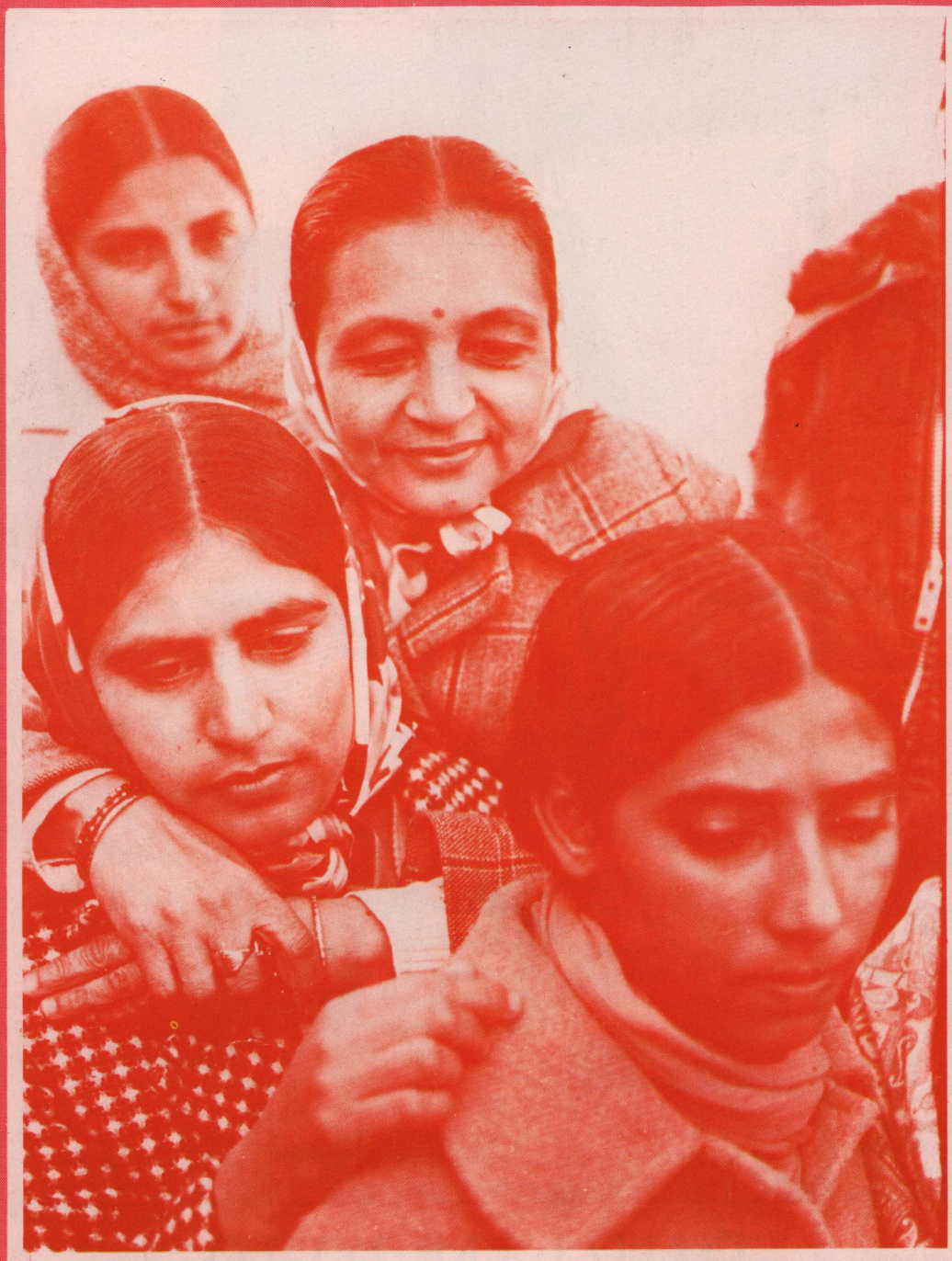


womens **VOICE**

20p December '79 issue 36



THE BABY KILLERS

The scandal of the dried milk companies

Christmas story

Wages with dignity for women at Chix

Children's books

A PENNY FOR MY FUTURE



DUBLIN 1979

Desperate poverty which forces children to beg on the streets for enough money to feed themselves is something we associate with underdeveloped countries, a long way away.

But it exists right here. In this issue of Womens Voice we take a special look at children lives as we near the end of the International Year of the Child.

Has it really made any difference to their future?

OUR POINT OF VIEW

When will war be over?

So this is Christmas, and a Happy New Year,
Let's hope it's a good one, without any fear .

John Lennon

We end the Year of the Child with terrifying images imprinted on our brains. Images of the children of Kampuchea. Children who, as John Pilger explained at the end of his television documentary, would already be dead by the time we were seeing them.

Kampuchea, formally Cambodia, wasn't worth much to the super-powers. Just as, not long ago, Bangladesh wasn't worth much. So they got written off.

To President Nixon, the Cambodian nation was just a pawn in the power game. It provided bombing practice and a last fling for his troops when they had already lost in Vietnam. He paved the way for Pol Pot and the vicious Khmer Rouge, who had only to add genocide to total devastation to make the picture complete.

We were hopeful when the Americans pulled out that peace would come to South East Asia. John Lennon's song 'War is Over' reflects our hopes and our relief. No wonder that the spectacle of Kampuchea this Christmas makes us despair. Inevitably, we feel guilty. However little we feel we have to celebrate in Britain, we are well off compared to those dying children. But guilt is a destructive, negative emotion. Many wallow in guilt, give a little in charity, and then turn away.

Our overwhelming duty to ourselves and others is to learn the lessons of Kampuchea and Bangladesh. To know the extremes the superpowers will go to. To understand why there is an unholy alliance between Thatcher and Chairman Hua, who still recognise Pol Pot. And to learn that although we are a million times better off than the survivors of Kampuchea, we too are capable of being written off if the time should come. Unless, that is, we learn to know our enemies, and learn to stand together against them.

womens
Voice

Womens magazine of the
Socialist Workers Party

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With Christmas almost here remember to send in all your news, letters, ads for the next issue as soon as possible, at the latest by Friday 14 December.

If you have any good ideas for articles we should plan for next year then let us know.

If you want to come to editorial meetings and want to help in some way in putting the magazine together telephone or write to us at the address below.

Cover photo Virginia Turbot
Page 2 photo Derek Speirs (IFL)

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ONCE AGAIN we welcome you to the Grand Hornsey refuse department works canteen. And its a glittering occasion, with this year's contestants for the Working Mother Trophy anxiously waiting for the results.

We wonder how these girls are feeling at this tense, anxious time. Of the eight original contestants, only three remain. Unfortunately, Mrs Gitre and Mrs Pimple were scratched due to lack of interest. However, on with the show, and the compere for this great occasion is, of course, our very own Bruno Bellicose.

'At last the moment you gentlemen have all been waiting for, "The Morning Rush Exam!"'. First away at the rostrum is Mrs Frownharrass, she's hurriedly throwing on her clothes, her coffee in one hand, and, yes, she's got one arm in her coat. Mrs Chronapathy is a little behind, she seems to be having

trouble finding her shoes, but what's this, yet it's Mrs Roche-Chemicalsaddicted, a slow starter almost a non-starter but what a surprise she's suddenly surged forward and there is no holding her back. She's at the door now, and yes, yes, she's out and has almost overtaken her morning bus. Oh it's a wonderful thing to watch. And now lat last our compare Bruno Bellicose announces this year's winners, third place and a "free Red Rover" goes to Mrs Frownhouse. Second is Mrs Cronapathy who, in the excitement, almost forgets her thirty day double alarm clock. Finally the winner, and as the dazed lady is helped onto the stage, one can see the tears in her glazed, sunked eyes. Clutching her year's free prescription forms in one hand she bravely begins her victory stagger along the stage.

Carole Barrett

Housing occupation

A WOMAN called Marie came to Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush Womens Voice for help over her appalling living conditions. She was living in a council house with her four children and was eight months pregnant. The whole family was having to sleep in the bedroom because a wall had collapsed.

All her children have health problems, bronchitis in particular, which were being made a lot worse by the damp. The floor and ceiling in the kitchen were both falling through.

It had been in that state for over a year despite Marie's attempts to get the place repaired or to get the family rehoused. She'd been passed from one department to another and fobbed off with vague promises while the council did absolutely nothing.

The situation was getting very urgent. We organised a picket which caused a bit of a stir but the council tried to tell us that they didn't have any suitable houses.

We didn't believe them. We know there are 1,000 empty houses and plenty more being sold off.

Next we organised a march against council cuts and another picket, but this time we went straight into the Housing Department and occupied one of the offices.

Eventually we received a promise that we would be notified within three days whether our demand could be met.

We weren't so much surprised as furious when we rang at the arranged time and were told 'no comment.'

First thing the following morning we were waiting outside the Department. Within five minutes we had a letter offering Marie a house.

She and her family have now moved in. The bin men told her the house had been empty for ages.

Just goes to show the council can do magic when it has to!

Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush Womens Voice

Who's harrassing who?

- 'The price I paid for burning a top cop'.
- 'Police chief plagued by practical jokes'.
- 'Journalist was paid informer'.
- 'Police chief denies sexual advances'.
- 'My aggro, by Cop'.
- 'Tec tells of four years of torment'.

THESE SIX headlines were from national and local newspapers taken from a selection of many similar headlines used to report one case heard in October

Ms Sue Shearing, a journalist from Welwyn Garden City, was found guilty of wasting police time, fined £100 and ordered to pay £300 costs.

Sue however claims in the last two years she has been constantly harrassed by police after she rejected the advances of Superintendent Steve Power.

On one occasion after a scuffle with Power in her

home, Sue's back was injured. When a complaint was made through official channels Power apparently became nasty, making threats. In the last two years Sue claims to have been stopped 20 to 30 times, and detained at the police station for stealing jewellery.

The Sun ran 'Police sex feud girl is fined'. The story carried on 'unmarried mother who accused a top detective of demanding sex was convicted yesterday of wasting police time with a hoax call.'

Why sex feud? Why unmarried?

'All this has happened because I dared to speak out and tell the truth about one policeman. One person taking on an entire police force,' says Sue.

St Albans Womens Voice is meeting soon to discuss how they can help Sue. Jane Hardy.

St. Benedicts occupied

THE STAFF at St Benedicts Hospital Tooting, occupied their hospital in a bid to stop it being closed as part of the local AHA's £6m cuts.

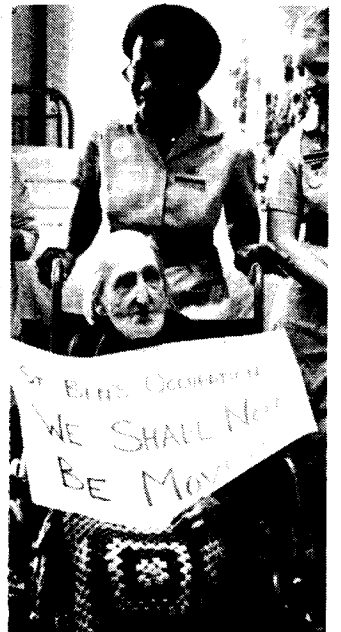
Cuts are always savage and the bureaucrats seem to hack away with complete disregard to the distress and suffering caused. St Benedicts is a prime example. Its the only geriatric hospital in the area that has anything like adequate facilities to meet the special needs of old people. The staff have developed special relationships with the patients and know how to respond to them.

Pat Seelochan, the COHSE shop steward and sister of a ward which is a rehabilitation unit, said, 'We know how important it is for the patients to maintain their dignity. Things which to us seem so simple, like going to the toilet, are often a major effort for old people and they need special facilities to help them. The Boling Broke where most will be transferred, is totally lacking in these. The patients will become very distressed and I honestly believe that many will simply lose the will to live and give up and die.'

So statistics of the cuts, become statistics of closed hospitals which become statistics of suffering. What are our priorities? Tax cuts for the top 3% earners? A nuclear submarine in a crazy arms race? The 'freedom' to invest in a villa abroad? Or is it making the last years of the patients at St Benedicts bearable.

The staff and patients at St Benedicts are quite clear. As Betty Goldsmith, a patient for 33 years, said, 'St Benedicts is my home. I think the staff are right to occupy. When they came out on one day strike a few weeks ago, I went down on the picket line because I felt so strongly about it. I hope everyone else will support us.'

Dee Davis



Mousecombe mothers do battle

FOR THE last two months Mousecomb mothers have been fighting to keep our lollipop ladies. This is only a little part of the cuts, but as it affects our kids' lives we are not going to sit back and let it happen. East Sussex have cut 40 lollipop patrols—and yet over 300 kids use our crossing and there is a factory just down the road.

After a street meeting the first day's action was to block the road and ask all the traffic to turn back. We did this four times a day for a week, and some of us just about lived on that crossing. One woman's pushchair was nearly run down by a mad driver, and the cops drove through to see how we'd act—we gave them a really hard time. Most people supported us and turned back.

At the end of the first week the council started their campaign against us consisting of lies, distortion and changing their 'offers' every day to try and get us to stop. The demo would have been really difficult to keep up, as we all have families, so we organised our own patrols. The

bus drivers are right behind us and gave us support despite the disruption to them. The TGWU also laid on buses and volunteer drivers at a special low rate for when we went to picket the Council meeting at Lewes. The cops and the council seemed to think we'd given in, but we kept it up for four weeks.

