile and Spain. Building revolutions in Portugal and Southern Africa. Creating movements of working women in the East and West. Most of all it's a day when we pull together to raise our demands for a better life, and organise our forces to fight for it.

That is why Womens Voice supporters all round the country will be busy on 8 March, and the weekend before. We call on all Womens Voice groups to plan now what they are going to

organise that weekend. Already news is coming in of concerts and fund raising benefits; of local campaign activities and public meetings. Some women in the North of England will be supporting the Right to Work marchers as they reach Clay Cross, joining them along the route. And in the South of England our supporters will be demonstrating through London on Saturday 6 March.

As there were last year, no doubt there will be again, some women who demand that only women should join the march. Some radical feminists and separatists even want to exclude women who are members of 'mixed' organisations like socialist groups and the National Abortion Campaign!

The policy of Womens Voice is

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8th INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



...ay...
...se it!

Women's Day is when men take a back seat. But we are glad to have them march with us, declaring the support that we women have had to fight for.

So long as there has been a women's movement there has been a split between those middle class feminists who see men as the main problem, and who have no revolutionary strategy, and those women who are part of the socialist movement, who believe that women are oppressed by class society, and only working class men and women together can overthrow the powers that exploit them.

This split was never more obvious than in the Suffrage movement. It was a difference that divided Emeline and Christobel Pankhurst on one side, from Sylvia Pankhurst on the other. When the first world war

came, the reformist feminists dropped all agitation for votes for women, backed the war effort, and sided with the British ruling class. But the revolutionary socialist women kept up their activities, and opposed the war, knowing that it was an imperialist war that could only mean slaughter for the working class of Europe.

Today those divisions still exist in the women's movement.

Womens Voice supporters are not sectarians. We want as many people to march for women's rights as possibly can. By the same token we have no intention of being told that we cannot march. International Women's Day is part of our tradition. **We call on all those who support women's freedom to march along with us on 6 March.**

● For further details of the march contact your local Womens Voice group or Womens Voice seller. Watch out for notices in Socialist Worker. Or ring 01-739 6273. London IS branches and Womens Voice groups get ready your banners now!

'In India you cannot talk about equal pay for equal work, or creches, when women carry their children on their backs into fields to work, and when women are pushed into the lowest and worst jobs.' S Kahn of CRIPP—the Campaign for the Release of Indian Political Prisoners.

Repression in India is not new—it has been intensifying since 1962. Opposition to the repressive regime has been growing, and women have played an important part in this. The number of women who participate, for example by demonstrating against price rises, is phenomenal, especially when you consider the nature of Indian women's oppression. For them, fighting for basic necessities for themselves and their families is a matter of survival. Almost inevitably, they are drawn into struggle.

Women get the worst paid and lowest jobs. They are the least organised, and most illiterate. As well as this economic oppression, there are all the traditional forms. For example, if a woman is raped, it is she who is imprisoned while the trial is coming up (and this often takes several months). She is the one disgraced, while the man can easily talk it away. Usually he is a landlord or of a higher caste, and unless the girl comes from a family with position, she has no way of getting out.

Even this hardly compares with the horror of selling women and girl children—a practice which still exists in hard times. You read in Western literature that families are almost happy to do this, but in fact it is a matter of survival. For many families the choice is between selling their daughters, or seeing them die of starvation with them.

In India there is no difference between manslaughter and murder. Any taking of human life, even if accidental, is considered a murder.

So is an abortion. Many women are forced to administer abortions to themselves, and if the authorities or the head of the village finds out, the woman can be imprisoned and tried for murder. If her family stands by her, they will be ostracised from the village, which can mean things like having the water supply cut off. Even so, abortion is still the commonest form of contraception, because little else is available. Despite the publicised campaigns, contraception has not reached the vast majority of women. In India, your future life depends on the number of children you have to look after you in your old age.

It is the poorest women, the 'harijan' or untouchables, who are forced into prostitution. If caught, it is the girl who is put in prison, not the pimp who will buy himself out.

According to S Kahn, women in India view their oppression in a very different light to radical feminists in the West. They are very much aware of their economic exploitation in society—they do not see their battle as being against men but against all forms of oppression. Class divisions are very stark in India—in some ways the caste system is a class system—the lowest castes getting the worst jobs.

Women are playing a major role in opposition to the Gandhi regime, and are being thrown into jail as political prisoners in their thousands. Only recently, Charjit Kaur, the leader of the Students Federation of India, was shot dead while leading a demonstration. Even before the 'state of emergency' was imposed a few months ago, estimates of the number of political prisoners

INDIA Where girls are bought and sold, and Abortion is treated as murder

BY FRAN REDCLIFFE



ran into thousands. Accurate figures are impossible to obtain.

