

womens voice

Monthly women's paper of the International Socialists

Tribunal makes nonsense of Equal Pay Act

Susan Waddington, aged 31, works for Leicester Council for Social Services. As part of her work, she recently set up and now supervises the work of Paul Southgate, aged 24, a playground leader. Paul earns £8 a week more than Susan.

The industrial tribunal, to whom Susan and Paul both argued her case for equal pay, ruled: because her work was of greater responsibility than his, it could not be called broadly similar. Therefore she was not entitled to equal pay.

Determination wins...

The women at Cockburns Valves, Glasgow, after a bitter 18 week-long strike, HAVE won equal pay.

Previously they were put in an all-women low grade. Now they have won rises of between £11 and £14.30 a week, and the womens grade has been abolished.

How did they do it? By unity. The men stood beside the women on the picket line, and they refused to go back until they'd won.

One thing is clear. The way to win equal pay is not to rely on 'impartial' barristers and solicitors with their cock-eyed interpretations of equality, but to fight for it.

MAY DAY GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS

This month, 50 years ago, workers across the country came out on General Strike. In all the television programmes and newspaper articles, the battles you won't have seen are those fought by working class women.

Turn to centre pages . . .



EQUAL PAY NOW!

All our claims for equal pay have just been sold out. The deal between the union leaders and Healey means no extra payments above the 4½ per cent. And that means no extra money for equal pay.

Equal pay could be paid in addition to the present £6 limit. And lots of women have fought for, and won it.

Now the unions have agreed to sell us out. Even though the law says we are entitled to equal pay.

Women still earn less than men. Women earn on average £37.40 per week gross. Men earn £60.80 gross.

That's why we have to fight—no matter what the deal.

**SMASH THE WAGE FREEZE!
FIGHT FOR EQUAL PAY!
NO DEAL WITH HEALEY!**

Women's Voice reporter in Ireland speaks to a group of Belfast women.
BY Joan Kelley

NORTHERN IRELAND

Living in an Occupied Land

Women living in Northern Ireland share all of the problems of women workers everywhere—job discrimination, unequal pay, high unemployment, high prices. Most women who work are not unionised. They get lower pay. They work at dangerous jobs. Recently a 71 year old woman was killed by a machine in an old mill in Belfast. Though this is considered part of the United Kingdom, the benefits that workers have won in Britain do not apply here. Divorce, abortion or equal pay don't count, and there is not a single government sponsored nursery for working mothers.

TERROR
What Britain has sent to Northern Ireland, though, has been the British Army, the terror, the repressive legislation. It's now seven years since the 'troubles' began in the north. They started this time because Catholics demanded civil rights, the right to equality in jobs and housing. Since then over 1500 people have been killed. There are still over 1000 political prisoners in jail. Large working class communities are like garrisons controlled by British soldiers.

These are areas that never got any benefits from British rule. They got the highest unemployment rate—20-30 per cent, the worst housing and the highest emigration rate. And what the women speak of most—the terror, the harassment, the pressure on them because of the British Army. In the beginning, in 1969, women brought tea to the soldiers, but since then most people in the nationalist areas have realised that the troops are not here to keep the peace. The new Prevention of Terrorism Act is the latest means of harassment. Mary described how they use it: 'They pick people up, refuse to notify their families, they keep them in complete isolation for seven days. At the end of that time they question them for half an hour, then let them go. One lad told the legal justice people that he



struggling for in many countries. They want to be able to control their own lives. Ann explained 'What we want is a socialist Ireland. We want the whole system changed. It won't be under Stormont (the old Parliament dominated by Loyalists). It won't be under native capitalism. The ordinary people will have a say in government. When we vote, the ordinary people would dictate to the leaders. In a socialist Ireland power would be in the hands of the ordinary people'.

AND HERE IN BRITAIN

The Prevention of Terrorism Act was whisked through Parliament to satisfy those people who thought that the government was not doing enough to stamp out terrorism. It was itself created by keeping our troops in Northern Ireland. It is one of the laws which generally attempts to harrass working class freedom, going hand in hand with conspiracy laws, the Immigration Act and the Criminal Trespass Law.

The real reason for this law is to pry into the Irish community and to get as much information as possible about its internal workings. It is also there to divide the Irish community. Irish people are being quite arbitrarily picked up, and the fear of the PTA turns the Irish community against any republican organisation, legal or otherwise.

The PTA is also an extremely racist law, because of the way it is used—classifying all Irish people as mad bombers. So far of over 1500 people already picked up under the act, only 27 have been charged. In fact, if the state was so interested in rounding up terrorists, they would use quite different powers. Let's face it, they can find an excuse for arresting any one they want to a quick conspiracy charge and there you go.

COMMITTEE

A committee has been set up to build a campaign in the Trade Union movement to spread information about the PTA, and to organise defence for people picked up under it, including picketing of police stations and a well organised system of immediate legal representation. The London-based committee is composed of 15 Trade Union delegates and aims to build a national movement for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, working as much as possible with other organisations fighting against this legalised terrorism.

PICKETS

So far the pickets have worked. One person was released less than 24 hours after the committee had been informed. The second person was released after two days. The third case is still going on at the time of writing, with daily pickets of the police station involving his family, with other members of the community and local trade unionists and there will be delegations sent from his workplace.

If you have any reason to believe that anyone you know has been picked up under this Act, ring 01-603 8654.

RAIDS

In Andersonstown soldiers have been increasing their raids on homes. One night they spent four hours ripping apart the homes of three old age pensioners. They even ripped the light switches off the walls. What did they expect to find? People here don't think it's the individual soldiers that plan these acts: 'It's got to be government policy to keep the pressure on that way', said Mary.

Many women have become involved in the struggle here.

Ann, who lives in the Markets area of Belfast, joined the republican movement when she was 15. Her family was republican believing that all of Ireland should be independent of British rule. Her mother taught her how the British had always oppressed and exploited the Irish. Her grandmother had been interned. Her father, a Protestant, was shot at because he planned to marry a Catholic. He

became a staunch republican too.

INTERMENT

Many older, married women joined the Republican movement when their sons were interned in 1971. They sold newspapers and organised protests. They blocked the streets and bridges to protest against internment without trial. 'They are not in jail because they did something for self gain, but because of what they believe in' said Jeannie, who works in the Andersonstown People's Co-op, and has a daughter in Armagh jail.

