

WOMENS VOICE

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Schooling Threat

**8.30 to 1.30
and no school
dinners!**

8.30 to 1.30 And No Dinners! That's a proposal that Hertfordshire County Council has taken up seriously—and has set up a working party to look into. The plan is to save over £5 million a year on school dinners and lower electricity bills. The working party is also considering a shift system—8.30 to 1.30 for juniors, and 1.30 - 7pm for the older ones—so saving even more money, and again, no school dinners. Local authorities all over the country have said they're eagerly awaiting the report of the working party.

The teachers who dreamed up the plan want to move towards 'continental' types of education, but however they explain away their disgusting ideas, there's no doubt that the main sufferers will be our kids. Five and a half hours without a break is far too long for kids to sit in lessons, and what are they expected to do all afternoon? Or are women supposed to give up work to provide dinners and amuse their kids for the rest of the day? These plans make the life of a working mum almost impossible. Don't local authorities realise that the inflation that's making *them* cut back also forces women out to work? Don't they realise, or don't they care?

Crisis

Probably a bit of both. But local councils haven't much choice. It's not just schools that'll suffer. It's been announced that some children's homes and old people's homes could well be closed down, and home helps and meals on wheels stopped altogether. It's all part of the same crisis that's attacking our wages and forcing prices up and up in the shops. When the system starts to crumble

it's always the sick, the old and the kids who suffer first—they can't fight back. Cuts in education and social services affect all our lives, then when we're 'worn down', it's real wage cuts, unemployment and poverty that follow.

Already schools are suffering from cuts in expenditure. The National Union of Teachers' recent survey showed that the main cuts were in re-decoration and repairs and reduction in staffing. In Cambridgeshire they're saving £¼ million by using meat substitutes in dinners, and Essex has sent round a directive to work with heat at 'minimum comfort level'. So watch your kids health! Lancashire has already cut out 60 jobs, and Durham is following. So it'll mean an increase in part-time schooling.

Cleaners are being reduced, and in Harlow, where fewer cleaners refused to do extra work, they were told to leave some classrooms dirty each evening. Another health hazard.

We can't wait for more cuts, it'll be too late when our kids really start to suffer.

We must spread campaigns like the Hackney parents action, and like the Harlow publicity campaign, started by local teachers, detailing local cuts. There's been a market stall each Saturday for the past three weeks, and a lot of support gained. Parents, teachers, cleaners, canteen assistants, clerical workers, must all be involved—attacks on education standards threaten our lives and our future. The fight must be taken up in the local trade unions and linked to the struggle against wage cuts and price rises. Kids and teachers have no economic power, but parents who work in industry have. If all workers who are also parents stopped work it'd be noticed that we care about our kids education, and the welfare of our old and sick. The economy is crumbling—let's make sure we don't crumble with it!

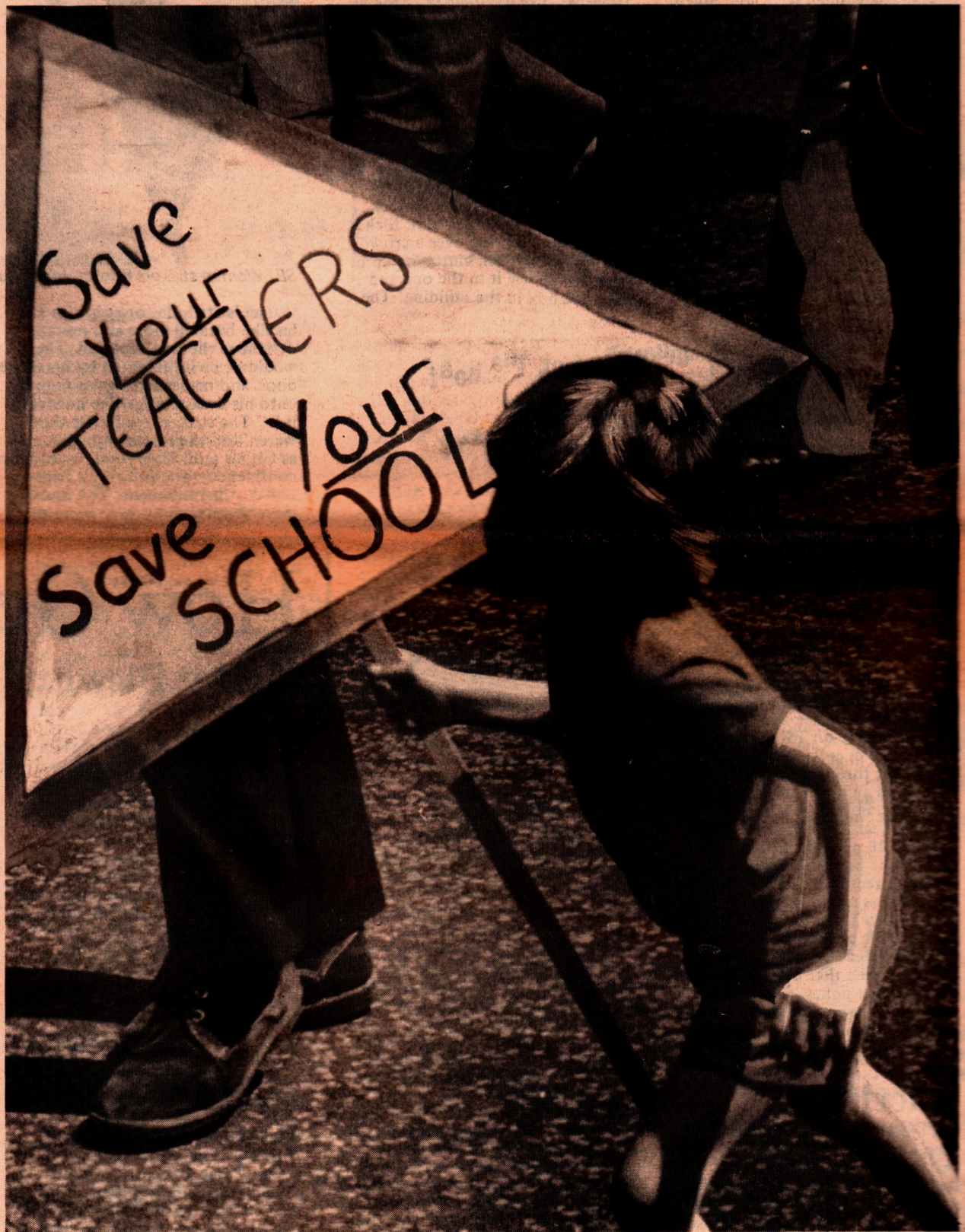


Photo: Mike Cohen

Partners in crime

Janie Jones is in prison for seven years. The courts found her innocent of blackmail, but guilty of the 'crime' of prostitution. Lord X and Mr Y, the partners in her crime got away scot free, even having their names and therefore their reputations protected by the courts.

But consider how the law deals with other criminal cases—accessories to murder or receivers of stolen goods—people who knowingly participate in and benefit from the crimes of others—they are taken to

court and charged. Is Lord Chief Justice Widgery seriously suggesting that Lord X and Mr Y did not know that Janie Jones was a prostitute, or that they did not on repeated occasions benefit from her 'crime'? But remember that these beneficiaries of prostitution are rich and powerful men. Paul Foot in Socialist Worker exposed the hypocrisy of the way the courts treat people—one law for the rich and another for the poor—and revealed the names of Lord X and Mr Y.

But class justice has had its revenge—and Socialist Worker, the weekly paper of the International Socialists, like Womens Voice, a workers' paper, has been fined £5,000 including costs. This is going to hit us hard, and threaten our ability to publish both Socialist Worker and Womens Voice.

So if you feel angry that prostitution is a crime worth seven years inside, exposing hypocrisy is a crime worth £5,000, but . . . using sex to sell everything from flashy cars to

the 'Sun' newspaper—far from being a crime—makes millions of pounds profit for the companies who daily use women's bodies as advertising gimmicks . . . then dip into your pockets, and send us a donation to the Defence Fund, so that we can go on exposing this rotten system, and go on fighting to change it.

Please send cheques, postal orders, etc payable to the Socialist Worker Defence Fund, to Corbridge Works, Corbridge Crescent, London E2.