We also decided to occupy Radio Brighton's foyer because twice they refused to let us reply to Tory councillors when we'd asked politely. This time they agreed. We learnt that direct action is the only way to get things done. If we turned up where no-one was expecting us, we were always one step ahead.

We showed this when our own zebra crossing appeared. We told them it was made of flour and paste, so they tried to hose it off. Gloss paint doesn't come off with water. The council ordered the paint to be rubbed off, but the NUPE members refused to do it. Outside contractors, non-union men, were called in, which cost the council about £200. We gave those men a hard time by

shouting what we thought of them.

Then we picketed the council meeting in Lewes when they were going in, to make a decision. The council lost our petition of 800 names and they lost two letters from the mayor supporting us. But they did manage to provide lollipop ladies for two estates which collected a total of 46 names on their petitions. We didn't get anything except threats of eviction from the council meeting where we protested.

We can tell from this what the Tories' priorities are: money to non-union labour and endangering kids' lives. Our kids don't matter to the Tories because they are working class kids, but they've forgotten one thing—our local area is for us.

So far they've paid out £600 to burn our zebra crossings off. That money could have paid for a lollipop lady for 10 months—they only get paid £14.70 a week. We're not going to give up, and the sooner the Tories realise it, the better.

Charlotte Muse

Womens Voice joins march

THE RECENTLY formed Lambeth Council Workers Women's Voice Group gave our new banner its first 'rather wet' airing on November 7th when 8,000 S. London workers and residents marched on Parliament to protest about cuts in Public Services.

We distributed 750 Women's Voice leaflets to women

workers—nursery nurses, home helps, typists, who had come on the march partly because of the threat to their jobs and also because they are aware that hospital closures, abolition of school meals and cut backs in Social Services will push them back into the home to care for children, the elderly and the sick.

Stop Press:

JUNE GRIEG has lost her appeal against her conviction for killing her husband. The Lord Justice in Edinburgh said: 'There are various expedients open to a woman regularly subjected to rough treatment by her husband, but a licence to kill is not one of them.'



WAGES WITH DIGNITY

WAGES WITH dignity, that's the demand of the women who work for Chix sweets in Slough.

For seven weeks now 50 Asian women have been out on the picket line every day demanding the right to belong to a union.

'We are fighting for our rights. We want to go in with our union' one woman told Womens Voice. 'It's very difficult sitting outside in the cold weather. I'm sick through standing in the cold. But I cannot go home and leave these ladies. I cannot sleep at night. I cannot stop thinking of this strike.'

The women all secretly joined the union during the summer so that they could do something about their rotten wages and conditions. But the managers refused to negotiate with the union, the General and Municipal. The women heard that the management would sack them all after Christmas and recruit non-union labour.

So out on strike they came.

The local officials of the GMWU are doing all they can to help the women. The strike is official and strike pay is being paid.

But the national union and its General Secretary Bassnet are now putting pressure on to stop the mass pickets, and even to stop the strike pay.

Yet this strike could be won. Pre-Christmas is a busy time for the sweet industry and the picket lines seem to be stopping a lot of the supplies getting through.

When the scab van drove into the factory this week it had curtains drawn all round the windows, to hide the fact that there were no scabs in the van!

- * Send a collection from your workplace or WV group
 - * Visit the picket line
 - * Don't eat Chix sweets
- Messages and money to Mohammed Anwer, GMWU 271 Goodman Park, Slough.

DIVIDE AND RULE TACTICS

HAS CORCORAN got a new secretary?

He's the fellow who tried to sack convenor John Taylor and several fellow shop stewards at Adamsons Containers, Reddish. After three months strike calling for their reinstatement Joan Taylor, John's wife, has received a letter from a woman claiming to be a striker's wife.

She accused Joan of supporting John in bringing hardship to her family. 'What right does your husband have to take food from my children's mouths' the letter says.

Dirty pay

AN EQUAL PAY decision made last year by an Industrial Tribunal, upheld by the Employment Appeals Tribunal and now upheld again in the High Court makes it legal for women to be treated as unfavourably as men

It involved a case brought against the Ministry of Defence by Mr Jeremiah concerning the financial loss he was suffering as a result of his overtime work. Through a complicated working arrangement, men doing voluntary overtime were required to work in a 'dirty' section of the factory while women doing voluntary overtime were not. The compensation pay in the 'dirty' shop did not count towards pension or gratuity, as other overtime jobs did, hence men suffered financial disadvantage.

Although all overtime is supposed to be voluntary, Mr Jeremiah claimed that he had been forced to work in the 'dirty' shop though he had not volunteered for overtime.

Obviously, Mr Jeremiah did not understand that being forced to do overtime in a 'dirty' shop and not getting paid equal rates is what he should have fought. The Tribunal suggested an equalisation of rates of pay, but the Trade Union did not agree.

Instead, women in the factory are now forced to do 'dirty' work for less pay. Is this what the Equal Pay Act was meant to do?

THE ENGLISH Court of Appeal referred an equal pay case, to the European Court of Justice under Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome (McCarthy's Ltd v Smith). They want a ruling from the European Court on whether the Equal Pay Act means a woman who takes over a job from a man should get the same, or less pay. Until now, it has been assumed that the Act only applied when there was currently a man for the woman to compare herself with. In this case, Mrs Smith was employed as stock room manageress at £50 per week. The previous stock room manager received £60.

DEPORTATION THREAT

NASIRA BEGUN is living under threat of immediate deportation. Womens Voice talked to Meggan Moreland who is a member of 'Friends of Nasira Begun'.

'Nasira has been in this country three years and is married to a British citizen. She arrived from Pakistan in 1976 to visit her brother, who had already settled here. While here she met and married a British citizen.

'She applied for a permanent visa, but her application was made two days after her visitors permit ran out. This meant that, technically she had been here illegally for two days.

'It took the Home Office three years to return her application. In their reply they said that because her visa had run out she had no right to be here and that this meant that she had no right of appeal.

'Nasira's situation was made more complicated because three months after her marriage her husband made her move out of the house and she came to Manchester to stay with friends.

'In October she received a writ from the Home office which was delivered by police. It said that she had 14 days to get out of the country. This means that she can be arrested at any time, put into a detention centre and deported.

'Nasira would face a bleak future in Pakistan. She would be regarded as a deserted woman, as such she would have no status, she could never marry again and perhaps, her family would reject her. Here, she has a brother and several friends, who want her to stay with them.

'The Friends of Nasira Begun' have held an active local campaign to stop her deportation, including: public meetings, street meetings and a demonstration on Saturday 17 November, which was attended by over 200 people.

'Nasira wants to stay here, her marriage is legal under both Muslim and British law. If Nasira is deported 'The Friends of Nasira Begun' will not stop fighting.'
Maureen Watson.

The strange thing is that this woman, who incidentally didn't sign her name or give an address, could afford to get photocopies made of three pages of insults and accusations and send them by first class post to the wives of all the other strikers.

Another puzzling fact is where she got the list of names and addresses from.

The woman claimed she was writing on behalf of others, who felt the same way. Joan hasn't yet met one wife who doesn't support John. In fact, since the letters were received, she's been

contacted by many who have reaffirmed their support for the strike committee.

If any Womens Voice readers work for firms which supply material for or use products from the ACRO group the best way to help is by blacking.

Money is now coming in but more is still needed. Please have a collection at your workplace, wherever you work.

Messages of support and donations to: John Taylor, 27 Jubilee Avenue, Dukinfield, Tameside.

Pat Jones

Stop these racist, sexist immigration laws



HOME OFFICE

Proposals for revision of the Immigration Rules

THE REDUCTION in the annual intake of immigrants from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan as a result of the Government's proposals on male fiances would be something of the order of 2,000 Mr William Whitelaw Home Secretary, said at question time today. He added that no-one could estimate what would be the increase by the end of this century if action on these lines had not been taken.

The Times Nov. 16 79

These racist and sexist proposals by the Tories are a direct attack on Asian women. The numbers of men involved, only 2,000, are negligible, but the attack is directed at one of the most vulnerable sections of the community—a section whose culture is being denied them, whose family life is being threatened, and who will suffer a great deal of heartache. As many as forty Tory MP's are threatening to abstain or vote against the measures, which they believe to be racially unjust, but they just might have been influenced by the fear that India will cancel a £1,000 million order for the Anglo-French Jaguar in retaliation.

I spoke to an Asian woman, who went on holiday to India last year, met a man and married him.

I can't understand why the Tories are doing it, they are saying we are second class citizens, they're treating us like dirt. It's alright for women to marry people within the EEC, the Tories are safe then, they know they will have white skins. Just because you're brown you have no identity.

She returned to Britain in April because her passport expired, she is a British Citizen with a right of abode. As soon as she married she and her husband put his name on the list in Delhi to apply for permanent settlement.

'We were told he would have to wait at least eighteen months. He doesn't even get his first interview till May. I am pregnant, the baby is due in December. This is the time when you need your husband with you. I'm terribly frightened he will never be allow-

ed to come here. They say the proposals aren't retrospective but I won't believe that until he's here. It's a totally desperate situation. I've tried all I can to get him a priority interview, I've written to my MP and the Home Office and the British High Commission. They say there have to be 'exceptional compassionate grounds'—no-one defines what they are—what could be more exceptional than a woman having her first baby.'

'The Tories excuse for this is to stop abuse, to stop marriages of convenience. Asian people do treat marriage very seriously, it's a respectable traditional institution for us, a tradition that is being lost here.'

'I thought about trying to get a visitors visa for my husband, so that he could at least be here for the birth. But I have been advised that it might threaten the permanent settlement application. They might think he's jumping the queue, and anyway the chances against getting the visa are high.'

'Why are the Tories attacking genuine marriages when there are so many bad things to be dealt with. Mrs Thatcher is a woman, and she's attacking other women. She looks after those with the golden spoons in their mouths, and we haven't even got

the right to live together as normal human beings. Why are they doing this now, when they gave us our passports in the first place.'

The new proposals are the most overtly racist, sexist, and unjust that any British Government has dared introduce. Just like the 1971 Immigration Act brought in by the Labour Government, such proposals create the machinery which enables racist decisions to be made openly by the state.

Every day the racism of the State reveals itself. Immigrants are treated as criminals by the police, homes are broken in to, people are strip-searched, passports are demanded. The Illegal Immigrant Intelligence Unit has the power to force entry into so-called 'suspects' homes, search them, and wreck them, and beat up the 'suspect'. The 'SUS' laws are used in order to harrass black kids, so that they can't even walk the streets without the threat of being picked

up, kept in custody and brutalized.

There is an underlying policy of induced repatriation being used by Government agencies. Attempts are continually being made to deport people, most of whom have every right to live in Britain.

Afzal Mohammed, a 23 year old Pakistani living in Whitby, North Yorkshire was to be deported in August, but now his case is pending in the Home Office. The Home Office claims that his marriage is not genuine, and therefore he has no right to be in this country.

In fact he married his wife Shemin, a British Citizen, in Pakistan in 1971, and in case the marriage was not recognised here they married again in Leeds in 1975. He has already been acquitted once of being an illegal immigrant by Whitby magistrates.

The Mohammeds have two children born in Yorkshire. The children were given blood tests supposedly to prove whether or not they were the children of the Mohammeds. Blood tests cannot show who a child's parents are, they can only show who it's parents are not. Even so the doctor who carried out the tests stated that they were the children of the Mohammeds. Now Shemin Mohammed is waiting, at the mercy of the Home Office.

The Mohammeds are only one of many families whose lives are being destroyed by a system of increasing repression and harassment.

Jan Trebilcock



Ian Mackintosh/IFEL

Answering back

Is it because they are men or bureaucrats?

SO LEN MURRAY and his cronies are the new champions of women's rights. They suddenly take that role so seriously that, rather like children squabbling over a new toy, they threaten not to play if they can't have it all their own way.

There's no doubt that the 28 October abortion demo should have been led and addressed by ordinary women. Perhaps the contingent from NUPE or the GMWU, which would have indicated more than anything what the demonstration was about.

We should have raised and won that argument long before we hit the streets. After years of pressurising and cajoling the official trade union movement to take our abortion rights seriously, the call for the demonstration was so welcome that we forgot some very basic lessons.

As usual, the media were able to exploit the situation. A group of women falling out with trade union leaders was too good to be missed. They were able to fix a lasting impression, not of overwhelming unity in action, but of seemingly petty divisions which eclipsed the real strength of the anti-Corrie movement. The papers virtually ignored the real issues that had brought tens of thousands of women and men from all over the country.

What conclusions should be drawn from the argument about who should have led the march? It would be disastrous if we drew the wrong ones. The policy of taking the question of abortion rights into the trade union movement is absolutely correct.

Abortion isn't simply a 'woman's issue'. It's also a class issue. Only working-class women will be forced back to the backstreets. In fact, only working-class women are ever affected collectively by any restriction on women's rights.

Women with wealth and influence have always used it to get themselves round the law and prevailing social attitudes. More than anything else our strength as working women, to challenge and change things, lies in our ability to mobilise our class on issues such as our right to choose.

That trade union bureaucrats are able to undermine us has everything to do with them being bureaucrats and much less to do with them being mostly men. That means we must not be pushed by their tactics into saying OK then, take your toy home. We must be even more determined to challenge not just the traditional dominance of men in the trade unions, but also the increasingly undemocratic control of our movement by a small clique of unelected, unaccountable men and women.