Ann explained that every woman in nationalist areas has had a husband or a cousin who was interned or tortured. 'We began fighting against oppression and for civil rights—against discrimination and unemployment. All our lives have changed drastically as a result. Ann's brother has been jailed for ten years. Her husband was beaten and

tortured in Holywood barracks two years ago. He has been unable to work since then. The doctors say he is ill because of the beatings, but they won't say it in court. So they can't collect compensation, and have to try and raise their family on social security.

BOMBINGS

Stories like this are not unusual in Belfast. All over Belfast women watch their children growing up, knowing they will join in the fight. The presence of British soldiers, the continual harassment, the lack of jobs provides the real recruiting ground for the IRA.

None of these women supported the recent bombings in Britain. 'I think it's horrible when they hurt innocent people', said Jeannie. 'I feel sorry for the soldier's mothers. I'd be the first to help a wounded soldier, but we're going through it too'. 'People in Britain don't care what soldiers are doing here. They

only care what happens to them', said Mary.

SOCIALISM

'They should tell them to get out of the British Army', Ann urged. 'They don't realise that British troops could be used against themselves, against workers on strike in England.' She explained that the harassment and torture used in Ireland would be used against the British people if the soldiers were given those orders.

These women very much wanted British men and women to understand, but all were sceptical that British workers would listen. People here are not fighting against British workers, nor against Loyalist workers. They are fighting because they want equal rights, they want to end the violence caused by British troops, they independence from Britain. But more than that, they are fighting for the same things workers are

EVICCTIONS VICTORY

Mrs Monica Joseph, a GLC tenant, has been trying to get a new rent book since last September. (London's Housing Nightmare' Womens Voice, March).

In January this year she received, through the post, not a rent book but a notice to quit. She rang the GLC office, for the umpteenth time, to say that she couldn't pay rent without a book to take to the rent office. And she stayed in her flat.

When he came to the office to pay the rent, but why should I? If they can't send me a rent-book, why should I have time off work to pay the rent?'

When her case came up, her representative in court had letters and articles about her story from Womens Voice, Socialist Worker and the Hackney Gazette. The magistrate told the GLC officer in court that it was their negligence in not sending her a new rent book over seven months ago that had caused her to get into arrears.

'It was great, you know, the magistrate made the man look that big! I've got a rent book now and I'll pay off the arrears by installments.'

Mrs Joseph said there seemed to be hundreds of people up that day, all summarised by the GLC.

than pay up. "you should see where I live" he said, "it's not fit for animals. My wife's pregnant so you can't throw her out on the streets and at least I'll get fed in jail".

'I think I'll go down there again just to see what's going on in court. I really enjoyed myself!'

'It shows you they don't always win.'

PICKETS WIN HOLIDAYS

Mrs Joseph said there seemed to be hundreds of people up that day, all summarised by the GLC.

Most hospital workers can take their holidays when they want. But the domestics have been forbidden to have more than two weeks of their four week annual holiday in one go—and even then only the privileged few could take them in the peak summer months.

Mrs Ferriera, one of the pickets told Womens Voice 'Management said "you can go one time, you husband can go another time", but I'm not going to go without my husband. Besides, my daughters are in school, and I want my holidays when they are on holiday too'.

JOKE

Management said "you can go one time, you husband can go another time", but I'm not going to go without my husband. Besides, my daughters are in school, and I want my holidays when they are on holiday too'.

holidays when they want because that would mean hiring relief staff. But the women workers have worked hard to earn their holidays, and they say that such a cost should not be an optional extra, but an essential part of management's duty.

The 25 women on the picket line were very pleased with the solidarity of the strike among domestics. Almost none of their work was being done, and they saw their supervisors in white coats—working—for the first time.

VICTORY

A mass meeting following the strike called for further direct action if their demands were not met, and following negotiations, the domestics can take all four weeks of their holidays at the same time. Management were forced to give in when they had seen the determination of these women workers demanding their holidays.

What an insult! £2.50 rise if you earn under £50 a week—and let's face it, that means most women workers. £4 rise if you earn over £80. If you earn between the two figures, you get a maximum of 5 per cent, and that means between £2.50 and £4.

Take off tax and national insurance contributions and most of us are left with £1.65 a week extra. And we'll even have to fight for that.

£1.65! The Guardian's shopping basket this Monday was 30 per cent higher than a year ago. Say you spend £10 a week on food for the family. It will now cost £3 more than it did a year ago for the same amount of food. Electricity prices have doubled in the last two years. Potatoes have trebled this year.

Council house rents are going up faster than ever before—even faster than under the Tories. Fares are reaching the point where it's cheaper to stay at home than to go to work.

It's crystal clear. The new pay deal means hardship. It means a much bigger cut in living standards. Much bigger than under the £6 limit, and didn't that leave most of us pretty short?

The other week, an observant Womens Voice reporter spotted the Labour Minister, Shirley Williams, talking to a pensioner:

Pensioner: 'Potatoes, 22p a pound. It's disgusting.'

Shirley Williams: 'That's why we have wage restraint. To bring prices down to what they were when you were young.'

editorial

Pensioner: 'They'll never come down.'

Crowd: 'They'll never come down.'

The crowd was absolutely right.

Cutting our wages is not going to bring prices down. It will push unemployment even further. As we get poorer, we won't be able to afford to buy the things other workers make. And so they'll get the sack as well. But prices won't come down either.

Why not? Because lots of the things that make prices go up are not controlled by the Government. Raw materials—all the basic

materials we import from abroad, like metals, coffee and cotton—are going up in price. There's nothing the Government can do about that. They can't control world prices.

As one stock broker put it, 'We're sitting on a time-bomb... the commodity price rises now in the pipeline are going to make the oil price rises look like peanuts.'

The newspapers keep screaming about the falling pound. What does it mean? It means a few rich people have increased their bank balances by making a couple of telephone calls. And it means the pound in our pocket is worth that much less. What's Len Murray going to do about that?

Isn't the sacrifice doing any good? Denis Healey can give millions of pounds to the bosses from our pay

packets, but he can't decide what they do with it.

They're not investing it in factories to provide more jobs here. Who could afford to buy what they produced? They are building factories abroad where profits are higher, and they are speculating. And we all know what speculation means—it means higher prices. They don't care about our jobs or living standards. All they care about is their profits. And it seems that's all the Labour government and the TUC care about too.

It's up to us. We can't trust the Labour Government to look after our interests. We can't trust the trade union leaders to do it either.

NO DEAL WITH HEALEY! SMASH THE WAGE LIMIT! ALL OUT MAY 26th!

JOURNALISTS CHALLENGE PRESS

The Daily Mirror's recent campaign to 'Bring Back The Mini' is a prime example of how newspaper editors see women.

