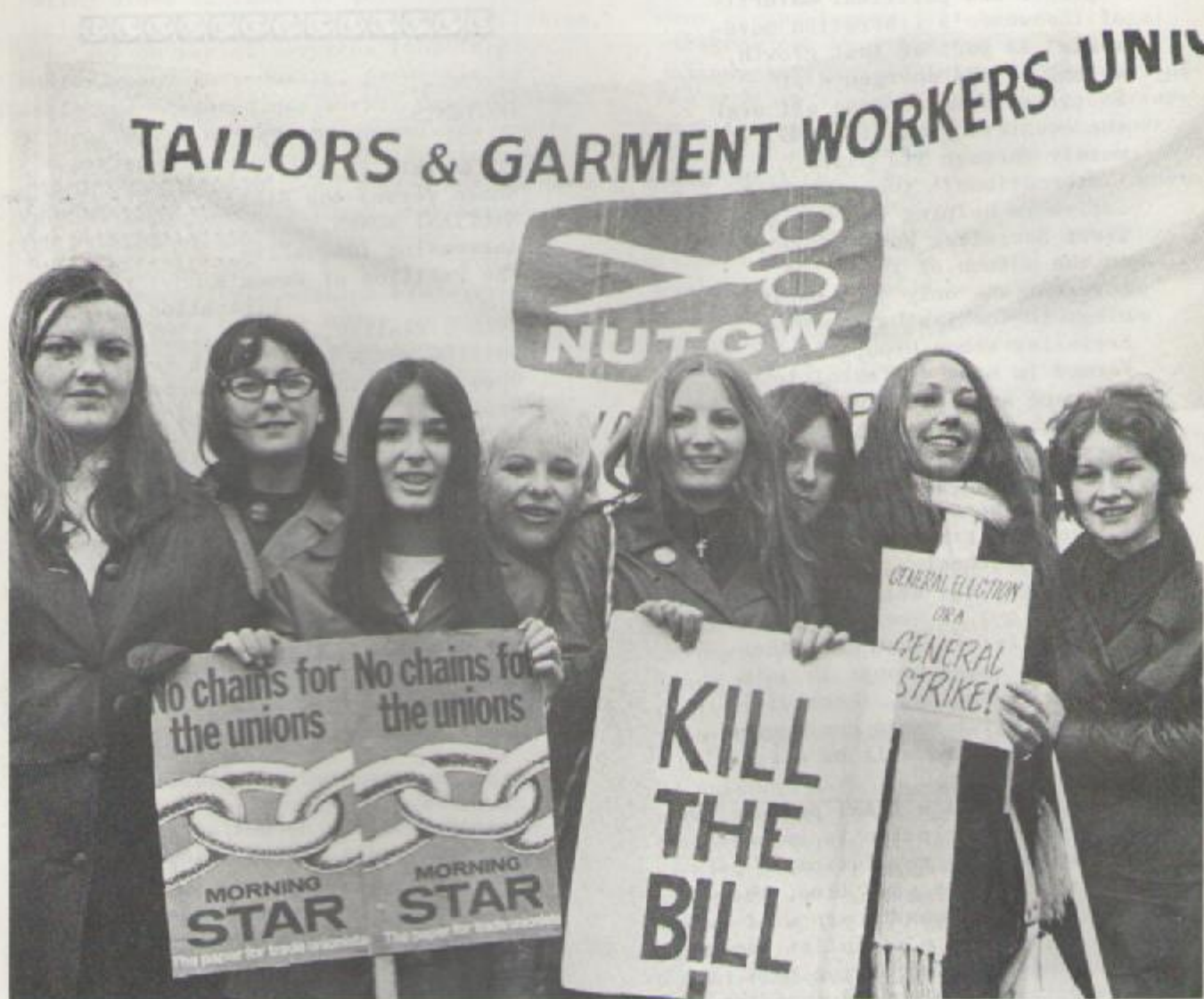


# SOCIALIST WOMAN

NATIONAL PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WOMAN GROUPS

MARCH - APRIL 1971

5p



## *Women & the Bill*

LETTER FROM HELEN KELLER TO THE  
WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

TELEPHONISTS ON STRIKE

**Kate Millett: Sexual Politics**

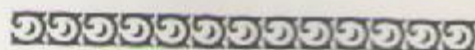
# EDITORIAL

SOCIALIST WOMAN sends greetings to the March 6th Demonstration. We warmly welcome the increasing size and political maturity of the women's liberation movement. As part of that growth, we salute the emergence of Socialist Woman Groups all over the country. When the IMG, mainly through its paper 'International' took the initiative in helping to form the first Socialist Woman group, in the autumn of 1968, the movement was only just beginning; in the last six months Socialist Woman Groups have formed in many different towns and more are in the process of forming. In order that all these groups should have a paper in which they have a say a pro tem editorial board has been set up. On theboard are women from Oxford, Manchester, Lancaster, and Glasgow, as well as London. In addition, we are inviting representatives from the other Socialist Woman groups to join us. In the autumn, there will be a Socialist Woman conference when a new board will be elected.

We believe that a total perspective of women's liberation is impossible without a total revolutionary perspective. At the same time, we recognise that many women will want to come into Socialist Woman groups without yet having this perspective. We intend that the groups will remain as open as they have always been, with the greatest possible democracy prevailing, so that policy is arrived at with the participation of all. Socialist Woman Groups have a vital part to play in the Women's Liberation movement, by bringing a political perspective into it. Women's liberation is a political question. Our oppression is rooted in the economic, social and political system, and until the system is overthrown, our liberation is impossible.

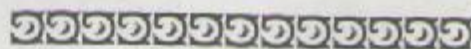
## EDITORIAL BOARD:

Margaret Coulson, Judith Evans, Linda Fryd, Leonora Lloyd, Linda Smith, Judith White.



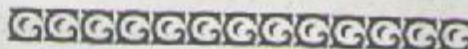
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Letters etc. should be sent to "Socialist Woman", 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1; copy date for next issue: 20th April.

Signed articles do not necessarily represent editorial opinion.



## NEXT ISSUE

Special Conference Issue including:-  
 Our perspectives for the Women's Liberation movement.  
 Problems of Working Women  
 The Family  
 The Night Cleaners Campaign  
 Part-time work: what does it do for women?  
 News of the Italian movement

*With thanks to the Design Group who helped design this issue. The Design Group can be contacted c/o Val Charlton, 01-267 1988*

# Women versus the Bill

The Industrial Relations Bill is clearly part of a generalised offensive by the ruling class against the workers, which includes increasing unemployment, inflation, cut-back on social services (the Tory budget), and in industry, productivity deals and measured day work. The problems of capitalism are again accumulating after its period of apparent stabilization and growth (the boom of the '50s) - and it can only attempt to solve these problems at the expense of the working class.

