

Womens **VOICE**

No 11

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November

FREE
ABORTION
ON
DEMAND

RUSSIA 1917
The Revolution of the
Women



photo: Ina de Phillips (11)

THE POWER TO TURN

A TERRIBLE story appeared in the papers recently. A young girl of fourteen has been prosecuted under a law passed in 1861 for trying to procure her own abortion. Her brother was also tried, for buying the 'noxious substance' that she used—laxative pills. They were both found guilty.

The Offences against the Person Act is almost forgotten these days as there are comparatively few illegal abortions. When it has been used it has been against backstreet abortionists taking money for their work. No one knows of it ever having been used against the woman needing the abortion. Except now, and the extraordinary decision to prosecute was taken by no less a person than the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The girl's baby was stillborn after seven months. After all the pain and suffering she was then hauled before the juvenile courts so that more interfering do-gooders could further humiliate and terrify her. She was found guilty. What she needed was sympathy and understanding. Instead she was told that sex and abortion are both equally a crime.

The real crime is that there was no help for her. No one told her she could have an abortion; no one showed her where to go.

This shattering experience will be repeated over and over again amongst young and old women alike if the people who are trying to change the Abortion Act get their way.

We have progressed since those dark Victorian days when women were not allowed to enjoy sex; when their lives were a ceaseless cycle of pregnancy and birth, and prostitutes provided the pleasure for men.

Safe contraception has changed all that. Sex doesn't equal pregnancy anymore. Women can plan their lives, go out to work, enjoy to the full the

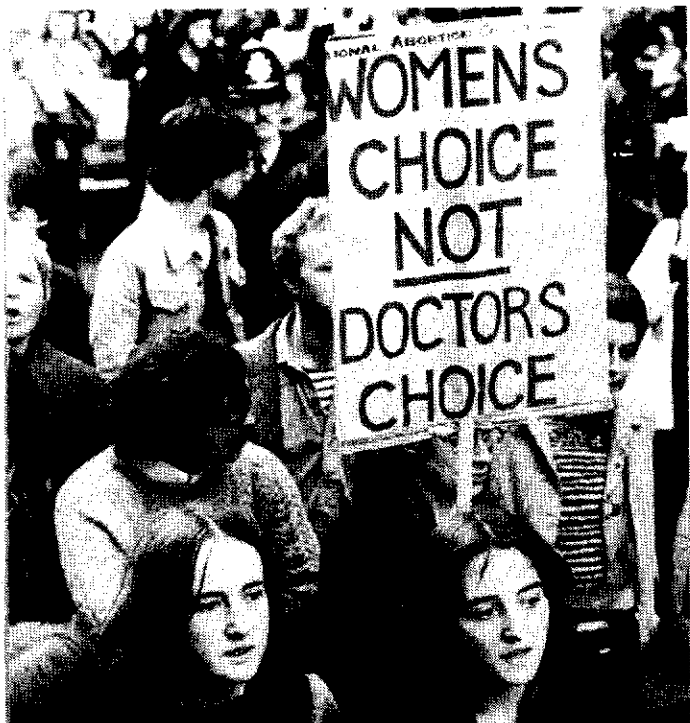
years before they have children, and when they have children, even enjoy sex. As a result we have made demands, for better jobs, with better pay; we want job security and maternity leave. Women are joining trade unions in their thousands. We have fought for, and won, a measure of control over our lives which those women fighters of 100 years ago only dreamed about.

A part of that control is knowing that if contraception fails, if we can't take the pill, or use an IUD, then we can get an abortion.

It's not as simple as we would like it to be. There is a lot of red tape, and delays. The cut-back in the National Health Service has made all health care more difficult to get. The prejudices of some doctors and gynaecologists against abortion prevent some women getting the permission they need. In parts of the country you can still only get an abortion if you pay; but £60 to a charity clinic is a far cry from £300 to a backstreet abortionist or a Harley Street Clinic. The 1967 Abortion Act is not perfect, but it is progress.

For three years now a campaign has been waged to repeal the Act. Some people argued that the Act was being abused and needed tighter controls. That has happened, but their campaign goes on. Organisations like Life, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, and the Catholic Church want to scrub the Act altogether; they don't believe women should have even that degree of control over their lives. Sex is not for pleasure, and certainly not for women's pleasure.

There are no lengths they will not stretch to. Life have threatened doctors with prosecution for murder for doing late abortions. They have 50 MPs ready to introduce a Private Member's Bill in Parliament to change the law. They tour schools



picture: Angela Phillips (IFL)

THE TIDE

with leaflets and films.

Throughout these three years Labour MPs have vacillated. Some are for, some against; others just avoid the vote. At the Labour Party Conference in September the members decided, and voted overwhelmingly in favour of a woman's right to choose.

That stung the Catholic Church into action. In Scotland, the priests are telling their congregations they cannot vote Labour. If they lose the Catholic vote in Scotland the Labour Government could lose the next election.

So within a week of this news, David Ennals, the Minister for Health, started talks with anti-abortion MPs to introduce government legislation on abortion, which will certainly have a speedy passage through Parliament. It will begin with a compromise, but once the anti-abortion MPs have a toe in the door they will force it open. They want no abortion rights at all.

Once we lose our right to abortion we are on a slippery slope to losing all the hard-won rights fought for over a hundred years or more.

The only way to stop that happening is to bring hundreds and thousands of women into the campaign. Women who may know little or nothing of their rights; women who would never want an abortion themselves but will fight for the principle; women brought up under the influence of the Catholic Church. Teachers, nurses and hospital workers. Women from the housing estates and the factories.

Such a mass of women will turn the tide against the moralists and the MPs. Then we can begin to build a movement amongst working class women that will not stop fighting until it has won control over every corner of our lives.

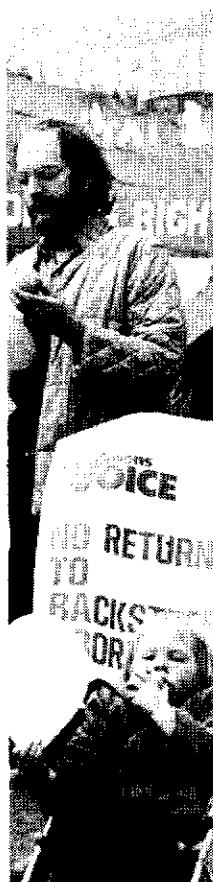


Photo: An Dekker

NY,

Womens Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

Womens World: did you want to play football as a kid? Page 4

News: BOC, Chiswick Womens Aid, Hospital Closures; there is more news than we have room for, so remember the copy date for the next issue - Friday 18 November. Page 5 to 10.

The Revolution of the Women: 60 years since the workers, men and women, took power in Russia. Pages 11 to 14.

Her story: moves into the towns, and gets ripped off. Page 15

Unions: What sort of maternity leave agreement would you really like? Page 16

Womens Voice Interview: Ellen Nicklin five months after the women at Laird Porteh agreed to return to work for negotiations on equal pay. Page 17

Reviews: The best book ever on the Suffragette Movement, Mary Ann Stuart watches Tonight. Pages 18 and 19.

Your Voice: letters to reach us by 18 November. And we need your money because we're being evicted! Pages 20 and 21.

Your Health: Are you on the Pill? Page 22

Whats' happening: for the next issue ads to arrive by Friday 18 November. Page 23.

Cover photo: Angela Phillips (IFL)

The next issue of *Womens Voice* is the Christmas issue. If you have any good ideas for games, stories, poems, or something which might just be an interesting read don't hesitate, phone the *Womens Voice* office today, 01-739 1878. Or write us a letter, or better still work out your ideas on paper and send them in: *Womens Voice*, 6 Cottons Gardens, London, E2. Copy to arrive not later than 18 November.

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YES! I'LL JOIN THE FIGHT

* Can you send me information about my local *Womens Voice* group & the Socialist Workers Party

* NAME

ADDRESS

Post to: WV, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2



EVERY Sunday morning in the park near where I live there's a transformation scene.

Normally it's just grass, trees and squirrels.

But once a week as if by magic it all fills up with running figures, rippling muscles and red and blue and green.

It's the lads, playing football.

Four pitches, eight teams, a handful of muffled spectators and a line of cars all the way down to the pub

Sometimes I go over and watch. And always a funny thing starts to happen. I get this eerie smell of Yorkshire pudding in my nostrils.

Down the road in 88 houses the Sunday dinner's in the oven. In 88 kitchens 88 women are getting ready for their sons and husbands to come home.

Now don't get me wrong. I really like football. As a matter of fact I support Norwich City.

Years ago my Dad took me along to see them play. I was thirteen then, and Norwich were struggling near the bottom of the second division.

My school friend used to go every week. We both had yellow and green rosettes pinned on our satchels. My friend even

had a letter printed in the Pinkun because they were always picking on this erratic inside-right called Tommy Brycefield and she was in love with him at the time.

So I went along with my Dad and there were two gates, one marked Men and the other marked Boys and I went in the one marked Boys and thought nothing of it.

Anyway, not long after that I gave up supporting Norwich City. That is, I made up my mind to stop caring.

For one thing they were a pretty emotionally exhausting team, if you know what I mean. Giant-killers away from home then throw away a two-goal lead to the bottom of the division on their own ground.

But aside from that I began to get the idea that being a football fan wasn't really the thing for a girl my age. It was a bit loud and rough and, well, unfitting.

* * * * *

THE OTHER night I had a dream. It was Saturday afternoon and 50,000 people were striding along Tottenham High Road. It looked like a demonstration. But they'd all come out of White Hart Lane. Only, the unusual thing was, this was 50,000 women.

An all-women camera crew had been filming the all-women match and at half time on Match of the Day they had women pundits with the action replay.

No, the sports where women have had a look in - like tennis and show jumping - have been strictly upper and middle class. There's a huge audience growing for them on TV.

But when it comes to local facilities the best women can hope for is keep-fit in draughty halls and the emphasis on looking beautiful.

I've been watching the kids round our way on their skateboards. And once again it's nearly all boys. All that fun and excitement. I wish I could get it out of my mind that the girls are at home learning how to do Yorkshire pudding.



the
eerie
smell
of
York-
shire
pudding

IN FOR A PENNY, IN FOR A POUND



Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

Eddie Dye, Sadie Bean and May Parkin are out on strike. They are canteen ladies at the Hackney British Oxygen depot. BOC workers are demanding a £20 rise.

The Hackney depot has just ended another strike - for the canteen ladies themselves. Last July, management suddenly stopped paying 'coverage' money

for the overtime worked to fill in for holidays and sickness.

£30 was taken off their monthly pay packets. 'They said they would rather pay it to charity,' Eddie told Womens Voice.

'Without the support of the stewards and men, they would have done just what they liked. You couldn't ask for better support than

what we got - all 137 of them came out. No doubt in my mind. We didn't even have to ask the stewards.

'Without a union we wouldn't have stood a chance. No way. After 2½ weeks, we got what we wanted.

'Now we're out again for the wage rise. Even if I wasn't going to get anything from it, I would have come out. But we are going for the same as the other workers - £20 a week and consolidation of past wage rises.

'They are a good bunch here. We are all one. Definitely.

'The radio and newspapers said today that we are voting to go back today. You know what publicity is. They twist it and turn it. They did it a couple of weeks ago.

'Put an ad in the Sun, saying what a good offer they made us. It's just BBC and BOC trickery. It's not true.'

'Also the management sent out letters to all the men. Lots of their wives saw the ad in the Sun and saw the letters.

'But the wives were understanding. They knew. They knew their husbands wouldn't come out if there wasn't money in it, if it wasn't worth doing.

'Management never sent us women letters. Just the men.

'I have always been in the union. I have been offered the manageress' job and turned it down. You can't be on both sides of the fence, can you? If you are a union woman, how can you go to the other side? I could see through it.

