

Womens VOICE

Womens magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

April '82

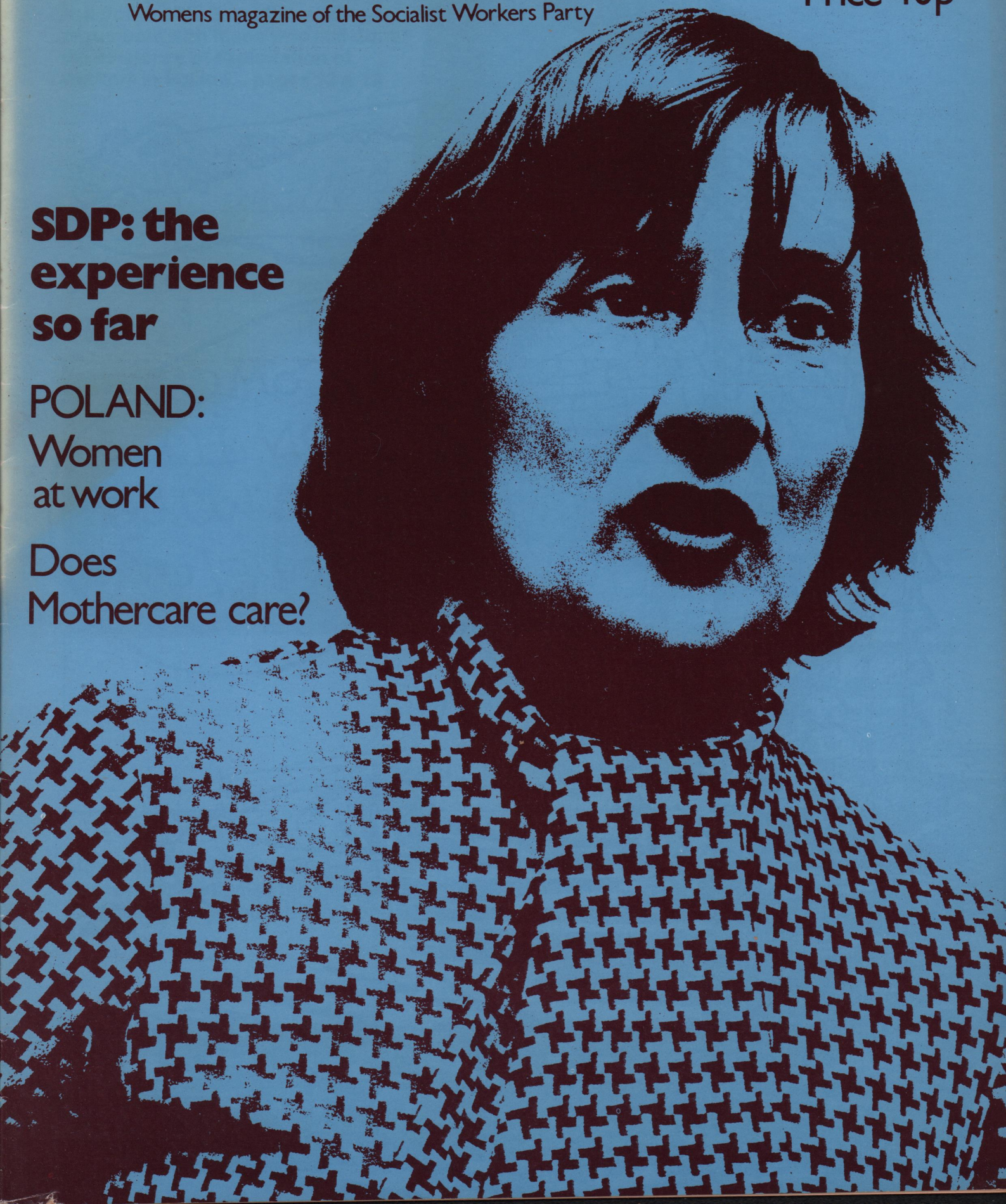
Issue 62

Price 40p

**SDP: the
experience
so far**

**POLAND:
Women
at work**

**Does
Mothercare care?**



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Skegness '82—the socialist paradise by the sea!

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Every year the SWP organises a holiday weekend, with meetings, discussions on every aspect of politics, films, live enter-

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Easter weekend 9-12 April

In this issue...

Polish women workers talk about life in a Polish Mill. Essential reading for arguments with those who still doubt the existence of exploitation of workers in Poland... pages 12 & 13



The SDP—just sheep in wolves' clothing. Read the experience of women local government workers in the aftermath of the Islington council strike...pages 14 & 15



Mini mobster? Who's to blame? Anna Paczuska investigates the causes of violence amongst our children pages 16 & 17

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Back cover drawing by Jayne Spittle

Readers will have noticed that we have had to increase the price of the magazine this month. We apologise for having to do this. But we are sure our supporters will understand why. Rising costs, postage, phone bills, paper and transport costs have caught up with us again and unfortunately a price rise is our only option.

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London E2.

Keep up pressure to defend abortion rights



Since October 1979, 11 Spanish women have suffered the trauma of court proceedings. They were on trial for having or performing abortions. Abortions in Spain are illegal.

The trial was adjourned amid left wing and feminist opposition, but reopened in June 1981.

Finally the trials are over. 10 of the 11 women were acquitted but one woman was sentenced on three charges to the minimum term of 12 years and 6 months. A staggering sentence, but only a reflection of the job on hand for socialists and feminists to get on with in fighting for safe and legal abortions in Spain.

When we heard about the threat to prosecute Peter Huntingford for defying the Tories latest attacks on abortion rights, the SWP printed and distributed five thousand factsheets, explaining the Tories latest attack on abortion rights. This coupled with weekly coverage in Socialist Worker started to put the wheels in motion for local SWP branches to take up the arguments.

In no time the factsheets were sold out and orders are still piling up for the re-print. About 100 SWP meetings were held on abortion and many workplace bulletins carried the arguments to factories and other places of work. Now, we are getting more reports of pickets of MPs surgeries and street meetings

being called by branches. We need to keep up the pressure on the TUC by calling on them to mobilise within the trade union movement and organise another TUC backed demonstration to defend our limited abortion rights.

The factsheets contain a model resolution to move at your TU organisation, branch, SSC, trades council or Labour Party ward. Below are just two examples of pickets organised by party branches.

EDINBURGH

As soon as we heard of the changes in the abortion law and possible prosecution

of Huntingford and other doctors—the branches in the district had educationals on abortion to get the members up on the arguments.

We've recruited lots of new young members recently and they were really enthusiastic about learning the arguments.

We then decided to hold an SWP picket against the attacks and the students at the art college took responsibility for coordinating it.

We had only one woman member at the college and she very successfully organised around different colleges in Edinburgh and all the SWP branches got involved.

In the end we had a really good picket which caught people going home on Friday night. We made a noisy impact on the city centre. The response from people was great. We were the only people in Edinburgh doing anything around the latest attack and it did us all a lot of good.

Our members gained confidence to take on the arguments, and we were able to involve many new people including women from women's groups in building for the picket. It was good to see the young male comrades so interested in learning the arguments and we had lots of discussion about where power really lies in this society.

At a NALGO meeting we moved the model resolution and nobody voted against it. No one could counter our argument that free abortion is a social necessity in a society that does not allow free choice of anything.

Even though the Department of Public Prosecutions has dropped the charges against

Huntingford, we need to keep a close watch on the availability of abortion on social grounds. We need to keep up the picket of anti-abortionist MPs, anti-abortionist doctors and keep informing workers of what the Tories are attempting to do to a woman's right to free abortion on social grounds.

Maureen Watson
Edinburgh SWP

READING

Reading SWP had an added incentive to build for activity against the most recent attack on abortion rights. Gerard Vaughan who presided over the latest backdoor attack on abortion rights is a local Reading Tory MP.

Activity started with a meeting in the Bulmershe college. It was possible to involve a number of new women outside the SWP in building for the meeting. Further meetings were held in the colleges which were followed by the leafletting of local hospitals. The leaflets raised the demand for free abortion on demand and didn't restrict itself to just defending the '67 Abortion Act.

The hard work culminated in a mass picket of Gerard Vaughan's surgery on 12 March. More than 70 banner waving and chanting women and men including women's group members, NUS members and Labour Party members joined the protest.

Vaughan admitted that abortions granted on social grounds were illegal now, and when confronted with the demand for free abortion on demand, he claimed to be deaf in one ear.
Reading SWP

Our right to
ABORTION
How the law has
been changed...
and what we
can do about it.

A Socialist Worker FACTSHEET 5p

Order your Socialist Worker abortion fact sheet now—they're selling fast!

The fact sheets explain the change in the Abortion Act, the implications and what we can do about it. They cost 5p each, bulk orders are 25 for £1 post free from SW abortion fact sheet, PO Box 82, London E2.



ANGER MOUNTS FOR PAY CLAIM

'I CAN'T afford to live on the money I get now. I just can't carry on.'

Norma Bushby, a staff nurse at the Ealing hospital in West London, queued in the pouring rain last month to speak to her MP about the health service workers' pay claim.

Hospital workers have been offered four per cent, although the government are trying to create divisions amongst them by offering nurses a little bit more — 6.3 per cent.

Norma takes home £60 a week. She explained where the money goes.

'I pay £35 a week for my room in the nurses' home. It's a small room, and I share the kitchen with three other nurses. There's just a two-ring Baby Belling for us all to use. I don't even get a meal at the hospital so I have to buy all my food.

'People think we get our nurses' uniform provided. But it's not quite like that. I have to buy my own tights, and I get through at least three pairs a week with the sort of work we do. I have to buy the regulation-

style shoes — they're about £12 a pair. And then I have to buy my own cardigans and fob watches.'

Norma is planning to get married this summer. Her fiance is also a nurse and she said that when they went to a building society to ask about a mortgage for a house, the person they spoke to laughed when he heard they were nurses. 'He knew what sort of money we're on.'

Norma is in charge of 30 patients on a general medical ward. She works two sets of shifts: 7.30am until 4.15pm, and 12.30pm until nine o'clock.

The work she does is both responsible and heavy. She has to allocate work to the junior nurses, and looks after seven patients herself. 'I clean dirty bums, make beds, take doctors on their rounds, do the medicine rounds, answer the phone, console relatives, do the necessary paper work, translate doctors' jargon to the patients, clean the floors if the patients urinate on them — it goes on and on.'

The government's offer of about six per cent to nurses will mean a take-home increase of about £3.50 for Norma.

'But it's not right that the government is offering more to the nurses. And it's not right that they should be offering a percentage increase. That means the more money you get now, the bigger the increase will be in terms of pounds and pennies. They should be making up our wages to what inflation is — all we're asking for is a living wage.'

Norma said that she thinks the government takes advantage of the dedication of hospital workers to their work and their reluctance to take industrial action. So, she said, they can get away with paying a pittance.

'You see, nurses are bound by principles. If we strike people think we're wrong. But it could come to that this year — people are so angry about wages. We just can't afford to live. I never have a holiday, or nice food to eat.

'The whole thing about nurses being "angels" sickens me.

We're not angels, we're ordinary human beings and we have a right to live like human beings.

'Lots of nurses are leaving the work because of the wages. They're going to work in places like Marks and Spencer because they get more money doing that.

'And the government just doesn't care. They're spending all that money on Trident. People have got to live in this country, and all Trident's good for is destroying it. It's just crazy.'

But Norma said she was still unhappy about voting for a strike. One of her workmates, Lisa Jackson, was more sure: 'I think it's the only thing that will change the government's mind. And now you're getting young nurses coming into hospitals who are angrier and more militant. I'd vote for a strike, but I'd do it reluctantly.'

Lisa was interrupted by a third friend, Kay Hudson. 'I'm going to be the first out of the door', she said.