Using women as sex symbols is a cheap way of increasing circulation and filling space in the popular press.

Women have been exploited in the media for so long that often even the most enlightened journalists don't question an editor's policy of selling his paper on the glamour bandwagon.

It isn't such an obvious abuse as distorted reporting and is therefore more difficult to challenge, especially when the decision on editorial policy rests in the hands of one man—the journalist representative of the profit seeking management.

The Mirror excelled itself recently when it went into competition with the Sun's page three by filling its pages with pictures of leggy models in a campaign to bring back the mini-skirt fashion. The editor boasted on the paper's front page that one man had actually switched papers as a result.

The media is a powerful tool for hammering home sexist material to the public and there has so far been little attempt from any quarter to change the image of women.

HOPE

But a glimmer of hope came from the National Union of Journalists annual conference in Buxton last week.

The 300-delegate meeting voted overwhelmingly in favour of moves to stop the stereo-typing of women in the media.

The union has adopted the Non-Sexist Code of Practice for Book Publishing which sets down guidelines on overcoming sexism in language and social stereo-typing.

A member of Life, the anti-abortionists, was howled down when he produced in a bottle the foetus of a two-month old baby during a debate on Sex Discrimination and the Working Women's Charter.

The conference was solidly behind motions which urged NUJ chapels and branches to become involved with the woman's movement and to set up women's committees. Members were also urged to ensure that the abortion issue was given adequate and positive coverage by the mass media. The conference condemned regressive moves to restrict the availability of abortion.

Women suffered one defeat in the discussions on equality. While the conference congratulated the Equality Working Party on the Images of Women document, it refused to adopt the booklet as part of the NUJ Code of Practice, after several speakers referred to it as 'flippant'.

The book looks light-heartedly but none the less sincerely at the way women's issues are treated in the press and points out that Hugh Scanlon is never referred to as 'Battling Grandad', neither have we yet seen 'Y-Front Pickets' although 'Petticoat Pickets'



The conference agreed that the working party should continue.

COMPLAINTS

The decisions taken at conference are not in themselves going to put an end to sexism in the press. One or two more progressive branches and chapels in the industry will take up the issues in the spirit of the motions, but a lot of work has to be done.

The NUJ has had a Code of Conduct

for a number of years which lays down that a journalist must not originate material designed to encourage discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation.

This year's conference has given women more power to fight its abuses.

Every case of abuse must be challenged with the editor, must be reported to the Equality Working Party and if sufficiently serious, women can ask the

local NUJ branch to make a complaint about the editor and reporter under the Code of Conduct.

Both editors and journalists need to be made to think about the consequences of what they produce, but they will not all become aware overnight, they need to know that people are keeping an eye on what is printed and that there is a serious threat of a complaint being made.

Redundancy and unemployment amongst teachers is a relatively new thing. Only two years ago, there was a shortage of teachers and in some areas, only part-time schooling could be provided. The cuts in educational spending have changed this situation radically and teachers now face the possibility of unemployment. It is estimated by the NUT that 12,000 teachers will be jobless by September. Trainee teachers, at present in colleges or universities, who were encouraged to go into teaching, are faced with the dismal future prospect of not being able to put their training into practice.

The Government tries to justify this situation by claiming that the numbers of children in schools is falling, because fewer children are being born and people are moving out of inner city

schools but at secondary level, more kids are staying on in sixth form because of unemployment amongst school leavers.

Any reduction in the number of kids at school should be used as an opportunity to make classes smaller. Most class-room teachers are over-worked and realise that, with much smaller classes, they could provide kids with a much better education.

teach, the staff are being faced with a choice between teachers and resources. Last summer, we voted to accept three extra teaching periods a week and spend all available money on teachers so that no-one would lose their job. This left us without enough money for books, paper, equipment etc. Spending all this money on staff made it difficult for some departments, like housecraft and needlework, to continue without extra money to keep up with the rise in prices

Stop Deaths, stop Cuts

In Darlington, recently, there has been an upsurge of self-righteous feeling by local Labour Councillors and the like, over the deaths of five patients in the Psychiatric Unit of Darlington Memorial Hospital. The five deaths seems to be a result of inadequate supervision. The deaths were: a suicide by using carbon-monoxide asphyxiation from a van in the hospital grounds, a woman drowned in her bath, a bed caught fire, an overdose of drugs and by hanging.

Social workers, Doctors, Nurses, the way the Unit is run. All are blamed. But who are the real culprits? Who has slashed Social Service expenditure. Who has told local councils to tighten the Public Expenditure belt? The answer is the Government.

Darlington is not the only town where deaths have occurred due to the cuts. We continuously hear of old people dying of cold, but no one ever seems to blame the government—only the underpaid already overworked workers.

DEDICATED

Patients in the Psychiatric Unit and Doctors in the town have shown the care that is taken in the Unit, through letters to the local press. One patient writes:

'If ever extra staff are needed P1 (the death ward) gets priority over the other Psychiatric wards... Unless there were enough staff to keep 24 hour surveillance on every patient, those people really determined to die will do so.'

'For God's sake, stop knocking the staff, especially on P1. They are amongst the most dedicated, feeling people I have ever known.'

The only way to stop deaths is to stop the cuts. We must tell them—Stop cutting human life now!

**Eunice Sharples
Darlington**

WOMEN TEACHERS LOSE THEIR JOBS

What sort of choice is that? If teachers are sacked to provide the extra needed for materials, it will be the part-time teachers who will go first as they are not protected by Trade Union legislation and their contracts give them no security. The majority of part-time teachers are women, mainly women with children. So, even in teaching it's a case of **WOMEN OUT FIRST**.

In some schools teachers are taking action to fight teacher unemployment. When teachers are away from school, it is normal practice for other members of staff to take their lessons, giving up their own marking and preparation time. In order to force schools to employ supply teachers to take these classes. Many teachers are refusing to cover lessons if the teacher is away for more than three days. In this way, employed teachers can take action to help those who are

By
Judith Condon
and
Laurie Flynn

The story of women in the General Strike has been well and truly hidden from history.

Even sympathetic writers have been party to the process of omissions and distortion. The marvellous little *Workers' History of the General Strike*, written and published immediately after the strike, presents an excellent picture of what the strike meant on the ground among ordinary working people, of the changes in their ideas, and the organisation they put together.

Take Shrewsbury for an example. There all those active in the working class movement expected the response to be very bad. Yet the opposite was the case, as the *Workers History* reported:

'Huge meetings. Everyone amazed at the way the call has been answered. Prominent members of the Conservative Party among the strikers . . . Everyone said "Nothing like this could have been imagined in Shrewsbury".'