Anne Robertson

National Abortion Campaign and SE Region of the TUC. Lobby of Parliament

February 5

Has your union voted yet for delegates to attend the lobby?

London

THE FIRST I knew about them closing Ward T8 at the North Middlesex Hospital, North London, was when a hospital doctor phoned, asking if Womens Voice could organise a protest. T8 is a gynaecological ward dealing with D+Cs (scrapes), diagnostic operations, sterilisations, prolapses, and with some in-patient abortion beds. In fact it is the only ward that deals with abortions in the hospital.

So on Friday 23 November from 11.30am onwards, 50 of us including 10 nurses and four doctors, trades council members, teachers, Ted Graham our local MP, and several NAC and Womens Voice members picketed the hospital gates.

Led by one of the nurses, we formed a line across the busy North Circular Road stopping the traffic and producing an almighty tail-back. After 10 minutes, having made our point, we went back to the hospital gateway—by which time no less than nine police officers had arrived.

You can get policemen galore at the drop of a hat, but even if your condition is acute you'll now have to wait three months for a gynaecological operation.

We shall carry on our protest, collecting signatures for our petition to the health authority. If you can help, contact Norah 807 1741 (Enfield Womens Voice) or Mary 802 9563 (Tottenham Womens Voice).

Bristol

BRISTOL WOMEN'S VOICE and NAC picketed a meeting of 'Birthright' in the Bristol University Students Union. Inside the meeting we greatly outnumbered the anti-abortionists and gave them plenty of opposition. Womens Voice leafleted the main shopping centre in the city on a Saturday. With placards and two 'pregnant' men we attracted a fair amount of attention and collected hundreds of signatures to our petition calling on the five local MPs to oppose the Corrie Bill

Katrina Tully

Glasgow

About 50 people entered the offices of the Sunday Mail, Glasgow's Sunday Mirror on Thursday 8 November, and refused to leave until they had seen the editor. We were protesting an article written by ex-Tory MP WV BOURNEMOUTH anti-Corrie Rally, 5 January 1980. Contact Carol, Lyckett Minster 3162 for more details.

Teddy Taylor on the day of the TUC abortion demonstration. He attacked the 'noisy, fanatical, disruptive, unprincipled abortion on demand clique'.

Glasgow NAC demanded the right to reply. The editor didn't even print the article as a letter. The lobby (organised by NAC and supported by WV) left after speaking to Ruth Wishart, a pro-abortion columnist and assistant editor. She told us we should leave it to her. The next Sunday there were five anti-abortion letters and one pro-abortion letter (not NAC's).

Next time we go in we won't leave so soon.

Jennifer Ross

Glasgow

A good turn-out of 280 trade unionists, local people from Midlothian, miners, nurses and teachers marched through Dalbeith on Saturday, 10 November, against the cuts. There was a rousing rally afterwards, with several speakers, including Alex Eadie, Midlothian NUM sponsored Labour MP and Dennis Skinner who got a standing ovation. The only thing lacking was a woman speaker.

However, we made our presence felt at the end, when 15 trade unionists, mostly women, approached Mr. Eadie to ask him why he had voted for the Corrie Bill. Alex is a bit of a mixed-up kid: he sponsored the 1967 Abortion Act and voted for White and Benyon.

You see, he doesn't think there should be any mandate or party whips on this issue; it's a matter for the individual's conscience—but only his conscience. He doesn't believe in abortion on demand, because women get abortions so that their holiday plans aren't interfered with and London is becoming the abortion capital of the world.

He certainly looked rattled by this experience. Now we're going to try and get NAC speakers round the NUM branches to warm up his 'safe seat' a bit.

Penny Packham

THE MANCHESTER National Abortion Campaign is calling a Regional Trade Union Conference on Abortion Rights on Saturday December 15 at the Small Assembly Room, UMIST, Sackville Street, Manchester 1.

The aim is to provide a forum for everyone interested in abortion rights and to plan future activities. Further information from Linda Thalman 061 224 4392.

Spanish women found guilty

ELEVEN SPANISH WOMEN have been on trial for having abortions. At their trial on October 26 the prosecution asked that the women serve prison sentences of six months and a day, followed by 11 years of 'Special disqualification'. Special disqualification means that the women would be deprived of the right to hold public office, but more outrageously they would be deprived of the right to vote.

The right to vote freely has only been restored in Spain since Franco's death. So removing that right is cisco's death. So removing that right is a clear indication of the contempt women, in particular, women who attempt to control their own lives.

In the face of such clear and vicious attacks on women you need to be brave to stand up and say 'I have had an abortion, just try and prosecute us all'. Yet 1300 women did it. Six days before the women's trial opened, 1300 women put their names to a statement of solidarity with the women on trial.

This action and other similar ones, combined with a massive show of strength from Spanish women, has won some kind of amnesty for the women on trial. Their case was suspended but this means that it can be recalled whenever the State sees an appropriate moment, even in ten years time.

The Spanish women's movement has won one battle but it still faces the war. There are unknown numbers of women who are serving prison sentences now for committing the offence of abortion. Next months Women's Voice will have the full story of this trial and its implications for Spanish women.

ends
Sal Jenkinson

IN OCTOBER Pollock, Galsgow Constituency Labour Party had a debate between its MP James White (sponsor of the anti-abortion Bill in 1975) and teacher Kathy Finn. About 50 people attended. Mr White proved himself not just anti-abortion, but a British chauvinist as well. He said the worst abuse of the Act was the massive numbers of foreign women who come here for abortions. What sort of socialist is it, Kathy demanded of him, which will let Spanish and Portuguese women die rather than come to Britain for safe abortions?

When it came to the vote the meeting came out against the Corrie Bill. Mr James White may support this bill but his constituents don't.
Jennifer Ross



Photo: Ian McIntosh (IFL)

The biggest pro-abortion demonstration we have ever seen marched through London on 28 October. Banners from all over the country and every union were there.

The nightmare of backstreet abortion

I WAS seventeen when I got pregnant. It was in 1959, long before the abortion laws were changed. I had met the bloke six weeks before, at a friend's wedding. We 'had a bit of the other', as he called it, on a Stepney bomb site.

I don't remember much about it except I was worried about getting home late and getting a good hiding from my mum. Well, as I soon found out, that was the least of my worries.

When my period was late I began to get worried. I kept rushing into the toilet looking for welcome bloodstains, but the weeks passed ...3...4...5... and so it went on. Frantic, I asked a girl at work if she could help, she told me about pills, hot baths and gin, so I tried them all and felt very ill but nothing happened.

Then one day my mother asked me if I was 'ALRIGHT!' I was mute with fear, but she had known since my first missed period. She did my washing and was just waiting to see how long it would be before I said something!

So it was out, and I think I felt relieved, even though the abuse I got from my mother was awful. A couple of days later she said I was to stay home from work, we were going to see someone about my disgusting condition. I was told to keep my mouth shut and not to make any fuss.

We went to an ordinary sort of house, I remember how tidy it was. My mum went into the front room while I waited in the kitchen. Mum came out of the room, there was a woman with her, she did not look at me but she led us upstairs to a small, dark box-room. Mum told me to take my knickers off and lay down on the floor.

The woman came over and knelt down, she opened my legs and I felt something cold touch my vagina then it was all suddenly scalding hot inside my belly. As she

did this my mum held her hand firmly over my mouth. After what felt like hours the woman went out; mum told me to get up, and I was going to walk home without any fuss or she would kill me.

I remember nothing about leaving that house or getting home. I had to stay up, mum said, to give the carbolic a chance to work. I wanted to lie down, it hurt so much, great clamping down pains kept coming that went on all day. In the evening mum said I'd better lie down, I must have started to worry her, I looked like wax.

Around eight o'clock the pains got really bad, I was sweating and breathing really hard; I let out a scream, mum came rushing up the stairs and looked at me, she told me 'shut your mouth you dirty bitch' and went out. She returned carrying an enamel bucket and I got out of bed and sat on the bucket.

I stayed, like that for the next couple of hours in unbelievable agony, vomiting and crying and begging my mother to forgive me, saying I was sorry. And as the clots of blood, the fragmented foetus, were tearing down through and out of me, my mother stood and kept up a stream of abuse, how ashamed I should be, what an animal I was, a whore how she was sorry she had ever brought me into the world, she went on and on.

And if an extreme pain made me cry out she smacked my face, reminding me about the neighbours, how she would never be able to hold her head up again if they found out, and I should have thought about the pain I was giving her, I was good for no man now, I was dirty, dirty, dirty.

At some point during the night my womb stopped its agonised contractions and I was allowed to get back into bed. The marks of the bucket on my buttocks and thighs took two weeks to heal.

Carole Barrett

HOW MUCH FOR AN APPEARANCE

OUR CLUB, Hastings, has proposed that there is urgent need to revise the amateur rules governing athletics. This was approved by an overwhelming majority at the Amateur Athletics Association's Annual General Meeting.

The AAA has now decided to set up a special committee to investigate these amateur rules.

The problem started in 1978 at the Edinburgh Highland Games. It was alleged that certain illegal payments were made to athletes. Appearance money. After all, athletics has its stars, just like show business.

The Scottish AAA wanted to get certain English athletes banned at the Highland Games. Their banning however, may not have been legal under British law and the athletes could have legally sought damages from the Scottish AAA. In America for example, the high jumper Dwight Stones has been disqualified from athletics altogether for accepting appearance money. He is intending to serve a writ on the Olympic Committee in 1984 in Los Angeles.

The whole amateur status is very confusing and very hypocritical. There is, after all, an inevitable logic to appearance money in amateur sports.

If a company is sponsoring an athletics meeting, the better the athletes, the better the crowd and of course the more money the company will make. So money can be paid, simply for the name to attract the crowds, to a small elite leaving others with nothing.

One of the proposals before the AAA is that prize money should actually go to the athlete

who wins the event, and not, as at present, into the pockets of the AAA.

I honestly don't know what the outcome of changing the amateur status will be. I just hope that women will get the same as men and that that won't be another battle. I don't think for example that they get nearly as much in appearance money as men mainly because our male middle and distance track athletes are amongst the best in the world.

But even though there are women field athletes who are world class, you can bet that the male field athlete gets more in appearance money even though not so high on the world ranking list, simply because he gets the better press coverage.

One outcome of making athletics open is that we will be able to see much more clearly how much money there is around and see that it is shared around more equally.

But that doesn't help the people at the bottom. Open sport might make it possible to make a fortune once you are at the top but it doesn't help you get there.

Tennis is open now but for young kids in Hastings, the tennis club costs money to join as does tuition.

Will it remain the same in athletics?

LIZ SLOANE

• **The subject of the Big Red Diary 1980 is Politics in Sport. There is a section in the introduction on women in sport and some interesting snippets scattered throughout the year. It is published by Pluto Press, £1.95.**



ISLAM: the religion of the obedient wife and the respectable mother

A NEW WAVE of demonstrations against the Shah and American imperialism is sweeping through Iran. But the revolutionary spirit many of us believed existed there a year ago has been overtaken by the reactionary spirit of the Islamic revolution.

In this interview Mitra, an Iranian woman, talks to Mrs Monireh Gorji, the only woman to sit on the Assembly of Experts, the temporary parliament set up to debate and draft the future constitution of Iran.

SPORT

I MET Mrs Gorji at the Assembly buildings, in between sessions. My first question to her was general but crucial: did she believe in equal rights for men and women?

'Yes I do,' she said 'But, in Islam, the nature of these rights is different. Men and women are equal but they have different duties and consequently have been given different rights. For instance, a woman, as a mother, is responsible for rearing her children and therefore is entitled to financial support from her husband. This right, given to women, creates a kind of security for them.'

But I wonder how far does this 'security' go in marriage when, under Islamic Law, a man can divorce his wife at any time he chooses, regardless of his wife's consent, and yet a wife has no right to sue for divorce without the husband's agreement. I pursued Mrs Gorji on this.

'It is true that the man is 'the supporter' and therefore can be regarded as the one who makes the major decisions; but Islam allows a woman, before marrying, to enter into an agreement with the husband, to allow her the right of divorce.'

It seems to me that Mrs Gorji does not realize that the critical point of this law is that it is the man who is given the right to allow the woman to...

Under Islam men are allowed to have up to four wives. I asked whether this was justifiable to her as far as women are concerned.

To me there is a philosophy behind any statement in Islam. The concept of having four wives was created in Mohamad's time, a time of many wars when the number of men fell well below the number of women. Mohama made the law in order to prevent the expansion of prostitution. Women need husbands to support them financially, emotionally and sexually. I personally think that this is a right given to women rather than men. Today, it is entirely up to women to accept such an arrangement.'

Then I asked about the chador.

'The chador is a traditional outfit—by itself it is not

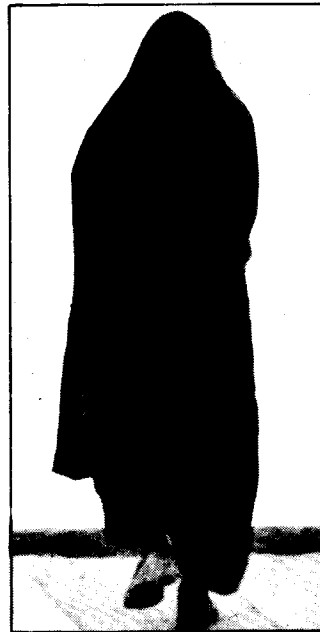
important. But it is essential for a woman to cover herself (only the face should be revealed) in order not to excite men sexually. That is to say, women should have respect for themselves if they are to be respected by men and not treated as sexual objects. To some extent this applies to men as well, who should not dress so as to draw attention to their bodies.'