Matthews workers fight poverty wages

THE 1200 workers at the Bernard Matthews turkey factory — over half of them women — have been on strike for higher wages for five weeks. Women on the picket lines talked to Norwich SWP members about conditions in the factory and their feelings about the strike.

The factory is situated about ten miles from Norwich, right in the countryside. The workers travel to work from all over Norfolk and are picked up in the mornings by the firm's minibuses, which have no heating and are really draughty. 'So we arrive here cold and go straight into the cold!' said one woman striker.

It is split into sections: the burger room, the sausage room: the women we talked to work in the sausage section. These women work a 39½ hour week and the normal rate of pay is £1.71 pence an hour, or £2.05 pence an hour for shift workers. After deductions this works out at £49.18 — including £3.30 attendance bonus. If you're a few minutes late they deduct the lot.

The workers would actually need a 20 per cent wage rise, just to bring them up to the official poverty line. Bernard Matthews had the cheek to offer a 6 per cent rise! He couldn't possibly 'afford' a larger increase for his workers as poor old Bernard only takes home a mere £7,000 a week!

Not only are the wages low but the workers often have to work in cold and disgusting conditions. The women said it's often warmer outside the factory than inside ... and that's with five jumpers on!

The frozen sausages the women have to handle are so cold that the frost penetrates through the flimsy gloves they are given to wear. Making the nerves at the tips of their fingers go dead and blistering their hands. If these blisters are reported by the workers they are just told to go straight to the nurse to get them popped, because nothing must stop production.

Although the women get their gloves free, they have to pay for their special socks and protective boots. The workers have to wear this protective footwear because of the cold and slushy conditions in the factory.

The women feel that most of the time they're 'not people but things', objects to help achieve the largest possible production rate. They are given no identity except their numbers and the hatred they feel for Matthews is intense.

Even normal bodily functions must not get in the way of production. If they want to go to the toilet — they have to wait until the supervisor comes round and ask his permission so that someone can relieve their job. The workers are then allowed three minutes. The women pointed out that this is especially embarrassing when they have periods, to keep having to ask a male supervisor to go to the toilet and how can you change a tampon in three minutes? The management even keep some sort of check on the women's menstrual cycles, presumably to 'catch them out'.

There was a great feeling of solidarity amongst the women we talked to and they were determined to stick the strike out to the bitter end.

When it first started, they never expected it to go on so long. They blame this on the scabs, who are still making production possible. There were 80 scabs working while we were talking.

As one woman said: 'I'd personally rather lose my job than have to work with them again.'

It seems from what these women said that these scabs will get a rough ride when the strike's over and they'd better watch out!

Frances Wardle,
Norwich SWP



Picture: NEIL MARTINSON

Lessons of the Foyles strike

SADLY, the Foyles dispute has failed. From the beginning the fight had little chance of success.

The Foyles' management had years of union-crushing experience and many strong allies and advantages — the police, the Tory government and the fact that Foyles is such a specialist shop.

The dispute was weakened because of inexperienced leadership, the 100 or so scabs (only 25 of the 150 staff joined the union), and the indifference shown by USDAW bureaucrats who, after more than five weeks had passed, finally announced that they couldn't even be bothered to make the dispute official and insultingly offered minimal victimisation pay.

Despite the dismal weather, pickets have been on the doors and handing out leaflets every day and the mass pickets on Saturdays have been well attended.

The 16 sacked union members and all the other people involved have learnt what is meant by 'union bureaucracy', 'scabbing', and union-smashing governments. They have also learnt why it is so essential to have more than a minority of workers politicised enough to understand that to fight for other people's jobs is the same as fighting for your own job, for the basic right to have or join a union, or, in the long run, for a say in the way your life is organised.

As it is, the remaining Foyles staff will continue working with low salaries, appalling conditions and meaningless, arbitrary five month contracts.

They had little to lose by joining or supporting the union. Perhaps the circulation of political bulletins would have helped them see this and would have prepared them more for the next round.

Anti-union? Not these Lucas women

The T Lucas strike against redundancies in Bristol ended in defeat last month. Not without important lessons for trade unionists everywhere.

The strike involved about 200 workers, about 40 of whom were women. When it started a picketing roster was drawn up by the action committee. Unfortunately the women packers were not included on the roster as a group. The action committee were not excluding the women, as such, from picketting. But they gave the impression that it was only the men who were wanted.

Consequently, only one or two women did regular picket duty. The daily pickets continued. The feeling that the other women strikers just weren't interested in picketting wasn't just restricted to the male pickets either.

Things came to a head when a group of about a dozen women visited the

strike office to collect their strike pay slips. When asked by SWP members why they weren't picketting — an argument developed.

The argument centred around what the strike was about and the men's attitudes to the women on strike.

It soon became clear that no-one had really taken the trouble to discuss the strike with the women. From the outset, they felt like they had just been dismissed as irrelevant or worse that they were against the strike.

They complained of lack of information from the action committee. Some said they'd been told that it was better if they didn't picket, in case there was any trouble!

We advised the women to press the action committee to put their names on the picketting roster and to make sure they were given more information.

The next day 12 women turned up on the picket line

as a group, much to the surprise of the men, forming a noisy picket and boosting the morale of the strike no end.

When they found out that women canteen workers who were members of the TGWU were scabbing they organised a picket of 14 women packers to greet them when they tried to get into work. So determined were the women to stop the scabs crossing the picket, that the police were called to escort the scabs through!

The first time in the strike where there looked like there was going to be 'trouble' and the women were behind it!

At a rally called to involve the families of the strikers, encouraged by the new militancy of the women packers, the wives of two strikers told the delegations organiser that they wanted to be involved in the bucket collections at local factory gates. A collection that they

were involved in raised £35 at Rolls Royce Works in Filton a few days later.

Here lies the lesson of the need for the maximum involvement and communication with strikers, and the need to involve not just any women workers in the activity of the strike but also the families.

The Lucas experience just illustrates the crying need for men and women socialists to take up the reactionary views held by many men and women trade unionists that women workers are a potential strike breaking and anti union force not worth bothering about.

The need is to offer explanations and practical ways to build the much needed maximum unity of men and women workers involved at every level of activity and decision-making in any strike.

*Pete Green
Bristol SWP*

Union activists denied jobs at Plesseys

'I've never felt so angry at anything before, the union officials have sold us out.' The angry words of AUEW steward Sadie Shields from the Plessey's capacitor plant in Bathgate, Scotland.

The seven week long occupation for jobs is over. The fight to defend 320 jobs at the threatened Plesseys plant ended bitterly for the 220 mainly women workers active in the occupation.

For the sting in the tail of the announcement—that 80 jobs were to be saved—was conditional on the deal that none of the 220 workers active in the fight would be considered for the jobs on offer.

At a time when support for the occupation was mounting, delegations were being sent out to spread their case, and moves were being made to organise the blacking — essential to put the pressure on Plessey's wealthy management ... the union officials were planning the sell-out.

'The union more or less told us that was it,' Sadie explained. 'It was a case of that's it—make your mind up time. We were left wondering what was happening. Here we were thinking that the people at the top of the union are trained — we were looking towards them to advise us. We're paying them bloody big fat wages to think for us. What a joke.'

'Whether it's the government or the union, when they don't want the blame for something, they put it back to the workforce or the country. And when it goes wrong, WE get the blame, but they think it's alright, because we've had our 'democratic vote'. It's all a big con.'

The women have been promised their redundancy money. But they know that it won't last long. There are no jobs to go to in Bathgate, the place is gradually becoming an industrial wasteland. The workers weren't fighting for redundancy pay —



they were fighting for their jobs.

By backing off, and denying the Plessey's workers the positive leadership they desperately

needed, the union officials have denied a badly needed jobs victory.

Julie Waterson.

OUR POINT OF VIEW

Hang 'em Flog 'em brigade rise from gutters

JUST 10 weeks ago newspapers and politicians were united in demanding longer prison sentences for rapists. Some feminists and even some socialists joined in the outcry.

Now we have the follow up. Scotland Yard produces special figures to show the way crime is rising. Blacks, we are told, are behind much of it. Demands for hanging and birching are back in the news. The Tory Home Secretary is denounced as 'Mr Wetlaw' in the *Daily Mail*—a man they say is dangerously soft on the crime flourishing in Margaret Thatcher's Britain.

The same arguments about longer jail sentences for rapists are now being used by the *Daily Mail* to argue for longer sentences for muggers, more prisons, and a general 'toughening up'.

Now of course rape is a peculiarly horrible and humiliating experience. But the television pictures of the 75 year old pensioner attacked and beaten up in his house also shocked everyone who saw them. It wasn't rape but it was horrible, it was humiliating for the pensioner. His fear and loneliness were used as propaganda for the law and order brigade.

The demand to jail rapists, or muggers, or to birch vandals, or hang murderers, is always presented in terms of the horrible nature of the particular crime. There is no real difference in the argument used about jailing rapists and the argument used about toughening up on muggers or hanging murderers. You might argue about the specific severity of the sentences. But the argument is always put in the same way—this particular crime we are told is particularly horrible and must be dealt with in a particular way.

And it is a very short step from accepting that the law, however inadequate, is a necessary, if biased and uncertain, protection for individuals against crime in this society, to accepting that the law can play a wider role as well.

The same law, the same judges very often, who are expected to jail rapists and muggers, also wreck the GLC's fares policy, issue eviction notices for families behind with their rent, and grant

injunction after injunction against trade unionists on strike. The people who will enforce the Tebbit anti union proposals are the judges.

This society creates crime, just as it creates great wealth alongside terrible poverty. Theft is a product of property; mugging and rape is the product of hopelessness and despair in a society in disintegration. As unemployment rises, so does crime. As poverty and hopelessness rises in the inner cities, so does rape and every other sort of crime.

Most crime as it is defined in the statistics issued by the police and the Home Office is committed by the poor and the helpless against the poor and the helpless. Of course it's not the real crime in this society. Every socialist knows that the real criminals control ICE, Unilever, GKN and so on. But the crime that the newspapers are discussing today is the crime of ordinary people against ordinary people.

As the crisis in British society grows, as poverty and despair become commonplace, crime will rise.

There is no serious protection against it. The Police, the Judges, the prison warders and the hangmen, help discipline us all, just as they have done for hundreds of years. But their real role is the protection not of a pensioner mugged in Brixton, or of a woman raped in Hackney, but of the Stock Exchange, the factories, the banks and the wealthy few who benefit from them.

In the next year more young black kids will go to prison for longer sentences. No rapist, unless he's very rich, will escape with a suspended sentence. More housewives will go to Holloway for shoplifting. So will some pensioners. The police will carry more weapons and have more wide reaching powers. Strikes, picket lines and occupations will face harassment and intimidation and straightforward attack by the police.

The attack on muggers and rapists is part and parcel of that development. And any socialist who forgets that forgets who the real enemy is.



Barking teachers need your support

NEARLY 4,000 teachers, parents and school students demonstrated in support of striking Barking teachers last month. Support for the strike is growing, the same evening 1,500 people lobbied the local Labour Council meeting.