'We want a £20 rise. Out for a penny, you might as well go out for a pound'.

OUT, FOR UNION RECOGNITION

TEN of us are out on strike for union recognition at Gorman's, Bloxwich, in the Midlands. We joined the TGWU in May this year, but kept it to ourselves because we knew that if Gorman, our boss, found out we would be sacked. We had tried to join once before in 1966 and were warned then what would happen.

But the conditions in the place deteriorated so much that we were doing as twice as much work for the same money, and sometimes picking up only £7 a week when he was sending us home during the day. We decided something had to be done. We asked the rest of the women if they would join with us. They were all for it until the Friday we got our redundancy notices. Someone had been and told him.

Since then Gorman has organised a ballot inside the factory and they have all said they do not want a union. They're all frightened of loosing their jobs.

We make Pork Scratchings

(crunchy bacon skin sold like crisps) which are sold under the brand name of Ernie Rand. The TGWU are getting pubs not to buy them, but there are some places, like the Rushall Labour Club, which still are. The unions are also trying to stop the pig rind in the docks, and the fat supplies from the makers of Tulip brand.

Between us we have about 20 children. So he couldn't have picked a better time, just before Christmas. Myself, I feel so angry about the whole situation that I get lost for words.

Barbara Cooper, Gormans picket.

★ Womens Voice Groups in the Midlands where the Pork Scratchings are sold should visit Labour Clubs making sure the blacking is on, and collecting for the strike.

★ If you know any women in the TGWU organise a collection amongst them.



A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

'I LOST my baby because the local hospital casualty department had been shut down by the cuts. That is why I went on the demonstration to save Plaistow maternity hospital. Shirley Sliwinski told Womens Voice her story.



BULLIES CLOSE HOUNSLOW HOSPITAL

IT WAS a quiet evening, a Thursday, and the corridors of Hounslow hospital were dim and hushed. Suddenly all was confusion. Elderly patients were bundled into the corridor, bewildered, wrapped only in blankets, carried off by young men into waiting vans. What was going on ... mass kidnaping?

Yes and no. Jacquy Hayman writes:

"Hounslow hospital has been the scene of the most vicious attack yet on our National Health Service. There is little doubt in anyone's mind that the raid on the twentyone old patients left in the hospital was carried out brutally, with no concern for the patients and with no warning to any relatives.

Just before the patients were due for their nightly drugs, scab ambulancemen arrived, in mini buses and vans, and removed the patients to the West Middlesex Hospital about two miles away. The old people didn't know what was happening - one visitor arrived to see her mother and found she just wasn't there any more!

The old people were bundled into the corridors without even being given time to dress or collect their belongings. The only genuine concern came from the nursing staff who have been running the campaign to stop the closure for 18 months.

In a community like ours where there is a recognised lack of old people's homes, Hounslow has been more than just a hospital. It is a place elderly people considered their home—where they were cared for as individuals and received the attention that isn't possible in a large understaffed hospital like the West Middlesex.

But to the bullies of the Area Health Authority, such hospitals are 'surplus to requirements' (whose requirements?), and they don't care a bit if the old and sick are rough-handed and upset as long as they save money by cutting out hospitals and putting more work on the shoulders of the nursing staff at the remaining ones.

'It's *our* NHS, we pay taxes to keep it running, and it's up to all of us, wherever we work, to fight the closure of any hospital.

I was 8 months pregnant and staying with my mother in Haslemere, Surrey, for the weekend. I woke up with terrible stomach pain. Mum got the Doctor and he said the baby was alright but I should go straight to hospital. That's where the problem started. The local hospital casualty department had been closed down and so we had to get an ambulance to come 12 miles from Guildford and then take me back 12 miles. There is a 'cottage' type nursing home but they have no facilities for any emergencies.

All the way I was in absolute agony even though the Doctor had given me an injection. When I got to Guildford they listened to the baby's heart and did some tests. They told my husband that the baby was dead but that it was best not to tell me. Then they induced me and I went into full labour. It was awful because a dead baby can't help to push its way out into the world. I had injections every 20 minutes, and though it was bad, I was still excited about my baby being born and so I said to Ken 'Don't worry we are going to be parents today'. He stayed with me all the time knowing I was suffering

for nothing.

I heard one senior nurse say 'Don't worry she can push it out, no need for an anaesthetic'. But in the end they did find an anaesthetist, there wasn't one on duty on a Sunday. They knocked me out for the last half hour and did a forceps delivery.

When I came round I asked Ken, 'Where's the baby', and he said, 'They couldn't save it.' The shock was terrible. I'd been through all that, and the baby was dead.

They did not know how to cope with me. I was kept in for 2 more days in the ante-natal ward. Every time there was a 'shift change' a new nurse would come in cheerily and say, 'And how many months pregnant are you?' The consultant could only say 'Bad luck, old girl'. Ken came up with some flowers on the Monday morning and they only let him in after he argued that the flowers would die if he didn't give them to me. I bet the Duchess of Kent got more sympathetic treatment when it happened to her last month! Ken visited me for 2½ hours the next day.

I found out afterwards, that I'd had APH (accidental placental hemorrhage) and if there'd been a

local hospital and I'd had a quick operation, then the baby could possibly have been saved.

But my problems did not end there. I had a breakdown and couldn't face to go out alone. I was scared to be on my own at all. The doctor gave me valium and I became dependent on it. I got pregnant three months later and was worried stiff because valium can affect unborn babies and yet I couldn't manage without it. I have a disposition to APH apparently but the London Hospital kept a close eye on me and induced me as soon as the placenta stopped, so now we have a beautiful boy. It's interesting that all the way through my second pregnancy Guildford hospital never sent on my medical notes, even though the London kept asking for them!

Even though the baby is five months now I am still not my old self, some days I can't cope at all and Ken is also changed by it all, it is amazing that we have stuck it out.

Life was a nightmare for twelve months. I feel now that I should have been told that the baby was dead. They assumed that I was some kind of idiot, women are always being treated like that. I am a sensible person and if I'd known, I'm sure the shock which caused all the problems that followed, and are still with me, could have been avoided.

So don't let them close down your local hospital or any departments. Its *OUR* national health service and they are ruining it. A department in the smallest hospital closed, can mean a very important life lost.

Interviewed by Jeannie Holborow

FIGHT ON

THE ACTION Committee at Plaistow Maternity Hospital are keeping their fight going with determination.

This week they put their case to Newham Council and a meeting of the Community Health Council -- in no uncertain terms.

While they are running the hospital, they also want to do something to improve its appearance. The first step will be a paint-in early in November.

Feelings against the closure among people in Newham is quite strong. The local Womens Voice group has held street meetings in East Ham High Street for the past two weeks. We sold badges and asked people to sign a petition saying they wanted the hospital kept open. People were actually queuing up to sign the petition.

Jane Ure Smith

Copy date for news for the December issue of **Womens Voice** 18 November



STOP THE CUTS

IN EVERY part of the country women are fighting the cuts: women who work in hospitals, like the Plaistow maternity and Hounslow; women who can't go back to work because the nurseries have been closed; women who resent the cuts in their children's standard of education. All these, and more.

The people who could lead a big campaign to stop the cuts in Government spending, the trade union leaders for all the workers in these industries, haven't got the guts to do it. They don't mind shadow boxing with the Government but they're not prepared to go any further than that.

They have called a week of Action to Stop the Cuts for November, but it will be up to us, the women whose jobs are at stake and the women most affected by the cuts, to do something.

YOU CAN MAKE NOVEMBER 23 A REAL DAY OF ACTION.

Are you fighting for a nursery? Why not occupy the council steps that day. Persuade the women you know who do have jobs in nurseries to come down to your picket at lunchtime.

Are your schools being cut? If you work in a school a strike would really hit them where it hurts most. If that's not possible, then a lunchtime demonstration, with some of the mums is next best.

Small meetings, small pickets, small demonstrations, are better than big nothings.

And if you start the ball rolling now, who knows, maybe the teachers in the school down the road, the hospital workers in your hospital, the NALGO members in the town hall will hear about it and demonstrate too.

EVERY WOMENS VOICE GROUP CAN HELP ORGANISE SOMETHING FOR THAT DAY.

23 November: Stop the Cuts





AN ESTATE ON TRANQUILLISERS

THE Manchester Evening News this week carried a front page story about our estate.

Gillian Yates—who lives on the Hulme estate—tried to commit suicide.

She is depressed because she is stuck there—day in, day out—with two young children, and afraid to go out in case the flat is burgled.

She took an overdose of her tranquillisers. That was news for a day. The next day, of course, the Manchester Evening News had forgotten about Gillian Yates, and something else hit the headlines.

This estate is infamous. The People's Rights Centre have just issued a report about Hulme that gives some horrifying statistics.

They say that local doctors prescribe 250,000 tranquillisers a month to people in Hulme.

This statistic gave the Evening News a headline 'Drug Wives Lash the Living Hell of Hulme'.

They might have added 'Drug companies profit from Hulme families' misery'.

Manchester Corporation now have a policy of not housing families above the third floor. But many women with babies and young kids are still waiting to be rehoused.

In our book we've got two lifts, but one is permanently out of order. When the other one goes you either stay at home or heave the shopping and prams down 64 steps and up again.

Last year a child fell over a balcony and was killed. Some of the women were so angry they formed an action group. By demonstrating and disrupting council meetings some of them eventually got rehoused.

This summer a council subcommittee threatened to close down Hulme Library, one of the few facilities on the estate.

But after two big protest meetings, the council changed their mind.

All people want is a decent house with a garden for the kids to play in. Penny Kay

GAS ACTION

TENANTS on the Hendham Vale estate in Manchester are keeping up their campaign against the Methane gas which is being released on the estate. A petition to the Tory Mayor of Manchester got some much awaited publicity in the Manchester Evening News. And the City Architect suggested the tenants try living in Birmingham! He is so sure there is no gas that when the last of the holes in the road has been filled in he is going to erect a 12 foot ventilating chimney outside 22 Calthorpe Avenue!

The tenants say: If there's no gas we don't need a chimney. If we need a chimney we shouldn't be living here at all!

Fed up with the constant promises about something being done and nothing happening the Tenants Association organised a visit to the local Councillors, when they were not expecting it! We have given the councillors another three days to get the chimney stopped or the tenants moved out. If not, direct action will be taken! Sandy Rose



RAMILLA PATEL marched on her own through the streets of Hyde on Saturday, 8 October.

Behind her—just 20 yards behind—was Martin 'Fatty' Webster, of the National Front—doing his 'solo march'. Ramilla told Womens Voice about it.

'I was halfway down Webster's route. There were about 200 Socialist Worker Party members lining the route.

'I jumped out into the road about 20 yards ahead of him. All the press were around him and the police! I've never seen so many police. There must have been about 1000.

The press surrounded me when they saw me. That was a surprise.

I marched about 80 yards—down to the square. I was paralyzed. I was so scared.

We couldn't let Webster get away with it, could we? He keeps going on about freedom of speech. What about freedom of speech for young blacks when they have their heads kicked in by fascists?

I marched right to the end. The square was massed with police. Obviously I couldn't get through them.

I had to do it. We had to show them up as being real thugs.

By the way, none of the papers I gave a statement to mentioned me. Only a reporter from Bolton where I'm from got a line in the People. Other than that, none of the national papers reported it.

The women who do this vital work must get together. Mary's plea to anyone who reads this and is a minder is—organise.

For further information contact Mary Lowndes, 4 Linden Park, Manchester 19. Jan Brown, Manchester

CHILDMINDERS ORGANISE

THE climax of a week of activity by Manchester childminders was a march through the town centre on August 27th. They aimed to publicise their work, inform other childminders of the help that's available, and plead with the local authority for more support and aid.

