

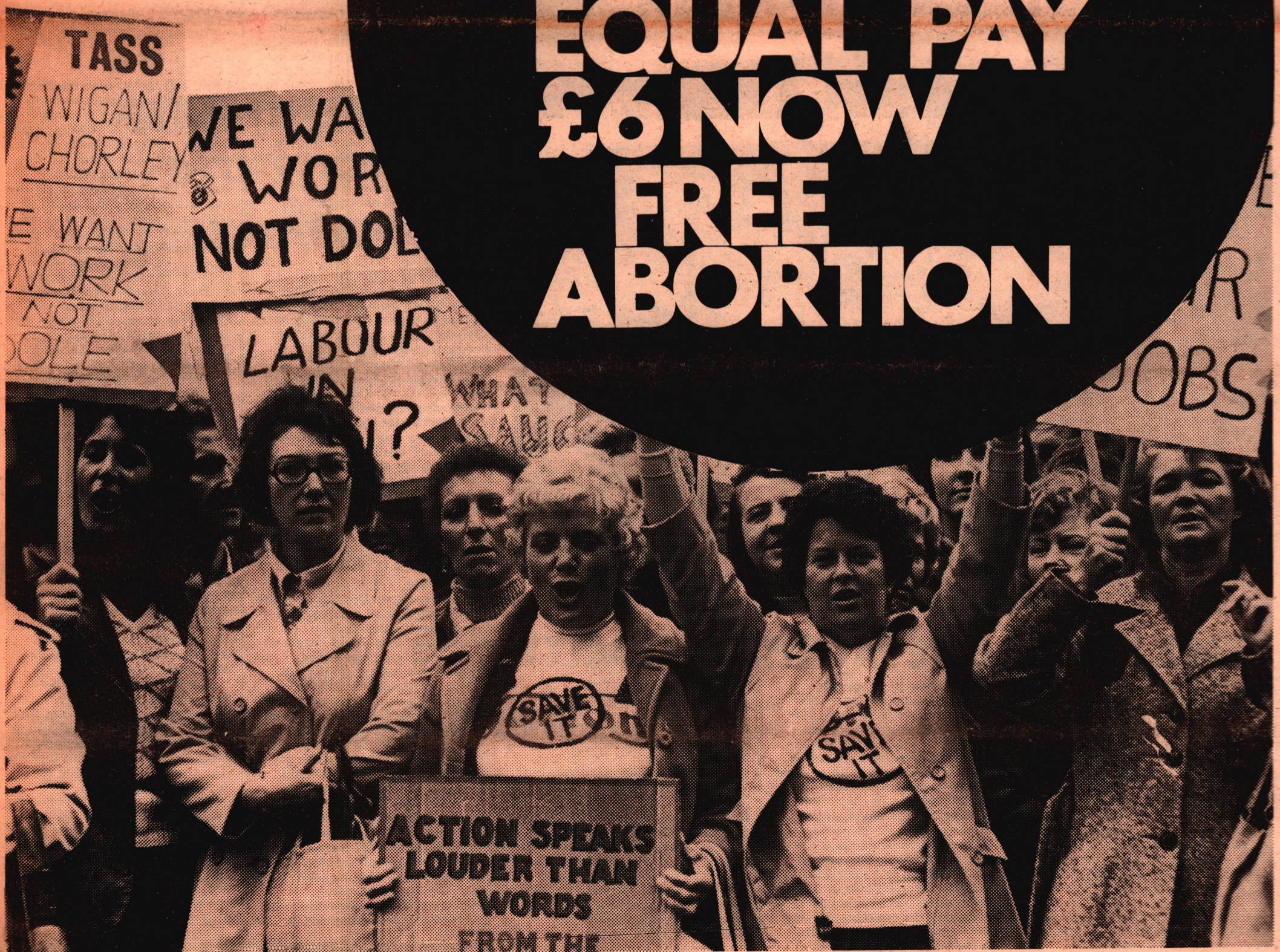
# womens voice

MONTHLY WOMENS PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

## WOMENS VOICE RALLY

Bellevue  
Manchester  
Saturday  
November  
29

**FIGHT FOR  
THE RIGHT:  
TO A JOB  
EQUAL PAY  
£6 NOW  
FREE  
ABORTION**



# WHY WE MUST FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK

THERE ARE 1½ million unemployed. And there's no sign of this going down. On the contrary—all the signs point to it getting worse.

The North-West Region of the TUC has called for a fight against unemployment—a demonstration on 26 November. And it's being backed by many trade union branches, trades councils and shop stewards' committees up and down the country. It will be the first chance of a national protest against the Labour government's Tory policies.

That's why it's also being backed to the full by the Rank and File Organising Committee. The Committee has just launched the Right to Work Campaign, and it sees the 26th demonstration as an important

part of that campaign.

Womens Voice talked to Chris Gunter, a member of the local government union NALGO and of the Organising Committee about the Right to Work Campaign:

'The campaign is very important for all workers—employed and unemployed. And it's especially important for women, because they're usually the first out of work when the crunch comes. It's the part-time workers—the twilight shifts, the women who can only work during school hours and the casual workers who haven't any job security. Unemployment and the public spending cuts both hit women hardest. At the moment there are hardly any nursery places. So even if women do get jobs they can't get their kids looked after.

'That's why it's so important for women to get involved in the Right to Work Campaign. It will be based on local Right to Work committees sponsored by trade union bodies. The key will be local action. That means picketing factories where redundancies have been announced. Demonstrating in labour exchanges and youth employment centres, like the recent occupation in Glasgow. Local groups will also be preparing for the 26th with leaflets, placards and transport to London.

'Because the campaign is locally based, the involvement of women is key. When we talk about pickets and demos we don't want just unemployed women but also the wives of the unemployed. It's not the sort of issue we can sweep under the carpet. Unemployment affects us all.'



## How to organise for the rally

OUR WOMENS VOICE Rally is going to be a real event for women. A place to go, for women to enjoy themselves, to meet other women and discuss all the common problems and struggles. Learn from one another's successes and how to avoid the failures. Particularly for women with children we would like to make the rally at Belle Vue a day away from the kids, from the family.

If this is going to be possible, Districts of the International Socialists must make sure that women who want to go do not have to worry about finding babysitters, whether they can leave baby with relatives, husbands, etc. Districts should be organising lists of people willing to babysit, child-mind. We have to organise a nursery actually in the district, because the creche at Belle Vue is only for the really young children too young to be left with babysitters.

All the districts some distance from Manchester should organise a day nursery with a rota of people to run it. A nursery does not mean a barren room with one or two sulky male comrades in the corner, being cowed and harassed by too many kids. A nursery has to be held somewhere where there are toilets, a kitchen. You have to have books and toys and a well organised rota so that no one ends up spending ten hours in the nursery.

Try booking church halls, friends meeting houses as they usually have kitchens. If you're lucky they will also have a yard for the kids to play in if the weather is fine. Someone has got to be prepared to cook food for the kids, make sandwiches, drinks. Districts a long way from Manchester are obviously going to have more problems. A nursery can't really run for 15 hours or more—the length of time some children may have to be looked after. In such cases, comrades will have to be prepared to spend the whole day at someone's house, to do the cooking, take the kids out, to football etc. watching TV with them and then putting them to bed.

Another alternative is to organise a day's outing for a group of kids—this is what we are doing in Birmingham. This would involve two or three comrades taking children on a day trip to the seaside or interesting local places. Organise games in a local park. Have you got a fairground in your area?—The possibilities are endless.

If you are running a nursery, tea and telly at the end of the day could keep most kids quiet until Mum gets back to pick them up.

For the rally to be a success, we don't just want a commitment from women to attend, we need a commitment from IS members and supporters to undertake the responsibility for providing good child care. If this isn't done, women will not be prepared to go away—or if they do they will be

constantly worried about whether their children are being properly looked after.

All branches and districts must take this question seriously and make proper arrangements for 29 November.

## Why I'm going to the rally

Linda Gordon works at British Home Stores in Hull, member of USDAW.

'For too long now women who have seen the inequalities of the system, and who have been prepared to fight against them, have had to do so in isolation. This rally gives us a chance to get together and discuss how to fight back as an effective, organised body within the working class.'