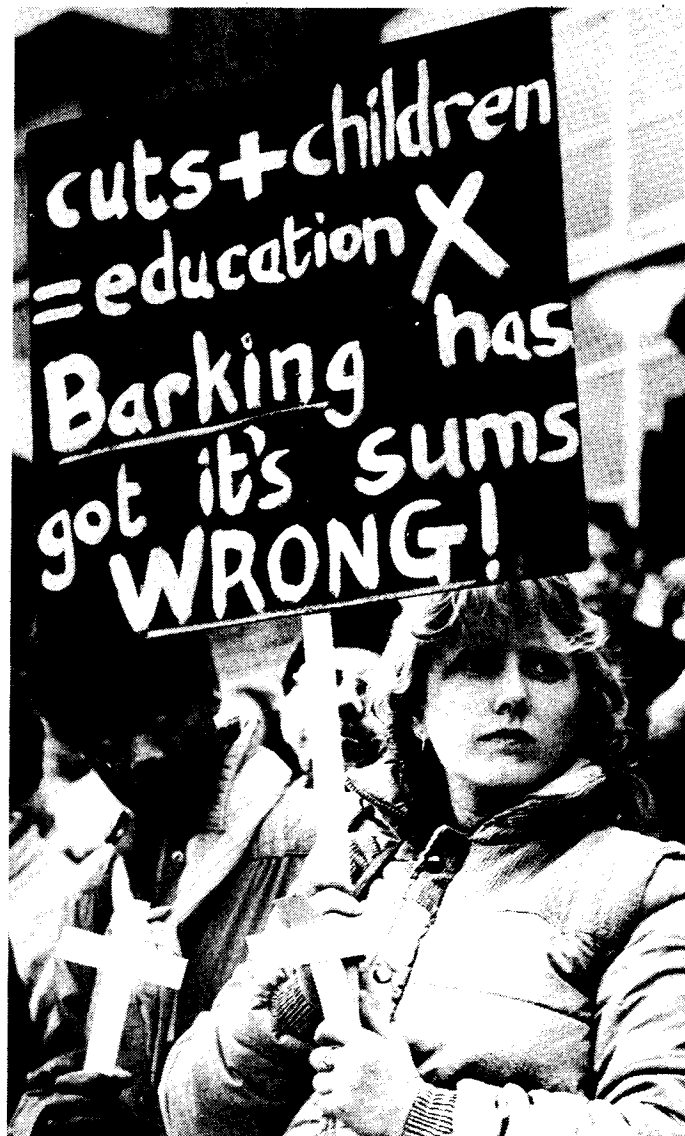
Picketing of schools is being stepped up to halt all deliveries, and six schools have already been closed as a result. But Barking's Labour council has also upped the stakes. They have hired a non-union firm called CRM to break through the picket lines. Teachers believe that the council is paying the scabs more than half above normal contract rates.

The council is also sending dismissal notices

to dinner ladies. This is only the second all-out strike against the cuts in recent months and if it is to be more successful than the Coventry NUPE strike last year the dispute needs to be generalised.

Inspiration

It is now in its fourth week and needs the support of trade unionists everywhere. It is an inspiration to both public sector and private sector workers everywhere. Please rush donations and messages of support to NUT Strike Office, 588 Rainham Road South, Dagenham, Essex. If you can organise support for a delegation in your workplace or district contact the same address.



Parents + teachers + children = fightback

Problems for women in refuges

REFUGES FOR battered women are still opening throughout the country, despite threats of closure and cutbacks in public spending. One of the most northerly and remote must be the new one recently opened in Dingwall, Ross-shire in the Scottish highlands.

Many people believe that such areas don't need refuges, but the facts show differently. The Dingwall refuge covers the industrial towns of Alness and Invergordon. With the recent closure of the British Aluminium smelter at Invergordon, unemployment in the area is shooting up. Social problems, including battering are clearly in evidence.

Eileen and Rhona have worked at the refuge since it opened before Christmas. Eileen is a fulltime worker, while Rhona is one of the many volunteers. They explained some of the problems which come up.

First there is housing. The hostel has only three rooms and can therefore take only three families officially.

'It depends on each individual woman what happens to them. Homeless accommodation from the council is in caravans. You can imagine what that's like up here. The

social work department don't like them. We had a case before Christmas where they more or less forced us to take a girl and her young baby because they wouldn't take her into a caravan — they would have put the baby in care instead. She wasn't battered.'

Even when the women are re-

housed, they are given the worst hard to let houses on bad estates — and stock is reducing because of council house sales.

'There is no light at the end of the tunnel for most battered women. Their problems are just beginning. Sometimes the housing department try to get the family home signed over to the woman, but she may still be frightened that her husband will come back.'

Another problem is that of kids.

'Lots of refuges have problems knowing what to do with women who hit kids. Now Scottish Women's Aid has appointed a children's officer. We're probably going to have to impress on people the need to work with kids. Let's face it, communal living is hard enough without having three kids.'

The funding of the refuge is a

source of constant worry. Eileen's wages are paid for a year by the Manpower Services Commission. After that they will have to try to get money from the local council which is not an easy task.

'If the refuge proves to be a success this year, then we'll get the money. If not, there'll be a battle. The Tory government is hoping to fall back on voluntary organisations. Women's Aid is caught in a cleft stick. It sees its perspective as a feminist one, but politically it's going to play safe if its waiting for a grant. The cuts mean money isn't forthcoming, but trying to run it on a volunteer basis would be impossible.'

The women can't yet tell what effect the smelter closure will have on their refuge and on battering in the area. But they are certain the problem will not go away.

Jobs before bombs Need before profit



Sadie Blood

**Campaign in your CND branch,
workplace, and union branch
for maximum turnout to
CND National Demonstration.
Sunday 6 June, London.**

EL SALVADOR

**Reagan's other
red carpet**

**DEMONSTRATE USEMBASSY
GROSVENOR SQUARE JUNE 7 · 5.30pm
LOBBY PARLIAMENT JUNE 8 · 1pm**

**Sadie Blood talks about
organising the CND in St Helens.**

WE'VE done things like organise a petition in the market square with leaflets and a local speaker to explain our case to local people. The police showed their faces and arrested some of our members with obstruction!

Weeks later, Linda Howard, an SWP member, argued with our CND branch for the need to support local workers in occupation against redundancies at Holman Michelle. Some members held the opinion that the fight for jobs was quite separate from the fight against the bomb.

We argued how the Tories put arms spending before our right to work, health, education and social services. We finally won the argument about the need to link the fight against the bomb with the fight for jobs.

The next week members of the CND joined workers from Holman Michelle in the market square giving out leaflets and taking a collection for the occupation.

Along came the police again ... this time they arrested both CND members and Holman Michelle workers, who ended up with £10 fines. Which shows just what side the police and the courts are on!

A trades council march through town was leafleted with the theme *Jobs not Bombs*, in that way linking both fights.

We have also sent speakers to various technical college and Labour Party meetings, set up a stall in the local town show which attracted thousands of people over three days. We've also encouraged one of our younger members to organise a gig to raise funds.

The Labour Party at Clockface organised a showing of *The War Game* and we were invited to send a speaker. A lot of new contacts were made and we received a donation of £30. Now we have been asked to

send a speaker to the same Labour Party ward to explain the urgency of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

It's clear that our rulers are pulling the wool over our eyes. Reagan and Thatcher now hold the assumption that small nuclear wars can be fought and won. What would the effect be on London if an attack was mounted on the city? Latest research suggests millions would die within a wide range of London and those who did survive would pass on genetic faults to any children that would be born, providing that they survive radiation, burns, starvation, and all the other horrors a nuclear war would bring. At the last general election the Tories promised 'we will put Britain back on its way to economic recovery if we are voted in.'

So they were voted in. They conned us. We see depression and despair all around us, as our friends and relatives languish on the dole. With thousands of our children on YOPs schemes used as cheap labour. We have learnt the hard way what Tory promises mean.

So we cannot afford to believe that we will be safe under our stairs in the event of nuclear attack. Instead of clearing up under your stairs, join the CND. For only a mass movement campaigning in the workplaces and the streets can begin to have some effect on our rulers who, at the touch of a button could impose death and destruction.

But further we have to argue for the need to connect all the struggles that our rulers provoke and knit them into one struggle. A revolutionary struggle that can rid us of this stinking society that puts bombs before jobs: profits before need.

Small changes—much changed

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day this year didn't see any big marches, but it did see the publication of a new newspaper, *Outwrite*, giving news written by and for women. At the moment it is monthly, with hopes for weekly publication in the future.

Eleven years ago another newspaper with similar aims, called simply *The Women's Newspaper*, also appeared on International Women's Day. It was sold on the Women's Liberation demonstration that day in London. It had eight pages and carried articles on Ireland, on contraception, on the Angry Brigade prisoner Jake Prescott, on social security and women claimants, on the campaign for the unionisation of night cleaners. It explained the five demands of the women's liberation movement—equal pay, equal education and job opportunity, 24 hour nurseries, free contraception and abortion on demand. It explained that it wanted its readers not just to buy it and read it, but to write for it and sell it 'wherever women meet—in laundrettes, clinics, schools.'

The next issue had an article on the abortion campaign, a report on the International Women's Day demonstration, an interview with a woman bus conductor, and a campaign report on the protests which followed the death of Stephen McCarthy in police custody in Islington. The third issue had a letter from a woman prisoner in Armagh, a useful explanation (with diagrams) of how to change a fuse—and defuse all those old jokes about women's incompetence!—and a story about Ericka Huggins, jailed for her involvement with the Black Panthers in America. It also covered the struggles of Black people in Britain against the forthcoming Immigration Bill.

So, eleven years on, what's new?

I've listed the major articles from *The Women's Newspaper* because it's extraordinary how relevant most of the topics still are, with three million claimants, the attack on public transport, the new racist legislation, the attacks on abortion rights... *Outwrite* has a letter from Belfast, articles about the abortion campaign, lots of coverage of women's involvement in national liberation struggles around

the world, and of their resistance to racism here. So it really seems as if the more things change, the more they remain the same.

But things have changed. The three issues of *The Women's Newspaper*, put together, were smaller than the single issue of *Outwrite*, but they bubbled with enthusiasm and confidence. They had lively reports of campaigns, pickets and demonstrations—against the Miss World show, about night cleaners and against police violence. They reflected a time when the demand for 'equal job opportunities' wasn't just a bad joke. There were only three issues: the last carried an explanation. The attempt to write a collective article on the Biba bombing (*the what?*) had brought out serious political differences, but they were all agreed that 'writing a newspaper by itself isn't enough—we don't want to be passive reporters of other women's activities or of our own introspection'.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, *Outwrite* doesn't have the same air of confidence. Even in reporting a NAC demonstration, it manages to give as much space to carping about the behaviour of some men on the demo as to the positive aspect of it!

These days it's not anarchists bombing selected 'Establishment' symbols. It's fascists bombing socialist, Black and community organisations. And there's no point in asking for 'equal' job opportunities when there aren't any for anyone. In fact, as the sisters on *The Women's Newspaper* realised, it's not enough to report the world—the point is to change it.

A lot has changed in eleven years, but some things remain the same. We still live in a racist, sexist society. There is still a war going on in Ireland. Women are still denied control of their own bodies. Women and men are still denied a future. And all over the world they are still fighting to change all that. *The Women's Newspaper* found that activity didn't automatically grow from newsprint—and I suspect that that's another thing that hasn't changed in the last eleven years...

Lin James

WOMEN'S NEWSPAPER 3p
no 1. march 6th. 1971

Outwrite FIRST ISSUE 10p. issue no.1 march '82
women's newspaper

What the papers say

Out in the morning, hungry for information from the world, wanting to know what's happening, wanting to make connections, both for a newspaper...

But the newspaper headlines, like the advertisements in the cities and towns are there ready to catch our eyes and make use of our minds.

The popular press would have us in a trap. To beguile us with propaganda and immorality. As best to reflect what is dominant in our culture... and that's not poetry.

The papers make full use of their means: news and political opinions; they rarely challenge these. Inside the paper are hidden lies and boxes of different sorts of lies: lies and never any real connection between them.

1913 - Women in the USSR led the first of the International Women's Days on March 8th. In 1917, the English women fought for the vote. In 1924 - China observed its first Women's Day on March 8.

In the late 1960s, feminists in the West started to observe International Women's Day again. At the same time, other countries started to observe International Women's Day together.