BITTER LESSON

Marion Townsend & Aileen Knowles report from Manchester

AFTER ten weeks of strike, the 350 women at SEI Heywood, Lancs have officially decided to return to work. After weeks of living on strike pay, organising pickets and eventually occupying the factory, you'd think that the decision to go back means that they've won. They came out on strike demanding equal bonus rates with the men—and got it... an increase of 62p. But their demands grew as they realised their strength and power, and most of their demands have NOT been won. So why did they return to work?

They had lost none of their original militancy. The mass rally in Heywood on Saturday October 19 brought people, money, and messages of support from all over the country—and the arrangements for a one day strike by the Bury engineers on Monday October 28 were already completed.

The answer is simple!

The strike was sold out by the union. The women were sold down the river by AUEW District Secretary Mr Peter Bramah. The 62p offer that the women had turned down three weeks previously was presented again at a mass meeting on 22 October. For some reason it wasn't the 'insult' that it had been three weeks ago. Instead it was now the best offer the management could be expected to make. The best thing the women could do, they were told, was to accept it and return to work. The vote was taken, and by a small majority the women decided to go back. And this was after some of them had just spent the night

in the factory and had managed to turn back the oil delivery for the factory's heating system—there was none left. They chanted the scabs in the morning with, 'We turned back your oil,' and 'You haven't any heat'. And the determination of the women echoed through the end of the morning ritual of singing in the scabs, 'We aren't coming in, we aren't coming in. Ee, ei, adio we aren't coming in'. That was 8am on Tuesday morning. Two hours later the women had been coned into going back.

Lesson

But although it's been a bitter experience, they've learnt an important lesson for the future. As Nicky Penn said, 'We trusted our union officials. Now we know differently. The union has sold us out, that's all there is to it!' And the girls have learnt a lot during the 10 weeks. For example they really enjoyed the break from routine, and got to know each other for the first time.

And they remember one of the most amusing scenes during the occupation. It involved the Personnel Manager, whose office is right next door to the switchboard. He kept it locked at all times, and it was really funny when he wanted to use the phone. He had to unlock the office to let himself out, lock it behind him and step over a crowd of militant women, clutching 2p in his hand, to use it in the one and only call box in the building! The



SEI Women strikers Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

women's attitude towards him and his like became more and more defiant as the weeks passed. They wouldn't be intimidated by his locked door, and managed to get a note in onto his desk saying, 'See how easy it is!' The strikers really felt they weren't on their own anymore, and as Glynis said, 'Everybody's got more confidence now, and aren't frightened of management. You know more people, and you're more to-

gether, you just thought you were on your own before, just a few in a room.

The women feel together, and still realise the strength their unity had. The scabs were mainly those not in the union, and now all the others realise the importance of being organised. Things have changed, and as Christine Kowalczuk sees it, 'Now everybody knows everybody else, and any grievance,

you go straight to the union. Some just used to crib about it to other workers, but now they'll shoot straight to the union.'

The struggle over this pay claim, and the solidarity that was built up amongst the women won't drop now. As shop steward Bella Fullard says, 'The more you're out, the more militant you get—and the more you decide to stick up for yourself when you get back in.'



OF A night, you see the advert about Brand X on TV. Next morning, you get a 2p off Brand X voucher through your door. When you go down the street, there it is, in your local supermarket, near the entrance with an EXTRA 20 per cent FREE. It's called sales promotion and it's usually directed at women. It costs big business millions every year BUT it pays them to do it... Not out of OUR pockets though, we're not persuaded. Or are we? Have you ever tried that irritating new product that pokes its way into your life at every corner? Well, you say, even if I have, I know I can test it and throw it out if it's no use.

Sacrifice

But unhappily for us, it's not so simple with another 'product' that's being pushed down our throats at the moment. You may have heard of it—it's called Sacrifice-In-The-National-Interest (or the Social Contract). Can you see through this one too, or are you going to try some, then find out too late, that it doesn't do you any good? It's hard, cause you can't escape the 'sales talk'. All the main parties, and the new government drone on about One Nation, Working As A Team Together, United Efforts, Equal Sacrifices etc. The bosses too, you'd expect it from them, have the line... Avoid-damaging-disputes-that-could-seriously-jeopardise-the-future-of-this-industry-and-your-jobs and that other great line—Partnership. Then there are our union leaders—and we shouldn't expect it (but we do now). They go on about 'Responsibility' and 'Restraint for

the sake of the lower paid'... funny how it's always the leaders of the lowest paid workers' unions who restrain the most.

Energy

With such a barrage of public relations, the Social Contract must surely be accepted. After all, is there any alternative to the fact that we must beat inflation to survive, and in order to beat inflation, we must accept a lower or static standard of living. To argue against this is to take a very big step in your thinking and say I don't care about National Survival, whatever that is, because I'm fed up with always taking the blame. Working class families have the same old grind, year in year out, from one generation to another. Women especially, we have to take the strain in bad times with ever tighter budgets and more personal sacrifices for the sake of the family. It's time we stopped being cushions for the system. Women are not sacrificial lambs.

Survival

What'll the next few years mean for the suckers at the bottom—women, among others. That great army of unpaid workers in the home to start with. Then take a look at all the fields of employment with low pay—shops, food and clothing, catering, health—mainly women workers. You find us in the places with poor union organisation or none at all. You find us doing unskilled jobs, or part-time work, or anything where you find it hard to fight for decent pay and conditions. And it's always twice as hard to find the energy to fight when your

How Gullible are you

Hester Blewitt, AUEW, Birmingham

main worry is at home, not work. But if we don't fight—if we are coned into the Social Contract, what'll happen? Our low pay will look even more pathetic if inflation goes on at its present rate. 'Progress towards Equal Pay by 1975' will probably be shelved, as something 'The nation can't afford for the time being'. There's also the growing trend for firms to introduce shift systems and night work for women, in exchange for Equal Pay. (Fords is trying it at the moment)—and family and social life will become even more disrupted.

Rank & File

If that's what you want stop reading! But if you think you deserve a decent life, then you'll have to fight for it. There's no place for passive femininity now. And no excuse for saying, leave it up to the blokes, I don't know where to start. Start by learning off them, and off women who have learned how to stand up for themselves. And if you're in a weak bargaining position, then find the so-called strong battalions, and get their support. Start in a small way, on your own doorstep now. Or you can continue efforts already begun by coming to the national Rank and File Conference in November as a delegate from your branch or shop stewards committee. If they've never heard of it, tell them, send for details. It is time our problems were recognised and acted upon, and this great link-up is a very effective way of doing just that.

ADVERTISEMENT

FIGHT WAGE RESTRAINT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Support the Second National Rank and File Conference

Saturday 30 November, Digbeth Hall, Birmingham
Make sure your shop stewards committee, union branch or district committee is supporting this important conference.
Delegates' credentials 50p

The Rank and File Conference Organising Committee has compiled verifiable lists of imprisoned Chilean trade unionists in all the main industrial and service sectors for adoption by British trade union bodies. Copies of these and a covering letter can be obtained from the secretary.

If you want credentials, get your trade union branch or shop stewards' committee to fill in this form and sent it to the Secretary, Rank and File Conference Organising Committee, 214 Roundwood Road, London NW10.

Send us credentials for _____ delegates to the Rank and File Conference on November 30.

NAME OF TRADE UNION BODY _____
ADDRESS _____ TRADE UNION STAMP

The Lesser Spotted Secretary Bird

Mel Bartley, London.

SHORTHAND and typing seem to be among the few skills that women are encouraged to learn. Unlike many other forms of training and apprenticeship secretarial courses are filled entirely by women. It isn't necessarily what many of us would choose freely, but it's one way to try and get a bit more pay. After working for some years in a very low paid, unskilled, clerical job, I decided to learn shorthand and typing, and got a grant from my local authority to be 'retrained'. I expected that we would all have to get our noses to the grindstone in order to learn these skills, and more so as we were assured that 'mature students' are 'less receptive' to them! However this didn't bother us too much, until we began to find out that secretaries are really expected to do for those few extra quid a week. We had lectures on 'Business Organisation'—being told how important it is to keep good time at work, and how to discipline others who don't. We were instructed in how to make coffee for the boss, and how to arrange his flowers. And worse of all, we had two compulsory days of make-up, fashion and hair-dressing.