When the All India Women's Association came out on strike over price rises they were arrested, and because of the cramped state of the prisons, put in cells next to the Naxalite women prisoners. (The Naxalites are a body, many of them young people and students, who took up armed struggle against the landlords with the peasants). This is how we have come to hear of the tortures of political prisoners.

Torture takes the form of women being stripped, cigarettes being applied to sensitive parts of the body, beating with rods and fists, near drowning and the use of iron rulers inserted into the rectum. Medical treatment is extremely rare and has to be bought with money or outside influence. Prison warders get the drugs the doctors prescribe and put them on the black market. The majority of political prisoners are working class and peasants, and cannot buy themselves concessions.

Conditions in prison are appalling: overcrowding, mosquitoes, no sanitation, disgusting food full of grit and dirt. There is no organisation of the prisoners, though the Naxalites, because of their political unity, are able to act together. They went on hunger strike demanding release from fetters. These are weights on the feet and iron bars up to the waist which if worn for several months cripple permanently. After fifteen days of hunger strike, the prisoners were released from the fetters for a few weeks, but on the smallest pretext put back in. Hunger strikes are the only means of protest open—any other disturbances receive harsh treatment.

The government detains women prisoners both as a source of information and as a deterrent. This has little long term effect, as more and more women are being forced into action as the economic, political and social crisis within India deepens.

India is now in the top three in the political prisoner league—along with Chile and Indonesia. The Campaign for the Release of Indian Political Prisoners is a broad based campaign centred round three main demands:

1. The ending of all forms of torture in prison and other places of detention.
2. The end to all prison killings.
3. The release of all political prisoners.

Since its recent creation CRIPP has begun to raise money, mobilise the support of women's groups, get student union support, get publicity (including the distribution of their brochure 'Land of the Political Prisoners'), picket cultural events to dispel the image of belly-dancing Indian women; forge links with trade unions. Support has come from many quarters including some women MPs, one of whom recently declined an invitation to a banquet to celebrate Indian independence on the grounds that she could not support the present regime.

The issue will become increasingly important over the coming months. It should be raised by socialists wherever possible, in trade unions, student unions, women's groups and workplaces.

For more information write to CRIPP c/o G Kumar, 22 Boundary Road, London, NW8.

Dear Womens Voice,

It has become obvious that one of the cuts in public spending which is being felt amongst one-parent families is the tightening up of the extra-needs payments. These are given for items like shoes, clothing and bedding which are not covered by Supplementary Benefits. These payments are even harder to get than ever before. People are being made to save for items that they would have been able to get through these payments. The total expenditure on extra-needs payments was only £11½ million in 1974 so the saving is minimal, the extra burden on families involved are enormous.

As inflation rises so these families become poorer, especially those who live on Social Security. Although total spending on Supplementary Benefits is going up, the individual recipient is by no means better off. For a start increases are worked out for the last six months and it's another six months before they're given out, so benefits are always a year behind price rises.

The prices of food, heating and housing are all rising faster than average, and these take a larger proportion of the income of poor families than the rich. So even as benefits are increased those forced to live off them get steadily poorer.

When I watched Concorde's flight last week with the privileged few consuming caviar and pheasant and then saw a neighbour of mine faced with a bill for new clothes and shoes for four children with an income of £28 a week (Social Security), I'd like to know how the Government sorts out its priorities.

Cuts in public spending are spreading everywhere and as usual they attack the

living standards of the weaker sections of the communities, women, one-parent families and children. They should be stopped now.

Maxine Johnson,
Manchester

Dear Womens Voice,

I have just been charged 54p for cod and chips at my local fish and chip shop. Is this a record?

Pat Foulkes, East London

least! I am 'just a housewife' but I can assure you that I am very much employed. Though agreed I am not paid for the work I do. Also I do need a job that pays me but my son is only a year old and nursery facilities being cut or nurseries being closed makes my getting a job impossible.

Unlike a lot of mothers, I enjoy being at home and watching my son grow up but my husband is on a low wage and if there were proper nursery facilities I,

along with many others, would use them.

So when the Right to Work Campaign includes me in its cause by demanding proper nursery facilities, I along with many others, will delight in supporting it fully. The Campaign does have my support but with the reservations previously stated.