I BECAME involved in the National Abortion Campaign through the Women's Movement. I belong to the New Cross Women's Group, and we became very concerned at the threat to our right to free and safe abortion on the National Health. Nothing was happening in our area, and so we called a meeting of all interested groups to form a local, NAC group. Lots of people came, from women's groups, political groups, and other organisations such as Tenants' Associations.

From the meeting we formed lots of committees to deal with the different aspects of our work such as Hospital/Medical groups, Trade Union groups, Finance and Publicity. People were quite keen to work in most groups, but not the trade union group, so I volunteered for that. Only one person would help me, a man. I later found out that he was in the International Socialists, and knew a lot about how to contact trade union branches and so on.

I'd never been particularly political, but I was very impressed by all the IS people who helped build our local NAC group. They were always helpful, ready to assist wherever they could, never pushing their political line in a sectarian way, always encouraging and instructive. They seemed to feel that we had to learn for ourselves, but that they would help with experience and advice, and solid hard work.

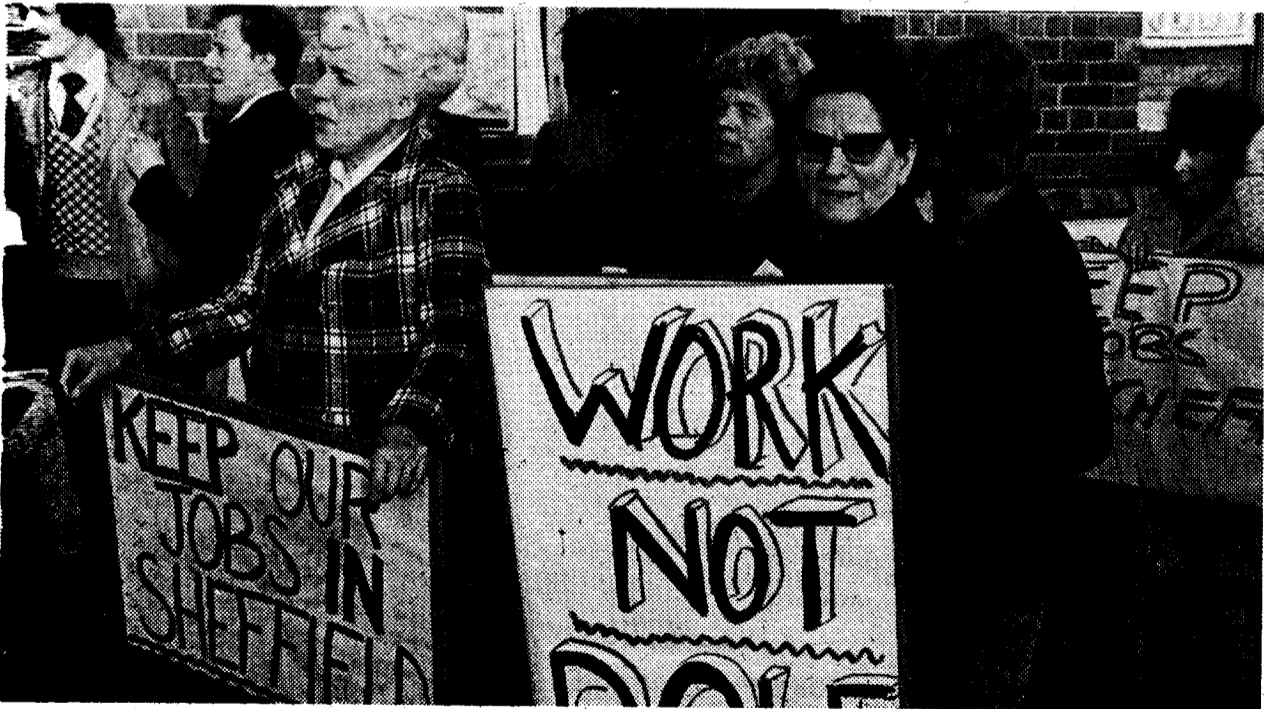
Later on, another political group became involved, the International Marxist Group. They wanted to control; they criticised the way we'd organised, and put lots of useless suggestions forward. The group, very successful till then, became confused.

Those of us on the Co-ordinating committee started discussing the actual political implications of what we were doing. Our women's group also decided to sort out the different approaches. As a result, I decided that as a socialist, IS was the only organisation for me.

JILL BROWNBILL



How to fight for our right to work: demonstrate (above) and picket (below).



A ONE day combine strike of the Edgar Allen Group in Sheffield has been called over 28 redundancies—25 of whom are women. The women have been occupying the Greenland Road Balfour Darwins plant in Sheffield now for six weeks and feeling is still solid. On 24 October there was a picket organised by the Edgar Allen factories in support of the occupation. It was supported by BSC River Don and Jacobs Chucks. 'WE ARE DEFENDING OUR JOBS, OUR CONDITIONS AND OUR ORGANISATION'.

## SCABS SHOULD GIVE PAY RISE TO CHARITY

ASTARON-BIRDS make electronic components, car radios, factory clocks etc. For months we have been asking for a wage increase. Our basic is £28.10 and most people get £1 merit award as well, this is well below the national minimum. Our convenor went to the boss on Tuesday and he said no, he'd have to think about it and all the same excuses so she held a meeting at the end of the afternoon. The majority of the union agreed on a one day stoppage next day. There are over 200 women working here.

A lot of women wouldn't come out; they were frightened of getting the sack or didn't want to lose a

day's pay. Some of them were sneaking in at 7am hoping to beat the pickets. There were about 100 of us out in the morning and we stopped 16-17 vans. It was great. The only nasty moment was when a man driving in one scab threatened to punch me in the face when we asked the women, who has often been helped by the union, not to break the picket.

Next day there was a lot of friction between those who went out and the blacklegs and some friendships have broken up over it. But it was worth it as our official had a meeting with the directors and they agreed to pay £6.10 a week extra from the end of November and

have been guaranteed the national minimum for three years.

One woman who was on the picket all day says she will bring in a box to collect the rise from the scabs to give it to charity... Quite a few non-unionists were out with us and we expect them to join now, we also had support from some of the men. The success of the strike has given us a boost. Unemployment is very bad in Poole but we have shown that determined action can bring gains even when you have to fight the scabs as well as the bosses. We take a regular order of Womens Voice in the factory and it will be great to read about our action in the paper.

# WRECKERS IN COVENTRY

## No Christmas money for the kids

BY MAUREEN ENEVER

CHRISTMAS IS coming, the goose is getting fat . . . Not in my house it isn't—nor I'm sure in the houses of a few thousand other women, whose husbands work at Chrysler, Coventry. They're being laid off because there's no work—or so they're told.

This week my husband who works at the Stoke engine plant is off for one whole week. After that it'll probably be one week in, one week out till God knows when. At the moment he receives lay-off pay of 70 per cent of the basic wage. To some people that may seem fair enough—but when you get used to a certain amount each week, it's difficult to accept a cut. And the lay-off pay soon runs out—they're only allowed so many hours. They they'll join the one million or so unemployed on the dole.

For me these lay-offs mean I've had to go out and get a job—cleaning, which I loathe. The money I earn isn't for the little extras I wanted to buy for my kids' Christmas, but to supplement the loss of the old man's wage.

Everyone in Coventry seems to be in the same boat. A couple of

months ago, I used to go and browse through second-hand shops to pass a bit of time. Now I find myself queuing up outside to see if I can get something for my kids. My situation is bad but I know friends who are worse off than me. One of them has a mortgage of £80 a month. And believe me, she doesn't live in a mansion. Rates are £12 plus gas and electricity. She has a six month old baby, and is now having to think about going out of work. The sort of job she'll get is one where she already knows someone to get her in. At the moment the only thing open to her is auxiliary nursing working nights.

I could go on writing about situations like this all day, but the more I think about it the more worried and depressed I get. I know the situation is the same everywhere. Well, not exactly everywhere. Nothing will have changed in the households of the gaffers. I bet they'll still have their fat turkeys and full Christmas stockings—got by stealing from the workers.

I just hope they spare a thought for the hundreds of kids who, through them, their ignorance and greed, will be facing the most dismal Christmas for a long time.

## ...and they don't even get school dinners

MY LITTLE boy started school in September. He can't stop for dinners because they say I'm at home all day and he lives near to the school—and also because there isn't room. I've seen the dining hall and there's plenty of room. The real lesson is that, because of cuts in spending, they are not employing any more dinner ladies. In our school, there are five women to two hundred kids. Now any woman knows what it's like handling kids and you would need a damn sight more than what we've got at the moment.