Mary Lowndes is a trained nursery nurse who prefers childminding, and has made a loving home (with her husband) for many children. She says that all types of pre-school provision are necessary. Some children need a smaller space, or a closer relationship to an adult than others.

Childminders are attempting to organise themselves—a conference in Bradford in July brought information from all over. That was when Manchester women realised how little support they get from the local authority. Other areas provide

toys and equipment, specialised social workers, information and contact, and some rare authorities take the money from the parent (according to their circumstances) and add to it—and then pay a wage to the childminder.

That is what Mary would like to see—so that the women who do this work would end up with more than the 6p an hour they get at the moment, after food, washing materials, toys, repairs and so on.

All attempts to organise have been hampered by lack of information about minders. Nobody has an up-to-date list, so contact is difficult. Many minders are reluctant to admit to their job, afraid of 'snooping local authority inspectors'—or taxes. They don't realise the claims that they could make, and in fact Mary's friends were staggered to find themselves better off after discussing their finances openly.

NO PLACE TO GO



EVERY week in Starsky and Hutch men chase, attack, fight one another. You'll hardly ever see a man hit a woman—that is what goes on off the glamorous TV screen, behind net curtains.

The person who first publicised what went on between those four walls is Erin Pizzey. We spoke to her recently at Chiswick Womens Aid Centre about her work over the last four years and her fight with Hounslow Council in particular.

Originally Chiswick Womens Aid Centre had an urban aid grant of £10,000 which was withdrawn because of "illegal" overcrowding. The refuge can officially take 35 persons including children. It always has 70 occupants and sometimes up to 100. Because Chiswick Womens Aid Centre is so famous, women are sent by social workers from all over the country, as well as from London.

The refuge operates an open door policy at all times, no person is ever turned away. What this all means to Hounslow Council is a huge problem on their doorstep, that they don't want. But taking away the grant from Chiswick Womens Aid Centre didn't make the refuge go away, so they tried sending Erin Pizzey to prison. But for the moment that hasn't worked either.

Erin herself comes from a violent background and sees the problem as one of violence—"the vicious circle of violence—children subjected to battering become violent adults and in turn brutalize their children and families." What Erin tries to do is break this vicious circle, teach people to control their violence.

Violence exists in middle class and working class families alike—When the middle class woman gets battered and undoubtedly it goes on—she may have the economic independence to go away with her

children to another home. Even if she personally hasn't got the available funds, one of her friends may, and that's where the difference in class lies.

Although working class women have friends they are usually in the same financial position as the battered woman herself. The working class woman will endure her



hardship for a long, long time before she'll try to get the man out of the home and leave her and her children in peace.

But she is up against the most

amazing barrage of "experts" who will assure her her place is with her husband and kids and "their" home. He will improve, if only given time and understanding. He too suffers like she does, but she unfortunately carries the broken ribs and scars of years of violence.

Even if the woman has an injunction out against her husband, a piece of paper which is supposed to keep him out of the matrimonial home, the police will not physically enforce it. Even when he returns and forces entry, even if he beats her again.

Only tipstaffs and bailiffs can enforce the injunction and they work 9am-5pm five days a week. So after maybe years of intimidation, traumatised children, the battered wife may eventually leave her man, still believing she loves him, still feeling a lot of faults in their marriage are her making. Knowing somehow she must provide a roof, clothing and food for her family, she goes to a refuge.

There, whether it is the Chiswick Centre or one of the hundred refuges run by the Womens Aid Federation, she will find a lot of sympathy, practical help, workers prepared to go to court with her, fight for her matrimonial home back (minus the offending husband)

PRINCESS ANNE has got another gift from Mummy. It's ANOTHER 600 acre estate - value £250,000. (It would take an ordinary worker about 100 years to earn that).

750 FAMILIES could be housed for two years with the money the Queen has just spent for Anne's two estates.

Britain's not overcrowded. The problem is just that we have one (royal) family taking up over 1000 acres of beautiful Cotswolds, while the rest of us squeeze into council flats or squat in derelict houses in Stepney or Kirkby.

Chiswick Womens Aid, Hounslow. Perhaps the Council will resort to the sort of tactics the Area Health Authority used at Hounslow Hospital, and just evict the women. Then where will they go? That's the problem Hounslow Council doesn't want to deal with.

Photos by Angela Phillips

fight for the custody of her children. Try to pull her life back together again. Try to humanise her kids who have been brought up to accept violence in their homes from babies. But it's unlikely she'll ever rid herself of the fear of her man returning, finding her new home, watching the kids come out of school, trying to snatch them. Will he see her shopping and follow her home?

The refuge can't stop that fear, but it can help in many other ways. Diane Watts and Alison Kirton

JUDGES ATTACK

Since fewer people are marrying and more living together permanently the 1976 Domestic Violence Act extended protection to the unmarried woman living with a man as husband and wife in the same household.

LAST month three Lord Justices decided in their anti-feminist bigotry to drive a coach and horses through the recent legal gains won for battered women.

This case concerned an unmarried woman who was battered by the man she has lived with for ten years, the father of her two children. They are joint tenants of their council house. A County Court ordered him to vacate their council house and to stop molesting her, in line with the new Domestic Violence Act.

But the man appealed against the court decision, won the appeal, so that now the woman and kids have nowhere to live, except with him!

How the hell is it possible that women's legal rights are so blatantly ripped up before the ink has barely dried on the statute book?

In Women's Voice (August issue) we warned that precisely because this legislation was an important gain for women, the Judges would try and over-rule some sections of the Act.

The explanation of the judges is a technical one. This new legislation which recognises the rights of the unmarried "wife" clashes with existing matrimonial law (relating to properly married people) and their Lordships decided that elaborate legislative code couldn't be undermined.

The battle for battered women's rights on paper was won ... but the war goes on.

Nina Gosling.

MIDLANDS— ABORTION BLACK SPOT

THE WEST Midlands, Wolverhampton and Dudley area have the worst abortion record in the country. Only 7 per cent of the abortions in 1975 were on the National Health, leaving the remaining 93 per cent of women to pay for their abortions. Many others were scared off by unsympathetic doctors and gynaecologists and either had to have an often dangerous—backstreet abortion or have an unwanted child. And yet in the same year other areas of the country had 90-95 per cent of abortions on the National Health.

Wolverhampton Womens Voice have been fighting the anti-abortionists by campaigning for better facilities, petitioning in the streets, leafleting.

Ann Moran of Wolverhampton WV reports further:-

"But it was our activity on Thursday morning (7 October) that

caught the headlines (and even ITV news!) and the issue is still being discussed in the local paper, Express & Star.

"We had been informed that a speaker from "LIFE" was going to address fifth formers at a local Church of England Comprehensive, and that the headmaster had refused to have a pro-abortion speaker. So we gave out leaflets to older pupils at the school calling on school students to accept what they hear as only one *opinion*, and to recognise that there are many pro-abortionists. The headmaster was hysterically angry and grabbed leaflets from the students. More of us returned at the end of schoolday, with an Express & Star photographer, and were able to give out more leaflets by the school gates on a public road. The photographer arrived just when the headmaster was grabbing leaflets and pushing a woman around!

SPUC OFF THE AIR!

WE WON a small victory over the anti-abortionists in Manchester.

A Piccadilly radio disc jockey put out an advert for the SPUC/Life motorcade in central Manchester. Not only that, but he quoted from their disgusting literature 'This is in protest at the 1½ million unborn children murdered since the 1967 Abortion Act.' As if it were a fact that all his listeners would agree with!

Three of us immediately phoned in to protest. We demanded time on the same programme to advertise two Womens Voice street meetings on abortion, and also the national demonstration on 29 October.

The reporter in charge was embarrassed. He rang back to say he couldn't arrange what we wanted, but he had stopped any further adverts for the anti-abortionists going out that day.

So it's worth challenging local radio rubbish!

ABORTION ACTION

EARLY IN October, St. Albans Womens Voice group discovered that an anti-abortion street theatre was performing the following day. We immediately produced a leaflet, putting the case for a woman's right to choose and organised a mass distribution for the next day. We found Saturday shoppers very sympathetic and a number stopped to help us give out the leaflets. We also collected money for our local abortion campaign.

The following Saturday we took to the streets ourselves armed with petitions, placards, leaflets and buckets for a collection. We organised a Womens Voice public

meeting on the Labour Party's anti-abortion deal. Our petitioning continued for two weeks and included collecting signatures outside a local factory. We got a thousand signatures with no trouble.

We are carrying on after October 29 by picketing the local MP, Goodhew, who is a member of the anti-abortion group Life. We'll be on the demonstration in Birmingham because to quote one woman in the street, "I'm not having no bloody rich cranks telling me what to do with my body."

Viv Pope, St. Albans.

SLAVERY IN THE KITCHEN

ON MONDAY 13th October 204 workers at the London Metropole Hotel in the Edgeware Road came out on strike. They were told it would be made official in three days by their union, the General and Municipal Workers' Union. However, on the Wednesday they were ordered back to work by their full-time officials because their wage demand of a 28 per cent rise would break the Government's pay policy. Some went back to work because of management intimidation, but 60 hotel workers are still out, demanding a decent wage—£50 minimum for everybody. Womens Voice interviewed a few of the 30 women who are still on strike:-

CATH SHUTTLEWORTH: "I'm a chambermaid, I take home £34 per week after tax, and another £11 is then deducted to pay for this dreadful hostel that management provide. The £11 is supposed to include food, but the food's so bad that we go out and buy our own. The hostel is so poor that everybody moves out as quickly as they can. £20 isn't enough to live on in London, not with £2 a week going on fares to get to work. The people pay £22.50 a night for a single room in the hotel, £27.50 for a double room—the single rate has just gone up £6—we haven't seen any of it. On the hotel bill a service charge of 12-15 per cent is added but we don't get any of that and no tips either!"

Sadie Lewis: "We don't care if we have to break the Government's pay policy we can't live on our wages we need £50 minimum. Everybody works here as a stopgap measure: they leave as soon as they can find a better job. A lot of Spanish girls work here—the managers threatened that if they went on strike they would not renew their work permits, so many of them have gone back. It's terrible the way the managers have tried to intimidate us, before we went on strike (we gave 24 hours notice) and afterwards.

They dragged one Phillipino girl off the picket line. They still hang around here—they've been round to the hostel and flats to persuade people to go back to work."

Cath: "The hotel is owned by Lounho property company—their profits are tremendously high they can easily afford to give us higher wages."

Sadie: "Yes, we are determined to beat the management. We need all the help we can get, financial support and people, because it's a 24 hours picket and there are 7 entrances for 60 people to work. We must change the situation of luxury in the bedrooms and slavery in the kitchens."

Donations and messages of support to:-

Allan Gage, 76 Hatherley Road, Walthamstow, London, E17
Sheila Mitchell

JOIN THE MASS PICKET



Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)

If they had wanted to, the trade union leaders who make up the TUC General Council could have won the dispute at Grunwicks. They could have stopped services to the North London factory, but they chose not to. They have talked a lot, but done nothing. Mrs Desai, seen here arguing outside the TUC with Lawrence Daly of the miners union, hasn't given up the fight yet.

On November 7 there is to be another mass picket of the factory. Be there if you can; bring your workmates, and trade union branch banner. Show Grunwicks and the TUC that we are still prepared to fight for the right to join a trade union.

Sixty years ago this month in Russia, all the things we dream about suddenly became possible. From out of a war, the workers rose up and overthrew the system that oppressed them. And in the midst of that revolution, hand in hand with it came . . .

THE REVOLUTION OF THE WOMEN



On International Womens Day 1917 the working women of Petrograd took to the streets. Their banners demanded bread and herrings, and an end to the war. Women textile workers, housewives, soldiers' wives, marched on the parliament building, calling out thousands of workers from the factories along the way. So began the February revolution.