Fraternally,
Eunice Sharples
Darlington

Dear Womens Voice,

What is a battered wife? Or for that matter a battered wives' home? A battered wife is not necessarily someone with a black eye or a busted nose. I did not have these outward signs; I was subjected to a more subtle kind of pressure. I began to lose my confidence in my own abilities and my faith in my opinions. In fact my whole personality was being submerged and suffocated inside an impossible situation.

In a battered wives' home you have a bedroom for yourself and your children, you do your own cooking and cleaning and help with the communal cleaning of the house.

They have all been through it so they are sympathetic and helpful, also your children will still be able to go to school in your temporary accommodation. It might not be what you are used to after all it is not the Ritz but it is a refuge. I might add a very grateful refuge. It takes a hell of a lot of work and money to run these houses and they need publicity as well as financial help.

For every thousand women that come forward there are another thousand who are too scared to take any action or simply do not know where to go for some practical help. In the Liverpool area there is a Women and Children's Aid Centre who will give you the help and advice that you are looking for and in Ormskirk there is also help available. Their phone number is Ormskirk 77091, they will advise you on your rights and if you want a divorce, they will again give you practical help on how to go about it.

Divorce has always been frowned upon by the church and the state, you usually get told to keep your marriage together for the sake of the children if nothing else. What they don't realise is that in the end it will be the children that suffer. Divorce in some cases is the only way to help them and yourself. Most people think that divorce is very expensive. It can be, but, if you are like me and have young children and cannot go out to work, nor have any savings, you can apply for legal aid.

There is no need to suffer in silence any longer, there is help waiting for you just around the corner, USE IT.
FRANCES LYONS

LETTERS

Dear Womens Voice,

I was very impressed by the January issue of Womens Voice but feel I must raise a protest at your words in the Right to Work Campaign article (back page). The article states: '... and don't think: "I'm just a housewife, I can't do anything", you're an unemployed worker, you don't know when you'll need a job.'

Well, how patronising to say the

'HAVE I REALLY PUT ON THAT MUCH SINCE YESTERDAY?'

How many women do you know who aren't worried about their weight?

Why is slimming by and large a female obsession—you see some nasty sights in trunks on the beach too. Letters to women's magazines and articles like this one from the Sunday Mirror tell you why. Slim is MAN'S idea of beautiful (or so we're told). Men hate fat—unlike the slimming firms. Weight Watchers claim one million members in this country. You pay about £1 a session and 'fines' on top of that if you're a 'naughty girl' and put on a pound or two instead of losing it. Diet-chocolate, slimming-bread, pills, sweat-it-off garments, vibrator belts, operations to shorten the intestine or carve off the fat.

Slim is expensive. Vogue's latest Spring diet includes a lunch menu of avocado pear followed by thinly-sliced, lean beef and a glass of dry white wine.

Dr John Garrow of the Medical Research Council's clinical research unit at Harrow says: 'There is no evidence that it's harmful to be a bit over-weight. The health risks start at 20 per cent over-weight.'

Tea-break

On Peg's birthday she bought two boxes of cakes and gave us one each with our tea. Jen and Cathy, of course, didn't want one:

'All his friends call me elephant-legs already,' moaned Jen. The office-junior had two and so did Peg.

'Well, I won't have much lunch,' she said.

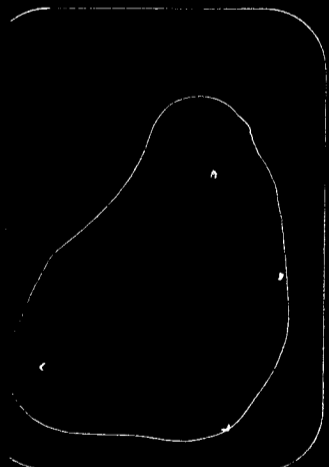
At one o'clock I bought a paper and on the front page, right at the bottom read:

'Madrid Sept: 25th British model, aged 22, star of well-known cigar advertisements, has been found dead in her holiday villa near Malaga. According to British Consular Officials, foul play is not suspected. A close friend said Miss Dudley had been taking tablets to help her slim and having trouble sleeping.'

Dirty

20th Century
History Museum

exhibit no. 51



species COMMON POTATO
eaten 'mashed', 'baked', 'fried' or
referred to have been extinct
since 1776 through over-pricing.