They don't have towels in the toilets—we have to supply our own. And pencils are limited—you only get one if you can write!

And because of the shortages of teachers we have to teach our kids to write when they come home. So what happens to the children whose parents work and just can't find the time to teach them?

They have black paper—yes, black paper to draw on. I don't know where it comes from but I'm sure kids can't develop their creative talents to the full using this. We have endless jumble sales to raise money for language machines to help children develop speech and reading.

In one area of Coventry where I used to live, we were actually having jumble sales and sponsored walks in order to raise money to have part of the school painted. Now, the latest thing is that they are going to cut back on the number of lollipop men and women. They are saying that the manning of children's crossing will be taken over by the mums and also by the school prefects. You can imagine the chaos this will cause—especially as the prefects in the school are aged between 10-11 years.

And they might have asked the mums. I'd like to know the rate for the job. It makes you think. Where will it all end?

## THE PROTEST HAS STARTED

ON 21 October, 10,000 students and public employees marched to lobby parliament against the cuts in education. The demonstration was organised by the South-East Region of the TUC, but the trade unions largely ignored it. The National Union of Teachers in particular was conspicuous by its absence.

My own union, the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions, was only a little better,

lobby. On the other hand, the turn out of students was really good. I had the impression that many teachers came along after work. Obviously there is a solid group of militant teachers who see how bad the situation is, but they are getting no support from leaders of the union.

There is a hard job to be tackled—to get the message across to our workmates, and to parents. It's no good thinking it can't happen to you. Teachers are losing jobs and kids are being laid off.

## WHAT IS THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

THE TRADE unions were built by men and women in the daily struggle against the employers over wages, hours and jobs. But from the very beginning, there have been problems: trade union officials, far removed from the shop floor or office with a guaranteed wage and job, forget about the daily grind. They get so absorbed in endless 'negotiations' they forget about the struggles of men and women at work. They come to see strikes and disputes as an interruption in their office routine. So they end up, usually trying to get people to go back to work, regardless of whether a dispute has been won or lost.

Mostly trade union officials are men and because union meetings are held in the evenings out of work's time, it is difficult for women to organise in their own interests in the unions. And often the union officials aren't the slightest bit interested in questions which 'just' affect women—maternity leave, equal pay, the right to a job.

If union officials work to get men to go back to work and break strikes, the problems are even worse for women. For a start, women often have less experience of struggle and therefore more trusting of the officials. Also you're less used to union procedure, rules and regulations—easy meat for a smooth talking official. On top of all that, women usually start off with less confidence than men, more reserved about speaking in mass meetings, talking back at men.

All in all, if women workers are going to be able to fight in their own interests they have to learn to deal with the trade union machine, the officials etc. just like the men. Men and women need to link up to fight inside the trade union movement for the unions to really fight for workers' interests—that means making sure officials are regularly elected and only get the average industrial wage of their members. Some might fight for equal pay for women then!

We need to fight for union meetings to be held in works' time so everyone can attend and take decisions.

The rank and file movement is all about building groups of men and women in different unions and industries from NALGO in local government to the Charter in the AUEW to fight in this way in the trade union movement. It is about linking up men and women all over the country to fight for jobs, better wages and conditions, maternity leave etc.

As Chris Gunter said: 'A job in local government used to be a job for life. For the first time white collar workers in local government, education and so on are facing redundancies and the dole queue. NALGO has been complacent for years—we in the NALGO ACTION GROUP are working to make our union fight for our interests'.

The rank and file organising committee is made up of workers from different rank and file groups and co-ordinate a network of trade union branches, trades councils, shop stewards committees committed to fighting for jobs, and trade union democracy and against wage restraint.

If you would like to find out more about fellow workers in your union or industry or have any difficult problems at work you would like some help with, contact:

Roger Cox, Secretary of the Rank and File Organising Committee.  
46 Prince George Road, London N16

# ENGINEERS BACK WOMEN IN EQUAL PAY FIGHT

BY JANET BALEN

THE FOUR women who run the office at Louis Newmark's engineering factory in Ipswich, had a successful week's strike.

They had been fighting since April for a pay rise of about £15 under the Equal Pay Act. They were taking home £21-£23 each week. For this they were running the office and other work in the factory, carrying out a wide variety of skilled and semi-skilled jobs: receptionist, telephonist, typing, shorthand, storekeeping, secretary, printing, assistant buyer, assistant to the draughtsmen etc. The company were not prepared to listen to their demands, having the attitude that their pay was not worth talking about as it was not essential money.

By July the women were feeling rather desperate, as the biggest concession management would give them was to agree to pay them the same as the lowest paid man—he was retired and made the tea. The company was not prepared to deal with their claim under the Equal Pay Act as no man did their job. 'It's not surprising,' says Norma Eltringham, 'No man would do our job for the pay we get.' One of the men's shop stewards told them to join TASS to get help etc for their claim, as he thought the women should at least get paid the same as a semi-skilled man in the factory.

The women joined TASS, and since July Mr Foley divisional

organiser for TASS has been of great assistance to the women, who had no previous experience in industrial disputes. They had never imagined before that they would take part in any industrial action.

By the beginning of October they were still unable to get management to listen to them or Mr Foley. It seemed now that the only action would be to go on strike, as everything else had failed, even though management tried to stop them by implying that no one else in the factory would support them.

An hour after the women went on official strike and set up their picket line the men in the factory held a mass meeting. They decided unanimously to walk out in support of the women. The factory was now brought to a complete standstill, and at last management took them seriously.

Negotiations went on for a week, with the men bringing in a claim of their own. The company eventually agreed to pay them a rise of £6 immediately, increasing this gradually to £15 by the end of December. This has given them their full demands under the Equal Pay Act.

The women think they would never have won their demands without the help of the men in the factory. From now on they all are clearer about each others problems, and never again will the company be able to divide and rule.

## WILLIAM TYNDALE: DEFEND 'DEMOCRACY' CLOSE THE SCHOOL DOWN!

WE'VE ALL heard about William Tyndale—the national press has made sure of that. What they don't do is make sure we know what is happening, what the issues are at stake. It all goes back eighteen months when the new headmaster started holding democratic meetings of the staff, involving them in taking decisions. A part-timer, Betty Waller, a supporter of right wing views in education, started making complaints to her right wing friends in Islington Labour Party. They started a campaign against the school, spreading stories about Trotskyists and worse.

The smear campaign got worse, when a known teacher militant who had been blacklisted moved to the school. The Evening News and Evening Standard lent their weight to the campaign against the school. Managers started visiting the school every week—unheard of in any other school. A petition was organised against the school, parents were persuaded to take their children away—all in an attempt to make the roll drop and force the school to close.

The right wing in the Labour Party in Islington were using the school as a spearhead in their attack on the Inner London Education Authority—the ILEA—which they consider far too 'progressive'. Finally after months of harassment, the ILEA agreed to an enquiry into the school plus an inspection. Clearly the inspection was to find evidence against the teachers. At that point the staff walked out on strike. Weeks later, the ILEA has agreed to a proper enquiry and the teachers returned to work.

The enquiry into the school started on 27 October. Although

it is intended to be a fact finding enquiry, there is little chance that the teachers' case will be favourably reported in the press. Throughout the case, the staff have been subjected to the most appalling witch hunt and smear campaigns by journalists who know nothing about the school. On the strike pickets I have seen reporters question and badger young children going into the school and yet the Daily Express had the cheek to carry a picture of a child with the headline 'Teachers' pawn'.

In fact the main trouble is that the school is being used as a pawn—by the right wing of Islington Labour Party.

There is no doubt that the press campaign has had its effects on the parents at the school. But many are still supporting the staff. During the strike, the staff ran a strike school, which despite the pressure from ILEA and press, was attended by 25-30 children.

The issue is now broader than just William Tyndale. The school is being used to attack all left wing teachers. The Daily Express has invited all parents to go into schools looking for trouble and to attack more teachers who do not support 'our democratic system'.

We know that under our 'democratic system' education still discriminates against working class kids. We know that it means huge cuts in education spending, cuts that mean parents have to provide pencils for the kids and teach them to read.