But unfortunately *The Workers History* contains only one mention of women in a footnote on page 50. It is a fairly predictable variety but interesting nonetheless:

'The part played by womens' organisations is not recorded but in many cases must have been great. At Watford the womens' section of ASLEF, (the train drivers union) took over the refreshment, relief, social affairs, distress and so forth, feeding 120 men free and others at a charge. Total cost to the committee—under sixteen shillings'.

Important as the tea and soup-making proved, especially in the mining districts, this was not the only role played by women. They weren't only involved as auxiliaries.

UNIONS
In 1926, only around 700,000 women workers were in unions, mainly women in textiles and garment making, and in printing and book-binding.

But every great social upheaval has an immense impact on those most downtrodden and oppressed.

They take inspiration from the air of confidence among better organised workers. They no longer feel isolated. They no longer fear reprisals. They feel sure that they can win, that they really can alter their conditions.

RESPONSIBLE

That sense of possibility is vital to the unorganised the isolated and the most miserably downtrodden. It was vital to women workers in 1926. And so one of the main effects of the

WOMEN ORGANISE DURING THE GENERAL STRIKE

General Strike was to spread organisation to those sections where it did not exist, or to strengthen it where it was rudimentary.

Womens Voice has been able to establish two particular examples of the General Strike leading to new organisation.

In the appalling sweated catering trade in London, women in the ABC tearooms succeeding in organising across the combine. During the nine days they came out on strike for union recognition and for better wages and conditions.

RECOGNITION

At the United Glass Bottling plant in Charlton, South East London, non unionised workers, mainly women also struck for recognition. And you can get the clear impression that this must have happened in a good many more factories.

And there is no doubt at all that the effect on women who were already organised was very, very intense.

GLASGOW

Iris Steadman was a young worker in Blackie's the Publishers works in Glasgow during the General Strike.

She recalls that of the 500 women there only one failed to strike. This was a forewoman. For her crime she was for many months afterwards systematically ostracised by everyone.

STRIKE

“ At the time of the strike I lived in Springburn. My friends and myself used to walk into town every day to go to the great strike meetings held in a cinema up a close in Stirling Road.

They were marvellous meetings and we learned an immense amount from them. Of course it had been instilled into us that the strike was a very worthy cause. That message was instilled by the leaders of our Glasgow Women's Branch of the Printing Bookbinding and Paper Workers Union, great women leaders like Minnie McAllister, Jeannie Rutherford and others.

BETRAYAL

But I will also never forget the ending of the strike, the way we were cheated. At that time radio was new. But I remember hearing Thomas (the railwaymen's leader and the organiser of the surrender) saying that 'an honourable agreement had been reached'.

It was made out that had won a victory and we were told to go back. Only then did we realise that it was no victory at all and was instead very much of a defeat. Only then did we

realise that the miners their women and children had been abandoned.

COLLECTING

The consequences were very serious indeed for organisation among women workers. The boss where I worked was a man named John Blackie. He was a big fellow in the Masters Printers Federation in Scotland.

I remember to this day hearing reports of how he laid down the law to Minnie McAllister and Shepard, the secretary of the Glasgow branch of the union. He told them that all facilities for collecting union dues on the premises would be withdrawn. Anyone caught collecting would be instantly dismissed, he added. But we still collected.

INDEPENDENCE

At other factories it was worse of course. At Mellhose's in Annesland the women and the union were altogether and it was to take fifteen years before we were able to mend the breach there, a victory that gave us enormous pleasure when it came.

We did these things in days when it was much more difficult to organise women than it is today, when women really were looked down upon and looked down upon themselves as a result of it. By the 1959 print strike you could see the change. The spirit of independence was more widespread. And of course it's even better today.”

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not a doubt in my mind about it. The women were the best fighters. magnificent'.

Now Iris Cox one of the veteran South Wales leaders of the great 1926 recalls the contribution of women to the General Strike, the struggle of the British working class which took place exactly 50 years ago this month.

Five days in the glorious month of May 1926 the entire British working class fought a battle against the wealthy, the people of position and privilege, the people who lived off the backs and the labour of others. They came out on strike to defend the four million men, women and children of the mining community who were the first targets for the reduced standards the masters had in mind for everyone.

Learn from bitter experience that if the foul, deeply hated coal-owners succeeded in driving down the miners, they would be next.

The magnificent struggle, growing in organisation and purpose, even though it was beaten down by the diplomats, horse-traders, and would-be noblemen of the working-class movement.

The so-called 'leaders' feared and dreaded the prospect of masses of people in motion, solving their own problems, learning how to run their own lives and by themselves. If the enormous creativity working class discovered in struggle was preserved and built upon, then what would be left for the dead-beat bureaucrats? Where would it all end, they asked themselves.

They wrung their hands and sought a settlement—any settlement. They looked to the past. They surrendered unconditionally to Tory Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin.

But a 'settlement' could have meant the disaster to end all disasters, but they refused to sign and file. Even after this monumental betrayal they managed to stand firm and prevent victimisation on a massive scale.

Look back on those Nine Days of Hope, there is much we can learn. The lesson is that working people change profoundly in struggle. That leadership—honest rank and file leadership—is not a luxury, it is built in the here and now, in anticipation of great struggles to come.

What still is that working class women, even then, were in the forefront of the struggle.

WOMEN IN THE MINING COMMUNITIES

In the mining communities the struggle did not end with the betrayal of the General Strike on 12 May. On the contrary the struggle went on for another seven cruel months until the coal owning millionaires succeeded in starving the miners back to work.

Cruel is an inadequate adjective to convey what was actually done to the men, women and children of the mining towns and villages by those of wealth, power and position.

BRUNT

And naturally women bore the brunt of what was done

The little known but very moving book 'Women and the Mining Lock Out' tells something of the situation:

'In the last village I visited, I found two heartbroken mothers. One had a baby born on Sunday for which she had been longing for years and it had died on Monday. The other had a little boy prematurely about a fortnight ago which died while I was visiting her. The district nurse who was there said she could suggest no reason for this condition but the mother's lack of food.

'I found another mother nursing a 14-month-old child which had wasted away till it was no

heavier than a three-month-old baby. In another town I visited a miner's wife who had six children ... She told me she had a little girl of four in the backroom with scarlet fever. There were other homes in the town where the children had scarlet fever and remained in their homes to share the starvation of the rest of the family.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children refused to do anything to help the children. Indeed they tried to sabotage the collections the Committee for the Relief of Miners Wives and Children were making. Sir Robert Parry, NSPCC director passed on to newspapers reports from NSPCC inspectors which claimed to show that no emergency situations existed in mining districts.