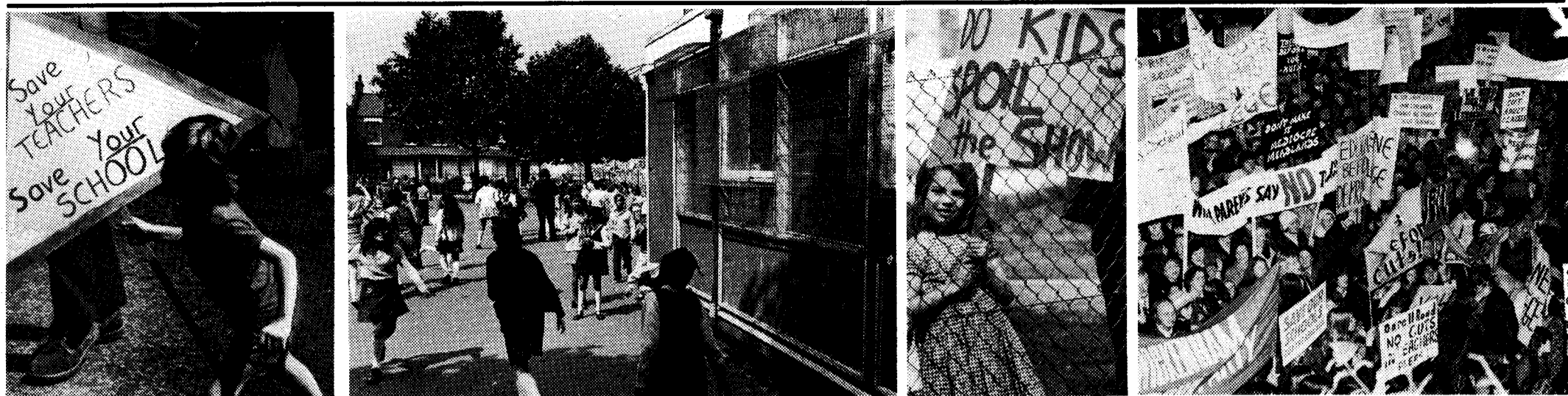
Butter 70p a pound. Cheese 75p a pound. Massive increases on bread, milk, eggs and meat. This is the prediction of the Ministry of Agriculture, now that the government has decided to phase out food subsidies. British food prices have to be brought up to full Common Market levels by January 1st, 1978. All over the land Mrs Thatcher's supporters are busy extending their attics. Talking about Mrs Thatcher... have you heard the one about last month's prices. They were so severe, someone saw her hair move.

Linen

KEEPING A WEIGHTY PROBLEM IN PROPORTION

Do you think hypnosis could help me lose weight? I'm so depressed, but I crave food even though I know it's my downfall. I've tried every kind of treatment but nothing has a lasting effect. I have everything to be happy about—a wonderful husband, a new baby, no money worries—but this sometimes makes me feel suicidal. My husband is very attractive and I'm sure it's just a matter of time before he leaves me for an attractive slim girl. I hate myself but I just can't seem to stop eating.

We are indebted to the union journal 'Film and Television Technician' for the revelation that whilst the government spent over £½ million on the Plant a Tree in 1973 campaign, they only coughed up £30,000 for International Women's Year. Of that £10,000 went on sending government representatives to Mexico for a UN jamboree, £10,000 to a Government body the 'Women's National Commission.' (A prize for anyone who has ever heard of them.) The WNC in turn spent £5,000 on car stickers and newsheets (a prize for anyone who ever saw them). And £600 on a reception in London for 'famous women from all walks of life,' including Princess Alexandra, Harold Wilson and Barbara Castle.



'There may not be full employment for all new teachers in 1976/77, there may be higher school meals charges, there may be cuts in non teaching jobs... In anticipation of the reduction in service, teacher training places will be cut from 30,000 in 1975 to 20,000 in 1976, and they will fall to 12,000 in 1978. For those already employed it is unlikely that "natural wastage" will provide the savings that the government will require.'

(Reg Prentice, TES, 23.5.75)

A generation of expansion in education is at an end. Teachers are faced with cuts and unemployment. The jobs of

ancillary workers are threatened. Thousands of college leavers are without teaching posts. Next year at least a quarter of college leavers will be unable to find teaching jobs. Already an estimated 7000 teachers are on the dole.

The leaders of the NUT publicly deplore this situation and condemn cuts and unemployment. But they will not take the initiative to organise a fight-back. Unemployed college leavers are automatically lapsed from union membership after one term unemployed. And instead of encouraging a fight the NUT leadership is making plans to introduce stricter disciplinary procedures so that they can more easily

Unemployment and Education

exclude militant teachers from membership.

Those kind of actions are the consequences of believing that cuts and unemployment are inevitable. But many teachers believe that none of this is inevitable. Unemployment is not a

natural disaster like a flood or an earthquake. It can be fought. But only if teachers organise themselves to fight. And this fight must essentially be started at classroom level.