Parents need to unite with the teachers and school students to defend and improve the education system. That means fighting not only the right wing in Islington Labour Party but the whole rotten system which always penalises the working class.

# Manchester



The Lord Mayor and the Council of the City of Manchester request the pleasure of your company at a Cocktail Reception in the Town Hall, on Wednesday, 29th October, 1975, from 7-30 to 9-15 p.m., in acknowledgment of International Women's Year, 1975

Mrs Linstead

## SOMETHING TO CELEBRATE

THE MAYOR and mayoress of Manchester seem to think we have something to celebrate in International Women's Year. They've sent out invitations to women trade unionists all over Manchester to attend the cocktail party at the town hall next Wednesday. Penny Simmons, delegate to the trades council from ASTMS Manchester Health Service branch had this to say: 'I shan't be going to shake hands with the Lord and Lady Mayoress because the same evening there's a union-sponsored meeting against the cuts.

The whole rebuilding programme for Manchester Royal Infirmary has been slashed. We want to set up a union delegate based 'Fight the cuts' committee. I'm not prepared to sup sherry while behind the scenes no doubt more hospital plans are up for the chop!

If the party goes over the morning after they can come and

join the picket of the DHSS organised by Manchester NAC (National Abortion Campaign). The picket is part of a week of action against the Select Committee being reconvened and introducing restrictive legislation. NAC is also holding a demonstration on Saturday 1 November. It is being supported by other groups in the North West and by the following trade union bodies: Manchester Trades Council, United Hospitals NUPE branch, COHSE Prestwich, ATTI NW Divisional Council, AUEW 15, CPSA Stockport branch, ASTMS Hyde, ICI branch, NALGO Tameside branch.

The abortion issue isn't an isolated one. The anti-abortionists are the same people who are standing back and watching our rights being taken away—our right to work, our right to equal pay, our right to adequate nursery provisions, health and education services and decent housing. The Labour government that is making concessions to the anti-abortionists is the same one that has imposed savage cuts in public expenditure and the £6 wage limit.



## STOP NURSES GOING ON DOLE

IN MANCHESTER, auxiliary nurses are threatened with the sack and nurseries are being closed down. Thirty auxiliary nurses at Fairfield General Hospital will lose their jobs in February 1976. They are on six monthly temporary contracts which previously have been automatically renewed. Two nurses have already been told their contracts won't be renewed after November. Management say that the Bury Area Health Authority are employing too many nurses! They are not the only ones. Over in Cheshire a hundred nurses are already on the dole.

In Oldham the council want to close down three nurseries. Parents and supporters marched in protest to the Town Hall on October 25th. The proposals will be put to the council on Wednesday by the social service committee who say they don't want any more nursery places allocated to what they call 'non-social' cases. Believe it or not, by 'non-social' cases they mean 'mothers who go out to work simply to earn money for extra luxuries.'

Pat McCormick is able to work part-time by leaving her child at Brook Street nursery in Chatterton. 'I won't be able to work. It's as simple as that. It isn't pin money. We need it. They say the kids can go to Coalshaw Green nursery but I'd have to get three buses to get there.'

The nursery staff have been told that they won't lose their jobs and mustn't have anything to do with the protest.



Fighting the lousy conditions on the Hulme estate: ABOVE, protesting mothers block off the main road - and clash with an unsympathetic driver. TOP, a father is arrested - for defending his small son from the police.

## NURSERY NURSES WIN JOBS BACK

NUPE—National Union of Public Employees  
NALGO—National Association of Local Government Officers

EDDIE LAWSON, NUPE regional secretary, has told shop stewards at Fairfield Hospital. 'There's nothing the union can do about the auxiliary nurses getting the chop as it is all perfectly 'legal'. And in Oldham the NALGO branch has been advised by district office that they should recognise that the employers have 'problems' over the cuts. Instead of defending their members' jobs they should sit down and discuss their target figures for reducing staff levels.

To help with this NALGO have drawn up a shopping list of suggestions which include the non-filling of vacancies and getting rid first of part-time employees 'who are not bread winners', retired workers and 'temporary' workers.

These are the people who should be giving us a lead in the fight

against the cuts and not having cosy chats with management. It's going to be up to us to fight.

Nursery nurses employed by the Labour controlled council of Tameside won a victory this summer. The council decided last December that the Third-in-Charge at an Ashton under Lyne day nursery was no longer needed, especially since the other staff were coping with the responsibilities of the vacant post. A threat to stop the additional work led to a 'reconsideration'. Expecting something positive to come from this, the nursery nurses continued with the additional work. But after a two minute discussion in the Council Chamber two months later the reinstatement of the post was rejected. The NALGO branch demanded that the vacant post be filled and additional pay for the extra work carried out by the rest of the nursery staff.

After another two months silence by the council NALGO balloted the nursery staff for the following

action:

1. An all out one day strike for Tuesday 8 July
2. An all out indefinite strike at the day nursery concerned
3. An all out strike by all day nursery staff if there was no progress with the council.

The nursery nurses voted over 90 per cent in favour of all three points.

A picket of the social services sub-committee was called for the 8th July. The council quickly held a meeting with NALGO officials on Thursday before the threatened strike and did a complete about turn, agreeing to fill the post.

NURSES have begun to show they're no longer prepared to be seen as Florence Nightingales putting up with low wages and bad conditions. They organised walk outs last year during their pay claim in the absence of real action from their so-called trade union leaders. In Manchester the Nurses Action Group took the initiative and got support from dockers for

their two 24 hour strikes. Miners and engineers also supported them on a demonstration organised by the Nurses Action Group.

Since then many nurses have joined the union instead of relying on the professional body, the Royal College of Nursing. But they've seen it isn't enough just to join the union—they have to fight for the union to represent their interests. Just recently nurses and ancillary workers boycotted canteen meals because of price rises in two Manchester hospitals.

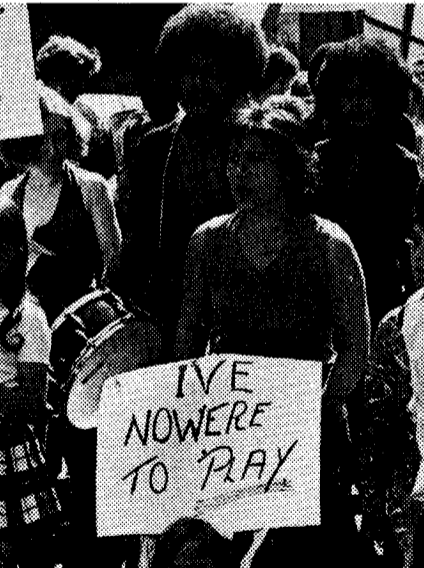
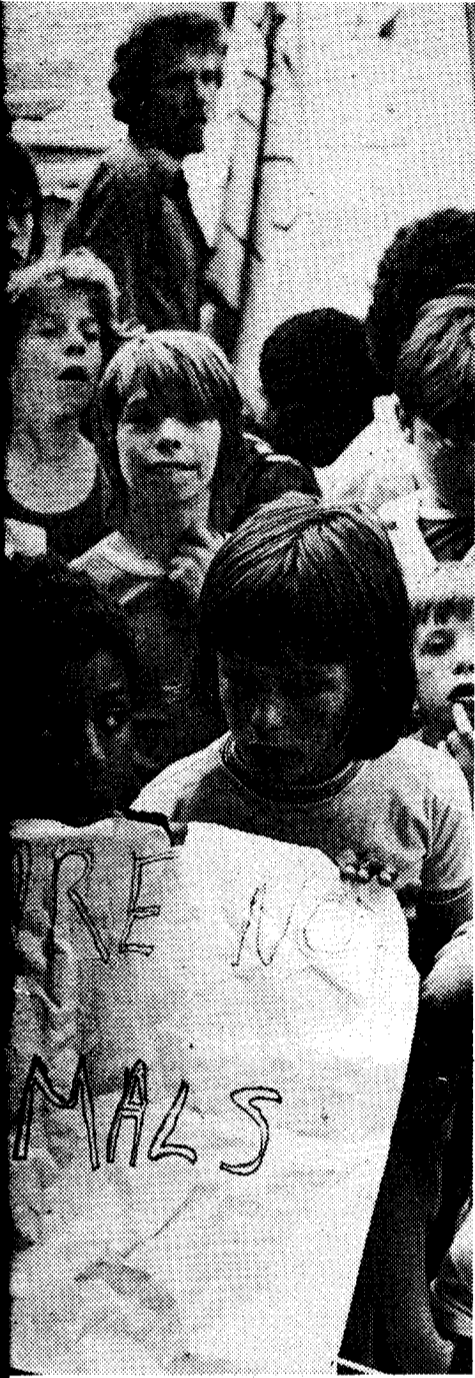
Another group of women in Manchester have begun to fight back against lousy wages and conditions. 30 play group workers got together in June and formed themselves into the playgroup workers' branch of NUPE. They are now campaigning for a wage rise and have put out a leaflet to parents who use the playgroups. The leaflet says:

