

# womens VOICE

20p April '79 Issue 28



**STOP THE TORY THIEF  
THATCHER THE SNATCHER!**

LONDON MAY 19

# UNVEIL THE REVOLUTION!



## Womens Voice national demonstration SUPPORT OUR SISTERS IN IRAN

Womens Voice calls on all women's organisations to join with us in making this demonstration a success. If you want to be involved write to Womens Voice Box 82, London, E2.



## Oppose the Concordat

Concorde cost us millions, the Social Contract cost us billions and now we have the CONcordat. This is the new Labour Party TUC Social Contract. It's aim is to smash our right to strike and to control our own pay deals. Labour hope it will win them the general election. If the Concordat is put into effect the low paid will suffer most, and that means us women. Rank and file trade unionists have written a pamphlet which explains the dangers. Why not send off for a copy? Write to Anti Concordat, 265a Seven Sisters Road, London, N4. Price 20p & 10p p&p Bulk rate 10 for £1 50 (post free).

## Where to buy books

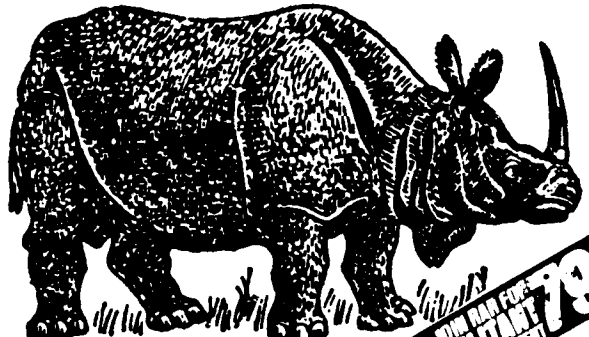
- The Bookplace**  
13 Peckham High St SE15  
01 701 1757  
10.-7 except Thurs. 10-1 and Sat 10-6  
Large selection of multi racial childrens books, feminist/ socialist literature and open publishing project.
- Wedge Co-operative**  
13 High St., Coventry CU1 5RE.  
(0203 25634  
Opening hours Mon-Fri 10-5.30 Sat 10-5  
Wide selection of feminist books. Mail order for all left books (add 10% min 25p)  
Sale or return bookstalls midlands area/cafe/exhibition space
- The Other Bookshop**  
328 Upper St London N1 Tel: 01 226 0571  
Open Mon-Fri 9.30 - 7 Sat 10.30-6  
Large selection of feminist and socialist publications  
Mail order service.
- The Public House Bookshop**  
21 Little Preston Street, Brighton. Tel: 28357. 10.15 am to 5.30 every day except Sunday. Small tea bar and room for use as reading room, or performing area.
- Key Books**  
25 Essex Street  
Birmingham, 5 021 692 1965  
9.30am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday. Wide range of socialist books.
- Days of Hope**  
115 Westgate Road, Newcastle, NE1 4AG  
Telephone 29057  
Monday, Tuesday Friday 10 to 5.30pm. Thursday 10am to 7.30pm. Saturday 9.30am. to 5pm. Non-profit making bookshop of Tyneside. Tyneside Socialist Centre. Bookstalls provided on request.
- Full Marks Bookshop**  
110 Cheltenham Road, Bristol 6, 40491. Monday to Saturday 10 am to 6pm. Socialist and feminist books, magazines and local contacts.
- Sisterwrite**  
190 Upper Street, London N1 /01 359 2573. Monday to Friday 11am to 7pm, Saturday 10am to 6pm. British and American feminist books. Mail order service.
- The Corner Bookshop**  
162 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2.0532 454125 10am to 6pm weekdays, 11 am to 5pm Saturdays. Wide range of feminist books.
- Books Plus**  
23 Lewisham Way, London, SE14 Buys, sells, exchanges second hand books, Picture framing service, and local crafts on sale.
- Corner House Bookshop**  
14 Endell Street, London, WC2. 01 836 9960. 10am to 7 pm Monday to Saturday, Special section and information service on education.
- Grass Roots Books**  
Newton Street, Piccadilly, and 109 Oxford Road, All Saints, Manchester. 061 236 3112/3 for both shops. 10am to 6pm Monday to Friday, 5.30pm Saturdays. Photographic gallery (Newton Street). Trade union mail order lists available. US imports and reduced price books.
- Other Branch Books**  
42 Bath Street, Leamington Spa Warwickshire 0926 28467  
Open Mon-Sat. 10am - 6pm  
Full coverage of socialist and alternative books, with a very wide feminist range. Five minutes from the railway station.
- First of May**  
45, Nicklay Street, off High Street, Edinburgh 1. 031 556 6963  
Open Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm  
Now has largest selection of feminist books in Scotland. Exhibition space in back

Rock Against Racism presents:  
**Militant Entertainment Tour Extravaganza!**  
**Alexandra Palace Saturday 14 April**  
**4.30pm- 12.00pm**

Tube to Wood Green, then bus W3 or walk from Wood Green British Rail

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Tickets - £1.70 (in advance\*); £1.95 (on the door); £1.70 (with dole card)  
\* Advance tickets from - 'Rough Trade' Notting Hill, 'Ace Records' Islington, 'Honky Tonk' Records, Kentish Town, 'Small Wonder' Walthamstow. Free creche available  
Organised by Men Against Sexism



SONS OF WHORE  
ROCK AGAINST RACISM  
ENTERTAINMENT 79

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**Election Special: Womens Voice** looks at Tory policy in areas where they have control through local councils and talks to women who would suffer if they are voted back into power. We try and answer the question burning in many people's minds — what is the alternative to rotten Labour and Tory hell, **pages 4 to 10.**

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Please send letters, articles, news to us by 21st April.



# IF VOTING COULD CHANGE THE SYSTEM IT WOULD BE ILLEGAL

"If voting could change the system it would be illegal" says the graffiti in one London toilet.

It reflects the cynicism and disillusionment that many people feel with the parliamentary game. But like most clever quips it doesn't solve the problem.

What do we do during the election campaign? Should we vote at all? Which way should we vote?

*Womens Voice* argues: Vote, vote Labour, and at the same time work to organise an alternative socialist party which will fight for our interests, for womens interests, for workers interests.

'A Tory government will make people fight back' Every one knows that a Tory government will be much worse for us than Labour. A Tory government has no interests within the trade unions and would openly oppose them, rather than making deals and compromises like a Labour government does.

On economic issues the difference between Labour and Tory is a matter of degree. The Tories will be nastier and more prepared to use the law, to imprison trade unionists, while Labour will go for dirty deals under the table to discipline workers.

On ideological issues, however, there is a world of difference between Labour & Tory particularly on womens issues.

On issues like abortion, contraception, child care facilities and education the contrast is enormous. Of



abortion and who believe that womens place is in the home. Of course there are supporters of both parties who think full time nurseries are simply a way of allowing women to opt out of their child caring responsibilities.

But as a party the Conservatives are infinitely more reactionary than Labour. Anti-abortion, pro-hanging and anti-working class, the flowery hat brigade are not just androids out of a nightmare. Their anti-progressive views are violently anti-working class. Rich women will always be able to afford abortions, private clinics and nannies. Working class women will only be able to afford them if birth control and child care facilities are available free as part of our social services.

Some people argue that precisely because the Tories will be worse that will make us organise and fight back. But it's not true. Repression works. High unemployment *does* discipline those workers in work to accept conditions that they would not otherwise put up with. High unemployment *does* drive women back into the home. Anti-abortion laws *do* drive women to back street abortionists and individual solutions. Lack of facilities *do* repress people's sexuality and makes their lives miserable.

A Tory victory would

on the defensive. That's why the press, the stock exchange, and the law and order lobby are all calling for a Tory government.

*'Labour are just the same as the Tories - there's no alternative - so we should abstain'*

There *are* differences between Labour and the Tories. One is openly anti-working class, one is supposedly pro-workers. But some people argue that the difference is not really big enough for us to make a sensible choice. If you've been sold out in a recent dispute, made homeless by a Labour council or watched your local schools lose teachers faster than Dr Who travels through space, then you may be inclined to sympathise with the view that says you can't vote Labour either because they've been acting like anti-working class swine too.

It's an argument that is born out of despair. It comes from those who see no alternative to the present chaos. If there is nothing better, then one may as well be as bad as another. There's no choice.

If on the other hand, you believe that working class women and men can build an alternative then the difference between Labour and Tory may be small but it is vital.

*Womens Voice* believes

their own lives, *can* run society and *could* do it a lot more efficiently than the corrupt hypocrites who claim to represent our interests. We know we can't get that just by wishing it. We have to fight and organise it.

And it is easier to organise and fight for workers interests and for socialism under a Labour government than under a Tory government. Both will have to screw workers interests to make the system work. But Labour will try to do it with a carrot. The Tories will do it with a boot.

The carrot undermines our confidence less. It leaves our organisations weak but intact. It's the lesser of two evils.

Both Labour and Tory will make a play for the women's vote. Margaret Thatcher will sympathise with the difficulties of the housewife and the shopper, threatened by high prices and shortages caused by nasty trade unionists. Labour will point to its laws on womens rights, on equal pay, anti-discrimination, its Equal Opportunities Commission and its concern for the family.

By emphasising what unites us as women they will obscure what divides us - *CLASS*. Labour claims to be fighting for workers interests. Tories represent big business. But whatever they say they will both be forced to implement policies against working class people. The Tories will do it more crudely than Labour. Neither can solve our prob-



**WANDSWORTH**

Things may be bad under Labour, but there's no doubt that they'll be much worse under Tories. We've had 12 months of Tory rule in Wandsworth. They were voted in on their promise to hold down the rates.

But they're trying to make the working people of Wandsworth pay for it. Ever since their first day in office it's been a policy of - if it's good for the people - cut it, chop it, close it.

Nursery facilities cut back. Proposed nurseries not built. The introduction of nursery fees into council run nurseries.

There have been attempts to close law centres, community agencies, a children's library, a swimming pool, a children's home. There has been an attempt to stop funding the abortion day care unit.

The price of meals on wheels is up. Gardening and decorating services for the elderly have been cut back. Direct works have been run down, with many redundancies for building workers. New and old council houses are being sold so that there's no transfer for people wanting to get out of high rise flats or needing new houses.

There have been dawn raids to take away and sell the furniture of those in rent areas

And £2.50 is going on the rents.

The Tories have attacked the young, the elderly and those in need. But the rich ratepayers are doing very well at our expense - no rate increases this year. We're fighting back, but we'd much rather be without them.

Marion Upchurch

**GLC**

The Tory controlled Greater London Council came into office in May 1977. They have embarked on a disastrous policy in housing, that has done little to help those in need.

They have:

**Cut**

nearly all housing schemes programmed in outer London

**Cut**

the programme for house and flat designs from 5000 in 1974 to under 1300 this year

**Sold off**

new housing estates privately. All had received government funding. Many were purpose built for pensioners. Since many were sold under market price an estimated £10 million have been lost

**Gave away**

derelict property on a three year no mortgage basis to those who queued the longest or entered into a lottery. Houses were not given to the most needy

**Sold off**

land in inner and outer London to developers so reducing future housing stock

**Gave**

existing GLC housing estates to local boroughs to manage and collect rents

**Spent**

many thousands of pounds advertising houses for sale to tenants offering them the chance of buying their own homes

**Introduced**

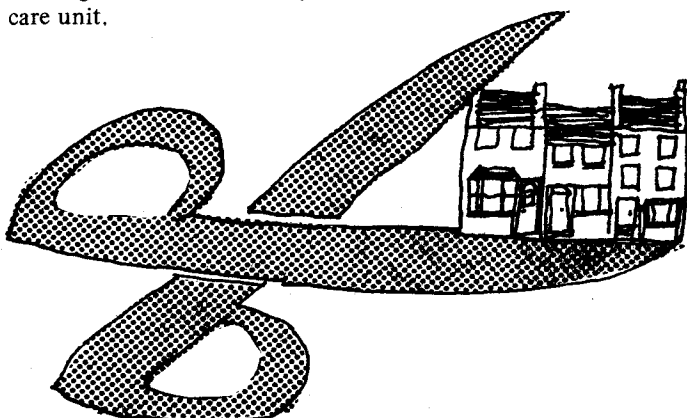
a system of self management on some housing estates. (This is where a tenant is elected to be the one who the tenants go to with their complaints and requests for housing repairs. That way the tenants end up holding the individual tenant responsible instead of dealing with and therefore blaming the local council office

**Cut**

staff in architects departments over 25%

So what does this mean for us?

fewer council houses, longer queues now, council houses in the best areas sold off. More people in tower blocks and fewer gardens.



# TORY BRITAIN- UNFIT FOR THE OLD THE POOR AND THE NEEDY

GLC Brentford Dock Housing Scheme is sited on the River Thames and the river Brent. It is flanked by Kew Gardens and Stn Park. The six hundred flats and houses are built around a mini marina. Many of the flats were designed for pensioners. Last May five hundred of these dwellings were given to an estate agent to sell.

Three bedroom houses in that area fetch over £50,000.

## TAMESIDE

We've already had enough of the Tories in Tameside, a district of greater Manchester. When they won the local elections in May 1976, they messed up the education of 3000 school children.

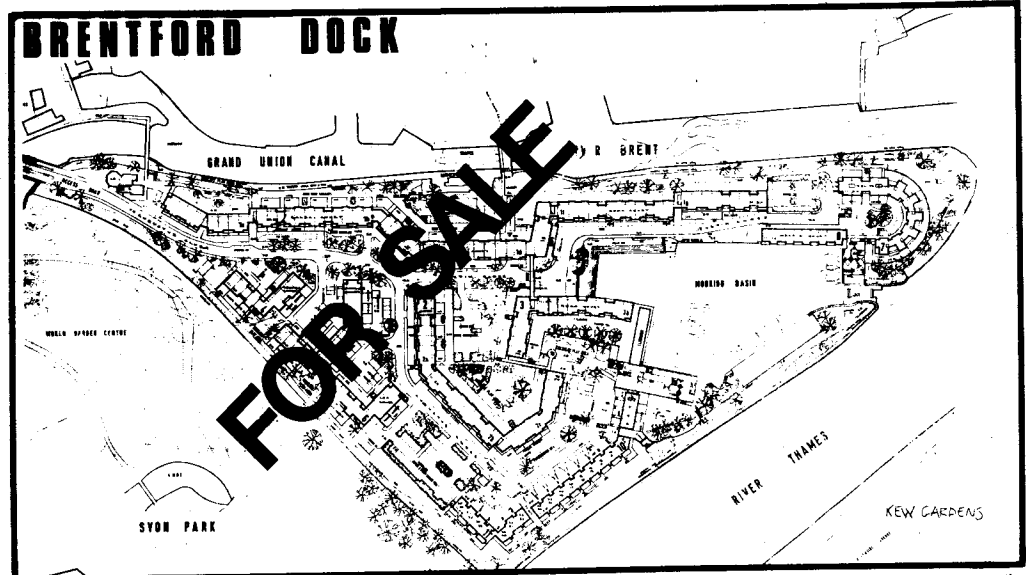
All of these children had been allocated places in the newly formed comprehensive schools in the area. But the Tameside Tories had decided to reintroduce the selective system of grammar and secondary schools.