Last term a delegate conference organised in protest against education cuts, attracted delegates from over 70 schools as well as local NUT branches and trades councils. It showed that there are teachers who are prepared to fight back. This term the Cuts Conference Committee has organised a follow-up conference through which it is hoped to launch an on-going Campaign Against Unemployment in Education.

The conference being held in North London Poly on 28 February is open to delegates from NUT branches and all workers in schools. It is particularly aimed at involving students in the teacher training colleges in organising together with classroom teachers to protect all jobs in schools.

The conference will be discussing organisation at classroom and college level and also links with other workers who are fighting unemployment. Links have already been made with the National Right to Work Campaign.

Details and delegates' credentials from: 18 St Agnes Close, London E9.

MANY NAC groups have shown at some time or another the film 'An Egg is not a Chicken'.

Hundreds of thousands of women all over the place, talking about their experiences, picketing MPs surgeries, collecting signatures on petitions, performing plays in the street, arguing outside hospitals, small demonstrations, largish demonstrations, and the enormous demonstration last June 21st. Where has all that gone?

Has it been dispersed by the 'objective situation' or sucked into the giant maw of 'parliamentary pressure'? We can't deny that the disappearance of the James White Bill has taken away a strong uniting element. There was this revolting geyser with his equally revolting Bill, and it was quite clear what we were all fighting against. Now we are left with long internal debates about the convention or otherwise of the select committee. As we go to press, the select committee has not been reconvened, but there is every reason to believe that it will be. But whatever the position of the select committee, there is still a struggle going on outside.

Many hospitals are still not carrying out their duties under the 1967 Act. Barbara Castle's promise to make them do so becomes a farce when she is busy slashing money going to the National Health Service. The introduction of five more outpatient clinics has been under the auspices of charitable bodies, not the NHS. The campaign for 'Abortion on demand, a woman's right to choose', should be taken back to where the women are: tenants' associations, schools, factories, offices, welfare clinics.

The question is whether NAC at the moment has the organisation necessary to steer that activity. Regional groups are rapidly overtaking the NAC national organisation, because they are in touch with local groups and can direct local activity. National planning



Picture: Angela Phillips (IFL)

Staff at Whittington Hospital in North London listening to the points raised by National Abortion Campaign pickets.

ABORTION WHAT NOW?

meetings aren't held often enough. It's difficult for local groups to rake the necessary finances together. The agendas do not always bear any relation to what people want to discuss.

NAC must make up its mind that it's not another ALRA, (Abortion Law Reform Association). They have had many years of experience of parliamentary campaigning, and consequently can do it much better than we can. We should give them the kind of support that we can provide, but not limit ourselves to, or attempt to duplicate, their role.

What we should be doing now is working like mad for the national demonstration on April 3rd. For those of us at work, that means above all going back to our union branches, with the lever of the TUC resolution on abortion to help us, and getting support for the demo. The picket of the House of Commons on Monday 9 February, the day the reconvention of the select committee is debated, and the demonstration in Liverpool on February 21st are major stepping stones for a really big national demonstration in April. We can't afford the

demoralisation which would set in if the turn-out is smaller than in June last year. Many people were activated by that demonstration, and went back and worked for NAC in previously untried areas.

We must give a lead in the mobilisation. The demonstration mobilising committee should not be just an extension of the NAC steering committee, it should be elected, representative and answerable. We will only achieve a massive turn-out if the mobilising committee is in touch with

the grass roots.

We must also learn from SPUC. Constant media coverage is vital. Articles and letters in local papers all help people realise that the struggle is going on around them, not in the debating chamber of the Commons. **by GERRY MATHEWS AND JILL BROWBILL.**

Action stations

Picket the House of Commons, Monday 9 February, 4pm onwards.
Liverpool demonstration, 21st, 1.30pm Sefton Park
National demonstration, 3 April—get going now to build support.

Liverpool NAC Protest

In December Liverpool NAC applied to the local council, predominantly Liberal, for permission to hold a street theatre and stall in the shopping centre. For the first time ever, Liverpool council turned down an organisation's request to hold such an event. All other bodies who have ever applied for these facilities have had their applications granted.

Now angry pro-abortionists in Liverpool are asking why the council turned them down. Could it be because of the large SPUC presence in the city? Or because of the meeting that, according to strong rumours, Liverpool County Council had with SPUC after NAC's application had been received? Surely not. We all know what marvellous supporters of women's rights Liberals are. Especially Liberal MPs like Cyril Smith who speak at SPUC meetings and watch as pro-abortionists are thrown down stairs and injured.