'Your play-group is paid for by the social services department but only just. The play-group workers end up out of pocket paying for many things themselves and being

ALL OVER Manchester there are All over the country women in estates are fighting different battles. We need to know what you are doing about nursery closures, how can we limit the damage against the cuts? How can we demand forward? Are playgroups being closed? We need to be able to exchange ideas and another's successes. In Manchester and estates, hospitals and offices know how important it will be for you. See you there. REPORTS FROM MANCHESTER BY PENNY PARKES, PENNY SIMMONS and AILEEN KNOWLES. PIC

# report

# THE DAY THE ARCHBISHOP LED ME UP THE GARDEN PATH



women who are angry and fighting. factories, shops, offices and on the streets. I'm doing—how you fought against the fight in the trade union movement. We take the fight for abortion on our own terms, organising anywhere else? We learn from one another's experiences, learn from one another. We are going round the factories selling tickets for the rally. We are going to go to this rally.

REPORT COMPILED BY:

PHOTOGRAPHS BY: JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

owed their wages for weeks at a time. The play-group workers don't have paid holidays, paid sick leave, or any cover if the play-group closes.

The cost of everything is rising, but the last time the play-group workers got a pay rise was February 1974. Do you know how much your Labour Councillors on the Social Services Committee fix the wages at? £1.50 for the leader and £1 for the assistant for 2½ hours work (very often many more hours in fact). So now they are campaigning for a wage rise. If you think that the play-group does a job worth doing then the people who do it are worth encouraging and paying, and we ask parents to help us by showing that you support us. Thank you. Manchester Play-group workers.

Earlier this year, a group of women on the HULME estate formed an action group to get something done about the lousy conditions on the estate. None of the lifts work nor the lights on the staircases; refuse bins are kept on the stairs near where the kids play.

They're jammed full of rubbish which gets tipped over so there's loads of flies.

One doctor said he was amazed none of the kids have typhoid. There's nowhere for kids to play, where mums can keep an eye on them. Earlier this year, a five year old child was killed when he fell out of the window and over the balcony. Families have frequently complained about holes appearing in balcony rails. The council has at last promised that repairs will be done, but not straight away, 'within six weeks'.

There have been several public meetings and demonstrations about conditions on the estate. The council have said anyone who wants to get off the estate will be rehoused in five years' time. The action committee did their own survey on the estate and found that the majority of families want to get out, and fast. Last week a deputation interrupted a council meeting to demand immediate rehousing. This was too much for the councillors—they left the room.

'WE ARE growing soft!' said the Archbishop, sitting in his Palace. 'We are without anchors,' he continued; 'We are drifting.' And he drifted on and on.

What a stunning message for us all, I thought, straining my ears to the radio to hear more. 'Your country needs you', he went on. Now I've heard that somewhere before. Wasn't it Lord Kitchener's recruiting slogan in the First World War? Didn't millions of young men respond to the call then... and finish up butchered in the trenches? Not the best advert for the benefits of sacrifice.

Ah yes, but he's coming to that.

'A common enemy in two World Wars drew us together in united action, and we defeated him.'

As a matter of fact, the last time the Archbishop appealed to the nation was to whip up support for the war effort. Meanwhile his counterparts in Nazi Germany were blessing the troops and ammunitions on the other side...

A most flexible and accommodating morality is the Christian one. Always on the winning side. Always justifying the system. Very useful to Roman emperors, British Imperialists, and Chilean fascists. Ready to argue that what is, is good.

or alternatively if something's bad, then it's your fault. And mine.

Yes it's our individual fault that inflation is raging, and unemployment growing.

If only we sat down together and prayed hard enough, and got our morality right, then the rewards would follow.

Only of course the rewards would be graded. The people at the top who have the most will get the most. It's very logical and quite in order, as the old hymn 'All things bright and beautiful' has it:

The rich man in his castle,  
(and the Archbishop in his palace?)  
The poor man at his gate,  
God made them high and lowly,  
And ordered their estate.'

Now there is another side to this, a very important addition. As Tennyson's poem 'The Princess' expresses it:

'Man for the field and woman for the hearth:  
Man for the sword, and for the needle she:  
Man with the head and women with the heart:  
Man to command and women to obey:  
All else confusion.'

So that's what's gone wrong with everything. Too much challenging of the roles God has fixed for us. Back to your machines, oh ye workers, and stop asking questions.

Back to your kitchens oh ye women, and stop stirring up trouble.

'Give us strong, happy, disciplined families', cried the Archbishop, and we shall be on the way to a strong nation.'

I shut my eyes and let my mind go. Ah yes, back in those days of greatness, when Christian morality ruled every heart, and the sun never set on the British Empire. And millions lodged in slums; and thousands went hungry; and workers couldn't afford to call a doctor; and women died in childbirth and then they invented the means test and... HEY WAIT A MINUTE!

THE MOST Reverend and Right Honourable Donald Coggan became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1974, appointed politically by the Prime Minister, owing to the uniquely close tie up in Britain between the government and the Anglican Church. He lives in two palaces, in Lambeth and Canterbury, and gets £8,805 a year, plus servants and expenses. He is a member of the high-class Athenaeum Club.

## BARBARA CASTLE SAYS THE PICNIC IS OVER...I'VE NEVER SEEN IT!



THE FINER Committee was set up in 1969 to look at the difficulties faced by one-parent families and how to deal with them. By July 1974 they produced a comprehensive report covering all aspects of life—income, law, housing, employment, parents and children. These were eventually debated in parliament last Monday. Although a few recommendations have already been accepted by the government; it appears that no more will be, due to lack of money. There will still be no special grant, or extra day care facilities; the one-parent family will still have to eke out a poor existence.

I interviewed Betty Whight a divorced woman of 49 who is a Womens Voice supporter, about her view on the Finer Report and other issues affecting her at present.

'I was born during the general strike while my mother was starving, lived through the poverty stricken 30s, the war, and I am still as poor as when I was born. Barbara Castle says the picnic is over, I've never seen it, and am still waiting for it to begin.'

'I had to leave my husband ten years ago as he made my life hell, my two eldest children were victims of a broken marriage, my youngest—John is the result. I have brought John up on my own since he was born, and life has always been hard. I have always felt a reject from society which has kicked me around. It feels like serving a prison sentence that never ends, whatever I try to do a

barrier is put in my way.

I am a victim of how society treats women, but on my own it is worse. Money has always been a problem, I get £20 a week to cover everything, as the crisis deepens it gets more and more difficult. I am only allowed to earn £2, so increasingly over the past year I have had to work illegally, but this only leads to the sack. I did have help from the Education Department but they have cut their special grants. They do let John have free school dinners, but they are not much good as the meat is getting less.

It would help a great deal if we could have a special grant which allowed us to earn money for ourselves. This would help to maintain our standard of living which has been eaten away by the Labour government.

It is difficult to get a job or go out socially because I feel so inferior. I have no money to buy new clothes, or to make my house nice. I have never had the education that other people get. I came from the poor end of town with all the worst provisions and facilities. My children get no better—the inequalities still exist. I had always supported the Labour government, but they have put me on the scrap heap, in a poverty trap that I can never escape from. I had faith in the Labour Party, that when in government they would help people like me, but they don't care, they don't understand the lives of ordinary working class people. My Labour MP appeared

sympathetic but this has done very little, he didn't even go to the debate on the Finer Report; he gave me tickets but no means to get to London. I feel completely disillusioned by the Labour government and hope that other people realise how they are being betrayed. The rise MPs asked for of £28 per week is the same as a widower with four children is expected to live on—it shows their priorities.