Recently women have been executed for committing 'zena', adultery, and it has been reported that a fourteen year old unmarried girl was executed for having an affair, though Mrs Gorji denied this report. This is a very complicated subject. Islamic Law is clear that an adulterer should be stoned to death, to demonstrate that a woman should treat with utmost respect her duty as a mother and wife... But to be so condemned there should be four male witnesses which makes a case very difficult to prove in such a private action. This shows that Islam always considers its laws to be fair and contemplative, but if the revolutionary committees make irrational decisions, it is not the fault of Islamic Law.'

I should mention here that in Islam, a man, as well as being allowed as many as four wives, can have several 'sighehs' (legal mistresses) for certain periods of time; whereas a woman gets executed for the same action.

So far, what I understand of Mrs Gorji's interpretation of women's rights under Islam is that 'being a woman' already creates problems for the woman; for example, a woman, being a 'respectable mother and wife', should stick to one man, whereas a man is allowed to have several women. This obviously creates emotional insecurity for the woman. Financially she has been conditioned to be under the father/husband's support—allowing the man to buy the woman's independence. Psychologically, a woman has to repress her desire to express her femininity (beauty, delicacy, etc.), explained again in the interests of men, so that the man's sexual desire is not disturbed.

Whatever way one looks at the Islamic laws concerning men's and women's rights,



one realizes that they are all in favour of men, explainable in terms of men's supposed interests. The woman is the giver, the man the receiver—a woman is constantly to feed the man's ego. One gets the impression that Islam looks upon women as inferior beings.

For instance, according to Islam, a woman hasn't the capacity to act as a judge or even as a reliable witness. I asked Mrs Gorji to explain the reasoning behind this.

'Mohamad has said that judgement is a very hard task. A woman is too sensitive, emotional and soft-hearted to be objective enough to judge. This has nothing to do with a woman's intelligence but has something to do with the kindly nature of a woman, and I myself, as a woman believe in the sensitivity of women. This is one of the characteristics of being a woman, which, if destroyed, destroys the nature of woman. One must not rebel against one's nature; to do so would be to stand against God's will, and this is something an Islamic woman can never do.'

Yet by Mrs Gorji's own reasoning should not a woman be the best judge (if not of anything else) at least of another woman, since she can understand a woman's actions and feelings far more readily than a man?

The practicality of Islamic law in this century was my final question.

'Islam is in the blood of human beings, one cannot

deny that. It is like the root of a tree that cannot die. Islam can be the base of any social, economic and political structure of any society. We should first try to build the base correctly and then attend to the rest, the minor but necessary alterations that accord with the time.

'During the Shah's regime the problem was that Islam was misunderstood by people, because it was never taught correctly. For instance, one of the big problems for women today is that they don't consider any rights for themselves because they don't know Islam well. In the past, under the dictatorship of the Shah's regime, the people were moving further and further away from Islam. Women in particular were led to believe that they should be satisfied with what they were given—they were nothing more than doll-like figures, useless beings in society. Thus until the time comes when women will be familiar with their rights, they will be under the law's protection.

It is needless to say that under the Shah, in the White Revolution of 1962, women were given the vote. For whatever reason that right was given, it was a big step toward's women's independence and understanding of their liberation. Factory and office jobs were open to them, even parliament. It doesn't matter what motivated giving women these opportunities. They built a sense of confidence, capability and independence, which then became the base of some women's resistance to Islamic dogma.

Now it is up to women themselves to continue this fight for their rights, within the suppressive conditions of the present.

Mrs Gorji's statement that under the old regime, 'women were led to believe that they should be satisfied with what they were given' is the exact description of her own self under Islam. Following Islam without question, believing in the role given to women as 'obedient wife' and 'respectable mother', makes Mrs Gorji a very dangerous person to make decisions for the future of Persian women.

EVERY YEAR, 30,000 children are born handicapped. EVERY YEAR 193 out of every 10,000 babies born are born dead.

These are figures we need to remember when anti-abortionists give lectures on the sanctity of human life.

It is awkward for most anti-abortionists to maintain their caring facade when presented with the evidence that only a rise in women's standards of living can prevent the misery of losing a baby, or having a handicapped child.

In Britain and France, authors Margaret and Arthur Wynn estimate that about one in every 100 children is severely handicapped and one in ten is handicapped to some degree. The French health authorities, when designing their campaign against child disability in the early 1970's estimated that a third of handicaps originated in the early stages of pregnancy, not only before mothers had started anti-natal classes but before they were aware they were pregnant.

The French authorities concluded that improving ante-natal services was not enough—a more general programme to promote better health among all women was needed. Sweden, however, shows how necessary the improvements in ante-natal care are: the number of handicapped children fell in ten years from 78 to 49 per 10,000 births.

Sweden's new very low rate of handicap has to be seen in the context of the high standard of living in that country. To get their own rate down that low, the French health authorities felt it would be necessary to take measures against those disabilities which arise in the very early stages of pregnancy, for example the malformations of the brain and spinal chord known as spina bifida and anencephalus.

The highest rates of these malformations ever recorded in the world are found in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. Other countries have had rates approaching the Scottish and Irish figures only during periods of severe disruption and famine, such as after the World Wars, or in cities in the United States during the depression of the 30s. The evidence seems to show that poor health and nutrition in mothers during the three to four weeks following conception is the main cause.

As far as nutrition is concerned, it is probably not just a matter of how much food the



**1 in 100 children
are born severely
handicapped
each year**

**WHO
PROTECTS
THE
CHILDREN?**

newly pregnant mother receives but also the proportion of fresh fruit and vegetables eaten. These are the foods, which are first in short supply as a result of war or famine. They are foods

which have to be cooked soon after buying and then bought again fresh. And they are the foods which the wealthier members of social classes one and two in Great Britain eat far

more of than working class people.

Even in times of economic normality fresh fruit and vegetables are nearly a luxury in our country, especially the more enjoyable kinds that we are more likely to want to eat.

Another frequent cause of tragedy to mothers is the birth of a baby which is not big enough. A 'low birth weight baby' (officially 5½ lbs or less) is at great risk no matter how good the facilities may be at the maternity hospital. Low birth weight babies are often, but not always, born prematurely.

A baby whose parents are of social classes four and five (the lowest paid jobs) is twice as likely to be under weight than one whose parents have comfortable middle class or professional jobs. The mother most likely to give birth to babies 'too small and too soon' are women who are divorced, separated or unmarried — women most likely to be having the hardest time of all in making ends meet. A low birth weight baby is not only at greater risk of death but also of becoming 'spastic', deaf, epileptic or mentally handicapped.

Once a baby has been born too small, it places a great strain on the resources of the family. The baby needs even more care and attention, but the families of low birth weight babies are likely to be those with the least resources. The undersized baby's family needs a doctor or health visitor they know and trust, on whom they can call without hesitation and without being afraid to seem 'fussy' or demanding.

Among the lowest paid families the death rate of babies in the first month is twice that of professional and managerial families. Post-neonatal deaths (those which happen between the end of the first month and the end of the first year) are six times higher in the lowest paid families.

If politicians were really serious about the sanctity of the child they would set about ending poverty and inequality, both by ending low pay among people in certain jobs, and by making sure that women bringing up children on their own are not subject to the crushing discrimination that threaten their babies' lives. All those who campaign for improvements in the health service and in the working and living conditions of women are doing far more to protect children than any anti-abortionist.

Mel Bartley.

Real poverty is on the increase in Britain and the Tory Government is making matters worse. Harriet Sherwood spoke to Ruth Lister of the Child Poverty Action Group to find out the facts.

THE PARTY of the family — that's how the Tories presented themselves in the pre-election period.

We will take care of the children they said. We will make Britain great again so our kids can look forward to a prosperous future.

It's all nonsense. The only kids they're taking care of are their own and the only families whose party they are, are rich families.

When the Tories presented their budget in June they handed out a massive £3750 million — but only 2.8% of it went to the people who really need it: the low income families. Geoffrey Howe then announced a devastating blanket 15% VAT. He told us that we would be able to pay the 15% from our tax cuts; that people should be free to decide how to spend their money.

Only those who earn over £100 a week have more money after the budget than before. The rest of us have no freedom to spend our money as we choose

It's not only through income tax and VAT that the government has slashed the amount of money for low-income families. They promised us an increase in child benefit, which hasn't and won't materialise. In the Tories expenditure proposals there is no provision for it. There have been suggestions that child benefit may be frozen in next year's budget

By this time in a year the amount of child benefit a family gets will have lost a quarter of its value. By keeping benefits at this year's level they are letting inflation do the cutting for them.

The Education Bill will do most of its damage to low income families too. In abolishing the statutory duty on local authorities to provide school meals as the main meal

of the day, over five million kids will suffer. Local authorities will no longer have to provide free school meals to the one million plus children who at the moment are entitled to, and need, them. Schools that continue to run a lunch service will undoubtedly put the prices up — probably to about 50p or 60p a day.

Free school transport will go. Some authorities may scrap school clothing allowances. The Tories are not going ahead with the last government's proposed pilot scheme for a maintenance grant for kids who decide to stay on at school: they will be denied the right to education. The meagre, ever diminishing child benefits will go on the increasing cost of sending a child to school.

The meaning of the government's public expenditure cuts are frightening. Everything will cost more, and we're getting less money at the same time.

Last year four million people were helped in paying their electricity bills through the discount scheme. This year the figure will only be 345,000 because the government are cutting £22 million from its budget.

The Tory proposals don't make allowances in the social security budget for the thousands of people they are putting on the dole. In a year's time there will probably be an extra 330,000 people unemployed. But the amount of money going to the DHSS is based on this year's figures.

Prescription charges will go up to 70p. The Tories try to justify this by telling us of the wide range of exemptions from the charges. Apart from the fact that the majority of those who are eligible don't claim, because they don't know they can, most people who are 'long-term sick' or claim invalidity benefit don't qualify anyway. This, combined with increases in dental charges, means that more and more people won't be able to look after their health.

Geoffrey Howe told us that the cuts mustn't bear unfairly on vulnerable members of society. Those working class people who were sufficiently taken in by the Tories to vote for them now can't fail to see what the 'party of the family' are doing to us and our families. People are angry, and that anger mustn't be wasted.

HOW POOR IS YOUR FAMILY?

UP VAT up to 15%

DOWN No increase in child benefit

CUT Free school meals abolished

UP School meal prices up

CUT Free school transport cut

UP Prescription charges to 70p

CUT Electricity discount scheme cut

Effects of budget:

Family with 2 children on £50pw	89p less
" " " " on £75pw	46p less
" " " " on £100pw (average income)	27p less
" " " " on £200pw	£3.10 more

The lowest 15% (of taxpayers) received 2.8% of the budget tax handout.
The top 5.5% (of taxpayers) received 38% of the budget tax handout.

baby killers



You know you can trust Nan.
Anda tahu anda boleh percayakan Nan.
妳知道妳可以信任 Nan.

incubators, design whole nurseries and give hospitals construction grants to build them, shower them with posters, pamphlets, towels, bottles, nappies, basins, cribs. . . .

The oppressed world is poor. It is not easy to say 'no' to equipment for which there is a real urgent need. The companies spend a lot of money on such things. With that money they buy the goodwill of doctors, nurses, midwives. It is only when some make a stand in favour of breast feeding that company reps can turn aggressive.

Just to make sure their products get medical recommendation, the companies employ 'milk nurses'. If you are a patient in an ante-natal clinic you'll get buttonholed in the waiting room or even visited at home (even hospitals try to keep lists of patients secret). Almost inevitably, you'll mistake these people for clinic staff and accept their sales patter as genuine medical advice.

The penetration of the

medical services by the milk companies, coupled with the fact that they are often modelled on medical practice in the rich countries with its emphasis on technology, result in poor knowledge about breast feeding among doctors and hospital routines which actually make it very difficult for the mother to breastfeed. Mothers and babies are separated, there is no opportunity for the mother to feed the baby for the first few critical days. By the time she is sent home with her free tin of infant formula, her ability to feed can be severely impaired. In the Philippines, where a new scheme re-united mother and baby, overall illness was reduced by 58 per cent and mortality by 47 per cent.

What can be done about this ruthless operation? In the words of Dr. Baer of Indonesia, whose work is to re-establish breast feeding: 'all the industry wants is the goodwill of the doctors, and a promise to avoid confrontation tactics. If there is no confrontation, it gives

the industry enough room to manoeuvre in. That's all the milk companies need ... to win.'

All they want is a quiet life. We must make sure they don't get it. There has been confrontation already. Some national governments have placed milk on a prescription basis only. Some, like Zambia, have nationalised and labelled the milk cans with truth instead of lies. The World Health Organisation has held conferences, the latest in October 1979, and published many condemnatory resolutions. Many church organisation, to give them their due, have campaigned against the infant formula companies.

The method most easily open to us is one adopted by an American group called the Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFACT) which has organised a boycott of Nestle throughout the US. This has hurt Nestle's. They've been running around various groups trying to talk them out of supporting the boycott.