Spurred on by the National Association For Freedom, the Tories sent out letters through a local estate agent's office, asking parents to apply for the 240 grammar school places. The Tories broke into school filing cabinets and employed volunteer selectors to choose 250 children from the sometimes incomplete record cards.

To add insult to injury, the majority of grammar school places were for boys - in a three to one ratio!

The parents formed an action committee and let the Tories know what we thought of them by picketing the offices where the selection took place. NALGO, NUT and the parents all fought together to stop this discrimination against girls and to try and get back to the comprehensive system. We failed in the latter aim - after all ordinary people don't have the House of Lords on their side!

Pat Jones, Tameside Rank and File Teachers



## CARDIFF

Though we have two Labour MPs in Cardiff, James Callaghan and George Thomas, the county council is overwhelmingly Tory. And it shows.

The Asian community have time and time again been refused planning permission for a mosque because of 'parking problems'. If the Tory council acts like this with a Labour government in power, what will Mrs Thatcher's racist policies do?

Though Labour's attitude to the economic situation has been to cut services because they say they can't afford them, the Tories had the idea that people can stand on their own two feet and if left to themselves, succeed.

It was this sort of attitude we met when *Womens Voice* delivered our free school milk petition to the Tory controlled council last July. The councillors said that these children did not need 'extra' milk, that people shouldn't have children if they can't give them breakfast.

They started talking about a means test for free milk. They then voted out free school milk 66-14 (even though it would have cost them *nothing* because of the huge milk surplus in the Common Market).

At least the Labour councillors got up and spoke

about the various surveys done which show that quite a few children have no breakfast, about the benefits in providing calcium etc and voted for free school milk.

Theresa Goss

## CALDERDALE

Calderdale is a dying area of Yorkshire. It has an ageing population because most young people have to leave the area to go and find work.

There are a high number of kids in care, and a large number of old people living on their own.

This means that a great deal of money should be given to the social services so that those with special needs can be properly cared for. But the Tories have done the opposite.

They planned to cut the budget by three million pounds. But after a vigorous campaign, this was reduced to one million pounds.

## The Young

Westgarth nursery school to close. The nursery will be sold and the proceeds kept.

A £1000 cut in the money set aside for buying new play equipment. Cut in the money spent on school meals - that means cheaper and less nutritious food.

Reduction in the number of school clerical assistants and welfare assistants. That means fewer jobs and fewer free clothes and shoes being given to poorer children.

Community service officer cut - s/he used to work with kids who had problems. Cut in the grant given to voluntary run youth clubs. Library budget cut by 27% - which brings the book buying budget to 40% below the level recommended by the Department of Education. This is the worst national record in the country.

## The Old

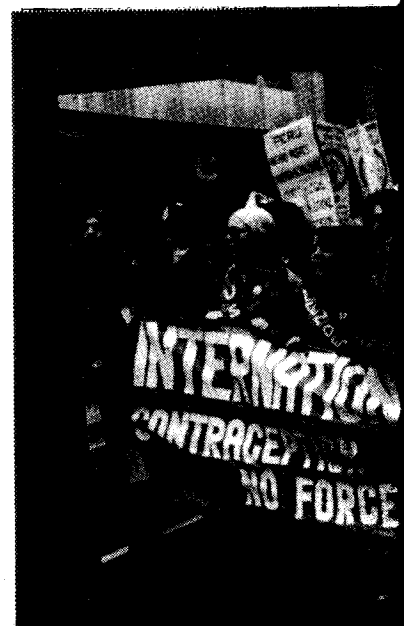
Daycare centres charges to go up by 20%.

Home help charges to go up.

Meals on wheels to go up an extra 5p.

Calderdale proves that the Tories have no interest in the young, the old, the poor.

Christina Potrykus



*'If one has no religious convictions, it is, I suppose permissible to say that a woman may do as she wishes with her body as far as sexual intercourse is concerned. That is a view with*

*which I personally profoundly disagree. But even if one accepts this view, once the woman becomes pregnant that right ceases.'*

Mrs Elaine Kellet-Bowmann,  
Tory MP for Lancaster

## **MORE NHS CUTS MEAN BACKSTREET ABORTIONS**

Birmingham is the second city in terms of industry and physical expansion. Yet when it comes to facilities for women's health, we are very backward.

Only 13 per cent of women who want abortions have them performed by the National Health Service.

The main reason for this appallingly low percentage have been cuts in the National Health Service. Women's health, particularly abortions are not thought important enough to be a priority. The other reason was the attitude of consultant gynaecologist Professor McLaren and his senior staff. Professor McLaren bitterly resisted our struggle for the right to have abortions.

Professor McLaren has left, but his replacement has not made any changes.

There are proposals to open an abortion daycare centre at St Chads Hospital, Hadley Road, Birmingham. But there has been a lot of opposition to this and a final decision has not yet been made. SPUC and LIFE held an anti-abortion demo outside the proposed centre. Three of us from *Womens Voice* went to stage a counter demo. We talked and argued with the anti-abortionists, despite being greatly hindered by the police.

Unfortunately St Chads and the Brook Advisory Centre are in the same constituency as arch Tory Jill Knight!

Women's rights in Birmingham have made very slow progress under Labour, but if the Tories gain power such slow advances will stop altogether.

If the Tories get into power, we will lose all the benefits which the amended abortion law brought, and the help which the Brook clinic provides — even if it does exist on a shoestring budget.

The Labour government has done us few favours. Nurseries have closed and we still have not achieved safe, free, reliable contraception and abortion on demand.

But under the Tories our plight would be even worse. We must desperately fight to return the Labour government. But we must ask a price for our support. Women's issues should be a part and parcel of election issues and we should call for our demands to be secured on Labour's return to office.

Julia Garbolinska

## **IF THEY TAKE ANY MORE AWAY THERE WILL BE NOTHING LEFT**

Margaret Thatcher went down on record on January 7, 1979, as saying that she would tax social security payments. She reckons that a family of five, three kids with two unemployed parents, get so many benefits that they can 'afford' to be taxed. How many families do you know who are well off on social security?

Just as worrying is the statement by Knutsford's Tory MP, Jock Bruce Jardine, in the *Daily Telegraph* on March 29. In an article entitled 'Where the axe must fall' Jardine explains that at the moment pensions are linked to wages and prices — whatever is the higher. Social security is linked to the national average wage increase. Labour introduced this system so that social security payments are increased annually. If wages have risen from 10 to 15 per cent in the past year, then so would social security payments.

Jock Bruce Jardine, who Thatcher described as 'Cabinet material', and who could quite possibly be the next Minister for Social Services, want to do away with this automatic increase. He says, 'that index-linked payments would have to go.

That means families already in desperate poverty will be even worse off. Women will find it harder and harder to make do. If you think families on social security can afford to be worse off, then listen to Cynthia's story.

It's only one story. You know many more.

"I got pregnant when I was seventeen. I started to claim Social Security when I was seven and a half months pregnant. When Michael was born they gave me £3/16 shillings.

"Being on Social Security is something to be ashamed of. They make you feel like it's a big gift. When I first had Michael a man at Social Security told me that I couldn't go through life having babies and expect to live off SS. What a cheek!

"The other time when I claimed SS was about three years ago. I was very depressed at the time. Michael and I were living in a house so damp that we both had to sleep in the living room because the bedrooms were so wet. There was a huge hole in the ceiling. I left the job because being depressed isn't like a physical illness and my doctor thought it was the best thing for my health — he didn't know I was a single parent — I think I told him I was married. I got £21 a week but to keep the place livable in I needed the gas fires on all the time that cost £1 a day.



Photo: Beethan Kidron

"I think it would be worse with a Tory government. Thatcher has no sympathy for people who are in need. She's the one that cut free school milk isn't she? What is she trying to save?

"Margaret Thatcher is only interested in looking after her own kind. She's miles away from us — she hasn't got a clue about my life. I'm not a minority either — her lot are the minority. I bet she hasn't ever had to worry about where the next meal was coming from or the price of shoes. Can you imagine her running out of tea?

"Not having enough money affects your relationship with your kid.

"I don't understand how they can take anything more away — there would be nothing left. We should have much more, not less!

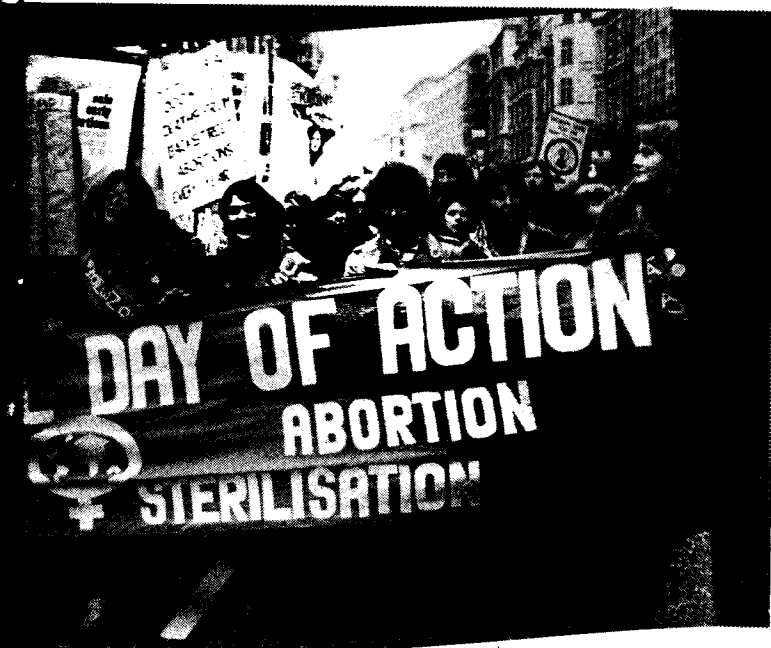


Photo: Mark Rusher (JPL)

# LABOUR MAY HAVE PAVED THE WAY BUT IT'S THE TORIES WHO WILL PUT THE BOOT IN

Margaret Thatcher believes in free choice and 'The Rights of the Individual'. By that she means, the right whether to join a union or not. She doesn't believe in the closed shop and eventually laws will be made to make them illegal. The 'Rights of

the Individual' will mean that workers who don't want to join trade unions will be given the right to get pay rises and better and safer working conditions on the backs of other workers, it will enable her/him to scab on workers in dispute, and

to let others fight for them.

What we say is that if that's the type of 'freedom' and 'Rights' they're after then let the individual feel free to work in some sweat shop with shitty wages and shitty conditions without a union beside them, and when prices and rents go up again let's see how free they feel when they can't pay their bills on the wages they get.

Maggie also says she wants to scrap wage controls (so do we) and that she wants to abandon all control on prices and profits (thought there was a catch in it somewhere).

You can just imagine what kind of free collective bargaining she means....

able to take immediate action over dangerous working conditions, the victimisation of our sisters and brothers or the fight for more pay.

2 Official strikes will have to go through procedure. That will mean going to the boss and saying we'll be going on strike in one month's time if you don't agree with our demands. It gives them a chance to stock up on whatever you produce so that when you do go out the effect will be *nil*.

3 Picket lines would have to be organised by a full time official. Now if any one of you has ever tried to get hold of one of those on the phone, let alone in the flesh,



This free collective bargaining will only be allowed in the private sector. In the public sector wages will be kept 'within the limits of the budget'. Not only will we low paid remain low paid but she intends to stop us fighting against it by making it **ILLEGAL** for workers in essential services to strike. And that means hospital and council workers.

The concordat, already prepared by the Labour government with the blessing of our trade union leaders has paved the way for the Tories. Labour will use the voluntary agreement of trade union leaders to destroy the unions the Tories will use the law. Here is a taste of what the Tories will do:

1 Unofficial strikes will be made illegal. This will mean that we will no longer be

you'll know that a picket will never be organised.

4 Secondary picketing will be made illegal. There will be no more solidarity picketing like at Grunwicks or Garners. For a striker the secondary picket is a weapon for success. The lorry drivers would never have won their claim without secondary picketing.

These are just a few ways in which trade unions will be effected by whoever gets in at the elections. But under a Tory government these anti-union attacks will be most vicious and damaging.

"We are at the spring-time of the year, the traditional season of hope and new beginnings. I think we all know in our hearts it's time for a change." Margaret Thatcher said this but I know how we'd change it. Why not join us?

## Ireland

## "ALL WE WANT IS TO CONTROL OUR OWN LIVES"

Airey Neave the Tory Under Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was killed on Friday.

The government and the media have deluged us with the horror and the tragedy of the murder. But isn't this very hypocritical? Every day in Northern Ireland they enforce a horrific and tragic situation, yet this does not seem to bother them.

They are responsible for hundreds of murders, they have been condemned by the court of human rights for inhuman treatment of prisoners, and they only maintain 'order' through repressive legislation that denies the accused the most basic rights, like trial by jury.

Assassination does get Ireland mentioned in the press, which usually ignores the daily war that is going on there. But assassinations will not end the war. There are hundreds more Tories to step into Neave's shoes. It gives the army and police an excuse to carry on even more harassment.

In this country the forces of law and order like to pretend things are normal. But for the many Republican men and women in England there is no normal peaceful life. They can be picked up any time under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and held without any rights to see a solicitor friend or relative.

If they have lived here for under 20 years they could be deported to Ireland and never allowed to set foot in England again. Nearly 4000 people have so far been arrested under this Act.

British troops and the British government should get out of Ireland. They are terrorists. The Irish people themselves should have the right to determine their present and future. As Maura McCory of the Belfast Relatives Action Committee said "all we want is to control our own lives. And we will go on fighting until we have won this right."





# "I WAS BORN HERE AND I'LL FIGHT TO STAY"

'When Margaret Thatcher went on about black people swamping 'our culture', my little brother just said, 'She doesn't like black people, does she?' I just think she's ridiculous.

'Sometimes I am just amazed by the way people think. Now I just take it as a joke when somebody like Thatcher says 'Send them back', If you didn't, you'd get really upset. We take it as a joke to protect ourselves. Last Friday for the first time in a long time I got really upset by what this woman said, and she was Jewish! In a bus queue she asked me where the 73 bus went to, and I said it was really hard to get one going past Kings Cross. Then she asked the conductor and I don't know if he didn't hear her or what, but he didn't hear or what, but he didn't answer. So she started going off, 'Aren't there any English left? They come here and get the best housing. And I thought about my place and sharing a bath with 15 people. I just wanted to say something but couldn't think of anything appropriately degrading

'She had insulted half the people on the bus and not even thought anything about

Margaret Thatcher said on World in Action on 30 January 1978:

*'People are really rather afraid that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture....we must hold out the clear prospect of an end to immigration.'*

Thatcher expressed herself worried about 'the British character (which) has done so much for democracy, for law and done so much throughout the world.'

We asked three young London women, Katie, Sabita and Femy, what they thought of these statements and the effect it had on them:



Photo: Angela Phillips

it. People like that who hardly think at all, this is the type of people that Margaret Thatcher appeals to.

