

Womens VOICE

10p
No 5 May
SWP

WANTED!

**.For conspiracy to deny
women their rights**

**.For threatening grievous
bodily harm to thousands
of working women**



William Benyon

.Tory MP for Buckingham .Gentleman farmer

.DEMONSTRATE

**AGAINST THIS AND ALL OTHER HYPOCRITES
AND BIGOTS IN THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT**

**.Saturday 14 May 1:30pm .Belvedere Road Waterloo
London SE1**

.And Scotland 11am Blythswood Square Glasgow



THEIR WAY...

OR OURS



Picture: Chris Davis (REPORT)

WHICH WAY WILL WOMEN WIN THE FIGHT?

How often do you say, or do you hear other women say, we must do something about rising prices. Or something about equal pay. Or we must stop the closure of nurseries. Anyone of the hundred things that women complain about endlessly.

But where do you start? How do you begin to organise a union, organise women together on an estate, or even get to know the facts about womens rights.

When the equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act became law at the beginning of last year the Equal Opportunities Commission was set up for just that purpose.

It had powers of investigation into cases of discrimination, a huge budget, new offices, and a world of injustices to set to rights, *what it didn't have was any guts to fight with.*

According to one Sunday paper two out of three women have never heard of the Equal Opportunities Commission. You may have heard of them but can you remember anything they have done?

If *Womens Voice* had £85,000 a month to spend we would print hundreds of thousands of posters, stickers, leaflets, pamphlets on equal pay, and sex discrimination. We would send them to every factory, office and school, to every trade union branch and every place where women meet—nurseries, family planning clinics, womens groups. We would organise campaigns to support those women who are prepared

to take on the employers—at Yardleys, Electrolux, Trico. We would have speakers touring the country telling women of their rights.

The possibilities are almost limitless with that amount of money, our ideas and our energy.

The EOC has done none of that. The money has been spent on wages for a bevy of bureaucrats and officials, offices in Manchester, and little else.

They have initiated two investigations. In Thameside they discovered that girls had indeed been discriminated against in the selection process for the secondary and grammar schools. As was always the case more boys than girls got grammar school places. They didn't do anything about it.

Their investigation into the Electrolux factory in Luton began a few weeks ago. It 'could take months'. The women at Electrolux earn £13 a week less than the men. They have won their case at an Industrial Tribunal and the Employment Appeals Tribunal. They have been out on strike. And still the management refuse to pay. There is nothing to investigate—the discrimination is obvious.

This softly, softly approach is a waste of time. On the picket line at Yardleys one woman summed it up:

"We've got a fight on our hands and we'll not be lady like about it!" That's right. That's how we'll fight.

WOMENS VOICE

Womens Magazine of
the Socialist Workers
Party

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Please write. Keep your letters short so that we can squeeze in as many as possible.

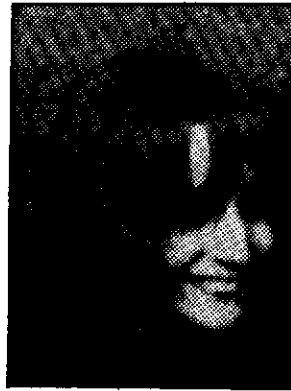
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All articles, letters, news for the next issue of *Womens Voice* needs to reach us by Wednesday 18 May.

Phone us with ideas, or to let us know what you are sending in on 01 739 1878
Write to: *Womens Voice*, 6, Cottons Gardens, London, E2.

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Womens World

by Judith Condon

The snooping has started. In last months Women's Voice we reported that the rules governing immigration rights of married couples were to be changed. The idea was supposedly to stop men being accepted into Britain through 'marriages of convenience'. There was no discussion, because no act of parliament was required. On such matters the home secretary, Merlyn Rees, can use his own much-vaunted 'discretion'.

Immigrant organisations predicted that the ruling would result in racist snooping into the personal lives of newly married couples. They hardly expected the proof to arrive so fast.

The rule was changed on March 22nd.. The ink wasn't dry before the police went into action.



Home Secretary Rees: putting racialism into practice by law.

Among the first victims of this appalling harrassment were Mr. and Mrs. Iftakhar Mahmood of Latona Road, Peckham. So far police and immigration officials have called at their home no less than four times, to determine whether they are sleeping together. On two occasions the immigration officers asked to see the shared bedroom, then proceeded to search all the cupboards and wardrobes. They looked at Mr Mahmood's clothes, and asked to see his private letters. A uniformed policeman meanwhile hunted through every room in the house.

Mrs Mahmood is just twenty years old. She and her husband were married in June last year. She describes what happened when the knock came on the door.

Asian couples harrassed under racialis'ts' charter

'I was scared. I didn't want them to come into the house but they seemed to have the right. When they asked to see our bedroom I didn't know what to say. They just marched up the stairs.

'While they were searching the bedroom they kept asking me questions about what size clothes my husband wore, and could I prove they weren't my brother's clothes, or my father's. They asked me what I gave my husband for breakfast. They stayed for about an hour the first time.

'The second time they came there was a new immigration officer. He said he hadn't seen our bedroom so they searched it all over again.'

In other cases the most disgusting and degrading questioning has been used. One couple were asked about where they sleep, and who decorated their bedroom. In another case an immigration officer asked an Indian husband whether

he and his wife 'normally' slept together, whether theirs was a 'love' marriage, where they spent their honeymoon, and did they ever sleep in the dining room. In East London a couple were asked how long they had used contraception, and why they had stopped doing so.

All these visits have been made by uniformed officers, acting without a warrant. Couples have a right to refuse entry and to refuse to answer. But faced with such intimidation of course most are afraid to stand their ground.

When you read the rules, you can understand why.

The Home Office has the right to refuse an extension of stay in this country to the husband or fiancee of a woman settled here if ONE of its officials has reason to believe it is a 'marriage of convenience'. Permission to stay can also be refused if the marriage breaks down within twelve months. It's a charter for

racialis'ts.

This is Britain today. Land of the free. The country that, as we are taught at school, has always upheld individual liberty and opened its arms to the refugees of more barbaric nations.

Nothing could be clearer than that this rule is being used to harrass and intimidate the Asian community. The rule must be reversed. One M.P. Alex Lyon, has tabled an objection to it. We must make sure that we bring all the pressure we can, through our trade unions and through other organisations, to let this miserable, arrogant Home Secretary Merlyn Rees know what we think of him.

The Labour Party has spent a lot of money on its damp-squid anti-racist campaign, launched last Autumn with fine words and some jolly backslapping by Benn and co. Let's see them now, for once, be made to act, or else be shown for hypocrites of the most cynical kind.

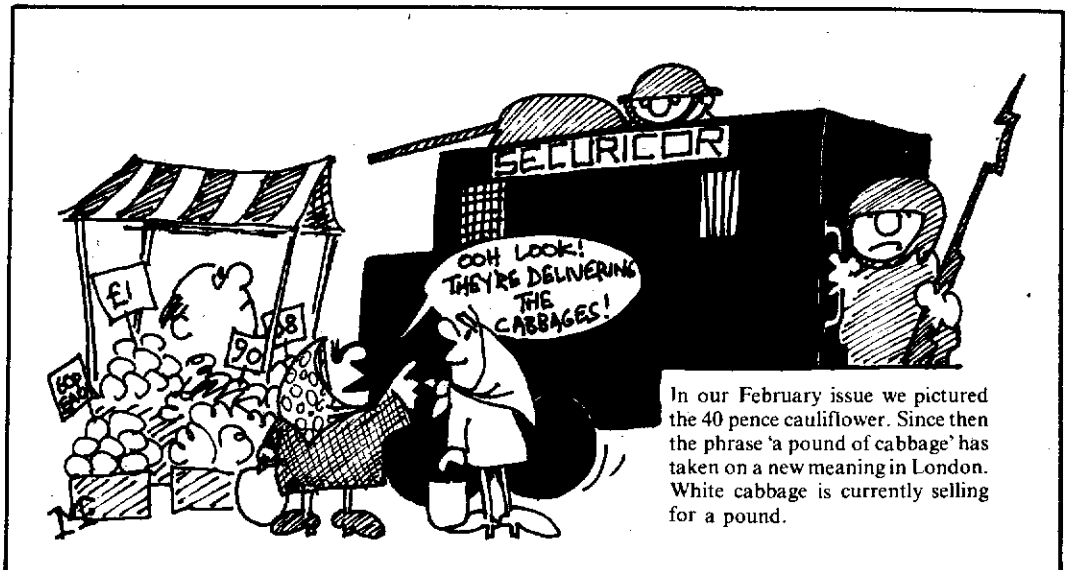
Four stewards on the dining car of the London—Wolverhampton train have been persecuted for fiddling. They bought their own 8oz jar of coffee, and sold it to passengers at 13 pence a cup. They made £15 profit.

Their crime was defrauding British Rail by selling coffee not provided by British Rail.

When British Rail sell you half a paper cup full of coffee at 13 pence, that's not fraud.

When Nescafe sell you an 8oz. jar of coffee at £1.98, that's not fraud.

An aroma by any other name would be a stink.



In our February issue we pictured the 40 pence cauliflower. Since then the phrase 'a pound of cabbage' has taken on a new meaning in London. White cabbage is currently selling for a pound.

Between January last year and January this year wages went up by 11.8 per cent In the same year prices went up by 17 per cent That is a wages cut

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT KEEPS WAGES DOWN AND PRICES UP SMASH IT!

Over the last two months, many workers have been looking to British Leyland workers for a lead in the fight against the social contract. After all, it was leading Leyland shop stewards who said they would call a one-day stoppage against it on April 20th.

When the day came it was like a damp squib—no mass strike, only delegations down to London. What a let down! Why did it happen? Was it because the workers at Leyland and other places no longer wanted to come out on strike or was it because the leading stewards, many of them in the Communist Party, decided against a coordinated strike, and to cool the whole campaign down.

One woman worker from Leyland (called Jean) had this to say about her feelings over the social contract, and April 20th.

'Everyone's got their breaking point, there'll be a rebellion soon. What you have in your purse for two weeks, you can't buy half as much with the second week. The women are prepared to fight the social contract. We will have none of it. We will come out for months, even six months. When the crunch comes we will lose our jobs over it. That's how the women feel about it.'

But when it came to the one-day stoppage, non-one came out on strike and there were bad feelings about sending delegations down to London. In the two weeks before April 20th, several things happened. The works committee issued a bulletin, arguing against any further strikes and at shopfloor

meetings, the workers were told 'come hell or high water, we must not lose another minute.' The works committee have gone back on the idea of a one-day stoppage. Instead they are recommending the shop floor take collections to send down delegations to a mass lobby. By then, the women were feeling very bitter about the way the union was messing them

Jean continued 'if the stewards had come into the shop and said the whole works

was coming out, there'd have been no problem. But the stewards didn't seem to know what they were doing. On top of that some of the women heard a news bulletin on the local radio announcing that their work was to be transferred to another plant.