INFACT produced boycott badges, Malvina Reynolds wrote a boycott song (useful for shop pickets and street meetings) they collected thousands of Nestle's free offer coupons and organised a 'mass dump' on Nestle's doorstep.

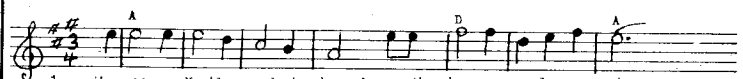
There is a very good case for such action to be repeated here. But in order to confront the milk giants successfully we have to organise. War on Want has published an excellent book, 'The Baby Killer Scandal' which is packed with facts. Very useful for Womens Voice meetings, discussion groups, taking up resolutions in union branches.

If you were pregnant in Papua New Guinea—and if you knew what bottle milk did to babies—what would you want your sisters in the rich nations to do?

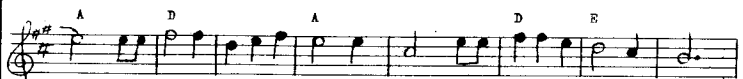
Ewa Widowsan

●If you would like Ewa to speak to your Womens Voice group about the campaign contact her through the Womens Voice office.

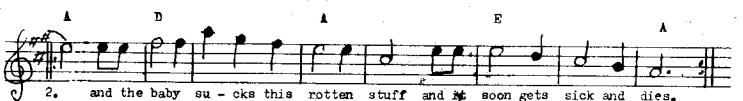
Don't use Nestles



1. We use no Nestle products here 'cause they have a cruel cam - paign
2. There's no refriger - ation there and the mother's milk soon dries



1. Selling formu - la-a to third world folks and the babies go down the drain.



2. and the baby su - cks this rotten stuff and % soon gets sick and dies.

We use no Nestle products here
Cause they have a cruel campaign
Selling formula to thrid world folks
And the babies go down the drain.

*There's no refrigeration there
And the mother milk soon dries
And the baby sucks this rotten stuff
And it soon gets sick and dies.
(Repeat last two lines)*

Nestle's know damn well what's going on
There are protests everywhere
But the ads still run and the profits rise
And the Nestle gang don't care.

*So we read the labels carefully
Where the Nestle brands appear
And we tell the world the reason why
We use no Nestle here.
(Repeat last two lines)*

CHILD IN CARE: WHO CARES

I'M AN unmarried mum. I was born and lived in Whitechapel for two years with my mum and dad. I went into care in Hackney when I was two years old because my mum didn't want me. Soon after,

my mum and dad split up. I was in and out of care all my life until I was 18. I was in about seven homes altogether, and the last one was a hostel for the mentally handicapped where I spent a



year because there was nowhere else for me to go.

I was very lonely because I couldn't make friends. I felt that nobody loved me and so I used to get angry all the time. Because I used to hate it in the homes, I used to get upset and I never talked to the staff so they said I was backward.

They took me to have my IQ tested but they kept asking me to do these silly jigsaws so I ran out in the middle of it with the man and my social worker chasing after me. **So the IQ of 60 I had taken when I was 11 years old was always on my record.**

When I was in the homes I was so unhappy I used to want to kill myself and I tried several times because I felt nobody cared.

When I left the homes 2 years ago I went into a hostel for teenagers and then lived with people I knew. I got a flat through an organisation when I was 8 weeks pregnant but they never knew I was pregnant.

I got the flat which had been done up, on the top floor, but the people downstairs won't let me use the garden even though they don't use it either, so during the summer when my baby was born I used to look at the garden and think that when my baby was bigger he would want to play in it but he can't. The flat is damp and now it's winter it's really cold because it's hard to warm, and I can't afford to have the fire on for long.

When my baby was born I used to go round the social services office and voluntary agencies every day because I wanted company.

Then one day when I was in the office and the baby was crying because I had tried feeding him three times that morning, this social worker told me to feed him and I said 'it's my baby you don't tell me what to do'. I hadn't met this social worker before, then he started telling me what to do! **That morning they put a Place of Safety Order on Michael and took him away. I found out later he had already been put on the At Risk Register.**

In Court my social worker said that she felt my baby was not at any physical risk but they wanted to take him into care because they said his psychological development was at risk. They said I was emotionally immature and wasn't capable of looking after his emotional needs.

They said that if I got upset I might unintentionally harm him, despite the evidence that I never had done. They dragged up all my past and I had to sit in Court and listen to it. But since I was pregnant and Michael was born I have grown up so much yet they were still talking about the IQ test I had when I was 11!

Under the present law there is no provision for a solicitor to represent the parents in court in a child care case. But I was lucky because some people at the Aid Centre found me a solicitor who said he would represent me for free. I know that if I didn't have anyone I wouldn't have got Michael back.

I was also lucky because I had friends, some who were professional people, they were able to help me organise a defence and to stand up in Court for me. Without this I wouldn't have got Michael back.

In Court the Magistrates found the case unproven and it was dismissed. I got him back two months after they first took him. I just cried because I was so happy.

Now if I need help or feel lonely I go to see my friends and the health centre for advice, or if they're out and I need advice I can phone Parents Anonymous. I'll never go back to the social services every day like I used to.

My baby is now 6 months and I know I can help him grow and develop. I'm not having him going into care like I did and have the kind of life I did. He is my baby and I love him and I'm going to look after him.

I have put my name down to move flat and the organisation are trying to get me a downstairs flat with a garden. My flat is so hard to warm, that I don't use the main room. The bloke downstairs won't let me leave my pram in the hall because he puts his bike there, so when I go out I have to carry my pram up and down the stairs all the time.

I think all mums and dads should be able to have representation in court to speak for them. I was lucky to get a solicitor who did it free, but I might not have been lucky and I might not have got Michael back. I often wonder what happens to all the other people who are faced with going into court without representation.

LINDA JAMESON

magazines carry features on dieting. Along with the usual high protein, low carbohydrate diets, a new high fibre diet has been introduced. It seems the figure fanatics have finally discovered what some nutritionists and health freaks have known for a long time: wholemeal bread and cereal instead of processed white bread will aid in weight loss.

Almost any nutritionist, when pushed, will agree that too much white flour and white sugar is unhealthy. Many will go much further and say that these two—especially combined—are responsible for tooth decay, and obesity, which in turn is responsible for heart disease, high blood pressure and arthritis. The lack of fibre in the white flour is responsible for constipation, piles, intestinal disorders and bowel cancer, now the second most common form of cancer in this country.

These ill effects are not distributed evenly throughout the population: the working class bears most of the burden. Many researchers have found that diet is the major factor contributing to life expectancy. Unskilled workers are not only twice as likely to

The government's responsibility towards the consumer took a new turn recently. Instead of taking direct measures to ensure adequate diets when malnutrition is likely—as they did by having vitamin D added to margarine and by giving children school milk—they have decided to let us look after ourselves. They produced a pamphlet *Eating for Health* which concluded that good nutrition is a matter of individual choice and instructed us to look after ourselves by eating wisely. The entire expertise available to the DHSS resulted in ten bits of advice to the public, including the following profound suggestions:

To eat less salt might be beneficial. It would do no harm for most people to eat a little less protein. Alcohol is not a necessary food. Obesity can mean ill-health or premature death... A practical way to prevent obesity is not to become overweight... The pamphlet also suggested 'it would be wise to reduce the amount of fat, especially saturated fat, in the diet' (saturated fat is animal fat, including butter); and recommended the 'the use of

The pamphlet also suggested 'it would be wise to reduce the amount of fat, especially saturated fat, in the diet' (saturated fat is animal fat, including butter); and recommended 'the use of sugar and confectionary should be limited.' The same day this pathetic pamphlet was published the EEC announced new incentives to encourage more sugar consumption, and the government were also considering butter subsidies for the elderly and those on low incomes, to reduce the butter mountain.

WOMENS HEALTH

DO YOU LIKE WHITE BREAD?

suffer from chronic illness, they are also likely to have a shorter life than a professional or managerial person.

During the war, despite civilian casualties, deteriorating housing and overstretched medical facilities, civilian deathrates decreased from 1940 onwards. The reason for the drop was food rationing, which insured a more equal distribution, and changes in diet.

Yet in Britain, white flour, and sugar make up the major part of most people's diet. Most of us rely heavily on processed foods because of the convenience and sometimes because of the taste. But it is at the price of our health that we do so.

It is not processed foods as such that are at fault. It would be a benefit to our society if we had ways of keeping food and having inexpensive, quick meals. The trouble is the companies who make processed foods are more concerned with their own profits than our health.

Sugar and wheat are promoted by the food industry because of cheap cultivation and ease in handling and shipping. White flour is more profitable than brown because the bran and germ separated during milling can be sold as animal feed. Also, white flour products are less satisfying to the appetite so people tend to eat more.

But what do they eat more of? In white bread at least 75 per cent of each nutrient is lost through milling. Only vitamins B1 and B2 are replaced, while the other B vitamins which aid general health and specific ailments, are lost. Vitamin E, completely lost during milling and bleaching, is already chronically short in the British diet.

Below the belt is even worse! The fibres like wheatgerm and bran in wholemeal bread make it easier to digest and excrete. The lack of fibre in white bread is probably the major reason constipation is a normal way of life for most people in the western world.

So this white tasteless gne that sticks sugar to your teeth and causes tooth decay, that condemns you to constipation and perhaps even an early death, that puts money in the pockets of Rank Hovis et al, and great burdens on the tax payers money (due to illness) still appeals to you? Why?

Perhaps the most obvious reason of all: nothing to do with taste, but time, money and convenience. Wholemeal bread is not usually sold sliced. It hardens to a brick in two days if not kept in a plastic bag. It crumbles everywhere. It takes longer to chew (and often causes people, when they first start it after a lifelong diet of white bread, some digestive discomforts).

Most people don't have the time to cook it themselves, and don't have the time to run around looking for it. More than a few, I'm sure, get put off by the middle class health shops that sell it. When we set about getting brown bread we don't have much idea what to ask for.

The main reason many of us don't buy it is the price. It's pretty dear, especially home made. As we all eat so much bread we tend to chose the one that costs the least. In fact, price is the main selling point for white bread. Mr Charlton of Associated British Foods admitted that wrapped sliced bread is bought solely for cheapness and there's no brand loyalty. One fortnight Rank Hovis charged half a penny more for their loaves than the other two big bakers. The resulting drop in sales staggered the company.

Most of this could be overcome, of course. Shops could install slicing machines and slice the bread on the spot. Once you get to like chewing bread, you feel cheated if you eat white bread and it dissolves in one gulp. If wholemeal bread was for sale at local supermarkets, many more people would buy it. If we knew more about the benefits to our health, we could make an informed choice. Sold on a mass scale, ideally sold for what it costs to produce, wholemeal bread would not be that much more expensive than white.

What it boils down to, as usual, is profit. Are you going to let Rank Hovis and Associated Foods drive you to an early grave? Are there local bread shops you could persuade to make wholemeal bread? Or do you still prefer white bread?

For further information see: *Food and Profit*, by the Politics of Health group, 50p from BSSRS, 9 Poland Street, London W1.

Tessa Weare

REVIEWS

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

READING is good for kids they say, but does it really matter what kids read? Recently, a lot of work has been done on the way books affect children. The stereotyped portrayal, of women as docile and domestic and of men as aggressive and adventurous, influences children to follow the traditional sex roles.

Books play an important part in boosting or fighting this sexist message. So it is up to us when we buy children's books to make sure that they give an acceptable view of what men and women are and can be. It means being critical about the books we buy or get from the library and passing on this critical view to kids. We can begin this process by selecting interesting books with positive images and talking about them with our kids.

It is not an easy job; often it's the most popular kids books that give all the wrong ideas, and books which appear acceptable on the surface may contain hidden messages. The heroine of 'Lucy' for instance, manages to find adventure and excitement but only at the cost of her female identity.

This doesn't mean we should stop our kids reading popular books but we should talk about them and see that they have alternative books with more positive images. Hopefully then they may begin to see 'not-so-good' books for what they are.

So if you buy a kid a book, look at it, read it if you get the time, but most important, talk about it.
Jeannie Hilton.

The Body Book Claire Raynor Piccolo £1.50

I THOUGHT the book was very good and it taught me about my body. I like it very much, especially the pictures. I didn't know that my lungs were at the side of my ribs, and now I know how we make noises with a voice box. I have lots of bones, if you had no bones you would be as floppy as a jelly. Some smells are nice, some are stinky. Babies grow in your tummy, they come out of a hole near your bum, then they drink lots of milk.
Richard Barrett, aged 7 years.



The Friends

The Friends

Rosa Guy
Puffin 60p

Phylissia was called a 'monkey' (one of the nicer names) by her fellow classmates. She mocked her West Indian accent. The only one that spoke to her kindly was Edith who got to school late untidy and shabby. Phylissia didn't want her as a friend but changed her mind when she was beaten up by the others and Edith defended her.

Life at home wasn't all that easier there was her domineering father and her loving but unhappy mother. Finally Phylissia gets used to being a West Indian girl living in America and leading an often sad and hard life. I enjoyed it a lot because it shows how badly West Indian girls are treated and how much they have to put up with.