This attack affects working class women very severely, both as house workers and as wage workers. The woman generally bears the responsibility of the family budget, and is forced into finding ways of economising as money buys less. More and more women are going to work out of sheer economic necessity. The night cleaners are a case in point: no one looks after kids all day and then works at cleaning all night because she wants money for the 'little extras'.

The problems of the work situation women find themselves in will be greatly increased if this bill becomes operational:

1) Unionisation: a very high proportion of women workers are not even unionised. Many work for employers who are anyway very difficult to fight, who employ women specifically as cheap labour: cleaning contractors, the public institutions of the bourgeois state (hospitals, schools, colleges, offices, employing cleaners and typists), small factories, and so on. The so-called 'fair deal' would give employers the 'right' to victimise any women who attempted to join the workers up to a union - the first essential step of organisation. And so fair is this provision of the bill, that there is no procedure laid down by which workers who are unfairly dismissed can be re-instated.

2) Pay and Conditions: according to the Equal Pay Act we're supposed to be getting equal pay by 1975. It's clear that the government and the employers aren't going to grant even this without a fight, and there are numerous cases which the Act doesn't anyway cover: such as so-called 'women's jobs' - cleaning, typing and so on. The only way real gains can be made is by militant action, and by the

use of the basic weapon of the labour market - withdrawal of labour. But strikes are seriously attacked under the Bill: in many circumstances they become illegal strikers can be fined and on refusal, jailed. Strikes in this category include any made in violation of long compulsory negotiation procedures under the supervision of a reinforced Commission on Industrial Relations - a body which knows very well on which side of the class struggle it is. Blacking and sympathy strikes are also made illegal - this would isolate a small work force (the situation of many working women) from the support of other workers. Even picketing is illegal if it prevents fulfilment of contract!

The bill is very strongly directed against rank and file action and unofficial strikes of the most militant kind. The category of illegal strikes includes any made in breach of an 'agreement': that is, a deal made between the employers and union officials. Only the 'official' union organisations are recognised - allowed to register. Shop stewards committees, trade union branches and so on, have no official status, and strikes called by them could be smashed.

3) Bureaucracy vs Democracy: the Bill openly attacks even basic rights of bourgeois democracy, notably the right of free speech. 'Incitement' to strike in breach of 'agreement' be it by a worker at a factory meeting or by a paper such as 'Socialist Woman' becomes a punishable offence. But the attack on workers' democracy, the attempt to cripple shop-floor organisation, is equally important. For women workers the only possible leadership is that of the militant shop-steward or rank and file worker: union bureaucrats are imbued with male chauvinism as well as with contempt for the rank and file worker. The T&GWU, denounced by May Hobbs at the latest Workers' Control Conference, is not the only union with a bad record.

## Our Tasks

Clearly when women workers, knowingly or as yet unknowingly, face this situation, it is an important priority to begin to link their struggles to

the more generalised struggles of the working class. Because of the nature of women's oppression, and the over-emphasising bourgeois ideology lays on the family role, women workers have for too long seen themselves as apart from the organised working class movement - and this weakens both them and the labour movement as a whole, which is of course just what the bosses want. One of the chief aims of the bill is to increase the fragmentation, differentials and competition among the working class, to get away with the present ruling class offensive by using sections of the workers to compete with and scab on others. From this point of view one of the most obviously useful existing sets of differentials is that between male and female labour, and we can expect, if we don't organise to combat it, to see low-paid female labour used to increase competition among workers, to divide them and weaken their militancy.

Working class women who do not work, who rely primarily on a man's wage, can also become unwitting victims of the attack by the employers. The bourgeois press, the television and radio all tell them to fear militant action by workers, to fear that they'll lose the source of the weekly housekeeping if their husband goes out on strike. But there will be even less job security if the employers and the government make any important gains in the present struggles. And in real terms the value of the weekly wage packet will decline.

The most important tasks for women socialists in relation to the bill are the following:

1) to help explain the nature of the bill to women workers, showing in what ways it does attack them; and encouraging their participation in local Trade Union Action Committees and in strikes and demonstrations against the bill. Women workers who do become militant can often develop a political consciousness very rapidly, and can therefore have an impact on the politics of the labour movement out of proportion to their numbers - and win militant men workers away from the excesses of male chauvinism.

2) to work with militant women involved in struggles for unionisation and better pay and conditions, raising demands which relate to the generalised struggle of the

working class - the need for the unions to go onto the offensive, the need for workers' democracy (recall of officials, etc.) - demands which can raise consciousness among other layers of the working class too. We must also continue to support and raise demands which arouse women's consciousness about the particular nature of their oppression - equal pay, shorter hours, and so on.

3) to reach the great numbers of working class women who cannot be directly reached through industrial struggles. The most practicable areas of operation will be working class communities - council estates in particular. Through campaigns for nurseries and better community services, and through agitation on such questions as the social service cuts, and inflation, it is possible to bring together housewives - usually the most isolated members of the working class - and discuss the class nature of the Tory legislation. Rent strikes, which will undoubtedly be called for in many areas soon, offer great opportunities for making this kind of link-up. But the crucial factor in the success of such campaigns is the involvement of the organised labour movement - the only rent strikes ever to be won have been won by industrial action. The potential of the co-operation between organised working class women, and the trade union movement, becomes very concrete in such instances.

4) Finally, we must pose within the women's movement as a whole the need to fight the bill, aiming to win more women to a commitment to class struggle, and to a socialist position.

*Judith White*

#### SOME FACTS

Industry sends 31% of its boy employees to day-release classes, but only 7% of its girls.

42% of men earn £15 a week or more; less than 1% of women.

There are 5 million wives working, 2½ million children have working mothers. In England and Wales, there are fewer than 3,000 day nurseries, two-thirds of them privately run. There are just over 3,000 registered child-minders.