I want my children and grandchildren to have something better, but it won't happen until we have a revolution. This won't happen until working class people realise that they are being used and manipulated by the upper classes; until we have the profits of our work and determine our own future we are lost.

We must all fight to better our lot. That means we have got to look beyond pressure groups such as Gingerbread for one-parent families, and also forget about the Labour Party which is never going to do anything for us. We have to think about real militant politics and work towards uniting all working people in the struggle for socialism. Two weeks ago I went out for the first time, without my son, in five years. That was to a Socialist Worker/Womens Voice public meeting. It was great.

I am going to help form a Womens Voice group in Ipswich, and will be going to the Rally to meet other women in the same plight as myself, who are ready to act. Janet Barker

Picture: (John Davies (Report))

## dear women's voice

WE WERE very interested in the centre pages of October's issue of Womens Voice which dealt with the education cuts. But we felt something was missed out under the heading of 'What To Do'. Nothing whatsoever was mentioned of school students, who have their role to play. It is they who can, as individuals or through their union the NUSS (National Union of School Students) discuss the full implications and get things going with the teachers in the school.

Many school students do care about their future and should be an integral part of the joint action committees mentioned in the article. As many school students as possible should join the NUSS as this enables them to take action and get information. For example, our NUSS branch has got many NAC signatures (for the National Abortion Campaign—ed.) Some members attended the Portugal demonstration with the NUSS banner, and we support the newly started Norwich Womens Voice Group. Womens Voice sales are also growing in schools. Fraternally,  
J LANG,  
Norwich IS/NUSS School Students.



AN UNMARRIED mother, like Linda Jones, who keeps her baby, is disgracefully treated by the state,



but why should she lose any self respect? She is worthy of some admiration, as well as her full maintenance. There is nothing degrading in being paid by the state. But it is degrading for a woman to have to ask the man she sleeps with for every penny that she needs, though this, in our present rotten social system, is generally regarded as respectable.

Mothers, married or unmarried, should be paid sufficient to keep themselves and their children without having to go out to work. But the life of a woman at home with a baby tends to be rather lonely. So creches and nurseries

should be available for help, advice and company, whether or not the mother chooses to do other work.

Nowadays, when a woman is married, social security is paid to her husband, with the object of establishing that he is the head of the family, and she a subordinate.

He can then share out the money or keep it to spend on himself, as he chooses. This is the kind of thing that Womens Voice should be attacking, as well as the treatment of unmarried mothers.

Not long ago, Womens Voice contained a very good article showing how the break up of the father-ruled family was essential to socialist revolution. Whatever happened to the discussion on the family that was to have followed?

It is deplorable that Womens Voice, echoing the Socialist Worker, applies the insulting word 'dole' to the national insurance money claimed by workers when they lose their jobs. This does not help to boost people's self respect.

About twenty years ago, when I had a spell of unemployment, I drew my weekly benefit as a right, and never heard the word 'dole' mentioned. How far are you trying to put the clock back? One might expect this kind of insult in capitalist papers, but to read it in socialist publications is a bit thick. No other form of insurance money is ever called a 'dole'.

A Womens Voice Reader

# Bus fares: Pay in full or walk...

PERHAPS YOU thought school kids got cheap or free fares. Not in Slough they don't. The Alder Valley Bus Company which operates between Slough and Reading has a rule which says that children have to pay the full bus fare before 9.15am and 3.30pm. That is, exactly the times when kids travel to and from school.

Parents—hit by rising prices

and unemployment—took exception to this. They staged a sit-down in the road for an hour. Despite a warning from the police that they would be arrested, parents dressed up in sheets daubed in anti-company slogans. They are now planning to organise protest marches and some are sending their kids to school an hour late in the morning to avoid the peak time.

Even the bus conductors are sympathetic.

This is a real blood-sucking increase—the thin end of the wedge.

**It's just been announced by the government that free bus rides for children under eight living more than two miles away are probably going to be abolished. So parents are seeing the need to organise to fight back.**

# ...or fight

A BATTLE has been going on in Lowestoft for several months over the transfer of 130 children from Kirkley Primary School to Pakefield Middle School. These children, only ten years old, will have to travel up to two miles to their new school. Kirkley Primary is being built as a middle school with all the facilities needed for under-11s, but it won't be finished until 1979 at the earliest.

The parents of the 130 children were led to believe that they would stay at the same school and use temporary classrooms while the extensions are being built. It wasn't until February that they found out what was to happen.

Many of the parents formed themselves into an action group, and fought to keep their children at Kirkley Primary school.

There are many problems which have arisen because of the transfer, and it is obvious that no real thought was put into it by Suffolk County Council when they made the decision.

The parents' main worry is the distance the children will have to travel. It is about two and a half miles from the Kirkley area to Pakefield school, and much of it is on the A12, the main road through Lowestoft. The kids have several choices of how to get there. They could walk all the way, which means a three quarters of an hour walk twice a day. That means leaving home soon after 8pm and getting home at 4.45pm. On a fine summer day it might not be so bad, but when it is pouring with

rain it is no joke.

Or they could go by bike and risk getting killed by the huge juggernauts that speed along the road. Or they could pay 15p each way on the bus—£1.50 a week. Double that amount for parents with two kids. On top of that there is dinner money because it is too far to go home.

Mrs Madge Flaxman, Press secretary for the Action Group told us how they had argued for half fares, on the bus but the transport company refused. They argued that an extra bus should be made available as the Kirkley area was not on the bus route to Pakefield.

The parents pointed out that the bus going to Pakefield school was already crammed full, children were sitting three to a seat and standing or sitting on the stairs—and they were paying the full fare. How could the company lose money like that, and how could extra children be carried unless more buses were run?

Neither Fred Mulley, Minister of Education nor the local Tory MP Mr Jim Prior, could do anything.

The Department of Education and Science suggested that the children should go to school by a different route. This would mean going down Birds Lane and Love Lane. No parents would want young children using them during the dark winter months, when they are reduced to 'muddy, deserted and sombre tracks'.

There is another school in the area and the parents asked if their children could go there. They were

told there was no room for them.

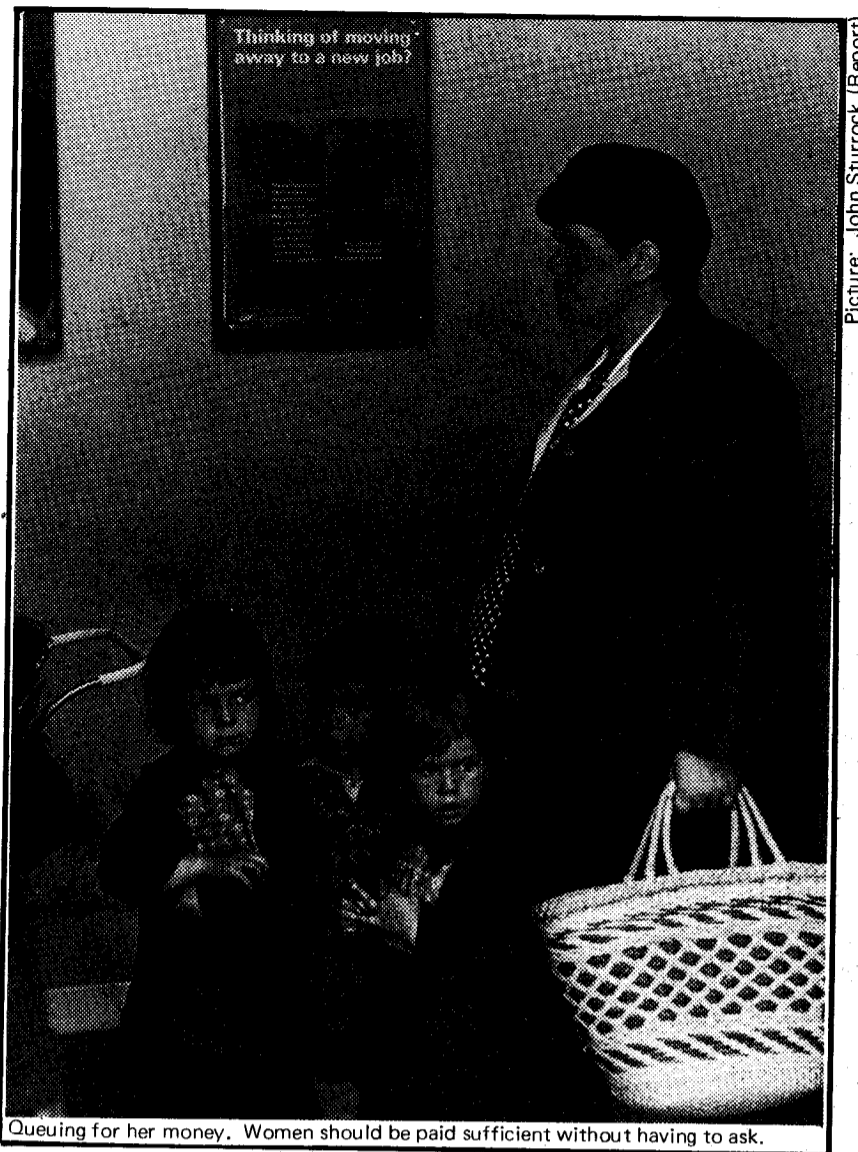
In August 1975, they heard, via the Lowestoft Journal, that they had lost their fight to keep the children at Kirkley. This completely disheartened many of the parents, but 33 were as determined as before and said they would boycott the school.