'I don't even know what it's like - where my parents come from. I was born here. This is all we know - England. But when people say to me where am I from, I say Nigeria, because I don't think of this place as home because people feel that this is not where I ought to be. I'm second generation, but I'm an 'immigrant'.

'When it comes to an election, they want to get every vote. And immigration in this economic situation, get votes. Most people don't understand how immigrants came. Like my dad. They don't realise how the empire exploited our countries, what immigrants contribute every day. Many were invited to come here. And they can't go back any more. We ought to have a national immigrants day when we all stop working - that would make them think!

'Black guys who can't get a job and hang around, get picked up 2 or 3 times a week under the SUS laws. Under the Tories I think it will be worse. When I was going home Saturday night, this patrol car was coming real slow, the cop just staring at me, and I thought does he think I'm breaking in? Is he going to arrest me? The police came to our house to see if we had any illegal Nigerians there. Because my dad is white and he came to the door, they didn't come in. A lot of problems with black people are caused by the police.

'I get nervous when I'm with a lot of white people. That's why people like to stick together. It's safer. We don't hate white people, but they have forced us to do this - to stick together. We might be attacked because we're black.

'At school the kids are mixed, but in the books all the people are white. And anything black is bad. Children take it in and grow up thinking like that.

'Margaret Thatcher is a woman and you might expect her views to be about sweeping changes for women, but she's not like that - not at all.

## SUS

# THEY RUB SALT IN OUR WOUNDS

Black people in this country suffer humiliating and violent harassment at the hands of the police in their homes and on the streets. The SUS laws are in two sections.

1 Under the 1834 Vagrancy Act all that is required for a conviction is the evidence of two police officers that the accused acted suspiciously on two separate occasions (which need only be minutes apart).

2 Under the 1971 Immigration Act police have the power to arrest without a warrant anyone who they suspect of being an illegal entrant. The suspect is held indefinitely in detention until a decision is made.

Using these laws the police attempt to control the black community through fear. For the ordinary black woman on the street it's a vicious circle. You aren't told you're being stopped and searched, and if you ask why and assert your rights you lay yourself open to arrest.

Typical is the experience of one group of 15-year-olds who were stopped on their way to an evening activity centre. They had to give names, addresses, school, ages, heights and were told "If we see you again on this street we'll pick you" when they asked what for they were

told "For anything we like."

In the police station, blacks are severely beaten up and police literally rub salt into wounds, bones are broken - often they go too far so that even the police who so regularly claim that wounds are self-inflicted can't justify themselves.

The Institute of Race Relations in a report submitted to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure stated "All this evidence suggests that arrest and police powers are now being used to keep the black community in its place: physically, by penalising blacks found out of their 'ghettoes', and psychologically, by penalising those who attempt to demand their rights."

But these sort of recommendations are not enough. The Labour government has done nothing to curtail these vicious attacks on the black community and needless to say a Tory government will devise even tougher tactics under the guise of Law and Order. As socialists and anti-fascists we must actively support the right to black self-defence and join in the demand for SUS laws to be scrapped immediately.

# LABOUR'S ROAD TO A TORY HELL

Labour's ministers have been sitting in parliament taking and grabbing and cutting away at the tattered fabric of working people's lives. One in four people live in official poverty, and women have been especially hard-hit. The average wage for full-time working women is £40.07 before tax. Yet after four years of wage restraint Labour have offered us the biggest insult of all — a wage increase of 5%. That means £2 before tax.

Five million people including one and a half million unemployed rely on supplementary benefit to stay alive. Time and time again the government have bullied those most in need into drifting nearer to the poverty line. They have made ruthless cuts in such benefits as Exceptional Needs Payments and help with heating bills. If the Tories come to power these people, dubbed as scroungers, will be punished even more. One of Thatcher's ideas is a tax on social security payments.

The thing that Labour can claim to have done for women will be the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts, introduced in 1975. They should be called the 'disappearing Acts', because they have had so little effect. The Equal Opportunities Commission's figures show that the gap between men's and women's wages has actually widened and there are so many loopholes in the Acts that any employer would need a mental age of four to overlook them.

Equal pay is just another meaningless reform that the government can take away if convenient — with high unemployment they want to push women back into the home. They ignore the fact that not only do many families rely on the women's wages to make ends meet, but women are often the

75 75 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT

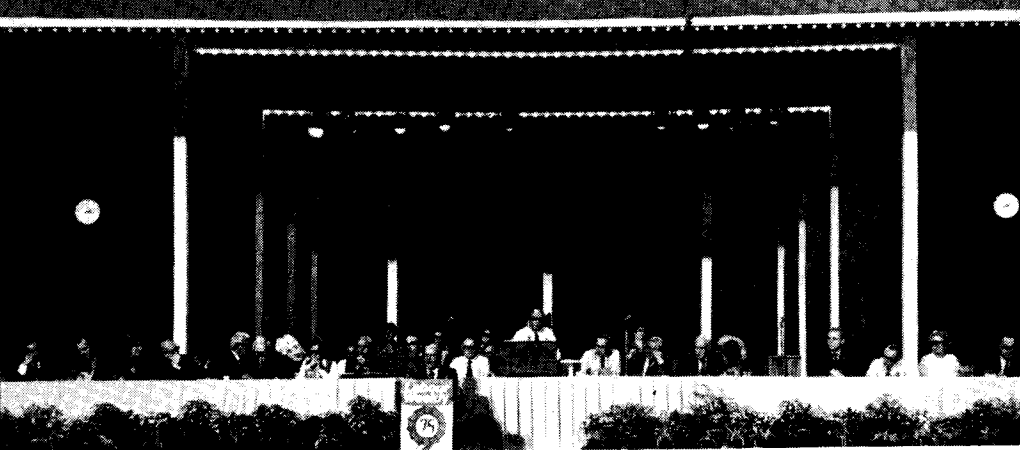


Photo: Chris Davies (Report)

sole breadwinners in the family.

It is hardly surprising then that when the government turns its attention to bleeding the health service it is women's health that suffers first. All the illnesses associated with child-bearing are seen as extras by insurance companies. That's why it costs a woman half as much again to insure herself. But David Ennals doesn't seem to think any differently — he's been closing down maternity hospitals everywhere. Every time our health service is cut it means another woman waiting longer and longer in the queues. Waiting with her child, waiting for an abortion, waiting for tests for cervical and breast cancer.

It is very difficult for ordinary working people to identify with the so-called 'socialist' government, and

they are not the only ones who are selling out on us. The union leaders have much more in common with Callaghan and his crew than with their own membership. Over the past few months during the low-pay campaign the unions brought all the male sections of the workforce out and practically ignored the real low-paid — women.

The Tories talk about the unions bringing the country down to its knees but it's the policies of Labour through four years of wage restraint that have stopped us getting onto our feet to fight for a decent living wage. They have tried to shame us into cuts in our living standards.

Only when we decide where the profits of our labour go can we break the vicious circle of rotten Labour and Tory hell.

Michelle Grant

## Socialist Worker

If you're fed up of having to choose between Tories who defend big business and blame the working class and Labour who say they're for the workers and still blame the working class you need the alternative — socialism.

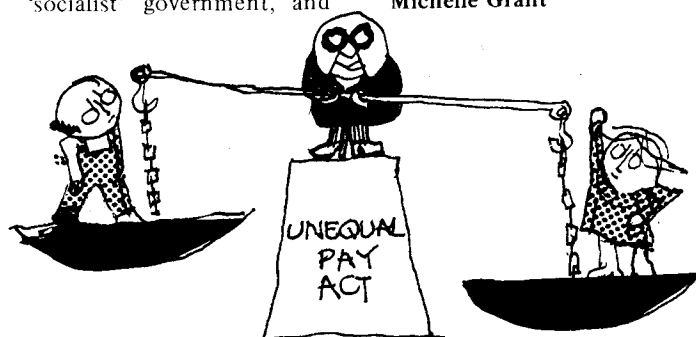
*Socialist Worker* is a weekly socialist newspaper which reports the day to day struggle for socialist ideas in the workplace, at home, in the shopping precinct, on the estate.

We believe that a socialist newspaper should give you the arguments and the ideas to organise where you are to change this rotten society and replace it with a socialist one.

We don't believe there's such a thing as a neutral report. We're biased but unlike other newspapers we're biased in favour of the working class, in favour of single parents, in favour of trade unions, in favour of women's liberation, in favour of black movements, in favour of all those peoples who are fighting to liberate their countries from imperialist control.

We're biased because we believe that we, the working class can change society and run it in our own interests.

If you want to fight to change the world read *Socialist Worker* every week — sell it to your friends. It's an essential weapon for socialists.



# WE HAVE THE POWER LET'S USE IT!



Photo: Chris Davies (Report)

## Campaign tips

### GET OUT YOUR BLUE RINSE WIGS...

The prospect of a general election may be daunting, especially if your *Womens Voice* group is small or just starting but it is a fine opportunity for us to put forward our ideas.... Let's face it most people do suffer from a severe dose of 'partypoliticalbroadcasting' and new ideas and alternatives to those grey-faced people in parliament will make a refreshing change!

So pull out your blue rinse wigs and posh voices and get cracking with your **Stop Thatcher the Snatcher campaign**. Here are some ideas that should get you off to a start.

- 1 Organise new sales of *Womens Voice*. It's a good time to start up new estate sales — people expect lots of knocks on the door when there's an election on.
- 2 Use the information about Tory horrors in this issue and any touches of your own as the basis for street meetings. How about a bit of street theatre. It's not as difficult as you probably think (get in touch with us if you would like some hints from women who have done this before). We're producing badges that you can sell on street meetings.
- 3 We are producing a draft of a leaflet that can be used with local information to go into workplaces. Again you might like to do a bit of lunch-time theatre to get yourselves noticed!
- 4 If the National Front are standing a candidate in your area get involved with the local branch of the Anti Nazi League — paint outs of Nazi slogans. It's fairly easy to organise and involves a lot of people. Get hold of a copy of *Women and the National Front* published by *Searchlight*, and use some of the quotes for your local Women Against the Nazis leaflets. Again here, working around your estate is really important.
- 5 After a bit of campaigning you could probably get a lot of new faces along to a public meeting. We will be producing posters for you to advertise it. It's a good idea to get a film or a theatre group to liven it up a bit.

**Don't take on too much otherwise you'll find that your carefully laid plans will be too much come the time even for the most energetic of you — good luck!**

Putting an X on a ballot paper once every five years isn't 'democracy'. It doesn't guarantee anything! Supposing we believed the party that promised a redistribution of wealth, a better health service, no discrimination against women and an end to unemployment — and we decided to vote for them? What would happen if they were elected? Would they implement our wishes? No, of course, they bloody well wouldn't! Not because they would be liars but because they just wouldn't have the power.

Parliament doesn't have that kind of power — not even with the best intention.

So long as we accept the 'we know best' and 'let us do it for you' philosophy neither will we have the power to change things. The very suggestion of us having the power to control and shape our own lives threatens the very core of our society.

Look at our history — the establishment of the health service and trade unionism, equal pay and maternity rights — the government may have legislated but we fought every inch of the way to make that legislation mean anything in real life.

And we are still fighting. Despite the equal pay legislation passed we are still the lowest paid, we are still in the shittiest jobs. The jobs we can take are determined by how we on our own can organise our life. Whether or not we work depends on things like the

availability of nurseries. The training we receive at school makes sure that we are the typist not the boss, the canteen ladies not the engineers, the cleaners and nurses not the doctors.

The Trico women in their fight for equal pay proved that legislation means very little. They fought the bosses, and in some cases their husbands, and that was hard but they won a victory for all of us!

*Womens Voice* concerns itself with such fights too. We have organised around low pay strikes, fought nursery and hospital closures and been active in many other campaigns which affect women.

Each local fight is part of a national problem — the problem that Britain is in a crisis and we are being asked to pay for it. But what each fight shows us is that women are not weak, feeble and isolated. Together we have strength and power. *Womens Voice* is a fighting socialist organisation.

We don't go on about pie in the sky.

But we do think that in the end it's possible to get a society where women have control of their own bodies — where we decide where and how we want to live.

We have the potential — we have the collective strength. All and every one of us has something to offer. Let us use our strength and continue the fight for womens liberation and socialism — come on sisters you know it makes sense.





# IRAN

**“Brother, brother our fight is for**

This was the slogan chanted by women against those men who stoned them when they demonstrated against Ayatollah Khomeini's decree that women must wear some form of head covering or be considered 'naked'!

Since the fall of the Shah's last prime minister, Shapour Bakhtiar, many women waited a little apprehensively to find out what our position was going to be 'after the revolution'. Although suspecting the worst, we had a vague hope that maybe things wouldn't be as bad as before.

What was it like before? Well, despite the attempts of the Shah to present himself as 'the liberator of women' (it's amazing how many men lay claim to this title!) we were worse off than our own male children. We were denied by law most forms of equality long taken for granted in the West and could not take advantage of what few laws there were.

Too few of the left either at home or abroad were prepared to understand the degrading circumstances in which women lived which meant that there was no campaigning about women's rights—even abroad.

It seemed that the prison of the family was

**freedom;  
final  
victory  
is the  
liberation  
of  
women.”**

never going to be broken open. Most working class families in Iran live in one, or at best, two rooms. Living together under one roof will be three or even four generations. The eldest male rules this home consulting with the other working men over family matters. Women often don't work (only 20

per cent of Iran's women are listed as 'economically active').

This family, the patriarchal family, is a continuation of the village family from the time not so long ago, when most of Iran's people lived and worked on the land. It is very different from the male + female + kids family typical of Western Europe today and is much more restricting. The women do all the menial work, including a lot of heavy manual labour while the men do the 'skilled' jobs.

In the cities many women found work of some sort or the other. Working class women often worked as servants in the homes of rich people—particularly, if they had young children as they could often bring these with them. Over the last few years, however, the expansion of light consumer industries—mostly foreign companies with assembly factories for TV's, fridges etc—brought an important number of women out of the home and into work.

More and more middle class women married later and went to university either at home or more likely abroad. This didn't spread to working class women, the majority of whom are still illiterate, but it did show that the role of women was not predestined

to be that of the home-bound slave.

During the last year of action against the Shah, we women joined in with men in the demonstrating and in the dying. Although we risked our lives we found a new freedom on the streets. Also the men used to herd us together on the marches—which ironically allowed us to feel more together as women than ever before.

After we chased the Shah out and then got rid of his stooge prime minister, it soon became clear that the leaders of the movement wanted us to go back home and forget this last year. 'The revolution is over' the new government kept saying—but things hadn't changed that much for us. However we had changed, we were not the same women.

We felt just as strong as the men. Together we had brought down the hated monarchy.

We still had no women's organisations or groups however and it wasn't until Khomeini started attacking us that we began to get things together. First of all, instead of dissolving the Shah's army, as the left demanded, he sought to strengthen it—however, all women were discharged from the services on 10 March. That announcement was made on International Women's Day. Several days before Khomeini had made his famous statement that 'ladies must wear the Islamic hejab'. Now a hejab means literally a head covering—it doesn't have to be the full length veil although in the more backward areas and families that is how it is interpreted.