Letter from Belfast

To my prospective visitors to Belfast - a word of advice - don't expect a good pair of weather! The west of Ireland in the winter is a place of mud and every drop of rain is magnified into a sea of mud. If you simply have to be in Belfast, don't expect a good pair of weather!

THE BEGINNING

1968 - The American Socialist Party resolved to observe the last Sunday in February as the first Women's Day in honor of women's liberation.

1969 - On March 8, women in the USA observed the first International Women's Day (IWD) celebration.

1970 - The American Socialist Party resolved to observe the last Sunday in February as the first Women's Day in honor of women's liberation.

1971 - March 8th marked the first International Women's Day (IWD) celebration.

What carries on

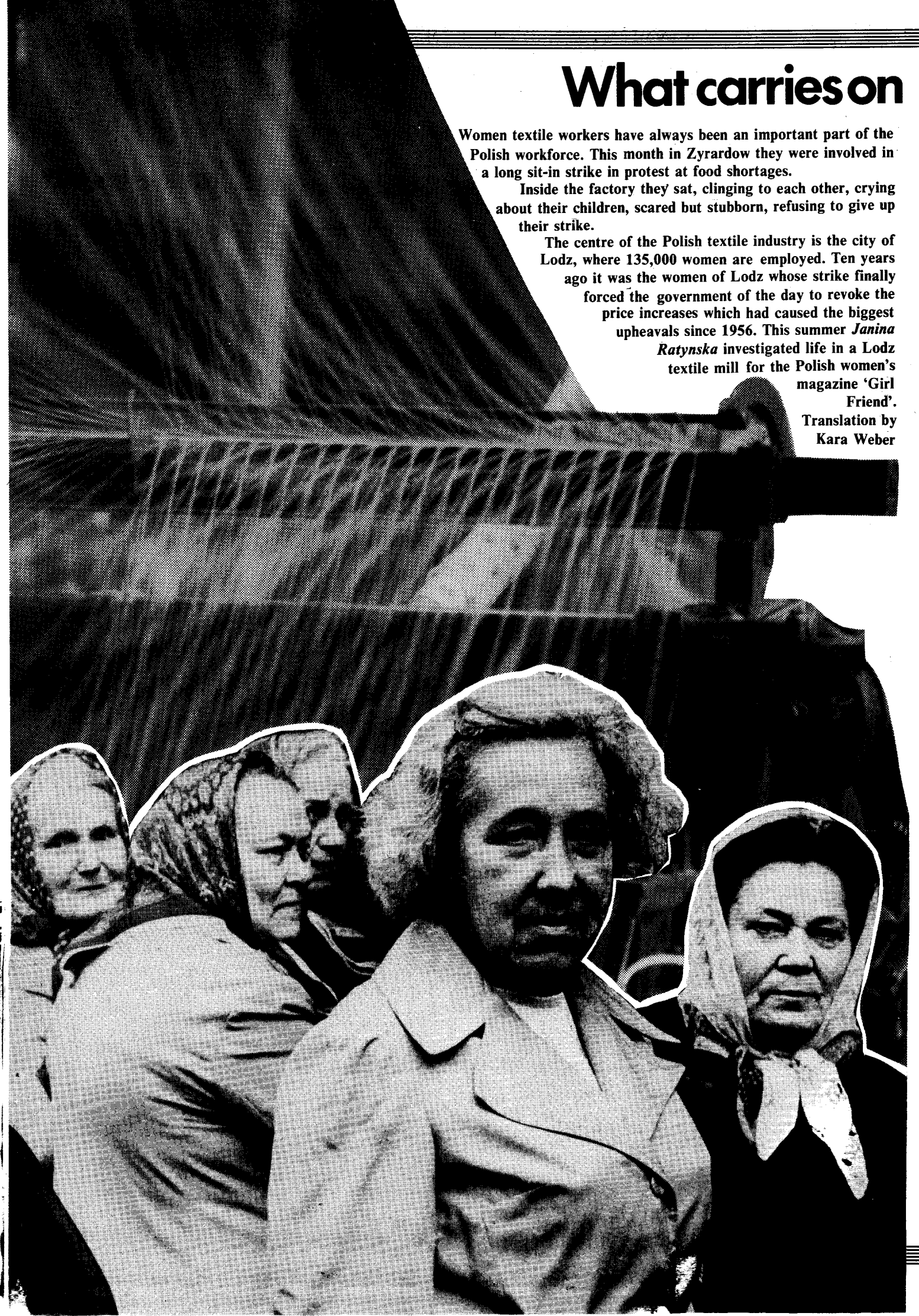
Women textile workers have always been an important part of the Polish workforce. This month in Zyrardow they were involved in a long sit-in strike in protest at food shortages.

Inside the factory they sat, clinging to each other, crying about their children, scared but stubborn, refusing to give up their strike.

The centre of the Polish textile industry is the city of Lodz, where 135,000 women are employed. Ten years ago it was the women of Lodz whose strike finally forced the government of the day to revoke the price increases which had caused the biggest upheavals since 1956. This summer *Janina Ratynska* investigated life in a Lodz textile mill for the Polish women's

magazine 'Girl Friend'.

Translation by
Kara Weber



working without eating and drinking?

IN THE spinning hall there are cans of hot green liquid. White scum floats over its murky depths. It tastes vile. It's mint tea — a reviving drink. Nobody will let this revolting stuff past their lips. Not a trickle will flow, even down the most parched and thirsty throats. The spinners quench their thirst at a rusty tap in the toilets.

Conditions in the spinning hall are tropical. Anything up to 104 degrees and 75 per cent humidity. It's the yarn which needs these temperatures and this level of humidity. Nobody even mentions the needs of the people here. Water drips from the faulty air conditioning units. The cold splashes feel like icicles on your sweltering back.

It's three in the morning.

A young woman by one of the spinning machines suddenly starts jumping up and down. First on one leg, then the other, swinging her arms. She's thin, her blonde hair tumbles about her face. From a distance she looks like a little girl playing hopscotch. As you approach the illusion vanishes. Her face looks exhausted, running with sweat, her lips parched, in her eyes an expression of intense effort. Seeing me she stops in mid hop like a mechanical doll.

'Don't look at me like that. I haven't gone crazy. It's just that I haven't slept for three days. I've got small children and my husband is away on a delegation. If I had a cup of coffee, I could clear my head, but as it is I just fall asleep standing up.'

It's the third shift at Harnam Cotton Industries in Lodz. Every night over 400 women work in its spinning and weaving halls. They leave home at half past eight in the evening, crowd into their packed buses and trams and ride to work. Once there, they change into their work overalls, stiff and sticky from accumulated dirt, sweat and dust. Once upon a time these overalls were washed every day, now it's once every two or three weeks. There's no detergent.

They bind their legs with elasticated bandage. They all do it, even the young ones.

Varicose veins appear after only a few years' work at the looms. Whether spinning or weaving, five years is enough to make a fine network of purple lines cover every pair of legs, even the most young and slender ones.

'Do you know what I sometimes call myself?' says the Spinning Manager, Kazimierz Biesaga. 'A mule driver. I respect these women, their work, their patience, their endurance. But when I see them working at night the image of labouring mules persistently returns to me. Underfed, short of sleep, running on their last legs. They bring sandwiches of dry bread and pickled cucumber. Butter would melt, and anyway there's little of it and they have to save it for the children. Their husbands need any cold meat that's going.'

They patrol their looms and spinning frames incessantly, first 200 metres one way, then 200 metres back again. 'We have our own version of the old kids' riddle,' says Mr Biesaga, **'What carries on working without eating or drinking? You know the answer? A Lodz yarn worker. Or perhaps you know the song about the spinning girls sitting like a row of angels? None of these are angels any more. All the creams and face masks in the world won't help.** To look at them you wouldn't think some of them are thirty years old. No, you wouldn't. What you see are bags under the eyes, wrinkles and bent shoulders.

Halina Kaczmarek has worked the three shifts at Harnam's for 30 years. 'I've had enough of this struggle to survive. When I'm working nights I never catch up on my sleep. I come off the shift and instead of going to bed I go to stand in a queue. Since June there's a special system for the sale of milk in Lodz. From 6 to 8 in the morning only mothers with special children's health cards can buy. Ordinary people don't get a look in, they have to stand and wait. If there's any left at eight o'clock then there's a chance of getting a bottle, but sometimes there's none left. Then I go to another queue for meat.

'Yesterday I stood there

from eight in the morning till two. I got 500 grams of shoulder. After standing in line I return home, snatch a bit to eat, do my cleaning, washing. I have to fetch water because I have a home without conveniences. I go to lie down for an hour after dinner. The racket in the house is dreadful, everything's switched on at once, the radio, the tele ... I sleep, it doesn't bother me. Then I cook supper and leave home for work.

I know nothing about politics, but those people in the government, you know the ones who are having to explain themselves now because of us, I wouldn't put them in prison, what for? They should come and work here, at Harnams. I'd give them top pay, let them make their seven thousand, we don't want any discrimination. But then I'd give them ration cards and chase them round to their share of queuing. That would be their greatest punishment.'

Kazimiera Chodorowska has worked at Harnam's for 30 years. 'The worst is finishing a week of night shift and going back to mornings on Monday. Your body has to adjust yet again. You sleep over your machine, your mates wake you up. If they put the afternoon shift to follow on from nights it would mean a two o'clock start. You wouldn't get so tired and your nerves wouldn't get so frayed. But when we raise the matter it's like banging your head against a brick wall. Anyone would think they wanted to run us into the ground. The best solution would be to abolish the night shift altogether.'

For many years the workers of every light industrial enterprise have tried to get rid of the third shift. It was the most important demand made at the lowest level, at meetings, works council conferences and production committees. At the higher levels it was never mentioned.

At the last meeting the unionists presented the government side with a report dealing with the third shift, compiled by experts from the Lodz Polytechnic, the Medical Academy and Lodz University. It's a shocking document.

On the basis of carefully detailed experiments it shows the effects of night shift work on the women workers. It links such work with pregnancy abnormalities; level of miscarriage much higher than normal; greater percentages of children born with congenital abnormalities.

It is said that the body's constant adjustment to work patterns during the morning, afternoon and night exploits, even plunders, the nervous system of the women. It leads to loss of control and equilibrium and to physical exhaustion.

According to surveys, a considerable proportion of women working the three shift system have broken families.

What has the department of light industry to say about this? The Assistant Director of the Work, Wages and Social Services Department of the Ministry of Light Industry, Edmund Wojcicki says: 'We received the report with mixed feelings. You must admit its tone is a little alarmist. In any case, you cannot view these matters solely from the standpoint of the interests of the workers. The interests of society as a whole must count for something.'

'Goods totalling a value of 70 billion zloty are produced during the third shift. The market, already very scantily supplied, would be greatly impoverished if this production were eliminated. There will be no third shift, but you won't be able to buy a single towel, shirt or sheet in the shops.'

'This does not mean that we see no openings for limiting three shift working. Such possibilities exist and our department has already worked out introductory measures.'

Five years is a long time. The workers themselves say — we can hang on. And they will endure it all, the sleepless nights, the queues, the nightmare conditions.

But they must know for sure that the fruit of their work, in the murderous, destructive conditions, will not be another crisis in ten years time but a peaceful, dignified life, free of deprivation.

SDP...

OVER the next few weeks, workers around the country will be hit by bundles of leaflets through letter boxes, posters on billboards, and canvassers knocking on doors making empty promises.

It's election time again in London boroughs, district councils and Scottish regions. They will be asking for our votes to give them the power to control our cities. Amongst the various parties for the first time there is a new one — the Social Democratic Party.

When the SDP was first formed they forwarded no clear policies. They rose in the tide of disillusionment of both Tory and Labour parties. At last year's Crosby by-election, Shirley Williams, founder member of the SDP, began to show her true colours. She stood on a clear anti-abortion platform, closely supported by Liverpool Liberal Council leader, Sir Trevor Jones.