Over the next few months were to be enacted some of the most significant events in Russian history. To begin with came the abdication of the Tsar and the beginning of a new parliamentary system of

government. Reforms, including votes for women, were introduced. But the government, led by Kerensky, were determined to pursue the war against Germany. They had no answer for the demands of the workers.

Russian society was in a turmoil. Those events on womens day had unleashed from ordinary men and women all the energy and imagination that had been checked, curbed and confined under the old system.

Suddenly *anything* was possible. Workers could hold mass meetings and discuss running their own factories. Peasants organisations sent

delegates thousands of miles to demand a better life. Women workers continued their agitation for their rights at work and in the home.

The middle-class liberals could not find the answers. Even the revolutionaries were unsure what to do next. Almost alone of all the Bolsheviks Lenin argued that the revolution could become a workers' revolution. The workers did not have to wait for decades of bourgeois government to play themselves out. *We can seize power now, he said. We can transform Russia into a socialist society. And in October, or November in our*

calendar, the workers and soldiers and sailors rose to the call.

They seized control of their factories and offices. They threw out the provisional government. They created their own assemblies, directly elected. They held meetings that went on all day and night, always arguing, working out the new forms and priorities.

This is the story of the Russian Revolution. When working men and women marched onto the stage of history, just sixty years ago, within living memory, never again to be forgotten.

One of the mightiest tasks of the new government was welfare. There were half a million children in the care of the authorities, and millions of sick and disabled soldiers. Imagine being placed in charge of dealing with such problems in a country the size of Russia. Then imagine the prevailing conditions.

Yet even through civil war and famine, through repeated invasions and all the chaos that came in their wake, the revolutionary government made great advances in providing security for the orphans and refugees, for the sick and the elderly.

In charge of welfare was Alexandra Kollontai, Bolshevik central committee member, and an active revolutionary since 1905.

Before Kollontai could take over at the Ministry of Social Welfare, she had to battle with the high ranking civil servants. They refused to hand over the keys, went on strike to try to sabotage the new government. So Kollontai had to send for a band of Red Guards and sailors to break into the treasury.

She reorganised the department from below and gave every worker a vote. She discovered that corruption in government departments had wasted millions of rubles, under the old regime. Now this money saved would give her a good start at the new social security programme. Then she proposed taking over all the wealth of the monasteries and convents, and turning them into children's homes.

Children's homes and homes for the elderly were placed under the democratic control of all who lived and worked in them. Then Kollontai raised more money by taking a monopoly on playing cards! She said they were a luxury, so they should be heavily taxed. The price went up from thirty rubles a dozen to three hundred and sixty rubles. And there were plenty of rich people who were prepared to pay up.

One of the revolution's greatest achievements was the improvement of services to aid childbirth. Kollontai founded the Palace of Motherhood as a model for institutions all over Russia to

provide classes and care for pregnant women. It was arranged that mothers could come there for eight weeks prior to the birth of their child and remain for eight weeks after. Meanwhile help was sent into the homes to take care of the other children.

Kollontai's approach, as a representative of the new workers' government was in great contrast to the woman she took over from at the Ministry of Welfare, Countess Panina. In July 1917, Kollontai was imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress, for criticising the liberal provisional government led by Kerensky.

By October, their situation was reversed. For when the Bolsheviks came to power Countess Panina led the strike of civil servants and refused to hand over the ninety thousand rubles of state funds that were in her possession. So she went on trial before a revolutionary tribunal.

The Countess was a fierce opponent of Kollontai. 'This absurd Madame Kollontai', she said, 'invites the servants to come and sit in armchairs at her meetings. Such things cannot be! What can they know of social reforms or technical training?'



Turkmenian women, from the central Asian deserts, learn to read. One of the principal tools to abolish social injustice and inequality was to be education. The day after the workers had seized power, a decree went out establishing the principles for a new democratic system of education. The size of the challenge was enormous. Eighty per cent of the population could not read or write. In the provinces of central Asia, the north and the east, literacy was almost non-existent. Many of the minority nationalities had no written language at all.

No party or revolution dreamed at striking so oppression and inequality. Soviet, Bolshevik revolution. Over here in Soviet Russia any inequality between under the Soviet power has eliminated the especially discredited hypocritical inequality of marriage and the family respect of. The second and most abolition of the private and the family. This and this alone towards a complete emancipation of women from "Household slavery" transition from private housekeeping to large domestic. LENIN, on International supplement to P

Six weeks after the revolution the church's control over marriage was broken and replaced by civil ceremony. Marriage was to be a contract between equals, freely entered into. The distinction between legitimate and illegitimate children was abolished. Divorce - almost impossible under tsardom - was made easy, on the basis of mutual agreement. The husband's legal domination within the family was ended, and women could decide on their own names and citizenship.

Equal pay was introduced. The professions, including government, were to be open to women. Pregnant women could no longer be dismissed and would receive maternity benefits. In 1920 abortion was legalised.

The Bolshevik Party was pledged to the full social and political equality of women. These legal reforms were the first steps taken in realising the dream.

They also provided a reference point for the continuing education and agitation among women. The party developed a network of

women's centres, or women's departments, through which to launch campaigns, to bring women together to articulate their needs and ensure they were represented in governmental decisions. The women's section - The Zhenotdel - began to be organised in the summer of 1917. At the 8th Party Congress in 1919 the women's section was established under the direction of the party's leading committee.

When the revolution was defeated many of these advances were lost. The new soviet state was isolated by the failure of other socialist revolutions in other countries. Stalin came to take total power and began to wipe out all opposition.

The women's sections of the party were destroyed. Co-education was abolished. Divorce became more difficult to get, and divorcees were not able to join the party. Homosexuals were branded decadent and by 1936 10,000 gays were imprisoned. Protective legislation was removed, discussion of sexual rights was ruled out, and a sickening cult of motherhood was begun to encourage women to bear children. Those who bore ten

on in the world has ever
so deep at the roots of
quality of women as the
revolution is doing.

Russia, no trace is left of
between men and women
of the law.

minated all there was of
scourging, base and
quality in the laws on
family, and inequality in
of children.

most important step is the
private ownership of land
and factories.

he opens up the way
complete and actual
woman, her liberation
"slavery" through the
in petty individual
large-scale socialised
services.

onal Womens Day in
PRAVDA, 1921.



The arrest of Alexandra Kollontai in July 1917, for criticising the Kerensky government. The sexist caption reads 'The Arrest of that Lenin Woman!' The suitcase is marked 'compromising documents.'

What was life like for women in Russia before 1917? Russia was a vast country with a far-reaching empire. Most people worked on the land as peasants, living in primitive, far-flung villages. Peasant women were little more than slaves, to carry water, cook, scrub, milk the cows, toil in

the fields, and wait hand and foot on their husbands. They were worn down with constant childbearing.

In peasant families the custom was for the bride's father to present her new husband with a whip - which then hung over the marriage bed in between being used on her. Fathers and brothers exercised the power of life or death over young women who dared to refuse an arranged marriage.

In the eastern regions, polygamy was practised, and women were veiled. But in the cities, life was very different. There were huge factories producing textiles and steel. Thousands of women were employed in the textile factories, in the food and tobacco industries, in laundries, and as servants to the rich.

Their numbers in the workforce had grown and grown because employers

discovered that women were cheaper to employ, and were less likely to organise trade unions. The war brought even more women into production as men were sent off to die at the front.

For these women too life was hard. They had been drawn into unskilled and low-paid work. They feared losing their jobs through pregnancy, and often worked right up until they were in labour. Only a small proportion were organised into trade unions. They lived in terrible cramped conditions, with several families sharing a single room. Hours were long.

Russian society was dominated by the Tsar, who clung to his absolute power and resisted reforms. The tsarist secret police clamped down on any attempts by workers to fight for a better life, and many trade union and political leaders were forced to flee into exile.



Moslem Caucasian women come to a meeting to hear a socialist speaker.



Wives of the once-wealthy attempt to sell their possessions to passers by. Louise Bryant, an American journalist who visited Russia as soon as she heard the revolution had taken place, described her first impressions in the streets of Petrograd.

In window after window there were flowers and corsets, false hair and jewel-studded dog-collars. The class of women who had need of such finery had fled. But the traders had somehow not yet come to terms with the new reality. And outside hotels were braided commissionaires, their sashes all faded and bedraggled. There were no longer any rich ladies waiting to be helped from their carriages.

or more were awarded the title, 'heroines of the state.'

The bureaucrats under Stalin even decreed that in a society where there was no unemployment women had no right to decline 'the joys of motherhood'. So they made abortion illegal once more. As Trotsky wrote from exile in *The Revolution Betrayed*, they displayed the philosophy of a priest backed up with the powers of a policeman.

Sadly the many gains of the revolution were being rolled back, and these wider questions - of sexual freedom, of building a new basis for relationships free from economic duress - those wide dreams and hopes of the early days of the revolution were postponed until the day when a new era of revolution would take them up again.

'They come
From the machines
From the land and washtubs
Under red kerchiefs
Tucking in the strands,
Hundreds of thousands
Of women delegates
Elected
To build and govern.'
Mayakovsky.

Vera Alexeyeva fought as a captain in the Red Army. In the months following the revolution she led a group of guerilla fighters on horseback, hunting down the Whites in the Ukraine. Afterwards she was transferred to a local *zhenotdel*, (women's department) organising peasant women who had started work in a textile factory. The way she describes the development of women in those meetings, their change of consciousness, she could be speaking of a *Womens Voice* meeting in 1977.

At the first meeting... 'One after another got up and talked of her own problems. Each one told how she had suffered during the revolution and famine. How could she get work, why should so much misfortune have been visited on *her*?'

'Now the women are talking about *our* problems - how we can organise day nurseries to take care of *our* children and how we can improve *our* conditions. That is a great advance, to have got the women to think and act collectively.'

'There are plenty of women we couldn't get to come near a meeting - but when we give them something practical - look how they come!' ... so the women's clubs discussed babies and sewing, politics and sex, childbirth and the need to free themselves from housework.

The Bolshevik Party was slow to realise the need to organise women. They tended to think women a backward part of the working class. There was a division between the middle-class feminists and the socialists. The feminists called for women of all classes to unite. They tried to organise cooks and maids. Kollantai praised their efforts, but she spoke sarcastically of the aim to bring maid and their grand lady employers into the same organisation.

It was the militancy and determination of women workers in a series of strikes throughout Petrograd and Moscow between 1910 and 1914 that made the best of the Bolsheviks change their mind.

No one could deny now the power of women, striking against the sexist and uncouth behaviour of foremen, demanding higher wages, and pregnancy leave and no victimisation, pulling out the men to support

1917



In 1913 the Bolshevik Party began a fortnightly publication of a women's paper called 'Rabotnitsa', (The 'Woman Worker').

It dealt with a wide range of women's concerns, including maternity pay, child care, votes for women, the problems of working women in the family, and a demand for women factory inspectors. After only seven issues the war began, and *Rabotnitsa* was closed down by the police. It began weekly publication once more in the spring of 1917.

them.

The Bolsheviks demanded the full social and political equality of women. Now they had to start transforming their ideals into practical agitation. The women in the party took the lead.

In spite of all the backwardness in that extraordinary country, the Bolsheviks showed they would fight for women's

liberation and socialism together. The most far-reaching reforms followed close on the heels of the revolution. Women and men workers together took the stage of history. They didn't push off women's liberation to some rosey time in the future, they worked to create the conditions for freedom in the here and now.

A letter from the Moscow area:

'Dear Comrades, it's very difficult for us women to be able to do political work. Especially when we have these god-given husbands - as many of us working women do, who are used to seeing a woman as a slave and don't want to look on her as a companion.