'Although this was later denied the doubts had been sown. Every day you see a steward, trotting out of the shop to some meeting or other. And when you ask them what's going

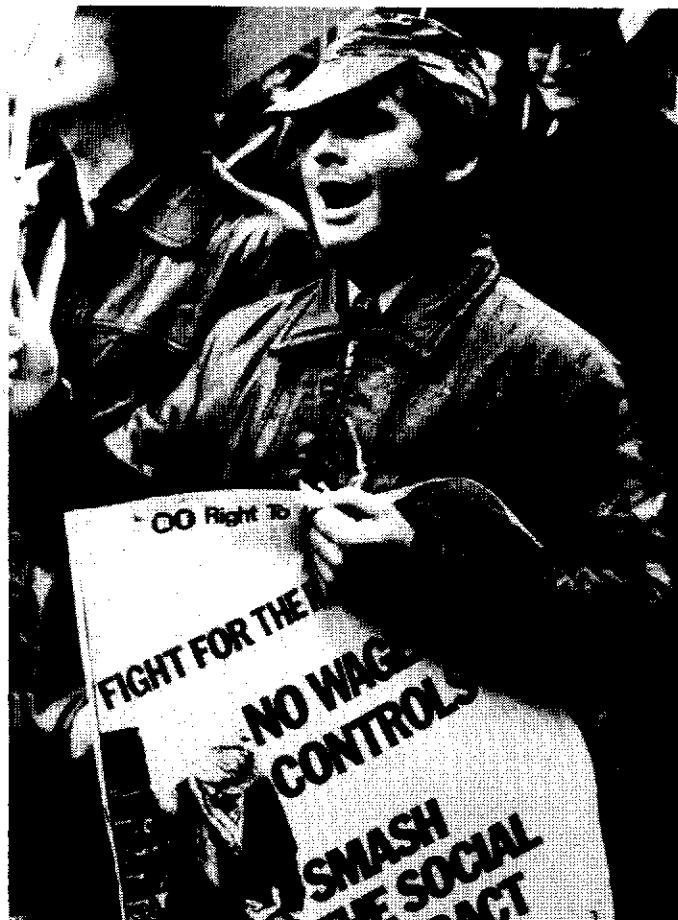
on, they just say 'nothing that would interest you'. We find out more when we switch on the telly or read the local paper. So by the time it came to collecting money, the women were confused and angry and many objected to putting money into the delegation. The atmosphere got so bad, that for two days, there was absolute silence at work. No-one spoke in the queues at clocking off time and radios were silent. You could have heard a pin drop.'

According to Jean the feeling is still there. 'We're bitter at management, they're not doing the grafting, they're sitting back in the three hour lunches, stuffing themselves. It's alright for them to decide this-that and we'll do the other, or they won't invest the money, but they don't do the work. It may look as if we're sitting back but when the time comes we'll fight'.

For the women in that Leyland factory, the tactics of the works committee were disastrous. Instead of channelling the feeling against the social contract into a fight the works committee put the scare round about the viability of the company. This led to demoralisation and bitter frustration.

The Government and union executives are now negotiating phase three of the social contract. Price rises will not just go away. Women have to fight the social contract to defend their living standards. Where the stewards are rotten they have to be replaced with people who will fight—the rank and file!

Sheila McGregor



Picture: John Sturrock (REPORT)

PRICES

Everyone agrees prices are terrible. But most women think there's nothing to be done about it. It's like the weather—awful, but what can you do about it?

All over the world, working people are faced by staggering price increases. In some countries they have stood together and *refused* to take any more. They have shown that price rises are not inevitable like the weather.

Someone somewhere decides to put up a price—well, that someone can be forced to change their mind.

POLAND

On June 24th 1976, the Polish government announced massive rises in the price of meat, vegetables, sugar, butter and cheese and fish. These foods were due to go up by 30 to 100 per cent.

The next day the workers of Poland said **NO**. They went on strike all over the country. Within two days the price increases were withdrawn.

One of the centres of opposition was the town of Radom. The summer before, the meat had run out in Radom, and 400 women from the shoe factory had gone on strike in protest. The press denounced them as 'hysterical women,' and their leaders were arrested.

But when 5000 more workers from the armaments factory came out as well in support of the women, they were released from jail, and the accusation of 'hysterical women' was soon silenced!

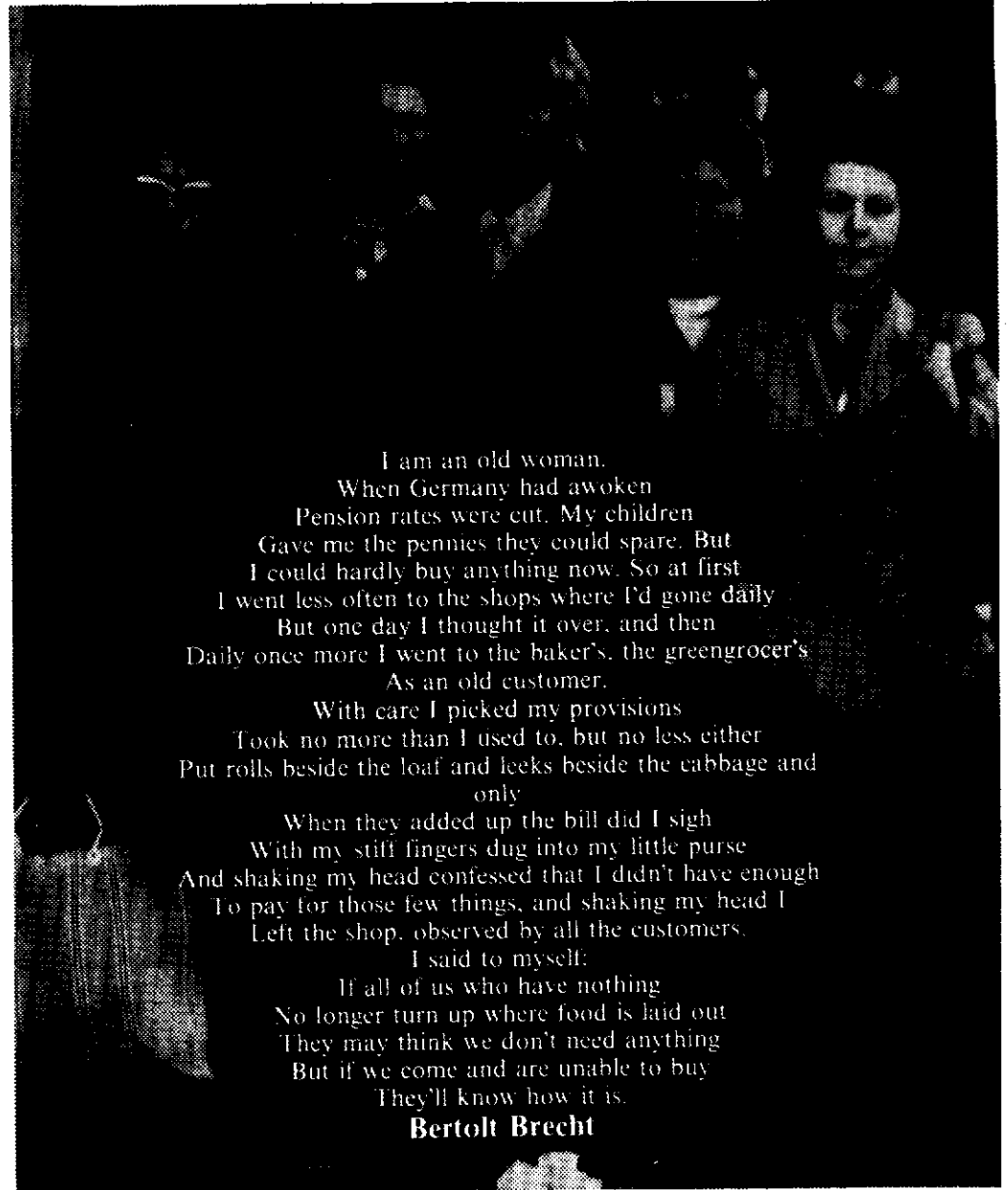
ITALY

In Italy, hundreds of thousands of workers banded together to prevent bus fares, gas and electricity bills soaring.

When the gas bill comes (for example), you take it down to the local 'price-fight' headquarters. There the people running it—from the trade unions and local political organisations—change the bill to a 'fair' price—usually the old price. You pay them, and they stamp it and that's that.

On the buses, everyone just paid the old fare. With enough people doing it—what could the bus company do? On some buses, like those taking people to work, they even took their own bus conductor along.

In Paris they cut the bus fares



I am an old woman.
When Germany had awoken
Pension rates were cut. My children
Gave me the pennies they could spare. But
I could hardly buy anything now. So at first
I went less often to the shops where I'd gone daily
But one day I thought it over, and then
Daily once more I went to the baker's, the greengrocer's
As an old customer.
With care I picked my provisions
Took no more than I used to, but no less either
Put rolls beside the loaf and leeks beside the cabbage and
only
When they added up the bill did I sigh
With my stiff fingers dug into my little purse
And shaking my head confessed that I didn't have enough
To pay for those few things, and shaking my head I
Left the shop, observed by all the customers.
I said to myself:
If all of us who have nothing
No longer turn up where food is laid out
They may think we don't need anything
But if we come and are unable to buy
They'll know how it is.
Bertolt Brecht

in half—and four times as many people started using the buses. Try telling that to London transport!

EGYPT

The penny loaf is the staple food of Egyptian workers. In May last year the government reduced it by a third in weight, for the same price. The massive protests restored the loaf in three days flat.

This year, in January, the Government announced new price increases of up to 60 per cent on basic foods. With an anger and co-ordination that must have terrified Egypt's rulers, hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants rioted, as if to a timetable, right across the country.

Ten thousand steel and arms workers marched into Cairo. Six thousand dockers led the storming of government offices in Alexandria. When the troops were called in working class districts in Cairo were turned

into no-go areas.

Within three days the price rises were withdrawn and a 10 per cent wage rise was agreed.

Price rises can be fought. It

takes courage, strength and organisation. But it *can* be done.

Elana Dallas



BACKSTREET ABORTION KILLS WOMEN

I feel as an ex-nurse I must write to tell of an incident which happened in 1967 just prior to the introduction of the present Abortion Act.

A woman was admitted as a routine tubal ligation, she had a family of six children and she would be in her late thirties or early forties. She was taken to theatre and there

was discovered to be two months pregnant—no surgery was done and she was returned to the ward, chided and humiliated by the doctors for hiding the fact—she was discharged home—she parted with the words 'I'll be back'.

Sure enough within a week she was back having been to a back

street abortionist, she was extremely ill with an infected womb. She had to have a course of anti-biotic injections and occupied a hospital bed for over a week. She was one of the 'lucky ones' who managed to get treatment after a septic abortion—others have died—are we to return to this!

This will happen again unless the Benyon Bill is defeated.
Angela Herbert, SRN HV

Fighting the James White anti-abortion bill in 1975 was a busy time for the Womens Voice Group in Pontefract.

We started off in a NAC group, and we were probably one of the few totally working-class NAC groups in the country. Most of the women had had no experience of attending, let alone organising meetings. We certainly had no experience of speaking in public. But it was fantastic the way our confidence and political awareness grew once the fight got under way.

We held public meetings street meetings and film shows. We attended community health councils, and took petitions around the housing estates. And we worked very hard to get a resolution against the James White Bill through union meetings.

This we saw as the most important thing because we hoped to get the union members out in mass for demonstrations.

Because we live in a mining area, the obvious union to concentrate on was the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). This was also important because in our area MPs are often NUM members, or NUM sponsored. If the resolution got passed through the branches to the Yorkshire Council level of the union, pressure would be brought to bear on those MPs.

We wrote to about 40 NUM branches in all, and the resolution was passed through ten. We were invited to speak at one NUM branch meeting. We went along expecting to find the usual half dozen men—but instead we were faced by a hundred miners. They had not come specially to hear us, but to vote for the bagpipe band. I think it was the first time they had been faced by eight women at their branch meeting. Anyway they were very sympathetic, and the pro-abortion resolution was passed unanimously. Their branch secretary also came and spoke at our next street meeting.

At another local pit, though, it was a very different matter. We were told along the grape-vine that the branch secretary kept tearing up our resolutions—we sent him three!

So we decided to picket the next branch meeting. At the club where the meeting was to be held, they refused to tell us the starting time. So we waited, and eventually the members began to arrive. We spoke to each one, and one of them agreed to take our resolution in with him.



Picture: Phil McCowen

If you have a union meeting before 14 May move a resolution to get support for the NAC demonstration.

'This branch deplores the second reading of the William Benyon Bill which would effectively decrease the availability of abortion: and agrees to campaign for free abortion on demand on the National Health Service.'