The demonstration on 8 March was really started by high school students—girls of between 15 and 18 years of age. It was an awful day—continuous heavy snow and freezing rain from morning to night. But those 15,000 women who braved the weather and the stones and insults of some small groups of men, felt a fantastic sense of unity and determination. We were fighting, we were women, we would win.

Our slogans reflected our feelings, we shouted: 'This day of women's freedom doesn't come from the East or the West—it is for women all over the world' in reply to our

## Our letter...

**We're women and we're socialists. We supported the struggle of Iranian workers in getting rid of the Shah. We supported the movement of the Iranian people to free their country of imperialist domination. We are disgusted by the British Government's attempts to defend the old regime both with its propaganda and by providing tanks and guns. And we support the Iranian workers who are now seizing these weapons and using them against those who oppress them.**

**We are opposed to those reactionary elements who want to stop the progress of the revolution. In particular we stand behind our sisters in Iran who are fighting for their rights.**

**Women fought for the Shah to leave. They want their freedom too. The position of women in the revolution tells us there is still much to be done. Women fighting for their emancipation are being knifed and stoned. Such action can only serve to defeat the revolution.**

**There can be no freedom without women's liberation. The revolution must continue to fight for full workers' power. The emancipation of women is a vital prerequisite for the emancipation of whole working class.**

*All power to the Iranian workers—Women and Men unveil the Revolution.*

attackers who said that we were just dupes of the East (Russia) or the West (Imperialist America). Other slogans were 'Us women are workers and labourers, the workers and labourers are now free', 'Freedom and equality are our basic right', 'Down with any dictatorship', 'We fight, we fight the Islamic Hejab'.

So many of the women were mothers who had lost children in the Shah's prisons that it was impossible for the new regime to brand us as counter-revolutionaries, something they are doing all the time to the left.

Khomeini was forced to back down by our demonstrating—which we continued for four days. He was even forced to denounce those men who had attacked us—on one of the marches a number of women were stabbed. But the new regime seems to think that they can bargain with us for our rights. 'We'll give you so much now and a little more later on' sums up their market place approach.

More and more women in Iran now realise that we must fight for our rights, that equality cannot be bargained for. As a result of the marches we now have a couple of women's campaigns and the beginnings of

local groups in several places. We have the problem of the women's movement all over the world, that of making realise they have to socialists concentrate on the organisation of working women. In Iran one of the new campaigns is very much a middle class affair.

Despite this we have made a start. Many women can now be counted amongst those who go against Khomeini and his government, saying that the revolution must go on. Only the building of a working class movement in which women play a leading role can really change Iran. We women need revolution not a few concessions.

Elahieh Sohrabi, Tehran

## Women's delegation

The Iranian Womens Solidarity Group has been set up by Iranian women living in Britain, Womens Voice Members and socialists feminists.

It aims to send a womens delegation to Iran in solidarity with the struggles of our sisters there.

Solidarity activities are also being organised in Britain culminating in a national demonstration in London on Saturday May 19th (Full details later).

Womens organisations, trade union bodies and political organisations are being asked to show their support by sponsoring the delegation—with hard cash as well as supporting the demonstration.

Finance and support are urgently needed. For further information sponsorship and affiliation forms write to: Iranian Womens Solidarity Group, South London Womens Centre, 45 North St, London SW4 or phone Linda 01 739 1870.

Collection forms to raise money to send women to Iran are available from the Womens Voice office.

STOP PRESS: Sponsoring the delegation so far are the following women — Anna Coote, Alix Holt, Tessa Gill, Sheila Rowbotham, Cathy Porter, Angela Phillips, Margaret Renn, Amrit Wilson and Obnagh Macdonald MP.



photo: IFL

Moved by the struggles of women in Iran and their bravery, our Womens Voice group to call a picket of the Iranian embassy in protest at their treatment decided by the authorities. 'Unveil the Revolution' was the slogan on our banner. We told as many people as we could. 40 people turned up on the day. Some of us were wearing symbolic veils. We handed a letter of protest into the embassy. Highbury Womens Voice

It is a terrific inspiration to learn how women were fighting 65 years ago—for equal pay, for the vote, for decent houses, for food for their children. Here are just a few articles which were published in *The Women's Dreadnought* in 1914.

Some of the dreadful poverty and hardship have gone,

but as you can see, some of the struggles remain. Getting the vote has not solved our problems—a hope which they cherished. But we can learn a lot from their fierce determination and their own self-organisation. We print this to honour those women and to remind ourselves that we have a great history to live up to.

# *The Women's Dreadnought*

All these articles were published in *The Women's Dreadnought* in 1914.

## Readers please note

SYLVIA Pankhurst and the militant suffragettes in East London were expelled from the Women's Social and Political Union in January 1914. Their support for Jim Larkin, the Irish trade unionist and revolutionary, was the final straw.

The WSPU leaders Sylvia's mother, Emmeline, and sister, Christabel criticised the democratic constitution of the East London group. 'You have your own ideas. We do not want that; we want all our women to take their instructions and walk in step like an army.'

### Wounded

Sylvia was deeply wounded by this but in March 1914 set up *The Women's Dreadnought*.

She wrote: *It was my earnest desire that it should be a medium through which working women, however unlettered, might express themselves, and find their interests defended. I wanted the paper to be as far as possible written from life; no dry arguments, but a vivid presentment of things as they are, arguing always from the particular, with all its human features, to the general principle.*

When war broke out in the autumn of 1914, the paper changed dramatically.

### Enemy

It argued against the war in its editorial—why should our men go out to kill German workers? Remember that German transport workers sent £5000 when the dockers were on strike to form a union. They are not our enemy. (Meanwhile the other Pankhursts, Emmeline and Christabel joined with the politicians of all parties which refused women the vote and urged men to enlist, giving the coward's white leather to those who would not.)

The East London Federation organised against the terrible hardship that the war brought. It first set up Babies Milk Centres for mothers too poor and ill to breastfeed their children successfully, then Cost Price Restaurants, then an Employment Bureau which got orders for sewing clothes, then a boot cooperative and a toy factory. A nursery charging only threepence a day from 8am to 7pm was set up



## VICTORIA PARK DEMO

ON Sunday last the women of the East London Federation of Suffragettes held their demonstration for Women's May Day in Victoria Park.

There was a good muster at Canning Town and Poplar and the procession marched gaily along with banners and flags flying headed by a band and followed by a brightly decorated cart filled with children.

A halt was called opposite 400 Old Ford Road where Miss Sylvia Pankhurst lives and she came out surrounded by a bodyguard of 20 men and women.

As the procession neared the park, the police beat off the

outer guard who carried staves with the colours, scattered onlookers and locked the 20 into the boat enclosure.

The fight was fast and furious, the CIDs trying to reach their prey but being repulsed by those who sur-

rounded her. The women's hats were torn off, their hair pulled out, their faces pinched and punched, their arms twisted but still they clung on, aided by the chains round their waists.

### CHAINS

The police hammered with their truncheons and at last got them apart, the blows falling on the women's hands as on the chains. A number of women were taken when Miss Pankhurst was arrested.

In spite of the anger and disappointment at Miss Pankhurst's arrest, the demonstration went forward. There were nine platforms. A large crowd gathered to hear the speeches on Votes for Women—a subject which always attracts far larger audiences than any other.

There was a gang of imported hooligans (who had previously been seen receiving their instructions from the police) who tried to break up the audience, but they found themselves outnumbered and even their

### COURAGE

Dutch courage oozed away before they could make themselves really felt.

A retired prizefighter who at the beginning said he was against the women said at the end he would fight for the Suffragettes in the future and that he had not understood before or he would never have been against them.

**BRAVELY and willingly we bear our share of the world's burdens. Why then deny us the**

**right to vote, which would dignify our labour and increase our power of service.**

## Women Workers Conference

67 SOCIETIES were represented at a conference on Women's Suffrage and Women's Work and Wages. The following resolution was adopted: 'The present industrial position of women is intolerable because of their systematic and organised underpayment and also because of their exclusion from the better paid

positions in trade and professional life.'

Miss Eva Gore Booth said that women suffered from two great wrongs. Want of equal opportunities and want of equal wages. In the cotton trade a spinner could earn two pounds a week but no women were permitted to be spinners. They could be piecers under the spinner. And it was well known that the spinner could read the *Sporting Life* while the piecer did the work for which she got only three shillings.



## FORWARD AMERICA

WOMEN teachers in Atlanta, Georgia have just secured equal pay with the men. Formerly the women earned 900-1400 dollars

(after ten years) whilst the men began at 1400 dollars and in four years could work up to 1800 dollars.

## Grimbsby girl tired of life

AT Grimbsby a girl of 18, Lillian Bartholomew, made a second attempt to drown herself and left a note saying that she was tired of living in Poverty Street. She was a domestic servant. She had been to her home and found her father expecting to be imprisoned for failure to pay a debt.

She was remanded to prison, but one more of those girls who rebel against the cruel hardship and injustice of their narrow lives.

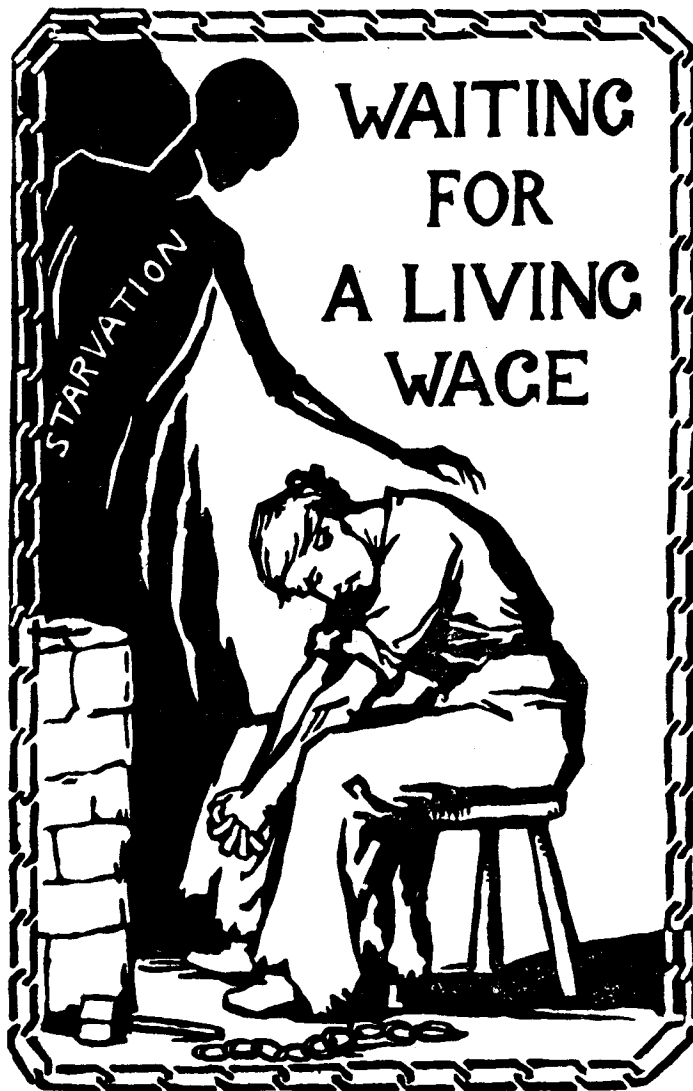
## LAUNDRY STRIKERS

6000 LAUNDRY workers, a large proportion of whom are women and girls, are on strike in and around Liverpool.

A procession of 1200 girls and women started to march to Blundellsands Laundry on July 15th and was met by numbers of other bands of strikers.

At the meeting a girl of seventeen said she was getting two shillings and three pence a week. The laundry workers are striking for a 53 hour week, including a Saturday of five hours and a shilling a week rise. Many at present have to work 60 hours a week and do not finish till nine pm Saturday.

Whilst the strike has been in progress many laundry vans have been held up by the women strikers. Some of the laundries have conceded the workers' demands. The strike progresses.



## The Irish Cause

THE Irish Suffragists have decided to wait upon Mr Redmond at the House of Commons on 11 June to demand the inclusion of votes for women in the Home Rule Bill.

## The Women's Dreadnought

### DISTRICT REPORTS

GOOD work had been done in Cubitt Town this week by members. Mrs Walker has made arrangements for starting meetings and Mrs Bird and Mrs Neuss have canvassed with Dreadnought and everywhere found a warm welcome and people anxious to know more about the women's movement.

Mrs Walker and Miss Peterson have also done canvassing in Arcadia Street and held an open-air meeting there.

Members billed factories in the district for the Victoria Park Procession and they also turned up well to bill and sell Dreadnoughts at the Dock Gates on

Saturday to the trade union procession which was forming up.

Miss Winnie Long has started a permanent Sunday morning pitch at the Dock Gates. Will others follow Miss Long's example? Poplar Station should give excellent results if worked. A jumble sale made £3 9s 8d.

#### District distribution of Dreadnoughts

1-Upper North St.,

Capt. Mrs Bird. Helpers Mrs Neuss, Mrs Bertram, Mrs Skeet. Misses Lagsding, Cresswell, Cregan.

No. of Copies weekly 1000

2 Chrisp St.,

Capt Mrs Fyffe. Helpers Mrs Unwin, Miss Eddy, Miss Rutter.

No. of copies weekly 600

3 Isle of Dogs

Capt Mrs Bird. Helper. Mrs Neuss

No of Copies sold 500

4 Kerby St.,

Capt Mrs Schlette

No of copies sold 400

## Morton's Strike

THE strike of 900 women and girls employed at Morton's in Millwall and the 300 men who have come out to support them in their fight against the introduction of child labour is still going on.

The four little girls whose engagement began the dispute have been dismissed, but no promise for the future has been given and the women therefore refuse to return to work.

Older women get 12 shillings a week. Younger women only get six shillings or eight and fourpence and in the busy season which when they work from 6am to 9-10pm they get an extra shilling a week.

Their work is to cut up rabbits and put them in tins. The work is very hard and the girls think they should get ten shillings a week to start and then have a rise once every year till they get 15 shillings.

When the strike began, one foreman locked the women and girls into the workroom and told them he would not let them out until they had finished the work. The women of course refused to do another stroke of work, so the foreman decided to let them out. The women told the men what happened and they gave him a good thrashing when he came away from work.

Mrs Mary MacArthur is receiving subscriptions for the strikers. 15 shillings a week is being paid out to the women and it is little enough as many of them are widows with children to support. One of the girls picketing outside the works has been arrested.

28 March 1914

HACKNEY Council manual workers have just won after nine week's strike action. Joan Luxford has worked as a cleaner for the Council for three years. For the last nine months, she has been a NUPE shop steward for about thirty-five women cleaners in and around the Town Hall. Joan's nineteen-year-old son is a cleaner and is on strike too.

'What alternative did we have other than to strike? My wages are £37 for 30 hours before deductions. The unions had a reasonable claim, we had to take action to support it to keep ourselves alive. All the women in my section agreed to take strike action. We started with the day stoppage and national march back in January and things built up from there.