Despite their reassurances, the Prince of Wales felt that 'the miners were owed a debt of gratitude for past services.' Underlining that he could not take sides in an industrial dispute, this multi-millionaire sent a cheque for £10.

INSPIRATION

But what no books so far published unfold for us is the most important part of the story—the resistance the women of the coalfields put up to the attempts of the masters, the government and the whole state machine to drive them down.

It is a truly glorious history, an inspiration to each and everyone who yearns for a system of society where human beings are free—yet doubts how we are to get there.

There's just the tiniest hint of this glorious history in the insubstantial reference to women in all the issues of the British Worker the paper put out by the Trades Union Congress throughout the General Strike.

WORKER

On 11 May the British Worker reported as follows:

Note the fact that the meetings are for 'miners wives'. Note also that the TUC in its unquenchable desire for respectability and moderation censored the last and crucial part of the report. Crucial because it shows that the women of the South Wales mining communities were fighters, angry fighters.

FIGHTERS

To what an immense extent they were fighters is only now becoming clear—thanks to the new generation of young socialist historians working on the history of the Welsh working class.

In his recent paper to the Swansea Miners Library South Wales Area of the Miners Union school on the General Strike, Hywel Francis discloses some wonderful information

on the events that unfolded in South Wales through 1926.

It was of course an epic life of death struggle involving the emergence of a whole new consciousness among the men and women of the South Wales coalfield.

COUNCILS

They were organised into councils of action that united the whole community. Those councils saw to the collective feeding of the community where they were really strong. What's more they also saw to the collective procurement of food.

In open defiance of the law that says the hungry must not steal, the councils obtained sheep to meet their needs.

A new working class justice grew up too, involving attacks and retribution on anyone who broke ranks. And what's more, women were at the forefront of the administration of that new justice. That's why Idris Cox remembers the women of the coalfields as the best fighters. *Because they were the best fighters!*

BLACKLEG

The first instance of the struggle really being stepped up comes according to Hywel Francis, from Pen-y-coed. At Pen-y-coed a blackleg on a bicycle was ambushed and escorted back to Coity in a wheelbarrow. The procession was accompanied by accordion music.

The whole operation was planned and executed entirely by women.

STRUGGLE

From August on the rank and file of the South Wales coalfields went into guerilla struggle against their oppressors.

There were 18 separate serious disturbances as they fought off strikebreaking attempts. The whole coalfield was humming with policemen imported from Brighton and Cornwall because the local men in blue could not be trusted against the increasingly violent and determined fight of the mining community.

In the last eight weeks of the lock out, there were huge confrontations in the Afon Valley and at Cymmer. In each and every one of these women were at the fore.

ARRESTS

Following the Cymmer disturbances when 500 men and women attacked the scabs and the police people were arrested and tried for disaffection, rioting and unlawful assembly. Eight of them were women. Among another group of 29 arrested following another riot were 11 married women. Each of them was fined / - Mary Hannah Lewis refused to pay and chose to do time instead.

At Goody where a massive military style operation was organised by the men and women, 1500 people were involved in the attack on the mine, the police having been decoyed.

123 people were summonsed as a result of this struggle. Sixty of them were women.

REPRESSION

But eventually the mining community was beaten down by starvation repression and brute force.

It was nevertheless a heroic and inspiring fight that showed just what the men and women of South Wales were capable of in adversity. Interestingly enough, their struggle stayed most solid where the women were involved, where there were communal feeding arrangements and the like—where in short the sense of working class self-organisation was most highly developed and widespread.

Nor have the men and women of South Wales, or a score of other places where similar events unfolded, written their last chapter in the history books. But the chapters they did write in 1926 bode well for the future. Then without a doubt working class women will find an infinitely greater and more coherent voice than they made for themselves half a century ago.

WOMEN FROM HISTORY

class women in the General Strike



letters

Skegness:
A great
success

Our Easter weekend in Skegness at the Socialist Worker Rally turned out to be a far greater success than

we had expected, and we don't think it hinged on the fact that it didn't rain for four days either.

For probably the first time since our children were born, we felt we could share the burden of them with other people. Being able to leave them in capable hands when we wanted to, and enjoy their company at other times.

The atmosphere was excellent, very relaxed and friendly. Also you felt you

had some kind of link with everybody else there.

Being able to go to lectures during the daytime, meant you didn't fall asleep, like you do at a lot of evening meetings when you've done a full day's slog at home or at work. Of course we realise this was a holiday and people were relaxed, but certainly Skegness gave us some sort of insight into what a socially organised society could be like. Perhaps it's a bit idealistic to say that, but certainly it was the best break we've had since the kids have been born.

For ourselves and our kids it proved there is a viable alternative to living in separate units. The kids had ready playmates and for those of us who are housebound, there was company and stimulation on hand all the time. Co-operation between parents worked with kids who didn't want to stay in the creches. The evening baby sitting was organised properly, which certainly for mothers and fathers is essential to give you a break from the four walls.

We will all be top of the list for a Christmas Skegness!

Diane Watts,
Gerry Norris,
Jenny Davison and
Mandy Hurford.
North London



Well you see lads this bolt goes in here... IS industrial organiser gets down to vehicle mechanics in the creche

DHSS hassle

Dear Womens Voice,

Our latest hassle with the Department of Health and Social Security may interest you. You know that with welfare coupons you can get either packs of National Dried Milk or 'doorstep' milk. National Dried Milk and a couple of proprietary brands share a high sodium content as well as a high protein content. In early February, Michael Meacher declared them unsafe for babies under 6 months. We changed to a more expensive brand; the babies thrived on it, and began to sleep through the night. Trouble is you can't get any dried milk, except National Dried Milk on welfare.

This increased our expenditure considerably, and so we put in an extra Supplementary Benefit claim. This worries the DHSS, as about 60,000 mums or dads use NDM, and many of those must be on coupons. Their answer is to get doorstep milk for the rest of the family with the coupons and thereby save money which can go to dried milk. Well, it doesn't cover, and even if we got more coupons (Which we probably could do) we're already disposing of our milk lake by entertaining a queue of neighbourhood cats. The papers picked up the issue when it was announced, but I don't think they've followed up the DHSS response, which is vital to thousands of people.

Yours,
name and address supplied.

Lay off
NAC!

Dear Comrades,

I was disgusted by your headline in last month's article on the April 3rd National Abortion Campaign demo.—'This proves it!' I for one wasn't there to prove a particular point but to fight for the right of women to control their own bodies and their own lives.