As a protest against the council's decision, Liverpool NAC have called a demonstration on Saturday 21 February. Assemble 1.30pm, Sefton Park, Ullet Road entrance.

We urge all trade unions and affiliated bodies to support it.

Aileen Knowles (USDAW)

Hackney Womens Voice Group: social/concert to raise money for the Right to Work Campaign. 24 February, Duke of Wellington, Balls Pond Road, London, N1. Come and join in. Solos, recitations, sword swallowers welcome!

NORTH LONDON Womens Voice Group: Saturday 21 February 11am, Right to Work Street Meeting: Will everybody who is interested in supporting this meeting, please ring 607 8067 or 348 2041 for further details.

Monday 4 March: Public Meeting: Sexuality. Speakers: Alison Kirton and Bob Cant. 8pm at The Beehive pub, Stoneleigh Road, off Tottenham High Road, N17. Buses 149, 259, 279, 243. Nearest tube: Seven Sisters.

South East London Womens Voice LOCAL RALLY. 21 February 2-9pm, at the Lee Centre, 1 Aislibie Road, SE12. Discussion, speakers and a film.

Waltham Forest Womens Action Group: Community Centre. We have rooms available. Anybody interested in teaching crafts, skills, etc. come to 161 Markham Road, London, E17, or ring 01-521 6368 or 520 1803.

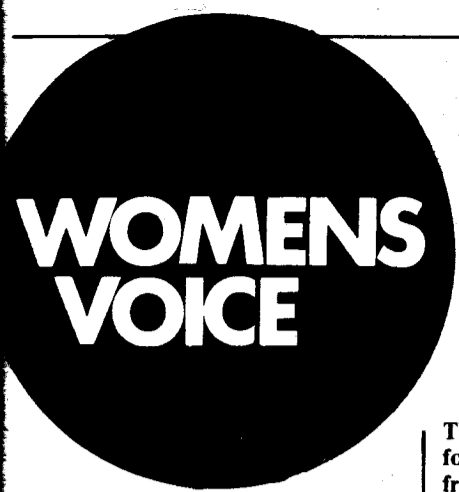
WHATS ON

MANCHESTER WOMENS VOICE SUPPORTERS PUBLIC MEETING
Fight for the Right to Work: Thursday 12 February 8pm at Mother Mac's, 33 Back Piccadilly, Manchester. Speakers: Sheila McGregor (Editor of Womens Voice), a cadet nurse threatened with the sack, Kerry Abram, unemployed school leaver going on the Right to Work March. For transport, or babysitters, ring TU Books, 061-832 8102.

Womens Right to Work Concert
Thursday 4th March, 7.30pm, St Pancras Assembly Rooms, Judd Street. Womens Theatre Group, Frankie Armstrong, North West Spanner Theatre Group.

Editorial Note

Whilst Sheila McGregor (Editor of Womens Voice) is away, this issue and the next are being produced collectively by: Judith Condon, Elana Dallas, Nina Streich and Jean Wright. We can't do anything without YOUR help. We received loads of letters and articles for this issue which was great. Please carry on writing and sending them to us at **Womens Voice, 8, Cottons Gardens, London, E2 8DN**



EQUAL PAY

Birmingham...

BY SHEILA MCGREGOR

At a foundry called Hunts in Birmingham, women work side by side with men in the core shop. The men are mainly Asian and the women white. The job that men and women do are interchangeable in most cases, apart from the women having a labourer to fetch sand which they need in filing down casts. During 1975 the women who are members of the TGWU asked the works convenor on several occasions about how progress was going with regard to Equal Pay. The convenor brushed aside these questions with vague assurances and the women presumed that the company would introduce Equal Pay in line with the new law that came in during December 1975.

However, January produced a nasty shock for the women, because their basic hourly rate of 39p, remained the same, whilst the men with whom they worked at the same jobs, had a basic hourly rate of 60p.

Betty McDermott—the women's TGWU shop steward for 15 years, approached the convenor Albert Tunley and asked him why they hadn't had their hourly rate increased to 60p. He told them that they now had equal holiday pay! Needless to say Betty and her members were not impressed, and decided to take their case to the TGWU officials at Transport House in Birmingham. The officials made lots of sympathetic noises and agreed that they did indeed have what looked like a very sound case. They told the women that they would convene a meeting between the TGWU and the management of Hunts.

Betty still hasn't been notified as to when this meeting will take place, but when the TGWU in Birmingham doesn't move very fast. Another meeting at the Hunt's foundry between the union and the track workers took place six weeks late. Betty approached Tunley and remarked that if it took as long as that for the women to get their meeting arranged they would be waiting till the summer. Tunley merely remarked that he supposed it would!