I was more or less indifferent about having to sit through a few hours of rubbishy lectures, but I just had to call a halt when it came to

being told that I was to sit down in front of a full-length mirror and have make-up actually smeared all over my face by the 'instructor'.

Sex objects

As a socialist woman, I wear no make-up and I spend quite a lot of time trying to fight against society's tendency to regard and treat women as objects. I realise that being a typist is a menial job, like most other jobs women and men are forced to do, but to be expected to dress and make oneself up like a fashion plate as well is a degree of humiliation no one should accept.

Anyway I refused to have make-up put on or to put any on myself. Having explained to the 'instructor' that this was my personal decision and that I was quite willing to stay in the salon for the compulsory two and a half hours, I was amazed at the attack which was immediately launched at me. 'Oh, I've met people like you,' snarled the instructor. 'You must have had some dreadful experience to make you feel this way about make-up.'

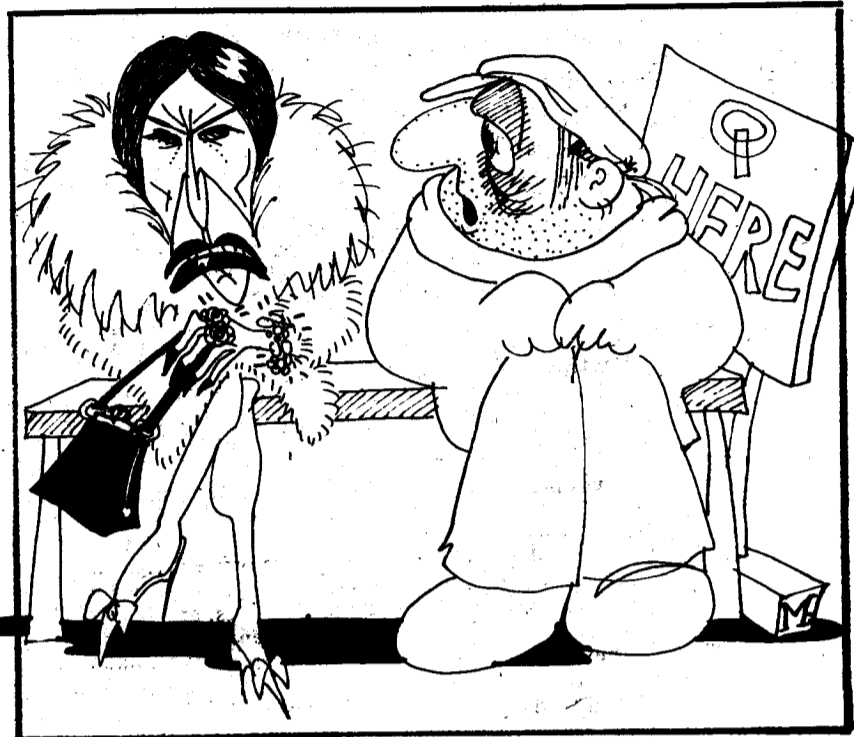
Make-Up

I don't know what most socialist women think about make-up, whether we ought to leave it up to the personal choice of each individual, or whether we ought to be suspicious of our tendency to 'freely choose' to look as much like magazine beauties as we can. Most people on my course felt they didn't want to be dictated to about their hair or make-up, and none of us were happy to accept that on top of slaving for our future bosses we were expected to play the role of sex objects as well. Maybe the point is to take our minds off the fact that office work is more and more done on an assembly-line basis having less of a special relationship with the boss. One result of this is that office workers are beginning to see where their true interests lie and organise, as other women have, to fight the bad pay and dreary conditions that are part of most people's work.

DIVORCE

WORKING CLASS STYLE

by Enid Khan, Leicester



IF YOU happen to be Liz Taylor, divorce is no problem. With her kind of money, when you've decided the marriage is over, all you do is hire yourself the best lawyer, take yourself off to Switzerland and the rest is automatic!

But for us lesser beings, in this rotten capitalist set-up, it's a whole sorry sight different. This is the story of just one working class divorce—and there must be thousands like it.

To reach the decision that your marriage is really over means facing the issue with more mental courage than is generally imagined. For this, no doubt, Miss Taylor and I shared common ground, and anguish, in leaving behind the home you've built together, in which you've lived, loved and brought up your children. But for her, no problem of alternative accommodation. Where can a mother with four children turn? Put her name on the corporation housing list. I did that two years ago and am still waiting. Reply to advertisements in the local press. But no one wants kids, even if you could find something large enough at a price you could afford.

Emergency

Meanwhile I was offered a gem by my employers, the local Hospital Board, an unfurnished chalet bungalow, at a lower rent than the flat, temporarily, but with the possibility of permanency. But alas, after only six weeks I had to get out, kids and all. It was wanted by an incoming executive moving from another town, and where does a humble

clerk rate in that situation?

I faced horror at the thought of taking my children into emergency accommodation in what amounts to the old workhouse, lousy, damp and cold, and was forced back in despair to my husband to face a further round of ill-temper and violence. We are under such pressures from all angles of society to stay within a marriage, no matter how bad!

But at length, this working class mother, who has to leave home alone, tell her kids she'll get a home so they can be together soon. Meanwhile they visit eagerly two evenings a week and we all huddle together at weekends in the tiny two roomed flat—sleeping three of us to the double bed, one on the settee, the other on a make-shift bed on the floor. I write to the corporation housing department again, explaining that a divorce is intended and custody of the children is expected. The reply is classic, 'after the hearing, bring along the custody certificate and we'll look into the matter.' Doesn't the Housing Manager know that I can't get a custody certificate until he offers me accommodation?

Aid

For our much married, well-moned movie star, no need to apply for legal aid for her divorce. There's so many others waiting for consideration that it takes about a month before you're interviewed—and humiliated. Queue first in the dingy offices, sitting on the wooden benches alongside down-trodden

poor devils waiting for their social security. Then you wait for several, tense weeks and you hear, yes, you've been awarded aid, but there's still a substantial sum to pay, and don't forget to inform us if your wages are increased by more than 50p a week during the next 12 months, as it will affect your payment!

Now for Liz Taylor, there's no waiting while the petition is drawn up. No doubt her lawyers fall over each other in their haste, so that the first one to get the petition formalities gets the fattest fee. But for me, a further year elapsed before the petition was finally served. All sorts of minor technicalities were put forward.

Too busy

Each time I rang my solicitor for information, there was some excuse. 'It's just a measure of how very busy your barrister is!' Dealing with all his wealthy clients, no doubt. Or, 'Well, your barrister doesn't think yours is such a pressing matter, since you haven't got accommodation yet anyway!'

All paths were smoothed in a matter of weeks of even days for our film star.

It's been 2½ years since I first left and a year and a half since I finally left, and I haven't got my divorce or a house yet. My husband has decided to deny all allegations and defend the suit, so it looks as if I'll have to wait the statutory five years to divorce him without his consent. I've applied for a legal separation. I'll let you know what happens—working class style!



Kindergartens for Capitalism

Anna Paczuska, Hackney

'THERE IS a shortage of adequate provision for pre-school children in all parts of the country', says a recent pamphlet produced by the National Union of Teachers.

That understates the problem! In 1971, less than 100,000 of the 2,700,000 children eligible benefited from the educational and social help that nursery schools can give. When you think that during the war when women were necessary labour in the factories, there was plenty of nursery facilities. After the war when women workers weren't as important the number of nurseries dropped. Nowadays more and more women are going out to work. They have to, to keep up with the cost

of living. But... the government has no plans to increase the number of nursery school places. Local authority day nurseries usually help only the very poor, and anyway there are fewer than 500 in England, 80 in Scotland and none in Wales. Successive governments have promised to review the situation, but nothing's happened yet. The result has been an increase in voluntary play groups and child-minders, both registered and unregistered. Women have no choice but to use these, and so unwittingly relieve the pressure on local councils, and the government, to provide state nurseries. And worse than that, they leave the field open to commercially run,

factory based nurseries. And if there's money in it, you can bet some enterprising capitalist will move in.

'Kindergartens for Commerce' is just such an enterprise. It was started by a university graduate who lives in Kent. Mrs Carol Cowan aimed to persuade factory owners to pay her to provide nursery facilities at their factories. In return for lots of lolly she would provide them with a service that would make them the most attractive factory in the area for women workers.