Sections of the women workers were involved from the beginning of the strike. One of the baths and laundries GMWU shop stewards, Anna, was on the strike committee and negotiating team. Some of the women like the home helps had not really been organised before. At first, they were angry about the strike because of what they had seen and heard in the press and on TV. When the stewards explained what had actually been offered they became some of the strongest supporters of the strike and organised themselves properly with stewards for the first time. In Hackney, those on strike have had daily meetings, the women frequently played a major part in those through speaking and voting. It was the low paid women workers who by their vote kept the strike solid when the Council offered a guaranteed £60 minimum for the full-time lower paid (with pro rata for part-timers) but had offered nothing for the slightly better paid workers, mostly men. The women said quite clearly, the higher paid came out for us in the first place now we must stay out for them.

**NO  
£0W  
PAY**

Many of the women have been involved in the picketing. Joan herself, with some of the dust drivers, went up to the regional rubbish tip at Edmonton to stop all the boroughs dumping there and to try and extend the strike particularly after the Westminster dustmen had settled. Joan also went to Greenwich to support the strike of the women cleaners there. She described them as having lots of guts as they had little or no support from the Borough's other workers.



photo: Christine Fellowes

## THEY STUCK IT OUT AND WON!

Most of the picketing which the cleaners in Hackney did was more mundane but it did stop the post, fuel and all supplies, and stopped any maintenance being done in the main Council buildings.

Besides being on strike, Joan still had a home to run. Her wages normally keep the family going, she thinks that is true of most families where the woman works. Her husband thought she was stupid to go on strike so Joan was pleased she had her eldest son to give support. Her husband thinks that women have not got minds of their own. He still expects his wife to find £15 a week rent and put dinner on the table. Joan says gone are the days when men can dictate to women because they are not little wives at home all day any more. Recognition must be given to the work women do. But Joan knows the backlog payment she gets from the Council will have to go towards paying off the rent arrears accrued through the strike.

Joan was very disappointed with the NUPE leadership's sell-out. 'We pay Fisher's wages, so he should support us better. All Fisher is doing is trying to keep a rotten Labour Government in power, the

same Government that has let prices go sky high, put us in the Common Market and keeps our wages down. The Labour Government has not done anything for working people since it's been in power. The Tories would be worse, I know. I think our union should be independent of the Government and we should elect our leaders at least every two years so if they don't do a good job we can get rid of them'.

The Union's sell-out nationally did not affect morale locally very much. GMWU, NUPE and TGWU members had all worked together. The confidence the Hackney workers have now got is tremendous. Being on strike together, having to pinch and scrape has brought all the workers together. Now they've won both in money and hours. Joan was very down to earth about her own situation. 'A shop steward is only as good as her support, fortunately the women I represent are prepared to fight and I've got their backing. I'm not any good at speaking to big meetings but I can and will discuss the issues with them.'

Interviewed by Mary Richardson.

**Send us your news!  
And photos!  
We can't do it without you!**

The deadline for the next issue is 20 April. Send your news to Womens Voice, PO Box 82, London, E2.



# WOMENS TUC-GIVE IT SOME TEETH

EACH year the TUC holds a women's conference where trade union women come together to call for improvements in the lot of women workers and their families. Much is said out little done. This year at Folkestone was much the same. The Women's TUC called for better training facilities, a shorter working week, retirement at 60 for all. It attacked Britain's appalling record for infant and ante-natal care and the continued discrimination in pensions and social security. It lambasted the EOC for its total ineffectiveness and, significantly, called for an end to male domination within the trade union movement. Meetings should be held in work time, creches organised, trade union training should be made more accessible to women and the sexist use of women in union journals—the pin-ups so beloved by Arthur Scargill and his 'Yorkshire Miner' should be banned.

All good in themselves, but will it change anything? The conference delegates generally agreed amongst themselves—every resolution went through without much opposition. It gave a great feeling of solidarity, but little of action. Those in a



photo: Lawrence Sparham (TFL)

position to do anything about the resolutions passed—the General Council of the TUC—hardly bothered to turn up.

The Women's Advisory Com-

mittee of the TUC has more men nominated by the General Council on it than women elected by the Women's TUC! Only one of those eight men came; few union journals

report the Women's TUC—no wonder one gets the feeling of being token women at a token conference.

Len Murray came for an hour. He told 'his little girls' that we would have to learn to live with microprocessors for the sake of British industry, even though this new technology means that at least 1½ million women would lose their jobs. Not a word about the women in Bradford resisting microprocessors at this very moment.

The real problem with the Women's TUC is that women don't have power at local level in unions. So the women who come represent no one and can be fobbed off easily. The women who are fighting—for pay—for decent social services, for jobs, don't get a look in at the Women's TUC because they aren't locked into the bureaucratic structures. We do need an effective Women's TUC (to push the trade union movement into fighting for the wider social demands traditionally thought of as 'women's issues'.) To get it we will have to make a start organising in our unions to get our voices heard.

Irene Bruegel NATFHE



photo: Jim Lennox

## WOMEN UNITE RECLAIM THE NIGHT

WELL, women in Manchester did just that on Saturday March 3. Nearly 300 women marched through the streets of Manchester banners and torches held high, denying the need of women to rely on the protection of men, boyfriends or police, to shield them when walking alone.

Despite loose organisation, the women got it together and made an impressive procession past a pornographic cinema showing 'High Heat', then through a city pub displaying humiliating pictures of women, we stopped outside the

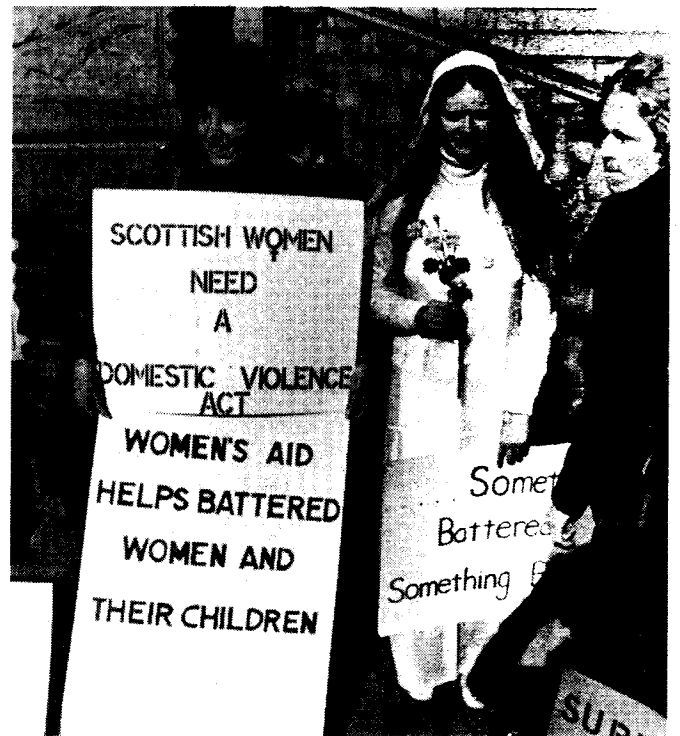
'Daily Star' but the bum of an editor Jacobson was nowhere to be seen!

The atmosphere of the march was really fantastic and the night was rounded off with a women's bop, a symbolic end to a great night. Manchester University Womens Voice.

## WOMEN AND HEALTH

On Feb 17, Women and Health held a workshop, and from the discussion the following points were drawn up regarding campaigning.

1. The staff themselves are in the best position to lead a fight against the cuts. If your union branches are weak, it should be a priority to strengthen them. The experience at Hounslow showed



Edinburgh women, above photo, hold a street meeting in support of the Women's Aid week of action against violence against women.

that even when a lot of community support was present, active support from union branches is crucial.

2. Involvement at the FGA hospital workers and outsiders have been involved through the picket rota, leafletting, petitioning, addressing envelopes etc.

3. Get the support of local hospital workers and campaigns. Don't let yourselves become isolated and open to being played

off against another campaign or hospital.

4. Bulletins—put out a bulletin (like the FGA's 'Fight for Your Life') with details of the cuts and how they're actually affecting us.

5. Take up the low pay of women workers, part time work, the need for better women's health facilities. And finally hold discussions on these issues.

Celia Shalom

# NEITHER CIVIL NOR SERVANTS

IF YOU are on social security, there is a chance you won't get your money on time. That is because thousands of civil servants are on strike for more money. And they need it. Many workers at DHSS offices take home less than £40 a week. The claim is for rises of between eighteen and twenty-five per cent. This amount was calculated by the Pay Research Unit—a body which compares the rates of civil service workers with the wages of workers in the private sector who are often (especially if they do 'women's jobs') non-unionised and badly paid. The wage rates are also a year out of date.

And of course percentage rises also mean that the higher

## 100 YEARS NO EQUALITY

THE Civil Service started employing women in 1870 when the State took over the telegraph companies who were already employing women. Some Civil Service officials saw that taking on women as clerks had great advantages:

'In the first place, they have in an eminent degree the quickness of eye and ear, the delicacy of touch, which are the essential qualifications of a good operator. In the second place, they take more kindly than men or boys to sedentary employment. They are less disposed than men to combine for the purpose of extorting higher wages, and this is by no means an unimportant matter. It is desirable that we should extend the employment of women, as permanently established civil servants invariably expect their remuneration to increase with years of service. Women, however, will solve these difficulties for the department by retiring for the purpose of getting married.'

So what's new? Over a hundred years later women are still on the lowest grades. The 1977 figures for employment in the Civil Service are:

	MEN	WOMEN
Clerical Assistant	14,500	57,000
Clerical Officer	42,000	68,000
Executive Officer	37,000	18,000

If women are on the lowest grades it means we are also the lowest paid. A quick look at the 1979 pay scales show just what a pittance women earn:

Typist	£41.39 per week
Clerical Officer	£44.13 per week
Executive Officer	£2599 per year
Higher Executive Officer	£3113 per year

There are other grades which are even worse. A sixteen-year-old trainee typist earns £29.42 a week before stoppages!

One of the worst maternity leave agreements in the public sector plus totally inadequate child care facilities means that women who have children get stuck forever on the lowest grades.

So why is this? If women make up 68 percent of the civil service unions, why don't our trade unions get a better deal for us? The answer is that few women with kids and family find it easy to get to union meetings, and secondly that most of the branch, executive and full time



union officials are men. So women find it difficult to make their voice heard.

Even now when the unions are fighting for more pay, they are mainly only calling out those in specialist 'key' jobs which include

very few women. After all, who wants to train a woman to do a job like computer programming, when she's only going to leave and have babies? Women are in all the boring, unsatisfactory, low-paid jobs like typists and clerical assistants. So, we have a situation where the CPSA is trying to fight for better wages, but without involving the majority of its women membership—who are all stuck in the lowest grades anyway and should be precisely the people fighting hardest for more money. It's a crazy

grades get the biggest increases, while the low paid end up with a pittance.

The unsatisfactory nature of the Pay Unit shows what a danger the Concordat would be if it gets put into effect. And any Civil Service worker taking home less than £40 a week will tell you the same thing—comparability is a con.

But despite all these faults, the CPSA is taking action. And it is up to Womens Voice groups to support them all they can. If you are on social security, you can picket in support of the low paid outside the DHSS. Don't let the government divide us. Sell this issue of Womens Voice

situation but its true. And luckily some women are saying that one hundred years of being exploited is far too long.

That is why the Civil Service Womens Rights Group was started last June. We are having our first national conference on April 17th in Birmingham. And at that conference we hope to launch campaigns for better maternity leave, better promotion prospects and a campaign about the threat of new technology. So if you're fed up with low pay and the lousy deal the CPSA and other unions give us, and you want to join our fight to make them take up our demands, write to Jean Watts, 21 Albert Rd London N4 or Nancy Kelly 131 Gretton House, Victoria Park Square, London, E2. Nancy Kelly CPSA

**THE Civil Service Creche campaign was started last June in order to fight for state-provided workplace nurseries. We now have over 100 individual affiliations from union branches and committees. We have produced two newsletters, a badge, a questionnaire and held public meetings and a national conference. We plan to do even more in the future. For more information please write to CSCC c/o 25 Villa Rd London SW9**

## OUR PROBLEM

I HAVE worked for DHSS for five years, in London, first; and now in a large Manchester office. Over 60% of the staff of DHSS nationally are women, and quite a number of the lower grades are active socialists. As women within the Civil Service we have problems too in our working environment. There is no provision of creches, although the Government advocates equal opportunity, we as their employees are not given much chance of equality. Over 60% of the lower grades are women, yet 90% of management are men—equality in promotion?

We have to implement laws which we may not agree with—

nobody asks us about them first any more than the rest of the public are consulted. The law changes weekly and very often the regulations are difficult to understand and implement. We don't make decisions not us who you see on the counter—it's higher management, but they don't have the embarrassment of trying to justify their decisions to the claimant concerned, they leave the dirty work to us.

The clerical grades are underpaid—a sixteen year old clerical assistant gets the princely sum of £29.68 per week before stoppages. Our union, the CPSA, is at present trying to get us an increase. CPSA members are also opposing the Supplementary Benefit Review.

I work for DHSS because I care for the sick and unemployed and pensioners. Within the confines of my job I try to help them, though we are often bound by red tape. I am also the Union representative in my office because I care about the working conditions of staff! The Government is hardly a model employer, they don't even practise what they preach.

We should be working together, claimants and staff of DHSS to show the Government what we think of their outdated laws—particularly those concerning women. Whilst DHSS regulations concerning cohabitation, I agree, are appalling, and sex snoopers would be better deployed in the office, they are not the root of the problem. The problem that we face as women is the attitude of Society, that we should be dependent on men for our keep. The DHSS is a perpetrator of this attitude, not the cause.

We women should have the right to an income if we are sick or unemployed, as a man does. Payment should not be dependent on whether we are living with a male or not.

I know what it's like to be a battered wife, and to be homeless, because it's happened to me. I got as much sympathy and understanding from DHSS as an employer as claimants get from DHSS as a Government institution.

Take heart, and when you come in to a DHSS office, give us a chance to try and help—a lot of us genuinely want to help you, that's why we work there, it certainly isn't for the money! CPSA Member



Photo: Mark Risher (F1)

## ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS

120 CIVIL servants work in the Stoke Newington DHSS office in London. Their office committee has 14 members on it. Ten of them are women. They have been in the forefront of setting up the local strike committee.

It met first in early February, with 50 delegates from local offices. 'The strike in London has been ridiculous so far', said Carolyn Conway, convener of the strike committee. 'It's so small there can be no more than 200 out.'

'How do we mount large picket lines with that kind of action? The action has to begin in every workplace, so that our union leadership just can't ignore us any longer.'

'Our leadership is just like part of the government said Christine the Health and Safety representative.

'The lower and higher levels of the union have practically no connection.'

'They don't really want us to strike, said Kay Hayes, CPSA rep.

'They want to keep the whole strike quiet. They have this idea that we can have a respectable strike that won't hit the public. In fact, the only way for us to win is through the

short, all-out strike.

'At the very least we need another one-day national strike to let the government see that they can't play about with us. If we organise these unofficially that would be even better. That would show up the union leaders, they're no good anyway.'

Carolyn added: 'The way to do it is pull people together from all the different areas and build strong Strike committees.