Recommended for 12 and overs

When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit Judith Kerr

Lions 60p

Anna was only nine in 1933 and didn't really notice large posters of Adolf Hitler and the Swastikas crowding walls and streets. Her father is Jewish and is a writer and when he goes missing Anna is told he won business (he's really escaping from the Nazis). Later Anna and her brother with their mother flee from Berlin leaving their beautifully furnished house, their friends and their toys.

Anna learns how to live in poverty, discomfort and constantly moving from several countries from the growing Nazi party.

She quickly learns that where ever she lives it doesn't matter as long as the families together. I enjoyed this story a lot. Even though it is a made up story this would probably have happened. It is like a Holocaust for children but of course not as frightening.

Lester at the Seaside

Quentin Blake

Picture Lions 60p

LESTER and his friends are sitting under the General Hardware Tree and along comes Flap-eared Lorna on her roller skates. Lorna wears her skates all the time, she even swims with them on.

They use the tree to get buckets and spades for a trip to the seaside. They meet the toot fish and a little person called Shelly. They have a lovely day.

It's interesting, ask your mum or dad or anyone to buy it for you. The story is funny. I like Lorna because she's got big ears and she keeps her skates on... she never falls over.

Laura Hilton

Fungus the Bogeyman

Raymond Briggs

Hamish Hamilton, £2.75

IT'S MUCKY and about a different world. Fungus the bogeyman is green and slimy and he has snails in his bed. Bogeymen have to keep their feet slimy and smelly.

'I like a nice wet dressing gown and slippers' says Fungus. They have flaked corns or crisped nits for breakfast and add 'pure muck' to their washing water.

Not all teachers would like it... it would be a bit of a laugh for most mums and dads. Not all kids would like this book but it's a good book for mucky kids. We've read it times and times over.

Emma and Laura Hilton,



Lucy

Catherine Storr

Amanda Lion 60p

THE BOYS won't let Lucy play with them even though she looks like a boy. In the book she changed her name before she becomes a detective. Conrad said "you have to be brave to be a detective" but she is brave; she gets into the crooks van during the robbery and even hides in the crooks hideout.

I think Lucy should be able to play with the boys because I play with boys. Even if I like the story because it's so exciting and it shows that girls are as brave and clever as boys, there is something wrong: the writer could have kept Lucy as a girl. It's not only boys who do exciting things.

Emma Hilton

Third Class Genie

Robert Leeson

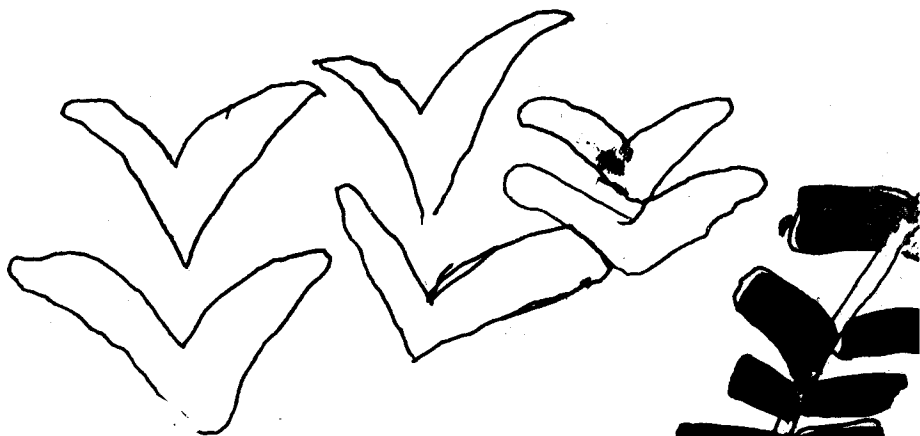
Lions 35p

THIS WAS the best book I've ever read. It was very adventurous and Alec, the hero, seemed like a real kid and I could imagine myself as him. He was just an everyday kid but you really got the feeling of where he lived because the writing was so good.

One day he finds an old tin can and there is a Genie in it. He starts to use the genie to help himself. Every day he uses the genie to help him but it's not always useful as the genie was not so up to date as Alec. One day Alec burns his shoes and he asks the genie to get him some new ones. The genie gets him a pair of old fashioned slippers with long, curly toes.

Lots of adventures and funny things happen to Alec and the genie and I think it's a book lots of kids about eleven to twelve would enjoy.

Andrew Barrett, aged 11 years.



Jessie cartner - Morley
age six.



Maggie on
the boat

THE SECRET PASSAGE

Nina bowden

John, Mary, Ben go to stay with their Aunt and Mary finds a secret passage behind three barrels and they all go into the deserted next door house; and one time John finds a little girl called Victoria in the house and they all bring her things to eat. and one time the owner came back and they went to jail but when Victoria said she was the owner of the house they let them go.

SHE the Adventress.

Dorothy crayder

Maggie was going on a trip to Italy by herself. the boat she was going on was called the Toscana. She lost her passport in a storm at sea. Maggie had plenty to worry about finding her way round the ship. She was going to stay with her Aunt.

I think it is a very good book. I liked reading it a lot - and some other children might like it.

REVIEWS

Publisher: Puffin

Price: 6/-

Underground to Canada: Barbara Smucker

When Jullily was torn from her mother by a wicked slave-trader she is determined to find her way underground to Canada. The escape is often frightening but Jullily is encouraged by her loyal friend (who was crippled by a whip). They are hidden by freedom giving whites who often give their lives for escaping slaves. When she finally reaches the land of freedom she has a great surprise awaiting her. A very fast moving where you often find yourself fearing Jullily's sad determined life. I really enjoyed this book and I recommend it for readers of eleven and over.

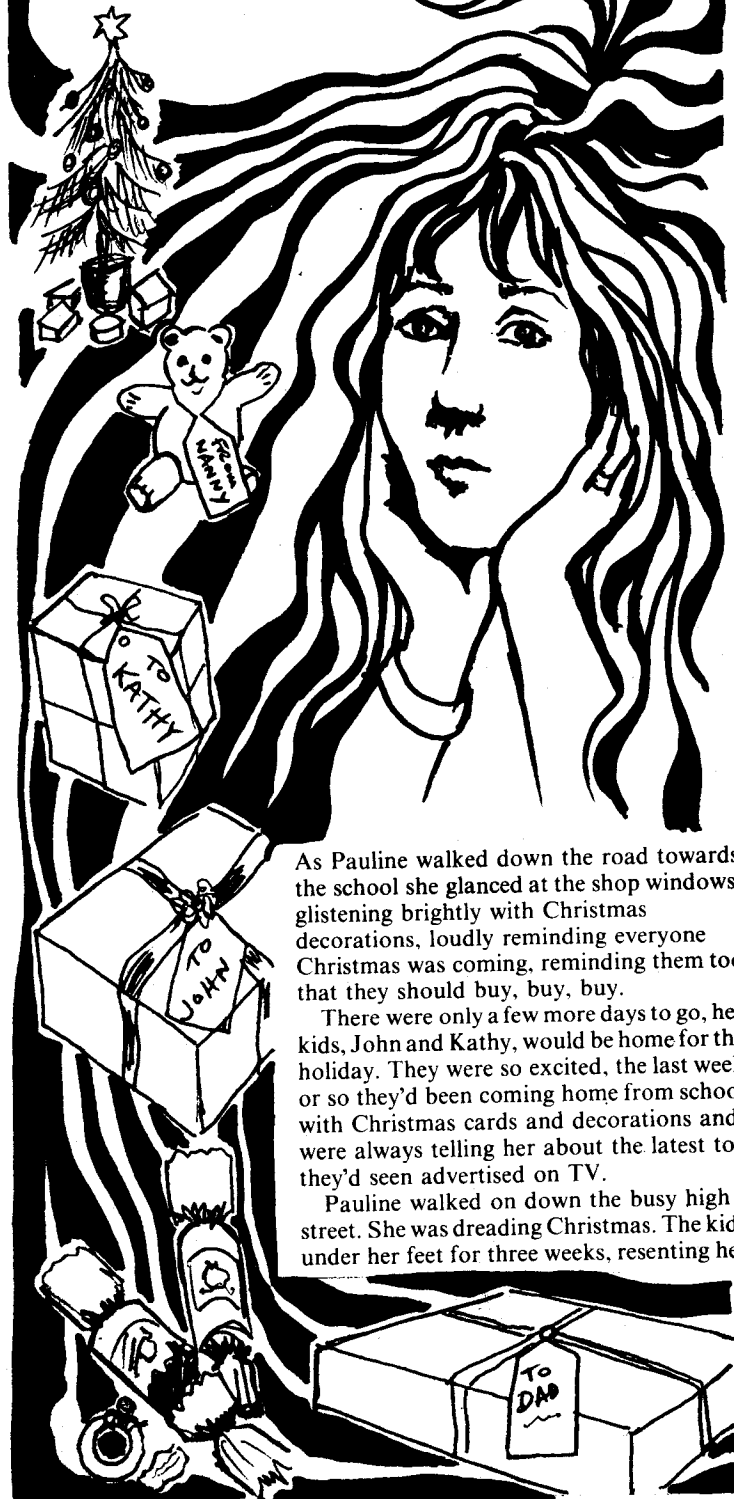


Harriet The Spy: Louse Fitzhugh
Armada Lions

Harriet is a little different from all the other girls she wants to become a writer. She is told by Ole Golly (her nurse) that if she wishes to become a writer she must write down what people say and what she thinks. She begins to spy on her friends, parents and neighbours and writes down what she thinks about them. The things she writes are quite honest and some makes the story funny. Harriet's note book is a wonder to her friends and they long to read it. When they finally get to read it they are extremely angry and annoyed at what is thought of them. It is a quite good book and most people will enjoy it.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

BY
TESSA
BARRATT



As Pauline walked down the road towards the school she glanced at the shop windows, glistening brightly with Christmas decorations, loudly reminding everyone Christmas was coming, reminding them too that they should buy, buy, buy.

There were only a few more days to go, her kids, John and Kathy, would be home for the holiday. They were so excited, the last week or so they'd been coming home from school with Christmas cards and decorations and were always telling her about the latest toy they'd seen advertised on TV.

Pauline walked on down the busy high street. She was dreading Christmas. The kids under her feet for three weeks, resenting her



if they hadn't got the toys they really wanted; noise, work, the TV on all day. She frowned, she was supposed to enjoy Christmas, not dread it, that was stupid!

She hadn't gone very far when she recognised a van parked by the side of the road. She was sure she'd seen it on her estate. As she got closer she noticed someone crouching down at the back of the van.

It was Jean.

"What's up?"

Jean looked up.

"Oh Pauline, thank Christ! I've got a puncture; I've tried the spare but that's punctured too."

"What are you going to do?"

Jean rubbed her dirty hand across her face.

"I've got to stay here, the kids will have to wait."

"I'll pick them up for you; I've got to get mine, but what about the baby?"

"She's at the babysitters, but if you could get her it would really help."

So Pauline ended up back at her flat with five kids, hers and Jean's. She was nervous, the kids were making the flat look a mess, her husband David would think she hadn't done anything all day. She didn't even know Jean that well, they both lived on the estate but had only said hallo because their kids went to the same school. Still, she couldn't have *not* helped her, could she?

But she wished she hadn't. She had to give them some tea, that meant two extra tins of beans, three eggs, not that she minded doing it, but she worried about the cost. And tomorrow she'd have to go shopping again, she'd have to take her kids, they would want this and want that, sometimes she felt she couldn't manage. She was sick of saying no, sick of shopping, cleaning and cooking and .

She was cutting the bread. Without thinking she shoved hard at the knife, and it slid through the loaf and into her finger. She flinched, tears came to her eyes. God, she was in a state! If she couldn't cope with five kids for a couple of hours, what would she be like at Christmas.

The beans started to burn, she wrenched the saucepan off the stove, the toast was done, blood from her finger dripped all over the hot slices. She was blinded by her tears, she felt her brain was knocking against her head, she thought she would go mad.

By the time Jean arrived all the kids were sitting down eating their tea. Even Jimmy, who she could never get to sit still, was behaving himself (he never did that for her!).

Pauline's flat looked immaculate. Jean felt awful, she still had greasy hands, she was tired and felt a real mess. Her home was always untidy, somehow she never managed to keep up with it and her job. The baby was into everything, and the boys didn't help either. "They look happy," she said as Pauline led her into the spotless kitchen.

"You've made the place look really nice."

"Thanks, its hard to keep these dumps looking nice."

Jean took her tea and sat down.

"Soon be Christmas," she said.

"Yes it comes round so fast," Pauline said cheerfully.

"Kids can't wait, they get so worked up."

"Mine too, they're looking forward to it."

Jean smiled, and stopped hiding her dirty hands.

"I am too, nice to have some time off to spend with the kids."

"Oh yes, yes I've got David's mum and dad coming, and his sister comes over in the afternoon, it's like a merry-go-round here! All go, still it's nice when the family gets together isn't it?"

Jean put her cup down.

"I'm not seeing anyone, we'll be on our own."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Pauline looked embarrassed.

"That's alright; I don't see my mum and dad, haven't for years, family row. Then Jim walked out on me just before my youngest was born. But I don't mind now, in fact I found Christmas with the family a real strain before."

Pauline looked surprised.

"Did you? Well, that's a relief. I thought it was me being nasty, but I dread it too. I don't get on with my mother in law, she drives me up the wall. She follows me about dusting and moving ornaments, she'd take over if I let her. I wish they wouldn't come but, well, it's expected of me."

