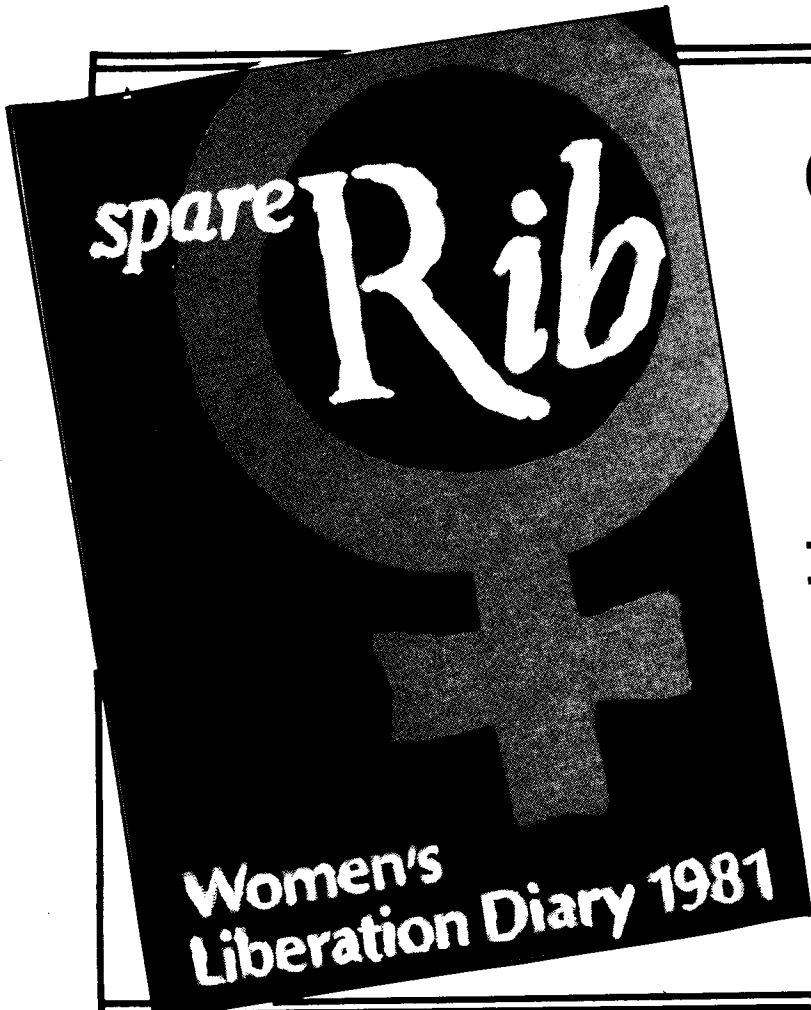


womens **voice**

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"Quite frankly, I don't think mothers have the same right to go out to work as fathers. If the Good Lord had intended us to have equal rights to go out to work, he wouldn't have created man and woman."

PATRICK JENKIN, Social Services Secretary

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NICHOLAS STACEY, Director of Kent Social Services

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SOCIALIST WORKER 13 September 1980 7

against THESE PIES ARE BLACKED!

THE strike for union recognition at King Henry's in Manchester has continued since 7 July and many of those on the picket line are women. Some of them spoke to Socialist Worker.

By PAT JONES

We want work!

OCTOBER 10 DEMONSTRATE!

WOMEN'S FACTSHEET

AWAY FROM PLACE IN NEW JUNCTION

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OUR POINT OF VIEW

Unnatural disasters

SPECIAL UNITS are being set up in Yorkshire to deal with the increasing problem of child battering, which has doubled recently. It has got worse for one reason—the effects of the recession. In other words unemployment.

As more and more people are thrown out of work, the problems which they face force them to turn inwards and to take out their frustrations on those closest to them, which is often the kids.

Everyone who has been out of work knows what those problems are. The frustration of having time on your hands. The lack of money which means you can never afford new furniture or clothes or holidays, and can only barely afford meat once a week. The indignity of having to explain your personal life to social security snoopers.

All these put pressure on unemployed people and their families. Many people feel they are not adequate unless they are working, which is after all what they are brought up to believe.

But unemployment is not a natural disaster. It is part of the society we live in and is being deliberately made worse by this Tory government. Margaret Thatcher pledged at the Tory party conference to keep on a course of increasing unemployment. So the child battering will increase.

As long as we believe unemployment is an individual problem we will blame ourselves and those around us. There is an alternative,

which is to fight for the right to work and for an alternative to the society which cannot guarantee it.

The Labour Party has called a national demonstration against unemployment in Liverpool on 29 November. Every Womens Voice supporter should be there. We should link it with the occupation at Gardners against redundancies, and all other fight-backs which are going on at present, and from that build a movement which can kick out the Tories.

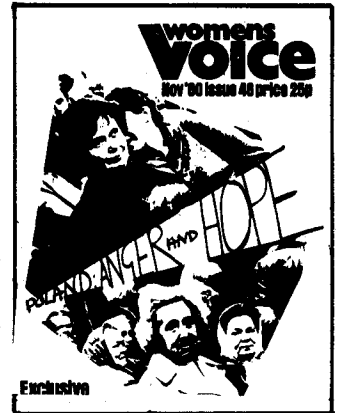
But let's not fall into the trap of thinking that the solution to all our problems is to wait four years for a Labour government (with slight alterations).

Under the last Labour government unemployment reached 1½ million. We have to support the demonstration and anything else organise against unemployment, but we shouldn't rely on the Labour leaders. Our success in fighting it depends on what we do *now* to build support for Gardners, for the 29, and so build up our own self confidence to fight Thatcher, not on waiting for other people to do it for us. We can unite against the threat to jobs, while arguing that only a socialist society can get rid of the misery of unemployment once and for all.

Organising together is the only thing which can give us confidence to fight the people who really cause child battering—the Tory government and the employers who support them.

womens
Voice

Womens magazine of the
Socialist Workers Party



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The next WV Editorial meeting will take place on Wednesday 26 November. If you would like to attend please phone 01 986 6222. If you would like a speaker for your WV group, give us a ring.

The next WV Steering Committee meeting will be on 16 November. Please contact us if you would like to attend.

Cover pictures: Ewa Barker

WOMENS VOICE · PO BOX 82 LONDON E2 · 01 986 6222



John Sturrock (Report)



Women strengthen sit in

The sit-in against redundancies which began at Gardners engineering factory last month has gathered a lot of support. One of the most important areas has been from the workers' families. The danger of mostly men being involved while their wives and families become isolated is one which exists in many strikes.

But at Gardners some of the wives got together to make sure it didn't happen. They organised a rally to gather support. Jackie Adams spoke: 'We'd like to show you all you won't get pressure off us at home. The only pressure you'll get is if you walk out of the sit-in.' Jannie Brightman described how the sit-in was about saving jobs for our kids, and the union convenor Tom McAfee welcomed the rally.

It wasn't just wives but mothers, mothers in law, sisters and kids who turned up. Rose McMullen, an 18 year old telephonist was there with a friend. 'It's my brother's job going. We couldn't afford to run the house without his wages.'

Afterwards Womens Voice talked to some of the women in the local Labour Club about why they supported the rally and the sit-in. Jackie Adams talked about how it had affected her. 'I've got two kids, a boy of four and a girl of three. Up to last week I never took any inter-

rest. I was triggered off by a row I had with my husband about money. Then I thought about it and realised I would still be in the same boat if he was made redundant. I've heard women talk about this strike and say how can they win, how can they do that to their families? But it's not the men doing it, it's the management. Other wives have to sit down and think about it.'

'I went to the rally because women need to show their strength. It's not been done before. I want to show management its not a strike of 2,500 but of 5,000. Mrs Thatcher said the lady's not for turning when she spoke at the Tory conference but it's the men in this factory who aren't for turning.'

'I've always voted Labour but its not my idea of a party.

They didn't do much when they were in. I've always been on the socialist side but never made up my mind to join anything. Why should a few people run everything? You don't see MPs eating rice pudding for their tea.'

'We need to get all the housewives together. We're even stronger than the men. Once our minds are made up they don't change. But the union scares people. They don't realise it's only a name. It's about people getting together.'

'The suffragettes went to prison and had to be force fed when they went on hunger strike. I'd be willing to do anything to get our case across.'

'I've altered in the last four days. Now I've got to do something. Gardners can be the turning point.'

WE NEED YOUR HELP

'We're all in the same boat. We need to tell people this at meetings here, there and everywhere'—one of the wives, Paula Walton

What you can do:

COLLECTIONS of money

MESSAGES and resolutions of support

VISIT workplaces to tell them of the sit-in

SPEAKERS for meetings can be arranged on 061 789 2202

RAISE Gardners in your own workplace and/or union branch

Money and messages to Tom McAfee, Union Convenor, Gardener's, Eccles, Manchester.

ON THE ROAD FOR JOBS

I HAVE been out of work now for seven months. It's very soul-destroying. I visited Job Centres in the centre of Newcastle only to find there was no work. I felt it wasn't doing any good keeping quiet about the way I felt about unemployment—about Thatcher. So I joined the 1980 Right to Work March.

We set out from Port Talbot in South Wales. I was really surprised to see how many had decided to join. There were people from all over the country. They weren't all young. Gladys Hook for instance, she's a 72 year old gran from South Wales. She only intended to march for the first few miles, but she came with us all the way to Brighton!

The first morning as we passed through the centre of Port Talbot the feeling that I had to be part of this body of marchers was fantastic. Everybody sang—everybody felt good.

Every morning we had a marchers meeting. We discussed the previous day's activities, the route that the march was going to take that day and the group who were going off on a delegation to the local factories.

These factory visits proved very successful. It gave us the opportunity to speak to the workers and make collections.

When the march reached London we could all feel a difference in the attitude of the police towards the march. Every morning when we assembled you could bet money (if you had any) that the police would be in thick lines on the outside of the march.

On 9 October we reached the outskirts of Brighton. We had marched 25 miles that day to reach the University where we were staying for the night. We were told that the students had voted to sponsor the march and buy us all a pint.

The light came through the



Tessa Howland IFL

A noisy picket met Margaret Thatcher when she opened a new home for people with disabilities in Peckham last month. About 200 people let Thatcher know what they thought of her. One woman said: 'That woman's a hypocrite, and it's disgusting that she should come down here and pretend to be concerned about people with disabilities when she's making the lives of most people in this country bloody hell.' Hear, hear.

window, 10 October had arrived, everybody was up early. We had breakfast.

There were some new faces about, miners from Wales who were going to march with us to the Tory conference. That was another thing about the march. It was an employed workers' fight as well.

We assembled outside the university. Up went the lead banner and the rest followed. Down came the rain! A quick chorus of 'Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head' and the banner moved forward—we were on our way. Nothing could dampen our spirits. People in

the streets of Brighton gave us cries of support. One woman ran towards the guy in front of me and gave him 20 cigarettes from her bag!

A group of school kids from Brighton ran out of the school gates to join us—they went on strike for the day.

When we arrived outside the conference hall the police had arrived in force to greet us.

It's hard to say how many people were at the picket—anyway there were more people there than Mr Prior recommends. Mrs Thatcher was due to arrive.

The voices rang out our mes-

sage for her: 'Maggie, we want you—Dead!'. The press said later that Mrs. T. didn't seem disturbed by our mass picket—if this was so why did she go in by the trademen's entrance?

While Thatcher made her speech we had moved on to the Dome in Brighton where we held a rally.

The fight doesn't end at the rally. All over the country activity is going on. If you are unemployed at present join in the fight. Get out and make yourself heard.

Occupy, Organise, Fight for the Right to Work!

Rosemary Puntin.



Laurie Sparham (I.F.L.)

Right to Work marchers arrive to picket the Tory party Conference in Brighton on.

Answering back

The Price of Jobs

TORY politicians would have us believe that it's our fault that unemployment is so high. They say we've been pricing ourselves out of a job. Over and over they repeat that high wage increases are the major cause of redundancies and lengthening dole queues. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Women have always done the worst paid jobs. They can hardly be accused of pricing themselves out of jobs, yet low paid, low status women's jobs are disappearing as fast as any.

Take the women who work for local authorities. Of the one million manual workers employed by local councils, two thirds are women, and most of them work part-time. Their wages are rotten — a part-timer working four hours a day will take home less than £30 a week. Recent wage rises have been pitiful — far less than the rise in prices, and yet these jobs are being cut all over the country.

Dorset County Council recently scrapped school meals, throwing several hundred dinner ladies out of a job. Every time a swimming bath closes a few hours early or a playground is left unattended, someone else's job has gone.

We're not pricing ourselves out of jobs — the Tories are pricing us out of our jobs. Thatcher is trying to bring down inflation by cutting public spending and imposing high interest rates. Both lead directly to the destruction of jobs.

Cutting public spending always means cutting jobs and keeping wages low. High interest rates mean that private firms are hard hit by the cost of borrowing money, and make their workforce pay by reducing the scale of their operations and shedding labour. Working class people have less money to spend and are buying fewer goods of all sorts, particularly consumer durables like fridges, washing machines and carpets. No wonder a Kenwood factory has closed, Hoover has laid off workers (including an all-women's twilight shift) and carpet makers are going bust daily.

Relatively higher paid workers, like carworkers, are losing jobs and being put on short time because of the recession — which is largely the fault of the government — not because of wage deals. Indeed, the highest recent wage settlement went to a group that is still expanding — the police!