# Militant Women



## Night cleaners: women on an 80 hour week

One of the arguments put about against Equal Pay is that women are fragile little things who are very good at making life agreeable, keeping the wheels running smoothly, etc. - we all know how it goes - but they don't really make any important contribution to our economic life. Anyone who thinks this should take a look at the nightcleaners to see how hypocritical this argument is. Women doing a nightcleaning job - which is hard physical work, including scrubbing on hands and

knees - don't do it because of their "right to work"; they do it because they have to. Most of them are women alone or with husbands in low-paid jobs; as prices keep rising, they desperately need the money to make ends meet, but society says woman's place is in the home, looking after the children (unpaid, of course). Result: grossly inadequate nursery facilities, except for the well-off, so the women can only work for money to live when they have taken care of their unpaid daytime job - in other words, all night, 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. for the magnificent sum of around £12-13. With condi-

tions like this, the "double oppression of women" has gone about as far as it can go.

Night cleaners all over the country are coming to realise that the only way to stick up for themselves is to remind the contractors who employ them that they aren't "just women", grateful for a few pennies - they are women workers, with a union, and if they stop work it will hurt. Women have a right to work - but like any other worker, they have a right to decide their own conditions.

We will be publishing more details about the nightcleaners' campaign in the next issue, but if you would like to help spread the campaign in the meantime, contact May Hobbs, Cleaners Action Group, 13 Middle Lane, London N.8 (tel. 01-348 2817), or your nearest Socialist Woman Group (see p.19).

*Felicity Trodd*

## London telephonists two interviews

WE RECENTLY TALKED TO Margaret Sim, an assistant secretary of a local union branch, about the role of women in the strike. The topic has received a lot of press publicity, almost all of it unfavourable to the strikers as a whole, and especially insulting to the women involved. Margaret Sim described the campaign against the "Hello girls" as disgusting - and just not true. The press were greatly exaggerating the numbers of girls working during the strike and those who did were not union members, who were all out.

Unions always have proportionately fewer women members than men because of the social circumstances of women in paid employment. Women hardly ever expect to be working full time all their lives as men do - they're bound to get married and need time off to have children, at least. So in Wren House, the Overseas Telecommunications Office, there is an annual turnover of 75% of the 400 women!

In the same building, according to Margaret, they are permanently 60 people short. Bosses well know that women have been trained all their

lives to be pleasant and agreeable - it's part of being a telephonist and it's part of being super-exploited.

But despite all the social factors which hold women back all their lives, 90% of P.O. girls are unionised, according to Margaret. And she told us that their militancy is outstanding - the girls who can least afford to strike, the teenagers on £6.50 a week, have persuaded the male night shift switch operators, to come out with them.

The public, it seems, contrary to what the papers have said, have been very much in sympathy with the strikers. A shop near Wren and Faraday House, where there have been constant pickets, has been giving them free tea, whilst round the corner, they have been able to get their shoes mended at reduced prices. Margaret said that people come up to the pickets in the street with donations for their fund.

The morale of all the strikers was thus very high - not least of the women involved. "We are demanding a £3 increase for all grades," said Margaret Sim, "and the longer they take to make up their minds to give it to us, the more determined we are to get it."

INTERVIEW with Esther Lawlor, a telephonist on strike, on the Faraday Building picket, a week after the strike began:

- Why did you come out on strike?

Mainly to get a better deal for the young girls at the bottom of the pay scale, who take home between £8 and £9 a week for doing exactly the same work as people getting three times as much. I'd like to see an end to the age-based pay scale. Many of these girls live on their own; when they've paid their £4 or £5 rent they haven't got much left to pay bills, buy food and necessaries. One 19-year-old who pays 5 gns. a week for a flat couldn't afford on her wage to buy proper meals. She collapsed one day from malnutrition. The girls who are staying in now are the ones who can afford to come out - many of them are even doing overtime instead of supporting the strike. It's the young girls who can least afford it who are out. The scabs are just being selfish and greedy. They'll take the pay increase

if we win, but they won't help us fight for it.

- How important do you think the union is?

I joined the union five years ago because I believe you need a union; you can't get anywhere on your own. You need the strength of the union behind you. The majority of women here are in the union and many of the members who are scabbing have been helped by the union in the past. The trouble is they won't listen to us, they just ignore us; they don't want to lose their money now.

But if we lose this strike, a lot of other workers will lose too - the engineers, the railway workers, the busmen, the night cleaners, car workers. If the Government stop us, they'll be in a stronger position to stop everyone else.

- Is a closed shop necessary in your view?

Well, trainees are not allowed to join the union: there are a lot of trainees; they get the same age-based scaled wages as qualified telephonists; and they can keep the switchboards operating if the qualified workers are on strike. They can strike, but they're under terrific pressure not to, because of their position. If we had a closed shop we'd be in a much stronger bargaining position than we are now. The GPO would really be feeling the pressure if we were all out.

- Do you think the GPO can give what you demand?

The GPO can well afford to give us the increase. We subsidise a lot of different industries. We don't know what they are 'cause they've got the books; they've got everything. I'd love to see the books.

- How long can you hold out, do you think?

We can hold out as long as Ryland wants to. We aren't demoralised and we aren't put off by the lies of the national press. The money collections from the sympathetic public, from unions, trades councils, left-wing

groups, have been a real help; without them we probably wouldn't be standing out here now. Mind you, the girls would live on bread and jam as long as they think it's necessary, and as long as they have a roof over their head they'll stay out.

- What are the prospects for the failure or success of this strike?

I think this strike could lead to a general strike. If we lose they'll all lose; if we give in, they'll all give in. If Jackson goes to arbitration, he'll be letting us down, because none of us want this. Look what happened to the power workers, and as a result they only got half of what they claimed. Chappell sold them out.

If you go to arbitration, you've got to accept the judge's ruling. I'd be disappointed if this happened, and I think a lot of people would be.

- Finally, what do you think of the press and radio coverage of the strike so far?

They never print the truth, they never put what you say. The BBC interviewed some of us and asked how long we could stay out. We said one week longer than Mr. Ryland. It came over as "one week longer".

*Members of London SWG*



*Drawing Women Back: Militant Woman, c. 1250*

# Increasing Inequality

In the last 2 years, the actions and campaigns on equal pay have attracted some publicity and have brought statements of apparent support from very varied sources (from the TUC, to Barbara Castle's bill on equal pay for equal work, to Tory statements etc.) This situation seems to have led to widespread belief that at the very least the trend towards equal pay must be underway in this country. We cannot let such a view go unquestioned for it is likely to mislead people into thinking that the battle has been won; and, more important than this, it simply isn't true. Here is an example from a pay offer recently made as part of a productivity deal proposed in the textile industry. Members of the newly formed Lancaster Socialist Woman Group, which is making an examination of the conditions under which working class women work a focus for its activities in the town, met three women shop stewards from the factory, Marjorie Haythornthwaite, Margaret Holden and Jean Mountain. In the discussion which took place, the shop stewards gave the following outline of the situation.