Jean nodded her head thoughtfully.

"My in-laws were a real pain, never ate anything I cooked, always complaining about their ulcers. If I got annoyed my husband used to side with them. It was all a big lie. Christmas with the family. Me, I'd rather spend it with strangers."

"Yes. Pauline looked relieved, "my kids drive me mad, they want the telly on all day, then there is usually a fight. David and his dad go to the pub, and I have to do everything. Still that's what it's all about, really, I shouldn't keep on moaning."

"Are you really looking forward to it?" Jean asked.

Pauline shrugged her shoulders.

"Crazy isn't it, the happiest time of the year, a great celebration. All day cooking, cleaning and cooking again. I think Christmas is a holiday for everyone but me."

They were silent for a moment. Pauline listened nervously to the clattering of plates as the kids finished their tea. She looked at the clock. David would be home soon, but she didn't get up to start getting his tea ready.

"Look," Jean said, "if you like I'll take your kids out on Christmas afternoon. I've got the van, my boss lets me keep it over the holiday. It's a real help, it gets me and the kids out. Before I got this job I was on social security. It drove us mad not being able to go anywhere. The job gives me some independence, though I was worried about leaving the baby at first, it really upset me. But she is alright and they are better off with a sane mum than a mad one."

Pauline looked at her, she didn't like to think about it, they were all such lousy alternatives.

"Can I take them?" Jean asked.

"Won't it be a lot for you?"

"No, I'd like to really."

"Yes, all right, if you're sure."

"You could come too," Jean said quickly.

"No thanks, all the same, but I'll have so much to do."

"What will your husband do?"

"Go to the pub, they always do."

"... And leave you here?"

"Yes, they always have."

Pauline stood up and walked over to the sink, then she turned around, her face full of excitement.

"I will come," she said.

"Oh great! It will be lovely to have company. We'll go to the country, I used to live in Walthamstow, right near Epping Forest. We used to love it when it snowed at Christmas."

"Me too, that lovely crunchy noise when you walk on it."

"Yes. By the way I'd better warn you, the last time we went the van broke down, there we were miles from anywhere, freezing cold, it was awful."

They were both laughing now, both looking forward to something new.

"It won't be like that this time, will it?" Pauline asked.

"No it bloody won't," Jean said, happier now than she had been for years.

The two women smiled at each other, for the first time in ages they were looking forward to Christmas.



LETTERS



Come on sisters!

Dear Womens Voice

We would like to register our disgust at the behaviour of a vocal minority at the TUC Anti-Corrie demonstration on Sunday 28 October. Their aims seemed to be at odds with those of the march. They seemed to feel that abortion is not a trade union issue, despite the fact that, after a long struggle, the TUC has finally recognised its responsibility to its women members. Abortion is a matter of concern for trade unions, as the presence of tens of thousands of trade unionists on Sunday demonstrated.

As Angela Phillips pointed out at the rally, the women's movement—almost by definition—isn't the kind of organisation which could turn out 40,000 people. The TUC can—and did!

We were all there for the same reason—weren't we?

Brenda Allcock & Deane Zeeman
Nalgo members

BIRTH CONTROL WE CONTROL

Dear Womens Voice,

I'd like to add some comments to Jane Foster's column on the cap in November's WV. As she mentioned the Pill and coil are reliable methods of contraception but can have some bad side-effects. The Pill can cause all the effects of hormone treatment and some potential long term risks; the coil can give heavy, painful periods and can cause uterine and even pelvic infection. Though these side-effects are minimal for many women, others put up with them as the price to pay for reliable contraception.

Many women might favour the coil and the Pill as there is no "horrible intrusion into lovemaking". Rubbish! This suggests we all walk around naked in our centrally heated house, with no disturbances, and happily fall into a passionate embrace like in the best romantic films. Putting a cap in takes 30 seconds, there is no more spontaneity in this

than walking upstairs to the bedroom, or undressing. It does not have to be put in during sex, like the sheath; in fact many women put it in when they go to bed, at the same time as cleaning their teeth. (Warning: Do not get the contraceptive cream confused with the toothpaste!!!) Your partner can't feel the cap in intercourse, also unlike the sheath. The best thing is that it is completely under your control—you decide when you need it, you put it in, when you don't have sex you don't use contraception. What could be simpler?

Women will still use the other methods because of medical reasons, the need for 100 per cent reliability, the lack of washing facilities, the embarrassment over their own bodies or sexuality. For the rest of us the cap is a good choice, it's safe, reliable, easy to use and birth control is really in our hands.

Jane Spence,
Leeds

Luck of the draw

Dear Womens Voice,

Two years ago I was sterilised. I was married and had two kids. I anticipated problems but I found my doctor very sympathetic so I went to the local hospital... now comes the crunch I thought. But no, again I was seen by a very respectful and sincere male doctor. He asked no searching questions and endowed me with the right to make my own decisions about my own body. Two weeks later, I was sterilized.

A couple of weeks ago, a friend of mine, married, 37, with two kids visited the same hospital for the same reason. She had been booked to see the same doctor and expected it all to be plain sailing. Unfortunately, that doctor was not there that day; in his place she saw an elderly male consultant.

She was given a lengthy session of questioning, made to feel thoroughly degraded and then told she should go on the pill until menopause. After all, she was a woman and she would properly change her mind.

He then revealed that he was a Catholic and disagreed with sterilization anyway! Her request was refused. So, she runs the risk of pregnancy because this man wants to dictate to women the way that they run their lives. With the help of her own doctor she is fighting the decision; perhaps she will be 'lucky' and get the right doctor next time.

But should our health really rely on the luck of the draw. Of course, if my friend had enough money she could be sterilized tomorrow—moral beliefs don't get in the way of the rich. They don't have to rely on luck, but my friend does!
Jeannie Hilton, Walthamstow.



Rosa was equal but no feminist

Dear Womens Voice

Maureen Harrington (letters issue 35) has misunderstood my point about Rosa Luxemburg. Of course a feminist must believe herself as good as any man. But the fact is society makes us unequal. Feminists fight to make equality a reality by changing laws, customs and beliefs.

Someone who simply believes that she is already equal to men, and so operates as if equality existed, is not a feminist. Rosa Luxemburg was treated as an equal, indeed as a superior, by men in the communist movement. That did not in itself further the cause of women's rights. That was left to Clara Zetkin and the German women's movement.

Zetkin led the movement which fought not only for the vote but for other aspects of women's rights and involved over 20,000 women at its height. It's a measure of how male biased communist history is that the only one of Zetkin's books to be translated into English is 'Reminiscences of Lenin'.
Anna Paczuska, North
London.

Why not argue your case?

Dear Womens Voice,

I read with some annoyance the short article in the last issue of Womens Voice about an event in Manchester. Terry Straiton wrote: 'Students for 'Life' planned a film showing in the students Union at Manchester University but came up against some lively opposition. Fifty pro-abortion students clapped and chanted forcing the film show to a halt.'

Surely decisions about such a

moral issue as abortion should be made by people fully informed about all possible implications of both sides of the argument; not by people forced into ignorance of one side by a group of noisy students. The ability to disrupt meetings is not necessarily indicative of a sound moral argument—which in any case should not be conveyed by clapping and chanting.
Catherine Gilouis
Bristol University

We picketed to win our right to join

Dear Womens Voice, Maralaine Scraggs' fight to get Luton Trades Union Club to allow women to join is very similar to what happened at the GEC Club in Manchester earlier this year. We won and this is how:

For a few years there had been mumblings and half-hearted attempts, like writing letters, to urge change. This year the women had had enough and with the help of (male) SWP members at GEC and Womens Voice, things got moving. Some GEC women and local Womens Voice women met and together produced a bulletin on the issue explaining the case, calling for



women to picket the forthcoming AGM and urging men to vote for a resolution changing the anti-women rules.

At this stage we had a strong boost to the campaign. It happened to be election time and none other than H Wilson deigned to do a factory meeting the day before the picket. Granada Reports were there and two women seized the chance to tell them of the picket. Lunchtime on picket day Granada did an interview which was screened on the teatime news—just as members would be planning on going to the meeting.

About 15 of us picketed—taking (and giving) a lot of stick from the men going in. I don't need to tell you what was said. You know what men with threatened egos are like!

The meeting went on till gone closing time—delaying tactics. Apart from a short pub break we were there to the end—sustained by reports from sympathetic men. And firmly refusing patronising offers to sign us in whilst we waited.

And we won! The SW bloke who moved the resolution was elated. 'It was like proposing anti-racism in an NF meeting. It's hard work arguing against sexism in a big AUEW factory.'

On Granada Reports next day, the news reader announced our victory as a direct result of the picket.

So it can be done. By the way the main objection to women joining was that they might cramp the lads' fine style of swearing!

Debbie Gold
S Manchester Womens Voice



Dear Womens Voice,

I assume that one of the priorities of the magazine is that there is as wide a readership as possible, so I feel this card is presumptuous in that it may offend Christian women (not, of course, liberal students!) and perhaps older working class women who read this magazine.

I come from a Christian upbringing and I believe that every woman has the right to have an abortion if she chooses but I do not believe that a Christmas card is a good means for satirical comment about the Corrie Bill.

Jackie Waterson, Edinburgh

A Morbid Psychological Perversion

Dear Womens Voice, Women are more powerful than you think A letter dated April '78 to a Peter Radcliffe Ludlain of the Conservative Group for Homosexual Equality recently came to light at the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group. It was written by Mr Nicholas Fairbain, Scotland's Tory Solicitor-General:

'Thank you for your circular letter (in which you spell my name wrong). I have no sympathy whatever with an organised Conservative group for homosexuality called Gaycon. Equality is a word used by Socialists to pretend what is different is the same and I do not expect it to be used by Conservatives in the same false way. A homosexual and a heterosexual are not equals or even equivalents and they have quite different characteristics. The origin of homosexuality

arises from a morbid psychological perversion caused by an emotional rejection of the mother object owing to an emotional deprivation by the mother object by the male child. No sexual activity in private is forbidden and what form that takes I consider is a matter entirely for the individual to decide. However homosexuals tend to be attracted to males of tender age and it is important to protect the latter. Hence the age limit (21 years in Scotland, P.P.) for what are termed 'consenting' adults to a homosexual act. The association of homosexuals as a group and the adoption of the word 'gay' are in themselves an indication of the squint from the norm and I regard it as very unhealthy to associate together as a group on the sole basis of squint sexual activity as being

WIDEN YOUR HORIZONS

Dear Womens Voice

At 45 I thought I was on a downward path, with 'me' hot flushes and aches and pains—I was about to enquire as to whether walking sticks were available on the S.S.

But that's all forgotten now, as rejuvenated by my Moped. I'm reliving my skiing days in the thrill I experience as I zoom. I fly—leaving the traffic way behind.

With £50 downpayment and monthly HP payments of around £13 over two years, all inclusive of insurance and accessories, I'm rapidly making huge savings in fares as the petrol topped up by oil comes out at only around 2p per mile.

The last few years saw me familiarise myself with my immediate environment within, an inner London borough as I pedalled around the backstreets on my pushbike. With this new acquisition however, I'm even more independent and even wider horizons are opening up. Anne Schlatter Highbury



the common interest.'

Yours sincerely,
Nicholas Fairbain.

So that's one of Scotland's top law officers—Nicholas 'normality' Fairbain. Did anyone see him on the tele, election night?—drunk and hysterical. I'm sorry, 'tired and emotional'. You'd never think our Nicholas was once a Vice President of Scottish Minorities Group—which became the S.H.R.G. (Scottish Homosexual Rights Group)—now would you? (See his entry in Who's Who.)

And are we to take it that women wield all this influence, are the sole cause of what Nicky thinks is a 'perversion'? There don't seem to be any gay women in his little world, but at least women objects get a mention.

Penny Packham
Edinburgh Womens Voice

TALES WE TELL OUR SISTERS

The empty crib

by Mary Ann Stuart



I never could understand why we couldn't put the baby in the crib until Christmas morning.

Christmas in our household was a curious mixture of fun, excitement and a good dose of dreadful duty. A Catholic household.

When we were very young, the church part didn't figure very highly. No Midnight Mass. Santa was the biggest part of it. Each of us three kids had a chair in the sitting room. On Christmas Eve we pinned a piece of paper bearing our names so that Santa would know which was which — and a little note asking for what we wanted.

I suppose it never occurred to us that he'd have to carry pretty big stocks to arrive at our house and have just what we wanted...

Stockings on the end of the bed. Oh the delicious excitement of waking early and feeling the weight lying across our feet.

It was later, when we were older, that religion crept in to spoil it.

Church twice that week — ugh! It was best when Christmas fell on a Sunday because then Christmas Mass counted for Sunday Mass too.

Early on it was church on Christmas morning. Midnight Mass was something to look forward to when we got older — that meant being grown up.

And so eventually it came, Midnight Mass. Really eerie it was. Church flickering in candlelight. Organ playing

the carols. Anticipation building for the procession of priest and altar boys from the back of the church.

In they come, preceded first by hushed silence and then by the triumph of the organ. In they come slowly, slowly, clad in rich robes glittering in the light of a hundred candles. Incense swinging, filling the church, filling our noses like a drug, drunk in eagerly. Gleaming cross held aloft, advancing up the aisle like some great mysterious precious. Finally reaching the stable scene set in glory on the altar, figures two feet high or more, gathered round the crib — which is empty.