No working class people are pricing themselves out of jobs. Those who do accept low wage rises will find that management think they're a walkover when they want to make redundancies.

Tory propaganda is aimed at dividing workers from each other. They'd like us to blame unemployment on anyone winning a decent wage deal, instead of supporting workers prepared to stick their necks out and fight management for their rights.

You can't fight for jobs without also fighting for decent wage rises, and unless we are prepared to fight, the Tories and our employers will walk all over us.

The Same the Whole World Over

The fight for abortion is being taken up by women in Ireland, both North and South of the border. In that fight women will have to confront the church, state and educational authorities.

Abortion in Ireland is illegal. The 1967 Abortion Act does not cover the North, even though it is part of the UK. Northern Ireland had its own Parliament at that time, but when direct rule was imposed by Britain in 1972 British laws covering divorce, abortion and homosexuality were not part of the package.

The first conference of the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign was held in October with speakers from the National Abortion Campaign and the Ulster Pregnancy Advisory Association.

Earlier in the year women in the South launched the Women's Right to Choose Group which is now openly running an abortion referral service.

The Corrie Bill threatened the chances of abortion for Irish women in its attempt to restrict the English law. Every year thousands of women, from both sides of the border, take the 'abortion trail' to England. No-one knows how many others who can't afford to get to England have illegal backstreet abortions in Ireland.

The focus of the campaign so far has been around getting the 1967 Abortion Act extended to Northern Ireland, rather than agitating for abortion on demand.

Any campaign for women's rights in Ireland will find outright opposition from the powerful church. Women in the North and South have begun confronting the church by serving notice on bishops and paisleys. The fight for safe and legal abortions has begun.

Joan Kelly



Over 10,000 women demonstrated in Amsterdam against proposed abortion laws. None of the major parties are putting forward bills which would give women the right to choose. Instead all the bills put conditions such as having to wait five days to see if the woman really wants and abortion.

OUR BODIES

On Saturday 9 August in Glasgow the Rape Crisis Centre held a street exhibition and later that night a film show. It was a huge success, and they are hoping to repeat it in the near future.

If you think you can help, contact—and they are always on the lookout for new

volunteers—Glasgow Rape Crisis Centre, PO Box 53, Glasgow G2 1YR: 042-221-8448

OURSELVES

AH ROBBINS company—the makers of the Dalkon Shield IUD—have 'advised' women to stop using it, because of the risk of pelvic infection. Although distribution of the shield ceased in 1975, some 1,000 women still use it.



SKEGNESS EVERY EASTER; WOMENS VOICE EVERY MONTH;
SOCIALIST WORKER EVERY WEEK.

Don't let Irish Prisoners Die

PAULINE McLoughlin, republican prisoner in Armagh jail, is back in hospital again. For months the Northern Ireland Office and the prison authorities have been playing games with her life.

Pauline has a nervous condition which makes her unable to keep food down. She has lost a lot of weight and her health is worsening. Whenever her health gets extremely bad the prison authorities shift her back to the miserable prison again.

Pauline was recently convinced by her comrades to come off the political status protest. She was given a cell mate because she kept losing consciousness. Finally she was moved to hospital again.

Pauline doesn't want to be released because of her health. Women supporters are demanding that she be given proper medical treatment. Let the authorities know that British women are supporting this demand. Write to Humphrey Atkins, Secretary of State, Stormont Buildings Belfast.
Joan Kelly

A hunger strike was begun on 27 October in the H Blocks, to gain the rights of special category status, which include free association with other political prisoners, civilian clothes, educational facilities, and visits. In support of the prisoners, the Committee for Withdrawal from

Ireland have called a huge demonstration in London on November 15th. And to coincide with International Human Rights day, the ad hoc hunger strike committee have called a demonstration on December 7th. For further information and publicity material (including films) tel. 01 267 2004.

Fight for the Right to Work

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT
called by the Labour Party
November 29 in Liverpool.

All Womens Voice members and supporters should attend.

Assemble at Sefton Park, 11 am.

For transport, see WV sellers.

Closing the books

THE CHILDREN of a Rochdale couple have been refused entry to Britain to join their parents. Anwar Ditta's children should have been here four years ago. The first application took two and a half years to assess. The second took over a year, and was rejected on 30 July. Grounds for refusal were that Anwar and her husband Shuja had told lies to the authorities in the past, so they could now be lying about the children being his.

Examples of the 'lies and deceit' consist of Anwar telling a lie about her age in Pakistan in order to marry, and the couple remarrying in a British registry office, saying they were unmarried.

They have been refused further leave to appeal. The Home Office has closed the book on their case. They must now go to the High Court.

Meanwhile time is passing and the children are living with one elderly grandparent in Pakistan. Their father lost his tax relief with the appeal rejection, but must still send money for the children's needs.

Please help the campaign. Collect money round your groups and union branches, and pass resolutions supporting this family.

Donations to The Anwar Ditta Legal Fund, 127 Crawford Street, Rochdale.

National demonstration, assemble at Church Stile, at top of the steps behind the Town Hall, Rochdale. 12 noon 15 November.

Sue Crossley

WE HAVE TO FIGHT TO BE PART OF THE UNION

AT M&W

The basic right of workers—to join and participate in the activities of a trade union—is being challenged by M & W Publications, part of a large publishing house, in Liverpool.

In September the mainly female workforce joined ASTMS. At the end of the month the union representative, Debbie Allen, was sacked because of her trade union activities. Four days later, two thirds of the workforce came out on strike, with official union backing, in support of Debbie's reinstatement.

Letters of dismissal were issued to the strikers the very next day. They were sacked for joining a trade union and showing solidarity with Debbie.

Pickets of the office have been set up, but there are still scabs who are refusing to support Debbie's reinstatement.

Most of the women on strike have never been involved in industrial action before, but in the last month their confidence has increased, as it always does in struggle.

One of the strikers, Karen, told Womens Voice: 'We're on strike not only for our own union recognition but for the right of every individual to join a trade union'.

Jane Mudd

Mass pickets of M & W Publications are on Mondays and Fridays, 12-2pm at 42 Stanley Street, Liverpool 1.

Messages of support and donations to: ASTMS Strike

Fund, 201 Tower Buildings, Water Street, Liverpool L31 AB.

AT TANDY

The strike for union recognition at Tandy's warehouse in Birmingham is facing opposition from lorry drivers who are crossing the picket line. The workers have been sacked from Tandy's and the union involved, the TGWU, is offering little support.

One lorry driver who was chal-

lenged when trying to cross the picket line was heard to say 'I'm not going to stop for a bunch of women'.

Morale amongst the strikers is getting low; union officials are discouraging action while the case goes to arbitration. The workers are not getting any strike pay and fines from picket line arrests are mounting up.

Messages of support and money should be sent to Janet Marsh, 3 Park Street, Wednesbury, West Midlands.

AND AT KING HENRY

THE STRIKE for a union is still on at King Henry meat pies factory in Manchester. Now is the factory's busiest period when Xmas orders are being made.

The mainly women strikers are determined to stick it out for the union. They know they need outside support and have got Liverpool dockers to black King Henry pies. A delegation has been over to Liver-

pool to support the strike at M & W Publications.

Join the regular mass pickets every Tuesday and Friday - 6am onwards.

Send donations and messages of support to: BF&AWU, Room 4, 4 George House, 30 Dudley Road, Manchester 16.



PREGNANT WOMEN ARE SICK - THAT'S OFFICIAL

The government's new sickness benefit proposals include massive changes in maternity payments. They are hoping to introduce a bill which will abolish *either* state maternity allowance *or* paid maternity leave.

At present, pregnant workers who qualify can get six weeks' earnings-related maternity pay plus 18 weeks' maternity allowance and the £25 maternity grant.

The first of the new proposals is to abolish the allowance and the grant, and instead make employers pay 15 weeks benefit at £30 a week.

Under this scheme, a woman earning £60 a week who qualifies at present for the grant, pay and allowance would lose about £250 if she got pregnant.

The second proposal is to abolish the right to maternity pay from employers, and instead increase the state maternity allowance by a few pounds.

So either way, pregnant women, whether working or not, will lose out on maternity benefits. The DHSS says it has had no complaints about the proposed changes.

Let's start complaining now.

Susan Pearce



Tessa Howland IFL

This playground is occupied! The 3rd Avenue Playground, in a rundown area of West Ham has been occupied to prevent it closing.

Student women get together

ON THE weekend of October 17 about 250 student women gathered in Cardiff for the second national NUS womens aggregate. It presents an opportunity for women in the union to get together and discuss in a positive way the discrimination they feel as women within education and union structures.

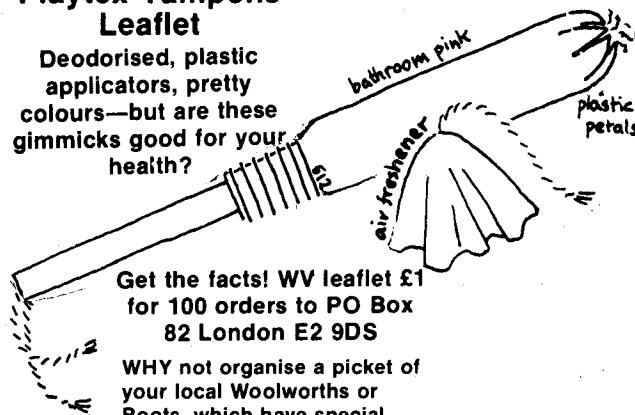
There were workshops on sexual stereotyping, the employment Act, mental health, women in Armagh jail, the cuts and many others. Motions were passed in support of Gardners factory occupation, the Labour party demonstration against unemployment on Novem-

ber 29 in Liverpool, and support for Charter 80 and campaigning for Irish political prisoners in Armagh and H Block jails.

We talked a lot about how we could link up with campaigns outside the student world. Students no longer live under the expanding education system of the 60s, when just to demonstrate was enough. Now we have to support those people fighting back against the Tory attacks like the Gardners workers. If you would like a speaker from Gardners contact me at NUS 01 387 1277 or 01 986 8355
Jan Neilsen

Womens Voice Playtex Tampons Leaflet

Deodorised, plastic applicators, pretty colours—but are these gimmicks good for your health?



Get the facts! WV leaflet £1 for 100 orders to PO Box 82 London E2 9DS

WHY not organise a picket of your local Woolworths or Boots, which have special offers on Playtex tampons.

DEBATE

AUDREY WISE (Labour MP)
SANDRA PEERS (Womens Voice)
WOMENS LIBERATION AND SOCIALISM
—WHICH WAY FORWARD?

November 21
Conway Hall
7.00
admission 50p



FESTIVAL AGAINST THE TORIES

On 8 October there was a planning meeting about the National Festival for Women's Rights against Tory Attacks. The women decided the festival shouldn't be on International Women's Day weekend. Many felt a very large demonstration of all sections of the women's movement should be organised instead. Watch out for planning meetings ...

The National Festival aims to involve all women's groups, campaigns and union branches concerned in fighting the vicious Tory attacks on us. The new date is 9 May 1981.

Please send in donations—we need to raise lots of money for the festival. And come to the fortnightly planning meetings, the next is Monday 10 November, 7pm, 374 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1.

A QUESTION OF VALUES

OVER 70 prostitutes have been arrested in a redlight area of Birmingham in a vicious police 'cleanup' campaign. A mere five punters were arrested. The police justify the cleanup on the grounds that 'decent women are afraid to walk the streets at night'. Why then is it the prostitutes they have been arresting and not the kerb crawlers?

There's more to the clean up

campaign than that. A brand new estate of expensive houses has just been put up near one well known pick up spot. Rumour has it that the big building firms have been putting pressure on the police to get rid of the prostitutes.

They're afraid that house values will drop if there's prostitution in the area. Money talks—it could explain the tim-

ing of the campaign, when police for years have done little about complaints by individuals about kerb crawlers.

The local prostitutes action group, 'Pros' is holding a meeting to decide what can be done, and two members of 'Pros' are coming to our next WV meeting as we want to support any action they take.

Birmingham WV



Women textile workers occupied their factory, Sussannah Kent in Gateshead, after 86 women were made redundant. After continuous harassment by their employers and little help from their full-time union official they were forced to end it.

Sitting astride her horse, the Queen met Mabel, an agricultural worker. WHAT are you doing here? the Queen demanded. I own this palace and all the Queen replied. WHO gave it to you, men? Asked the mopey Mabel. AND WHO gives it to him? His father. AND WHO gave it to him? His father. So the Queen & Mabel recounted the course of matters. And who gave it to you, Mabel? Mabel asked for the umpteenth time. HE won it in a battle. replied the Queen having said. **GET OFF YOUR HORSE & FIGHT FOR US**

—they told me a woman could get to the top.

Happy Xmas sisters... Special Offer

A set of four cards with envelopes will cost you £1 including 30p for our postage and packing costs.

All proceeds from the cards go into our funds, so give us a hand and stop pouring money into the coffers of the big card printers all in one go!

Rush orders with money to *Womens Voice*, Box 8, London E2.

ORDER YOURS NOW!

DANGER — WOMEN AT WORK

Enfield Women's Voice recently put on a performance of *Danger, Women at Work* by the Counteract Theatre Group. The play is about women working in a factory producing tights—the 'glamour image' of the product is in stark contrast with the way they live and work. The factory owner, a 'wide boy' if ever there was one, plans to close down the factory and sell off the machinery.