One of her first customers was United Biscuits in Middlesex. They were having problems at the time in

getting women to come and work for the money and conditions they had to offer. Mrs Cowan solved their problem and absenteeism dropped rapidly. Eleven firms in all have taken advantage of the service so far. Mrs Cowan charges £25,000 for a nursery for 50 children with £53,000 for extras. It is obviously a paying game, and she has a modest Lotus Elan to show for it, and doubtless much more.

The fact that profit is the only force willing to increase facilities for the under fives is disgusting enough, but there's other considerations. Factory nurseries are the modern equivalent to tied cottages. Women workers put up

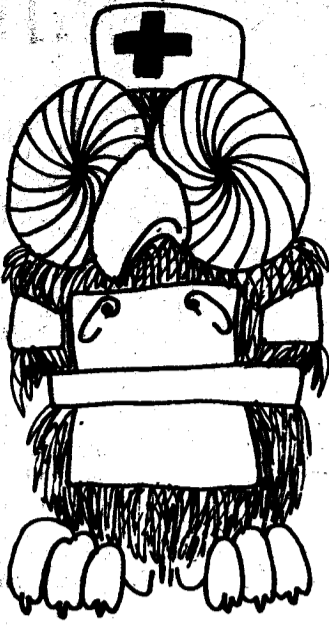
with low wages and poor conditions for a convenient nursery. Where they already exist, we must fight for lay trade union control.

In other places we must resist the introduction of management-run nurseries, and campaign for council run nurseries—regardless of your work place.

The Labour Party has spent enough money telling women what they are doing for them. Lets see them actually doing something.



*Pre-School Education, NUT Hamilton House, London. Price 25p.



**Night Nurse Brenda Kerr writes from
Kilmarnock Royal Infirmary**

I DON'T really fit into either category, but have to admit that there's something a little strange about anyone who deliberately turns their life upside down, and before you start night work, I think you have to realise that is what you are doing. You can't expect kids, neighbours and road diggers to 'switch off' just because you're trying to sleep during the day.

I only work two nights—I do it because my husband works permanent nights from Monday to Thursday. I work weekends, which means my husband 'baby-minds' and I don't have to rely on friends and relatives. I need at least eight hours sleep before I can cope for 11 hours on a busy ward. Most nurses find that three or four hours sleep isn't enough, though that's all many of them get with all their housework to do each day. What happens then is that you become a liability not only to your patients, but to your workmates who end up doing your share of work. Most of us reach rock bottom around 3am, when you have to draw on all your reserves and although we know we're supposed to be working, our bodies are convinced we should be sleeping.

Marriages

For two days I completely forget about housework, our place is more like 'Steptoe's Yard' than a home! Most of us on night duty have young families and find this shift fits our needs. We can work

enough hours to have a reasonable wage, and spend more time with our kids than if we do day time shifts. And more important, there's no problem with baby minders. But real family life is almost non-existent for women who do full-time nights, and many marriages suffer. Physically night work is not good for you and tiredness is always the enemy. When you're tired the small things become important—you're easily irritated and depressed. This is how it affects your husband and kids, the way they have to put up with your changeable moods—quite apart from the fact that we have such a small amount of time to relax with our husbands. I don't have a great social life with my husband at weekends, I'm usually leaving for work when most people are preparing for a night out!

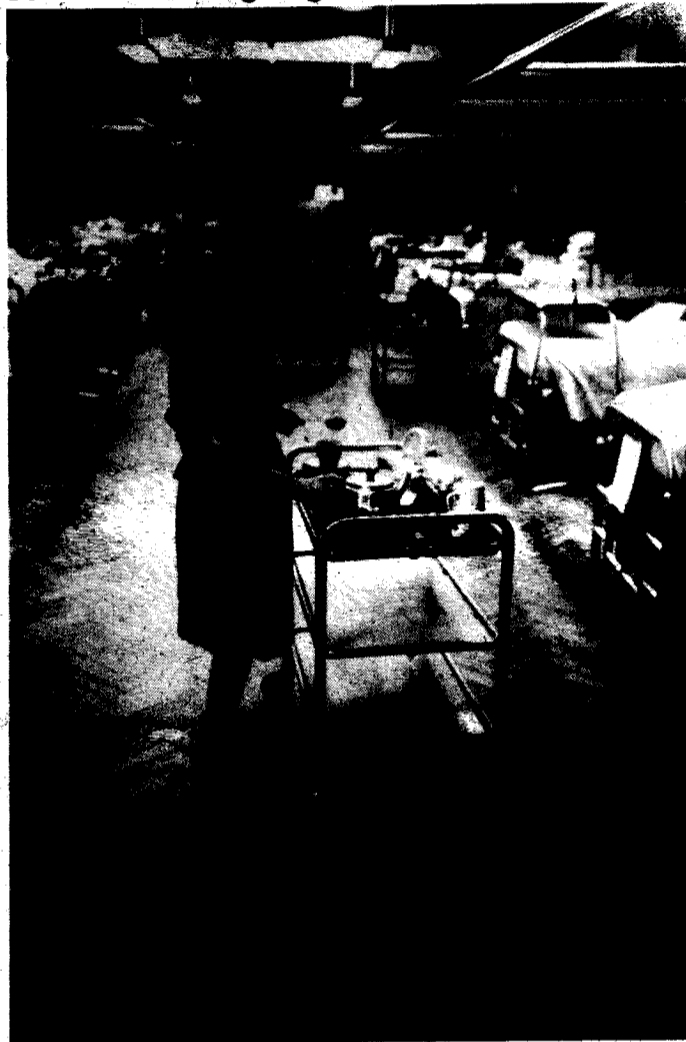
Temporary

Nurses have years of experience of working through the nights—and we've been able to work out all the disadvantages. But it has to be done in hospitals, people can't be switched off at night, so all we can do is fight for really good money to compensate for the upheaval of life. Let's face it—we wouldn't be so keen to do it if there was free nurseries, a shorter working week, and we could earn good money during the day. Like most women of my age group I look on night duty as temporary, and look forward to the time when I can resume 'normal' working hours and live a 'normal' life again.

NIGHT WORK is against the law for women. We are protected by the Factory Acts. That is, unless it is necessary to have a continuous process, as in hospitals—sick people can't be switched off at night—or where it is impossible to do the work during the day, as with cleaning offices etc, that are used during daytime working hours.

But as 1975, Equal Pay year, approaches more and more factories are applying for special dispensations, saying they need a continuous process. And the Labour government is granting them without a whimper despite the grand speeches in the past against the idea of women working nights, by such people as Barbara Castle. It's hard to think that the government believes that biscuits and gin have to be worked on for 24 hours non stop, just like sick people.

This month Women's Voice takes a first look at the situation—we urge readers with experience of night shift workers in their family to write in for the next issue, both about what night work does to health and family life, and opinions about women working nights.



is for a

WOMEN WORKERS at United Biscuits, Merseyside have squashed management plans to introduce a night shift as part of an Equal Pay deal. Ethel Singleton, who at present works on the evening shift, talked to Women's Voice.

'They propose to present three shifts having a continuous night that would employ more men carry on the day. It was to employ more (women), during part-time shifts, nights. Now, because to pay women more approaches it'll be to keep the machine the time.

'We said "NO" our percentage of whatever part-time. We used two machines to win the other girls. Firstly, we're agreed

AT Gilbey's in Harlow, part of the massive Grand Met, complex, women have recently agreed to go on nights. Management are reported to have been amazed at how easy it was to get the special dispensation from the Labour government—they just applied and got it—no questions asked! There was no opposition from the union, the TGWU and the women accepted it. One of them talked to Women's Voice.

'A lot of us were quite keen—you can earn £60 a week if you do five nights. Where else can you get that kind of money? And you don't have to worry about the kids during the day. We work the night shift, and come home early in the morning and do all our housework. Most of us sleep between 10.00am and 3.30pm, then it's up in time for the kids to come home from school. Before, I had to get the kids up early in the morning, give them breakfast and get them ready for school before I left at 7.00am. They went to a neighbour till school time and she looked after them for 1½ hours after school too. I paid her £3 a week for that. Then if she was ill I'd have to come home early, and if they were ill I'd have to take time off.