He is perhaps best known for his fierce anti-union stand against Liverpool City council workers, and more recently remembered for his cold blooded refusal to pay the Liverpool typists a living wage. Needless to say, Shirley Williams sailed to victory capturing much of the Crosby Tory vote.

The SDP have still managed to fudge any clear line of policy. Their parliamentary vote on Tebbit's anti-union bill was split three ways — their attitude to trade union legislation, incomes policy, public spending cuts or how they plan to tackle unemployment figures, are still left unstated.

At the end of last year 27 of Islington's Labour councillors defected to the SDP causing the formation of the first SDP local council.

The SDP started as they meant to go on. They have cut grants to a centre for difficult children, and to a child minding centre, refused a grant for a unemployed centre (local unemployment is over 20 per cent) and now intend to sell off 750 empty council properties that were purchased for conversion to be let to people in need. Well over a thousand people will be made homeless as a result.

The SDP have also dusted off an old plan ditched by the Labour Group. The plan proposes to reorganise the social services department in Islington. They plan to centralise the social workers' departments forcing many administration workers out of work, and making it far harder for those in need to get the help they need.

They have also wasted no time in plans to slash jobs and services.

But by far the clearest reflection of what type of animal the SDP really is was shown in the experience of the recent all-out strike of Islington NALGO members; *provoked* by the SDP when they tore up a housing worker's job contract.

THEY REFUSED to allow council worker Rob Webb take up a permanent job he had applied for; been accepted for; and signed a contract of employment for. Instead,

by Mary Williams
and Yolande Bryant

Islington council housing department told him to leave the premises and face a disciplinary hearing. Only after a solid strike of the housing department which later spread to all departments did Rob Webb win his case to start work.

THE SDP COUNCILLORS used the opportunity of the workers in children's homes striking in solidarity with Rob Webb, as a chance to close down one of Islington's child care homes. They moved the children to a derelict council building in Corsica Street.

A day care worker from one of Islington's day care centres for the mentally handicapped joined the strike in support of the council's treatment of Rob Webb.

She explained: 'Both the vote to strike in support of Rob Webb and the vote to remain on strike when we discovered the closure of the kids' home were overwhelming. We all saw the need to take action against the high handed and undemocratic attitudes of Islington SDP councillors. We were disgusted, while we were on strike protesting over the fact that the council had broken one contract ... they did it again.'

EVEN WHEN ACAS was called in *by the SDP* and negotiated a settlement which the unions would have accepted, the SDP threw it out.

The SDP councillors called in the police to remove two labour councillors from the temporary children's home in Corsica Street, when they arrived to investigate the conditions of the home.

These are just some of the iron fisted methods Islington SDP councillors are using to run the council's affairs ... as one striker summed up:

'Not only are they trying to run the council as management dictators, but they aren't even our elected representatives. These people were elected as Labour councillors to implement Labour Party policies, which oppose cuts in jobs and services. They did not stand down for re-election when they joined the SDP and are now implementing policies which they have no mandate for.'

Another woman striker explained her rea-

ctions to the strike. 'The vote to come out in the housing department was 125-1! We were really staggered by the response. Some of the best and most enthusiastic picketers were women from the cashier's office — women who had rarely come to union meetings in the past. Even some SDP supporters were in the ranks of the picket lines. We were so solid at first. The most amazing experience for me was the night of Rob Webb's disciplinary hearing. The lobby began at 6.30 — by 10.30 we still hadn't heard the outcome, but there was still over 200 of us, and a good half of that number being women waiting on the steps of the town hall.

'**Women who'd ripped up our NALGO Action News bulletins in the past were there to the bitter end, jeering and shouting at the SDP councillors. There was no doubt in anybody's minds just who'd provoked the strike and what the SDP were all about.**

'Three weeks into the strike, we got an insulting offer from the SDP — the branch officers argued it was the best we would get. At this time, many of the strikers felt that the strike was having little effect. We'd argued for spreading the strike but the branch officers just weren't interested ... people began to think that the strike couldn't be won.

'The last week of the strike saw people drifting back work. But it's funny, I couldn't bear those people too much of a grudge. I knew what they were doing was wrong, but I could understand why they'd given up. It was more in sorrow than a conscious effort to break the strike that they returned to work.'

On Friday 12 March a mass meeting finally voted for a return to work, with more or less the same offer we'd rejected before. The terms are that the children's home remains closed; its seven workers are found comparable work in the borough (originally, the SDP had said that one worker should accept work in Watford!) and that the dispute procedure be renegotiated.

'Even though we lost the strike, the day we returned to work the feeling amongst the strikers was pretty good. It was the scabs who held their heads down, not us. We all know that this won't be the last effort by the SDP to break our union organisation and there's a feeling that next time we'll know better. We've all learnt a lot from the strike, especially the need for rank and file control of the strike.'

The glossy, oh so moderate image of the SDP has taken a hammering in Islington. The Islington SDP have shown themselves in their true colours. Nothing but wolves in sheeps' clothing, Tories by another name.



Photo: Chris Davies (Network)

...the experience so far



Photo: Chris Davies (Network)

'MINI MOBSTERS'

WHAT'S TO

AN UNCRITICAL reader pounding through this month's press about violent events could only come to one conclusion—it's all women's fault. For at every turn women are seen to be at the root of the decay that is causing violent and decadent behaviour. And there's a long list of worthies who say so.

Councillor Len Tyrer is one. He is a governor at St Saviours School in Toxteth—the school where juniors went on the rampage earlier this month, beat up teachers, and smashed the furniture. In a speech reported in the Liverpool Echo, Councillor Tyrer placed the blame for these events on *women* teachers. 'I'm not being sexist' he said (not much), 'but if you have tough kids you need tough people to deal with them.'

He didn't actually say that it was weak women who had made the kids so tough and violent that they then couldn't cope with them. Nor did he say that weak women should be at home minding children, rather than being out at work failing to discipline them.

He had no need to. There are plenty of others to say it for him. And on March 19 Dr Rhodes Boyson, Tory junior education minister just about did it. In a speech made in Poole, Dorset, Rhodes Boyson laid the responsibility for rioting youths, football hooligans and murderous muggings on the permissiveness of their parents—the sixties generation.

Permissiveness in the sixties, said Rhodes Boyson, produced great quantities of pornography, greater sexual licence, increased family breakdown and a decline in self control. 'There was a cheapening of human life and young people were brought up to be selfish, pleasure seeking, or

irresponsible.' Those years when the women's liberation movement was growing, when women workers began to fight for equality, the right to work and equality in bed weren't progressive at all (for all that they were nice). For far from being liberating and progressive, those years led to what Rhodes Boyson called 'a decline from the clear and confident virtues of the Victorian Age'.

Women should have stayed passively at home never thinking of equal rights or fun—then children would not have grown up to be thugs. Conclusion—traditional marriage and meek women make for a stable, non violent society.

That conclusion is one that the Society of Conservative Lawyers also agrees with. The Society is currently getting agitated about the high rate of marriage breakdown. It claims that the state has withdrawn from preserving marriages and protecting children. (Presumably conservative lawyers don't like easier divorce laws and an end to caning in schools.) Obviously they think it's women's fault too—women who wind up their rotten marriages and then put their children at risk.

The theme is not new. Patrick Jenkin, one time Tory minister for Social Services, has been pushing this particular boat out for years. In his view mothers of young children should not go out to work. He blames strikes, violence, and increasing terrorism on women who go out to work and neglect their children.

'I am convinced', he once said, 'that a mother is by far the best person to look after her young children.' Unfortunately he didn't

follow up that fighting speech with a Bill to disband the public schools where upper crust mums dump their children because they don't want to look after them. But he had made his point.

It's a point that the Tories seem to be making ever more forcefully—that working mothers, liberated ladies, single mothers, and women who aspire to men's work (in this case teaching)—are causing havoc with traditional values and hence driving young children to violence.

It's true that violent incidents are increasing. At the same time divorce rates are soaring. But that's not really an argument. Incidents of open heart surgery are also increasing. But nobody seems to connect that with either the divorce rate or violence.

The reason that violence and family breakdown are connected is simple. The Tories are worried about violence. And they are also worried about the family—or rather the way that it is falling apart. For them the family is central. It educates, socialises and disciplines its members. It is a powerful individualising force working against class consciousness. It is an important consumer unit. Women are responsible for all these family tasks. And the family is falling apart.

The reasons for the collapse are plain. The strains put onto relationships by shift working, commuting, and the demands of employers who want cheap female labour, but won't provide any childcare facilities, are enormous. Add to that the stress of unemployment, of social services declining to the point where women



'TINY TERRORS'?

BLAME?

provide the only day care for the old and the sick, and small wonder that individuals collapse under the strain. When individuals collapse their personal relationships go with them.

If the Tories really cared about the family they would stop tearing apart the social services that shore it up. But they won't. And a clear indication of how much Tories care about families is provided by the way they treat black families. Wives and husbands are yanked on and off planes under racist immigration laws, and their children shunted halfway round the world in order to comply with abstract (and racist) legalities.

It's precisely that kind of Tory 'care' that causes violence in the first place. It's that kind of 'care' that values war highly and educates children on the glories of victory and battle. That kind of 'care' also puts children into sex roles that demand aggression from some and meekness from others—whatever their personality.

That kind of 'care' has also built up a system of values that idolises physical strength, and demeans people who are of a slight or 'deformed' build.

Given those values and pressures, it's hardly surprising that children grow up violent. In the college where I teach, staff often respond to press reports of youth violence with comments that what is surprising about young people is not how bad or violent they are, but how well they cope with the grim prospects of long term unemployment and a rotting inner city environment.

Traditional values are falling apart. They are doing that as a result of society at large falling apart. In that process the family comes under stress, and is also cracking. Socialists have always argued for the abolition of the family. But they have never looked to an isolated and destructive process like that which is happening at the moment. Socialists have argued not for an end to the family but rather for

the replacement of the family by new, equal relationships between men, women and children.

Socialists' ideals about the alternatives to the family were outlined in an enthusiastic speech made by Alexandra Kollontai during the Russian Revolution in 1917. 'On the ruins of the former family we shall soon behold arising a new form which will involve altogether different relationships between women and men, and which will be a union of affection and comradeship, a union of two equal persons of the communist society, both of them free, both of them independent, both of them workers.'

It was an inspiring alternative. Unfortunately the Tories have no such inspired alternatives on offer. They can look only backwards—to traditional values and old style families. Yet their own economic policies are making it impossible to maintain those very values and structures. At the same time their economic and political ideas encourage

and condone violence in every strand of our society—in our children, our schools, our workplace, our streets.

Violent incidents and family breakdown are not cause and effect, they are both symptoms—symptoms of a society in deep crisis.

In that society the collapse of the family offers us nothing and indeed leaves us more vulnerable to violence. In socialism however, the demise of the family would mark the end of violence and the beginning of new, non violent social relationships.

by Anna Paczuska



THE STRENGTH of feeling in Kathe Kollwitz's work is overwhelming. Her strong and capable lines struggle with hunger and death. She said she was 'gripped by the full force of the proletarian fate' which was inescapable in the poor district of Berlin where she spent most of her life, and where her husband worked as a doctor.

Kollwitz was born in 1867. Her early work was mainly inspired by literature and she used themes from Zola, Dickens and Hauptmann. Her prints of the Weavers' Rebellion are really illustrations. (Her award for these was vetoed by the Kaiser, who called the work 'gutter art'.)

But as time went by she began to draw from her own immediate surroundings and abandoned narrative detail in favour of directness, often using the stark black and white of the woodcut instead of lithography, to make more impact on posters and leaflets.