With patronising articles which seem to be written only to show how right Women's Voice was, I'm ashamed to sell Women's Voice to the sisters I've been working with in NAC.

Let's have some articles to persuade our sisters WHY we think the campaign should be taken into the trade unions.

Lets see something on how real support has been won from trade union bodies. I've had enough of the hackneyed take-it-to-the-labour-movement formula. Let's start saying how, and why, and then get on with it. Then Women's Voice will have some credibility with members of the womens movement who are rightly unimpressed with the labour movement as it is now. We should be fighting to build local NAC groups and arguing sincerely that our way is the best way to fight for women's rights—and win.

It's no good sitting on our backsides, insulting the women's movement (who started up NAC before Women's Voice and IS had ever heard of the James White Bill) and writing hack-ish articles like the one on the April 3rd Demo.

If Women's Voice has the right politics—PROVE IT—by activity.
Nell Hirst
Hull

Laws against
women

Men and women are in theory equal since the Sex Discrimination Act came into force. Unfortunately, however, the Sex Discrimination Act does so little to bring about sex equality that it's a facade.

There is so much legislation blocking sex equality that the few benefits that the Sex Discrimination Act brings are just crumbs to satisfy the people's hunger for freedom. There are still laws that keep women out of the better paid jobs, restricting their choice of work.

Such a law is the Mines and Quarries Act, (1954). It denies women the right to choose to work down mines or in quarries, and completely ignores two fundamental facts of life. FACT 1: Women are quite capable of doing any work just as well as any man. FACT 2: Women are very intelligent and very capable of making decisions for themselves. The reverse is also true in discrimination in the employment field thanks to a hysterical bit of legislation introduced by Mrs Renee Short MP.

So this is supposed to be equality.
Peter Shelley,
NUM,
Barnsley.

DAY SCHOOL ON WOMENS RIGHTS: Saturday 22 May, 10.30am-5pm, Nottingham Teachers Centre, Cranmer Street. Speakers include: Jean Cousins, NCCL, Joy Elsom, NUPE, Sylvia Greenwood, TGWU, Judith Hunt, TASS, Mel Read, ASTMS, Una Walton, Tobacco Workers. Hosted by Nottingham NUT Womens Rights Subcommittee. Creche provided. Registration 75p, 40p unemployed.

NORTH LONDON Womens Voice Group: Public Meeting: Immigrant Women. Monday 24 May, Speaker: Martha Osomar. 8pm, The Beehive pub, Stoneleigh Road, (Off Tottenham High Road) N17. Buses: 243, 149, 259, 279. Nearest tube: Seven Sisters. All welcome.

21 MAY

Defend the 44! Support our brothers and sisters arrested when the Right to Work March entered London. Picket of Hendon Magistrates Court, The Hyde, London, NW9, Friday 21st May starts 9.30 - court sitting starts 10am. Ask your Womens Voice seller for details of coaches from outside London.

OWING TO illness, part 2 of the Health and Safety feature by Sybil Cock will not be appearing until next month.

OFFICE WORK
FEMALE GHETTO

'The office today is a female ghetto. Of the millions of women working in offices, the great majority are in menial and subservient positions. Coffee-making, filing, placating the boss—all add up to a life of interminable drudgery.'

So says Mary Benet in her book, 'Secretary—An Enquiry into the Female Ghetto'. The role a woman plays at home of looking after her man, making sure he is well fed, doing all the jobs he feels too important to do, boosting his ego by looking nice and being efficient, is acted out in exactly the same way in the office. Our work as a secretary is just an extension of our position in the home.

EXPLOITED

Secretaries are, on the whole, women-women. Not only are they exploited through their labour but also by the men they work for. You are always the one who has to make the coffee, for example, your reward for this exciting job usually comes in the form of: 'You are a beautiful woman'.

or:

'I don't know what I'd do without you'.

Of course he doesn't, he can't type, take short-hand or make coffee, whilst you would find it fairly easy and relaxing to do his job of dictating a few letters everyday. When he says, 'my secretary knows my job as well as I do', try asking him why he's still in the job. However, no-one who is a secretary is thought of as being a skilled worker. Basically, you are just a pretty face, a pair of tits and a pair of legs. One 'compliment' I had, whilst I was taking short-hand from my boss, was another man coming into the office and saying:

'It's no wonder you don't use your dictaphone when you can have a pretty little thing like this sitting in your office'. My short-hand might have been 150 wpm or I might have been the most entertaining person in the world, but that would never have crossed their minds.

GLAMOUR

To people who haven't had the 'advantage' of learning short-hand and typing, being a secretary appears to be a very glamorous life. You imagine a secretary will meet exciting people and maybe even travel to exotic places. You are told that if you have the basic skills you will never be without a job (farical with unemployment at one and a half million). Well, both glamour and promotion prospects are non-existent. Filing, buying toilet-paper, sitting with words going in through your ears and coming out through your fingers aren't glamorous. And what makes you think you'll make it up the ladder of success? As a secretary, you're much more useful brightening up the office, boosting your boss's ego and looking after his every

whim than you are when you become competition in the job stakes.

UNIONS

The typist in the 'pool' formerly had the illusion that she could work her way up to becoming a private secretary. She now finds herself confined to the role of machine operator. A 'pool' typist turns out at least three times as many letters as a personal secretary, usually for about half the wages.

In the USA, 'pool' workers are beginning to wear overalls, clock-in and have their out-put measured. In fact, they are being treated more like factory workers and therefore are beginning to see the relevance of joining a Trade Union. Traditionally, the white collar worker has felt (and has been led to believe) that she is part of management, and has not wanted to align herself with her fellow workers. Secretaries have been discouraged by their employees from joining unions, with the arguments that theirs is a job of trust, and that they should not divide their loyalties. They have been told that union membership will make promotion out of the question.

This is changing quite considerably in Britain today. Many secretaries, especially in places such as local authorities, Civil service, Universities, are now union members and participate in the running of their union. However the usual problems that women face in attending union meetings still exist, ie not being able to get babysitters to attend outside office hours, their husbands not approving, not feeling confident enough to speak anyway, and so on.

We must involve ourselves in our unions, fighting for union meetings in office hours and making others aware of the problems that affect women. We must raise our own and the consciousness of others about the roles we play at home and at work. We must fight for the right of women to work. Legislation such as the Equal Pay Act has hardly touched the life of the secretary. She has no-one to measure her pay against.