Although it's more handy for the kids, I think a lot of us feel really ill and tired at the moment. I hope it wears off soon. It does mean that women take much more time off, and I've heard the management have threatened to take women off nights unless we get more reliable.

**SHORTAGE
WHAT NEXT**

What's a shortage? It's when we can't buy our usual food or household goods as often and in the same quantity as before. It isn't necessarily because there's a shortage of that commodity in the world. Like sugar. There's been enough sugar produced in the world for everyone, but countries and companies who make money from sugar have learnt a new game. It's called 'playing the market', and the rules are to hold back stocks until the 'shortage' leads to higher prices in the shops. Many manufacturers learnt valuable lessons from the Arabs and their oil!

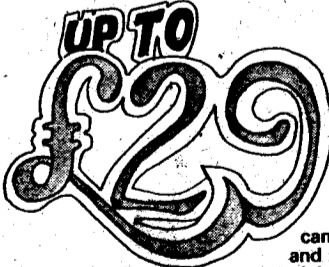
What's the result? The result is that women don't trust shops—don't trust the economy—no longer expect what's always been taken for granted in the past. And it leads to hoarding. 'Anti-social and selfish' some people say—but to a woman with a small income and a family to support it's an insurance against future shortage, and against rocketing prices. Is it sur-

prising that women are stocking up on sugar with the certainty that the price'll continue to rise and the whole of Europe'll be short of it for some time to come? And tins . . . women are being accused of 'hoarding' tinned food. The truth is, women have learnt from the capitalists. Inflation is galloping—tinned food is rising rapidly because of steel going up, packaging charges and what goes in them! Canned fruit and meat will be considerably more expensive very soon. We know that in six months our money'll be worth less—tins will be much more expensive, so we buy now—just as much as we can afford.

Milk

Women's buying habits show very little faith in any Social Contract. We don't believe that the government will control prices. There's too many powerful people 'playing the market' game. Farmers in Britain

**Make more with a
Matchbox job**



The ladies who work at Matchbox like making things. They like making the Matchbox toys and models loved by children all over the world. And they like making the good money that Matchbox offers. And the money is good. You can earn between £21

and £29 p.w. after training (including threshold.) Think what you could do with that. You could save for a holiday of a lifetime, or a colour television, a washing machine, or even a deep freeze. That's what Matchbox money can do for you.

The hours are great too. There are so many full and part time shifts to choose from that you are bound to find one that really suits you down to the ground. So you'd be making the best use of your time as well.

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NIGHT WORKERS and burglars

Women against Internment

Maeve O'Reilly, Belfast

THE PRESENT outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland, around the anger and resentment over internment without trial, has been building up for some time. Just over a month ago an angry group of women burned down some of the wooden huts which are used as 'visitors' waiting rooms' at LONG KESH internment camp. Then they occupied other out-buildings, climbed onto roofs to shout messages of support and encouragement to the internees and refused to be moved until they were attacked by a fully armed riot squad and a pack of alsatian dogs. Their protest was the climax of weeks of open conflict between the prisoners and the authorities which began with a joint protest by Catholics and Protestants in the camp about the appalling conditions. They refused to eat the camp food and to make this quite clear they threw it back out over the high wire fences surrounding their cages. The authorities responded to their demand for better food and conditions by stopping all food parcels and visits. As their wives and mothers began arriving at the camp gates for their weekly visits (they're allowed ½ hour after a four hour bus journey), they found the place overrun with soldiers—and the women had common ground for protest. Catholic and Protestant women picketed the camp and appeared together on TV speaking against the camp conditions and against the ban on food parcels and visits. As the protest spread Catholics and Protestants blocked the roads in Belfast, a group of Catholic women were beaten off the road by a police baton charge and another group of women began a sympathetic hunger strike in a school.

Marked men

The women's militancy was not surprising. Internment affects them deeply and they have been the most consistent supporters of the many anti-internment marches over the last three years. Harassment, searches and army brutality are an everyday occurrence. Worry and uncertainty about the future overshadow daily life. People are interned without trial for months, even years—no date of release is given. You can't plan for the future. Ex-internees are marked men, constantly being harassed by the army, and refused employment. For the many women who face these problems, life revolves around the weekly visit to the internment camp and the struggle to bring up a family on social security payments becomes impossible when so much goes on food parcels and travelling expenses.

Bravery

Although all the women agree about the horrors of Long Kesh, the joint protest has not really grown into a firm basis for an anti-internment movement involving both Protestants and Catholics. On this occasion the Protestant internees backed down rather than continue any further along a path towards involvement with the republicans because the republican aim of a united Ireland threatens their 'Northern State'—a state that has given Protestants preferential treatment in jobs and housing for the last 50 years.

The bravery and perseverance shown by the women in their struggle against internment will certainly continue, but cannot win through on its own. But it's a start, and shows that united working class action can begin to break down the barriers of religion that have falsely divided the working people of Northern Ireland over the years.

forced to do nights, so why should we join them? Perhaps in a different society, if a continuous process was necessary we'd do it, with the necessary compensations. But when we're also expected to care for the homes, husbands and kids, we can't do night work as well. Others argued that if we have to go on nights we want Equal Pay with the best night shift workers in the industry, not a miserable £37!

With these kind of arguments we've won round most of the women—and the men, and the plans have been shelved for the moment.

Future

But I'm sure it'll crop up again next year when we're negotiating the final Equal Pay agreement. They're bound to try the 'no men do your job' argument to most of us—as I said there's only one

department with men doing the same job, but we all know that men did our job in the past. We're ready for the fight and we won't give in to the night shift carrot. You see, another big biscuit complex here, Associated Biscuits, that's Jacobs and all those, have got a continuous process with women on nights, so our lot want to keep up with them. But there's one good thing that comes out of a bad job like ours. The kind of work we do, you can't keep up for long so we have to keep having breaks, and that means I get plenty of chance to talk to the other women workers.

There's quite a few of us who have plenty to say—almost all the women stewards are against the social contract for example. They've seen through that. But there's a whole lot that we've still got to convince. It'll be an interesting battle for Equal Pay next year, but we're ready to face it.

'Your body clock is the key to most of the harmful effects of shift work. It is set to a certain programme when you are a child and you cannot reset it completely unless you change to a different living/sleeping routine and stick to it. The only way to achieve this would be to work nights right through the week and the weekend.' As it is now workers on nights, 'Don't get enough sleep and it's not as deep as it should be.'

The results are 'permanent tiredness, irritability and constipation', and shift workers are much more likely to suffer from nervous disorders and ulcers than day workers'.

From Hazards of Work by Pat Kinnersley



the... so... They... the... anyone... from... there is... week... the... for... having... 75... profitable... all... for... do... to... being

been playing hard too. They've... there's more money in... cereal than in dairy herds... for milk is irrelevant to... and they're abandoning their... This, together with increased... for milk since the govern-... milk subsidy, points the way... shortage of milk in the near... and a shortage together with... prices for all dairy produce... now egg producers are play-... holding back eggs because there... plus and they don't want the... to drop! In this game, the com-... usually win and the house-... is always the loser. It's a crazy... playing with the world food... and so when you hear the... and politicians and food re-... complaining about world... floods and hurricanes, re-... that's only a little part of it... rest is the 'market game' and... the leading players.

LETTERS

Please send us your letters: Address them to Womens Voice 61 Tylney Croft Harlow Essex

FEMALE FLOWER POWER

THE NEW Equal Opportunities bill is certainly an improvement on the Equal Pay Act (if we get any protection against redundancies that is). But will it stop us being treated as a sub-human species? I doubt it. I was a student, studying law, in a college where the women's role was to charm, smile and dress nicely. And for God's sake not to mention that

the law is anti-women and anti-working class. The usual response was 'that has nothing to do with the subject'.

Now, as a labourer in a GLC park, I'm not even supposed to have tea with the men! And that when we've been digging the same flower bed! It will take a massive upheaval before we're recognised as anything but

unpaid workers in the home, or workers who needn't be taken seriously. Till then any of us who demand a real choice of what kind of wage-slave to be will go on being put down and patronised.

Yours, fighting all along the line,
Nell.