She was strongly opposed to the war, in which her own son died. Her other son had very nearly died of diphtheria. Over and over again she drew the theme of a mother trying to save her child from death, or weeping over an already lifeless body. She later lost her grandson in the second World War. 'I long for a socialism', she wrote, 'which will leave men free from lying, murdering and destroying'.

Kollwitz had two large exhibitions in Russia between the wars and was invited to Moscow in 1927. In the previous year, Lunacharsky, the Peoples' Commissar for Culture wrote that her style 'is dominated more

The endless grief of Kathe Kollwitz

Hunger



and more by a pure poster technique. She aims at an immediate effect, so that at the very first glance one's heart is wrung ...She is a great agitator'.

This did not gladden the hearts of the Nazis and they forced her to resign as first woman member of the Prussian Academy, removing her work from exhibition. 'Thank God no German mother looks like that' they said. But the simplicity of the images enabled them to pirate her work for their own propaganda, changing the signature. 'Hunger' was published in German and Italian Fascist journals, and 'Bread' was used against the Spanish Republicans.

Although Kollwitz understood the necessity for struggle, she tended to express despair rather than hope, endless grief with insufficient anger. In 1932 she at last completed a monument for the Belgian cemetery where her son was buried. The figures of kneeling parents were criticised by the communist paper Red Flag which deplored her 'failure to use the opportunity to protest against the imperialist war'.

'Socialist realism' art styles which refuse to admit feelings of hurt or fear are bound to be shallow. Kollwitz's talent was to draw attention to those being trodden underfoot in a heartless world. But the possibility of success must sometimes be remembered if morbid fatalism is not to dampen revolutionary spirit. S.Grumble

'Kathe Kollwitz: Graphics, Posters, Drawings'. Published by Writers and Readers.

WOMENS HEALTH

THE TRIPLE STRUGGLE Latin American Peasant Women

Audrey Bronstein's 'The Triple Struggle' is a picture of peasant women from some countries in Latin America, Peru, Guatemala, Bolivia, El Salvador. Throughout the book the author interviews women to find out their opinions about work, birth control and married life. As a result we begin to understand how peasant women feel about their life. It becomes clear that the question of health for working class women and peasants in South America cannot be separated from their social and political conditions.

'I get up at 4.00am to comb the cabaya (a fibre like wool). My husband doesn't like me to do this but I have to do it. I spin until about 6.00am and then I make coffee for the family because they have to go off to work. After they leave I cook lunch and take it out to the field. When I return I spin until it is time to make the dinner. I only go out to buy what I need. I come straight home to do more spinning. That is how I end my day of work and that is how I will end my life.'

This is how a peasant woman in Latin America describes her life. Like all peasant women her day is cruelly long and hard — for her to take it easy would threaten the survival of herself and her family.

Malnutrition

'Malnutrition, disease, lack of access to basic services such as clean water and electricity, lack of access to even the simplest educational and medical facilities are common to most Latin American peasants.'

Work in the home is the primary activity of women in the rural mountains of Latin America. She bears her children, cooks, washes and cleans. One of woman's jobs is to provide clean water. This means daily trips to the local water source, often a great distance from the home. She will also do something which will increase the family income — raising and selling animals; producing handicrafts to sell to tourists or craft co-operatives, or she might work on a large farm for cash or vegetables and grains. When they receive cash it is less than men for the same work.

'The men earn more, regardless of the work. The women's work is harder and they get paid

less. The men earn Q2 (£1) and women Q1.25 (60p).'

Paid work though means that the women have some independence from their hus-



bands. A Peruvian woman explains.

'Because I am a member of a co-operative I am able to earn. It makes you stronger, if you have paid work. I think you are more "full of life"; you feel able to do other things and you learn more, even more than the work you are doing. You feel more able to do other things and you have more experience.'

But at the same time as gaining some independence, women feel guilty because they are leaving their 'women's job' in the home.

Contraception is a contradictory issue in Latin America. The International Agency in the region is aimed primarily at direct population control rather than giving the woman the right to control her own fertility. The distinction between choice and control is clear. Choice implies access to information and understanding the different methods. Control imposes contraception by restricting both access and information.

Women fear the family planning doctors because they do not know what they will do to them. They are also aware that the issue is politically explosive.

'They say it is better to have only two or three children because there isn't enough land. There is plenty of land, but only a few people own it all. And they want all the Indians to disappear so they can keep all the land and we won't be a threat to them.'

'That's why they keep sending so many people to Guatemala to talk about birth control, to teach it, we know that these things are not good for women's bodies.'

Machismo

For women family planning presents a problem from their doctor, and the church. The influence of the Catholic Church is very strong in Latin American countries and their opposition to contraception is well known.

'I had 17 children ... the priest who married us said that we should be ready to receive all the children that God wanted to send us, and we didn't know anything else; and so we didn't look for other ways to have less children.'

But women lack confidence in nurses and doctors. 'I was afraid of the hospital and doctors and I don't know if they sterilised me or not.'

Like women from all over the world, Latin American women suffer from the 'machismo' of their men. They are taught all their lives that they are the inferior sex. Although peasant women share many of the problems with their men — their poverty, their lack of facilities, their lack of understanding of the dominant language — they also bear the double burden of housework and childrearing.

Their unpaid work in the home defines their oppression as women but it also unites peasant women with working women everywhere. The 'Triple Struggle' has many lessons, but the interviews with peasant women taught me that the oppression that women suffer knows no boundaries. Only rich women who can afford the luxury of hired labour to do their household tasks can escape their oppression. For the rest of us, we have to struggle against the conditions which keep us poor and the ideas which keep us inferior.

Ana Maria Valdes.

REVIEWS

REDS

Director:

Warren Beatty

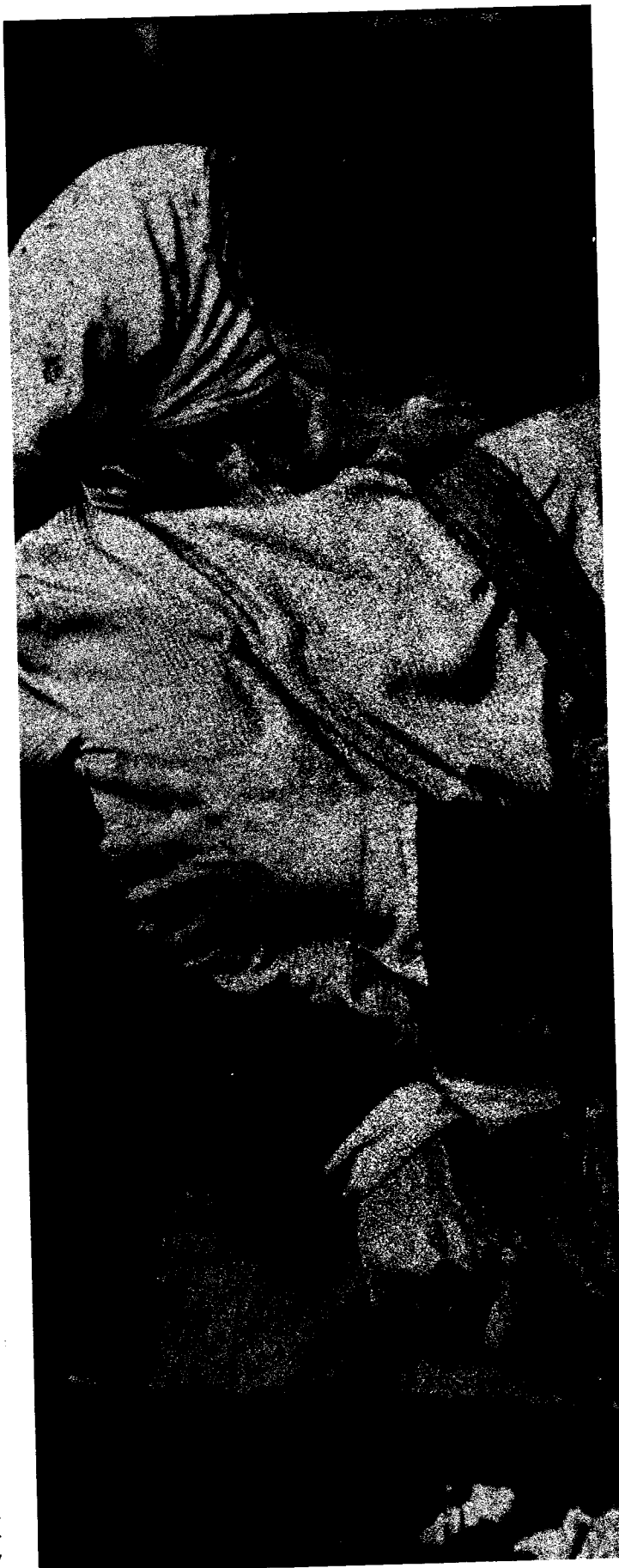
REDS is a love story, a beautiful unforgettable film. Louise Bryant, small town dentist's wife, meets John Reed, active socialist and radical journalist. A night of talking follows. The next evening Louise seduces John (he wasn't fighting). John offers to take Louise away to New York where she can become a writer.

It sounds romantic and unlikely. But it really happened in Portland, Oregon in 1915. The vital and creative relationship that ensued is excitingly and movingly portrayed in this film.

The couple lived together in Greenwich Village. John Reed travelled extensively, spoke at meetings and wrote. Louise stayed at home, tried to write, and waited for John's visits home. But 'stay at home' girlfriend for a full time politico was not the woman that Louise wanted to be. She was committed to being an independent 'new woman'. They separated.

Then when in 1917 John Reed decided to go to Russia to report the worker's revolution, he bought Louise a ticket too, and urged her to take the chance of a lifetime and go with him. Together in Petrograd they lived through worker's meetings and street demonstrations, through insurrection and soviets. They met Lenin and Trotsky, Alexandra Kollontai and many, many of the worker's leaders.

These events were all recorded in John Reed's very fine *Ten Days That Shook the World*—a magnificent book that captured all the excitement and exhilaration of a worker's revolution in the making. *Reds* follows the book closely—conveying powerfully and memorably a thrilling impression of socialism in action. I defy any



socialist to sit dry-eyed through the vivid sequences of a worker's revolution in full thro, which make some of the most exciting viewing in the film.

John Reed and Louise Bryant returned home and tried to convey to American workers what they had experienced. They toured America, speaking and writing about the revolution in Russia. John Reed wrote his book. Louise Bryant wrote her less well known *Six Red Months in Russia*.

Then John Reed returned to Russia—his aim to gain recognition for his newly founded Communist Labour Party of America. A long period of separation followed. Neither could forget the other.

The story of how Louise and John got together again, how they finally recognised their relationship with each other 'as comrades' comprises the rest of the three and a half hour long film.

Warren Beatty and Diane Keaton play the lead roles with conviction and passion. I was completely carried away. And if you are the sort of person who thinks that love is a powerful and creative emotion which moves and changes even revolutionaries, then I urge you to see this film. If on the other hand you think love is a slushy word for sex, then don't bother.

This film is about revolution, but not about the mechanics and the formalities of revolution. It is about an emotion that can inspire and passionately commit people to change and to revolution.

Anna Paczuska

TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD by John Reed
Penguin £1.50

SIX RED MONTHS IN RUSSIA by Louise Bryant
Journeyman Press £2.95

Does Mothercare care?

Most Women's Voice readers will have realised just how much the rights of working class women have been affected by the policies of Thatcher's government. Cuts in education, social services and school meals means that for many women going out to work has become an impossibility. Women are being badly hit by unemployment and are told by the Tories and the media that their place is at home caring for their families.

We are well aware of the people who seek to erode women's hard won meagre rights, such as the backdoor attack on abortion. Women are being forced back into accepting traditional sexual stereotypes as the norm

At the same time there is another more subtle means of sexual stereotyping at work, one that can affect the way the next generation see themselves and their place in society — Kid's Clothes!