Despite the appalling weather and a small audience, the play was very successful, because at the end the women decide they are going to fight the sudden sacking, but don't go on to discuss *how*. Our audience included quite a few women from Thorn's local factory who are facing redundancies and the discussion that followed the play was lively.

Norah Carlin

Sale of the Century

OCTOBER 3rd 1980: *The Government brings into effect today its commitment to give public sector tenants the legal right to buy their own homes.*

'This is a momentous advance in broadening choice in housing . . . The Right to Buy gives tenants a package of rights which makes home ownership a genuine possibility to people who could previously only dream of it.'

Those were the words of Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, on the day the 1980 Housing Act came into force and local authorities were instructed to begin selling off their housing stock.

The Government is offering attractive incentives for council tenants to buy: if you have lived in your house or flat for three years you will be given a 33 per cent discount with an extra one per cent for every year after that, rising to a maximum of 50 per cent for tenants of 20 years standing.

The Tories have long been talking about freedom of the individual: the freedom to buy or to rent. But although they firmly believe in private ownership of property, the principle of having the *right* to buy is not the only motive behind the sale of council housing.

Public housing costs public money and the Tories are notorious for their reluctance to spend money on people's needs. Selling council houses means selling jobs, especially in direct works units used for maintenance. 2,000 jobs in housing departments and direct works will be lost for every 100,000 council dwellings sold.

No-one profits from the sale of council houses, least of all the local authority. If a property valued at £12,000 is sold at a 50 per cent discount, there is a loss of £6,000. Central government is demanding half the sale price of these properties (in this case £3,000) as an immediate 'repayment' of funds provided by the government to build the property in the first place. Local authorities are promising full mortgages

for many properties; so on a £12,000 house sold for £6,000 they must borrow £9,000 in order to provide a mortgage and pay central government, and pay it back at current interest rates.

Who pays the difference? You and me, council tenants through higher rents and other rate payers in the borough.

But the people who will buy council houses and flats are not just council tenants. Between 1977 and 1979 41 per cent of sales of newly built GLC houses and flats went to people not on council waiting lists. Many councils are putting their newest and most recently converted housing stock onto the open market.

There are over a million people on council waiting lists around the country. Nearly two million council dwellings are either unfit or lack basic amenities. 53,000 households were accepted by local authorities as officially homeless in 1978. What chance do these people have of getting somewhere decent to live if the country's best housing is passed over to the private market?

Council house sales mean higher rents and worse maintenance for those who remain tenants. At the moment maintenance is paid for on a 'pooled' basis; a proportion of the rent from *all* council dwellings is set aside for maintenance and then used as each dwelling needs it. If the best property is sold there will be less income for maintenance for the properties that need it most. The losses made by local authorities on council house sales will have to be paid for in the long term by higher rents.

Apart from the practical effects of council house sales, public responsibility for housing is being attacked. Although council housing is far from perfect, the sharing of costs between tenants and allocation of housing according to need are important principles to be defended.

In the last few weeks a number of local authorities have said they will refuse to

implement Heseltine's instructions to sell. Unfortunately, but predictably, most have now backed down to saying they will process applications as slowly as possible and at the same time try to dissuade people from buying.

In Sheffield, where one in three council tenants need re-housing and the waiting list is over 26,000, local tenants' associations are flooding the housing department with applications to buy in an attempt to jam up the processing system. The NALGO branch are refusing to process applications in

will not take on any extra staff to deal with council house sales.

The NALGO branch at Lambeth have a policy of total non-cooperation with the sale of council houses on the basis that it is a cut in public services and that no-one is employed to carry out the sales.

The branch will get the support of NALGO's Emergency Committee by stressing the staffing level issue rather than the principle, says Mike Waller, the branch secretary of Lambeth NALGO. 'But even if Lambeth council were to employ

COUNCIL NOTICES

COUNCIL RENTHOUSES FOR SALE!
 MORTGAGES AT 16%!!
 BUY YOUR HOME WITH A VIEW, PLUS:
FREE VALIUM!!!
 Contact: Heseltine Enterprises
 (a member of the Thatcher Group Ltd)

NUKE THATCHER

any case; they say that staffing levels in the housing department are not sufficient to deal with applications to buy.

Lambeth council has decided to go ahead with the sale of council houses but has asked its Housing Committee to write to all tenants in the borough explaining the disastrous effects of sale. The council has also said it

300 people tomorrow to sell the houses we wouldn't budge.'

Harriet Sherwood

SCAT (*Services to Community Action and Tenants*) have produced a pamphlet called *The Great Sales Robbery*. It's available, price 40p, from SCAT Publications, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

WOMENS HEALTH

Cancer — every woman's fear

EVERY YEAR many women die of cancer. There are rare types of cancer and common types. Three of the most common are breast, cervical and uterine cancer. They usually affect women in the prime of their life, between the ages of 35 and 60. With early detection many of these deaths could have been prevented, or life prolonged and made more comfortable.

Is it women who are at fault for not recognising their symptoms early enough? No — most women do not know which symptoms are important to report.

This is especially true for cancer of the cervix and the uterus. Odd bleeding is the most common symptom, bleeding after sex, between periods, and after the menopause. Bleeding at strange times is also a symptom of quite a few other gynaecological complaints. There is no need for a woman to worry but it is important to visit the doctor as soon as possible. Many women wait until the symptoms are causing them discomfort. Usually it is something quite simple, occasionally it is a cancer that is advanced. Women are often told by their friends to expect bleeding after menopause — advice that can delay the treatment of a malignant tumour.

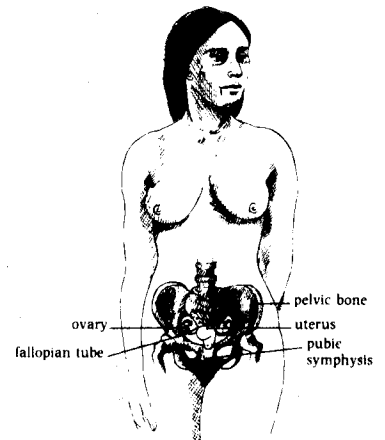
'Is it women who are at fault for not recognising their symptoms early enough?'

occasionally they will send you to a consultant for some tests and investigations. Ideally they should encourage you to come with any problem, but all too often you are made to feel that your problem is too small to bother them about.

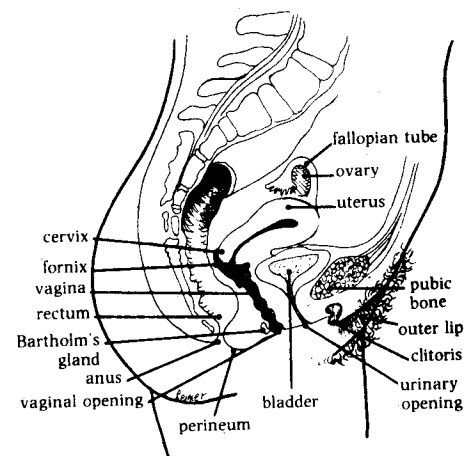
The Health Education Council is supposed to educate people about prevention. If you've noticed the posters in the doctors waiting room, you'll have seen how it concentrates on pregnancy, care of children and smoking. Diseases associated with men, heart disease and lung cancer seem to gain a lot more publicity. Women are only really considered during pregnancy and motherhood. Imagine the posters and TV commercials that could be produced about the importance of reporting post-menopausal bleeding, or what happens when you go to the smear clinic. They've got the resources, but do not use them fully.

The 'breast lump campaign' has fared better, at least most women know lumps need immediate attention. This is not due

the uterus and cervix and perhaps other serious gynaecological disorders.



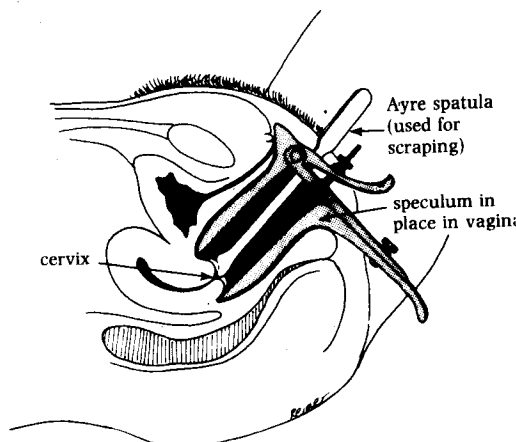
The Area Health Authority is responsible for providing screening services. Smear clinics have been set up and also most Family Planning Clinics do regular smears. But they only detect abnormalities of the cells of the cervix, it does not diagnose cancer of the uterus. Good doctors will suggest women go regularly to a clinic or will do smears themselves. There are



still a lot of women who do not go regularly for smears or have never even had one. Many women are frightened that it is a painful procedure, many do not realise the importance of it. The 'at risk' population are women who started their sex lives early, had a few children, usually from poor home conditions — these are just the sort of women who might find it impossible to get to clinics.

There is no doubt that money is needed to increase the facilities for screening in this country, but there must be every effort made to ensure that all women get the benefit of these facilities. It's about time the Health Council, the media and the government got off their collective backsides and started preventing some of the cancer deaths among women.

Jane South



Doctors are mostly helpful if you come to them with a lump or bleeding. Usually they will make a diagnosis on history, examination and perhaps a smear;

to the efforts of the Health Education Council but to the coverage the media and women's press has given it. The same work needs to be done with cancer of

POLAND:

ANGER & HOPE

Ewa Barker
interviews **Anna**
Walentynowicz



Anna Walentynowicz radiates an extraordinary warmth and love for people. She is also an unbending and tireless fighter for justice and people's rights and the best crane operator on her division. She was a welder for 16 years, but illness made her retrain to something less strenuous. Always drawn towards organised activity, she joined first the Youth Movement then the Women's League, only to leave them in disgust at the grotesque hypocrisy of both. Persistent protest about the misappropriation of her Union's aid fund by union officials led to her victimisation in 1968.

Her husband's death made her withdraw from activity in the early seventies, but finally the annual commemorations organised around the spot where shipyard workers were murdered in 1970 and the formation of the Committee for a Free Trade Union drew her back, this time into clandestine activity around the paper 'Robotnik'. Her first arrest was in December 1978, but she returned to work with redoubled zeal. She says:

'We used 'Robotnik' to talk about ourselves, to write about issues which concerned everybody, about issues we could not discuss out loud. This is exactly what the bosses couldn't stand, because they were allowed to do what they wanted, but no one was allowed to say anything about it. My first article was entitled 'Plain Speaking over the Entrecote'. This article really hurt my employers grievously, for it was them I described, and the shipyard.

'I described Gierek's visit to the shipyard. You see, when the Government fell in January 1971 and Gierek became the first secretary I was one of the delegates to meet him. The events of that

year are well known, but you should also know that we invested a great deal of trust in him, in Gierek himself. That was the time of the famous slogan 'If you help us, we will help you'. He disappointed us terribly. He came to the shipyard several times. But the last time he came, in 1978, he had completely distanced himself from the workers, and had become just the same as his predecessor.'

On the Sunday of Gierek's visit all the workers were sent home. Anna continues.

'...The bosses were afraid and wanted to ensure that not a single worker was left in the yard when Gierek was here... For the past two days the main canteen had been prepared for him and his entourage. They brought in new tables, arm chairs, carpets. More than that, on the Saturday they painted the grass outside. You may well laugh, it's funny, but it's also true. All the grass in front of the canteen was painted using green wall paint.

'Gierek arrived at 3 o'clock. All the food, restaurant cooked, was brought in containers to the yard. 350 people came with him. In my article I described the menu of that day. Chicken Entrecote was one of the dishes, hence my title 'Plain speaking over the Entrecote'. There was caviar, which of course is quite unavailable here, many different cognacs, other specialities.

'Of course to serve this multitude of guests there were 32 waiters, 14 waitresses and 50 cooks... There was a panel of living red and white carnations, about two metres wide and one metre high... it said '35 years of the PZPR'. Some celebration! I found out the visit had cost a million zlotys, and this in the middle of the kind of crisis we have. And I wrote about it, I let the secret out, I told everybody how it was possible to play at the workers expense. Well after that they really started on me...

We'll tell you of these

Anna's victimisation drew protests from the shipyard workers. She was forcibly transferred to work 50 kilometres away. 'The whole point was to keep me out of the shipyard, as far away from the crews as possible. But of course all these events we described in our paper 'Robotnik'. We wanted the news of it all to reach as many people as possible, while they wanted to persecute us, but quietly, so no one knew about it. Well, our work grew and more and more people joined us and worked with us.'

Strikes

Poland had been simmering with sporadic strikes throughout the early summer when the management at the Lenin shipyard refused to honour a court decision that Anna must have her job back. Three young workers from the 'Robotnik' team decided to start a strike and successfully led the men out. Anna continues.

'... They demanded that I should be present at any negotiations with the management and refused to say anything without me. By the time they made the director sent his car for me the whole shipyard was at a standstill. There was a moment, when I reached the yard and was greeted with flowers when, like a woman, I burst into tears. I had to get up onto their hastily constructed platform so that everyone could see that I was really there, because otherwise they would not have agreed to talk to the director.