WE'VE ALL seen a great upsurge in the National Health Service this past year. We've seen attacks on the Health Service and the increasing danger of private medicine, the emphasis on two standards of care, one for the rich, the other for the poor. It is becoming more and more obvious to us, that the root of the trouble is short staffing, bad pay and bad conditions, and for the first time, barriers are being broken down between different groups of workers inside hospitals, as we all face the same problems.

We've learnt our lessons the hard way, the only way to learn, the way everyone learns, through industrial action. We've learnt that if we want to change our lives for the better we've got to do it ourselves, no-one'll do it for us, and that the only way is to fight together through the unions. It's up to us to show the union what we want doing, and to push it into acting. The crucial lesson is that all trade unionists working in the same workplace should band together through joint shop stewards' committees and action groups. And finally, that we only win if we stand together, not only to shout, but to act.

For these reasons I am calling on all women trade unionists to fight for support in their branches for the Rank and File Conference on 30 November. This is one of the best ways that we working people can show our intentions against the on-coming attacks of inflation, unemployment, rising prices and low wages.

All active trade unionists, working people, men and women must come together if we are to be strong. We must force the unions to work together in easing the many pressures of our lives. We must learn from the strengths and weaknesses of each other, from our victories and our mistakes, and in defence of our rights we must organise.

Women, the management can't hear you, the unions are a little deaf, but we in Manchester can hear you somewhere. Come to the conference and make yourself known. See you there!

COME TO THE CONFERENCE AND MAKE YOURSELF KNOWN. SEE YOU THERE!

Penny Simmons, ASTMS Manchester Health Service Branch.

'We must show men that women will fight... and we must show women that women can fight.'



I AM a student nurse, and am writing this letter to try to get as many readers as possible to come to the national Rank and File conference at the end of November. It's very important that we women show not only our faces but our voices at this conference. This year nurses showed people they could fight for something they believed in. We found we not only had to fight the government, but also our own union leaders. We found that to get anywhere we had to form our own Rank and File nurses' groups to organise within the union and get other workers to help us.

That's what the Rank and File movement is all about—people at the bottom organising themselves and fighting for what they want. I think it's especially important for women to go to the Rank and File Conference because although motions for Equal Pay and Equal Opportunities are always passed at union conferences and such like, they seem to be the first thing dropped in a pay claim.

The conference is trying to draw together people who want to fight against the pressures of the government's Social Contract and we can't afford to miss a chance to build a movement to do this. We must show men that women will fight and we must show women that women can fight.

Judith Jones, NUPE shop steward, Salford.

Expressed milk

I FEEL I must reply to the letter by Siobhan Molloy because she perpetuates yet another myth about breast feeding. Contrary to popular thought it isn't necessary for a nursing mother to be with her baby for 24 hours a day, because breast milk can be expressed beforehand and kept in the fridge while mum has a night out. There's a lot of ignorance about breast feeding, mainly because it isn't profitable to advertise it, and many women choose bottle feeding for totally false reasons, such as believing that 'most women can't do it' or 'it will spoil my figure'. Every woman should be able to choose the method by which to feed her baby, but it must be a choice based on full knowledge of both methods. So I suggest you print an article which lists both truths and fallacies involved, as this would be much more productive than heated argument and perhaps in IS, at least, we could put an end to the myths.

Angela Dunne, Bolton, Lancs.

Best so far

IN PETERBOROUGH we have recently formed a Women's Voice group. We last met on Sunday and discussed the paper. We thought others might be interested in our comments on the last issue of Women's Voice, and might also like to write in to give their views on its contents.

Everyone thought that issue 12 was the best so far. We have in fact sold practically all our copies already and feel that on the strength of this we can increase our order.

However, there are some criticisms. Most of us felt that though the issue was good it could have been improved upon with having more, shorter articles and letters. The article on Ireland in the centre pages was good when you got down to reading it but some of us were put off by its length and the fact that the print was so small. Another criticism is that the articles tend to deal well with the wrongs of society as it exists but gives few pointers as to what we can do to change things. We felt that to help right this maybe at least one article should talk about the political questions which are raised in the paper and how we can respond to them. We felt that Women's Voice is a bit frightened to examine political questions in too great detail for fear of putting women off.

Despite this, as we've already said, the paper was the most readable yet and is a paper that we are very pleased to sell and build around. To help play our part in Women's Voice we are hoping for the next issue (14) to write something on women at home, and also to contribute something to add to the women on night work article in this issue.

Sonia McKay, For Peterborough Women's Voice Group

Oblivion is cheaper than the flicks

ON THE radio recently I heard a report given by the 'Samaritans'. They announced that the suicide rate in Britain had declined. This, he said, was surprising in a time of economic crisis. But there is one group of the population where both attempted suicides, and calls for help had increased—among married women with children. He went on to say that these women hadn't really wanted to kill themselves, but took overdoses of pills to gain a period of 'oblivion'. There was no further discussion on why mothers were driven to such desperate measures. But it's quite obvious that an economic crisis affects the women trying to feed their family first and foremost. Why a man supposed to represent a compassionate, helpful organisation did not emphasise this surprised me. Prices are going up and up but the house-keeping is not. We mothers have the continuous burden of making ends meet. In this society where it depends on a man's earning power to provide a decent standard of living for his family, it's not surprising that women suffer first when there is a shortage of money—and that the profits of large companies suffer last.

So desperate mothers take an overdose of pills to get a break, a moment of release. What would be the reaction if the reporter announced that this group, for example Ford workers, or that at least the point would be discussed after all production could be affected. But isolated women in their own homes affect only their kids. Anyone who has been at home 24 hours of the day, on call to the demands of small children knows the desperation that can blanket everything. It's not surprising that some of us long for 'a period of oblivion'. Because it is only when there is enough money over that she can pay for a temporary release. An evening out to the cinema can cost £2!

So money is the key. It would cost money to set up more nurseries. Defence and arms are 'more important'. Food and laundries should be cheaper but this would mean less money for people like Mr Marks and Mr Spencer who only made £35 million this year. They claim they must make more money out of us for investment and research. Perhaps they should invest in the mental health of our children and women, and research into ways so that women are not driven to attempted suicide to gain a period of oblivion from this society.

Gillian Anciano, Ilford, Essex.

GENTLEMEN, PLEASE

I have just attended a union (ATTI) committee meeting where the chairman as usual addressed the meeting throughout as 'Gentlemen', despite the fact that I am branch secretary, and the treasurer is also a woman. Together we are probably the most

active trade unionists on the committee and yet these silly situations exist. Perhaps being left out in the courtesy remarks is better than jokes about petticoat government.

Even at Leicester Trades Council, where at least female delegates are

individually addressed as sister so-and-so, when addressing the whole meeting male delegates simply wade in with... 'Brothers'... so used are they to branch meetings composed of men.

A nursery campaign started by women in our union branch was referred to as 'of interest to the females' till I pointed out that a nursery is of interest to men with children if they take any responsibility for looking after them. It is refreshing to hear those male trade unionists who always refer to 'women and men' or 'Sisters and brothers', automatically including that half of the workforce that we need to involve in the trade union movement. It is even more encouraging to work with men who will actively campaign with you for such things as better maternity and pension provisions for women—after having to argue against other men who feel such matters are irrelevant. Fighting together we might get somewhere.

Pat Kirkham, Leicester



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I SAW a job advertised today in Salisbury, for 2½ hours a day, at 70p an hour. It would have fitted in with school hours and given me that bit extra to make the £13.20 (plus rent) that I get from the social security for me and my two kids. I say 'live', not watch life go by—holidays, pictures, new clothes—all going on somewhere else. It's ridiculous, being 27 and having your nose pressed up against shop windows.

So will I take the job? No, because after 12½ hours my net gain would be £2! What kind of robbery is that, surely no one could work these hours for so little? No one, except a single mother.

The social security don't allow single mothers on supplementary benefit to earn more than £2. It's like being at the bottom of a trap, there's no way out of the daily scrimp, scrimp—save on bus fares, trudge in the rain to jumble sales, do without any luxuries. And the rate has stayed the same since 1966. That means it's worth about half of what it was compared with 1966 and is about 8 per cent of a woman's full time earnings as opposed to 19 per cent then. Inflation eats away at even the tiny possibility of escaping a little from the trap. The earnings rate is less than for widows or OAPs. It's £2 whether you've got one child or ten.