'This branch agrees to support the demonstration organised by the National Abortion Campaign on 14 May, with the branch banner and a donation of £X towards the cost of a coach.'

Add or delete demands as you see necessary. If you miss 14 May still move it; chop off the second part of the resolution and commit your branch to opposition to the bill. If you have sponsored MPs make sure the resolution contains a clause saying: 'Those MPs sponsored by this union should be expected to vote according to the policy of this union. If he/she/they voted in favour of the Benyon bill we call upon the Executive to do...' whatever is within the means of your union rule book.

NEWS

Soon the secretary arrived, and when he saw twelve angry women, he ran, wobbling like a little fat jelly, trying to make it to the back door as we chased him. It was a tremendous occasion. When he got inside we could hear the row break out as the other committee men shouted at him for giving the game away. They had told us their Dick would never tear up the branch correspondence,

but we knew better! Anyway, the resolution was finally passed, with only one vote against, so our determination paid off.

Anyway, we are now full of enthusiasm to fight the Benyon Bill and we are gearing up our activities all over again. Last time round we found how exciting the campaign can be, once you really pitch in to it.
Jean Lewis

NO RETURN TO BACK STREET ABORTION KEEP IT LEGAL KEEP IT SAFE

Women themselves should decide what they will do with their lives, whether or not they will have a child. And they should be able to take that decision without questions, without financial barriers, without endless red tape.

If women decide to make that choice and have an abortion then abortion should be freely available on the National Health Service. Then no one will be able to make a profit out of that decision. And women will be assured of the best possible care and medical knowledge.

If the bill at present before Parliament becomes law it will:

- Make it more difficult for doctors to agree to abortions.
- Make it impossible for the charitable clinics, like the Pregnancy Advisory Service, to provide cheap abortions

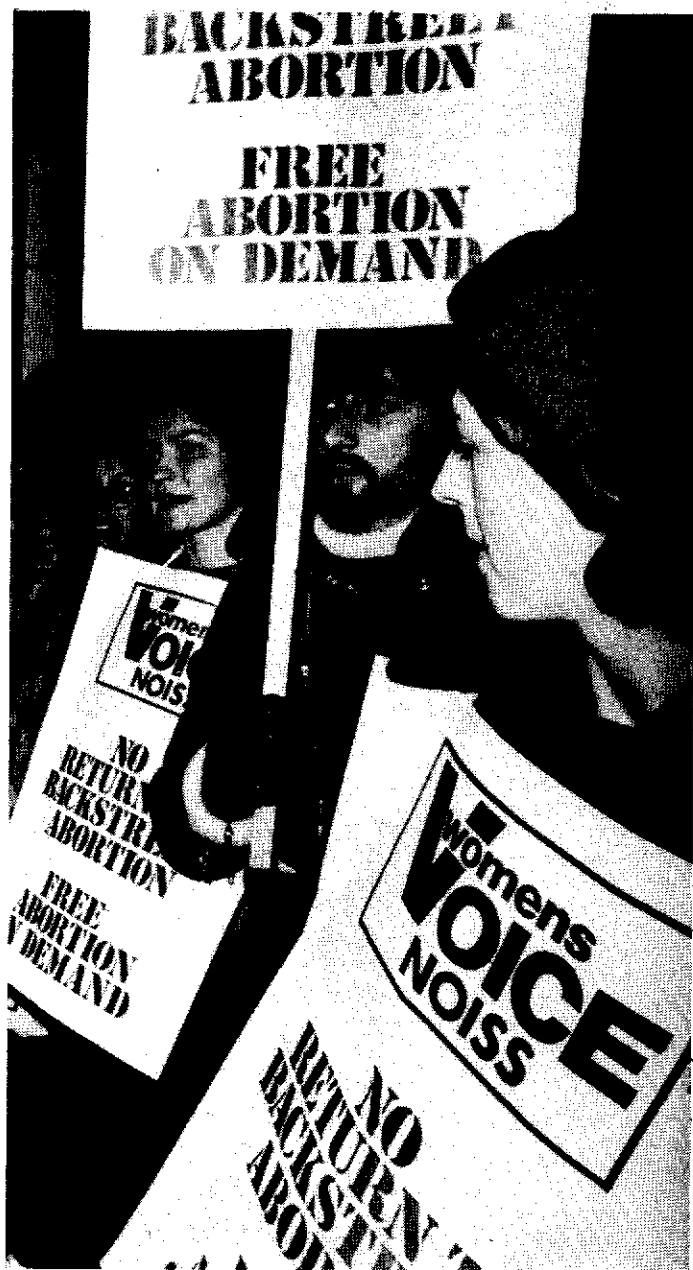
for working class women who can't get them on the National Health.

- Give the police access to medical files— something which they have never had

Members of Parliament, like William Benyon, with their hypocritical attitudes and bigoted ideas, do not have the right to prevent women making that choice themselves. They argue freedom of choice in voting for this disgusting bill. We demand freedom of choice in the way we live our lives.

Posters and leaflets
produced by the Socialist
Workers Party
for the demonstration on 14
May

are available from 6 Cottons
Gardens, London E2 8DN



Picture: Phil McCowen

Picket SPUC!

Friday 17 May, 2pm, Central Hall, Westminster
SPUC will be holding a mass lobby of
Parliament

Organised by National Abortion Campaign

GET STUCK IN!

We only have a short time left to make 14 May into a big demonstration. That means getting a lot of publicity and talking to a lot of women quickly. One of the best ways to do that is to go straight into opposition territory, wherever groups of women are, where we can start an argument.

Leaflet catholic churches and schools; leaflet bingo queues, with someone on a loudhailer provoking the crowd; walk into every doctors surgery, nursery, playgroup, family planning clinic and give out leaflets,

display posters. Wherever women are in groups that's where we need to be.

Book your coach. Make your banner. Every Womens Voice group and SWP branch should have a banner. If you have hospital workers or engineers, dockers or playgroup leaders, teachers or nurses, make a special banner: Nurses For Abortion on Demand. Check now that trade union branches supporting the demo have a banner to bring.

EQUAL PAY

TEMPORARY WORKERS USED TO FOOL EQUAL PAY ARBITRATION

'There will be a riot when we go back in that factory' the women at Yardleys told us. Because the men in the factory, in the same union, scabbed on their five weeks strike. This is just what has happened.

Since the strike finished in mid March the company have taken on a total of 200 temporary employees. The women are convinced it is an attempt to catch up on production, and to confuse the arbitration committee when they visit the factory. They will see 600 women doing the work of 400 and of course it will seem that the womens case is not as strong as it is.

The TGWU branch is factory based, with meetings in the factory canteen. 600 workers turned up for the first meeting after the strike was called off. As they went in, one male scab abused one of the women, geering at her to get back home and 'wank your husband'.

Upset, the woman went to the microphone and asked the meeting to ask him to apologise. He jauntily went up on the stage. But not a word of apology. Rather, he abused all the women who had been on strike, telling them to give the £25 the union gave them in lieu of strike pay to charity. He added that the only ones who should get the £25 were the women who came back to work during the strike! Hardly were his words out of his mouth than a hail of paper cups, cigarette ends and general canteen rubbish were hurled at him.

All the antagonism and torment of being scabbed on burst out. One woman got this particularly ob-

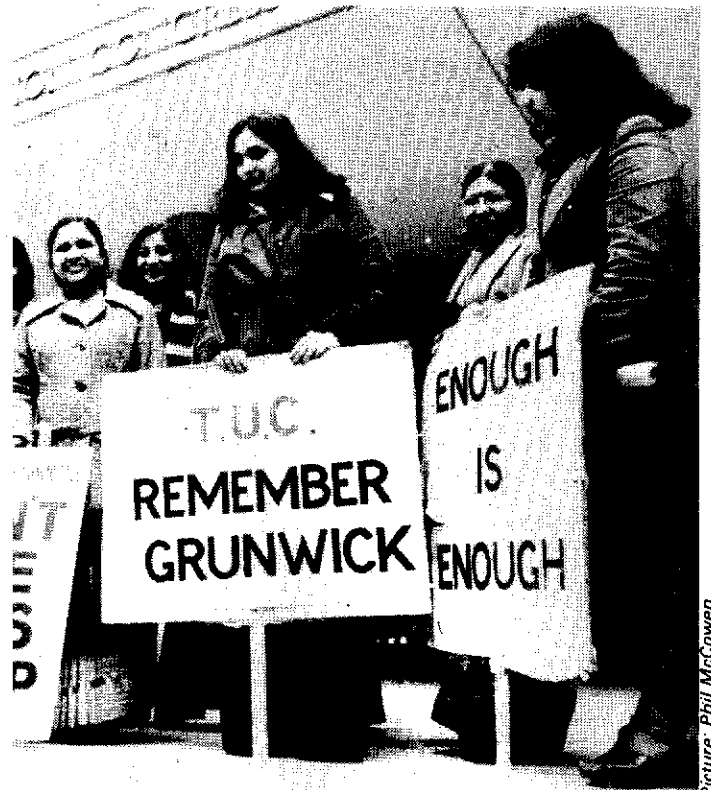
noxious scab round the head with her handbag. Fighting broke out. The police were called. And that was the end of the meeting.

The union organisation at Yardleys is now in total disarray, because the men scabbed on the women and the powerful TGWU did absolutely nothing to stop them. **Margaret Renn**

The TGWU Biannual conference is being held from the 4-8 July. If you are a delegate, or will have some say at your union branch on the way your delegates will vote, make sure they support General Motion 146 on Equal Pay, with the following amendment if it reaches the order paper:

General Motion 146 Equal Pay

'That in view of the failure of the sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act to achieve equality for women workers Conference resolves to ensure that equal pay for equal work is conceded at all times and will strive to abolish the continuing inequality in job opportunity. (Amendment) To this end, Conference instructs the General Executive Council to give immediate official backing to all disputes involving a majority of women members or which concern the questions of equal pay and discrimination against women. This official backing must include official backing of any firm with which the Union is in dispute if our members' actions are to be effective. Conference believes that we must fight with every weapon we have in order to win justice for our women members.'



Picture: Phil McCowen

GRUNWICKS

37 WEEKS AND STILL OUT

The workers at Grunwicks, (picture above) mainly Asian women, have been on strike for 37 weeks. They were sacked for demanding recognition of their union (APEX).

They have had nominal support from all sections of the TU movement—including the TUC General Council and Len Murray!

This strike could have been won by now if the expressions of support had been turned into blacking of the postal film deliveries and of shops using Grunwicks film.

Now we need to build real activity:

Getting regular factory delegations to the 24-hour picket.

Organising regular collections

Putting resolutions through branches, union executives and up to the TUC General Council demanding further action.

Support the 24-hour picket. Send messages and money to the Strike Committee: Brent Trades and Labour Hall, 375 Willesden High Road, London NW10.

DEFEND JOHN DEASON

As we go to press John Deason Secretary of the Right to Work Campaign is on trial.

From the time we left Manchester John Deason was harassed. There was a strike at a site in Manchester. We visited it, and as we went through the gate the police tried to arrest John. Why? Because he was a dangerous risk to the strikers?

No. Because he is the Secretary of the Right to Work Campaign against Unemployment.

Everyday for three weeks since that Saturday, John was continually harassed. The police tried continually to arrest him—not just in the large cities but in small towns

as well. Every single day of the three week trek from Manchester to London.

They tried on the A1 coming into London, and finally succeeded at Hendon. This man now faces many serious trumped up charges. We must not let them get away with this as they did with the Shrewsbury Three.

The trial is going on inside the Court, but the real fight for John Deason will be outside. With a massive picket outside on the day, and massive action if he is jailed.

Kerry Abrahms, Right to Work Marcher, Manchester to London.