'It's not only husbands who have these ideas, often male comrades are not true friends. "You are only a woman, and it's not your place to be deciding things."

And you often hear them say, "I would never allow my wife to work for the party. I wouldn't stand for my wife deserting the children. And just imagine getting home and finding no meal ready ...

Ever had the experience of going to your first meeting to find out what it's all about ... and then finding yourself elected ... ! One housewife wrote in from Astrakhan, that she'd been persuaded to go along to a meeting by two other women:

'I have to admit I didn't really want to go, but I went and to my annoyance was elected delegate. The meetings got underway with lectures. Then they started drawing us into practical, public work.

'I got such a lot out of those meetings. Pots and pans will never give us as much as those delegate meetings can. I'll never drop my work in the community now. I never want to be just a housewife again!'

Inertia and blind habit, unfortunately, constitute a great force. And nowhere does blind, dumb habit sway with such force as in the dark and secluded inner life of the family. And who is called upon first of all to struggle against the barbaric family situation if not the woman revolutionist?

Leon Trotsky.

Womens Voice and the *Socialist Workers Party* place ourselves firmly in that tradition - the tradition of the first great workers' revolution and the tradition of the Bolshevik Party. Come to our meetings on the Russian Revolution.

Compiled by Alix Holt,
Laurie Flynn, Di Watts,
Judith Condon

Herstory 7: STILL IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Though the lords owned the land, the animals and the people who worked it, there was somewhere else to go:

THE TOWNS

In the 13th century they'd never had it so good (the lords, that is - it was pretty unbearable for peasants), the market was booming and towns which had started as ports & market centres began to grow rich making luxuries for their extravagant lordships...



Towns were independent places usually - here you could be free of the lord's protection, work at your craft and even own the piece of pavement in front of your shop. They had to make a law that pavements should all be the same height because people were



the lords & their ladies liked to dress well & have tapestries

the Church wanted fine robes & altar cloths

So some towns began to specialise in cloth



I SEE SOMEONE'S BEEN TO YORK AGAIN!



A new figure appeared:

FEEL THE QUALITY MY LORD

THE MERCHANT



who came to own the craftpersons' tools, and often their houses too

Women spun, carded & washed wool on piece

JUST LIKE BEING A SERF AGAIN!

rates for the

AH NO! I'M THE HISTORICALLY PROGRESSIVE FORCE THAT PRECEDES BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY

the merchants carried English cloth all over Europe: the nation of shopkeepers was afloat. Crafts had been preserved & handed on through the Guilds



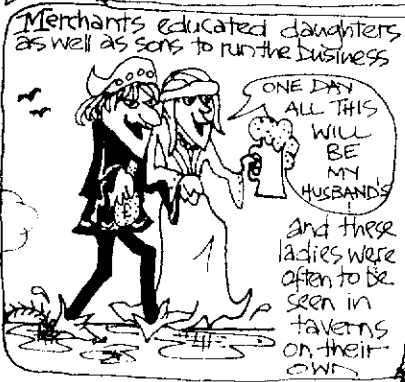
FRED SADDLER

Journeyman would become Master one day.

But prospects grew dim as more & more Journeymen were hired

DROP DEAD, T'OLD MAN!

and the merchants gained control of the Guilds



Merchants educated daughters as well as sons to run the business

ONE DAY ALL THIS WILL BE MY HUSBANDS

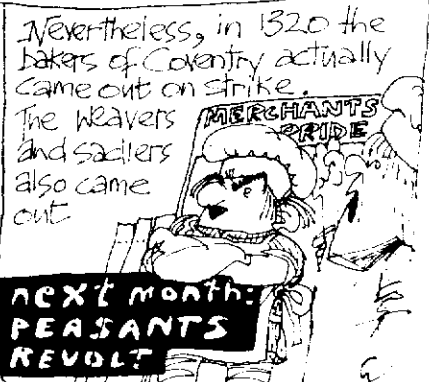
and these ladies were often to be seen in taverns on their own



Meanwhile apprentices trying to organise their own guild were suppressed by law

We demand yeoman guild recognition

rank & file Guild struggle



Nevertheless, in 1320 the bakers of Coventry actually came out on strike. The weavers and saddlers also came out.

NEXT MONTH: PEASANTS REVOLT?

Maternity Benefits

THE EMPLOYMENT Protection Act was loudly hailed as a major step forward for the provision of maternity rights. But in terms of paid leave, the EPA does not come near to being as good as many other provisions for employees that already exist.

The Act does however safeguard your job. You can't be sacked just because you're pregnant and you may return to the same job and conditions within 29 weeks of the birth.

To qualify for maternity leave the EPA says you must work for the same employer for 2 years, but many union agreements only insist on one year's qualifying period.

After the EPA came out NALGO, the local government workers' union, renegotiated the maternity leave for its members working in the universities, and improved maternity rights.

Then last December NALGO tried to negotiate an extension of the university scheme to its members in local government. The negotiations broke down and so the local government members are still only entitled to the provisions under the EPA if they've worked in the same place for more than two years.

If they've worked between one and two years, the pre-EPA NALGO agreement applies.

Janet and Graham Barnett are both social workers for Lewisham Council in South London.

Thomas was born in July. Janet wanted to give up work to look after the baby but she was contracted to work for Lewisham Council for another year and the Council refused to allow her to break her contract.

Instead they allowed Janet six months unpaid leave after her maternity leave expired, so she will return to work in March next year instead of last September. This agreement had to be ratified by a Council committee.

'I was made to feel as if they were doing me a special favour, that it's not a woman's right to look after her baby and return to work when she feels that she and the baby are ready.'

'Under the Council scheme I had to leave work 11 weeks before Thomas was due even though I would have liked to have worked for longer before the birth, as I felt perfectly fit and would have preferred the paid leave after the birth.'

I couldn't go back seven weeks after Thomas was born. It's too young, and impossible if you're breast-feeding. It's difficult to decide ahead of the baby's birth when you want to go back to work, or if you will want to go back at all.'

But for most women work is now an economic necessity and

many women are forced back after seven weeks because they can't afford to take unpaid leave.

'I was not eligible for maternity benefit from the DHSS because I was only paying married woman's insurance stamps. I received four weeks' full pay (minus £12.90 DHSS maternity benefit I would have got if I'd been eligible), then 9/10's normal pay (minus £12.90) for two weeks, and then half normal pay (no deductions) for 12 weeks.'

'Paid maternity leave from your job should be for at least one year on full pay. And then you should have the right to return to work for the same employer and the same grade.'

'After all, if I'd been off work sick I would have got full pay for six months under the Council's sick leave scheme. It shows you the value the Council and government put on women workers and the need to rear children properly!'

'And it's pretty useless being given maternity leave unless there's provision for the care of the baby on your return to work.'

'A day-nursery place is impossible in Lewisham unless the child is 2½ years old or in danger of being neglected. So we need to fight for creche facilities in the place of work, as well as proper maternity leave.'

Ann Derby
Lewisham NALGO

Dismissed woman is awarded £2,023

By Annabel Ferriman
An unmarried woman who was dismissed when she became pregnant must be paid £2,023 compensation by her former employers, an industrial tribunal ruled yesterday. Miss Genevieve Pilet, aged 37, of Kensington, was dismissed by the Land Settlement Association in February because she failed to have a baby in time for her reinstatement.

Paternity leave agreement

The General and Municipal Workers Union has negotiated a "generous" paternity clause, which includes a sick pay agreement, for employees of Gallon Road Chef, the motorway caterers.

Under the deal male members of the staff with more than two years' service will be entitled to 10 days' paid leave during a period six weeks before or six weeks after the birth.

The firm had refused, and the tribunal ruled that she had been unfairly dismissed under section 34 of the Act because the main reason for dismissal was her pregnancy.

Mr Paul J...

Women in NALGO are now demanding an improved maternity agreement. We want:

1. Immediate right to maternity leave on starting work
2. 52 weeks maternity leave on full pay.
3. The right to return to the same job after one year.
4. The right to return to a job on the same grade 5 years after the birth of the child.
5. Six weeks paternity leave on full pay.
6. The right to attend ante-natal and child-care clinics for either parent.
7. Parental entitlement to sick leave in the case of child's illness.
8. Full maternity provisions for all women workers whether part-time or full-time.

Womens Voice has produced a pamphlet for the campaign for better NALGO maternity rights. Available from 27 Tivoli Gardens, Morris Walk Estate, London, SE18. Send 5p plus 7p postage, orders for 20 or more post free. Money with orders please.

Womens Voice Interview



• 500 women in the East Kilbride and Kilmarnock Laird Portch factories—part of the Jaeger company—were on strike for equal pay for 5½ weeks in May and June this year. They returned to work after assurances by employers and union officials that job grading would start right away.

• Five months later . . . Jennifer Ross talked to Ellen Nicklin, convenor of the East Kilbride factory and sponsor of the Rank and File Conference on 26 November.

LAST WEEK and for the past few weeks Ellen and most of the women took home £28 for a 40 hour week.

Workers leave or join the factory all the time. Turnover is 52 per cent. For many women all that keeps them there is the fact that they pay the wee insurance stamp and so won't get benefits if they leave.

Last month the women's union, the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers, negotiated a ten per cent rise with the clothing-manufacturers' Federation.

They balloted the factories—a procedure unheard of before this summer's strike.

'In Laird Portch we didn't vote. We were on our own on the streets in May and after everyone else had voted for the ten per cent we weren't going to put our heads on the block on our own,' Ellen said.

'We are still fighting for equal pay', Ellen said.

On 3 June in East Kilbride the union's national officials persuaded the strikers to return to work. Since then no progress has been made.

'We had a joint stewards' meeting in London from all the Jaeger factories. It was a good meeting, but next time we want to meet without the full timers.

'All Tindley, our national organiser, did was to tell us our own wage rates. Since I know my own already, this wasn't much help.

'All morning no mention was made of our strike or job grading. He said he needed to find out anomalies and he is one of the people who negotiate our wages every year!

'He wanted the meeting to end at lunch. Since the meeting, all we have had is a letter saying they are still trying to collect wage rates, and telling us that they always said it could take 12 to 18 months.'

The women have become disgusted with their union. No strike pay has been given. The national executive allowed £1500 between East Kilbride and Kilmarnock. The East Kilbride workers feel that everyone has suffered and so everyone should get something. That works out to £3 each.



Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

The union official sent Ellen this insult.

'It should be clearly understood that the sum of money voted was not meant to be a general handout, but earmarked to relieve genuine distress among those involved, and with the lapses of time it is obvious that the hardships will be gradually eliminated.'



Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

Feelings are high. At the last meeting in October the women voted to withhold their dues in an attempt to put pressure on the executive. Some are even talking about leaving the union. But as Ellen says, 'Joining another union wouldn't be a solution. They are all bureaucrats. It's a business to them. And they forget who they represent.'

'We are not just angry at the employers now. We are angry with the union.'

'We had more confidence with the union when we were on strike. Then we were out together. Now the executive has taken it over, we have lost that. Most of the women are more aware now about politics. And we are also aware of the difficulties.'

Although confidence in the union is non-existent, the women are still determined to get equal pay and still confident in themselves. The passivity of most of the union members has not helped. Only Kilmarnock came out in support of East Kilbride in May.

'The executive did the same thing in Leeds in 1973 when they had their big strike. They sold out the workers and forced them back to work. Our general secretary says we have no power as we can't hold the country to ransom. But our employers don't care if we are all running about in the nude. All they care about is the profits. A strike in the clothing trade would make them sit up.'

There have been changes since the strike—the setting up of the combine committee (to bring together shop stewards from all factories in the Jaeger group). The first East Kilbride district garment workers' union meeting for three years which 50 attended—half from Laird Portch. Through their branch meetings they are meeting clothing workers in other factories.