For the last decade *Mothercare* shops pioneered the manufacture and supply of unisex babyclothes and children's outfits. They sold good quality, bright coloured and easy to care for clothes which were long lasting and could be passed down from one child to another regardless of gender. This is not to say that *Mothercare*, a commercial enterprise out to make a profit as all big businesses are, was trying to make life easier for parents or to break down traditional male and female roles.

What they did see was that many women were demanding an end to stereotyping and more freedom from the drudgery of housework, hence the unisex babyclothes and easy to care for, hard wearing fabrics. *Mothercare* made an immense profit out of the demand for these products and became an international organisation with branches all around the world. Last year the company was bought out by the same multi-national that owns the equally highly profitable (and trendy) *Habitat* shops.

It is perhaps evidence of the decline of the feminist movement over the last few years that *Mothercare* no longer sees that the marketing of non-sexist kid's clothes is highly profitable.

Out are the tough, bright dungarees, playsuits, practical dresses and

jumpers. In are frilly dresses in pastel pinks and lemons for little girls, even the dungarees are in pastel colours or covered in flowers. In fact pretty flowers are everywhere, even in pram linings. If you have a baby boy of course you can have a plain lined pram!

The boy's clothes are equally as role stereotyping, they are displayed wearing either traditional pale blue or in sporty athletic type gear looking lively and active while the girls appear sweet and decorative, except for one or two exceptions (tom boys?)

Even in the toy section there appears to be a greater division of the sexes than there used to be, boys and girls do not appear to play together but are separated into gender role playing. Only one man appears in the entire catalogue emphasising the fact that it is women's work to look after the children and choose their clothes. But with fewer non stereotyped clothes on sale.

Mothercare is a misnomer, it does not care much for mothers at all, only making profits. Unless we take the trouble and have the time to shop around or make the clothes ourselves then our kids are going to have to go back to having their gender defined by the type of clothes they wear not by their own later preferences.

It could have awful implications for the women's and gay movements — in short, for the united working class movement of men and women working together against their oppression.

Su Weston



BOOKMARX CLUB

Several books of particular interest to women appear in this quarter's selection. Prices in brackets indicate non-club prices.

1 *The London Journal of Flora Tristan* £3.20 (£3.95)

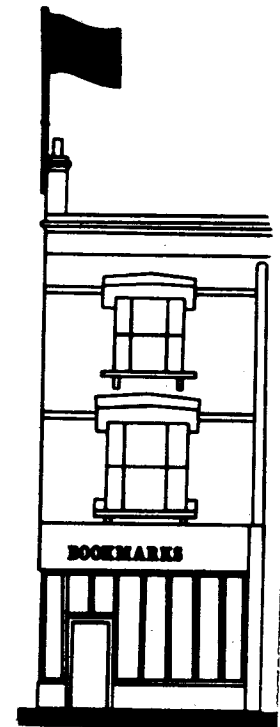
Flora Tristan was one of the few among early, utopian socialists who saw the potential of the working class for building socialism. She had a vision of one big workers' union which would unite the workers in their fight. Her socialism was mixed with a passionate feminism. In this account of a visit to London she describes nineteenth century city life through the eyes of a socialist and a feminist. The sections on women and prostitutes are sensitive and interesting.

2 *The Beth Book* £2.80 by Sarah Grand (3.50)

This was the novel about the new women. A Victorian classic, it is a largely autobiographical account of the struggle of one woman to free herself from a repressive marriage. Her struggle comes through writing. The goal however is more active—a commitment to the newly founded suffragette movement.

3 *Bridge of Beyond* by Simone Schwartz-Bart £1.50 (£1.95)

An excellent and relevant caribbean novel. Its theme is the survival power of women—emerging from



slavery to reconstruct village communities.

4 *The National Question: Selected Writings* by Rosa Luxemburg £3.00 (£3.00)

It's been a bumper year for books about and by Rosa Luxemburg—one of the few women prominent in the early socialist movement. Following on from her love letters here are some more specifically political writings. Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg disagreed on the National Question. His views are well known. Here are hers.

5 *Triple struggle* £2.40 (£3.00)

A book about Latin American peasant women.

For more information about Bookmarks and the Bookmarx Club write to Bookmarks, 265a Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

LETTERS

Irresponsible and ...



Prison not the answer

Dear Womens Voice,
I am disgusted with our so called civilised society and thought writing to you seemed a better use of my energy than bashing my brains out on the wall.

I think sending people to

prison in most cases does not help. We imprison far too many people and besides, the people that are sent to prison are the ones that need help.

Tanya Simmons
Twickenham

What's so good about Weight Watchers?

Dear Womens Voice,
Chris Fellowes' article on weight watchers just about sums up WV's misguided view of feminism.

She does not follow through the arguments put forward by *Fat is a Feminist Issue*. Why eat if your body is not wanting food? It is a known fact that present society perpetuates conflicts of body image, strength and weakness in women. It does not allow us to eat when and how we really

want. We have to regain control over our bodies.

Those conflicts have to be worked through in order to understand ourselves better and accept our bodies.

Don't you know the more you are deprived of something, the more you want it? This leads to overcompensating — what you call bingeing. The psychological effects of the bingeing following your strait jacket diet are very damaging

Dear Womens Voice,
I was upset and angry by the irresponsible and inaccurate way incest was used and portrayed in Chanie Rosenberg's short story 'Obituary'. *Womens Voice* would never suggest in a story involving rape that a woman, wearing a mini dress, who did not fight back, 'asked for it' and in fact enjoyed a position of power because she could always press charges.

Just because you rarely hear of sexual (as opposed to physical) abuse within families doesn't mean that it doesn't happen. Just that it's kept secret. It will remain so unless we challenge the prejudices surrounding it.

Chanie's story does explode some of these. Brian, the father, is a 'respectable' man, not a violent, alcoholic. His actions come out of his position within capitalist society, not because of 'personality defects' which are his fault alone.

which leads to self hatred and starts the vicious circle going.

I agree nutrition education is a good thing but smoking and drinking which are 'bad' too, are necessary if we are to get through the day in our present society.

You don't mention anything about working class women, or unemployed women — how can they afford to buy 'nutritionally good food'? Cheap foods are often sugary

But much more dangerously she confirms many others.

1. 'Emma though surprised did not object' in other words, she consents.
 2. Emma, solely by being an adolescent girl, is sexually attractive. Therefore in some way she seduces her father, SHE takes advantage of HIM.
 3. She enjoys it.
 4. The act is not repeated.
 5. Emma has the power to blackmail the father.
- Why then, is sexual abuse at home one of the most common reasons given by young people for leaving home? (*American Runaway Newsletter 1975*)

A socialist womens magazine should be exposing and fighting these prejudices, not reinforcing them. Until we do it's hardly surprising that myself and other victims keep our secret.

Who wants to be judged guilty or labelled a liar?
A comrade,
East London.

and stodgy. How can they afford to pay £4.20 and then £1.95 a week for the privilege of going to WW?

If WW is what you want, fine, but 95 per cent of women who have lost weight through diets put back the same weight or more.

I think your outlook is unprogressive, naive, disciplinarian, and elitist. You are pandering to capitalist society where women are conditioned into being objects, only good for looking at.

Ruth Cowan
North London



Inaccurate?

Dear Women's Voice,
 We were surprised and appalled to read a story like *Obituary* in a magazine which purports to have women's interests at heart. The treatment of father-daughter incest denies the experience of many women. Under the guise of sympathy and understanding for the man involved it reinforces myths about women—for example, the greed and manipulateness of young women's sexual behaviour, the responsibility of the wife for the father's frustration and exploitativeness—and succeeds in glamourising and trivialising incest by presenting it as a tender and enjoyable experience. The story amounts to little more than soft porn and insults and demeans women reading it.

In trying to make a point about the behaviour of middle class scabs, the story reveals deep-deated misogynist prejudices about the power of women's sexuality in somehow sapping and denigrating men; and this is simply not acceptable or excusable in a supposedly socialist women's publication.

Sue Turner and seven other women
 Hull

Childbirth: our rights

Dear Womens Voice,
 I read Maggie Bonner's article on giving birth (WV February) with great interest. During my first pregnancy I was under the care of a large teaching hospital. This time I shall be attending a smaller hospital in a different Area Health Authority.

The difference in the type of care offered is quite marked. The point is not that one hospital offers better care than the other, but that each forcefully promotes its own particular method of care which seems to be determined by the pet theories of the top obstetricians and paediatricians in that hospital or AHA. The choices that were outlined in the article are not always made available — it depends where you live as to what choices are open to you. Maggie was quite right when

she said the struggle for women to have freedom of choice in this area is a hard one. It will continue to be so because you not only have to struggle against the system but also against the bigoted views held by some in the revolutionary socialist and women's movements: to have children is some sort of sell-out to the capitalist system.

The right of every woman to have a child using the method she wishes is as important as the right to free abortion on demand. They both mean a woman having control over her own body. Perhaps this won't be possible until we live in a socialist society, but it doesn't mean that we shouldn't campaign for these rights now, by making sure women know about the choice of methods they should have, and how to go about getting the care they want.

Jane Fitzpatrick
 Barking, Essex

Rape: a problem for us all

Dear Womens Voice
 Re the letter from Rita Morris in the March issue of *Womens Voice*. I didn't see the article in the February issue to which Ms Morris refers but I felt that I must write in answer to her views.

I don't believe that longer prison sentences for rape would be the answer to the problem. What is needed is the re-education of both men and women. Too many men believe that sex is something which should be 'taken' from a woman. Another erroneous belief is that when a woman says 'no' she is actually playing some elaborate game and in reality means 'yes'.

Our children must be brought up to realise that sex is part of a loving, caring relationship and should never be used for any other purpose.

The streets will never be completely safe for a lone woman until men understand that for a woman to be on her own in the street does not constitute an invitation.

Rape is a problem which concerns us all, and which can only be solved by men and women working together. The 'blame', if any, lies with us all.

Yvonne Mullard
 Lowestoft



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SANDRA



APRIL 1972 Gill Brown looks back

APRIL 1972 and the eyes of the world again turned to Northern Ireland.

The Tory Government, under the leadership of Edward Heath, introduced direct rule from Westminster and dissolved Stormont. But that was all that changed. The British troops, responsible for the murder of 13 civilians on Bloody Sunday, stayed; internment without trial of suspected IRA 'terrorists' stayed; unemployment, bad housing and Orange bigotry stayed.

Direct rule showed clearly what Stormont had tried to hide: that the six counties of the North were under the control of the British state. Before, the state had relied on the unionist machine and Orange Order to dominate the six counties. But now, with increasing Republican resistance to the presence of British troops, the 'old order'

was no longer a sufficient means of control. So William Whitelaw moved in.

With the likelihood of concessions on the way to 'buy off' the Catholic middle class, unionists rallied together to defend Stormont. 100,000 attended a Vanguard rally at Stormont, an organisation whose leader, William Craig, said:

'We have an organisation that covers every part of the land. It must be used to identify the real enemy and build up dossiers. One day it may be our job, if the politicians fail, to liquidate the enemy.'

The month that began with Ireland also ended with Ireland. The inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday hurriedly conducted and written, appeared at the end of April. Lord Widgery, in charge of the inquiry, cleared the army of blame in the face of overwhelming eye-witness evidence to the contrary and concluded: 'There is no reason to suppose that the soldiers would have opened fire if they had not been fired upon first.'

Writing in *Socialist Worker* about the 'Widgery Whitewash' Eamonn McCann reached a different conclusion. That Bloody Sunday had been planned by the Army in conjunction with high powered

Cabinet ministers, including Willie Whitelaw, to smash the IRA.

Since internment began on 9 August 1971 whole areas of the six counties had become 'no-go' areas for the British troops. Anti-internment marches were frequent and support for the IRA was growing. Something

had to be done to bolster up Stormont, already foundering on the rocks of Republican resistance. Bloody Sunday was the answer.