Picture: Phil McCowen

KEEP THE NAZIS OFF THE STREETS

You can't just write off the National Front as a bunch of hardnut lunatics that will go away if you ignore them. They won't go away. They feed off the fears and frustrations of millions of workers, and grow especially when the going is tough. When food prices soar and wages get smaller, they become an attractive force to thousands. They use clear, crude arguments like 'get rid of blacks and immigrants because they take our houses and jobs', or 'break up the trade unions

because they have too much power'. The arguments are rubbish. How can anyone say blacks cause unemployment or bad housing? There's plenty of money in the hands of bankers and industrialists. It is *they* who have the power and privilege which prevents adequate jobs, social services and housing.

When the National Front planned to march on Sat. 21st April, in North London which is a high immigrant area, local socialist organisations decided to counter-

demonstrate. I went along with the other women in the *Socialist Workers Party*. I used to think it only made things worse by opposing them because it draws more attention to their miserable march. But a look at history shows the opposite. In Italy and Germany before fascism got a grip, there were very big socialist parties which preferred to stand by and do nothing. They argued that it was better not to be provoked by the fascists' acts of brutality. Meanwhile, Hitler's and Mussolini's thugs attacked socialists, Jews, gays and women until they dominated the country by brute force. Make no mistake, that's exactly the kind of thing the National Front and National Party stand for.

When we all met the morning before the march, we all had butterflies in our stomachs. Some of us wished it was already over, but hanging around is the worst part. Once you get on the march those butterflies mingle with anger when you see the racists coming down the street with their union jacks. Our counter-demo was well stewarded and everybody linked arms to keep together. The Front got a rollicking—eggs, rotten tomatoes, sacks of flour and paint and water bags were thrown by the hundreds—they looked humiliated and stupid. We want to make sure that every time they march, it will be more and more sordid and unpleasant for them. They must not be allowed to grow.

Glynis Cousins



Picture: Phil McCowen

Occupied for over a month, workers and patients at Hounslow Hospital, West Middlesex, are determined to fight the closure of three local hospitals.

The hospitals act as a vital overflow for the West Middlesex Hospital, where patients often have to wait on trolleys for hours while doctors try to find empty beds.

The 85 hospital workers, the TUC council of action and Hounslow Hospital Defence Committee are building support among other hospital workers, local people and other trade unionists.

All donations and messages of support to: Hounslow Hospital Defence Committee, Staines Road, Hounslow, Middlesex.

The right wing Council of Equity has reversed its decision not to provide a creche for the Equity Annual General Meeting after considerable pressure from the membership.

Equity rank and file organised a petition demanding a creche which was signed by theatre companys and individual Equity members. And the Feminist Theatre Study

Group threatened to call a special General Meeting to change the rules so that the Council had to provide a creche at meetings.

The creche was not ideal as it was outside the theatre where the meeting was held and there was little publicity. But it was a victory nevertheless and we feel hopeful that the creche will now become a regular feature of Equity meetings. Carrie Lee-Baker, Equity rank and file

SUPPORT THE CHAMBER MAIDS DISPUTE

ON 24 April, 28 chambermaids at the Charing Cross Hotel, London, came out on strike for the fifth time in 18 months on an effort to make the hotel's management honour its agreements.

They have had two nagging grievances: the management constantly breaking promises over overtime conditions and food.

The hotel management gets the chambermaids and the cleaners to compete against each other for extra overtime working to supplement their miserly pay packets.

In February 1976 the hotel management signed an overtime choices agreements. And within twelve hours of signing it, broke it. They called in extra cleaners to make up rooms, without asking the chambermaids first. Jean Jepson told *Womens Voice*.

'They employed two girls right out of 'a home'. We've never seen this before: 16 year-old girls! At first we thought it was bloody disgusting, sending young girls to live right in the middle of corrupt streets with sex-shops and all. Management thought they wouldn't strike... But they were the first to put their hands up for striking.'

The maids came out on 14 April while Jean Jepson was ill in bed. The personnel manager came to her room and told her, 'Anybody on strike gets no food.'

'When we put through the branch motion about pay deals, we told them we didn't want the £6 limit. We didn't even get the £6 and what we did get was with meal money deducted. So when we got our 6 weeks backpay increase last year, we asked: 'Where's our back-grub?'

We've got a bloody argument with this management. They keep our money and deduct board and all and now they tell us 'No working no eating'. They owe us money for the past week we worked but now they've cut off the food.'

Maureen one of the 16 year old girls told us what she thought of the strike:

'I was asked to go back to work by the headhouse keeper. She kept me in her office with one of the scab chambermaids till a quarter past one at night, but I told them NO. We are out on strike because they broke the agreement and we'll stay out till we win.'

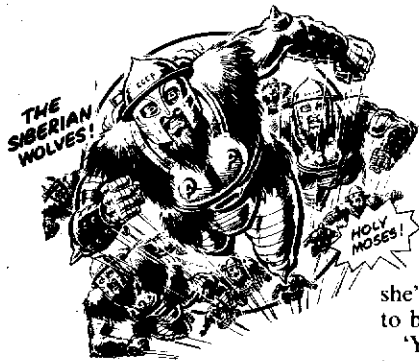
This February the food was so uneatable, that the chambermaids staged a strike right in the canteen. A fortnightly Canteen Committee was supposed to be set up, there's never yet been a meeting.

When the 28 chambermaids and 3 plate men came out, in a April, the rest of the staff, 120 NUR members, were handed letters saying that if they fed any of the strikers, they would be sacked immediately and they've just accepted it. So far only two of the original 28 have gone back to work and one just left.

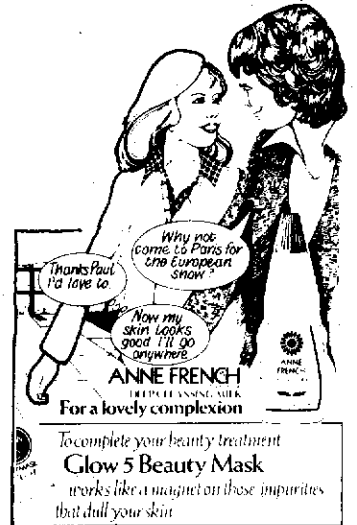
So the chambermaids are still on strike. They picket the Charing Cross Hotel every lunch time to try and reach the businessmen going in for company lunches.

Sherri Yanowitz

Send messages of support and collections for the strike fund to: Jean Jepson, c/o The Housekeeper's Office, Charing Cross Hotel, The Strand, London, WC1



BOYS and GIRLS



What happens when you gather together a group of girls and boys aged between 8 and 14 and get them to talk on the subject, 'Girls should be girls'—but does it have to be that way?

These are some of the things that were said on one of the children's meetings at the Socialist Worker Rally at Skegness over Easter.

Where does it all start?

The girls: Well, you always have to have pink for a girl and blue for a boy. Before the baby is born they always say you'd better get yellow or white, in case you guess wrong.

'And when you get presents, they're different for boys and girls. If you're a girl you get dolls, and prams, or you get little dust-pans and brooms, and tea-sets. It's supposed to be for when you grow up.'

'But boys get cars and train sets, or meccano.'

The boys: If you wanted to play with your sister's dolls your parents would take them away and give you an Action Man—'cos that's a boy's toy. Anyway, other boys would laugh at you if they found you playing with girls' toys, so you don't.'

'Yes, you'd get called a cissy.'
The girls: 'But we get called a tomboy if we play boys' games.'

Books and comics

'In Janet and John, Janet always has to help her mother, and John goes to the football or something like that with his dad.'

'And in those fairy stories, it's the girl who gets into danger,

she's always stupid, and she has to be rescued by some knight.'

'Yes, in Enid Blyton that happens. And the girls in the Secret Seven always make the lemonade and biscuits back in the camp, while the boys go off and have exciting adventures.'

'And the girls always have to tidy up the boys' bedrooms.'

'Anyway, those books are all about posh children, with nannies, or in boarding schools. They're always talking about having "jolly japes", and rubbish like that.'

'I've seen some Chinese books which are different. I remember because the girls in this book were digging up potatoes and they had to learn to fight as well.'

'The Eagle and those boys comics are full of adventures about heroes and fighting.'

'In the Boyfriend and Valentine they have pictures of pop stars, who you're supposed to dream about.'

'They have special offers like "How to attract your boyfriend with this new sexy perfume."

'Just imagine if they had things in boys' comics about how to wear this new lipstick and get your girl!'

Laughs all round.

'The girls in the stories always have the latest fashions, and they're really pretty and they always get the boy in the end.'

Adults

'That Lucozade Ad on the telly gets me. When the kid scribbles all over the walls and throws his mum's knitting on the floor, and then she comes in all smiling, and gives him a drink. My mum would give me a thump!'

General agreement!

'Yes, the women always have their hair all set, and they're made up and young and pretty. My mum doesn't have time to

look like that.'

'They're not real people anyway.'

'My mum and dad try to treat us all the same, because they're socialists.'

'My dad told me I couldn't play football because I'm a girl.'

'My dad can't even cook an egg.'

School

'In our school the girls are not allowed to wear trousers, even in the very cold weather.'

'We got a petition up about it, and we joined the National Union of School Students in our school.'

'But most people are frightened because they can just expel you when you try to do something.'

'We could get all the girls to wear trousers on the same day. They couldn't expel us all.'

'The boys might say why can't they wear skirts then, they might take the mickey.'

A lot of disagreement with this.

'My teacher's alright. He's here at the rally.'

'You're lucky.'

'But you can get the good teachers to back you up sometimes, and your parents.'

'Why can't boys learn child care and home economics? They can choose to do cooking now, but that's all.'

'Yes, and girls should be able to do woodwork or metalwork if they want to.'

The Future

'It's not fair that women should always have to stay at home and look after the children. The men should take their turn as well and let the women go to work.'

'If women want to go to work, there should be free nurseries for them to leave the children in, really nice places.'

'You could have every factory with a place next door for babies and pay someone from the firm to look after them.'

'What about shopping and ironing and cooking, you'd still have to do that.'

'Maybe women should get wages to do it.'

No one had really thought about this, most were a bit blank.

'Years ago, didn't they bring the shopping round to your door? I remember that. You could organise it like that.'

'You could leave your shopping list at the shop and they could be paid to put it all together for you, for you to pick up on the way home from work.'

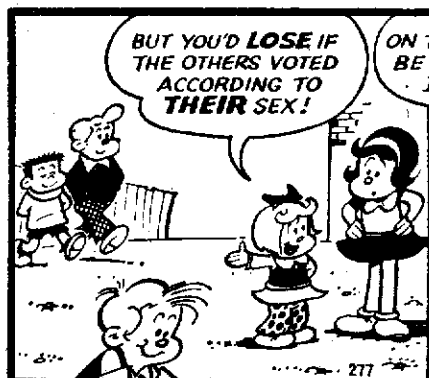
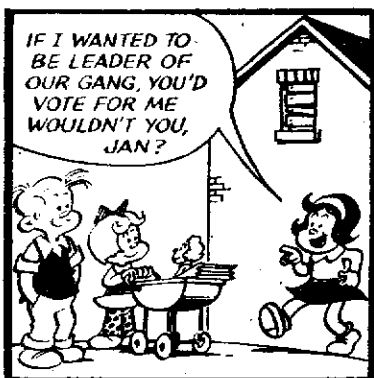
'Couldn't you have big kitchens like here at Skegness, so you could all go and eat together with your friends.'

'But it wouldn't be fair for the poor people who had to do the cooking or washing for everyone else. They might be bored. I wouldn't want to do that for a living.'

'Well, you'd just have to take it in turns then it wouldn't be so bad.'

Everyone there enjoyed this discussion. With children like these, brimming over with ideas, the future could be very bright. Oh yes—and who was that dad who can't even cook an egg...?