'Its not an easy job to organise in the clothing industry, but the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers executive won't have it all their own way. The combine can keep all the Jaeger factories in touch with what's happening, and co-ordinate action. So long as the other stewards report back like they do in East Kilbride.'

Action in the union is changing things. Going along to branch meetings, seeing it meets regularly, getting others involved, contacting other factories, campaigning around the forthcoming national elections, visiting other branches. All these can build a real fight in the clothing trade.

At Jaeger, the union can't be allowed to delay equal pay longer giving management time to organise themselves. Already they have made one handy man a 'maintenance worker'. A time limit must be imposed.

Laird Portch has been sold part way down the river, but as Ellen says, they still have confidence in themselves and the fight is only just starting.

*'We are still fighting for equal pay'.
'We're not just angry at the employers now. We are angry with the union.'*

"VOTES FOR WOMEN AND SOCIALISM FOR ALL"



"IT IS probable that so many people never before stood in one square mass anywhere in England" reported the Daily Express. The year was 1908 and it was the biggest suffragette demonstration ever.

Half a million women and men converged on Hyde Park in seven processions from different parts of London. From Chelsea alone there were 7000 women all dressed in white. There were 3000 standard bearers, hundreds of banners, thousands of flags. Brass bands filled the air with music. Everywhere were the new colours of the Suffragette Movement: purple, green and white.

They had proved beyond any shadow of doubt that there was massive support for their campaign. A message was sent to Asquith, the Prime Minister, to ask him what action the Government would now take. 'Nothing to add,' came the reply.

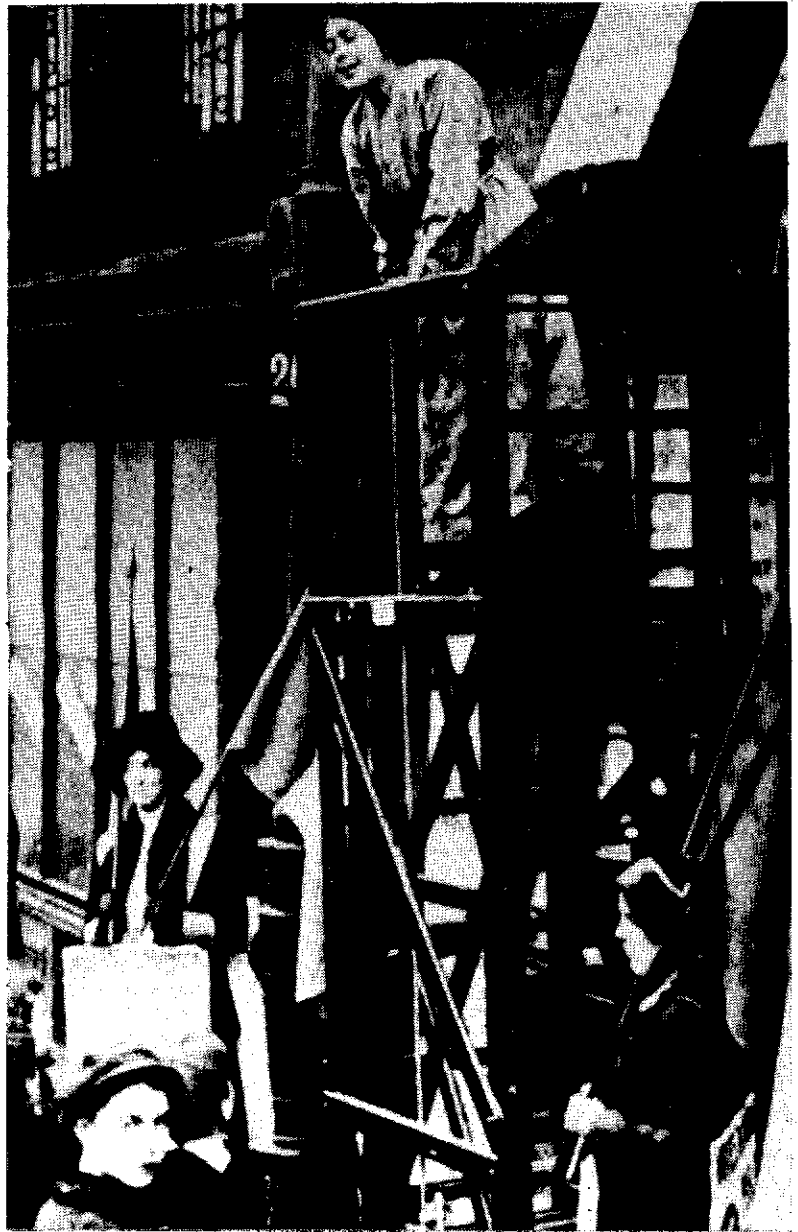
The Womens Social and Political Union immediately called a public meeting in Parliament Square for the night of 30 June. An official warning was issued to the public to stay away. 5000 foot police and 50 mounties were assembled. As the suffragettes came towards the Houses of Parliament they were

thrown to the ground, dragged down side streets, beaten from all sides.

Enraged by the violence Mary Leigh and Edith New took a cab into Downing Street and flung two small stones through the windows of the Prime Minister's house. It was the first act of violence in the long, and often bitter, campaign for the vote.

Women slashed paintings, burned down buildings, set fire to letter boxes, smashed windows. On 1 March 1912 in "Piccadilly, Regent Street, Oxford Street, Bond Street, Coventry Street, Whitehall, Parliament Street, Trafalgar Square, Cockpur Street and the Strand, as well as in districts as far away as Chelsea, well-dressed women suddenly produced strong hammers from innocent looking bags and parcels, and fell to smashing the shop windows. There is nothing like a hammer for smashing plate glass.'

Hundreds of women were sent to prison. The Authorities used force feeding to stop their hunger strikes. Emily Davison became the first martyr when she threw herself in front of the King's horse on Derby day.



Sylvia Pankhurst speaking in the East End of London



Artist's impression of the suffragette window-smashing raid

This is the story of the Suffragette Movement.

Over the years it has been romanticised and glamorised. Sylvia Pankhurst strikes a very different note in her book, 'The Suffragette Movement' which is being republished this month.

She was involved in the Movement from its earliest days but could not always agree with the political decisions of her mother Emmeline and her sister Christabel.

She believed that the campaign had to bring in the mass of working class women as well as the courageous women of the educated middle classes.

"I regarded the rousing of the East End as of utmost importance. The existence of a strong,

self-reliant movement amongst working women would be the greatest aid in safeguarding their rights in the day of settlement. I was looking to the future; I wanted to rouse these women of the submerged mass to be not merely the argument of more fortunate people, but to be fighters on their own account, despising mere platitudes and catch cries, revolting against the hideous conditions about them and demanding for themselves and their families a full share of the benefits of civilisation and progress."

Women's suffrage was the fight of the day, she said. But it wasn't an end in itself. 'Votes for women and

socialism for all,' was her slogan.

But there were socialists who didn't support Votes for Women. Those in the newly formed labour party argued that it was too narrow a slogan and adult suffrage for all men and women was the real fight.

The Revolutionary socialists argued that socialism was the only answer, the vote being of little consequence without power.

The Adult Suffrage League was formed in 1906. Keir Hardie wrote of it:

"It holds no meetings, issues no literature, carries on no agitation on behalf of Adult Suffrage. It is never heard of, save when it emerges to oppose the Womens Enfranchisement Bill."

For aspiring politicians adult suffrage was a convenient refuge from the militancy of the women.

In 1907 the Labour Party Conference debated a resolution for the immediate extension of the vote to women "on the same conditions as to men". An amendment declaring that "to extend the franchise on a property qualification to a section only is a retrograde step and should be opposed", was proposed by a woman, and carried overwhelmingly.

The truth was, and Sylvia knew it, that there would be no Adult Suffrage only men's suffrage unless the women got the vote.

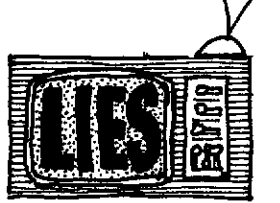
When do we put the fight for womens rights first? When do we say what matters is socialism? These are just the same

arguments that we have today.

This is one of the few books that I have ever read which shows how the two are inter-related.

The Suffragette Movement
Sylvia Pankhurst
Virago £2.95
paperback

Margaret Renn



DO NOT ADJUST YOUR SET ...

I CAME home from the Grunwick picket line, eager to watch Tonight, where Grunwick workers were to tell the world that they wanted to join a union but feared for their jobs.

First though, I had to sit through Bing Crosby as a benevolent priest. At 11.05 the film was in full swing—no sign of Tonight, 11.30 pm... at last! The End! Bing walks off into the night accompanied by angelic voices and I sit up eagerly for Grunwicks.

No such luck. We get the German terrorists and 20 minutes of Italian pornographic television first—which must have put off all but the most determined.

Finally it came, for what it was worth. There was no big expose of the tyranny of George Ward, just one very short interview with an anonymous worker who wanted to

join a union but feared for his job if it was made public. But for the most part, the programme dealt with the 'persecution' of Ward. There were spots of this renewed trouble on the picket line—a much exaggerated view of the momentary attempt to break through the police cordon as the bus carrying the strike breakers appeared.

Although there were interviews with trade unionists Arthur Scargill and Jack Dromey, who both called for all essential services to be cut off, there was a very heavy bias towards Ward and his preparations for survival. The attempt by water workers to cut off the water failed because of two non-union water workers. It was they who were interviewed, not all those who had tried to keep the water disconnected.

We saw the Asian women drawing their strike pay. There is tremendous pride in these Asian ladies,' the reporter piously told us. But not a single striker was interviewed. The women who have fought so long and so hard over the last 14 months were worth only a brief showing, collecting their money, as if that was all there was to it.

Perhaps it was as well that it was shown so late, for it was a demoralising film. The message was simple. George Ward may be a little wrong in not accepting the court's findings, but his rights are sacred and nothing can be done.

We know different. And the strikers know different. It is our business and we must do whatever is necessary to win. We can't expect much from TV, but then the Grunwick strike won't be won by watching TV—so I'll see you at next Monday's picket!

by Mary Ann Stuart

TONIGHT BBC1
OCTOBER 11th
11.05pm

SITA

SITA is an autobiographical novel by Kate Millett, the author of *Sexual Politics*. It is about the breakdown of her love affair with Sita, who comes to dominate their relationship. Like her earlier book *Flying*, Sita is an outgrowth of the violent publicity that followed the publication of *Sexual Politics*, but it's a better book than *Flying*.

Her frankness had for me a consciousness-raising effect which I'm sure is valuable to many women, and valuable, too, to women and men wanting to understand more about themselves and, hopefully, avoid some of the miseries we put each other through when we're 'in love.'

Kate Millett
Virago £1.95
paperback

Tom Robinson Band



'A BAND'S lyrics have gotta be about something, and some of us are trying to make our songs relevant to the lives of our audience. If music can ease a tiny fraction of the prejudice and intolerance in this world, then it's worth trying'. That was Tom Robinson, in an interview in *New Musical Express*.

I like punk rock for its energy and anger, but most of the stuff I've heard is so deafening that you can't make out what they're trying to say. So when we went to hear the Tom Robinson Band in Leeds, we didn't know what to expect.

What a shock we got! The music was terrific - and so was the politics. Everyone was jumping about on their seats, the dance floor suddenly came alive with clenched fist salutes - I've never seen

anything like it.

You could hear every word, and they were spot on. Lines like 'the left is right and the right is wrong - better decide which side you're on', songs against racism and right wing morality, a frightening picture of the possible future called 'Winter of '79' in which the National Front is getting stronger, 'black kids getting crucified - some of us fought and some of us died.'