Why should the children of women whose husbands have deserted them, suffer because their fathers, although absent aren't dead? What a sickening thought—it'd be better to be a widow! We shouldn't find ourselves saying such things. If the interests of the kids came first there wouldn't be this difference. I suppose they think we should be 'punished' for not making our marriages work!

One of the results of this rule is that people do take sneaky jobs and don't declare them. Then they add to their problems with the guilt and worry that they'll be found out.

Single parents should have an allowance as of right, from which they can build—it should be a base to stand on, not a lid to keep them in. While marriage and respectable family life is still part of keeping shaky old capitalism together it'll be a long time, but it's a demand we should be making loud and clear for us and our kids.

Jan Taylor, Oxford



What'll we tell the kids

'At my school we have world studies which is English, History and Geography all mixed up together.

Suddenly I thought that we might have world studies because there are not enough teachers to teach all of these things.' Rachel Phillips, aged 12.

by
Mary Phillips,
Southwark

'SO THEY had an election and Labour won,' ended Amos' story about the General Election. He is 8 and often asks about the International Socialists in bald terms. In the middle of tea he'll suddenly shout, 'What is IS, mum?' he doesn't listen to the answer, and still expects me to explain what day Jesus rose again from the dead and whether he is hovering above us somewhere in space.

'Mum, did the astronauts see God?' 'Of course they did,' interrupts one of the girls. 'It said so in the Radio Times.' It's a difficult job, making your children politically aware. Mine go on marches and demonstrations—if they agree with

their aims. Amos sits in the bath shouting 'No arms, no aid, smash the Chilean Junta'. He also blows raspberries at every policeman he sees.

Rachel (12) has progressed from sitting on the toilet shouting 'Long live Chairman Mao!' at the age of 4 to being baptised as a convert and confirmed in the church of England, as with Nina, aged 13. And Amos came home from choir when he was 6, in tears because the vicar said he was too young to be baptised! They know my views and are sorry for me, but have given up trying to convert me!

Gavin (6½) however, has always dismissed religion, refused to go to church on Sundays with the others,

and asserted that he did not believe in God or Jesus saying 'It's all a load of rubbish'. He was also, until recently a racist, shouting 'black jack' and other provocative remarks at black kids (from the other side of the road of course) I asked him why he didn't shout it at his two black friends, and he declared indignantly, 'They're not brown, they're my friends.' This did make him think though, and he has stopped making racist remarks. But he's now started believing in God!

Anyway in spite of all this religion the children are showing signs of interest in politics. Nina has started glancing at the daily paper's front page, and recently asked me the difference between racialism and fascism. Amos has now accepted the fact that comrades do not believe in God, and visitors are somewhat taken aback to be asked about this at the front door before they come in.

I asked Nina and Rachel if they knew what my politics were. 'IS', exclaimed Nina triumphantly. 'International Socialists,' said Rachel. I asked what it meant. Their mouths hung open. 'Labour?' tried Rachel. 'It's against racialism and fascism,' said Nina firmly.

Struggles

But the most immediate way to put our politics across to our own children is in struggles they are actually involved in. For our local adventure playground, parents took over land which was to be a lorry park. The tenants association on our estate is fighting the landlords over central heating and has actually got ramps in the road to slow down the traffic. The children have seen me involved in the campaign over London Weighting and know how it relates to their schools. They will have our support in any fight over conditions at school.

And in their own lives and struggles they will hopefully begin to relate what we say and do to the society they are living in, and the potential for a socialist society, and most of all, see the working class as the revolutionary force.



LET'S GET ORGANISED

Maggie Newell, TGWU, Heinz, Harlesden

AS THE cost of living continues to gallop, and wage cuts get more obvious, more and more workers, especially the lower paid, are beginning to really feel the pinch. It's given quite a shove to groups of women workers who are normally passive. Because women workers are in a crucial position at the moment. We're approaching 1975—the year when the long awaited Equal Pay Act is supposed to become law. The government has obviously no intention of forcing employers to implement the Act; they're only willing to 'advise' the boss on his obligations. Promising stuff! There is also a government White Paper out that plans to cope with the inequality of women. If you feel discriminated against in your job, on the grounds of sex, then you can take your case to a tribunal and go through a pile of legal contortions there. Personally I would have more confidence in a group of women workers taking a joint stand, like those who won a victory at Wingrove and Rogers

in Liverpool, after a long strike over threshold payments. We're going to see more and more women pushed into a corner and whether we manage to get ourselves out of it or not, depends upon our confidence and solidarity.

ISSUES

In my factory there are some scandalous situations especially for women, and the only way forward is for us to take up things as they crop up. For example, during the last spell of hot weather some of us took a look at the standing up job we were doing. The job could have been done just as easily sitting down, and yet we were struggling and sweating our way through eight hours a day and feeling about 300 years old by clocking out time! Against the surly wishes of the chargehand, we found ourselves some chairs and got on with things in a slightly more civilised way. In the same way, we looked at another job which was causing a lot of strain and back-ache. We were stacking boxes of

tinned-stuff (each weighing 24 lbs) to a height of around six feet. Supervisors told us that to stack to a certain height was part of the 'agreement'. Whose agreement was that then? We weren't consulted. Anyway WE agreed to stack to a reasonable height by our own standards, and carried on working with less of the donkey-work strains.

RESPECT

It's coping with the little things such as these that help to strengthen us and give us self-respect. It's important to realise that we, as workers do not have to suffer any old conditions that are laid down for us by management. After all, we're the most important people there! Imagine a process department without it's process workers? ... the stillness would knock you!

So ... let's get organised on the day-to-day issues so that when the time comes we'll be equipped to deal with bigger struggles.

my sister. Although my husband always gave—it was having to ask.

By the time my eldest girl was three she was showing signs of bad nerves which sent me to the Child Guidance. That was the most frustrating thing—all those women mostly fed up and depressed with having to cope with such a frightening society which tells us one thing and does another.

Families

Instead of admitting how things really were we spent an hour every week blaming our families. I suppose that's right, but what made our families—only the same society—so no wonder they had problems. No one ever suggested that we could change our way of society so women could enjoy things—only how to work round it. They even put a woman on drugs. It did one good thing though—it made me see things as they really are and I know millions of women feel like me—only they're too guilty to admit it with all we hear about wonderful motherly fulfilment. I'm not against marriage or motherhood in the right society. I'm against women having to give up their identity and rights as human beings. I just cannot spend my life living through my family and having no life of my own.

Training

Although people regard bringing up children as a useful job, employers take a very different view. Just try getting a job with the right hours not to mention school holidays. Suddenly you're told, 'It's not worth training a woman with kids'. When the children were at school I got a job in a college canteen, a very hard manual job but it has school holidays and the hours aren't bad. But it's a far cry from what the adverts would have us believe—all that rubbish with pretty girls sitting at desks or middle class mother sitting at home all day having coffee mornings. You know at work we can tell the women who have been at home a long time just by the way they act. They're always the frightened ones and the ones with no confidence in themselves.