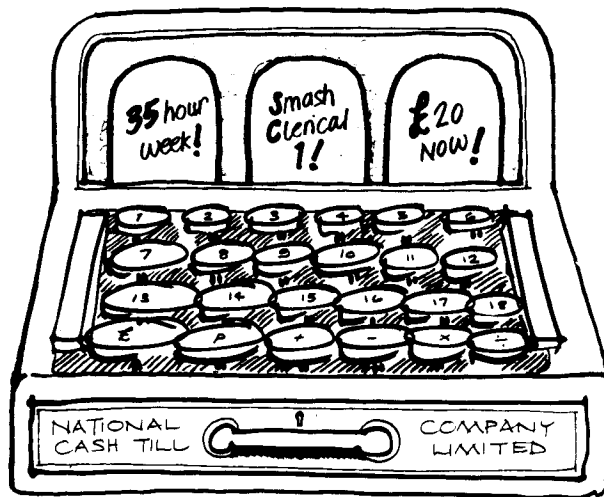
'This is where rank and file organisation counts. And Redder Tape, our rank and file organisation, is the ideal way to do just that.

'We should have been in with NUPF from the beginning. The more unity the better, and the bigger the group the better.'

'We're all affected by cash limits,' continued Carolyn, 'whether we're in the Civil Service Department, the Area Health Authority or the local council. It's the same hands on the purse strings in the end.'

'The truth is that we've had a Concordat in the Civil Service unions for years, and look where it's got us.

'The sooner as many people as possible understand that the better.'



## NALGO ACTION CAMPAIGN

**JOIN the NALGO Action Low Pay Campaign. Say no to NALGO's ridiculous claim for 15%. Say yes to ours**  
**Minimum £20 pw flat rate**  
**Minimum wage of £65 per week**  
**Abolition of the poverty grades like clerical 1 with automatic upgrading 25 days leave plus improved maternity/paternity leave.**

If you want to join the campaign, want stickers, 20p per sheet of 12. Nalgo Action News Special, 5p each plus postage, write to NAG, 32 Kersley Rd, London N16.

# WASHING THEIR DIRTY LINEN IN PUBLIC

At Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport, laundry workers have been in occupation since February 2nd, when management locked them out of a meeting room. They wanted to return to work, but found that management had turned the steam off, removed clean linen, set impossible targets for work, and had been washing hospital linen in public laundrettes. So the sit-in became permanent and official, and Beryl and Debbie picketed a launderette pointing out to the press and public that 'this' launderette is washing infected linen (the owner refused to touch any more soiled laundry). As the women say, domestic machines can't possibly reach the high temperatures needed to kill infection and the public, as well as hospital nurses should realise this when they 'volunteer' to help management to cope in the

crisis which they provoked. At the Hospital we were shown machines broken by officials, piles of soiled linen will have to be burnt, pools of water everywhere from leaks and bursts. And bird droppings on the racks for clean laundry (open windows aren't covered by wire - so birds fly in regularly). The job looks difficult at normal times, but after the damage and delay by officials it's hard to see how things can return to normal without a great deal of effort and more money, from management. We heard that at Marple Dale young nurses have no choice but to wash through soiled laundry some of it from T.B. patients; the same at the childrens Orthopaedic Hospital. What a way to run a health service!  
**South Manchester Womens Voice Group**

**NO LOW PAY**

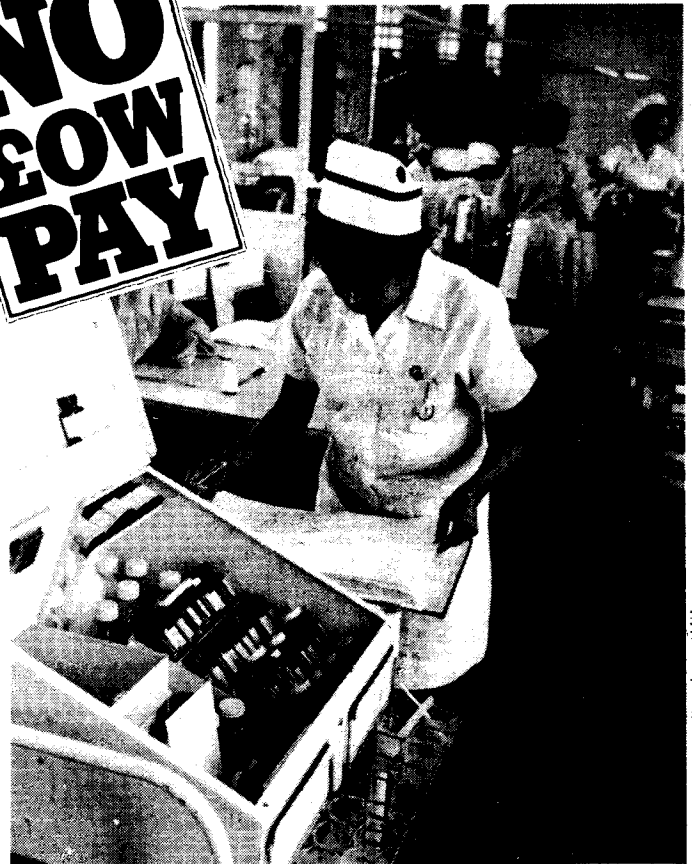


photo: Laurence Sparham (FL)

# LEAVE THE RCN AND JOIN A UNION

THIS is an extract from South East London's hospital bulletin which went into Greenwich hospital. Days later the nurses' leaders' settled for a lousy deal without even taking the offer to their membership. The deal is 8.8% plus £2 a week. There is to be an inquiry into nurses pay and if the inquiry comes up with any money the nurses will be paid a rise in August and in January.

So 'Ennals Angels' kept their halo and stayed on the poverty line. This extract still makes sense—leave the RCN and join a union! Then organise to start fighting for more.

ON February 26th the Royal College of Nursing ruled out action to get better wages. Instead it decided to 'embarrass' health minister David Ennals into giving us an increase by 'work, work, work and more work' and in addition, to petition the public and hold 24 hour vigils outside the Houses of Parliament.

That's how the press were able to quote our fight with other hospital workers. We nurses are now 'Ennals Angels' and the other workers can be slagged off by the press as the irresponsible hooligans. Who are they kidding? It's the RCN that's being totally irresponsible. We are in the hospital service, ancillary staff and nurses alike, we are all low paid. We have to keep rubbing home the point that the NHS is on the verge of collapse and that we

must take a stand to defend it, and our living standards.

After the RCN's 'commendable decision' not to take industrial action we were offered the insulting 9% plus £1 on account of the comparability study (who the hell are they going to compare us with?). This offer would bring student nurses wages to just below the DHSS' own official poverty levels.

They're not at all embarrassed, they don't even feel guilty that we're still waiting for the rest of our last pay claim.

The need for us to join proper trade unions and to link up with our fellow workers is now even more apparent than ever. Nurses in NUPE and COHSE (believe it or not!) in many hospitals are now taking action in support of the claim. Total stoppages, overtime bans etc., are taking place.

We are fighting for the future of the NHS itself. Ask patients in the FGA or Bethnal Green whether they support this kind of action.

# 75p-THAT'S YOUR LOT!

NEWCASTLE Womens Voice decided to work around hospitals during the Low Pay Campaign. After giving out a couple of bulletins and generally getting our faces known, we visited one of the

more active hospitals, St Nicholas's, and asked for information to send to our paper.

Everyone was very friendly. A night cleaner and member of the Action Committee at St Nicholas's told us that a lot of workers there were part-time women. She herself was on night shifts part time because she had two children. For them, she said, the then 9% offer would mean 75p a week.

These women had learnt all the bitter lessons of the strike that official union leaders are 'rubbish' that all out strike is the only way

to win a claim that you need to be united.

Newcastle Womens Voice subsequently held a public meeting on 'Women and Low Pay' and were delighted by the response. Two people came along from St Nicholas's and some came attracted only by our street posters.

It seems clear that many women now see the need to forge ongoing links with other workers so that the next time round they can win the pay battle.

What came of our meeting is that Womens Voice can help here.



photo: Laurence Sparham (FL)



## WHERE WOMEN LEAD UNIONS FOLLOW

PICKETING on a winter's day in Manchester is no joke all the same. NUPE members from at least eight major hospitals are continuing their all out strike. From the very beginning of action for £60 and 35 hours, the women have been at the forefront.

Laundry workers, domestics, kitchen and sterilising department staff from Stockport to Bolton have buried the myth that women 'won't fight', 'don't understand', 'only work for pin money'. At the North Manchester General it was the women who forced the Branch Secretary to support their call for a total stoppage. A mass meeting voted to come out, and it was the women who insisted on contacting the official who was attending another mass meeting at Christy's hospital. At the same time the workers at Christy's voted to come

out and so did Withington Hospital. Everyone knew that this was the only way to follow the rejection of the 9 per cent and £1 on account deal.

The majority of women involved particularly the laundry workers were now angry that it wasn't 'all out' from the very beginning. Anyone could see how easy it was for the management to cope with the 'in-out' tactics recommended by the union leaders. The management had simply stocked up enough linen to keep going. This is why the women at Stepping Hill and Bolton occupied their laundries with other NUPE members.

Our domestics are angry about the widespread use of 'volunteers' who are working in large numbers and doing less vigorous and dirty work than the women themselves normally do. Management here, at

North Manchester General, have denied that they have intimidated other hospital workers into doing strikers' jobs. But if you were a junior nurse and your nursing officer told you to lug laundry bags for provisions up to the ward, wouldn't you feel intimidated?

Only one ward in the Acute Hospital is sticking to its guns, where sister Anne Underhill and Nurse Kelly both members of COHSE, are giving their nurses the sort of encouragement and support they need. This is why the next step is to be a nurses' action group, both to fight for decent wages for nurses, as well as to ensure that nurses can't be blackmailed into becoming strike breakers.

The police have been very heavy and worked hand in hand with management. They have done everything possible to demoralise

the strikers. Limiting the numbers on the picket line, making us put the braziers out and escorting vehicles across the line. There have been some good moments like when the domestics made the fresh food drivers unload their lorries just inside the gate, so that the management had to come down and collect the food.

It has been the women here, and at Mondall Hospital, who have been out talking to other workers and arguing for stepping up the action. It is the women who don't have any illusions about the union leadership, either at national or local level. These women have shown time and time again that they are prepared to fight. Not just for more money, but for the future of the NHS. **Anne Robertson**  
North Manchester General Hospital

# THEIR LIES...



photo: Keith Sreente

A DANGEROUS precedent could be set if the anti-abortion LIFE group succeeds in its push for a prosecution over an abortion at Wanstead Hospital.

A storm of protest has broken out following a nurse's claim that she heard a 20-week-old aborted foetus cry.

The LIFE group is gathering evidence under national chairman, Jack Scarisbrick, in the hope of persuading the Director of Public Prosecutions to prosecute the person responsible for manslaughter.

If this fails, they hope to bring a charge of deliberately procuring the death of a child capable of being born alive, under the 1929 Infant Life Preservation Act.

West Roding Health District's Assistant Administrator Mr Peter Stanley has confirmed that a foetus emitted a sound after being aborted

last June, but denies that it was alive.

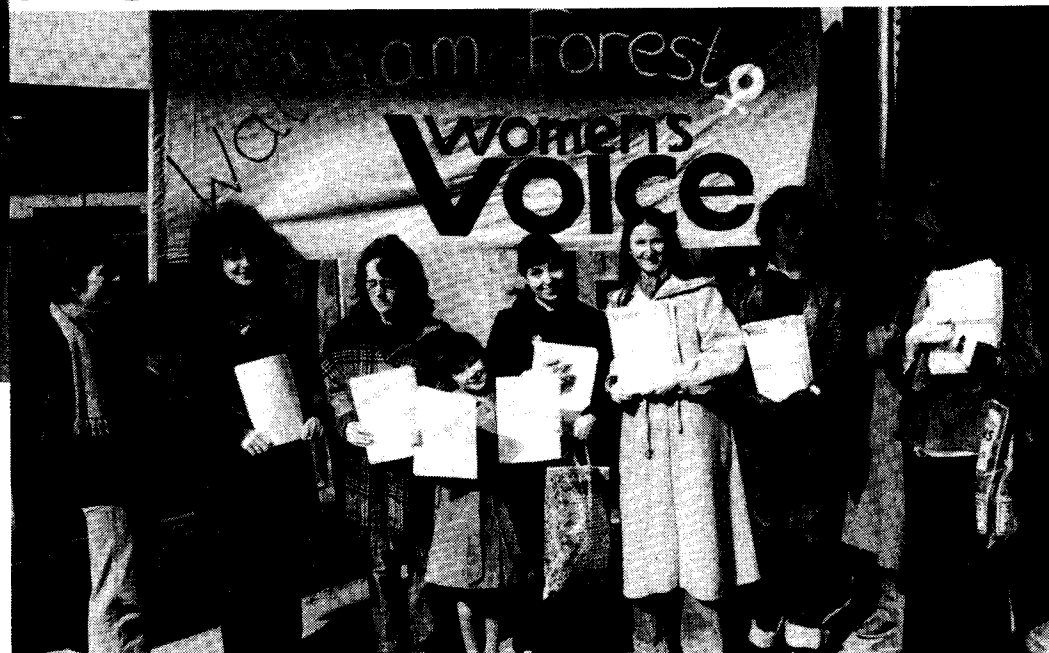
He added that they have been worried for a long time about patients being nursed in ordinary wards, sometimes gynaecological wards where women are treated for infertility.

The 1967 Abortion Act has put pressure on the hospital to perform abortions without providing proper facilities.

The AHA has approved a self-contained abortion clinic at Wanstead which should open in June. The LIFE group is firmly opposed to this clinic being provided.

Nurses at the hospital have often complained at abortions there and there is only one gynaecologist who is prepared to carry out the operation.

# ...OUR ANSWERS



## SOCIALIST FEMINIST CONFERENCE

IT IS difficult to give an overall picture of what took place at the Socialist Feminist Conference, since we all spent most of the weekend isolated in small groups, in various workshops. While workshops have the distinct advantage of an informal non-hierarchical structure enabling the maximum number of women to participate, a whole conference given over exclusively to workshops was most unsatisfactory.

Without a plenary session there was no opportunity for the outcomes of the workshops discussed by the rest of the conference. Admittedly the plenary session at the last Socialist Feminist conference in Birmingham ended in chaos and showed that there were basic differences of orientation within the movement; yet by suppressing these conflicts and attempting to maintain some sham of unity this conference achieved little.

The workshops themselves reflected this cautious attitude. There seemed to be an unwillingness to tackle fundamental

WF organised a campaign around the closure of the local maternity wards at Whipps Cross last autumn, but then things went into a bit of a lull.

We were just starting to make a fuss about the fact that the outpatient abortion clinic promised in 1976 still had not materialised, when

the Sunday People blew up a story about an abortion at Wanstead Hospital.

LIFE then started leafletting the hospital and are suing the local gynaecologist for manslaughter—he is the only person willing to perform abortions in the area.

All the other gynaecologists are

anti-abortion. If he goes—so does our chance of getting any decent facilities in the area.

We have produced a leaflet for the hospital and nearby streets and are leafletting the hospital and will mount a counter demonstration.

issues such as class, race or Northern Ireland; no real attempt was made to examine the oppression of women with the wider context of class oppression.