In the last 6 months, all the jobs in the factory (Lansil Ltd., a subsidiary of the Monsanto chemical empire), have been put into 7 grades. The grades are not supposed to depend on who does the job, but on the job itself; each grade includes jobs which men and women do. In the productivity deal proposals put by the management, revised rates of pay were offered. How would these effect women workers in the factory? There are 4 main points to be made:-

1. The new rates offered are not much above the present rates and in some cases would be less.
2. The present bonus scheme would disappear altogether so that the take home pay of some women would drop considerably in some cases. Besides this, work loads would be under constant review so that every-one would have to work harder, while no one would receive bonus for their efforts.



"There must be more to life than 3d. off-beans..."

3. Although the mens' and womens' jobs have been put in the same grades male rates of pay are higher than female rates in each case.

4. But the offer actually discriminates against women to an even greater extent because the difference between male rates and female rates would in fact be greater than now, and greater than before the strike last year, which led to wage increases all round. The difference between male and female rates would be as follows:-

Grade	%	now		
		Male rate	Female rate	Difference
1	100		87	13
2	100		88	12
3	100		88	12
4	100		88	12
5	100		88	12
6	100		89	11
7	100		89	11

Grade	%	New offer stage 2		
		Male rate	Female rate	Difference
1	100		80	20
2	100		81	19
3	100		83	17
4	100		84	16
5	100		84	16
6	100		85	15
7	100		85½	14½

Over and above this, although the company say there will be no redundancies, 106 jobs are to "disappear". That will mean fewer jobs in this town, and will effect the chances of work for youngsters as well as adult workers.



The women shop stewards are calling on their members to reject these proposals; to say no to any increase in the difference in rates of pay between men and women. They are urging all women workers to demand equal pay out of company profits as part of any agreement which is signed, and to say no to any attempt to reduce the number of jobs in the factory and they call upon all trade unionists in the factory to support their demands. While the whole trade union movement is under attack from the Government, unity is vital. But this must be a unity which recognises and fights for the rights of all, and therefore can call upon the support of all sections of the membership.

Margaret Coulson

## The Politics of Women's Liberation

During the last few months women's liberation groups have had a good deal of coverage on T.V., radio and in the press; perhaps an indication that the general movement has grown to an extent where it can no longer be ignored but has not yet reached a stage at which it appears to be a threat to the established order of things in this society. Sparked off by the Ford women's strike in 1968 and influenced by the women's liberation movement in the U.D., the women's groups which have developed in Britain have had a variety of aims and targets for action. Nevertheless co-ordination between the various groupings has developed and the work to build the March 6th demonstration is a clear example of this.

At this time it seems appropriate to ask what part Socialist Woman and the socialist women's groups have to play within the women's liberation movement. I have tried to examine in some detail elsewhere the main features of the exploitation of women in this society, and to draw some conclusions for our practical orientation from this analysis.\* Here I simply want to draw out some of the main points.

\* See article in forthcoming International.

In trying to understand the position of women in any society we have to consider the social significance which is attached to certain facts of human biology, namely the biological differences between the sexes and the helplessness of human infants. But we are not simply concerned with the social interpretation of biology but with this in relation to the structure of a particular society at a particular time; that is with the way in which the biological characteristics are integrated with the economic and political structures of society.

In Britain women are in a position of economic subordination. There are three main aspects to this. Firstly most women are house workers doing vital work outside of the money economy, paid indirectly through their husbands' wages. Secondly in paid employment women are amongst the most exploited of workers, getting low rates of pay (in 1968 the average wage for female manual workers was £10.8s while for male manual workers it was more than twice as much, £22.4s for a full week's work in both cases); they do largely unskilled work, have fewer chances of promotion or training or of access to more interesting and responsible jobs than men. However, these inequalities are not equally shared by all women; the worst situation is that of working classwomen; the wives of the wealthy are cushioned by material advantages which derive from the exploitation of others. In Britain no attempt to unite all women can be justified as a means to liberation; the right of women to be managing directors, or to enter the stock exchange, has no part in our campaign.

The economic subordination of women is traditionally justified because it is made to appear "natural", an inevitable part of the condition of being female. Sir John Newsom has argued that the main social function of women is to provide a secure and comfortable home and to be mothers. Thus the possibility of pregnancy, the responsibilities of motherhood are interpreted as meaning that women must be unreliable employees, less worthy of lengthy education or training or promotion than men. Because women bear children it is assumed that they must always be the ones to care for them and this requires almost exclusive and intensive attention for several years.

In addition to the handicaps which motherhood (and as all women are regarded as potential mothers this is a handicap which

all are assumed to share) appears to involve, the sexual subordination of women provides further confirmation of their secondary position in society. It is believed that women don't (cannot) take the initiative in courtship or in sexual advances, their sexuality is inevitably passive, essentially only a response, dependent on the assertiveness of the male. We can thank Victorian "morality" and the Freudian view of the female which developed out of it for the worst features of this crippling view of female (and male) sexuality. This tradition enables the commercial exploitation of the female body through advertising and its object-ification in parades like "beauty" contests. The total effect is to reinforce the general condition of women as one of inferiority and dependence.

To act against this situation of subordination means that we have to work for fundamental change in the structure of society. The campaigns to which we give priority must reflect our understanding of our position; and our contribution to the women's liberation movement must be to explain and extend our perspective. Our main effort and solidarity must be with the struggles of working class women, especially working class working women who are both amongst the most exploited, and who, of all women, have the potential power along with other workers to create the basis for our liberation.

Margaret Coulson



"You've got to give a little, take a little, and let your poor heart break a little."

# Myth & Reality

Everyone connected in any way with the Women's Liberation movement is aware of the uneven levels of understanding of, and consciousness about, the whole question of "women". Much of the problem lies in developing the consciousness of women themselves; in nurturing the awareness of their position in the capitalist society; and in developing their understanding that this society cannot present them with any solution.

Our fight against the ideology of the society must be at many levels, just as the inculcation machinery of the state operates on many levels. Women and men are subjugated throughout their lives into accepting as "natural" the predominant attitudes of the social system; women are in some definable or indefinable way inferior to men.