When the new term started in September, they kept their children away for two days but pressure was put on the kids so the parents had to give in. Only one man is still holding out. He takes his daughter to Kirkley Primary school every day where they are always turned away. Court proceedings are now being taken out against him.

A lot of the parents decided to hold a protest march to Pakefield school on the first day of term. About 50 children and 25 parents set off at 8.30am keeping to the paths as far as possible so as not to hold up traffic.

In the interview, the Action committee stressed the point that they were non-political. And through their campaign they were determined to fight their case in an orderly manner, to do things properly and legitimately and not take any action that might offend people. Clearly, while they are prepared to remain polite, no one will listen or take the slightest bit of notice. Perhaps if they disrupted council meetings with the 130 children, or occupied the council offices, they might have been given what they wanted.

The action committee is disheartened by the whole situation of the authorities and by the apathy of a lot of the parents involved. They hope that other people can learn something from their failure.



Queuing for her money. Women should be paid sufficient without having to ask.

Picture: John Sturrock (Report)

# Students begin fight back against the cuts

STUDENTS are hit by the cuts the same as anyone else. But often they find it difficult to fight back. So it is encouraging to find areas where students are organising to take action against the cuts.

A lobby backed by the National Union of Students—but which they didn't try to mobilise for—was an overwhelming success in spite of that. About 10,000 students—mainly from the technical college sector turned out.

In London a couple of colleges—Kingsway and Thames Poly—had

occupations to mobilise for the lobby.

Wester-super-Mare Technical College in the Avon district had its canteen subsidy abolished by the local council. That meant price rises of up to 130 per cent. So the students organised a boycott. It was a huge success, with nearly all the students participating. In fact, it was so good that the authorities have closed the canteen down. The students are now considering how to step up the campaign to get the canteen re-opened and the prices reduced.

# MEN VOTE TO SACK WOMEN

THE UNION of Post Office Workers has an agreement going back years that part time workers get employment only if all the full-time men have jobs. In Birmingham, this means sacking women instead of fighting against all redundancies.

Because of price rises, parcels work has dropped off, and 34 men are being moved to another department. To make way for them 68 women are to leave sorting—21 women to be retired and 47 women being sent down the road.

The strength of feeling of the women can be easily judged. Typically, UPW meetings are held at a time when women find it difficult to attend, but from 169 women 121 were at the branch meeting two weeks ago. The men in the union packed the meeting, some turning up just for the vote, and agreed the women's redundancies (the only man supporting the women is married to a part-

timer).

The basic rates at the GPO are low and so overtime is being protected at the cost of women's jobs. One of the women told Womens Voice: 'I believe no one should be made redundant. If overtime was cut down, no one need be sacked!'

It is clear that there will be a fight. Some of the women are themselves worried about defending their jobs because they've been told so often that it's only pin money for them.

Most of them however, know that they need their wages, and with unemployment high in this city the only thing to do is to fight back.

'There's so few of us against so many men. Most of us are wanting to fight back, but we don't know how. With Womens Voice help, I'm sure we can do something.' Messages of support to Post Office women, 224 High Street, Deritend, Birmingham.

# Help needed

WOMENS VOICE needs someone to help on the business side and to push sales. Womens Voice sales are expanding, our influence is growing. But we have a long way

to go. If you have any free time to help us make a go of it ring Sheila McGregor at 01-739 9772 or write to Womens Voice Business Manager, 8 Cottons Gardens, E2 8DN.

# March for SPUC - the Church will pay

50,000 PEOPLE marched with the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child in London last month. It was a chilling sight for those of us who staged the counter picket. How do they organise such large numbers?

Firstly, they march on a Sunday afternoon. What happens is that congregations are coached down straight out of church, from all over the country. It only cost 50p return from Glasgow. The priesthood provides a full time net-work of organisers. Together with the clergy march nuns, Catholic

Mothers Unions, and Catholic and Anglican colleges. In several instances, trade unions were named on the banners, but the banners were not official; the carriers had not got the backing of their work-mates.

The most disturbing aspect of the march to many people is the fact that it contained so many children. Some carried white flowers to symbolise 'babies' killed in abortions. Others brandished huge and lurid photographs of aborted fetuses, together with slogans which, as children, they could not possibly fully understand.

This is particularly nauseous when you consider that the opponents of abortion are often the same people who strongly oppose sex education for children. (Mrs Mary Whitehouse and her followers believe that if you tell children about it, there's more chance they might want to try it out for themselves.)

Nevertheless they are prepared to exploit children to make a sentimental impact on their marches. They have no scruples about visiting schools and youth clubs with their sensationalist propaganda. And they organise children to march on an emotive issue long before they have had a chance to think it out for themselves. Perhaps SPUC's intention is that they never will be able to think it out for themselves...

## The cost of free speech

A PRESS statement has been issued by the Freethinker, a monthly humanist journal complaining of the actions of Susan Kentish and Michael Litchfield, the authors of *Babies for Burning*, and liemongers extraordinary. Kentish and Litchfield threatened to sue The Freethinker over their review of the book.

They also threatened to sue the 'Sunday Times' for that paper's article which totally demolished the case made out in the book, and the reputation of Litchfield in particular.

Since then, the imaginative pair have gone into virtual hiding, apart from appearing at the select committee investigating the restrictive proposals laid out by James White MP. But the Freethinker meanwhile had to raise money to engage a solicitor to advise them in the event of a libel action. Unlike the 'Sunday Times' they do not have the resources to take such threats lightly.

William McIlroy, editor of The Freethinker says: 'The libel laws of this country are unsatisfactory, and it is intolerable that a person can threaten libel action which he/she apparently has no intention of pursuing, but nevertheless put other people to a great deal of trouble and expense.'

Meanwhile, whatever happened to Kentish and Litchfield we might well ask—remembering that their lies proved a very useful tool in

the hands of the anti-abortionists. As yet they have not retracted, not explained and certainly they have not been brought to court. Students of the bias of the British legal system, please note.

Speaker at the 'Life' church service afterwards was Kevin MacNamara, a Hull Labour MP, generally regarded as being 'left-wing'. He'd voted for the James White Amendment, but never spoken his views in his constituency. Presumably he thought that York was far enough away for safety. But a strong contingent from the Hull Women's Voice group (complete with banner) made sure he didn't get away with it unopposed.

## in York...

ON October 4th, the anti-abortion group, Life, held a demonstration in York. It was a pretty pathetic show. Despite rumours of it being a 'northern mobilisation', expecting contingents from as far away as Blackpool, only about 150 people turned up. Most of these were middle-aged men. The number of women of child-bearing age couldn't have reached double figures!

The counter demonstration organised by York NAC was small (80 or 90), but lively and effective. The night before, we plastered the route with posters, and walked either side of the silent 'Life' procession chanting, carrying placards, and distributing leaflets. 'Life' were completely demoralised and any impact their demonstration might have had was totally submerged.

# NURSERIES: Pipedream or reality?

CAN YOU get your kid into a nursery? Chances are you can't. According to a London social worker, 'You have to virtually batter your kid before you can get a nursery place.' With the cut-backs in public spending the nurseries aren't likely to be expanded. So as well as fighting the cuts, we'll have to be thinking of alternative ways of providing for the kids.