'Then I went to the negotiating hall where all the negotiations took place later. There was the director, there was Lech Walesa and several of the members of the committee. The director was still fighting at that time. He wasn't going to accept me; he might withdraw my dismissal, but he'd never accept my return to W2 division because he wasn't going to undermine the authority of management. He didn't understand that his authority was already gravely undermined and anyway he had brought it

on himself. After three days of such talks they reached an agreement between the strike committee and the shipyard management...'

Solidarity

Anna was reinstated, so was Lech Walesa, and a rise was agreed.

'... It seemed we had won our case. But by then other workplaces had come out in solidarity with us and in spite of our victory we could not sign this agreement. What were we to do? The smaller factories were relying on us and it would seem as if we were betraying them. Quickly we conferred and announced a solidarity strike, but already there were misunderstandings, people were going home, there was terrible confusion. Alina Pinkowska took up the rescue of our good name. We ran from gate to gate shouting at people not to go home. We had no Tannoy because the director had switched it off, using it himself now to issue announcements that the strike was finished, that the agreement had been signed while we were yelling at people to stay. It was a dramatic moment, but we made it, we stayed.'

Another striker told me later that many of those workers who had gone home in the confusion were driven back to the shipyard by their wives who often worked in the smaller factories and were still out on strike. Anna continues...

'What did I do during the strike? We did everything. We maintained contact with the crews, we received delegations from other factories. We waited a long, long time for the talks... we often didn't know what was to happen next, we were very tense and anxious. But the solidarity which we felt in those moments, the experience of being in touch with people, the Mass said in the shipyard premises, the priest came, the Sunday communion and the daily prayers which broke out spontaneously among people even without the priest, the symbol of the cross inside the yard gave us faith, gave us hope to hold out.

'It was quite a different strike from the one in 1970. Even though we still didn't have an organisation the experience of that year helped us greatly. No one went out into the streets. The gates were locked and there was no possibility of a provocation. Mind you we did find out,

'What did I do during the strike? We maintained contact with the crews, we received delegations from other factories. We waited a long, long time for the talks... we often didn't know what was to happen next, we were very tense and anxious. But the solidarity which we felt in those moments, the experience of being in touch with people, the Mass said in the shipyard premises, the priest came, the Sunday communion and the daily prayers which broke out spontaneously among people even without the priest, the symbol of the cross inside the yard gave us faith, gave us hope to hold out.'

because the boys rigged up a bugging device to spy on the police, (they spy on us, so why shouldn't we bug their premises) we did find out that they wanted to put us to sleep by spraying a drug using an aeroplane and then break in and overpower us...'

Victory

The committee did get evidence pointing to the initial stages of this plan being implemented. They took additional precaution.

'...No one slept a wink that night... Somehow they didn't do it. So we understood that if they didn't do it although they could have done it, that meant that they were afraid. That gave us strength. Then we bent all our concentration on the talks with the Government...

'.. By the thirtieth day they were hurrying with the agreements, wanting to agree to all our demands. But we did not agree, we still wanted to clarify our position once more so we



Meat queue in Warsaw.

BEAS

Oh doctor, doctor
I need a check up,
Sorry Ma'am I'm
I'm a veterinary student
But doctor, dear doctor
I'm more like a bear

When I get up each day
I run round the house
I gallop to work like
Like a monkey I can

I work like a dog,
Like a camel I'm
I'm as sly as a fox
Like a she-bear I
When at last I'm a
My man fondly will

So perhaps you can
That once and for

Days filled with hope

strike? We did everything. We crews, we received delegations

delayed signing until the 31st. On the 31st they signed all the demands. Only one was left, I think it was point 4, about political prisoners. They said they couldn't agree to that because it was in the hands of the public prosecutor.

'Then we started worrying again. They were agreeing so fast, we thought we must have made some mistake, we must have failed to foresee some consequences of what we were demanding, they must be outmanoeuvring us in some way. It turned out that Huta Katowice had threatened to extinguish their furnaces. That was not a threat to be taken lightly. What is more, the miners, as an act of solidarity had sent a letter to the Government. 'If all 21 demands in Gdansk are not met, we'll flood the mines.' That really was beyond a joke! And they would have carried it out too...

'... As a result the Government signed all our demands except the fourth. But surely that was the most important point! If we don't defend the

political prisoners to-day, then tomorrow our agreements are worthless for we are all political and they will call us that and simply lock us all up. So we refused to agree.

'We demanded an adjournment we turned to our com-

people are striking to this day, there is a shortage of information, we are not given access to workplaces, we have no means of publishing our bulletins for people.

'The CRZZ (the old TUs) distributes false information,

And we will have to carry it out. The Government is now conducting a trial of our strength. How strong are we? How great is our determination to stand by our demands?'

Anna talks of her job on the Gdansk Presidium. She wants



Women outside the court in Warsaw as Solidarity delegates arrive to formally register the union.

ST OF BURDEN

I'm down on my knees
Will you help me please.
In doctor, you misread my plaque
Surgeon, not a people-quack.
Doctor, let me put it this way
I want than a person these days.

Each morning, and this is no trick
I lie like a cat on hot bricks.
I lie like a horse in a trap
I cling in the tram to my strap.

I sit on the the shops
I wait, and still I can't stop.
I try to make both ends meet
I fight so my family can eat.
I sleep and under the covers
I whisper 'You dormouse, move over!'

Can find me some miracle medicine
That will make me a PERSON!

munity to the crowd in the hall, to the people occupying the shipyard, to the people standing outside the shipyard gates. They told us that we could strike for another week, for another two even, but all 21 demands had to be met. We returned to the hall, and Jagielski says he can't agree. In that case we break off the talks. He then had a private conversation with Andrzej Gwiazda in which he agreed, but wouldn't give a date for the freeing of the prisoners. Again we refused to deal. Finally he said that by tomorrow at noon all the people on our list would be freed... And that was our victory.

Threats

'But what of it, if to-day the demands granted us are still not fulfilled? The rise that was agreed is not yet paid. Some

threatens that the people who have signed up for the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union will not be able to receive assistance from the loan fund, will not be able to take advantage of the sanatoriums and other such benefits. But this is our money, for example it is the workers who create the loan fund, not the CRZZ, but now they usurp the rights to it. As far as the CRZZ Aid fund is concerned, this too is our money, which we have paid in contributions collected for 35 years. Nobody was ever called to account for this money, another example of their lawlessness.

'So the fight continues, no less now than during the strike. At this very moment telegrams are being sent out to call a National Commission of the NSZZ so that the matter of a warning strike can be discussed.

to travel to other workplaces which are organising.

'... In the present situation it seems that people need to be given encouragement, they need to meet those who have stood firm in the face of repression, they need an example of someone who does not bend in the fight for our rights. We still haven't learned to stand up for our rights, because we were too frightened, indeed to this day we are still being frightened...'

She tells of her visit to a blind people's co-operative, a meeting she was apprehensive about because of threats made by the co-op's president.

'... When I entered the room I thought there was no one there from management, there were only people who could not see me but who wanted to hear me because they had heard a lot about me on the radio and from

friends. They complained that the president forced them to work a two shift system. A blind person would be brought to work for the first shift by a relative, but there would be nobody available to bring them to start a second shift. They asked to be allowed to work a one shift system. The president brushed their request aside saying that everyone could come to work, the blind could move around equally well by day and by night, and these people would just have to do it. When I was told this I said: 'What a pity the President isn't here now, because such a man cannot be a president. He works with people already especially disadvantaged, such a president can only be a man of exceptional generosity and warmth. If he is not then he will no longer be president. I will make myself personally responsible for this'. It turned out that the President was there in the audience, but he did not speak up. Next day they sent me flowers and a letter... That moved me greatly...'

KOR

Anna speaks of KOR, the leading dissident group, some of whose members worked with her around 'Robotnik'.

'KOR's name is greatly hated by our Government, they even say that KOR represents anti-socialist forces, that they act to damage our country; the opposite is the case. I take the view that it is the Government who, in the name of the law, did wrong. It is they who damaged the people and damaged our country, it is they, the Government, who are the anti-socialist force while KOR stood in the defence of those who had been wronged, and it is on KOR's investigation that the new Trade Unions have arisen...'

Commission

Discussing possible plans for her future in the new trade union Anna talked of her interest in the formation of a Women's Commission.

'... I want to lift women up, to raise their rank in society, make their life which in our conditions is especially arduous, a little easier.

'Our statutes already mention the demand for giving longer maternity leave to mothers of small children, who suffer

most at present. I remember my own son, with a key tied round his neck, going to school alone, hanging about in the yard because there was no one to take care of him. A mother has to have her task made easier, if she has to work, her hours should be shorter so that she will have more time for her family and her children. On the one hand, her workplace shouldn't suffer, but its problems cannot be solved at the expense of the family. She also needs help in the work of feeding her family. She needs more products on the market which she now has to make for herself, she needs bet-

not alone. We need to organise an Association for the care of the elderly. Our homes for old people are called 'homes for a peaceful retirement' but there is no peace or serenity there. We do not need to organise such homes, but we need to ensure that everyone in our country feels they really are 'at home.'. And this can be done by women, women who have more energy because they are not overburdened with so many duties.. I see myself like this. And women would not be cut off then, would not be locked up in their homes, but would also not have to race to get to

work on time, would not be enslaved, if I can put it that way. Yet they could devote their time to others and that is very beautiful...'

Anna believes further conflict with the Government is unavoidable, but is facing the future determined and hopeful. Her concluding message for British socialists:

'... I would simply ask English trade unionists to solidarise with us, to co-operate with us, so that all people, all nations can live well. So that people can never be wolves to each other.'

'I want to lift women up, to raise their rank in society, make their life, which in our conditions is especially arduous, a little easier...'



Pictures by Ewa Barker

ter supplies in the shops, she needs everything which enters a woman's life and must be made easier. That will be a task for us...'

Isolation

In Anna's view women should be able to stay at home until their children are at least ten. When asked about the problems of isolation from society which this entailed she said:-

'... It isn't true that you can work only in employment. There are so many things to do, for people to take a social interest. There is work on the housing estates, there is work for sick people, because in our society there are many sick people who are deprived of proper care. We need to bring these people in, so that they are not on the sidelines, so that they are

A SONG FOR MY DAUGHTER

My love, I've still not much time
You've seen almost nothing of mum
Just wait and grow a little more
We'll tell you of all that we've done.

We'll tell you of these days filled with hope
Much talking and heated debate
Of nights with but snatches of sleep
And hearts that beat strong, did not break.

Of people who at last felt at home
No longer cut off from their own
In solidarity fought for to-day
And also for you, when you've grown.

So chin up! Be patient and brave
Till once more we can cuddle you warm
In our house, till now without joy
Now open, and lighted, and home!

The poems were written by Polish workers in the course of their dispute.

These two anonymous examples, out of many, were translated by Ewa and Colin Barker

Dear Jane

WE ALL know that pop songs concentrate on love. The basic assumption behind them is 'Everybody needs somebody sometime'. That's a reasonable statement as we all live as part of a society and have relationships with parents, sisters, brothers, friends and lovers. But to our society it's the last group which is the most important and that's something we all take for granted until we find ourselves single!

Everyone must go through this experience of being without an emotional/sexual relationship. We may have lost a partner through separation or death or just a temporary parting but the effect is the same. Suddenly you realise that the world is organised for couples — odd numbers are odd!

Being alone and single is a crippling experience because single people are made to feel deficient and unnatural. It

must be *your* fault that nobody loves you. You may have many close friends but we know what the word love *really* means — romance, starry eyes, someone to whom you mean everything. At no time does the myth seem more true than when you are excluded from it.

The fact that being half a couple is so important is shown by the very high remarriage rate of divorcees. Once bitten is not necessarily twice shy.

There are of course people who have decided to remain single — who prefer independence to security, and for these people the pressures are twice as strong. However certain of your life-style you are, there are always black moments when you wonder if you aren't just making the best of your inadequacy. Being lonely, like dying, is an unmentionable topic today. You must never admit it —

you must be seen to be having fun or people will find you embarrassing. If you are single and happy and confident then you can be a threat — a 'husband stealer' perhaps. In fact, if you're lonely your sex-life is likely to be very low key despite the 'swinging' myths.

It is of course natural for people to need companionship, but is monogamy — even a series of monogamies — the only answer? Thousands of people have to live alone, and they are often made to feel inadequate as well as being made lonely. Friendships with women and men who may be single or have partners can provide all the pleasures of companionship — the feeling of being important and loved by others, the shared activities and even the sex.

Many women find that

when they get into a partner relationship they drift away from friends. The partner is supposed to be the only friend you need. If the relationship breaks up, how much more devastating the loneliness is. Many women regret this loss of friendship even in a happy sexual relationship but the 'couple mentality' makes it difficult to say that your partner can't provide everything you need emotionally.

We are all single at some time and we don't know at the time whether it's a permanent or a temporary state. Single people, especially those who want to stay single, should find the courage not to accept the stereotypes of misery and inadequacy but to be positive and show that being alone is not being lonely, selfish or friendless.

Bobby Noyes

You're Worried

Red Rope

HILL WALKING and rock climbing are sports which until a few weeks ago I would never have given a second thought. Because I wasn't interested? No, because they are activities that lie way outside my high-rise lifestyle—and are usually male preserves. Oppression is complete when you don't even consider what you might be missing!

After spending two weekends in Yorkshire with the Red Rope Club I've found a bit more world to explore.