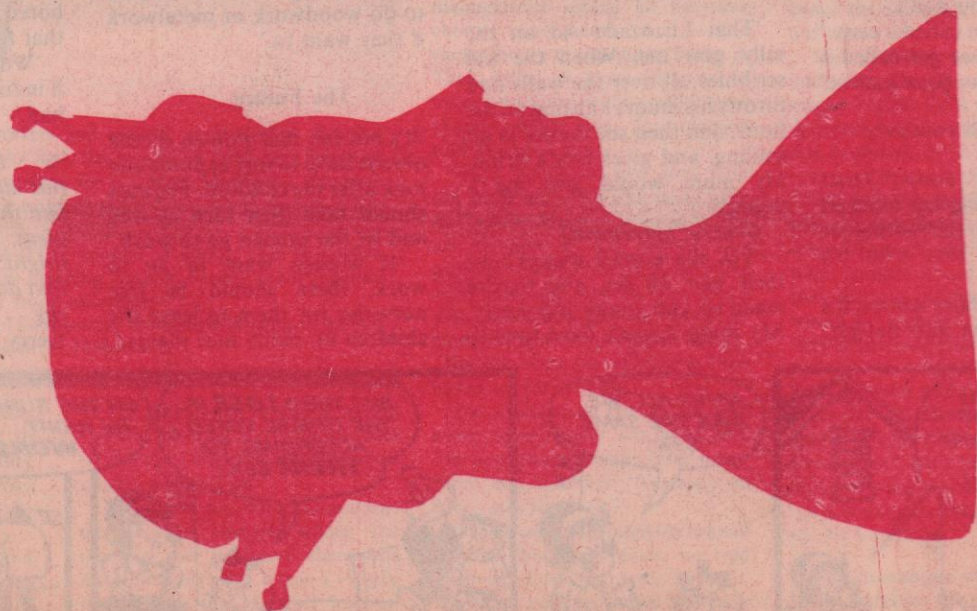
Gerry Norris.



STUFF

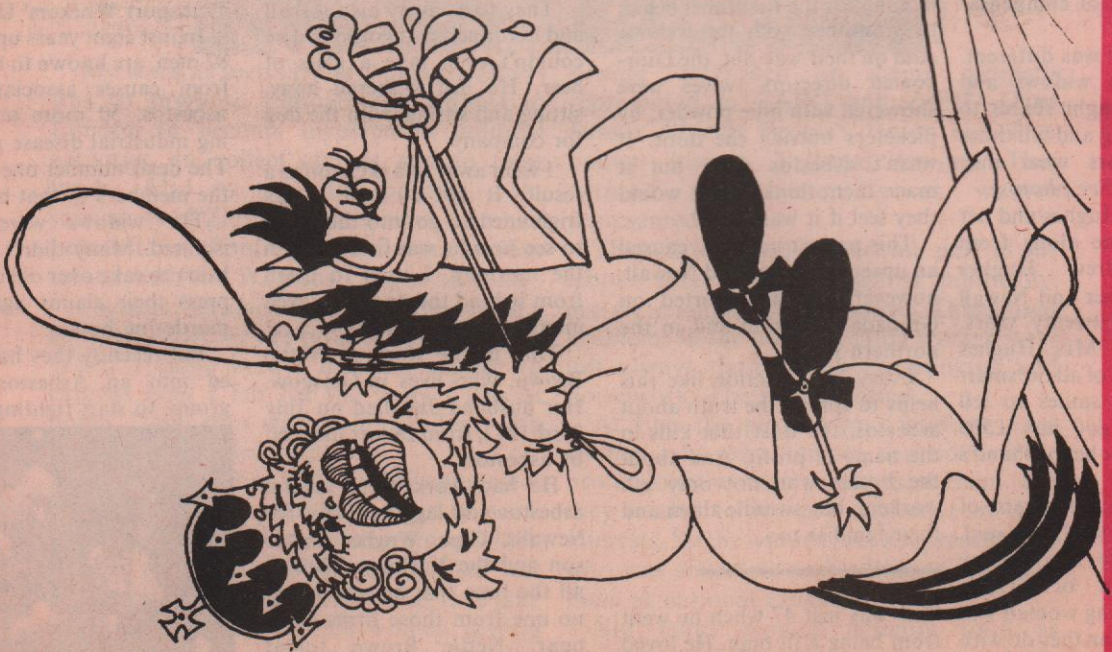
THE

JUBILEE



A LESSON IN HISTORY

Sitting astride her horse the Queen met Mabel, an agricultural worker.
What are you doing here? the Queen demanded.
What are you doing here? Mabel replied.
I own this palace and all this land that you can see.
Who gave it to you then? asked the intrepid Mabel.
My father, replied the Queen.
And who gave it to him?
His father,
And what about him: who gave it to him?
His father.
And so the Queen and Mabel recounted the course of history until they
reached the beginning.
And who gave it to him? Mabel asked for the umpteenth time.
He won it in a battle, replied the Queen haughtily.
Get off your horse then, and I'll fight you for it!



Womens
VOICE

First they kill the men then they rob the widows



There is no cure for asbestosis, the disease you get from inhaling asbestos dust. It takes hold of you without your knowing anything is wrong. It takes years to develop. But then it can kill very fast.

The deadliest fibres are those so small you can't see them.

Asbestos also brings on other forms of cancer.

Not only workers are at risk. There have been cases of women dying from asbestosis who have never worked with the stuff. It may have wafted in the window from nearby factories. It may have come from the many domestic appliances like hairdriers and ironing boards that contain asbestos.

The directors and shareholders of Turner and Newall got a big surprise at their annual meeting on April 21st in Manchester.

Each year they meet to celebrate the flow of profits from asbestos. This year the figure was £35 million. They pat themselves on the back for money saved by their lawyers, whose job is to swindle workers and widows out of compensation.

Only this year was different. Some of those widows and workers had bought shares to go to the meeting and tell those smarmy directors what they think of them. (See photos).

Mrs Katherine Hughes and her family had come along from Glasgow. Andrew Hughes worked for Turner and Newall on and off for twenty years. Before he died. Mrs. Hughes stood up in front of all the smart suits and smug smiles to tell how she had got just £500 compensation for her husband's death.

'I didn't even get a card of sympathy from you', she said. 'I'm expected to live on my widows pension of £13.85. What about young women with children? What can they do with £500? I sat up with my husband night and day for three weeks when he was dying. I hope none of you ever see a man dying of asbestosis. None of you know what I went through.'

And the point was

dramatically illustrated when the women presented Mr Hardy, the director in charge of health and safety, with forty daffodils, each bearing the name of a man the firm has murdered.

But that wasn't the last of the embarrassment for the creeps of Turner and Newall. Some of the other shareholders, who were amazed at what they were hearing for the first time, began to sympathise with the widows. And on their way out, the Dior-coated directors' wives were showered with blue powder, by picketers outside the door. It wasn't asbestos dust, but it made them think. What would they feel if it was them?

This protest not only caused an upset at Turner and Newall, however. It was reported on Granada television and in the northern press.

Every bit of action like this helps to spread the truth about asbestos, the dust that kills in the name of profit. And about the bosses who not only kill workers, but swindle them and their families too.

"Jas was just 47 when he went from being a fit man. He loved dancing and football. And in the mornings he would watch for the bus coming round the corner, run out of the house and sprint down the three flights of stairs and catch it.

Then all of a sudden he took

this pain and went into hospital. That was just after the new year. I was told he had a cancerous fluid in his lung.

'He was a changed man. He couldn't walk. His hair went grey. His legs were as thin as a child's. It was pathetic. I used to hope that I'd never have to look on him again. That's what it does to you.

'They took away his football and his dancing. It got so bad he couldn't even take a glass of beer. He just withered away, sitting and sitting, with the dog for company.

'I went away to a skeleton as a result. It got so bad I was frightened to go into the room to see how he was first thing in the morning. I used to listen from behind the door. In seven months he was dead.'

This is the story of Nettie Brown, who lives in Glasgow. Her husband Jas died on July 23rd 1972, from cancer induced by asbestos.

He had worked for several asbestos and lagging firms, for Newalls, Cape, Wrights Anderson and the Norbury. Though all the time that he was dying, no one from those firms came near. Nettie Brown found herself eventually entitled to just £5.33 a week. Her rent alone was £3. So she had to find a job. Like many other asbestos widows, she came to the conclusion she'd be kicking up daisies before any compensation would

be paid out. But anyway, what could compensate for the murder of her man?

Who could make up for those seven months of agony, watching him die?

Nettie Brown is just one of hundreds of asbestos widows. Her husband was a member of Glasgow's 7/162 insulation workers branch of the Transport Workers' Union.

In just eight years up to 1973, 82 men, are known to have died from causes associated with asbestos. 50 more are receiving industrial disease pensions. The dead number one in ten of the members of that branch.

The widows were always isolated. Many didn't have the heart to rake over old coals and press their claims against the murdering bosses.

But recently they have formed into an Asbestos Action group, to start fighting back.



Picture: Phil McCowen

Tendai Walker comes from Zimbabwe (Rhodesia). For years the black people of Zimbabwe have been fighting a guerilla war against the white ruling class. After she came to London to study at the Polytechnic of Central London, Tendai became secretary for Womens' Affairs in the London Branch of the African National Congress.

Alison Kirton interviewed her for Womens Voice.

FIGHT FOR FREEDOM Women in Zimbabwe



Picture: Angela Phillips (IFL)

My work as secretary of Women's affairs was to organise Zimbabwean women in London to become involved in political activities, to collect clothes and to raise funds. Also to raise the political consciousness of Zimbabwean women who had been left out of politics, and to work in close liaison with the Womens League at home.

I became involved because I come from a country where we are politically oppressed. When I came here I had the chance to express how I felt for the years I was at home. I met men with political ideas with whom I could discuss politics.

As a black woman I felt doubly oppressed. In Zimbabwe our men have to go to work and take orders from white women which they have to obey. This makes them feel frustrated. When they come home, they take this frustration out on their women, getting drunk, refusing women money, even beating them up. It has taken a long time for many women to realise that it's not the men's nature, it is the evil system that is causing this.

When the guerilla war started in 1966, women encouraged their sons to go and train as guerilla fighters. They started

getting interested in being properly represented in ZAPU and ZANU (Zimbabwe African People's Union and Zimbabwe African National Union). They wanted their interests as women represented.

They also started to become part of the labour force and to organise politically, mainly in religious organisation. This caused problems in the home because women were not always there to do the cooking and housework. The men objected.

At first the peasant and working class women, who were illiterate, depended on the professional women to represent them. But they tended to be very subjective in their interests. So the women sent a representative who was articulate and willing to represent them at national executive level.

Not many women actually train as freedom fighters—their rôle is mainly nursing and teaching. But one Zimbabwean girl is at present training as a pilot in Ethiopia in a scheme for Zimbabweans.

As you know it is very difficult to organise politically in the open at home, but the women were very clever, they knew many tricks that the men were unaware of. They



As the dwindling white population mobilise for their last stand and white women ape their military gestures, the women of Soweto point the way for neighbouring Zimbabwe.

BUY FOR THE BOYS ON THE BORDER

Help keep Rhodesia Super and Safe

RHODESIA

Part of the proceeds from all goods carrying the Rhodesia Super symbol goes to the Border Patrol Welfare Fund!

wanted to organise a large rally in the Stadium in 1976 in Salisbury where African National Congress leaders would address the people. They called it a religious conference—something accepted by the government—they didn't know the motive was political. The conference was a great success, 30,000 people attended. The executive members gave their speeches, camouflaged in religious terms, but everyone knew what they meant. This success was due to the women and the youth league who mobilised the people. Each woman was given 'a line' of houses to organise.

Also when Lord Goodman went to Zimbabwe he was met at the airport by a demonstration organised by the Women's League telling him that they were going to get Zimbabwe liberated by the bazooka.