"MEN ARE SUPERIOR TO WOMEN. THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE, BECAUSE THEY WERE PUT IN THE WORLD FIRST." The woman's place is in the home, and her main work after marriage is housework and childbearing, whether or not she indulges in working outside the home for wages.

"HOUSEWORK IS A DUTY TO HER FAMILY." "A WOMAN IS REWARDED BY GETTING A NEAT AND TIDY HOME." Throughout her growing years the young woman will be given all the shit about how satisfying and total housework is.

"INDOORS YOU GET PAID BY MAKING THE FAMILY HAPPY...IN SEEKING WHAT A NICE PLACE YOU HAVE". The horizons of all human potential are restricted in a bourgeois society, but for a woman they are even more stringently reduced.

One of the main indoctrination agencies of bourgeois society, if not the main one, is the nuclear family; the grouping which nestles close to the child and unwittingly ensures that the bourgeois values, absorbed already by the parents, will be the root of the child's consciousness of the world. The basic tenets of the capitalist society, competition, the isolation of units to work against each other (divide and rule), the acceptance of hierarchy, with the dominance of the father over the mother and the power of both parents over the children; the fundamental importance of the family and

the placatory role of the mother; all are accepted as the natural order of things. And the key to the indoctrination procedure is the mother, who acts as the mainstay of the family. It is she who transmits the values of hard work and conformity, it is she who could act as a brake on the husband (for example, urging caution rather than action); she is the one who has the responsibility for the co-ordination of all the various tasks of the family. The family is the unit of child rearing, the unit of consumption, the unit of production of use values in the form of housework and, fundamental for the exploiting class, the developer of attitudes.

"GIRLS ARE MORE SELF CONSCIOUS OF THEIR APPEARANCE THAN BOYS BECAUSE THEY ARE EXPECTED TO BE NICE AND DAINTY. AND IT IS THEIR NATURE TO WANT TO BE."

"DOING HOUSEWORK JUST COMES NATURALLY TO WOMEN."

"I WANT SECURITY IN MY OWN HOME".

"I WANT THREE KIDS AND A CONSIDERATE HUSBAND."

From the bosom of the family, the child is pushed into the educational net, where there are equal opportunities for a free, non-political, education, for ALL! Irrespective of the conditioning of the children prior to the entry into school and the parental pressures when they go home each night, all children have the same opportunities as each other!

"I'M STILL AT SCHOOL, BUT I'M LEARNING FAST. WHEN I'M IN SCHOOL UNIFORM AND THE BUS COMES ALONG ALL THE BLOKES IN THE QUEUE GO BARGING ON AHEAD OF ME LIKE A HERD OF ELEPHANTS.

"BUT WHEN I'VE GOT ME GEAR AND MAKEUP ON, IT'S A DIFFERENT SCENE. THEY ALL START SMILING AND STANDING BACK AND OFFER ME A SEAT - IT'S GREAT! (AS YOU CAN GUESS I JUST CAN'T WAIT TO LEAVE SCHOOL)."

(Letter in ROMEO).

Equal - when one sex is demanding to get out of the educational establishments early because of the need to earn so that they can attract the other sex and settle into security? Equal so that there are courses for girls and others for boys? The girls being trained in school for work centred on the home, whereas the boys are offered no such training.... it's an all or nothing world!...

"I THINK MEN ARE MORE MASCULINE DOING DOCKING OR ROAD WORK, BUILDING, ETC.... MEN WHO WORK IN BANKS OR OFFICES ALWAYS

GIVE ME THE IDEA OF PUFFS. MEN CAN'T DO LOOKING AFTER KIDS, WASHING, CLEANING AND COOKING."

Equal when girls think of education and work as a fill-in before the wedding?

By the age of 18 - in 1962 - there were 7.3% boys at school whereas only 4.2% girls were remaining at school.

And after school - work (at least for a short time).

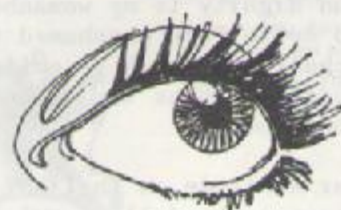
"WOMEN'S JOBS ARE NURSING, TEACHING, SECRETARIES, AND WORKING IN BANKS."

Much has been written about the availability of jobs and the opportunities women have in work, and these conditions continually reinforce the way that women view themselves. They are prepared to work at more mindless jobs than men; they are prepared to work for lower rates than a man. In 1969 manual women workers on average earned £12.2s per week, whereas men were earning £24.17s. These figures are very illuminating although in part the disparity is due to the large number of women who do part-time work. But this type of employment itself is part of the myth. Of course, part time work is often the only way that a woman can manage to earn money and do all the work for her family, but it is also the way that capitalism can use women most effectively. The wife/mother/woman continues to supply the demands of the nuclear family and at the same time produces commodities for the system.

#### *A Socialist Teacher*

DID you know that beauty chores are like homework? Well, it's true. If you do them thoroughly you'll earn yourself lots of Good Looks Marks!

Have a look at the programme below and just pick out the subjects that interest you. Work your way through and you'll have A-Level Looks (A for Admirable, of course!)



...If you can gather three passes here then you're a perfect student and you're bound to be a success—with the boys, of course!  
—Romeo feature

(All quotations in this article are from schoolgirls' essays, unless stated otherwise.)

# WRITING WOMEN BACK :

## *Helen Keller = Socialist*

To the great majority of those who have heard of her, Helen Keller is known exclusively for her great bravery and her undaunted struggle to overcome the handicaps of blindness, deafness and dumbness which resulted in her mastery of five languages, including her own. Small wonder that the picture blurs here - for this remarkable woman, born in 1880, like many women throughout the history of class society was committed to the idea of social revolution, and spoke up for her fellow-women against the stifling social oppression. She was an avowed Socialist and proud of it - a member of the I.W.W. (the American Syndicalist movement - the Wobblies.) "I am no worshipper of cloth of any colour but I love the red flag and what it symbolises to me and other socialists. I have a red flag hanging in my study."

She spoke and wrote frequently on behalf of workers on strike. "Whenever there is a strike it shows that men and women are over burdened by hardship. Only through organisation can the workers escape industrial slavery." She attacked militarism in vibrant speeches, and she hailed the Russian Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and continued to defend it for the rest of her life. "There abides with me a gratifying sense that casting my lot with the workers, even if only in dreams and sentiments, has given symmetry and dignity to my womanhood and enabled me to face unashamed the spiritual challenge which is quite as searchingly fiery as the economic ordeal."