All in all I felt that there was too much feminism and not enough socialism and a sidestepping of issues that might provoke a confrontation between different political views.

If the Socialist Feminist movement is to have any real meaning, political differences will have to be discussed and somehow resolved.

Fran Briscoe

What do other readers think?



photo: Angela Phillips (LFL)

# WOMENS HEALTH

## First we need to understand -then we need to fight

THIS article by Mel Bartley was presented by Womens Voice as a paper at the recent Socialist Feminist Conference. Here Mel explains why health is a political issue. She describes ways in which society and the medical profession use their power to blackmail us into being good wives and mothers.

WHY should health be a political issue for women? Why is it women who have taken to the streets to demonstrate for the right to control their own bodies, set up self-help groups and taken a lead in many struggles to save and improve the health service?

By the crudest measure of health, that is, death statistics (mortality statistics), women have no right to grumble as we can expect to live ten to fifteen years longer than men. Men do not suffer the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth, but recent medical advances have greatly reduced these dangers. Men more than make up for not having babies by the additional stresses of heavy, dirty, polluting work, shift work, and death caused by accidents at work and the aftermath of such accidents.

The coming of 'total war' with conscript armies made young men very valuable to the state, and this led to improvements in the care and social provision for the expectant mother and the young child. But after physical maturity at eighteen to twenty five, men are no longer very important to the state, and are not protected by legislation in the same way as women. This legislation had the aim of making sure that as many women had as many children as possible for use in the colonial and international wars. It was not intended to improve the general state of women's health, but that's what happened. At a cost - the cost of being tied to the role of wife and mother. And by being trapped in this role, great damage has been done to women's health, although it cannot be measured by death statistics. Women have come to see that ideas about their own and their children's health are used in rather a similar way as ideas about the 'national interest' and the economy are used to keep all workers in their place. We are conned into accepting our role, not physically forced into it. We see the doctor (GP, gynaecologist, psychiatrist etc) far more often than we see the boys in blue, more often even than other enforcers of proper behaviour such as social workers. All these groups of people have ways of making us do what they tell us. Usually they do it by having the power to

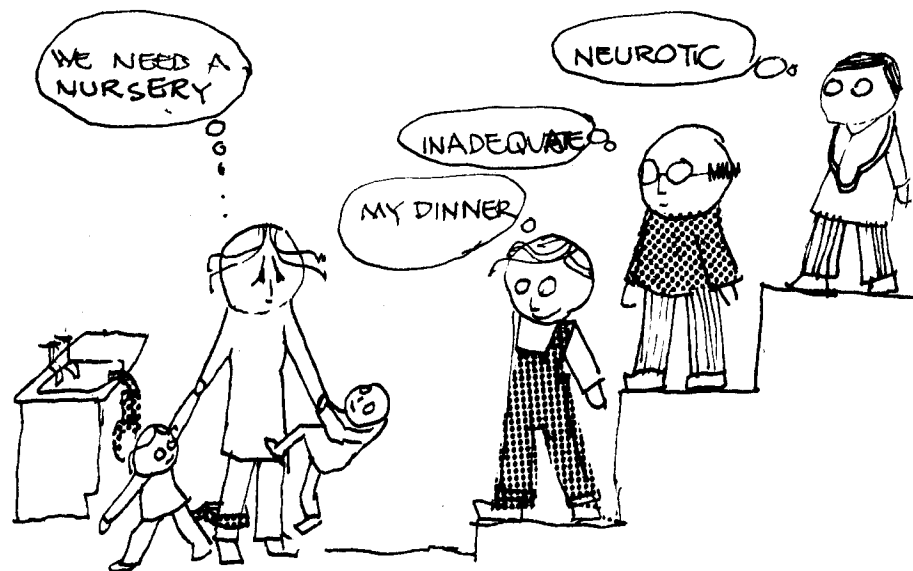
give or withhold something we want and need - an abortion, a place on the housing list, a place in a nursery, social security, special needs grants, contraceptives, medicines . . . And I think that if you think about your own experiences as a woman with these 'agents of control', you will remember that very often what they demanded of you in return was some sort of compliance with the traditional role of a 'good' wife and mother.

The difference between a widow or a divorced woman and a single parent in the eyes of the social security is one of the most obvious examples, the cohabitation rule is another. But often the demands are more subtle and for that reason more effective.

After all, how do we really know whether leaving our young child in a creche or with a minder and going back to work will or will not have a detrimental effect on her or his

counsellors, social security officials and so on. But the judgements of even these non-medical people are often couched in pseudo-medical language about the 'adequacy' of the woman's personality, her 'neuroticism', her 'instability' and so on.

This is not to say that women do not suffer for real. It is not to say that women do not become ill, rather it is to question the notion of what an illness is (which is why health is ultimately an important issue for men as well). Traditionally, an illness is seen as something which comes along and strikes an individual because of some weakness or rash behaviour of her own. It is *the woman* who 'has' the illness. So the minute you are defined as ill, your condition is seen as something that is probably temporary. It means that the person should accept being put under the expert supervision of someone who knows more about her problem than



mental health later in life?

How are we to resist the idea that the feelings of depression and desperation we may experience when left alone all day with small children are due to some individual failing of our own brain chemistry that needs, not a nursery, but a course of drugs?

The difference between the way men and women relate to what I call the 'health establishment' is that the ideas of this establishment are used to keep women going in what is still seen as our primary role - that of wife and mother. It is a role that we still really have to face alone. There are no wives' or mothers' committees with shop stewards to see that conditions are kept at a decent level. There is not even a supervisor to lash out at (lashing out at the kids themselves is just another form of disease) or a management to curse.

Short of seeing the whole way society is organised as the source of our oppression, we have no alternative to feeling that we as individuals cannot cope, and seeking the help of the GP, the gynaecologist, the headshrinker, the little bottle of pills.

It is in this way that the questioning of ideas about health and health care and the way it is administered leads women on to question the way our society oppresses us. The husband is the supervisor, the GP is the personnel officer, the consultant is the management. Similar roles are of course also played by social workers, marriage guidance

she does herself. She should accept and follow whatever treatment the expert recommends, and all in good time she will recover. Her pre-illness state, eg being at home all day with small children, or doing two shifts, one at work and the other at her housework, is seen as being the 'normal, healthy' state and she will be well again when she steps back into that role.

When you look at how this model of illness is applied to women who suffer from agoraphobia, depression, cystitis and vaginal infections, arthritic conditions, you get some idea of the oppressive function of ideas on 'health', 'treatment' or 'normality' which serve to shove women back into isolated, sexually unsatisfactory and laborious situations. Add to this the forms of physical and mental distress suffered by the elderly who are alone and not properly provided for (the vast majority of people over seventy-five are women, and the average length of widowhood is now eight and a half years) and you have included a huge proportion of the suffering in our society.

A first step towards the refusal and rejection of the social conditions which produce this suffering is for women to work towards our own definition of health and normality, our own understanding of how our minds and bodies work and what our needs are. And then to fight for what we really need.

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## Finding my freedom

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
After being a subscriber to your magazine for only a few months I would like to thank you for opening my eyes a little wider than they were.

I have been just one of the women who have had their feelings suppressed for such an awful long time, and now I'm at the beginning of the road of finding my own freedom, it's difficult but I'm enjoying it. I like the new me.

Keep up the good work and all the very best to each and every one of us.

*Thanking you,*  
*Beryl Llewellyn,*  
*Manchester*

## Sales fine!

*Dear Womens Voice*  
Like the women in Leeds, Bristol Womens Voice members also went down to the station to sell Women's Voice to women going to London for the Low paid demo on January 22nd.

However, unlike the women in Leeds, one of us was approached by the police and charged with committing an offence by illegally selling the magazine on British Rail property.

The police claim that they had been watching the woman concerned for fifteen minutes and witnessed her selling a copy of Womens Voice. This is untrue as she had in fact barely been there five minutes and, unfortunately, no-one had bought a copy.

Her court appearance was adjourned as her solicitor was unable to obtain a copy of this obscure bye-law in Bristol. When he did obtain one we discovered that it is illegal even to display goods, let alone sell

them on British Rail property, so she was breaking the law just by holding copies of Womens Voice!

Any donations towards the fine will be gratefully received c/o 32, Dalrymple Road, St. Paul's, Bristol 2.

*Katrina Tully*  
*Bristol Womens Voice*

## Jumble tip

*Dear Womens Voice*  
Regarding your recent DIY feature on jumble sales a useful tip I've learnt is to collect from blocks of flats rather than houses. This is because houses have cellars, lofts and cupboards under the stairs where people hoard all the goodies that flat-dwellers have to throw out—so you get more jumble. Go to private flats rather than council ones because the people who live in them can afford to throw more away.

The other advantage of flats is you can get around them quicker, since they don't have garden paths.

Happy jumbling.  
*Sue Spicer,*  
*Brighton.*

## Abortion query

*Dear Womens Voice*  
I am writing in reply to your March article on 'International Abortion Right'. Under the heading of abortion rights in the USSR, you state correctly that in the 1920's they were the only country offering 'abortion on demand' then you mention that sixteen years later, this right was withdrawn—right, but you omit to explain why, which I think is very bad journalism.

The reason why it was withdrawn in the Soviet union was because they discovered a 'hidden' side effect, i.e. a staggering 20% of women became sterile after the abortion.

I am not an anti abortionist but I do think that this is a very valid and important point since very few people are aware of this fact. I am also uneasy about the abortion laws as they are at the moment in this country, because rumours are rife that whereas a white woman can come up against a lot of hassle obtaining an abortion, black women seldom do. This smacks of racism and reminds one of Nazi Germany (the 'Aryan Ideal' concept).

Miles of smiles.  
*Christina Barnes*  
*Kentish Town Womens Voice Group.*

## Gay unity

*Dear Sisters,*  
We are pleased to see that Womens Voice is prepared to raise its voice for the benefit of our gay sisters who are discriminated against by this capitalist system.

Here in Bournemouth, the situation is as bad as anywhere else. Gay News, Sappho, Sequel, Move, Spare Rib and Womens Voice are not accepted for display at the local library and we feel that there should be a National Campaign by all Womens Voice and SWP groups to remedy this abysmal state of affairs.

County librarians are laws unto themselves. They decide what is right for us 'lesser mortals' to read. We have had very little say in the matter—up

until now.

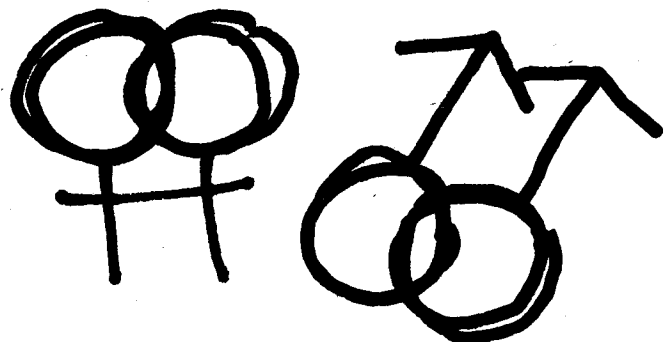
Our gay sisters may be a minority in which case all the more reason for us to stand beside them. It is up to all of us to support their rights.

We are, in my opinion, in a strong position to do this, whereas many gays are isolated and afraid of reprisals. Let us once again demonstrate our unity against oppression and discrimination by the powers that be.

I ask all sisters in Womens Voice to support a campaign to display Gay News and other periodicals in their local libraries. Let us set the fashion and not follow it. We are heartily sick and tired of being told what to do by our capitalist masters who are anxious to preserve the 'Status Quo' Libraries should be for the benefit of the people. Not all the people have heard of Womens Voice. Let's do something about that for a start. Bournemouth is prepared to start the ball rolling.

Thanks to Womens Voice we've now got a claimants union going and we hope that this example will be followed elsewhere. We hope to hear from other Womens Voice groups. Let's hope to see a few more pegs in the map by 1980. Womens Voice is our voice so let it be heard.

*L. Handley*  
*Poole and Bournemouth*  
*Womens Voice.*





## I WILL SURVIVE

Gloria Gaynor

Polydor

I always sing along when the radio's on, even to the most banal records, so it's great when a strong song that's sung by women gets to the top of the charts, and I can join in without blushing.

On this record, the disco beat is relaxed and easy, the orchestration is quite flamboyant, but the merry rhythms are belied by the tell-tale minor key. Gloria Gaynor's voice is rich and poignant, and the actual tune is very sad. The woman in the story is defiant but she's been badly hurt—beaten up, perhaps, as well as let down:

*At first I was afraid, I was petrified  
Kept thinking I could never live without you by  
my side.  
But then I spent so many nights thinking how you  
did me wrong,  
And I grew strong, and I learnt how to get along,  
And so you're back, from outer space.  
I just walked in to find you here with that bad look  
upon your face,  
I should have changed that stupid lock, I should  
have made you leave your key  
If I'd have known for just one second you'd be  
back to bother me.  
Go on now go! Walk out the door!  
Just turn around now, you're not welcome any  
more!  
Weren't you the one who tried to hurt me with  
your fire?  
Did you think I'd crumble? Did you think I'd lay  
down and die?  
Oh no, not I!  
I will survive!  
As long as I know how to love I know I'm still alive  
I've got all my life to live  
I've got all my love to give\*  
I'll survive, I will survive  
(\* NB: Hasn't she learned her lesson yet?)*

The song doesn't pretend it's easy to free yourself from emotional dependence on a lover, even if he is a selfish, violent slob—but it does make it seem worth the effort:

*It took all the strength I had not to fall apart  
Trying hard to mend the pieces of my broken heart  
I spent oh so many nights just feeling sorry for  
myself  
I used to cry, but now I hold my head up high  
And you see me, somebody new*

## A PIECE OF THE NIGHT

Michele Roberts

Womens Press

£2.25



This novel is about Julie Fanchot, born in Normandy, who spent her childhood in an English convent. She married Ben when she was at Oxford, and at her wedding meets up again with her school friend and lover, Jenny. Dissatisfied with her marriage she leaves with her two children to join Jenny

*I'm not that chained-up little person still in love  
with you*

*And so you felt like dropping in*

*And just expect me to be free*

*But now I'm saving all my loving for someone  
who's loving me*

A welcome contrast from the Three Degrees' current hit:

*Just give me love when you can, if you need me  
a woman in love will understand*

*And I'll give you all that I am, believe me*

*A woman in love needs only one man.*

'I Will Survive' is an exhilarating song compared to all the slush we're subjected to the rest of the time, and I think it may give confidence to some women who are trying to shake off relationships in which they're oppressed.

If only I could believe Gloria Gaynor meant it! But how can I when it turns out that on the same I.P. *Love Tracks*, she does a version of Clout's hit 'Substitute' one of the most abject songs ever sung by a woman.

It's enough to make me weep! I feel so betrayed! But never mind. I will survive!

*Lucy Toothpaste*



and other feminist women to live in a commune in Camberwell.