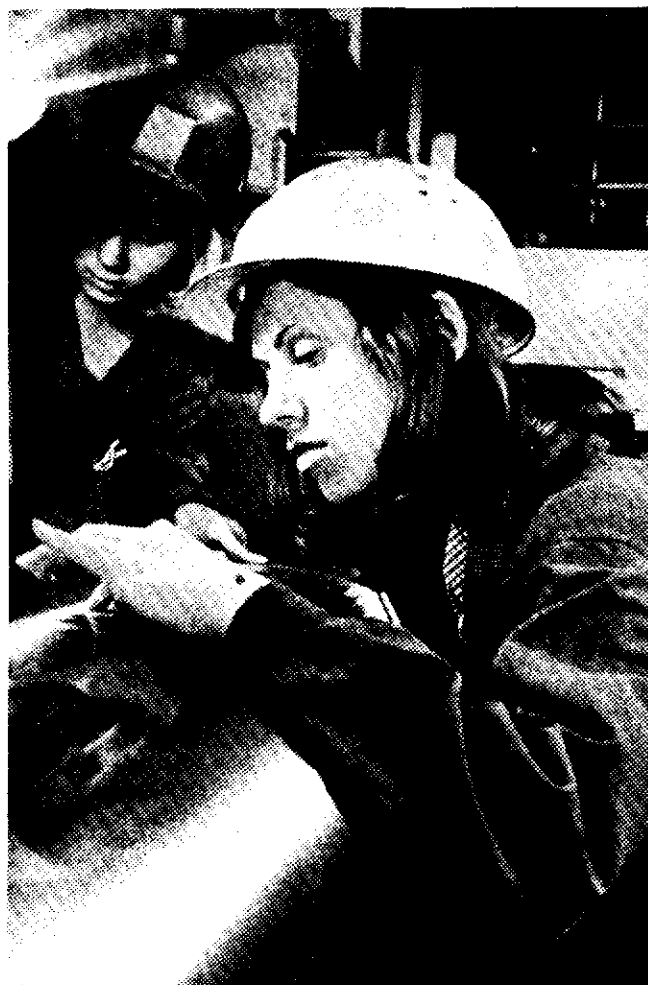
The struggle will definitely have an effect on the liberation of women. Women won't just sit back and assume their traditional role as housewives and mothers, when they have done so much. The Algerian women have been betrayed and I don't know how Frelimo women are coping. I hope that after liberation women's interests, especially their domestic interests will be catered for with nurseries, creches, and paid maternity leave. Women will have to go out to work more and become involved in the organising at work.

After national liberation hopefully there will be a nucleus of people who will build a socialist party to fight for the total liberation of our people. At the moment our leaders are middle class, they are nationalists and not socialists. Also our country is in the grip of the multi-national companies, especially the mining companies. It is in their interests to build up and support a black ruling class who will make sure that capitalism continues in Zimbabwe.

But we have seen how the women organised themselves to make sure their interests were represented, they have provided food and shelter for the guerilla fighters, they have organised resistance. This is the beginnings of class struggle and our leaders won't get away with betraying our people.



Womens Liberation at Marxism 77



A course on Womens Liberation and the Struggle for Socialism

- A new view on Engels
- The family, capitalism and womens oppression
- Working womens struggles in the 1970's
- The Liberation of women

Each lecture will be followed by questions and discussion, and workshops on related topics.

Other courses on: Literature and Revolution; Marxism; Labour History; Revolutions of the 20th Century; Marxist Economics.

With debates, guest speakers, music, films.

July 1-8, at the Polytechnic of North London.

If you want to be there write to: Marxism 77, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2, enclosing £5 for the full course.

Organised by NOISS. Everyone welcome.

YOUR RIGHTS



CHILD BENEFITS

The new Child Benefit scheme came into operation on 21 April this year. It replaced the old system of Family Allowances, and the Interim Child Benefit Scheme for single parent families.

Anyone 'who is responsible for one or more children in any week shall be entitled to' child benefit.

Rates

The rates are:

- £1 for the first child in a two parent family
- £1.50 for the first child in a one parent family
- £1.50 for each other child

Conditions

You don't have to pay stamps. The benefit applies to all families in which there are children under the age of 16 (or children under 19 in full-time education).

But there are residence qualifications—the child or one of its parents must have been in the UK for more than 26 weeks in the last 56 weeks. The person claiming must also have been in Britain for that length of time.

A single parent receiving maintenance only gets £1 for the first child.

Who gets the benefit?

If both parents are living together it is the mother who gets the benefit. Otherwise the person with whom the child is living has priority.

How to claim

You have to put in a new claim for this new scheme. The forms should be available at the Post Office. If they are not—go to the Citizens Advice Bureau and ask how to make a claim by letter. If you haven't got the documents needed for your claim send the form off without them: you can always send them later and your claim will be backdated.

Overwhelmed with gratitude! Don't bother! The Child Benefits, paltry though they are, are not a gift from the State. Getting them from the Labour Government was like getting blood out of a stone.

In summer 1976 Dennis Healey decided to scrap the proposed scheme. There were two reasons—first, it was proposed to reduce tax allowances to pay for the benefits. By reducing men's wages in this way phase 2 of the Social Contract, planned for August 1976 would have been endangered. Secondly, the benefits would have meant a net increase in government spending. And the rule of thumb is: cut where it hurts most women and children first.

Even so the extra tax allowances he gave to married men in April 1977 'for their families' represents an extra 50p a week which could have gone to each child instead of going to childless couples.

The new scheme is a net gain of only £15 a year to each family, however many children there are.

Demands

The Child Benefit Act gives power to vary the rate according to the age of the child. We should demand that this power be used now.

Rates should be increased to something like the EEC levels: For a family with three children, one over the age of twelve the family allowances per month are:

France £62.99
Germany £58.36
Belgium £109.16
Denmark £42.18
Italy £21.06
UK £17.00

Judith Hamilton

The forgotten story of women at war

Once again patriotic propaganda is being used to obscure the real conditions of womens work in wartime. Debra Thom shows how Sylvia Pankhurst and the women of the East End never lost sight of the connection between the struggle for socialism and womens rights.

Women have a hard time of it. The gap between the official attitude to our work—The Sex Discrimination Act, The Equal Pay Act—and what people (women as well as men) really think is enormous. If you're married, the press refers to you as 'pin-money wives'. If you've got kids you're told you should be at home looking after them. And it's certainly difficult enough to find a nursery anyway. In times like the present, when unemployment is growing and welfare provisions are being cut, these attitudes get worse. So the image of a world where women were able to work with pride and pleasure naturally appeals to us. This is the image that is currently being presented of life in the First World War. But in many ways it is a world that never existed.

Digging for whose victory?



Ironic anti-war cartoon from the Workers' Dreadnought

The war began with an appeal for sacrifice. Rich women sacrificed their dresses and their extra servants; the needlewomen and servants were forced to sacrifice their jobs.

Then the war machine began to use up shells faster than the munitions factories could provide them, and they needed more soldiers. Women began to replace men working on buses and trams, on the land; in all sorts of occupations previously closed to them. There was a big battle with men's unions to make sure that women weren't being used as cheap labour and that men replaced would get their job back after the war.

War meant sacrifice. Rich women sacrificed their dresses and their extra servants; needlewomen and servants sacrificed their jobs.

Women's life at home was changed by the war too. For the first time ever some of them earned a decent regular wage and a bit of independence. Women could put their children in creches and get a good hot meal in a canteen for themselves if they worked on munitions. They still had the problem of terrible food shortages, and a Government that was too scared to interfere with the market so that bacon, bread and tea were always running out and fresh vegetables were impossible nine months in the year. And it was women who had to stand up to 3 hours sometimes in a queue.

Probably more important than anything was the constant living with death; most families lost one man, many lost more. The horrible irony was that some of these limited advances for women



One of the canteens set up to feed the people of East London

were won at the expense of workers killing other workers in the trenches.

The exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, the book *Women at War*, and the TV series *Yesterday's Witness* all ignore most of that side of the war. Sylvia Pankhurst gets a mention in the book but she's overshadowed by her mother and sister who put all their energies into urging men to sign up as soldiers and women to take their places. Sylvia Pankhurst fought hard for women's rights amid all this froth of patriotism. When women were unemployed she set up a workshop making toys, and went on delegations to trade union leaders about government workrooms paying the unemployed a starvation wage. When women were allowed into munitions factories she agitated for the government to stick to its promise of equal pay for doing men's work.

Limited advances for women were won at the expense of workers killing other workers in the trenches.

She opposed the war all along the line. She could see and argue in her paper 'Workers Dreadnought' that the war and women's rights weren't separate questions at all. She set up a nursery, a mother and infant clinic, and a canteen, and the headquarters of the Workers Suffrage Federation, a converted pub renamed the Mothers Arms, became a place for women to meet. By the time the war was over and the vote granted to women over 30, she had realised as thousands were also to do, that the vote wasn't that important. Most of the things we have gained since then have taken long struggles.

As well as Sylvia Pankhurst they ignore the rent strikers of Glasgow, Munitions workers who struck against being 'labour conscripts' or refused to leave their hostels when the Russian front was closed at the end of 1917 and they were booted out of their jobs. They ignore the strikes for equal pay. They ignore the massive growth of women's union membership and the self confidence in organisation that that showed. They ignore the small thanks the brave and courageous got who had not been at the front but had daily risked their lives on TNT, camatol, on detonators. We need to know about their bravery and their struggles.

Women's May Day

Women's Dreadnought
May 22 1915

In East London,

SUNDAY, MAY 30th,

PROCESSIONS FROM

Beckton Road, Canning Town ... 3 p.m.

East India Dock Gates ... 3.30 p.m.

GREAT DEMONSTRATION

In VICTORIA PARK at 5 p.m.

This will be the Third Anniversary of Women's May Day in East London, which was first held in 1913.

In the midst of War it is more than ever necessary that working women should demonstrate their solidarity and determination in the struggle for political and economic emancipation. It is more than ever necessary that working men should stand by their sisters in the Labour World. The Resolution that will be moved at the Demonstration is as follows:—

1915. Womens May Day demonstration in East London: for socialism, equal pay and the vote.

When womens jobs dried up Sylvia Pankhurst set up a toy workshop



NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

	male	female
Membership	357,942	267,221
Executive members	61	5
Officials	174	17
TUC delegates	69	5

NALGO organises workers in the public services: in local government, (60 per cent of its members) gas, electricity, health, water.

The union is mostly organised into workplace branches. In this the key figure is the branch secretary. Branches are managed by Branch Executive Committees, comprising branch officers (elected by the branch members) and departmental representatives (elected from members in their departments).

Shop steward organisation exists only in a few branches.

Generally women are poorly represented on branch committees, although they comprise 40 per cent of the membership.

The National Executive Council (some 60 members) is elected by members via a postal ballot on a District basis.

The present General Secretary is Geoffrey Drain, who is elected for life by the NEC.

There is an annual conference which determines national policy. There are no creche facilities provided.

NALGO was against the James White Abortion Amendment Bill

Two years ago the union produced a report on Equal Rights (to mark International Womens Year). But nothing much has been done with its findings.

Barry White

As women who go out to work will know, most trade unions are mainly run by men, for men; and in many cases, the union appears to by a remote body.

For members of Nalگو these facts are painfully clear. Our union is still mainly run by men on very high grades (Town Clerks)

It is mainly for this reason that the *Socialist Workers Party* calls for the building of rank & file groups within all unions. In Nalگو, we have a small but active rank & file group called the *Nalگو Action Group*, with branches all over the country. Our task is to try to involve all members in taking an active role in the union and making sure it represents their interests. For us, at the moment, this means mounting a real fight back against the Cuts in public spending and foking the union leadership to back our demands.

A lovely idea, you might say, but how do you start? In Sheffield, 2½ years ago there was one N.A.G. Member. Now there are 30, with considerable support from members who won't yet commit themselves to the group. We contacted people by leafletting every union meeting and every possible workplace, by continually chatting to people about their roles as trades unionists, and by inviting them to meetings which we tried to make lively, informative & interesting.