Helen Keller wrote to an English Woman-Suffragist the following letter:-

"I thank you for the copy of "Votes for Women." Mr. Zangwill's address interested me deeply. You ask me to comment on it, and though I know little, your request encourages me to tell you some of my ideas on the subject.

I have thought much lately about the question of woman suffrage, and I have followed in my Braille magazines the recent elections in Great Britain. The other day I read a fine report of an address by Miss Pankhurst at a meeting in New York.

I do not believe that the present government has any intention of giving women a part in national politics or doing justice to Ireland, or the workmen of England. So long as the franchise is denied to a large number of those who serve and benefit the public, so long as those who vote are at the beck and call of party machines, the people are not free, and the day of women's freedom seems still to be in the far future. It makes no difference whether the Tories or the Liberals in Great Britain, the Democrats or the Republicans in the United States, or any party of the old model in any other country, get the upper hand. To ask any such party for women's rights is like asking a czar for democracy.

Are not the dominant parties managed by the ruling classes, that is, the propertied classes, solely for the profit and privilege of the few? They use us millions to help them into power. They tell us, like so many children, that our safety lies in voting for them. They toss us crumbs of concession to make us believe that they are working in our interest. Then they exploit the resources of the nation not for us, but for the interests which they represent and uphold. We, the people, are not free. Our democracy is but a name. We vote? What does that mean? It means that we choose between two bodies of real, though not avowed, autocrats. We choose between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. We elect expensive masters to do our work for us, and then blame them because they work for themselves and for their class.

The enfranchisement of women is a part of the vast movement to enfranchise all mankind. You ask for votes for women.

What good can votes do you when ten-elevenths of the land of Great Britain belongs to 200,000, and only one-eleventh to the rest of the 40,000,000? Have your men with their millions of votes freed themselves from this injustice?

When one shows the masters that half the wealth of Great Britain belongs to 25,000 persons, when one says that this is wrong, that this wrong lies at the bottom of all social injustice, including the wrong of women, the highly respectable newspapers cry "Socialist Agitator! Stirrer of Class Strife!" Well, let us agitate, let us confess that we are thorough-going Social Democrats, or anything else that they please to label us. But let us keep our eyes on the central fact that a few, a few British men own the majority of British men and all British women. The few own the many, because they possess the means of livelihood of all. In our splendid republic, where at election time all are free and equal, a few Americans own the rest. Eighty percent of our people live in rented houses, and one-half of the rest are mortgaged. The country is governed for the richest, for the corporations, the bankers, the land speculators, and for the exploiters of labour. Surely we must free men and women together before we can free women.

The majority of mankind are working people. So long as their fair demands - the ownership and control of their lives and livelihood - are set at naught, we can have neither men's rights nor women's rights. The majority of mankind is ground down by industrial oppression in order that the small remnant may live in ease. How can women hope to help themselves while we and our brothers are helpless against the powerful organisations which modern parties represent and which contrive to rule the people. They rule the people because they own the means of physical life, land and tools, and the nourishers of intellectual life, the press, the church and the school.

You say that the conduct of the women suffragists is being disgracefully misrepresented by the British press. Here in America the leading newspapers misrepresent in every possible way the struggles of toiling men and women who seek relief. News that reflects ill upon the employers is skillfully concealed - news of dreadful conditions under which laborers are forced to produce, news of thousands of men maimed in mills and mines and left without compensation, news of

famines and strikes, news of thousands of women driven to a life of shame, news of little children compelled to labor before their hands are ready to drop their toys. Only here and there in a small and as yet uninfluential paper is the truth told about the workman and the fearful burdens under which he staggers.

I am indignant at the treatment of the brave, patient women of England. I am indignant when the women cloak-makers of Chicago are abused by the police. I am filled with anguish when I think of the degradation, the enslavement and the industrial tyranny which crushes millions and drags down women and helpless children.

I know the deep interest which you and your husband always took in God's poor, and your sympathy invites me to open my heart to you and express these opinions about grave problems.

March 3, 1911.

Linda Fryd

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# Open Letter to Anthony Barber

Dear Sir,

I have been listening to your speech and to an analysis of what you have been saying. Now I have something to say to you. I firmly believe that you are unaware of how poor people exist and I am the person to enlighten you because I am poor.

I am a married woman but separated from my husband and have custody of our one child, a boy of 12. I am fortunate, I actually receive my maintenance, but it is taxed at 8/3 in the £. I work full time and am taxed as a single person. I am still on emergency code although I have worked at the same company since May 1970. Deductions from my pay are 15/- national insurance, 1/2 graduated pension, 16/- tax. My total income is £12 12s 10d per week. £4 of this I must NOT spend, it pays my rent £2 10s, rates 10/- and the other £ I save for my electricity bill. So we are left with £8 12s 10d. My other expenses which have to be met are as follows:-

£	s	d	per week
14	9		coal
8	0		milk
4	2		papers
10	0		private insurance
10	0		TV
<u>£2</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>11</u>	

For food, cleaning materials, i.e. toothpaste, soap, soap powder, vim, floor polish, shoe polish and clothes I am left with the vast sum of £6 5s 1d per week. First food, coffee has gone up from 4/1 to 5/10, sugar from 1/4 to 1/6 for 2 lb, flour between 1/7 to 2/1 for 5 lb, tea between 2/6 to 3/1. The cheapest butter has gone up from 1/5 to 1/7 for 1/2 lb.

Are you letting the price of food go up so that when we creep into the Common Market you can say there now, they aren't so much higher are they? But we are feeling the pinch now, you aren't fooling anybody with this ruse. I have applied for a rent rebate and at the time of writing am awaiting a

decision. I have also applied for and received a grant for school clothes, free meals and one pair of shoes for my son. The clothes grant was for £10. I was informed that I could buy two pairs of trousers, two shirts, one pullover, one school tie, one blazer and a duffle coat. In actual fact I bought one pair of long trousers, two shirts and two pullovers - that came to £9 17s. They are not top quality and I bought them plenty big enough

so he can grow into them. In York alone there are an estimated 800 women who are widows, divorced or separated. Do you expect them to struggle on for ever? Have you ever stood at the meat counter of a large store (where I might add the meat is the cheapest) and watched an old age pensioner pick up the cheapest joint she can find, look at the price, put it down and turn away? You want to weep as you wonder what she will have for her Sunday lunch. I can't afford a joint either. Since when did you have sausages for your Sunday lunch? The firm I work for do not supply luncheon vouchers as many do in London. I don't know of any firm that does supply them in York. I take sandwiches. Don't suggest I get a better job, it took from November 1969 to May 1970 to find this one. All my clothes are hand me downs from kind friends, my shoes are birthday or Christmas presents. I haven't been in a store to buy a coat or dress for years. I am sick and tired of the eternal struggle to make ends meet. If I hear another report where someone says the housewife will have to bear the cost I'll scream. Another phrase that makes me contemplate murder is 'pockets of poverty'. Believe me, this is a myth. There are old age pensioners, mentally handicapped, physically handicapped, one-parent families, low-income families, just to mention a few. There are blankets, huge blankets of poverty. Stop this propaganda where people think there are just a few here and there.