'Sing if you're glad to be gay' is one of the most bitter songs I've ever heard - an anguished account of gays being harassed, persecuted, their clubs broken into, and gays being beaten up by the boys in blue. One of the best lines is 'They give us page three of the Sun and then call us obscene!' The chorus 'Sing if you're glad to be gay, sing if you're happy that way' is a mixture of gay pride and a tortured cry against repression.

'Right on Sister' is a fast boppy number, really optimistic about how women are on the move, fighting for their rights, becoming more independent and stronger.

The Tom Robinson Band are not some obscure little political group who preach away and get bottles thrown at them. They are becoming quite famous, and have a contract with EMI, one of the giant record companies. *New Musical Express* called them 'the most important new band in Britain' - and I certainly agree.

If you get the chance - do go and see them. One final quote from Tom Robinson: 'Politics isn't party broadcasts and general elections, it's yer kid sister who can't get an abortion, yer best mate getting paki-bashed, or getting sent down for possessing one joint of marijuana, the GLC deciding which bands we can't see... it's everyday life for rock fans, for everyone who hasn't got a cushy job or rich parents.'

Pat Edwards

Male and Female



Men do the fighting
And women do the knitting

A neat division of labour;
The men supply the corpses
And women knit the shrouds.

by GINNY HALL



YOUR VOICE

Private fits and public humiliation

Dear Womens Voice

I AM writing to tell you about the daily discrimination and oppression against epileptics.

Recently I heard about a summer job going in the London Borough of Redbridge for someone to take joint charge of a group of six 'disturbed' kids during the holiday.

I am halfway through a social work qualifying course and was looking for some alternative to the dismal diet of sausages and mince that you get used to when you are on a grant or on the dole.

The fact that I am a qualified teacher, experienced social worker and had already worked as a social worker for Redbridge for 18 months made this job seem like an ideal answer. I was apparently the ideal answer, too, to the interviewers.

Part of the ritual of applying involves the ticking of that box asking if you have ever suffered from epilepsy. Having been

'controlled' for four years and proved my fitness for society by staying in social work, I foresaw none of the problems I used to get.

Imagine my disbelief when I was called back a week later to be told that the doctor, who hadn't even seen me, but who had been quite happy to pass me as fit enough for social work two years previously, considered that I constituted a risk to children.

In case you don't know there's still almost as much mythology flying about about epileptics now as there was in the days when people like me were burnt as witches. More or less everybody is capable of having a fit given the right stimulus. The reasons why people display fits are so various as to defy generalisation. There is no such thing as the 'epileptic personality'. I am sick of people who don't know I'm one, telling me that you can

smell them, that that they look sneaky, that they're aggressive, unstable, weak-minded.

Although I only had two fits (both thoughtfully in private), the doctors insisted that I interrupt a teaching career and stay off work for a whole year for the purposes of 'observation'.

Faced with living on £11.15 per week sick benefit, faced with the stigma of not being allowed to work, faced with advice from a top consultant to 'get a job with Remploy' and give up any ideas of working in a responsible job, faced with being unable to sign an HP agreement (this time because of my condition of being a woman, not an epileptic), it was sink or swim. I joined IS (as SWP was then called).

The majority of the difficulties that an epileptic has to face have to do with how, like so many other oppressed groups, we don't fit in with the bosses' picture of healthy workers out of whom they can squeeze as much labour as they like to add to their stockpile of profits.

Penny Hammond

Your replies please...

Dear WV,

The policy of Womens Voice appears to be one of an ultra-feminist bent, and as such is constantly telling women of their oppression by men and the State (and telling them, and telling them, issue after issue). But doing this the opposite to the desired effect is achieved, ie aggression rather than agreement.

I cannot believe that WV will grow within the true working class, until it changes some of its views. Let's have more articles and letters from these supposedly oppressed women who read Womens Voice, those working class women who watch 'Coronation Street' and enjoy cooking!

Judith Condon's article on Elvis could have been found in any women's magazine. How about a column from the TRUE working class woman up here in the North, instead of the 'London-orientated' bulletin that calls itself WV, and seems to be written by some middle class women playing at being working class.

Anyway, enough of playing at journalism. I'd better rush into the kitchen to cook my man's tea, after all, the chauvinist mug has only been working all day, to contribute towards our home!

**Christine Fellowes
SALFORD SWP**

A pair of walking lungs

Dear WV,

I've just come back from a visit to the Brook Advisory Centre (for contraceptive advice) feeling angry, embarrassed and bewildered.

Angry because I've been told they won't give me any more smear tests for cancer—I've had two clear ones in four years and that's my lot. (Of course, I've still got the 'freedom' to pay to have them done privately). Anyway, I was told I should be grateful since the Family Planning Clinic have stopped doing them altogether for single

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... Coventry-st. W1
... MAINTENANCE £3000. City
... office. Good refs & exp
... reqd. Age 40/50. Phone
... Kave. 628 7451/9. Alangate
... State Agency
... MAINTENANCE person: 555
... Please contact Mr
... Edmondson, 629 7854

... in writing to
... Ltd, 74 Borough High-st.,
... 01-407 5667 or telephonic
... EXPERIENCED
... typist. Small friendly firm
... am-5 pm. Excellent terms. 9
... Exp

... shorthand
... am-5 pm. Excellent terms. 9
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... FEMALE Cleaners required
... Heathrow Airport. 6 nights
... £60 per week. Work in-
... cludes ladies toilets. Tel.
... 739 5873.

... FILING CLERK work avail-
... 353. Phone Andrea
... 3232. Alfred Marks
... Star Bureau
... GENERAL SALES Ledger
... Clerk. W. Sale. Free. Lunche-
... 837 982.

... INTERV
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... at least

... MALE CLEANERS required.
... Heathrow Airport. 6 nights.
... £81 per week or 6 days at
... £70 per week. Work includes
... male toilets. Tel. 739 5873.

... TRAINERS 2-3
... MALES. Qualified. Mine

I found these two ads in the Evening Standard. Out of curiosity I rang the company and asked about the vacancy for female cleaners. I was told that the hours would be from 9pm to 6am. I then asked a male friend to query about the vacancy for male cleaners. He was told the hours would be from 9pm to 6am. I find it odd then that the male cleaners are getting £81 a week and the female only £60. I understood the company's name was 'Humphrey'. Most cleaners at Heathrow airport are of Indian origin but it does not explain entirely how the company can get away with it.

**Marie-Laure Poyet
London, N16**

Only some get caught

Dear WV,

On 15 September my husband went to prison for the first time for receiving. We have never been separated since we got married 18 years ago, and he's never been out of a job. I don't think anyone could realise what a terrible experience this is unless they've been through it

themselves.

When he was arrested in March the police also took myself and my fifteen year old daughter to the police station. She was held in a prison cell for three hours.

It was obvious that my husband's firm colluded with the police because they adver-

tised his job before the case was even heard. When he appeared in court the first thing the prosecuting solicitor could do was to point out that my husband's name is foreign - as if that has anything to do with it.

I never realised the police are liars until now: they put words into my husband's mouth that he could never have said. I hate the police now. After my husband was sentenced no-one told me I could visit him. I had to find out for myself.

Now I have to live on £23 a week, with a rent of £10.30. I have had no new clothes and have no winter shoes. But the worst thing is being separated. I feel empty and every day feels like a year. I feel I don't want to know anyone anymore, but I'm involved in a fight on my estate, and I feel I have to keep fighting.

All this has made me feel even more bitter against the system. It's the prisoner's wife who is sentenced as well.

You can't get by these days without fiddling, and everyone does it, including the police. But the bosses and the judges don't admit it. They stick together.

Womens Voice reader

YOUR VOICE

women.

I felt embarrassed yet again at having to refuse a heartfelt request from the receptionist for some cash to save the clinic from closing. They have provided a good service, especially for unmarried women and I really would hate to see them going broke - but what a lousy bloody system that makes one set of paupers (the clinic) ask another lot (the patients) for money they haven't got, for a service as basic as choosing when you want kids.

And I'm still confused as I keep getting told different things by my GPs on the one hand and the Brook doctors on the other.

Since I get chronic bronchitis I'm often put on anti-biotics (ampicillin) for long periods. The family planning doctors tell me it makes the Pill unsafe: it

can cause 'breakthrough bleeding'. Sometimes you don't even get that kind of warning. The antibiotics can make you get 'intestinal hurry', so that you are unable to digest the Pill enough for it to work. And I've found this out after two years of being at risk.

Last June, when I landed in the City Hospital chest ward, I told the Professor that he had cheerfully prescribed this drug while I was on the Pill, without asking me. He looked bemusedly at me, said he hadn't heard there was any risk of conception, and walked on.

They just see you as a pair of walking lungs, and this side of socialism, doctors have neither the time nor training to see a complete person in front of them.

Penny Packham
EDINBURGH SWP

Don't do that here

Dear WV,

A few months ago, our second child, Eleanor, was born. During her birth, I remember the midwife saying 'It's stubborn, it must be a boy.' That was just one more sexist remark; they had started some weeks before her birth. I decided to breast-feed Eleanor, and would like to explain why.

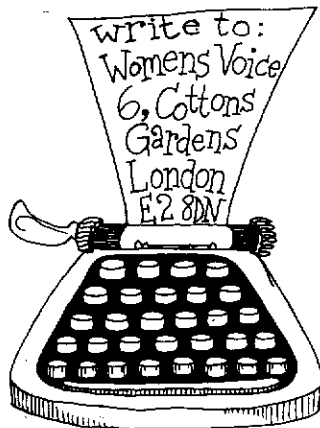
Women's breasts have a function - to feed a child if the occasion arises, but this has become of secondary importance in our society. The primary function has become to promote the sale of cars, cigarettes and a vast range of other products.

The male dominated media continually bombard us with their image of a woman's body that is defined as attractive and 'sexy'. The idea of using their breasts to feed a child has become unpalatable to many women (and men). I found myself falling into this trap - would my breasts sag as a result of feeding Eleanor? The fact that I could recognise how my attitudes to my own body were manipulated in the interests of capitalism enabled me to overcome this thought, and I decided I would breast feed my child.

Another thought concerned the hypocritical way in which a woman's breasts are seen. If it's page three of the Sun, or an advert for car tyres, then naked breasts are OK.

But if a woman is feeding a baby in a public place, then eyebrows are raised, feet shuffle - the reaction may often be one of embarrassment, or as if to say, 'You shouldn't be doing *that* here for all the world to see - creep away where we can forget that breasts aren't just for cheap thrills.' Why should women be intimidated into feeling that if they breast-feed they should hide themselves away? Our bodies are our own, not the property of the media, advertising, or men.

Kate Gordon.
Reading.



Make sure your letters arrive in time, by Friday 18 November for the December issue.

WOMENS VOICE EVICTED

Photo: Syd Shelton



IN RETALIATION for the hounding we gave the National Front in Lewisham they came round in the middle of the night and fire bombed the head offices of the Socialist Workers Party.

Now that we have spent weeks rewiring, fixing telephones, painting, the landlords have come round to finish off the work the Front began. They're evicting us.

We rarely see them. They just collect the rent - about £25,000 over the eight years we've been here. But as soon as they heard about the fire they were straight round.

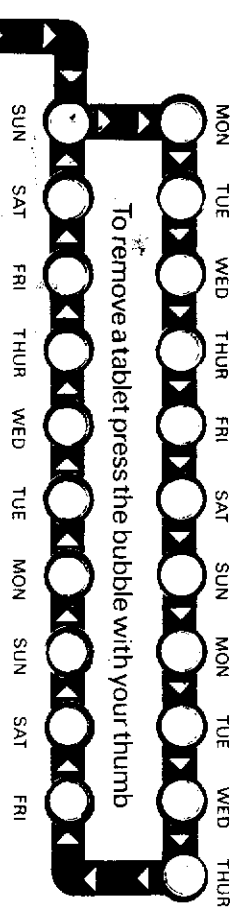
We have four weeks to get out. We hope the move won't upset things. We hope we can find somewhere new in the area.