Last Summer, we decided that part of the reason that our fellow workers were apathetic about fighting the cuts was that they didn't know what cuts were happening So we decided that, despite our small numbers and lack of money, we *had* to try to produce a series of bulletins showing people how the cuts would affect them. We were also

agreed that this bulletin should be aimed, not only at Nalگو members, but also at the hundreds of council workers in other unions

Our first effort was a 12 page 'Stop the Cuts' Bulletin, which listed every single cut (29 in all) that we knew about within the local authority; pointed out the effect these could have on

people; explained why the cuts were happening; and, most important of all, told people some of the ways they could fight back. We sold nearly 600 copies

We are selling the bulletins at 2p. each. The impressive sounding 12 pages were made up by folding 3 sheets of ordinary, foolscap duplicating paper, printed both sides. With the aid of a 'stylo' we were able to draw cartoons on the stencils, which made the bulletin much more readable. Total cost for 600 copies was in the region of £5-£6.

However, bulletins such as ours could and should be produced by groups of housewives and sold on housing estates, as well as being put out by and for public sector employees. (Your local S.W.P. Branch will help with duplicating, technical advice, etc.)

We can fight the cuts, but only if we all join together. The Sheffield NAG bulletins are a drop in the ocean, but if the idea is taken up, we could have some *real* effect.

By the way. The whole thing in Sheffield was started by a woman so don't say you can't do it!

Carole Dale
Sheffield Nalگو

n a l g o



Picture: John Sturrock (REPORT)

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One woman's fight for a decent education

When he was 6 years old I was asked by the head teacher to let Paul, my son, see the school psychologist as he was a bit slow with his reading but nothing to worry about, so I agreed. The Psychologist did an IQ test on Paul then said he was of normal intelligence. He had only been at school 12 months and did not like it very much but he would be alright when he settled down.

Everything was alright until she saw him again 14 months later. This time his IQ test told her he was thick.

Two days after seeing him she sent for me to go to her office and told me she had got a better picture of Paul as she had had a talk to the Headmaster, and she had come to the conclusion that Paul had brain damage. Both her and the headmaster thought it would be better if Paul went to a special school. I told her I did not agree. If there was anything wrong with Paul he would have shown some other signs which he did not. He was quite forward as a baby. I never had anything to worry about until he started school with those stupid IQ tests.

I went to my own doctor who sent me to see a specialist at the hospital with Paul who did all the tests and could not find anything wrong with him.

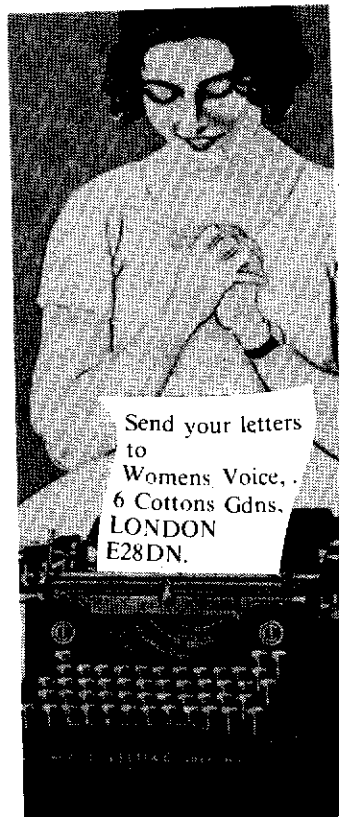
So for the next four and a half years I was taking him to the hospital, seeing different doctors and child psychologists, and not one of them could find anything wrong with him. They all told me not to let him go to the special school. All he needed was remedial teaching.

But during that 4½ years I kept having to go to the school to argue it out with the head teacher. He still wanted Paul to go to a special school. He told me I was spoiling his chances of any education. Yet when the children were doing any lessons Paul was told *you can't do this* go and tidy those books. So the other children got to know Paul couldn't do this, or couldn't do that. Kids started calling him a dunce. I complained to the head. Paul must learn to take no notice, I was told.

Paul hit a child for it. So I was told by the Head. Paul is aggressive which is proof he needs that other school.

During the last 6 months at that school I heard they were getting a remedial teacher. The doctors at the hospital said Paul needed remedial teaching and they sent reports to that effect to the Education Department and school. I went to ask the Head if Paul was going in to remedial classes and was told NO, there were other kids needing it more.

I went mad, but he got in that class. Anyway in September of last year he changed school and went to the senior boys at the age of 11 yrs 11 months. He went straight into the remedial class. He loves the school and is very happy. In January I got a note from his teacher. He has caught up over 2 years reading and



writing in less than 5 months!

By the way, before Paul left the other school he was discharged from the hospital. They said Paul had had enough. He had seen so many doctors it had started to affect him. He thought he was dying so I had to explain it was because he was slow with his reading and they were trying to find out why. Paul said 'so they think I am crackers, don't they' which did hurt me.

Well the first school got to know Paul had been discharged from the hospital so then I got a letter from the psychologist: could he see Paul. I went along to see him and argued

it out with him. He told me I must be a hard woman or they would have broken me down before now. I managed to stop them from sending a letter to Paul's new school by picking up the phone and telling him to go to hell. But now they have no reason to see Paul. He is doing so well and I must be the happiest woman in Pontefract.

So please more remedial teachers and any parent in the same position as me please fight them and good luck. I don't think I am the only one to have a child treated like this.
J Harbland
Pontefract

Novel ideas

I'M a member of the BookMarks club. I pay £4.50 every three months, and in return I get lots of books. Books that would cost me far more than that if I bought them in the shops.

The Dispossessed by Ursula Le Guin (Panther) is one of the books that came this month, and it's so good that I want to recommend it to everyone.

It's a science fiction novel and very exciting. But instead of going on about robots and ray guns, it explores what life would be like in a society where people co-operated instead of competing with each other. Where children are cared for

by the whole community. Where couples only stay together if they want to and no man *owns* a woman. Where there are no rules except the one rule of solidarity.

It's a fast moving novel that doesn't tell you what to think, but tickles your ideas as you turn the page to find out what happens next.

Well worth 75p and a few hours of your time.

To find out more about the Bookmarks club write to: Bookmarks Club, c/o 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

Elana Dallas,
North London

We often receive long letters or articles in response to articles we have printed. This month we are printing several of these in this extended letters section. We always want to hear from you. Write to us, long or short.

Cutting the grass

Those bloody cuts are everywhere.

On 'Good Friday' I visited the Exmoor Park Information Office in North Devon. The very helpful whitehaired old lady behind the counter nearly leaped over it when I happened to mutter something about the cuts. She said that since last autumn she was paid only as a 'part-timer' (18 hours a week!).

The park service expected her to open only 3 hours each day—in the afternoon and **not at all** on Bank Holidays or Saturdays. That is, the only times when working people could actually visit a park. But she knew from years of experience as a 'full-timer' that students, hitchhikers and people who just wanted

to walk over the Moors were most likely to want information in the mornings; whilst it was mainly coach parties and day trippers in cars who turned up after lunch.

Since she really loves Exmoor and cares about people, she 'voluntarily' opens the office every weekday morning and especially on Bank Holidays. Once again, a woman is doubly exploited because she must either accept the pruned government cuts or sacrifice herself at low pay to keep our social services going.

Fight the cuts and stuff the Jubilee!

Sherrl Yanowitz
Camden, London.

Welcome to England 1938

I remember well, it was the year 1938. Hitler marched into Austria and from then on the days were numbered for my husband and myself. We both did not fit into the new order. My husband had to leave Austria in the Autumn of 1938 for Riga, the capital of Latvia. I stayed on in Vienna until December of the same year. Being hard pressed by the Nazis either to divorce my husband or leave my country I chose the latter.

I got in touch with an agency which arranged domestic jobs in England. I made an application for a post to a family with three children in Northwich, Cheshire. Things went from bad to worse, so I left Vienna for Amsterdam where I stayed with very kind friends. I received my permit for which I was waiting in Holland. With great hopes I stated my unknown journey to the land of my adoption.

After a few days in London and with an awful feeling of apprehension I took up my job in Northwich. Unable to express myself in their language, I had no choice but to do all the work I was asked to, like cleaning, cooking, washing, shopping and fetching the children from school. It meant I had to get up at 6.30am and finish work about 9pm in the evening. Sunday afternoons were free.

All this for the statutory amount of 15 shillings per week. Up to 25 shillings was the rate for the job for general domestic maids, foreign or British.

An Austrian refugee friend of mine who worked for a titled, but impoverished, lady as a domestic servant didn't fare any better. In the end she ran away and came to London to look for a job and she found one. But because she left her employment before her domestic permit had expired the lady reported her to the police. She was traced at her new job and asked to return until the permit ran out. But she refused because she was treated like a slave. In the end she found work in a London hospital as a cleaner.

My husband worked in a factory as a trainee, since refugees were not allowed to take up any work they liked. After six months I had had enough of being exploited by people who took advantage of my unfortunate and unhappy situation and left for London to join my husband. A few months later the war broke out.

Theresia Tupler.

Women for sale

After reading the pieces on Cypriot women in North London I thought it would be interesting to add a bit on the position of Greek women in Greece.

Although they are not in the situation of being refugees from their own country, Greek women share an equally downtrodden place in Greek society. As in North London thousands of Greek women work as dress makers in their own homes—often making as little as 15 drachmas (about 25p) a garment. They work in the same cramped conditions, often squeezing the

large machines into the hallway as an alternative to working in the children's bedrooms. They make, say, 20 identical dresses, send them back to the shop or factory owner and in return receive another load. Not until they have worked for a period of about 3 months do they get paid for their work—and they pay their own electricity bills—often very high as a result of using these machines all day and into the night, the women fitting in the work in between housework and looking after the children.

For women who go out to work in factories their day is even worse. Starting at 6.45am they work through until 2 or 3 in the afternoon. A friend of mine who worked in a famous biscuit factory had to stand for 7 hours continually working her machine—if she sat down or if she dared eat a biscuit coming off the line, she was stopped the day's wages (about £2.50). You can imagine these conditions are bad enough for a normal healthy woman but this girl suffers from permanent anaemia and should never do a standing up job. Another girl, Vaso, was about 2 months pregnant and worked in a detergent factory. The women workers there wore no masks which meant that they were continually breathing in the dust from the raw detergent. Every day, many girls had fainting fits and sickness, and they weren't all pregnant! We don't know if that dust will affect Vaso's baby but she has to keep working there because she won't find another job.

Also the dowry (proika) system is still upheld today in Greece. In no less than 32 articles of the Greek Civil Code daughters may 'demand' that their fathers produce a dowry suitable to their economic and

social standing! Needless to say, in reality, the daughter has very little choice as to whether or not she gets her man through an arranged marriage.

In Athens it exists, in a more subtle form, but nevertheless a price paid for the object ranges from whole estates among the rich to the one goat or sheep, invaluable to the poor peasants. I've kept this one example, which I think women will agree, is as vivid as an advert can be. 'Sturdy, 45 year old woman capable of performing manual work, virgin and with proika of 100 olive trees and 20 acres. . .'

Jacqy Hayman
West Middlesex.

Don't patronise

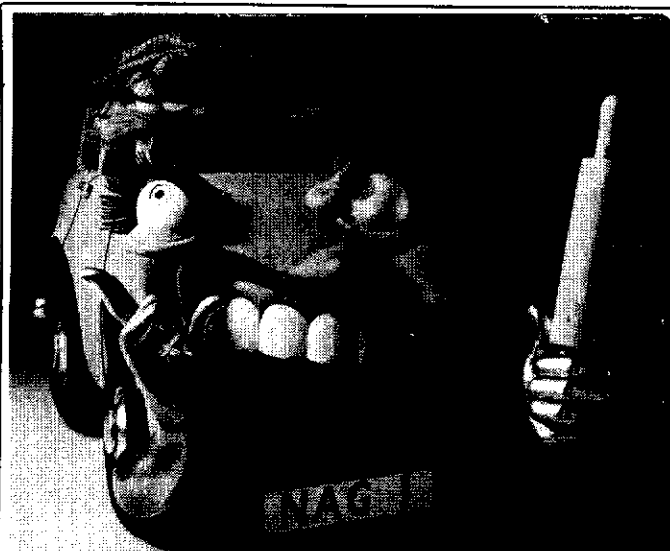
The article in issue 4 on the contraceptive drug being tested on women in Glasgow was mostly very good and very informative.