About 26 women and men went on both trips—some SWP or WV members, others were 'non party' comrades and friends. We stayed at Earby Youth Hostel—two converted cottages left to the YHA by Kathleen Glasier, a local labour campaigner. The present warden has created an atmosphere in the true spirit of the Association's tradition—a place where working class people get the chance of escaping the pressures and grime of the cities. A chance to

reclaim the countryside.

The group divided into walkers and climbers and each group made their own plans. The difficulties in pleasing all of the people all of the time obviously arose. How do you resolve the problem that some experienced walkers want to press on and stretch their skills while others want to take things slow and easy? The old conditioning of 'fast is good' crept in and it took some effort from everybody to keep things together.

On the second weekend the walkers sub-divided into 'meet your own needs' groups and after checking that each group

had a member with basic survival items (a map and compass) we set off for a good walk over Ingleborough. The fact we all ended up together on the final descent was more a mark of the camaraderie than the perverseness of our natures!

In pointing out some difficulties I seem to emphasise the negative. So I'll leave out the blood, blisters and mud and mention a few plusses. Scenery—wild, sometimes colourful, sometimes bleak, always exhilarating; bright air, sharp winds, scary mists and glorious sunshine (all within half an hour); physical exertion, feeling tired, feeling good, feeling months of pressure slip away. And the people . . .

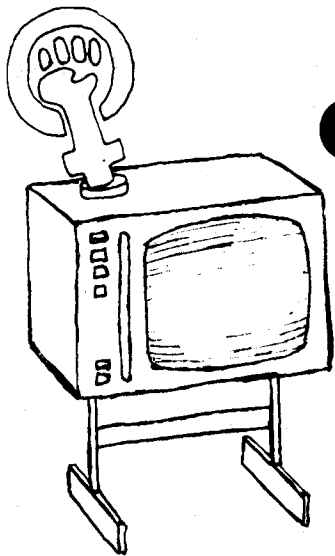
The people I met on the two weekends to Earby must make

Red Rope a unique organisation. Women and men believing in working for socialism. Women and men trying to live equally now. And no sexism. This is not to say there was no friction between people but I've seldom seen such good humoured friction. Knowledge and encouragement was always freely shared and there was time for each other. Sharing the pleasure of ten or twelve people enjoying a completely new experience is another side of the struggle for socialism.

As in most sports the thought of having to buy a lot of equipment can be off-putting. That's why Red Rope is building a fund for maps, ropes, etc. A suggested list of basics has been compiled and with a bit of notice most things could be borrowed. Transport is usually by mini-bus with reduced rates for people travelling independently. Further trips are now being planned—contact 46 Ada House, Pritchards Road, London E2. (01-739-6668) for more details. Those hills and rocks are ours—the right to enjoy them is ours too.

Maggie Stewart.

SPORT



Cutting up men

ONE of the main topics of conversation at work is 'what did you watch on the telly last night'—and the BBC 2 Inside Story *George and Julia*, which ran for three consecutive nights, was certainly a well-aired topic.

George was born a man but decided to become a woman. He felt he was trapped in the wrong body, and began the process of becoming a woman by taking hormones. After nine months George packed away his suits and ties for ever and started his new life as Julia.

Remarkably, (or perhaps not so remarkable come to think of it), dressed as a man George looked of average build. Seeing Julia in a dress I immediately thought 'shes a bit fat, she really should diet if she wants to dress as a woman'. My conditioning about body size and women looking attractive soon cut through my worked-at veneer of feminism.

As the story unfolded Julia had breast enlarging surgery because the hormone treatment wasn't giving her enough of the desired effect, grew her nails into talons and had a glamorous hair-do. I began to feel more uncomfortable. It was obvious that George/Julia had no intention of becoming Ms. Average or Ms. Real Woman. He/she was determined to become a larger than life, plastic package. The genuine male fantasy stereo-type.

So that he/she could have the sex change operation George/Julia had to see a psychiatrist. The NHS psychiatrist started to object to the operation, although George had been living as

Julia for about a year, because he/she had had private breast enlarging surgery, 'without his permission'. Julia decided to have the operation privately and saw another psychiatrist who agreed to the surgery.

The actual operation was very gorey as the surgeons spent hours building a vagina from the skin of the scrotum. And when Julia left the hospital after ten days because she ran out of money, she still could not walk properly.

It seems tragic that anyone should be forced to mutilate their body because society frowns on the way they want to live. George basically wanted to wear bright fancy clothes and make-up and have loving relationships with men. In this obscene society we live in the most important question ever asked about you is 'is it a boy or a girl?' From then on you are labelled for life and expected to behave in certain ways. George/Julia just couldn't cope with many of the implications of his 'male' label.

In a socialist society it won't be necessary for people to worry about which sexual organs they had. They won't dominate your whole life. Sadly for George/Julia the only hope for the near future is tolerance. Although with the media coverage in the gutter press, like the News of the World, (ex-sailor is now a woman and wants to marry man), and some of the sniggers I heard on the tube from people discussing the TV programme, even that seems unlikely.

Pam Williams

'When the revolution comes—and it *must* come—it will be by the workers, without distinction of sex or trade or country, standing and fighting shoulder to shoulder.'

Eleanor Marx



When Karl Marx's youngest daughter Eleanor was born he wrote to his lifelong friend and co-writer Engels: 'had it been a male the matter would be more acceptable'. Hardly the best beginning in life.

Yet Eleanor Marx grew up to be one of the most outstanding figures in British socialist history.

She was a prominent member and founder of the Socialist League; she wrote, with Edward Aveling, the pamphlet, *The Woman Question*; she was co-founder of what is today the third largest union in Britain, the GMWU, which was formed out of the gasworkers' strike; she was a delegate to the founding conference of the Second International. Yet she is often remembered, if at all, simply as Marx's daughter. But the bulk

The acceptable daughter

of her political work was done after his death, and she was an independent figure in her own right, who always kept to Marx's political ideas but also tried to apply them in practice in the growing working class movement. She was respected by most of the leading socialists both in Britain and Europe at the time. At all times her political work meshed in with the ups and downs of the working class movement — a huge strength in times of high class struggle, but a source of unhappiness and frustration when that militancy declined.

For much of Eleanor's life there was a high level of struggle. She grew up during the birth of a working class movement in Europe. The Paris Commune, which grew out of France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, was greeted by Marx and Engels as the first time workers had created their own forms of government and run society themselves. The civil war in France arose when French government soldiers attacked Paris and eventually destroyed the commune in 'Bloody Week'. 50,000 Communards died and thousands more were forced into exile.

Eleanor was 16 at the time. As the Commune neared its end, she and her sister Jenny travelled to France to see their other sister Laura Lafargue and her husband Paul. As active socialists, they were in some danger after the suppression of the Commune.

They fled to Spain, and Jenny and Eleanor were briefly arrested on re-entering France. When they arrived back in London from their hazardous trip, they found it full of French refugees. The Commune and its aftermath was to dominate their lives for the next years. Marx and Engels saw in the Commune the embryo of the first workers' state and a guide to the way workers' revolutions would take place in the future. Both Jenny and Eleanor became engaged to communards who frequented the Marx household.

Eleanor's engagement to Lissagaray was disapproved of by her parents. She found it difficult to break away from being the baby of the family — it wasn't until her father's death in 1883 that she was able to grasp her full independence.

The attachment to Lissagaray lingered on for ten years. They were important years in her personal and political development. She translated his book *History of the Paris Commune* into English and worked on her father's papers. She also became involved in the reviving British socialist movement.

But it was in the years after her father's death that she flowered. She was part of the increasing agitation round unemployment, which culminated in the great

demonstration of Bloody Sunday in 1885. It was attacked by the police and led to the death of a demonstrator. She was a popular speaker at socialist meetings and she wrote a great deal.

It was around this time that she began her relationship with another socialist, Edward Aveling, which was to last the rest of her life and deeply influenced her work. Aveling definitely has an unsavoury side to his character and was unpopular with some leading socialists. Eleanor's biographer, Yvonne Kapp, points out another side to him: 'Eleanor's union with Aveling may have been, was, disastrous in the long run; his character may have been, was, deplorable. Nonetheless, from the time her life was joined to his, it became purposeful.'

Perhaps the most purposeful period was during agitation for the new unions. Many workers, the unskilled, the women, the immigrants, were kept out of the traditional skilled unions and had no means of bargaining. The 1880s were the years when those oppressed masses awoke and began to organise. Many of the most famous battles in British Labour history date from this time — the matchgirls' strike, and the dockers' strike for their tanner.

One of the most important was the gasworkers' strike in 1889 for an eight hour day. Eleanor worked constantly around it and helped with the formation of the Gasworkers Union (later to become the GMWU). She was a friend of their leader Will Thorne who wrote of her in the 1920s (by which time he was a right-wing trade union bureaucrat): 'If she had lived she would have been a greater women's leader than the greatest of contemporary women.' She was so well respected that she became a member of the Gasworkers Union executive and formed its first women's branch, of which she was the secretary.

The East End of London, with its filthy chemicals and food processing industries, was the cradle of the new unionism. Eleanor worked round many of the strikes which didn't go down in history — like those of the onion skimmers at Crosse and Blackwell and the sweet makers at Barratts in Tottenham. Many strikers were women.

It was around this time, too, that Eleanor wrote her pamphlet on *The Woman Question*. In it she describes women's oppression as a class question, but she also believed the fight for feminism and socialism were inseparable. Working women suffered most and had to lead the fight for women's equality — an important argument at a time when many believed working women too poor, too ignorant and too overburdened to fight their oppression. She put her ideas

into practice around the East End, where she spoke to mass meetings of strikers and recruited them to the Gasworkers Union.

Although she had been a member of the Social Democratic Federation and then of the breakaway Socialist League, her involvement with mass agitation led her away from them. She felt they couldn't relate to this upsurge in struggle, and just made propaganda instead of getting involved in day to day agitation round the strikes. She felt that unless socialism could be seen to connect with the daily struggles on bread and butter issues it would not be something which the workers would feel was theirs.

The big strikes didn't last. They died down by 1891 but new unions had been created out of them. In the 1890s as well, the socialist movement moved away from Marxism and the ideas of socialist revolution. For Eleanor, political decline matched personal unhappiness. She and Aveling were drawing apart. Shortly before her death he secretly married another woman.

In 1898 Eleanor Marx killed herself by drinking prussic acid. Some blamed Aveling's treatment of her (some even accused him of her murder). But it was much more than that. Engels had died three years before. With him went not only a very close friend and political adviser, but her last link with Marx and her childhood. She had recently resigned from the Gasworkers Union executive and so had lost her last real link with the working class movement. She saw the socialist movement abandoning Marxism. These and the loss of Aveling made her despair complete.

It is impossible to do justice to Eleanor's life in the space of one article, or to her many interests — her love of amateur dramatics, her closeness to Engels, her commitment from childhood to Irish national liberation, her friendship with Olive Schreiner, her important role in international socialism.

She died at the age of 43. A friend wrote of her when she was a young woman 'an unusually brilliant creature, with a clear, logical brain, a shrewd knowledge of men and a wonderful memory... middle courses never commended themselves to her... she was the gayest creature in the world — when she was not the most miserable.'

She left us an example which was unique in British working class history: a woman, a mass agitator, thoroughly schooled in Marxist ideas which made her rare enough. But even rarer in that she combined her theory with practice, with organising working women to fight. There was no one like her.

Lindsey German

REVIEWS

CLOUD NINE
CARYL CHURCHILL
JOINT STOCK
THEATRE GROUP

IS LOVE a dream or a possibility? Can it last? Does it even exist?

These questions are raised in the play, *Cloud Nine*, which is in two parts. The first is set in Victorian colonial Africa. Women are wives and mothers and prone to fainting and hysteria; men are explorers and guard the empire.

But beneath the surface, nothing is what it seems. They all repress their real personalities and desires, hiding frustration and guilt. The situations and characters are taken from Victorian melodrama but the play has the confusions, mistimed entrances and sudden revelations of



Maggie Steed as Ellen P. Ron Cook as Betty. Picture John Haynes.

traditional farce.

It is easy to laugh at the Victorians, though, isn't it? We know better today. Things are different — or are they? The second part of the play

is set in the present day, but uses the same characters, 25 years older.

We can see how the assumptions of the Victorian era still underlie our modern

relationships. The characters think of themselves as liberated (Martin helps with the washing up) but, although they spout theories, they find it difficult to free themselves from their expected sex roles.

Some of the characters experiment with a different kind of sexual relationship and gradually they become more in touch with their own feelings and needs.

Characters from the first part make brief appearances, reminding us of the Victorian times.

While the sex roles remain it does seem as if love can only be a dream, but the play suggests that if we can rid ourselves of traditional conditioning, we may at last find *Cloud Nine* and love each other truly and freely.

Jacqueline Mulhally
Hammersmith WV

Pleasing ourselves

PLEASE YOURSELF
COVENTRY WOMEN'S
EDUCATION GROUP
40p

PLEASE YOURSELF attempts to provide a feminist guide to sex to girls of about 13.

The writers have managed to fit a good amount of information into the leaflet, and they begin the discussion on sexuality by talking about masturbation — something we can do ourselves!