The book is worth reading, especially if you are a secretary, if only because it puts into words the frustration, and often anger, you have felt by the way you are treated at work. But its conclusion is disappointing. Until we get rid of the bosses and we accept that each job is as important as another and each skill is recognised for its own sake, we will continue to have our labour exploited and women will continue to do the subservient jobs the men won't do.

I want more than Mary Benet wants. I do not just want the opportunity for a few middle class women to make their own way in the business field. I want men and women to take control of their own lives and their own work.

Barbara Robathen

Advertisement

NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION
Wednesday 26 May

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK!
NO DEAL WITH HEALEY!
NO TO THE CUTS!



The National Right to Work Campaign calls on all its supporters to fight for maximum support for the day of action in every town and city by employed and unemployed. Move resolutions through trade union bodies calling for support. Organise maximum publicity.

SUPPORT ALL LOCAL ACTIONS

In London, support the demonstration called by the London Confed and the London Co-op Political Committee. Assemble Tower Hill, 1pm, to march and lobby parliament.

ALL OUT 26 MAY!



While the oil sheiks shop in Harrods, millions live like this

This article was written by a group of Iranian women living in Britain. The Shah's secret police are active here in pursuing those who speak out against the barbarities at home. For this reason individual names have been withheld.

For workers in Iran, the Shah's police state, there are no rights. Every strike is met by heavily armed police, and may end in torture or death for those involved. Yet this is a regime loved up to by the British Labour Government.

Under such conditions, women suffer all the worse. Thousands of them, including children of four and five, work in the carpet-weaving factories. By the age of thirty they look terribly aged, after over twenty years of work, and a child born every year from when they are about sixteen. (Half the children die shortly after birth).

WAGES

It is the same picture in the tea, rice, and tobacco plantations. The basic working week in Iran is 60 hours—six days of ten hour shifts.

For this 30,000 women in the high-profit carpet industry get £.80 a week. In the state-run textile factories the men get £5 and the women £2.50. In the fields women get 16 pence for a fifteen hour day. Official figures show that half the women working in industry get less than £5 a-week.

On top of poverty-level wages and bad housing come the ravages of disease—trachoma, alopecia, chronic rheumatism, and rheumatic heart disease in particular.

Education is so poor, or non-existent, that 80 per cent of Iranian women cannot read or write. So it is very difficult for them to pursue the few slender rights the law affords them.

CHATTEL

The man is considered head of the household. Even in the case of a divorced woman, if her parents are dead, then control over her passes to her older brother or nearest male relative. Polygamy is said to be officially discouraged, but it still goes on among

WOMEN IN IRAN

A story of poverty, oppression, torture and struggle

On the 8 March many women all over the world celebrated International Women's Day. In Iran the 'Organisation of Iranian Women' - president Princess Ashraf, sister of the Shah and a well known Heroin pusher - held their 'celebrations' on 27 February by order of the Shah. This date is used because it was the day on which Iranian women were given the privilege of voting (or not as is the case for the vast majority) for the only legal party which was founded by... yes, you've guessed, the Shah.

This so-called women's organisation has no place in it for the millions of women in the country who work long hours in the factories and fields. Instead it contains the likes of Ashraf who travel the world speaking for Ira-

nian women—as at the UN International Women's Year Conference last year in Mexico. This same monster has also served as honorary president of the International Human Rights Commission. There is apparently nothing at the UN that money can't buy.

Some thoughts on women ...

'In a man's life women only count if they are beautiful and graceful and know how to be feminine ... this women's lib business for instance. What do these feminists want? What do you want? Equality you say—indeed! I don't want to sound rude but you may be equal in the eyes of the law but not—I beg your pardon for saying so—in ability. You have never

produced a Bach or a Michelangelo. You have never even produced a great cook. And don't talk of opportunities, you must be joking, have you lacked the opportunity to give history a great cook? You have produced nothing great.'

(The Shit of Iran speaking to Oriana Fallaci the Italian journalist)

'Oil is like a beautiful woman whose got many men trying to buy her, naturally, she will go to the one who will pay most, and he will own her.'

Prime Monster of Iran in a recent interview with a German journalist)

the tribes and in the ruling class. The acquisition of a young girl in old age is considered very chic since the Shah himself did it recently.

A man can sue for divorce on a wide variety of grounds, but a woman has only the grounds of desertion for over four years, lack of support, and 'if the condition of her existence becomes absolutely intolerable.' In practice a woman never initiates such actions unless she comes from a family with enough money to hire a lawyer to speak for her.

LAW

Inside the law-courts, you need two femal witnesses to equal a male; that is, legally speaking, a woman has half the

worth of a man.

Not surprising, then, that the birth of a girl-child is still thought unfortunate. Until she is bought by a husband and produces a male child she is considered less than human.

Clearly the women of the ruling class in Iran either use influence or money to escape much of the system's institutionalised oppression. But for the workers and peasants such possibilities do not exist.

So in the movement against the regime there are many women, whether fighting as guerillas or participating in the strikes and hunger protests. In doing this they fight not only the regime which oppresses them and their class, they also

fight against the submissive role into which they have been cast for centuries. **TORTURE**

Increasingly therefore women feature in the news from inside the jails and torture centres of the regime's barbaric secret police. For, according to Amnesty International, of the 40,000 political prisoners, about 4,000 are women. As recently as last January the regime made its own gruesome contribution to the equality of women and announced publicly the execution of 22 year old Manijeh Ashraf-Zadeh.

Many more have died in clashes with the police and army as well as under torture. One of these was Samin Saleh, who according to the National Council for

seven months pregnant when she was tortured to death. Another, Asieh Ahmady gave birth to a baby in jail four months ago and was forced along with her husband to watch it beaten to death.

There are no barriers for the torturers, no lengths to which they will not go to degrade and break their victims especially when they are women. One in particular of their victims is Fatimeh Saidi, serving a twelve year sentence in the notorious Ghasr prison and who at fifty years of age is known to all as 'Comrade Mother'. Not only has she herself suffered so severely from torture that she is now partially paralysed, but all her three sons have died in action against the regime.

STRUGGLE

Yet the struggle goes on and continues to spread to new areas, with the workers and students in the cities playing a leading role. In this fight against the tyranny of the Shah a new sort of woman is being born, one who is not an object, a chattel to be bought and sold.

For many women in Iran the speech from the dock of Shahin Tavakoli (arrested May 1971) has become an inspiration, and we quote part of it as a fitting end to this article.