So, at present the women are continuing to work alongside men, doing the same work but with a differential of 21p in their hourly rate. The women have the full support of the Asian men in the core shop, who are also pushing for an Asian shop steward to represent them. Several of the women remarked how good it was to have the support of the Asian men, although they had had some arguments with white men who were indignant at the prospect of women earning as much as they did!

Equal pay is not the only grievance that the women at Hunt's have. Betty McDermott told us that the working conditions and safety are poor and already the Factory Inspector has been called in. All this while Hunt's spend £1,000's providing a new car park and 'rejuvenating' the outside of the building, and on the inside there is practically no roof on the toilets. These are just some of the issues that the women and men are going to be fighting in the next few months.

The law says we're entitled to equal pay for similar or 'broadly' similar work from January 1976 on. Women have been supposed to be getting closer to men's rates over the last few years, ever since the legislation was brought in. The only problem is that, over the last few years, the bosses have had time to think out ways of how not to pay equal pay. In fact, you could say they've been working really hard at it.

In some cases they argue that the women don't do any jobs that men do, there is no 'broadly' similar work, so by definition you're not entitled to equal pay. In a case like that you have to fight to be classified as semi-skilled and therefore entitled to the same rate as the men who are semi-skilled.

The other problem is with job evaluation where the boss brings in a grading system and you all get paid according to grade. Great. Until you find out that the ability to carry heavy goods is given more points and graded higher than say 'dexterity'. What then happens is that mysteriously the majority of women land in the lowest couple of grades and the men, bar a token one or two, all mysteriously land in the higher grades. All scientifically worked out.

Of course, the fact is, that where the bosses can get away with not paying out equal pay, they will. That leaves us one way of getting it—by fighting for it.

'Where the bosses can get away with not paying out, they will. That leaves us one way of getting it—by fighting for it.'

That means women being prepared to take a lead themselves, explaining to the men the importance of supporting the struggle for equal pay and then going out on strike for it.

But that's when the battle starts. It's not enough to go outside the gates, you've got to organise a proper picketing rota with all the women involved as well as any men. Start

turning back everything that comes to the gates, including the milkman and postman. Get the union to make the strike official—if they're slow off the mark, get down to the local union office, occupy it and force them to make it official. Get collection sheets circulating round other factories and work places. Try and get other workers down on the picket line to support the strike. Try to use your battle as a lever to get

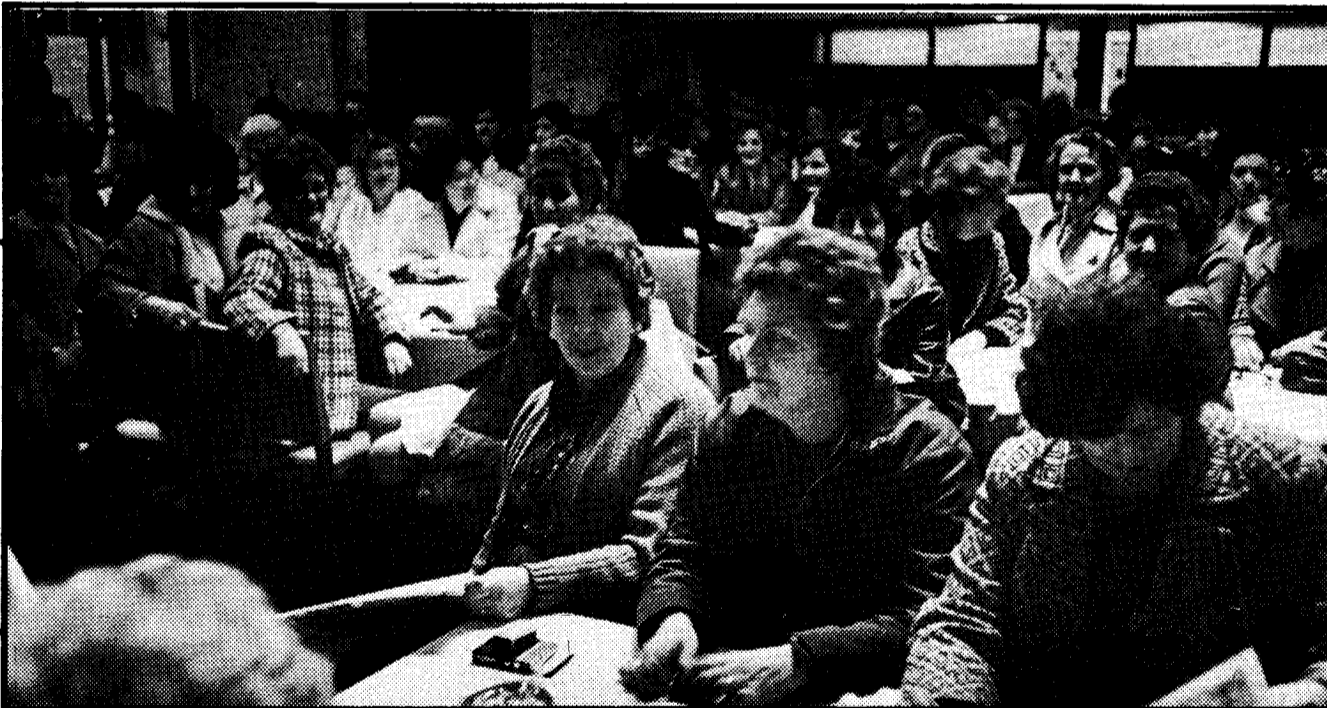
the union to organise a campaign in the area for equal pay for all women.