While young feminists might be happy with it, it is sometimes too bald for a more romantic, uneasy 13 year old. The girls at work I showed it to were very embarrassed by its unwavering assertion that a woman's body is hers to have what sex she wants with. Perhaps beginning at a level closer to the ideology

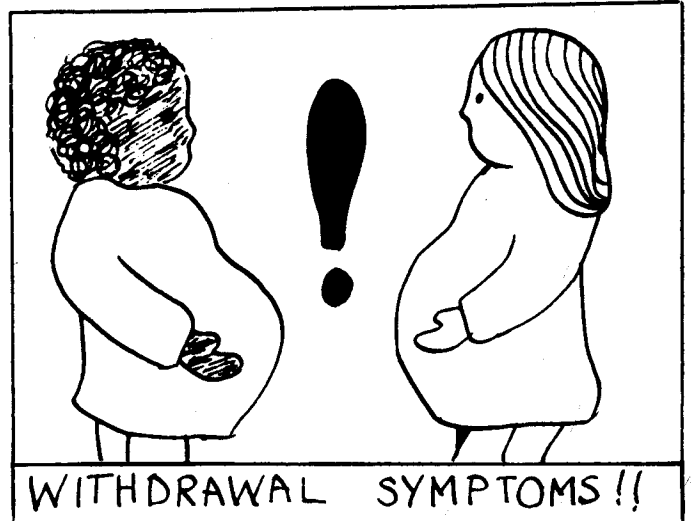
usually fed to girls would make it easier for them to accept it.

In trying to undo the misinformation of years of male-defined sex education, I feel they have over-emphasised the insensitivity of the vagina (I am convinced I feel something with mine!). Sex is a different experience with intercourse, and we can learn to move our bodies so that we give our clitoris pleasure from a man's body — a fact they didn't mention.

However, the pamphlet is very useful, especially given the dearth of literature on the subject, and I hope that a larger, fuller version will be written.

It is available from
12 Westminster Road,
Coventry.

Tessa Weare



THE BIRTH CONTROL
BOOK
HOWARD I. SHAPIRO
PENGUIN £1.95

AN ADDITION to the recent spate of books about sex and birth control, this proves a useful addition as the male gynaecologist *has* shared his knowledge of contraception, abortion and sterilisation with ordinary

women. He covers literally thousands of questions with an unswerving commitment to medical objectivity — giving lots of statistics, like the number of deaths, and ectopic pregnancies.

But he also shows in his occasional asides that he is committed at least to women's equality — a welcome attitude amongst male doctors.

Tessa Weare

WIDOWS' REMARRIAGE MOVEMENT — An account (in Marathi) of the plight of Hindu women

Dr S G Malashe
Women's Research Institute,
Bombay

QUESTION: What are the wells in the backyard of a Hindu family house used for?

ANSWER: The wells are there for the widows in the Hindu house to jump into, to commit suicide.

Dr S G Malashe is the head of the Marathi language section at the only women's university in Bombay city, India. He has recently published the findings of his research into the conditions of Hindu widows in India.

It reads like a book of horror stories.

Each story depicts man's cruelty to women: if Hindu women are shadows of Hindu men, walking two steps behind and little better off than animals, then it is all the fault of Hindu men; and when the women become awakened, their men will pay heavily. Women are the last colony of men, and Hindu women are the blackest of all slaves.

A hundred years ago, a Hindu woman was talking for the first time to a male audience, and she was taunted by the male chauvinists for her tiny voice. She retorted, saying that Hindu men had made her voice small and insignificant because they had never allowed her to express herself.

The attitude of Hindus towards women springs from the ancient Hindu Laws of Manu, who like Moses gave men sanctions for their exploitation of women. Manu declares that a woman must never be made independent: from her childhood up until old age she is the property of Man, and he must take care of her.

Many people in this country may have read that in 1829 Lord Bentic passed the law to prohibit Hindu women killing themselves on the lighted funeral pyres of

their husbands. But the day to day life of every widow who did not die on the funeral pyre was a living death, and family wells were often the final escape from their wretched lives. The government took great pride in the reforms they made during that time. But people should not be deceived: British women were only slightly better off than their Hindu sisters, as can be seen in the books and literature of that period. Men, brown and white, exploited women. And white English men were no angels!

A woman's life in India is, at present, sad and miserable; a century ago it was inhuman, and full of horror. The stories in this book are about what happened a century ago. But one hears of similar things still happening in many parts of India, mostly in rural parts, but occasionally even in big modern cities like Bombay, Delhi, Madras and Calcutta.

If a Hindu woman gives birth to a baby girl, her husband becomes very sad and worried, because when she grows up he will have to pay a large dowry to get her married. This wretched custom is still enforced among Indians of all religions and races, and it has made the lives of many women a misery. A century ago some men actually used to kill their baby daughters as soon as they were born by pushing the umbilical cord into their mouths. The surviving girls would be married before puberty — if not, their families would be outcast and starved to death. It was common for babies to be married while still in their cradles!

Often, poor girls were married or sold to rich old men, who usually died soon afterwards, leaving behind very young widows. These girls led very sad lives. There is one touching story of a widow of seven years old who was playing with other girls, happily jumping around and singing songs. An old visitor to the family saw this and angrily rebuked the head of the family: widows should

not laugh, jump about, sing and enjoy life! The little girl was sent to the darkest corner in the house, and went on crying without understanding why she could not play games with other children.

because her sight is thought to be unlucky for others. Even Kate in 'The Taming of the Shrew' was not so dehumanised.

Each story in this book made me sad and unhappy



Once a Hindu woman becomes a widow, she must shave her head, wear a red sari, eat raw and spiceless food, do all the menial work in the house and stay in the darkest corner of the house,

about Hindu society. The small, delicate and meek-looking Hindu man's treatment of women is shocking — a disgrace to humanity and to the dignity of 'Man'.

Shashi Deo

DRESSED TO KILL film, general release

BRIAN de Palma, the director of *Dressed to Kill*, dislikes women. He not only dislikes them, he positively detests them. Woman hating was a strong feature of his previous films, *Carrie* and *Obsession*; *Dressed to Kill* takes his hatred one step further.

The opening scene tells all. The camera lingers over the body of Angie Dickinson. She is caressing herself while watching a male shave with a cut-throat razor. Suddenly a man seizes her from behind and rapes her.

All this, it is made clear, is her fantasy. Later in the film she has casual, but very enjoyable sex with an art gallery pick-up. De Palma gives her a dose of VD for that indiscretion. And shortly after discovering this she is

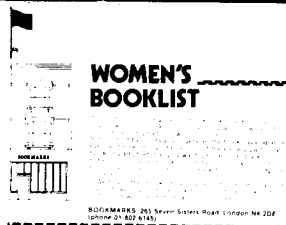
hacked to pieces by Michael Caine dressed in women's clothes — a very savage scene.

A new heroine now arrives on scene. De Palma, having punished his rape-fantasing married woman, now gives us a prostitute with a heart of gold and a real liking for her work. The clear implication of the film is that women fantasise about rape, actively invite rape and may even enjoy it.

What cannot be denied is that De Palma is an extraordinary film-maker. He uses brilliant effects, can create incredible tension in his audience and is a great manipulator of the cinema. But *Dressed to Kill* is deeply and irrevocably sexist.

Someone should direct De Palma to the nearest shrink or perhaps the nearest copy of *Women's Voice*.

Jean Woollard



Women's Booklist
Available from Bookmarks
265 Seven Sisters Road
London N42DE

DIRTY LINEN

If you have any stories, silly ads or anything else for this column, send them to Dirty Linen Po Box 82 London E2

Delivering a letter to the headquarters of the TGWU recently we were surprised to see that their printed receipts are made out to Mr..... Apparently the T and G, who have just produced a women's handbook, don't really expect to do business with women!
Alison Cartmale

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission claims in a new report that the two biggest companies producing tampons—Southalls (Lillets) and Tampax—have made 'exceptionally high' profits, because they control the market and have been able to demand unduly high prices. But, they agreed to do nothing.

DHSS consider their claim. Fortunately the Disability Alliance stepped in and the DHSS was forced to pay up, but not until after the move into their new home had had to be delayed. 'They made us feel like we were trying to get something we shouldn't have' was Mr Musgrave's understandable impression.

The latest contribution to our silly ads competition comes from Woolmark who claim

100% of girls quizzed said they preferred their rams dressed in pure new wool.



Belinda Petty has won the first round in her fight to become a referee at national judo matches.

The British Judo Association had claimed that women were not strong enough to separate male competitors. Ms Petty could referee matches between male adults, just so long as they weren't national competitions. A small case of discrimination she thought—and was proved right.

At another Industrial Tribunal, hearing the case of the dismissed bunnygirl who caused a stir by getting pregnant, the magistrates found against the Playboy Club.

The Club had defended itself on the grounds that it was not in the bunnygirl image to have pregnant women.

'I thought all bunnies got pregnant' replied the magistrate.

Another example to add to those we gave last month of how the Department of Health and Social Security stamps on scroungers.

Mr and Mrs Musgrave of Nottingham are both severely handicapped and confined to wheelchairs. With the help of social workers they decided to leave their hostel and set up their own home.

Naturally they needed special aids to do this, and they applied to the DHSS for a special needs payment. But the DHSS told them they had to approach some charities first, and only if they were turned down would the

More elderly people are being looked after by their families today than at any time in our history, Patrick Jenkin, Tory Secretary of State for Social Services, said recently. And this was just as it should be.

Of course, he knows all about looking after your own—he had a live-in nanny to bring up his children.

From the new catalogue of Book Club Associates, advertising their Christmas books:

Gifts for her
Wild knitting, Patchwork, Home handicrafts, Creative Soft Toy making, The Complete Home handywoman
Gifts for him

The Best of Jazz, The Crossman Diaries, Bomber Command, The British Army Today and Tomorrow, Guns and How They Work, Invasion, 2194 Days of War. We think the Bookmarx Club, at 265 Sisters Road, London N4, may be able to offer you something slightly better if you're interested in buying books for Christmas.

Unisex doesn't pay!

Dear Womens Voice,
I enclose a letter from LEGO. I wrote to them complaining about their 'over 6' kits for girls (nursery sets, hairdressers, bungalows etc) and about their technical sets (only showing boys in the catalogue).

I signed myself, BSc, just to prove women too know about science and technical things.

Their letter is most amusing—Unisex doesn't pay!
Anna Paczuska
Highbury, London

Dear Ms Paczuska
Thank you for your letter concerning the question of "girls" and "boys" toys.

We are very sympathetic to the points you raise. Indeed, as far as our DUPLO toys and LEGO Basic Sets are concerned we do all we can to present them as having a unisex appeal for we strongly believe that the urge to create is common to all children.

Despite this, the popular misconception that building is a boys' pastime means that sales of even these sets divide 60/40 in favour of boys, much to our dismay.

As children get older this division of expectation becomes more and more marked so that we are forced to acknowledge it.

We could declare that LEGO Train Sets and Technical Sets are suitable for girls as well as for boys. But the fact remains that over 90 per cent will still be bought for boys regardless of anything we might say.

Faced with a situation in which our sales to girls, especially over the age of 6, were small compared with sales to boys, we are forced to design special "girls" sets in an effort to appeal to them in a traditional way.

We are quite prepared to be one step ahead of the general public but to swim against the tide of mass opinion (however mistaken that opinion might be) does not make for growth in a Company on whose success the livelihood of many employees depends.

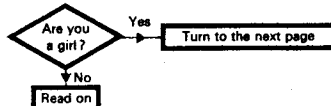
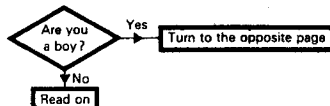
In short, we are very aware of the need for greater sexual equality but we hope that you too can be as understanding of the difficult problems this can create in a highly competitive market.

CAV Nicholls
Marketing Manager
LEGO UK Ltd

Linda Woodroffe sent us this example of a modern maths test book. No comment.

Prelude

Flow diagrams



In a knitting pattern for a pullover the instructions for knitting part of the rib start as follows:

Using No. 10 needles cast on 65 sts.
K1 row. S1, K1, P1, K1 repeat from * to the last stch. K1.
2nd row. S1, P1, K1, S1 repeat from * to end of row.

Here is a flow diagram showing you how to mix concrete. Two of the boxes have been left blank. What should go in them?

Use 3 buckets of sand

LETTERS



Making hospitals work for us

Dear Womens Voice

I read your article on the maternity series (September issue) with interest. The article advocates more home deliveries as the present state of maternity care in hospital leaves much to be desired.

But surely this is running away from the problem. I would argue for a vast improvement of the maternity services in hospital.

While health workers often use technological means to make life easy for themselves — you can cite the case of fetal monitoring — it remains true that these means can only help women to have healthy babies. In hospital the means are there to ensure a good standard of care whilst the baby is born. If investigative procedures such as fetal monitoring and amniocentesis are dangerous, then we should be arguing for their more cautious use and also for these investigations to be explained clearly to women so that they may choose whether they have them or not.

You describe the gradual ascendancy of male doctors over female midwives. Midwives are at the moment able to deal with most contingencies in maternity care. Maybe we should put our weight behind them in their attempts to gain complete control over the care of mother and child — fight for the right of women to be cared for by women. Wouldn't it be marvellous to have a sympathetic, wholly patient-orientated service for women, but in hospital.

Quite apart from this, hospitals can provide back-up services in things like laundry which might be difficult to achieve at home. Also for a few days, the nurses can pamper a mother a little and provide the emotional support she greatly needs.

Morag Lawson
South East London



... MORE MONEY IS SPENT ON ANTI-SCROUNGING CAMPAIGNS THAN IS SPENT ATTEMPTING TO GET STATE BENEFITS TO THE THREE MILLION WHO DON'T REALISE THEY SHOULD HAVE THEM.