Has it ever occurred to you what would happen if the entire working population of women went on strike for equal pay or for better social benefits for

people in desperate need? I know men smile at the thought of women on strike but the idea is spreading, believe me. We could bring the entire country to a stop. Just think for a moment of all the places where women are employed today, from doctors and lawyers to char ladies.

So the Tories have got what they want, POWER, what are you doing with it? Helping the rich get richer and the poor get poorer? If so, the one thing that I value above all else on this earth I will have to give up, my son will have to go into care. He will lose the parent he has left, to be looked after by people who don't know him or love him. Because I can't struggle on for much longer.

So the next time you open your fridge door, switch on your central heating, hear the noise of a vacuum cleaner or washing machine, just think of all the people who haven't got these so-called necessities, and for God's sake help us.

Reprinted from 'SCARLET WOMAN', journal of York Women's Liberation Group.

## Leonora Lloyd

### reviews

## SEXUAL POLITICS

SEXUAL POLITICS.

By Kate Millett.

Published by Robert Hart-Davis at £2.50

This book arose out of a short paper prepared for a women's lib. meeting and grew into a long thesis. In it, the writer traces the 'sexual revolution' (or 'reform rather than revolution'), examining not only what actually happened, such as the fight for the vote, but also the ideas that inspired it - or tried to hold it back. Kate Millett obviously attaches great importance to the literature of the period, but whether because she feels it influenced people, or was a mirror of prevailing attitudes, is not quite clear. She then investigates the 'counterrevolution', and here Freud is enemy no. 1.

Kate certainly tears into him with a vengeance, and I found this one of the most interesting parts of the book. There is no doubt that we are all influenced by 'pop psychology', which is very invidious, but anyone reading this book has at least been warned. In this section, she also examines the post-revolutionary period in the USSR, as well as Nazi Germany. The last part of the book is concerned with the way various male writers display their psyche.

Kate Millett's main thesis is that 'sex has a frequently neglected political aspect'; by politics, she means 'power-structured relationships'. Now, this is fine as far as it goes, but her contention is that the most important point about our society - and 'all other historical civilizations' - is that they are patriarchies. '... the primary social and political distinctions are not even those based on wealth or rank but those based on sex. For the most pertinent and fundamental consideration one can bestow upon our culture is to recognize its basis in patriarchy.' In other words, that the poorest man is in some way more privileged than any woman.

The trouble is that Kate Millett lacks a scientific analysis of society; she sees only one of the more obvious manifestations of capitalism and attributes all our ills to it. Although she praises Engels, not only for his analysis of patriarchal marriage and the family, but also because he showed that it was not a universal or inevitable system, she ignores the rest of Marxist analysis and this leads her into some serious mistakes and omissions.

For example, she says: 'It is rather disturbing how the great changes brought about by the extension of the franchise and by the development of democracy which the eighteenth and nineteenth century accomplished, the redistribution of wealth which was the aim of socialism (and which has even had its effect upon the capitalist countries) and finally, the vast changes wrought by the industrial revolution and the emergence of technology - all had, and to some degree still have, but a tangential and contingent effect upon the lives of that majority of the population who might be female.' Might, indeed! Even liberal economists have had to admit that the so-called 'redistribution of wealth' is an illusion; and it is

the emergence of technology, whether in the factory, or as represented by the pill, which has been an important factor in the growth of women in the labour force.

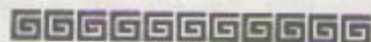
And: 'Perhaps, in the final analysis, it is possible to argue that women tend to transcend the usual class stratifications in patriarchy, for whatever the class of her birth and education, the female has fewer permanent class associations than does the male. Economic dependency renders her affiliations with any class a tangential, vicarious and temporary matter.' In fact, it could just as well be argued that women were parasitic on their class and would therefore (especially upper-class women) cling to it the more. 'Thrown upon their own resources, few women rise above working class in personal prestige and economic power, and women as a group do not enjoy many of the interests and benefits any class may offer its male members. Women therefore have less of an investment in the class system! The same sort of thing could have been said about Jews in Hitler's Germany, yet many bourgeois Jews helped to betray the victims of the gas chambers. 'But it is important to understand that as with any group whose existence is parasitic to its rulers, women are a dependency class who live on surplus.' This is both meaningless and wrong. Even if the second part followed from the first, what she is really saying is that all women live on profit, i.e. that their husbands' pay-packets contain a little bit of the dividends for their wives! Not to mention those women who go out to work and who are paid 50% of a man's wage. It certainly is good of the boss to forgo some of his profits to provide employment for these parasites.

There are lots of good things in this book, but Kate Millett, like most of the popular writers on this subject (hence their popularity?) ducks the real issue - that our society is a class society which makes profit out of women's subordinate position, and that the only way to women's liberation is through an end to this profit system. (Which is not to say that liberation follows immediately on the overthrow of capitalism, but that is a pre-requisite.) Because she cannot see the real causes, she cannot pose real solutions. After all the anger has erupted, anger that will find many echoes in her readers, what has she

to say about ending the 'root cause' of all our troubles? The ultimate paragraph reads: 'It may be that a second wave of the sexual revolution might at last accomplish its aim of freeing half the race from its immemorial subordination - and in the process bring us all a great deal closer to humanity. It may be that we shall even be able to retire sex from the harsh realities of politics, but not until we have created a world we can bear out of the desert we inhabit.'



Kate Millett



Mrs. Sarah Miles, Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party, talking about the vetting of prospective candidates' wives by selection committees, said on 25th Feb.: "The wife of an M.P. has just got to realise that she doesn't come first."