We are hoping to buy a small place that all the various sections of the SWP can cram into: Womens Voice, Flame, our head office and so on. Then at least we can't be evicted again. In the long run it will be cheaper than paying rent. But in the short run we need a lot of money.

If you can take a collection, organise a raffle, a jumble sale, do it now. Every Womans Voice reader has some talent she can exploit for our benefit!

Get your donations in double quick time to: SWP Anti-Nazi Fund, 6 Cottons Gardens, London, E2.

HOW SAFE IS THE PILL?



Two studies have recently been published which point to some of the dangers from taking the Pill. One, by the Royal College of General Practitioners, studied 46,000 women over a eight year period. The Family Planning Association in Oxford studied 17,000 women over five years.

They both came to similar conclusions: The Pill may be responsible for some women

dying of diseases of the cardio-vascular system (the heart and the blood vessels).

To put the findings of these studies in perspective, we have to look closer at two things: what sort of risks do we run in the course of our daily lives, quite apart from taking the Pill; and what precautions had been taken at the time when many of the women in the study started taking the Pill to make sure that the already known side-effects would not endanger their lives?

First of all, in both studies, more women died of cancer than any of the cardio-vascular diseases, and there was no difference here whether they were on the Pill or not; in fact slightly fewer Pill-takers got cancer.

Secondly, the risk of dying from a disease related to smoking is almost 9 per 1,000 of the population. Smoking is responsible for 35,000 deaths every year. Roughly 4 million women use the Pill; at most this might cause an extra 400 deaths a year. Breast cancer causes 10,000 deaths a year, road accidents 4,004 and accidental poisoning by drugs and medicine 674. If you decide not to have a baby, or delay your first pregnancy until you are thirty-five or more years old, you are four more times more likely to get breast cancer than if you have your first baby early. This is about the same risk that a Pill-taker is said to run of dying of heart or blood-vessel diseases.

It has been known for quite some time now that if you increase the level of the hormone oestrogen in a woman's body, there is more likelihood that the blood will clot in places where it is not wanted. Clots of blood are very useful when you cut yourself or have a tooth out, but if they form inside the blood vessels and block the normal flow of blood, trouble can be caused. If they travel round the body to the brain, heart or lungs, such a blockage is much more likely to happen. Yet

of the nine women who died in the smaller FPA study, only three had been entirely free of cardio-vascular problems at the time they went on the Pill! It is impossible to tell from the way the larger, Royal College study, is reported how many of these women were in a similar position. How could these women ever have been allowed to take the Pill in the first place?

The Pill was first tested on human beings in the island of Pierto Rico, a protectorate of the United States where the people are very poor. Adequate research takes time, and time is money when it comes to profits. The drug companies were so anxious to market their product that they did not wait for the results of any long-term studies. Only now have they become available. Little surprise that they are controversial.

So doctors have been prescribing the Pill for women who needed a reliable method of contraception but who are now shown to be in a high risk category. Many women were not properly monitored for side effects whilst on the Pill; others will have concealed problems from their doctors due to their need to avoid pregnancy; all of these facts naturally increase the 'risk' figures in the study.

We can draw some conclusions: more research is still needed. For example, the effects of the progesterone-only Pill may be less dangerous for women predisposed to clotting disorders.

There are serious risks for some women, especially those suffering from cardio-vascular problems, and for women nearing the menopause (when other little-understood changes are taking place in the hormone balance of the woman's body). These risks can be avoided by regular, careful examination and consultation with their doctor, family planning clinic, or well-woman clinic, as to what is best for them. But of course, these are precisely the sort of facilities being hit most hard by the present cuts in the hospital services.

Drugs are too dangerous and too important to be left in the hands of greedy private companies. The fact that the risk to most Pill-users is small should not be used as an excuse for not stepping up research into a truly safe and convenient contraceptive. Women with health problems need such a contraceptive more than anyone else, not less, and yet at the moment it is these women who must think most carefully about taking the Pill.

And most important of all, there will be plenty of women who feel after they have gone into all the pros and cons, that they do not choose to take a drug which is still not fully understood, every night, year after year. Now more than ever, these women are justified in asking for free abortion to be available immediately on demand (the earlier the abortion, the safer it is to the woman). This is the only way of ensuring that women using other forms of contraception can avoid unwanted pregnancy.

No woman should be forced to take the Pill because it is the only one hundred per cent safe method, if she suspects it may damage her health. Nor should women or men be rushed into having themselves sterilised. A choice of contraceptive method backed up by abortion on demand has always been the ideal system, and now it is shown to be even more necessary.

Mel Bartley
Gwen Tufnell

Risk of death from cardio-vascular diseases associated with the pill

Up to 34 years old: 1 extra woman in every 20,000 pill takers
35 to 44 years old: 1 extra woman in every 3,000 pill takers
45 to 49 years old: 1 extra woman in every 700 pill takers.

Let's get it in perspective

The Family Planning Association study was done in Oxford, an area with a higher standard of living, more middle-class people, better climate and less pollution than the average for Britain as a whole.

Their figures show:

- ★ If you are on the pill you have a 1 in 2012 chance of dying
- ★ If you use a diaphragm or IUD you have a 1 in 2368 chance of dying
- ★ These figures are true for this comparatively rich health conscious group studied.
- ★ For the general population whether you use the pill or not the chances of dying early (before you reach 65) are 1 in 1090.

WV Meetings

● **Aberystwyth WV discussion groups.** Every other Tuesday. Farmers Side Bar.

● **Black Country Womens Voice** meets fortnightly, Sunday afternoons, 2.30 at 27 Glen Court, Compton Road, Wolverhampton. Children very welcome. Phone Wolverhampton 23233 for information about Womens Voice activities and meetings.

● **Canterbury Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on Tuesdays. 8.00pm at the Jolly Sailor, Northgate. November 1st... Rape. November 15th... Nursery Campaign. For more information or babysitters ring Lyn Whitstable 263051

● **Cardiff WV groups** meets at 58 Bridge Street, SWP Bookshop, Cardiff.

● **Edinburgh WV.** For information about WV work, contact Susie at Book Marx, 130 Morrison Street, Edinburgh. Open 10am-6pm everyday and most evenings.

● **Lea Valley Womens Voice Group public meeting:** What is Pornography? Speaker: David Widgery. Monday 14 November, 8pm, The Beehive Pub, Stoneleigh Road, Tottenham, N17. (Nearest Tube Seven Sisters). All welcome. If you need a babysitter, please ring Mary on 802 9563

● **South East London Womens Voice** meets alternate Mondays at the Womens Centre (above the Task Force shop) Deptford High Street, SE10, 8.00pm. Further details from Peggy 853 2070 (day)/Anne 855 1920 (eves.)

● **South West London Womens Voice** meets alternative Tuesdays at 7.45, details from your WV seller: 15 November: What a pair of knockers! Aileen Knowles will speak on Sexism. 29th November: Women at Work. Speaker: Linda Quinn. Monday 5 December: The Womens Movement Across the World, speaker Joanna Rollo. Battersea Library, Lavender Hill, SW11. 13 December: Discussion - bring a bottle, something to eat, questions, problems, complaints, suggestions about Womens Voice.

...Wolverhampton
Womens Voice Social Evening on Friday 4 November at 7.30pm, in The George, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton. Film: 'Blow for Blow' followed by disco. Creche, raffle, tickets (double) £1.50, (single) £1. unemployed half price.

...sexual politics, pornography, Eastern Europe, world struggles. Social evening on Saturday. Accommodation and creche available. £1 for the weekend. Reduced rates available for claimants and pensioners. London WV groups are invited to come and bring their friends

At the Womens Centre, Deptford High Street (above the Task Force shop) Trains to New Cross tube or Deptford mainline station. Further information and tickets available from: Ann 855 1920 or Peggy 853 2070 (3.30 - 7.30).

Gay Groups

● **SWP Gay Group** The International Gay Struggle - Tuesday November 15th 8.00pm, University of London Union, Malet St, London, WC1. Ring Richard 01-790 2454 for further details

● **SWP Gay Group** meets every other Monday. Ring Richard 790 2454 for details

Help needed

● **Psychology student** wants help from lesbians to complete a questionnaire for her PhD thesis. Confidentiality assured: help a Marxist-feminist in her research. Forms from: Nike Koessl, c/o Bristol Gay Switchboard, 32 Hill Street, Totterdown, Bristol, BS3 4TW

● **Feminist photographer** wants part-time help in caring for small baby in exchange for room, board and extras. Suit someone on dole and/or doing unpaid political, artistic or literary work. Ring Michdelann 607 4728.

...Wolverhampton
Womens Voice Social Evening on Friday 4 November at 7.30pm, in The George, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton. Film: 'Blow for Blow' followed by disco. Creche, raffle, tickets (double) £1.50, (single) £1. unemployed half price.

● **York Womens Voice Dance:** 17 November, De Grey Rooms. The Feelies, Brownie Dyke and disco. Tickets £1.

● **Rockparty Benefit:** Dance, 8pm Saturday 10 December, with the Milk, SA Disco, at the Recreation Hall, King Edward Memorial Hospital, West Ealing, W13. Admission: advance ticket only 50p, from SAP or 75p at door. Write to SAP, 67 New Road, Bedfont, TW14 8HR

● **No Return to the Thirties:** A benefit for the completion of a film about the Right to Work march 1977, to be held at the 'Other Cinema' Tottenham Street, London, on Saturday November at 6.30pm

Union Maids: by Julia Reichert & James Klein (USA). The story unfolds through interviews with three remarkable women who came from the rank and file to become organisers during the 1930's. Documentary 45 mins. and **Land without Bread:** by Luis Brunuel, 1932. 29 mins EST, and Extracts from the **Right to Work Film:** 17 mins, and speaker. Tickets £1.50, £1 to unemployed. Please support this benefit. Rank and File Films. **Bar and Food available.**

● **Can you read, write, type?** Can you help us to produce Womens Voice? We always need help, whatever your talents. Please phone or write to Margaret Renn at 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2 (tel., 739 1878)

WV AT IS GOING ON campaigns meetings



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of the nine women who die of cardio-vascular problems went on the Pill! It is important the way the larger, Royal Society reported how many of the women in similar position. How many have ever been allowed to take the Pill in first place?

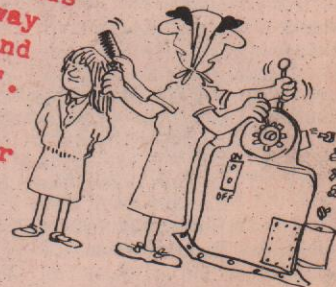
The Pill was first tested in the island of Puerto Rico in the United States where the women were poor. Adequate rest and time is money when you are a housewife. Two companies were involved in that trial.

1978



"Being working class to me is being born with a pair of hands which are practically withered away by the time you are finished - and you've got nothing to show for it".

the Spike - housewife/nightcleaner



You'll never do while

If you need advice

Contact your nearest Aid Centre. You can contact

England and Wales National Women's Organisation, 51 Chalcott Road, London NW1 (01 586 0104)

Northern Ireland Telephone Belfast 66, or Londonderry 69279 or Coleraine 4141 ext



Have you heard you tell me how you'll pull the bosses down



JANUARY				FEBRUARY				MARCH			
9	16	23	30	6	13	20	27	6	13	20	27
10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	7	14	21	28
11	18	25		8	15	22		8	15	22	29
12	19	26		9	16	23		9	16	23	30
13	20	27		10	17	24		10	17	24	31
14	21	28		11	18	25		11	18	25	
15	22	29		12	19	26		12	19	26	

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