Organise

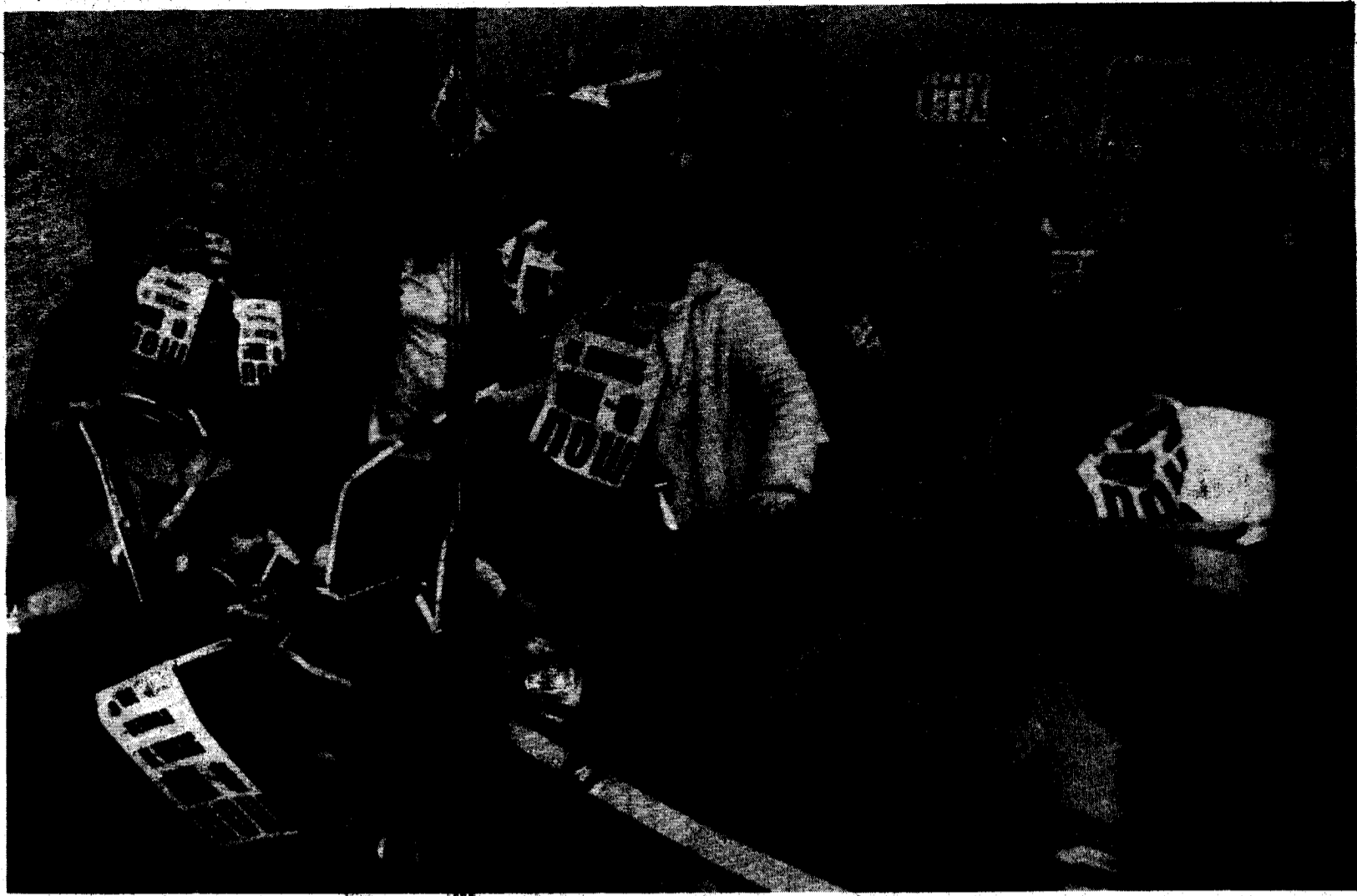
I've tried to get our place unionised. After a year's work I've finally done it. It's not easy in a little place especially where only women work. But I've done it. Now I've joined the International Socialists and I've been selling Womens Voice. We must fight for a society where a woman has the right to be what she is and not what our present rulers tell us to be. Too often changing your name means changing your identity.

I'm sure one day people will look at our society with the same horror we look at the old roman gladiators. But our only hope is to unite, men and women, black and white. I feel sorry for the men too. After all they get a bad deal in this society; only I'm sure the women's plight is much worse.

I hope this helps other women like me. I'm sure we can make it and bring our children up in a socialist society where we treat people as human beings not just objects for sexual exploitation or profit.



...YOU SAY YOU
HAVE THIS
DELUSION ABOUT
BEING TRAPPED
IN A CAGE



HIGH RISE CONCRETE COFFINS Squatting in Moss Side

In Moss Side, Manchester, families have been squatting in a half finished council house on a new estate near their own. 80 women and children, with more outside, and with some husbands, began it, and a rota was organised to hold the fort. They are pressuring the council to rehouse all the tenants in three blocks. They have an uncompromising demand: 'We want rehousing!'

Linbeck Crescent and Laburnum Crescent sound very attractive. But if you go to Moss Side you will see they contain hideous blocks of flats which look at least 50 years old. They're not. They're only four years old and are already plagued with rats, mice and bugs. Repairs are not done for months, and then they're really shoddy. The lifts are always failing, which means women with kids and shopping have to climb the stairs all the way up. Inside the flats, the inner walls are made of compressed straw—in a fire they go up in no time. There is a fire station not 40 yards from one block, and Irene, one of the squatters, described the scene: 'I guarantee that from the fire starting, to the firemen getting there, it was only four minutes. In that time the place was completely gutted, completely burnt out.'



Moss Side tenants (top) occupy a new council house to protest about conditions of the Moss Side Estate. Tenants (above) block the main road in the district. John Sturrock (Report)

This 'modern slum' is no improvement on the previous homes. As Ginnie said, 'The place we used to live in was a slum, but never once did I see bugs there. Here, we're suffering from things I never saw in my life, like mice and bugs. We've had the place cleaned out by the Health twice, but the bugs hide out in the walls because they're made of straw. Then they come out, climb up the walls and drop off the ceiling.'

For the tenants it is one depressing incident after another, Teresa McDonald explained the strains of living in Colditz-type flats: 'The doctor said he's never known so many young housewives to suffer from depression. Here, once you've taken the kids to school, and go back in, that's it, you're on your own.'

Problems

The kids have nowhere to play—especially football. There's a notice saying, 'No ball games allowed'. It's not surprising that children get up to tricks on the estate. According to Mr Goodhead of the Manchester Housing Department, interviewed in the local paper, some families are 'problem families' with poor standards of behaviour... destroying the social and physical environment. As Kath Locke commented, 'Call this an environment?' Goodhead should have the problem of living in 'concrete bug-huts' and he might think again.

The families have now left the house they were occupying as it had served to publicise their demands and pressurise the council. Women with

prams and children marched from the house to the main road. A car drove through the demonstration and a woman and her husband were injured when the police moved in. The husband has been charged with assault despite his going to hospital with a broken arm and injured neck!

Meanwhile they will keep up the pressure on the Town Hall. It is the responsibility of the officials to solve the 'problems' by giving the families decent places to live. The people on Moss Side feel bitter about the £50,000,000 complex of supposed 'amenities' staring at them—mainly shops and a huge block of empty offices. The 'problems' are not the families. They are the rat-ridden flats, the broken-down lifts, the inflammable walls, and the bureaucrats in the Town Hall. As Kath Locke said, 'A crime has been committed on the whole of the working class, with high rise concrete coffins being built. But you can't separate politics and housing. It's a whole big con: housing, education, the whole way through. It's the entire bloody system, and that's what we're going to change.'

7 Weeks to Victory report from Liverpool

180 women workers at Wingrove and Rogers in Liverpool have reason to celebrate. They've been on strike for 17 weeks, fighting the boss, scabs, police and press! Now, despite the 70 women who stayed in, they've won a resounding victory—£2 a week plus £1.50 bonus on top of £2.09 annual rise, and another £1 in November. Before the strike the women took home only £15 basic for a 40 hour week. Shop steward Sylvia Fenny said, 'It'll be a much happier factory after this. The morale of the women has been fantastic, it's never flagged and it's not the money that's important, it's the victory. We aren't going back in ones and twos either—we'll march back with our heads held high.'

Equal pay activity in ASTMS by M. Falshaw, ASTMS

MOST TRADE unions have passed resolutions at their conferences for equal pay, equal opportunities and benefits for women members. Most of them then leave it at that. My union organised a delegate conference in July to specifically discuss issues affecting women workers and suggestions for action were sent from that meeting to the national executive. They set up a special sub-committee to consider the proposals, which to date hasn't met. However members of the union aren't just sitting back and waiting.

In my area, No 5, we decided that one of the most important things to do would be to get factual information to the workplace groups on progress towards Equal Pay, dodges the employers are getting up to, details of successes or failures of other Groups—by way of fact sheets on Equal Pay, maternity and paternity leave, pensions, and by each branch organising meetings on these subjects. Although it is important for men to become involved, we are suggesting to branches that they make special efforts to get women members along by finding out what day, time, place etc they prefer, arranging lifts and babysitting.

Other divisions are organising similar activity. The success of this will depend on the response of the members of the branches and groups, but it is important that they do get the facts and the positive encouragement which union leaderships aren't giving.



"What you ought to do..."

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