A little girl, dressed in white and blue, carries the doll through the procession — usually the sister of one of the altar boys, or the daughter of the man who runs the altar boys' society.

Gently, with great reverence, she lays the baby in the manger by the mother doll, the Virgin Mary, who must have got pretty tired staring at an empty manger all this time.

Then it begins. The smoke, the chanting, the tinkling of little silver bells instructing us to bow our heads as the communion is made.

Then home and finally to lay the little child in our own little crib.

That was the end of the pre-Christmas ritual, the signal that everything could begin in earnest. The coffee and rolls first, the giving and receiving of presents that no-one could

really afford, the Christmas dinner and the Queen's Speech...

Christmas really began about a week before. The tree was bought and stood in the same corner. It was decorated with the same decorations and crowned with the same makeshift star concocted from cardboard and silver paper — never a fairy — nothing so pagan in a Catholic household!

The lights never worked first time (whose did?) but new ones were never bought.

Then on Christmas Eve, or perhaps the day before, the crib was set up.

The little stable, bits of green to decorate it brought in from the garden, all the little figures carefully arranged inside and outside the stable on a piece of green baize cloth anchored by stones for dramatic effect (it was very rocky in those foreign parts).

All carefully in place except for the baby. He wasn't born until Christmas Day so he couldn't go in until Christmas Day.

It was the ritual of the whole thing that I never could understand. The whole of our Christmas was ritual, and somehow, the older we got, the more entrenched the ritual became. It was almost as if something would go terribly wrong if it wasn't done just right. It was all an obsession crystallised for me in the taking care not to put the baby in the crib until Christmas morning.

WHAT IS GOING ON?

WV groups

● **ABERDEEN Womens Voice** for more information telephone Liz 51059

● **ACTON AND HARLESDEN** ring Carrie 993 0356

● **NORTH BIRMINGHAM** Womens Voice meets fortnightly. Phone Maggie 021 449 4793

● **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM** Womens Voice meets fortnightly. Phone Jill 021 459 1718

● **BLACKBURN** Womens Voice meets every Tuesday 8pm-10pm Jubilee Hotel (opposite King George's Hall) 673894 for details.

● **BLACK COUNTRY** Sundays fortnightly. 2.30, 27 Glen Court, Compton Road. For Information 23233. Children welcome.

● **BRISTOL** Womens Voice meets fortnightly at the Inkworks, 22 Hepburn Road (off Basingstoke Road), St. Pauls, Bristol 2. Ring Bristol 46875

● **BURY** Womens Voice. Ring Lynn 061 764 6659 for details.

● **CANTERBURY** Womens Voice meets every other Tuesday at Jolly Sailor Northgate. Phone Barbara (Lyminge 862742).

● **COVENTRY** Womens Voice meets every other Wednesday, 8.00pm, at the Hertford Tavern, off Queens Road (near the Butts). Coventry 618956

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

● **EALING** Womens Voice meets regularly. Phone Jenny 991 0443.

● **ECCLES AND SALFORD** Womens Voice. For information ring Jennie 707 2557 or Ann 737 3800

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

● **GLASGOW** Womens Voice. For information ring Clare 959 8041 or Dorte 423 1185.

● **GLOSSOP**, Derbyshire Womens Voice meets second and fourth Tuesday of every month at 110 Victoria Street, Glossop. Phone Glossop 64287 for Carol.

● **HACKNEY** Womens Voice phone Pauline 985 3086 or Chris 806 8535 for information and babysitters.

● **HALIFAX** Womens Voice details from WV and SW sellers every Saturday 12.30-2.30, Co-op arcade on the Precinct.

● **HARLOW** Womens Voice meets fortnightly on Wednesday at 8pm. Ring Pat, Harlow 28022.

● **HIGHBURY** Womens Voice. Details ring Elana 359 0842 (days).

● **HORNSEY** Womens Voice meets fortnightly. Ring Jane 348 6712 or Maggie 341 1182 for information and babysitters.

● **ISLINGTON** Womens Voice meets regularly. Phone Sandy at 802 6145 for details.

● **KENTISH TOWN** Womens Voice meets weekly. Ring Gail 485 0954 or Vera/Di 267 5059 for information and details.

● **LAMPETER** Womens Voice meets Tuesday evenings. Details from WV sellers or write c/o SDUC Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales.

● **LEYSTONE** Womens Voice has now been formed, telephone Pam 558 1509 or Annie 556 5595 for details.

● **LIVERPOOL** Womens Voice meets on alternate Tuesdays at 8pm in the County Hotel. For further information phone Alison at 727 4057 or 709 1844.

● **LUTON** Womens Voice meets alternative Wednesdays. Details and babysitters. Ring Jane 421266

● **MANCHESTER** University Womens Voice meets each week at 5pm in the students union.

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

● **NEWCASTLE** Womens Voice meets regularly phone 29129 for details.

Womens Voice T-Shirts. 'Womens Voice fights for womens rights!' Only medium size left - red, blue or white. £1.50 plus 15p postage. No sweat shirts left. Cheques to Kentish Town Womens Voice, 175a Kentish Town Road, London NW1.

● **NEWHAM** Womens Voice. Ring Pam 534 1417

● **NOTTINGHAM** Womens Voice group meets 2nd and 4th wednesdays every month at 8pm, 118 Mansfield Road. For further information or babysitters, ring Jane 49502

● **READING** Womens Voice meets fortnightly. For details phone Shirley on 585554

● **SHEFFIELD** Womens Voice meets fortnightly at the Prince of Wales, Division Street. For details ring Sue 613739

● **SOUTHWARK** Womens Voice meets every other Tuesday evening. Contact Jenny 697 7996 for more information.

● **SOUTH LONDON** Womens Voice meets fortnightly on Tuesdays. Tate Library, Brixton. Oval. All welcome.

● **SOUTH WEST LONDON** Womens Voice. All welcome. information and babysitters contact Marion 947 0560.

● **SOUTH WIRRAL** - Would anyone interested in forming a Womens Voice group please contact Janet, 051 339 6070.

● **STOCKPORT** Womens Voice. For details phone 061 431 7564.

● **STOKE ON TRENT** Womens Voice meets at Knotty Action, Mollart Street, Hanley. Fortnightly. Ring Sandra 814094

LEICESTER Womens Voice meets alternative tuesdays. Contact Fiona 0533 62855.

Two new badges from Womens Voice

Abortion our right to choose 15p each plus 10p postage
She's no sister (Margaret Thatcher that is) 20p each plus 10p postage
Money with orders please. Add 10p postage whatever number your order.

Small ads

National Child Care Campaign. If interested in national register, information exchange and national conference to discuss strategy etc. please send SAE to NCC, c/o Flat 4, 61 Chalcot Road, London NW1.

WOMENS LIBERATION in Youth Work — a Feminist Perspective Nottingham University 21/23 March 1980. The Women Working with Young People Group would like to give advance notice of their annual conference which is for feminist youth workers. For more details please contact Val Carpenter at NAYC, PO Box 1, Blackburn House, Bond Gate, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV11 4DB. Telephone (0682) 61921.

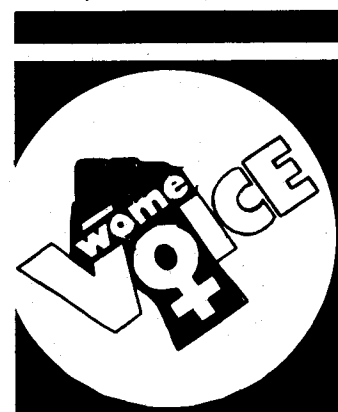
● **TOTTENHAM** Womens Voice meets regularly. Phone Mary for information and babysitters, 802 9563.

● **TOWER HAMLETS** Womens Voice meets on alternate Mondays. Babysitters available. Phone Jane 515 7403.

● **WALTHAMSTOW** Womens Voice meets alternative Tuesdays at 8pm. Phone Pauline 521 4768 or Mary Ann 520 3025.

● **WALSALL** Womens Voice meets regularly. Phone Ena at Walsall 644205 for details. Children welcome.

● **WATFORD** Womens Voice is being formed. Anyone interested in coming to meetings please contact Davina or Ros. Watford 28500 ext 659



NEW WOMEN'S VOICE BADGE. 20p each plus 8p postage. Ten for £1.60 post free. From Bookmarx, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.



MANCHESTER UTOM are sponsoring a tour by Relatives Action Committee, speaker Bernadette Toal: Tuesday 4 December, 8pm, small assembly hall, Barnes Wallace Building, UMIST. Thursday 6 December, 8pm, AUEW House, Margaret Street South, Aston under Lyne. Wednesday 5 December, Stockport. Phone 273 5947 for further details.

SEE RED Womens Workshop calendar is back again! Six pages of 2 or 3 colour posters, 17 x 24 inches. From 16A Iliffe Yard, off Crompton Street, London SE17. £3, or £2.50 unwaged, plus 35p postage.

Mother Christmas badges, also Eve was framed, and four other feminist badges. Loan of badge machine for fund raising events. Phone for complete list: 01 254 1306

Last year we produced our first *Spare Rib* Diary . . . we've asked women to tell us what they liked and disliked about it and for suggestions for the 1980 Diary. Out soon, using the original suffragette colours of green and violet, it contains many original drawings, cartoons and photographs by women, accompanied by relevant and witty feminist quotations from the last 200 years! It also includes a huge listing of feminist groups and useful contacts for easy reference.

New additions this year: a special calendar for easy calculation of your menstrual cycle, indexed note pages, 1979 and 1981 calendars, size 4x6 inches.

It's a card cover, laminated 184 page book, costing £2 from good bookshops. Also available direct

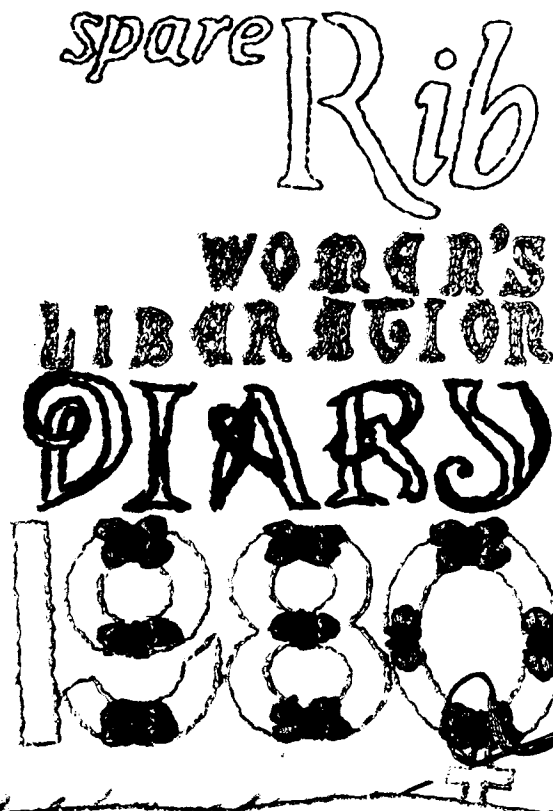
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Your nearest Womens Voice Group meets

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We fight for:

Equal pay

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The right to work

Against all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, sexual orientation, or race.

Women's liberation is only possible through women organising and fighting for themselves.

Women's liberation can only be achieved by linking its struggles to those of the working class and overthrowing the capitalist system.

Womens Voice supports the aims of the Socialist Workers Party. It is organisationally independent but based on the politics of the SWP.

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the
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I want to join the fight . . .
Name _____

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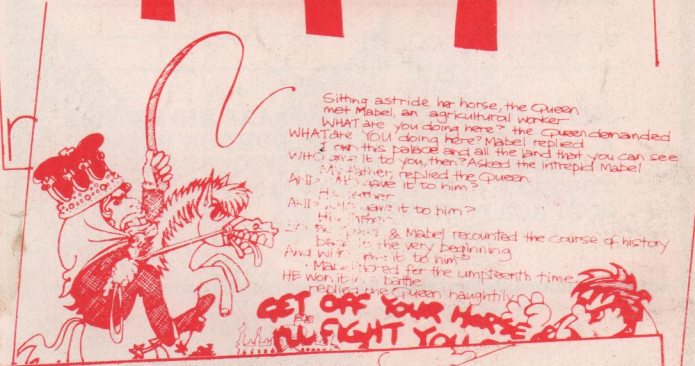
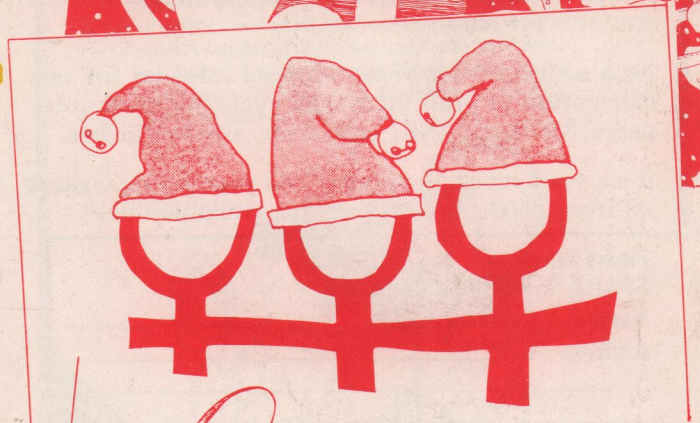
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