From a new little pamphlet *Poverty for near beginners* published by Mushroom, 10 Heathcote Street, Nottingham, price 35p. It was inspired, they say, by the experience of poverty and by Professor Peter Townsend's book *Poverty in the United Kingdom*.

Your health not their self esteem

Dear Womens Voice

Having just had my coil removed, I should like to stress to other coil-users the vital importance of letting your family planning doctor know if you are not happy with this form of contraceptive. If you have an infection you may be causing permanent damage to your reproductive tract and that means you might easily find yourself unable to have children a few years from now when you might want them.

Like everyone, doctors are hesitant to go back on their recommendations, so you might find your doctor unwilling to take your coil out after he has inserted it. If you are unhappy with it, don't keep it! Go to another doctor who does not have his or her self-esteem at stake; they will very often encourage you to have the coil removed.

The area of contraception is ridden with emotional and health considerations, so it is essential that we use the form of contraception that we are most happy

with, from both these angles and we should accept nothing less.

Jo Hewson
South London

SPREAD IN USE OF DP JABS

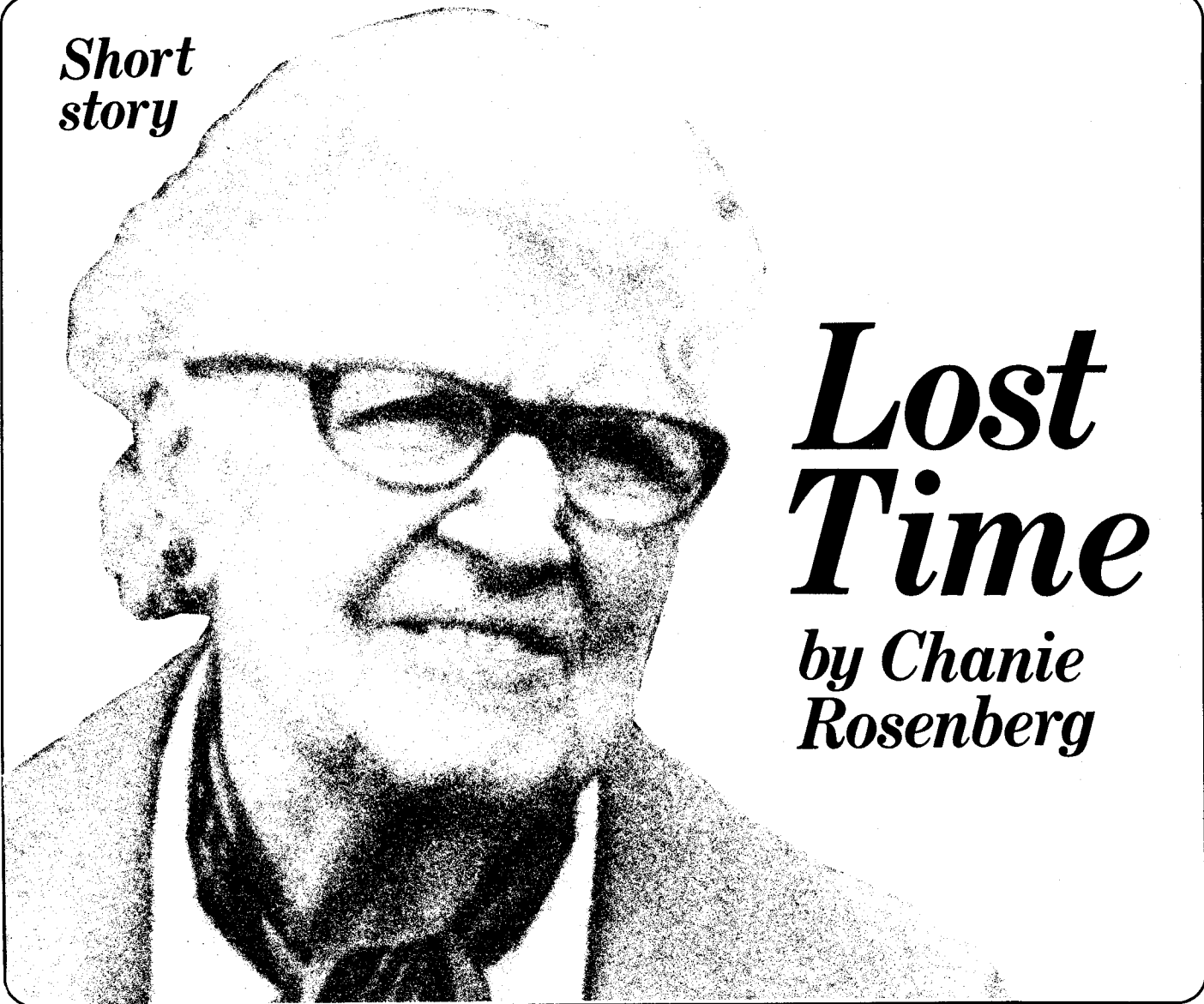
Dear Womens Voice

I read in the May issue of Socialist Review about the use of Depo-Provera in Third World countries. It mentioned that US AID and UN FDA, both operating here in Botswana, have been pushing its use on women throughout the poorer countries.

Here US AID have said that they do not push the use of DP but the UNFPA have admitted they do. One sister has managed to get a meeting with them for the end of this month. We desperately need more information to be well armed in the coming meeting. Can you help us with information, and we'll keep you informed of what happens here.

Kevin Doherty
Serowe, Botswana

Short story



Lost Time

by Chanie Rosenberg

MARY SANG with all her heart and soul. Her voice rose and fell, charged with feeling. She sang as though her life depended on it.

The audience sat rapt. They seemed to sense that it was more than a mere song that wafted towards them from the platform. It was a communication that stirred them deeply.

The song moved towards its end. Mary lingered on the last note which faded away gradually. There was a hushed pause before the applause started, low and slow at first, then building up to an enthusiastic climax. Mary bowed her head and moved to go. But the applause continued loud and long and she had to bow her head several times before she could leave the stage.

She made her way to the dressing room. The later performers were engrossed in their costumes, their make-up and their nerves. She crept quietly away and wandered along dark corridors till she came to a small, empty room. It had a couple of easy chairs. She closed the door and sank down in one, exhausted. She was due on again in 55 minutes. Her performance had so drained her that she would need that time to recover her strength. She lay back in the dark and drowsed.

HER MIND drifted back. She saw herself at her youngest daughter's school, at the careers evening, where she was supposed to help determine her daughter's future.

Why had she always been too old at all stages of her grown up life, no matter how she herself felt? The right age seemed always to have eluded her.

She had had previous invitations with her other children. Money had been much tighter than and she had been too busy keeping the home neat and tidy, she didn't have decent enough clothes either, and in any case she was a bit nervous about going into school. But Emma, her daughter, wanted her to go. "All the other Mums will be there—and Dads," she said.

Mary wanted to do the right thing by her daughter. She had more time now, and suitable clothing, and it was after all her youngest child whose future was being planned. She decided to go.

Mary had practically never been out since the children had arrived, so this was quite an occasion. She wanted Bill to go with her, but he didn't want to. The children's education was Mary's concern, not his. He'd watch the telly and wait for them. After much persuasion, however, he agreed to go. The three of them set off, Bill dragging behind the other two.

When they got to school Emma excitedly left them to seek out her friends. Other daughters did the same, and a gaggle of girls gathered at the back of the large hall, giggling and pointing to one another's parents.

"That's my Mum," said one girl, "the one with the blue dress and fair hair." Emma followed the direction of her hand and saw a slim, handsome young woman animatedly chatting to a group of people.

"She's pretty," said Emma, and the girl beamed. "That's my Dad, just behind her." He too, looked very smart and youthful.

"There's mine," said another girl. Again

Emma noticed how young and lively these parents seemed. "They look nice," she said.

Mary and Bill were lost without Emma. They knew no-one and had no notion of what to do. They moved towards the group of girls to get Emma to organise their time, Bill trailing behind Mary.

"Are those your parents?" the first girl asked.

"Yes," said Emma, with sudden foreboding.

There was a short silence, then a younger brother attached to one of the girls piped up in a high voice. "They're a bit old, aren't they?"

Mary overheard the remark and caught sight of the instant look of pain that stabbed Emma's face.

"Shut up, you little idiot," said the sister in a loud whisper, stamping hard on the boy's toes.

"Ow, stop kicking. You're hurting me," screamed the child, tugging away from her. The girl tugged back, and at the same time trying to overcome the embarrassment, said sweetly to Mary, "Good evening, Mrs. Davis, Mr. Davis. Emma's going to do science, isn't she? She's ever so good at it."

Mary was too embarrassed to find a reply. Without a word, Emma moved away from her friends and started conducting them round the different teachers. She stayed with them all evening and did not rejoin her friends.

Bill was oblivious of the goings-on, but Mary's heart ached for Emma.

Why had she always been too old at all stages of her grown up life, no matter how she herself felt? The right age seemed always to have eluded her. She'd hardly come out of being too young to go out with boys, to being too old not to be married. She didn't like to be different from her friends who were all settling down and starting to have babies, so she looked about earnestly for a husband. She found Bill, a friend of the family, who was about a dozen years older than Mary, but who was decent, and fond of her.

Mary married Bill. A few years later a neighbour, whose new baby she had come round to see, asked, "You not starting a family yet?"

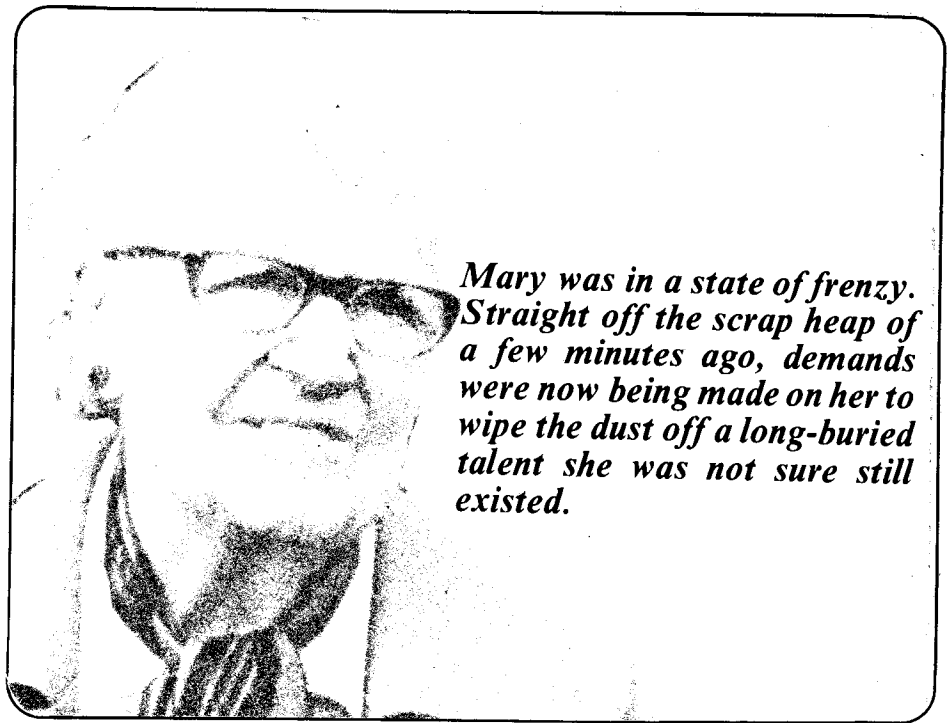
"No," said Mary.

"You shouldn't leave it beyond thirty," advised the friend. "That's getting on a bit. Complications are more likely."

Mary gave up work and had her first baby when she was thirty. She had another three over the next decade, and then went back to work, this time in a school kitchen where the hours were suitable.

Fourteen years later she found herself, an unglamorous old Mum, with an even older, greyer Dad, at her youngest daughter's careers evening.

Bill accepted his age, and drifted into senility. Not much later he accepted its inevitable consequence, and quietly faded away.



Mary was in a state of frenzy. Straight off the scrap heap of a few minutes ago, demands were now being made on her to wipe the dust off a long-buried talent she was not sure still existed.

Mary stayed away from work for a fortnight for funeral and other arrangements and to grieve. When she got back the other women were all sympathy, but her job had gone. There had been a cut in hours and a shake-out of jobs.

Mary crept home. She was left now with no apparent purpose in life, an old, redundant husk.

She prepared to follow Bill, demanding little, quietly fading away. But for the first time something in her rebelled. She had willingly acquiesced in the impositions of age and their attendant duties, had always done the right things, and these had kept her fully occupied all her grown-up life. Now there was nothing left, except age without duties.

In an unusual fit of rebellion, she shook herself out of her grieving lethargy, dressed up and went out, intending to go window-shopping down the High Street. On the way she heard a noise and laughter coming from the Community Centre. She looked in and saw a hive of activity. It was an Old Folks Club preparing for a social evening.

"Come in dearie," shouted one of the organisers. "Can you do anything, like act or paint?"

"No, not really," said Mary. "I used to sing, but haven't for ages."

"George, she used to sing," the organiser shouted across the room. "See what you can do with her," and she was passed over to George. Without further ceremony George picked out a song he knew, told her to sing it and prepared to accompany her on the piano.