Michele Roberts writes brilliantly about the repression Julie suffers from the Catholic nuns at school, the guilt she carries with her. This reminded me so much of my own convent childhood...I could almost smell the cabbages and candle wax. She brings out the agonies that Julie feels when explaining her new way of life with women and the oppression and frustration Julie feels in her marriage.

The book is written in a very rich style but sometimes I got the feeling that it was a film set being described rather than real life. I also

found it rather difficult to identify with Julie's problems as middle class women seem to have so many options but are none the less oppressed. However having said that I really enjoyed reading this book.

*Alison Kirton*

• Correction and apology to Celia Shalom for a misprint in her review in last month's *Womens Voice* on The Pearl Bastard by Lilian Halegua. The last sentence of Celia's review should have read: 'But while there are a number of books helping us understand the cruelty women suffer in life, few of them give us the strength we need to fight it.'

# WHEAT IS GOING ON?

## Public meetings

● **Newham Womens Voice presents: HARLAN COUNTY** a documentary film about the bitterly fought miners' strike in 1973. The film highlights the role of women in the mining community. N. E London Poly, Livingstone Road, Stratford, Friday 30 March 7.45pm.

● **Coventry Womens Voice Public Meeting HOW SEXISM AFFECTS US ALL** Speaker: Dave Widgery. Thursday 26 April, 7.30pm at the Hertford Tavern, near The Butts, Ring Coventry 618956

● **Lea Valley Womens Voice** are holding a **jump sale Saturday 21 April 2.30pm** at Tottenham Community Project, 628 Tottenham High Road, N17.

## Womens Voice meetings

● **Aberdeen Womens Voice**, for more information telephone Liz 51059.

● **Acton & Harlesden Ring** Carrie 993 0356 or Pete 969 9812

● **Bath Womens Voice** meets regularly for details phone Caroline, Bath 315967

● **Birmingham Womens Voice** meets regularly at the "Holloway" pub, Holloway Road, City centre. For details of next meeting and baby sitters phone Jenny—440 5794. All women welcome.

● **Black Country Sundays** fortnightly, 2.30, 27 Glen Court, Compton Road, Wolverhampton 23233 for information. Children welcome.

● **Bristol Womens Voice** meets every other Tuesday at 7.30pm in the Inkworks Community Centre, 22 Hepburn Road, St Pauls (off Brigstoke Road). For information Bristol (0272) 553 740 or 669198.

● **Canterbury** every other Tuesday at Jolly Sailor Northgate. Phone Barbara (Lyminge 862742).

● **Chelmsford Womens Voice**. For details of local activities, see Womens Voice Sellers.

● **Coventry** meets every other Wednesday, 8.00pm at The Hertford Tavern, off Queens Road (near the Butts). Phone 450-570

● **Croydon Womens Voice** meets alternate Tuesdays. Phone Maureen 660 0989 or Yvonne 664 3768.

● **Ealing Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Maureen 567 7083 or Jane 930 0986 for details.

● **Edinburgh Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on Sunday evenings. Phone Penny 557 0731 for details.

● **Edinburgh Street sale** every Saturday 2-3pm. Meet from 1pm onwards at the Cafe Royal (behind Woolworths, Princes Street). Womens Voice readers welcome to turn up and give us a hand. For more info phone Penny 557 0731.

● **Exeter Womens Voice** for info ring 0392 38022

● **Finchley and Barnet Womens Voice**, fortnightly meetings, for information contact Anita 883-4968 or Glenis 346-7627.

● **Fleet Street** meets every other Wednesday at the Hoop and Grapes Farringdon St lunchtimes from 1-2. Ring Maggie 822 3780 (work).

● **Glasgow Womens Voice** for information phone Clare (959 8924) or Sheila (424-1048).

● **Glossop, Derbyshire**. First and third Tuesdays of every month at 110 Victoria St., Glossop. Phone Glossop 61873 or Claire Glossop 64735 All welcome.

● **Gravesend Womens Voice** meets every third Monday at 8pm. For more details phone Jeffer Gravesend 57095

● **Hackney** phone Pauline (800 3586) for information and babysitter.

● **Halifax** details from WV and SW sellers every Sat 12.30-2.30 Co-op Arcade on the Precinct.

● **Harlow Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on Wednesday nights. Ring Pat 28022

● **Highbury Group**. For details/babysitting, ring Elana 439-3764 (days). All women welcome.

● **Islington Womens Voice** meets regularly phone Sandy at 802 6145 for details.

□ **Hornsey Womens Voice** meets fortnightly for info ring Jane 348 6712 or Maggie 341 1182.

● **Lampeter** Tuesday evenings in college. Details from WV sellers or write c/o SDUC Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales.

● **Lea Valley** meets regularly. Phone Mary, (802 9563) for information and babysitters.

● **South East Manchester** meets every other week, for details phone Kate 434 2343

● **Medway Womens Voice** meets regularly. Telephone Helen Medway 270 684 or Marge 251 362.

● **Newham** meets Tuesdays and Thursdays fortnightly. Phone Wendy 790 2373 Babysitters available.

● **Newcastle** meetings are the second Tuesdays of every month. Bridge Hotel, Newcastle, at 8 pm 'Nr High Levelbridge), Telephone Number: 813877 Newcastle.

● **Norwich**—every other Tuesday 8.30pm 'Black Boys' pub Colegate. Or further information phone Norwich 29963

● **Preston** We meet every other Tuesday at the Windsor Castle, Egan Street, (near Meadow Street) at 8pm Telephone Mary—Preston 55739 for more information or if you need a babysitter.

● **Reading Womens Voice** meets regularly. For information phone Kathy on 668 800

● **Sheffield Womens Voice** meets at 8pm every other Monday in the Prince of Wales pub, Division Street, Sheffield. For more information ring Jackie 665 326

● **Shrewsbury** the first Wednesday of every month. Other meetings too so phone 58830 for details.

● **Slough Womens Voice** group. Meets on the first Tuesday of every month at Slough Library, Ring Mary—Slough 24093

● **South London Womens Voice Group** meets fortnightly on Tuesdays. Tate Library, Brixton Oval. All welcome. Next meeting Tuesday March 20 at 8.00 at Tate Library All welcome.

● **S. West London Womens Voice Group** meet alternate Tuesdays 91 Bedford Hill, Balham All welcome. More info, babysitters contact Marion 673 1329.

● **Stoke on Trent** would anyone interested in organising with Womens Voice in the Stoke on Trent area contact Sandra 814094.

● **Tower Hamlets** meets on alternate Mondays. Babysitters available phone Heather 739 6668 (home) or 534 7825 ext. 13.

● **Waltham Forest Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on Tuesdays or Thursdays at 8pm. For details ring Jeannie 531 8340, or Pauline 521 4768

● **Walthamstow** meets every Sunday 3pm. For details ring Jeannie 531 8340, or Pauline 521 4768.

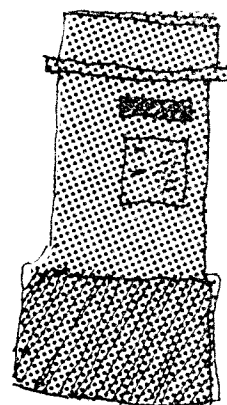
● **York** Meets every 3rd Saturday in the month at the Royal Oak Goodramgate. Full Creche facilities. Food on sale—do drop in!

### ● WOMEN AND SCIENCE

Saturday 21 April 10am - 5pm, at the Gay Centre, 9/10 Borderley Street, Digbeth, Birmingham

**Organised by feminists in BSSRS**

Registration £1.50 (unwaged half price) Creche available. Evening social. Contact Ro Clayton, 26 Goldsmith Road, Kingsheath, Birmingham (021 444 6255) or Marianne Craig, BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London, W1.



# GARNER STRIKE FILM BENEFIT

APRIL

SUNDAY 1st  
12.30pm **Dread, Beat & Blood** *plus*  
**Dark Star**  
GATE CINEMA NOTTING HILL

SUNDAY 8th  
1.00pm **The American Friend**  
PARIS PULLMAN DRAYTON GARDENS, SW10

WEDNESDAY 11th  
11.15pm **Pressure**  
THE SCREEN ON THE GREEN ISLINGTON

SATURDAY 21st  
4.00pm **Shirin's Wedding** *plus*  
**Babies and Banners**  
RITZY CINEMA BRIXTON

## NATFHE Outer London Region

Day School

### Women in NATFHE

Polytechnic of Central London (New Cavendish Street)  
10am - 5pm

For further information contact: Margo Galloway,  
Acton Tech, High Street, London, W3.

## small ads

### The Other Cinema

Films by women and about women to show at your meetings. Complete list available of the films we have for distribution. Send SAE to The Other Cinema, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London WC2H 7JJ. Telephone 01-734 8508.

### Birmingham Womens

Liberation group can be contacted at 76 Brighton Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham. Newsletter available with list of different groups.

### Abortion

New group forming to collect information about abortion facilities and set up abortion counselling and referral service. Deptford Womens Centre, 74 Deptford High Street, 7.30pm, Tuesday 23 January. Ring Jennifer 732 9218 or Wendy 737 4849

### See Red Womens Workshop

New catalogue and posters now out. Send SAE to 16A Iliffe yard, off Crampton Street, London SE17.

We are now printing for groups needing posters (+ T shirts) for meetings events etc Phone 701 8314

Small ads rates: 5p per word

### Men against Sexism

are organising the creche for the Easter RAR extravanza at Ally Pally. We need books, toys and games. MAS supporters needed to help out with the kids. Phone Andy (278 0100) with offers of help and toys.

### Rape Crisis Centre

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted and want someone to talk to or need legal or medical advice the Rape Crisis Centre runs a 24 hour telephone line. Contact us any time day or night on 01 340 6145 or PO Box 42, London, EN6 5BU.

### Lesbian Line

Lesbian Line is a new phone service for women operated entirely by women and offers help, advice and information. Phone between 2-10pm on 01 794 2942. Scottish Lesbians can ring Homosexual Rights Group 031 556 4049, weekdays 7 to 10, weekends 2.30-10pm.

### Menstruation

I am writing two books on menstruation for 9-14 year olds and I would like to hear from women of all ages who would be willing to talk to me or answer a confidential questionnaire about their experiences.

Please write to Ruth Thomson, 72 Hemingford Road, London, N1

# Join Womens Voice...

WOMENS VOICE fights for womens rights. We want equal pay with the highest paid; maternity leave without restriction; the right to a job; nursery places for all children so that mothers can chose to work; and an end to discrimination in education, training, jobs and benefits; the right to abortion on demand.

To fight for these changes is only a beginning. Womens Liberation means we have to free ourselves from the grip of the rich and powerful whose oppressive rules and ideas are fostered on us from our earliest years. This means we have to fight for socialism too, to free us from a society divided between those who have and those who have not.

To fight we have to be organised: Womens Voice is a sister organisation of the Socialist Workers Party.

**Fight with Womens Voice for Womens Liberation and Socialism.**

## join the fight!

### Womens Voice Groups

Scotland  
Dundee  
Edinburgh  
Central Glasgow  
Aberdeen

Wales  
Aberystwyth  
Cardiff

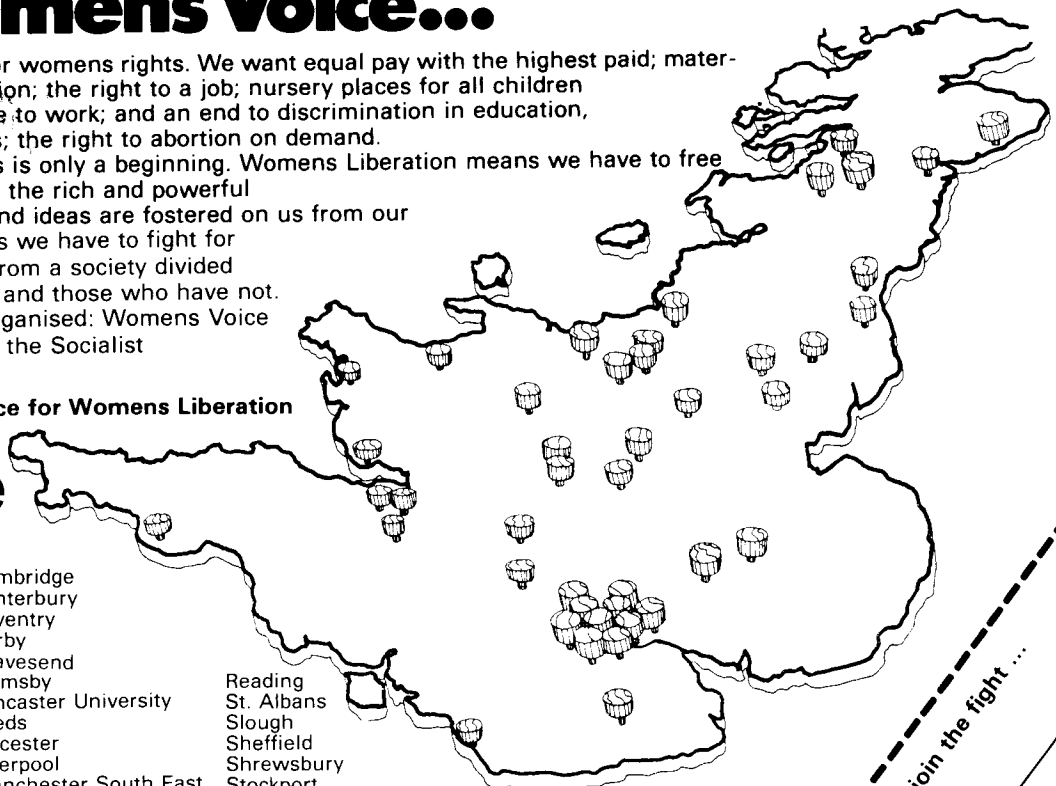
England  
Bath  
Birmingham  
Bristol  
Bristol University

Cambridge  
Canterbury  
Coventry  
Derby  
Gravesend  
Grimby  
Lancaster University  
Leeds  
Leicester  
Liverpool  
Manchester South East  
Medway  
Newcastle  
Norwich  
Nottingham  
Oxford  
Preston  
Plymouth  
Pontefract

Reading  
St. Albans  
Slough  
Sheffield  
Shrewsbury  
Stockport  
Sunderland  
Wolverhampton  
York

London  
North East London Poly  
Central  
Fleet Street  
South

South West  
South East  
Hammersmith  
Bedford College  
Lea Valley  
Kentish Town  
Islington  
Walthamstow  
Tower Hamlets



I want to join the fight ...

Name  
Address

Send to Womens Voice  
PO Box 82, London, E2.

**General Election Fighting Fund ££££££££'s needed**

The Tories have got big business to fund them.  
We've got you! We need money for posters, leaflets, badges,  
street meetings - the lot.  
Send what what you can to Womens Voice Box 82, London E2

*Keep out the Snatcher  
and all the other Tory thieves*

If you're fed up being told by politicians what to do, then join  
the fight for women's liberation and socialism!

I want to join the fight

Name .....

Address .....

.....

*... and get the RED flag flying*

*subscribe*

For yourself  
For a friend

Name .....

Address .....

12 issues £3.60 and Airmail  
£6.40

*bankers order!*

I would like a bankers  
order to help keep  
Womens Voice fighting

Name .....

Address .....