One complaint—the writer talks about 'women who are too lazy or careless to use the pill effectively'. I'm sure that if she lived in a place like Blackhill with four kids under five, not enough money to pay the rent or buy food and a husband on the dole, then she'd be 'too lazy or too careless'. And the same goes for all of us.

Please don't be patronising. Perhaps that's not how it was meant but that's how it came across. There are reasons why women 'can't or won't use the pill effectively' Let's tackle those reasons and not just look for solutions to the symptoms.

Keep up the good work.

Nancy Kelly
Tower Hamlets SWP



"I married the wrong car."

MAZDA



I enclose an advert which appeared in the TV Times recently. So women are now no better than cars!

Also I heard this riddle the other day—not one person I've spoken to has got the answer—it really shows how the system has trained us to mentally discriminate against women.

'A man and his son are involved in a car crash. The man is killed and his son is rushed into hospital for an emergency operation. When he is taken into the theatre the surgeon comes in and says 'I can't operate on this boy—he's my son'. What is the surgeon to the boy?'

The answer is, of course, his mother.

Most people, including myself, were completely stumped. The very fact that a woman could be a surgeon never entered our heads, and most people I asked were fellow revolutionaries or certainly people who don't discriminate.

I hope you will find both of these things useful for Womens Voice.

Pete Halsall
Ormskirk SWP

"For the first few months, we were so happy together. Then things started to go wrong. Hardly a week went by without her demanding something new. I'm not made of money; I found it impossible to keep her in the manner to which she was accustomed. She became terrible in the mornings. Coughing, spluttering, generally out of sorts. She always did like a drop of 5-star. As time passed, she developed an unhealthy taste for it. And to cap it all, she's unfaithful. Lately, she's spending all her time with some mechanic or other."

plays

'PIRATE JENNY' theatre group is now taking bookings for a new show against the Benyon Bill, called 'Bouncing Back with Benyon'.

It is a 20 minute play showing how ordinary women will be affected by the new anti-abortion bill if it goes through Parliament.

It is designed for use at a trade union, Women's Voice or NAC meeting—anywhere you can use it to benefit the campaign against the Benyon Bill. Available from April 14 - May 14.

It can be used in the following way: ask your branch at the next meeting to make special arrangements to have half an hour on the subject of the Benyon Bill and the campaign against it.

We would do the show and then you can give a swift run down on the bill and what you expect the branch to do about it, eg getting a big delegation behind your banner on the May 14 demo.

Contact us NOW for all bookings, however provisional, particularly if you would like to arrange performances outside London. Fees negotiable.

To: Pirate Jenny, 76 Oxford Gdns, London W10. Tel: 01-960 5875.

COUNTERACT is going on tour with their play on nursery provision and the cutbacks, 'The Double Shift'.

It lasts 80 minutes, and a shorter (40 minute version) is available for lunchtime bookings.

May 2-8: Scotland: Dundee and Glasgow

Contact them at: Counteract Federation, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London, EC1. 01-251 4977

conference

ABORTION and Feminism. May 8. A conference to be held in East London for all women interested in discussing how and why we struggle for abortion.

details from Hackney NAC.

SCOTTISH WOMENS LIBERATION CONFERENCE. May 21st-22nd at Tillydrone Community Centre, Dill Rd., Tillydrone, Aberdeen. For further details contact Fiona Forsyth, Nethertulloch, Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire. Tel: Oldmeldrum 714. We hope to keep fee at £2 inclusive; pre-registration helpful.

demo

NATIONAL Abortion Campaign Demonstration. May 14 Beat the Benyon Bill!

know

your rights

REPRESENTATION in Industrial Tribunals. May 12. Courses at Friends House, Fuston Rd, London NW1, organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties. Details from Ann Sedley, NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1 (01-278 4575).

WHAT'S ON

meetings

ABERDEEN Womens Voice group is holding a series of meetings on the politics of Womens Voice/Socialist Worker, at 163 King St (first floor) a 7.30pm.

Tuesday 10 May: **Violence**

Tuesday 14 June: **Equal pay and sex discrimination.**

Tuesday 16 August: **Racism.**

Tuesday 13 September: **The family under capitalism and under socialism.**

Tuesday 11 October: **Radical feminism v. revolutionary feminism.**

For further information contact: Angela Maxfield, Aberdeen 26951.

EQUAL PAY AND OPPORTUNITY CAMPAIGN meeting, Wednesday 11 May, 6.30pm, London School of Economics, Room H716, 7th floor, Connaught House, Aldwych, WC2. Speaker: Diana Jenda, Research Officer, USDAW.

EDINBURGH SWP/WOMENS VOICE discussion group meetings on womens politics. Saturday mornings 11.30, Room 6, Trades Council, 14 Picardy Place (top of Leith Walk) All Womens Voice readers welcome.

30 April Single parent families
7 May Hidden from history—women and revolution

CENTRAL LONDON Womens Voice public meeting. Fight for a woman's right to choose. Speakers: Gerry Matthews, Avril Levy, Maggie Dunne.

Friday 6 May, 7pm, Enterprise pub, Chalk Farm Road (next to Chalk Farm tube)

Creche provided phone Vera 01-267 5059.

action

NORTH LONDON WOMENS VOICE GROUP: Defeat Benyon's Bill! Motorcade and various street meetings, Saturday May 7th. Phone (Mandy 1607 8067) or Gerry (801 0988) for further details.

picket

COM CON LABOUR MP (WANDSWORTH AREA) VOIED FOR BENYON! Come and picket his surgery with us! Friday 6 May 6.30-7.30pm, 611 Gartlett Lane, Off Looting Broadway, Joint S W London Womens Voice S W NAC activity.

COVENTRY WOMENS VOICE MEETING FIGHT THE BENYON BILL!

Elastic Inn, Cox Street (by Pool Meadow) Wednesday 11 May, 8pm.

DEFEAT BENYON'S BILL! Joint S W London Womens Voice, S W NAC public meeting, Wednesday 11 May 7.30pm, Clapham Manor Baths, Clapham Common (nearest tube Clapham Common).

Speakers: Dave Widgey (GP doctor), NCCL plus local speakers. A chance to see Pirate Jenny's new play on abortion 'BOUNCING BACKWARDS WITH BENYON'.

BIRTH LONDON WOMENS VOICE GROUP: Public meeting Monday May 16th, 8.00pm, Stroud Green School, Ennis Road, N4. 'COSTA DEL TRICO'-The Womens Theatre Group play about the long-running equal pay strike, followed by a meeting and discussion on equal pay. All welcome.

CRUMPSALL Socialist Workers Party public meeting: Women & Socialism. Speakers: Ann Robertson (ASTMS steward, Crumpsall Hospital) and Sandy Rose (NATFHE)

Thursday 5 May 8pm Room A11, Abraham Moss Centre.

OXFORD Womens Voice group public meeting 9th May, time and place to be arranged. Details from Christine Hazlewood, Oxford 43305.

disco

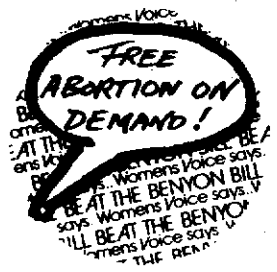
THAMES POLY WOMENS GROUP

Fund Raising Disco. With **Jam Today**, Friday 13 May, Thames Poly Student Bar. Students and Claimants 60p, others 75p. Funds to Grunwicks Strikers, NAC. Bar extension.

workshop

WORKERS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION SCHOOL, WOMEN & WORK. 1977, 10am-4pm, Sat May 28th, YMCA GI, Russell St. Speakers: Philippa Langton, Sarah Benton, Sally Groves.

NEW WOMENS STUDIES COURSE at North London Poly, Ladbroke House Highbury Grove N5. Women and work, women at home, health, the law, womens rights, women and Trade Unions, rape, psychiatry. From April 27th for 10 weeks, Wednesdays 7-9. Free.



Sticky badges, 3 dozen for 50p, including postage.



Metal badge: 10 for £1 post free. Sticky badges 17p including postage.

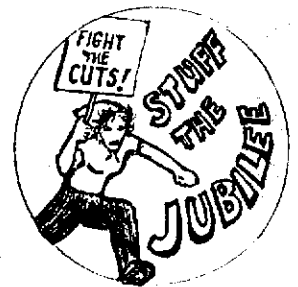
Money with orders to Womens Voice, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2

badges

badges

badges

'Scream for a nursery' badges in green, white and black available from 153 Huntingdon Rd, Cambridge, £4 for 50 post free.



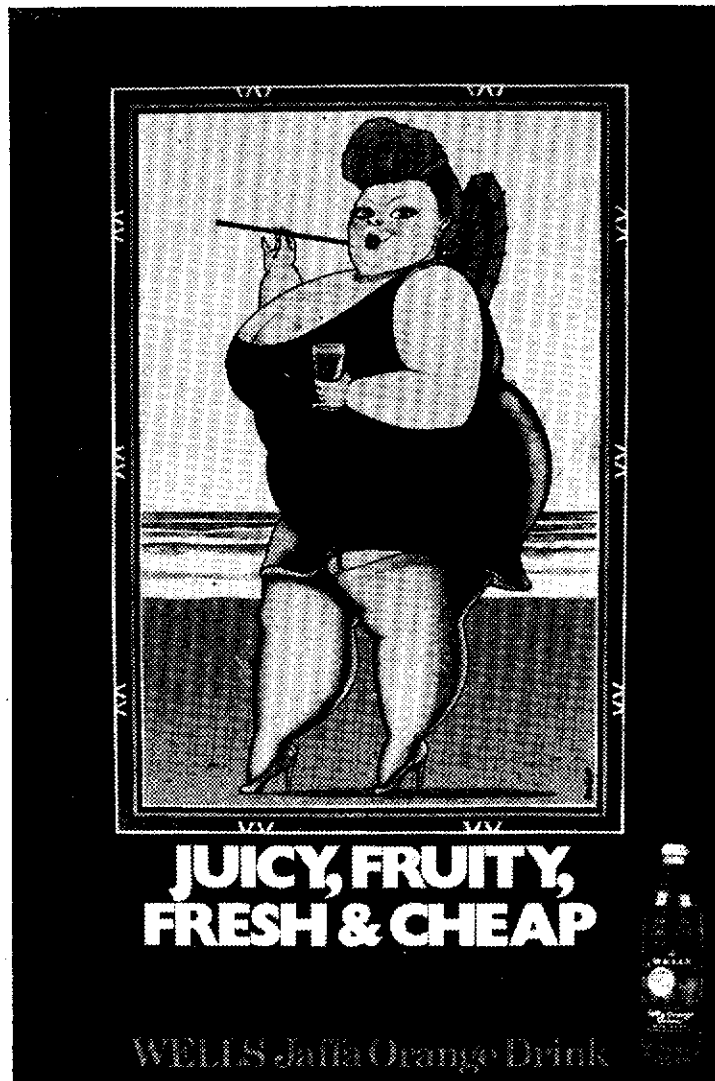
Stuff the Jubilee, fight the cuts!

Badge in red, white and black, 20p post inclusive, 10 for £1.50, 100 for £13.50. Money goes to Save Socialist Worker Printshop. Cash with orders please. To Sherril Yanowitz, 116 Fortune Green Rd, London NW6.

A fundraising project by Camden SWP.

Womens Voice abortion posters available, 50p for 20 including postage from Womens Voice, 6 Cottons Gardens, London, E2.

DOES THIS AD MAKE YOU SICK?



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