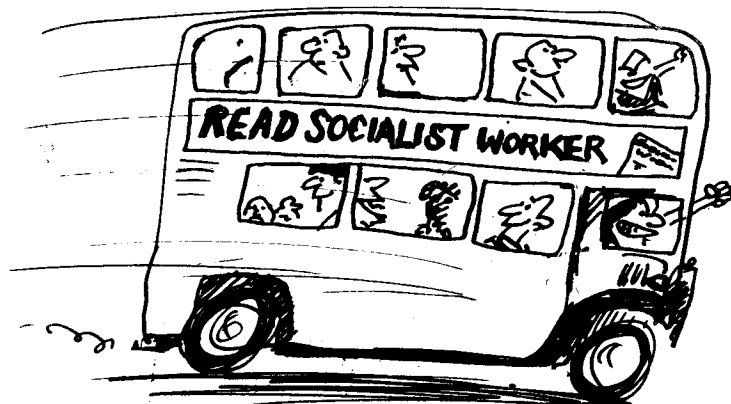
But it backfired. Tactics had to be changed. So direct rule was introduced and Widgery wiped the slate clean for a fresh offensive.



One of the 13 shot dead on Bloody Sunday

why I became a socialist

Fay Hester is 27 years old and one of the few women bus drivers in Glasgow. She explained how she came to socialist ideas and eventually to the decision to join the Socialist Workers Party.



By the time I was about 18 I considered myself a socialist, but I wasn't a revolutionary. At first I didn't realise my ideas needed some formulation. I realised through *Socialist Worker* that there is a pattern, a reason why people do things.

My family were to the left of the Labour Party, probably stronger than most people. I would consider my mother a feminist although she probably wouldn't think of herself as one. Any work in the house was shared not just between me and my sister, but with my brother as well. I thought this was how everyone acted.

Some men are brilliant. A few are a bit patronising, and some ignore me completely.

I came from a poor background. We lived in Govan then later moved to a housing scheme in Pollock. It was a revelation to me — I can't remember at what age — when a Tory government was elected. I couldn't believe people voted Tory.

I went to college in Aberdeen at 18, but left after a year and got work in

different offices. I spent five years getting fed up with boring office jobs then when I was 24 or 25 got this job on the buses.

Until then I wasn't active in the union. But in the garage the divisions between them and us were so much clearer.

In the civil service, at the National Savings Bank in Cowglen where I worked before, there were so many different levels that you forgot where the line is and what divided workers from management. In a garage you know exactly where that line is.

I'm more or less the only woman driver in my area. There was another but she got married and left. There's only about ten in the whole of Glasgow. There's the whole spectrum of how other drivers treat you. Some men are brilliant. A few are a bit patronising, and some ignore me completely.

They can't accept women can be bus drivers. That's especially true with the older Asians — I don't exist for them.

It's the same with the passengers. You get a whole range of responses. I've never had any trouble on the bus. I used to worry about it late at night, but not any more. You see people peering in. Half of them miss the money slot through looking at me. Sometimes I feel like an animal on show.

I hate the shifts on the buses. What keeps me going is that I'm on the branch committee of the union at my garage which makes it more interesting.

I don't think there was one point when I thought I'm a socialist. Coming into contact with the SWP I found ideas which previously I hadn't thought important. Learning about those ideas has given me confidence in talking to people at work. The ideas were always there but the difference is that I've had the whole thing explained to me.

I was round the periphery of the party for three years and only joined this year.

I think now why the hell didn't I join three years ago.

I suppose it was because I always felt it was such a big step — one which would affect my life. To me it's not just a question of signing a card but a real commitment.

To me it's not just a question of signing a card, but a real commitment

It's a dead important thing for me because it has given me the confidence to talk to people about political ideas. I'm really enjoying branch meetings now. I could talk politics all day.

Socialist Worker is something I find useful. I read it quite hungrily. Although there are certain subjects they don't cover enough, like El Salvador, places where real class struggle is happening.

We need to encourage new party members. When I joined I went along to my local branch in Glasgow and saw that old members were chairing the meetings and running them. It's all wrong. I said I thought new members should chair and that's been happening for the last few weeks. Sometimes they're not very good, but they'll only get good by doing it.

SWP
**WHERE
WE
STAND**

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION
The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD
The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers. The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based on councils of workers delegates and a workers' militia. At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system. Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM
The struggle for socialism is part of a world-wide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We oppose racialism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the fight of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements. The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. Russia, China and Eastern Europe are not socialist but state capitalist. We support the struggles of workers in these countries against the bureaucratic ruling class. We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against homosexuals.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class. We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. We urge all those who agree with our policies to join with us in the struggle to build the revolutionary party.

For details of the Socialist Workers Party, fill in this form and send to: National Secretary, SWP, PO Box 82, London E2.

NAME
ADDRESS

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Small ads

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If you want to help produce Womens Voice phone 01 986 3672.

And another thing

by Susan Pearce



There are people who are delighted about the fares rise on London Transport. These include, members of Bromley council and various High Court Judges. But they also include London's 12,000 taxi drivers. A rise in fares means that 2 or more people sharing a taxi is cheaper than going on the bus. Something must be wrong.

What we want from public transport is a fast, regular, frequent, safe, *cheap* service to take us nearby anywhere we might want to go, and back again. Nowhere in the world, except perhaps in the Moscow underground, are these criteria met, whatever the *London Standard* may say to the contrary... Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong and Istanbul are quoted as places which run cheap private minibus services at a profit.

Of course it's right. Those other cities do make a profit on their transport—at least the owners of the dirty, dangerous minibuses, staffed by children and adults on slave wages, make a profit. But if you want to go anywhere off the main routes you have to get a taxi.

It does cost money to keep vehicles safe, to run a service for people like all those on the huge lonely unserved council estates on the fringes of our cities. But the attitude is still very widely held (especially amongst cab drivers!) of 'I don't need London Transport. Why should my rates pay for it?'

I don't need Trident missiles. I don't need a bigger, more armoured police force. As it happens, I don't need an old people's home or a drug rehabilitation centre. I don't need the abortion service or nursery care. Not today I don't. Tomorrow may be another matter.

If we all spent 8 hours a day at work (or in bed if we're unemployed) and the rest sitting at home (or in a handy ditch if we haven't got a home) we wouldn't need any of the services our rates and taxes are supposed to pay for. Of course the suicide rate would rise sharply, causing a traffic jam in the NHS morgues, but that crisis would soon be over. The shortsighted rich have perhaps forgotten that after that there would be no workforce, obedient or otherwise. Then where would they be?

Every member of our society has a right to a life worth living. This includes the right to move about as you please, unmolested. So most people who pay rates and taxes also need public transport. (Although politicians and newspaper writers seem to think that the ratepayer, the taxpayer, and the public transport-user are three different people).

Who do we get to help us win this? We get Ken Livingstone, horned devil of the Greater London Council (if you're viewing from the Home Counties that is) standing on top of a bus in the County Hall car park to tell us that with 2 more sessions in Parliament 'we' will have won cheap fares.

Ken Livingstone's all right, as 'men of the people' go. He does his bit speaking out on fares, gays, Ireland, newts and the like. He eats in East End curry houses (the expensive ones recommended in *Time Out*) and I'm sure he means the best for us all. But there's no getting round the fact that he believes that parliament works. It would never cross his mind that it could be any use to go round the bus garages and tube workers' canteens arguing for industrial action or a no-collection policy on fares. So we're left with passengers frightened to refuse to pay a minimum tube fare of 40p—who wants to be pushed off a train, all alone, into the eager arms of a gleeful young constable,? the bus conductors frightened to stick their necks out without the full support of their fellow workers and the backing of their union, and the union leaders not giving a damn so long as their funds and their knighthoods are protected.

It's not true that the famous Milan supermarket 'Can't Pay' protest happened because Italians are more hot-headed than the British (it's the Mediterranean climate you know). What they had was leadership and co-operation. They knew they had a right to cheap food and they were confident enough to fight for it.

Nothing less will win cheap fares, or anything else. for us.

My wife!...my comrade?!

Great changes occurred in the lives of women after the revolution in Russia. 'Cement' a novel about soviet life in the 1920s opens when Gleb, the returning soldier hero comes back to his wife Dasha. But he finds that he cannot simply pick up where he left off....

HE THREW his military coat upon the fence, unstrapped his haversack and laid it upon the coat. Then threw down upon it his helmet with its red winged star. For a moment he stood still, shrugged his shoulders high, swung his arms wide, and wiped the sweat from his face with the sleeve of his tunic. He looked again upon the doorway of the house, where the door ajar was creaking its riddle to him through its black chink. The door creaked loudly and—

Is it Dasha, or is it not?

A woman with a red kerchief about her head, in a man's blouse, stood in the black oblong of the doorway, looking hard at him, knitting her brows. Her eyelashes quivered with amazement, and as though she were about to scream. When she encountered Gleb's, suddenly her brows lifted and the tears sparkled in her eyes.

Is it Dasha or is it not?

The face, with the mole on the chin and the round nose; the sideways turn of the head when looking intently—this was she, Dasha. But everything else about her—he couldn't quite say how—was strange, not womanly, something he had never seen before in her.

"Dasha! My wife! My Darling!"

He made a step towards her, his boots scraping on the concrete path, and stretched out his arms to embrace her. He could not hold the beating of his heart nor the spasmodic contraction of his features.

Dasha stood in the doorway on the top step. While the blood rushed to her face she could only stammer:

"Is it you? Oh, Gleb!"

Then Gleb seized her—the crushing embrace of a husband, of a peasant—till her bones were cracking; pressed his prickly, unshaven lips to her lips. And she gave herself to his will, and remembrance was lost in rapture.

But this sprang from her heart for a second only, and in this second Dasha felt the old power of Gleb once again upon her.

Firmly but tenderly, Dasha lifted his arm from about her and gazed at him distantly with a surprised smile.

"What's wrong with you, comrade Gleb? Don't be so wild. Calm yourself."

She trod a step lower, and began to laugh.

"You soldier! You are altogether too excitable for this peaceful neighbourhood.... The key is in the door. You can boil yourself some water on the oil-stove. But there's no tea and sugar and bread. You'd better go to the Factory Committee and register for your ration."

She came yet another step lower. And her careworn face showed anxiety—a strange anxiety, not for herself.

This was more than an insult—it was a

blow! He felt shamed and hurt. His arms were still extended, and uncontrolledly his smile still flickered.

"What the hell do you mean? 'Comrade!'—what's that? Do you think I'm a damned fool?"

Dasha had already gone down the steps and had reached the gate. There she stood, gazing at him, smiling.

Is it Dasha or is it not?

"I take my dinner in town, in the communal restaurant of the Food Commissariat; and I get my bread ration from the Party Committee. Gleb, you'd better call in at the Factory Committee and register there for a bread card. I shall be away for two days.



They've ordered me to go to the country. Take a good rest after your journey."

"Here! Wait a bit! I can't understand this. Since when did you become 'Comrade' to me? What have I wandered into, anyway?"

"I'm in the Women's Section.... Can't you understand?"

She walked quickly away, with long decided steps, without looking back, the red kerchief on her head teasing him, beckoning him and laughing at him.

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Ode to the management of Ross Foods

We are cheap labour
Oh yes we are,
We are cheap labour
Oh yes we are.
We don't want bungalows or
company cars
All we want is a damn
good rise.
We turn out pasties
We turn out pies,
But they won't give us
a bloody rise.
So there's no pasties and no pies
Till we get a bloody rise.

The cost of living
Is going up.
And they won't give us
A bloody 'nough.
We hold our heads up
And pay our bills
And we're all on valium pills.

□ *By the women of Ross pie factory in Hull*