Shahin's husband had been shot in a guerilla action and been captured. After arrest she was subjected to extensive torture. In her statement to the court, after detailing her treatment in jail, she continued . . . 'I totally refute the allegation by my so-called Defence Counsel that I was ignorant and unaware and followed my husband blindly. No! I believe in freedom and in the people and in their revolutionary struggle. As with any decent human being I have always . . . aimed to bring about the eradication of poverty, ignorance and social injustice. You have demanded the death sentence for me . . . I warn you my blood is no less red than that of my husband and brother. I do not fear death.'

When the death sentence was read out she replied:

'Today I really feel that I have nothing to fear from the torturers.'

A letter from John Deason

MAY 26

clear that every steward who meets on May 8th and every worker that demonstrates on May 26th must be thinking and talking specifically about the nursery nurses.

The following statement has been issued by the Right to Work Campaign and the National Rank and File Organising Committee. It has the full support of the Womens Voice Editorial Board.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The £6 wage freeze brought with it 1½ million unemployed, massive cuts in social services, and prices still rising at 21 per cent. Healey is now proposing even tighter wage limits of 3 per cent in return for pitiful tax concessions.

The TUC and most national trade union leaders are unfortunately talking about 5 per cent instead of rejecting such policies outright.

Tighter wage controls will mean continual unemployment, not less. Such policies need to be countered by determined trade union action. The National Right to Work Campaign therefore calls on all its supporters to campaign within every union, trades council and within the TUC itself for NO DEAL WITH HEALEY.

The London District Confederation of Engineering Unions organis-

ed a National Assembly against Unemployment on March 27. This Assembly issued a call for a day of action on May 26 against unemployment.

There are several things you can do to campaign for that call.

- ★ Get your union branch to support the day of action.
- ★ Organise local demonstrations during working hours.
- ★ Visit every possible local factory, building site, school and office urging stoppages of work for the 26th May.
- ★ Organise trade union sponsored adverts in the local advert.

Make May 26 a real NATIONAL day of action against unemployment.

Yours fraternally
John Deason (Secretary National Right to Work Campaign)

DUNDEE WOMEN BUILD UP TO MAY 26

Last Thursday, Maureen Shields, a member of NALGO and a nursery nurse in Dundee, addressed a Right to Work meeting. She gave the same address two days later on May Day at a Rally in the city square. She gave a clear call to all trade unionists for support in opposing the Tayside Regional Coun-

cil's proposed sackings of 50 nursery nurses and their refusal to open three new nursery schools.

Her speech on May Day was the only one which related in any practical way to the problems facing working women in Dundee. The Right to Work Campaign has been pushing for support for the nursery nurses for some weeks now and have collected hundreds of signatures on petitions from work places such as Timex where the majority of the workforce is women. These petitions have been only the start of raising the issue among factory workers.

The nursery nurses have begun to mobilise themselves and it is hoped that Maureen will be able to address an all-Dundee stewards meeting on May 8th in the YMCA. This meeting is to discuss the proposals which came from the Assembly on Unemployment for a one day stoppage on May 26th. It is quite



OUT FOR EQUAL PAY

By Margaret Jones and Sam Lyon

Joan Windever, AUEW shop steward at Dubiliers in Kirkby, and Chrissie Jewell told us on the 4th May:

'We're fighting for two things. First we claim the £6 which we know we're entitled to and not the 10 per cent (£3) the company is trying to palm us off with. We've been to the Ministry of Employment in London and they've backed our claim. We also want it back-dated from May.

Second, we want equal pay with the semi-skilled men. The women on the assembly line get 4-6 weeks training but still they're paid as labourers. Without training could they do the job of winding, moulding, soldering, printing and assembly? The answer is not. Many of our members are on machines and many more have to be able to read and understand drawings, which they have to have at hand throughout the job. Is this labouring? We don't think so. The women and the men at Hammond Road Factory are with us. Altogether, between the two factories, there are 250 AUEW members. Both factories are closed shops. The skilled men are backing us as well. We want the full amount that is due to us and we're staying out until we get it.'

Dave Williams, AUEW convenor writes:

'We're staying out for the full £6 pay increase and for equal pay for the women workers.'

At the end of April, the company



Immigrants, trade unionists and all anti-fascists gave their message to the NF—Get off our streets!

Keep the fascists off the streets

21 people were arrested, among them three women, on the anti-fascist demonstration in Bradford on 24 April. The following week, 1 May, demonstrators successfully prevented the new Nazi National Front from holding a motorcade through the immigrant area of Manningham. The Manningham Defence Committee organised a sit-down in one of the main roads skirting the area and police arrested 12 anti-fascists.

Money for the defence of all those arrested is urgently needed. Send to Treasurer, Defence of Manningham Committee, 41 Athol Road, Bradford 9.

In London on the same day, 24 April, a handful of supporters of the National Party, a split from the National Front, marched to Trafalgar Square to hold a St George's Day Rally. They were surrounded by at least twice their number of counter-demonstrators along the route and in the square itself, but the police moved in, outnumbering either demonstration and 25 people on the anti-fascist demonstration were arrested. Many were badly knocked about by the police. One woman shouted at the policeman in front of her:

'You've made these streets filthy letting scum like them march on them.'

made an offer to pay one week's wages in advance if we return to work. A mass meeting unanimously rejected the offer and voted to continue the strike. Send all financial support to: Dave Williams, Convenor, 1/0, Burwen Drive, Liverpool 9 8DF.

WE'RE PREPARED TO FIGHT

A sympathy strike with workers in another factory has turned into a fight against appalling conditions in their own factory for 300 women workers at Hamilton Carharts Caroline Port in Dundee.

Once on strike, the frustration of the women erupted. For most of them, this was the first time they had ever been on strike. They are members of the Tailor and Garment Workers Union and have four unselected shop stewards to represent them.

'The shop stewards have told us we cannot get rid of them,' one striker told

us. 'We'd like to know what the rulebook says, but there are only four in the branch and the stewards have them.'

The strikers have demanded more shop stewards, democratically elected, improved canteen facilities, and an end to their sweatshop conditions.

They won support from local shipyard workers and prepared for a long strike. The stewards responded by calling in the full time official.

After negotiations with the management, three days after the beginning of the strike, the official and stewards said that the demands had been met. The

management threatened women with the sack for associating with communists after they had distributed a leaflet opposing a return to work.

At a later mass meeting, the stewards succeeded in getting a return to work, although only the demands concerning holiday pay had in fact been met. Negotiations are continuing on the others.

The women have shown the management that they are prepared to fight. There is now the opportunity to build a strong union organisation in Carharts. This is the first of many battles to come. by Cathy Christison (COHSE)

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