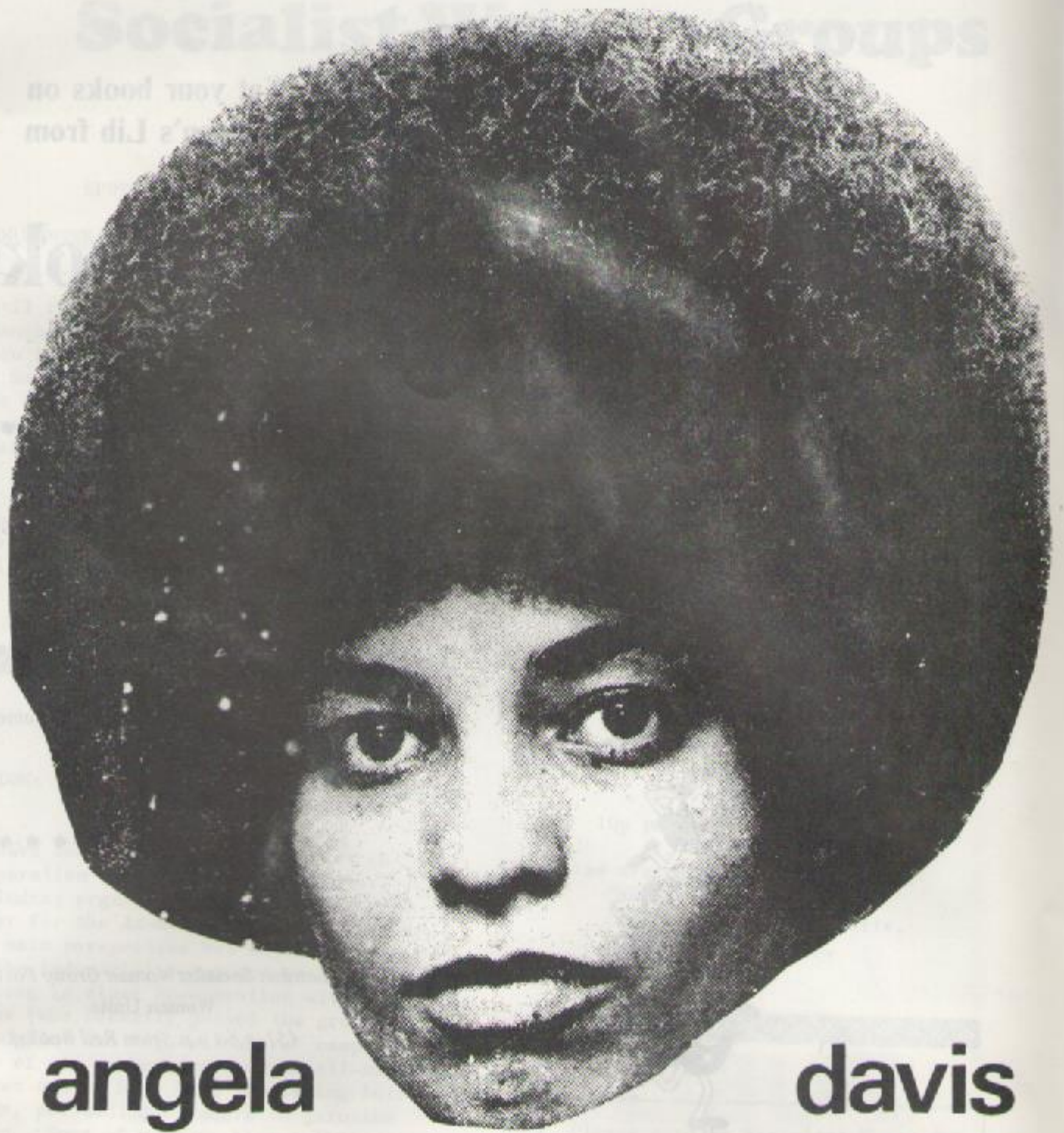
COMMENT:— No, there are more important things, like property, privilege, profit...



The Suffragette that knew jiu-jitsu

Drawing Women Back: Militant Woman, c. 1910





**angela**

**davis**

**i am a BLACK COMMUNIST**

THE CORRUPT

GOVERNMENT (U.S.A) COULD NOT ACCEPT

SUCH A COMBINATION'

**i am a POLITICAL PRISONER**



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# Socialist Woman Groups

## SPOTLIGHT

**MANCHESTER:** Judy Evans, 43 Brantingham Road, Whalley Range

Until recently, this group was called 'Manchester Women's Liberation Group'. Then its name was changed to 'Manchester Socialist Woman Group' and this change was completely vindicated at the very first meeting. So many people turned up that the men had to be asked to leave, so as to allow all the women to attend - over 60 in all. Most of them were local workers from shops and factories, and it was a very successful meeting. Next time they will have to hire a bigger room!

**OXFORD:** Judith White, 27 Southmoor Road.

**BIRMINGHAM:** Tessa van Gelderen, 72 Cambridge Road, Kings Heath, B'ham 14

**LANCASTER:** 35 West Road

**LEICESTER:** Jean Holman, 7 College St.

**NOTTINGHAM:** Toni Gorton, 16 Ella Road, West Bridgeford,

**LONDON:** Leonora Lloyd, 40 Inverness Road, Southall, Mdx.

We have been taking an active part in preparation for the March 6th. Demo., including organising a meeting to raise money for the Ad-Hoc Committee. However, our main perspective has naturally been in the industrial sector and we have been working in close co-operation with May Hobbs (who recently joined the group) throughout the night-cleaners' campaign. Some of our members were on an all-night picket and we have been leafleting buildings, persuading cleaners to join the union. Some of us have been talking to the telephonists, and been collecting for them. In order to expand this side of our work, we hope to have two branches soon, our existing one in North London and one in West London, where there are many factories employing women. We are holding a meeting in Greenford Hall on March 15th, when May will be talking about the Industrial Relations Bill.

Jane Meany.

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# ROSA LUXEMBURG

1871-1919



AFTER THE DEMO, DON'T GO HOME...

## PUBLIC MEETING

March 6<sup>TH</sup> - 7.30 p.m.

To commemorate the birth of a great revolutionary woman: a militant leader in the fight for the Socialist Revolution.

at the MARQUIS OF GRANBY, Cambridge Circus, London W.C.2. (up the Charing Cross Road—Leicester Square tube).

SPEAKERS: Tessa van Gelderen  
Judith White

(Including a discussion about the demonstration)