Success depends on using your own strength to build a movement in support. Don't leave the local union official to do it. Chase them all the time and if they don't come up with the goods—money and effective blacking etc do it yourselves. The problem at Newton Derby was that they were isolated and forced back to work. We must make sure that doesn't happen, by arguing with the strikers that they need support from other workers.

But the other problem with equal pay is in the white collar jobs which supposedly already give equal pay. There women are notoriously in the lower grades. In cases like that women and men in the unions have to campaign for the abolition of the lowest grades or, as in teaching, for a single salary scale for all classroom teachers. In such cases rank and file trade unionists should work out as part of salary claims the best way of eliminating the grading system—either by closing the differentials or by abolishing them.

And finally we've got the battle for skills. Most women cannot get the top rate in industry because they aren't skilled—we're not the electricians, tool setters, fitters etc. That's where the Sex Discrimination Act comes in—fighting for the right to do the same jobs so we can become skilled as well.

The threat to jobs in the steel industry won't just affect the men. There are women who work in the steel industry too. These catering women work in the massive Port Talbot plant in South Wales. Their jobs will be cut if there is a cutback. Their families will suffer. They have the right to work too!



Picture: John Sturrock (Report)

Newton Derby...

After 12 weeks on strike, the workers of Newton Derby are no nearer Equal Pay, supposedly the law of the land. Management sent all the strikers a letter threatening them with the sack if they didn't go back. Although a meeting decided 10-6 to stay out, faced with the determination of the six to go back to work, the other strikers felt they had no alternative but to join them. The Trades Council and the local AUEW are still looking into the dispute, but perhaps the most positive thing to have come out of it is the links that the strikers made with other factories in the area, through collections for them in their action.

Glasgow...

It's only one month since the government introduced its Equal Pay legislation, but already it's proving to be totally inadequate. At three firms around the Glasgow area, men and women white collar engineering workers are on strike because the companies won't give women the same rates as the men they work beside.

At Hamilton, 60 workers (29 of them women) have been on strike at Magnetic and Electrical Alloys for three weeks because the company, part of the giant multinational BICC, refuses to grant Equal Pay. Male supervisors doing similar work to some of the women on strike earn £10 a week more. The strikers, members of TASS, have the backing of the shop floor workers. Members of the engineering union, the AUEW, have refused to handle any goods which get through the picket.

At the Wheway Watson factory on the Hillington Industrial Estate, 10 members of TASS, 9 women and one man, are now in their third week of strike for Equal Pay. They are demanding that the wages of the women staff be brought into line with the 60 shop

floor workers in the factory. Edith Hannaghan, one of the pickets, told our reporter: 'the highest paid women on strike take home £23 a week—some of the younger girls are getting only £18 take home pay. Some of us are getting £30 a week less than the male clerks who are doing a similar job. We are picketing every day, and we're turning back most of the deliveries.' A number of men on the shop floor have been laid off because they refused to handle blacked goods. More help is needed on the picket line from other factories in the area.

Just along the road, another 60 TASS members, half of them women, are on strike at Cockburn Valves. Again, the women get £10 less than the men, and all the laws in the world will not persuade management to part with any more money. Hitting them in the wallet is the only thing that will.

Donations and messages of support to: MEA TASS strike fund, c/o Stan Martin, 179 Bunbeth Court, Coatbridge, Lanarkshire. Fay Carnegie, 56 Potterhill Road, Glasgow.

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75p for 6 copies. £1.50 per year. Fill in this form and return to 8 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN

Name

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