Mary was in a state of frenzy. Straight off the scrap-heap of a few minutes ago, demands were now being made on her to wipe the dust off a long buried talent she was not sure still existed. She blinked and looked round for help. Everyone was busy, and George was immersed in working out the accompaniment. He banged out the opening chords, and nodded for

her to begin. She opened her mouth but no sound emerged.

"Come on, ducks," George said encouragingly, and started again. She came in tremulously, her voice shaking. George strummed on with cheerful disregard. Gradually her voice grew stronger, and technique she had learnt at school came to her aid, and she ended up loud and strong.

"Splendid," said George, slapping her on the back. "Grace, put her on. She'll do fine."

So started Mary's singing career. Long ago her teachers had suggested she have her voice trained. Now, decades later, she secretly took lessons, practised hard, and became a sought-after performer at the Club socials.

And here she was, at the age of 70, seemingly younger than she had been for most of her life, a star singer at the highlight of the year, the Old Folks' Inter-Clubs social held in the Town Hall, with an audience of five or six hundred, who urged her on enthusiastically.

SHE SHOOK off her drowsiness. It was almost time to go on again. She straightened her dress, sought the note to start the song and quickly ran through it. She returned to the dressing room beginning to tingle once again with nervousness.

"Time, Mary."

She tensed her muscles, swallowed and coughed to clear her throat, put on a smile and walked on to the stage. A burst of applause greeted her, and she began.

Once again she got carried away, putting all her life and soul into the words and the music. Once again the audience did not fail to recognise and absorb the message Mary's voice conveyed to each one of them, bringing tears to the eyes of the more sensitive and the more sentimental.

As always, Mary sang as though her life depended on it.

And indeed it did.

WHAT IS GOING ON?

WV groups

- **ABERDEEN** Womens Voice Liz 51059
- **ABERYSTWYTH** Womens Voice c/o Students Union, UCW, Aberystwyth.
- **ACTON WV** Ruth or Jude 740 6660
- **NORTH BIRMINGHAM** Women's Voice Maggie 021 449 4793
- **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM** Women's Voice Jill 021 459 1718
- **BLACK COUNTRY WV** 27 Glen Court, Compton Road.
- **BRADFORD** Womens Voice Janet c/o Textile Hall, Westgate Bradford or Trish 306447.
- **BRIGHTON WV** phone 696897.
- **BRISTOL WV** Katrina 46875.
- **BURTON ON TRENT WV** Kim 33929.
- **CANTERBURY** Womens Voice Barbara (Lyminge 862742).
- **CHORLTON WV** Claire 226 1048
- **COVENTRY WV** 361585 (Sue Pinkham).
- **DUDLEY WV** Brigitte Brierley Hill 78308.
- **EALING/SOUTHALL WV** Christine or Jane 571 1838.
- **ECCLES AND SALFORD WV** Jennie 707 2557 or Ann 737 3800
- **EDINBURGH WV** Penny 5 0731
- **ENFIELD WV** Nora 807 1741
- **GLASGOW WV** Clare 357 1157
- **GLOSSOP**, Derbyshire Women's Voice Glossop 64287 Carol.
- **HACKNEY WV** Jan/Maddie 249 8716
- **HALIFAX WV** every Saturday 11am-12.30pm. Co-op arcade on the Precinct.
- **HAMMERSMITH WV** Kate 748-7336
- **HARLOW** Womens Voice Pat, Harlow 28022.
- **HATFIELD AND WELWYN** WV phone Cathy Hatfield 65238.
- **HIGHBURY WV** Clara 226 7066
- **HORNSEY WV** Maggie 341 1182
- **ISLINGTON WV** Sandy 802 6145

- **KENTISH TOWN WV** Pauline 586 5693
- **LAMPETER WV** c/o SDUC Lampeter. Dyfed, Wales.
- **LANCASTER WV** ring 36196
- **LEEDS WV** Gilda 622 800 or Bev 457 098.
- **LEICESTER WV** Fiona 0533 62855.
- **LEYTONSTONE WV** Annie (556 5595) or Pam (558 1509)
- **LIVERPOOL WV** Jane 727 1182
- **LOWESTOFT** Womens Voice—c/o 107, Montgomery Avenue, Lowestoft.
- **LUTON WV** Denise 35, Chatsworth Road, Luton.
- **MEDWAY WV** Lici, Medway 571628.
- **NEWCASTLE** Womens Voice Liz 854 782
- **NEWHAM** Womens Voice Pam 534 1417
- **NORWICH** Womens Voice c/o 56 St Benedicts St. Norwich.
- **NOTTINGHAM WV** Chrissie Langley Mill. 62356.
- **OXFORD** WV phone 723 395 or write to PO Box 20.
- **PIMLICO** Womens Voice Helen 730 7983 or Leslie 834 0760
- **READING** Womens Voice Shirley 585554
- **ST HELENS** WV Carol, St Helens 28178
- **SHEFFIELD** Womens Voice Sue 613 739
- **SOUTH WARK** Womens Voice Kirsten Ross 732 4604
- **SOUTH LONDON WV** Sally 720 5768
- **SOUTH WEST LONDON** Womens Voice. Marion 947 0560.
- **STOCKPORT** Womens Voice. 061 431 7564
- **STOKE ON TRENT** Womens Voice Sandra 814094
- **TOTTENHAM** Womens Voice Mary 802 9563
- **TOWER HAMLETS WV** Helen 980 6036
- **WALTHAMSTOW** WV phone Sue 521 5712
- **WREXHAM** Womens Voice Heather 87293

WV public meetings

Womens Voice **WOMEN IN HISTORY** series. 7pm The Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Road. (Warren Street/Goodge Street Tube). Friday nights.

Nov 21 Rosa Luxemburg - Marnie Holborow.

Dec 12 Catherine Childley - Nora Carlin.

• **BIRMINGHAM WV** presents 'NEVER MIND THE BALLOTS' Counteract Theatre Group. New play about the Employment Act and how it affects women. Friday 14 November 8pm Bournbrook Sellyoak.

• **EDINBURGH WOMENS VOICE MEETINGS, every other Sunday, 7.30pm Trades Council, 14 Picardy Place. Sunday November 2: Oppression of women by the Catholic Church in Ireland, speaker: Anne Owens. Sunday November 16: Rosa Luxemburg, speaker: Penny Packham. All Welcome. Tel. Penny 557 0731 for babysitters. Edinburgh Womens Voice Public meeting, Thatcher Degrades Women Wednesday November 12, 7.30pm, Trades Council, 14 Picardy Place.**

• **SOUTH HERTS DISTRICT WOMENS VOICE OPEN DAY SCHOOL WOMEN AGAINST THE TORIES** Speakers include Sheila McGregor, Workshops, Disco. Saturday 8 November Nash Mills Hall, Belswains Lane, Hemel Hempstead. Contact Val Berkhamsted 74468 Jane St Albans 68678 Cathy Hatfield 65238. All women welcome.

Small ads



• **CLEVELAND** Womens Festival 1 and 2 November 10am to 5pm, Grove Hill Community Centre, Middlesbrough. Workshops, food, creche cost £3 for weekend, £1.00 unwaged. Further details Maggie 222411.

• **LESBIANS** supporting Womens Voice/Socialist Worker contact the Womens Voice Lesbian Group. Jane Scragg c/o PO Box 82, London E2 9DS.

• **WOMEN** in Armagh talk with slides. 13 November, 8pm, Garfield Centre, Garfield Road, London SW11. Organised by Wandsworth Women.

• **ABORTION** a womans right to choose. How do we achieve it in the 80s.? Conference for the Trent region (Sheffield, Notts, Leicester). 15 November, Queens Walk Community Centre, Nottingham. 10am-5pm £1.50 waged (75p unwaged). Details from 23 Templeoak Drive, Wollaton, Notts.

• **THE CHANGING FAMILY:** day-school on Saturday 15 November. Workshops and plenary sessions on social policy, psychoanalysis and gender, patterns of child rearing etc. Speakers: Michele Barrett, Hilary Land and Christine Berg. £3.00, special rates for low waged, Creche. Details J. Hoy, Extra-Mural Dept, University of London, 26 Russell Square, London WC1. Tel. 01 636 8000 x 266.

GAY SOCIALIST CONFERENCE 1980 Organised by the Gay Left Collective

Saturday 22 November 10am-6pm, Sunday 23 November 11am-5pm Caxton House, St John's Way, Archway, London N19. Nearest Tube: Archway. Registration: £2.00 waged, £1 unwaged. Lunch available both days. Creche available. Please let us know in advance if you intend to bring children with you.

• **GAY** Teachers Conference 15 and 16 November, Sheffield Polytechnic Students Union. Details Pete Bardsley, PO Box 107, Sheffield S1 1EJ or phone 0742 680464

NOVEMBER 22nd: Conference for women in the Labour Party. Called by *Fightback for Women's Rights* to start organising a rank and file women's caucus. Three themes- 1) Democratic changes to make our voice louder in the party; 2) drawing up a package of demands to fight for the party to adopt and implement (other campaigns invited to contribute ideas); 3) getting the party to fight for women's rights now against the Tories.

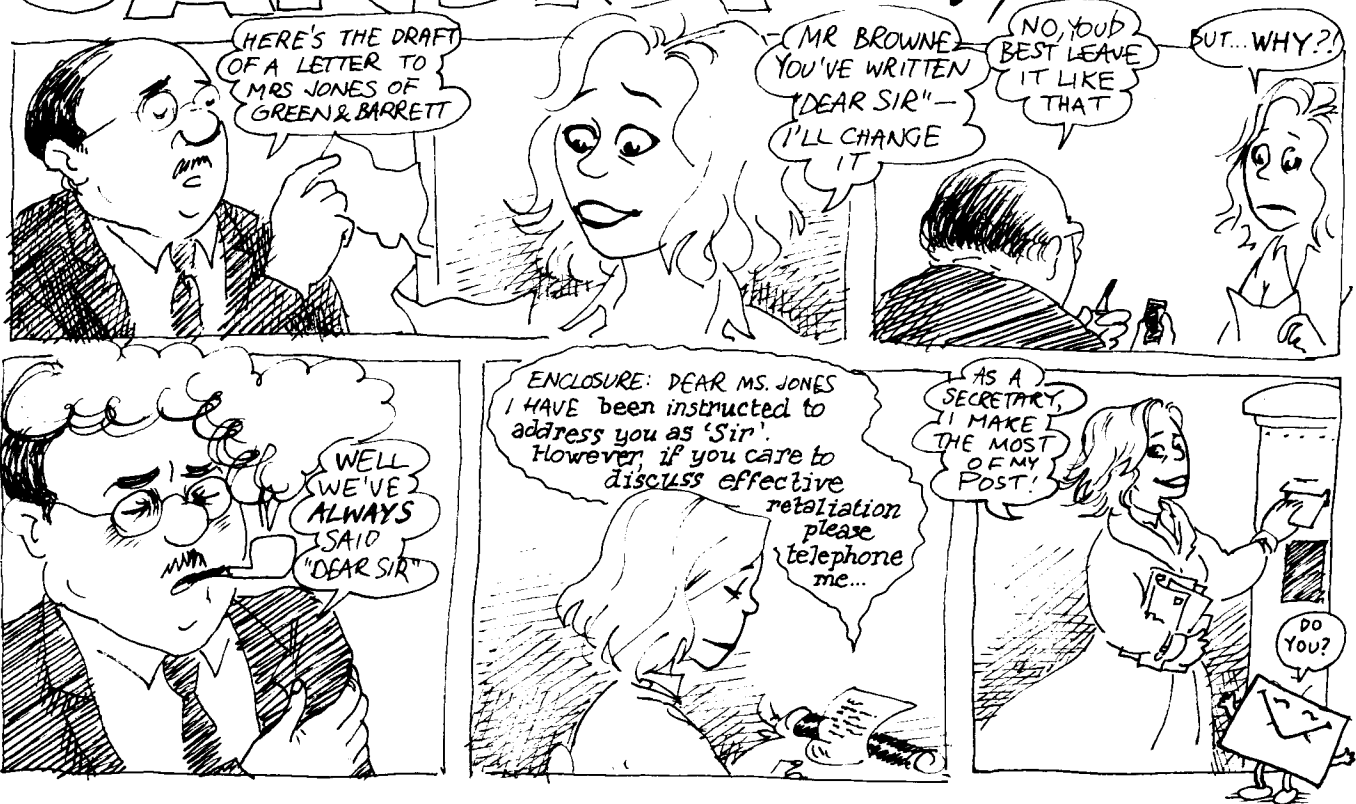
11am to 4.30 at Islington Central Library, Holloway Road London N7 (Highbury & Islington tube). Creche, lunch. Fee £1. Info from Women's Fightback, 41 Ellington Street, London N7

MATERNITY BENEFITS AND THE EMPLOYMENT ACT.

A factsheet on how the Employment Act will affect maternity benefits, and how to negotiate for a better deal, has been produced by the Defend Our Unions Committee. Send orders to Maternity, PO Box 82 London E2 9DS. Cheques or postal orders should be made out to 'Right to Work Campaign' Cost £1 for 50.

SANDRA

stranger than fiction!



Your nearest Womens Voice Group meets

Join Womens Voice...

join the fight

Womens Voice is an organisation that fights for women's liberation and socialism.

We fight for:

Equal pay

Free abortion and contraception

Maternity leave and child care provision

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.

I want to join the fight...
Name _____
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