One way is to fight for a nursery at the workplace. There have been few examples of this except in the colleges. Although these have been organised mainly by students they're important as pointers to the way we can win. And to some of the mistakes that nursery campaigns can easily fall into.

Enfield College in North London now has a nursery. They had been negotiating for years, and they'd got nowhere. So some of the students in the college decided they'd had enough talking. So they occupied the director's office, with kids, who scrawled over papers and generally made a complete nuisance of themselves.

They only occupied it for one day. But that did the trick. The next academic year the college opened a nursery for students, teachers and workers. It's not perfect but it's better than anything the students could have hoped for by negotiating with the college authorities.

But other campaigns haven't always run so smooth. There are lots of traps along the path. Some

of these came out after a similar occupation at the London School of Economics. That college has a terrible record for facilities. No student common room and not even a separate students union building. It also suffers all the problems of being in central London. Lack of space, and students having to live miles from the college.

Like Enfield, LSE students had been campaigning for years to try and get a nursery. All they'd got from the school was a big blank. So the Director's plush office was occupied for a couple of days. A few children were in the occupation at least part of the time.

Campaigners came out feeling confident and hopeful. But then the trouble started. Firstly because the college authorities tried to make a compromise. The students had demanded a ground floor lecture-room near washing and toilet facilities.

The college offered a dingy, rat-infested basement, exposed to the noise and fumes of traffic. Of course the nursery campaigners rejected this but only after long arguments about whether it should be accepted as a temporary measure. There was also the suggestion that students should set up an alternative nursery, run by student volunteers.

Several real problems come out of these experiences. The first is that students involved in the campaign naturally enough want to get a nursery established, for their kids and for the kids of parents who aren't even at the

college yet, and who may not be able to go to college for lack of a nursery. So the temptation is to settle for any nursery no matter how inadequate. That means settling for rotten buildings, smaller numbers in the nurseries and fees which are so high that the only people who can afford it are senior lecturers. Or even the idea of students themselves financing the nursery. Sometimes the idea is argued that students' unions should pay out of the welfare fund. Or else that students should run the nursery on voluntary labour and collections.

Socialists in the colleges have always argued against this type of approach. We argue that the nursery is a basic right in any college. Like the National Union of Students nursery campaign poster says: 'Every college needs a canteen, every college needs a library... every college needs a nursery'. It is not a luxury but a necessity.

And the responsibility for providing a necessity lies with the college authorities. It is not up to students to provide alternative services. Students' unions should be fighting bodies which force the authorities to take up their responsibilities—not charity organisations.

Campaigns can be won. They can be won by fighting for demands and by taking direct action which will really hit the college authorities. But only if we have clear ideas what we're fighting for—and refuse to give up till we win.



Sit-in at the London School of Economics - every college needs a nursery, and we won't give up until we win.

## Iceland - fantastic!

FANTASTIC! On 24 October, Red Socks, the women's liberation movement in Iceland, organised a massive general strike of women workers. Factories, shops, telephone exchanges, newspapers and theatres closed as women came out in their thousands. 25,000 packed into the centre of the capital, Reykjavik for a mass rally.

The strike was almost 100 per cent solid with the country's 60,000 women. Husbands were forced to stay at home as women school teachers struck, and even housewives refused to work. Some men took their children to work with them. And in banks and restaurants a few male bosses

were reduced to tackling the tiring and menial jobs usually reserved for women. Nevertheless, in most places the women's strike led to a complete shut-down.

This was exactly what the women had predicted. They downed tools to show how necessary women's work is to the economy. In Iceland women workers get on average only three-quarters of what men get for the same work. As in our own country there is a lack of nurseries and child care. Women are used as cheap labour. And on the executive of the ASI, the Icelandic equivalent of our Trades Union Congress there is not one woman.

# SPUC: The secret is out...

THEIR POSTER will have a 'Line drawing of a rather appealing baby', out of whose mouth will come the words, 'Abortion, my mum said NO'. They say, cynically, 'this should have a very positive appeal as a slogan. They intend to circulate a half a million such posters, starting the first week of November, through schools and churches, and through the Social Welfare Commission, a Catholic child adoption agency.

Who are they? They are a new co-ordinating umbrella organisation set up by the major anti-abortion groups in the country. They hold their committee meetings at the home of Francis Tulloch, secretary to James White, MP. Their activities will be funded by big hand-outs from SPUC, Life, the Festival of Light and the rest.

One thing emerges loud and clear from the minutes of these meetings. The new line-up means business. They certainly don't think its over yet. They concede that our pro-abortion propaganda around 'a woman's right to choose' has been successful, and they intend to pull out all the stops to get restrictive legislation passed.

We must not let them gain an inch of ground as the autumn-campaigning comes to a head.

## WOMENS VOICE EXCLUSIVE

It was agreed that one way of demonstrating the strength of our grass-roots affiliation would be a widespread distribution of car-window size strikers and other posters.

a. POSTERS. Professor J Scarisbrick showed us four posters they have devised. Typically they show an aborted foetus with the slogan 'Did I kick too hard?' They are suitable for house windows, church porches and poster sites. If you require copies of these posters please could you contact Prof J Scarisbrick at Life.

b. CAR WINDOW STICKERS. Four slogans were agreed at the subsequent sub-committee meetings. They are as follows:

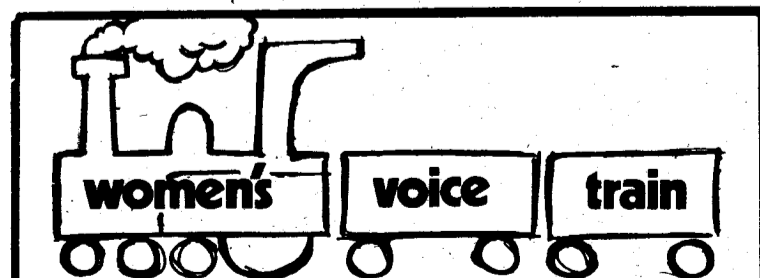
i 'Would you be alive now if abortion had been legal then?' (A large proportion of the population are conceived out of wedlock or are illegitimate.)

ii 'Abortion; a woman's right to kill.' (This is our reply to this successful poster of the pro-abortionists).

iii 'Smash abortion abuses'. (Aimed at profiteering etc)

iv Line drawing of a rather appealing baby. Words emerging from his mouth are: 'Abortion? My mum said NO'. (This should have a very positive appeal as a slogan).

Extract from document of new anti-abortion umbrella group. Document headed 'Consolidating the Anti-Abortion Campaign', signed by Gordon Heald.



WE HAVE booked a train to take us from London to Manchester on Saturday 29 November for the Women's Voice Rally. It will leave Euston at 8am, and then special buses will take everyone to Belle Vue.

After the rally, the buses and train will get us back into London for 9.45pm. The cost—£4 inclusive.

Every London district should make sure one person takes special responsibility for collecting money for the tickets. They have to be paid for in advance. If you know how many you will be wanting let us know now, and

we'll send them off as the money arrives. Subsidise the cost of the rail ticket if you can for women who can't afford £4. DETAILS are now coming in of coaches for the Womens Voice Rally in Manchester GLASGOW: The Information Bureau, George Square, 7am. £4. Contact Linda Jones, IS Books, 041-424 1048.

COVENTRY: Pool Meadow, 8am. Contact Glynis Tew at IS Books, 0203 21662. LIVERPOOL: Mann Island Pierhead, 9am calling at Golden Eagle, Kirkby, 9.30am. Contact Teresa, 051-236 5036. BIRMINGHAM: 8.30am. IS Books.

# WHEN THE TALKING HAS TO STOP

MANY, many women were angered and frustrated by the NAC conference in October. Whilst SPUC were marching, NAC talked.

Or rather the steering committee talked. The rest of the delegates didn't get much of a look in. The agenda was tightly controlled and important decisions slipped through with no right to discussion. We were left after two days with a week of action to be organised (many cities have gone through this already this Autumn) and a national demonstration next March. Unless of course you fancy going to Italy or some other international demonstration.

What's more simple majorities have become clear majorities in National planning meetings—to ensure the minority always wins. If a decision is difficult, you don't win with 50 per cent plus one of the votes, you need an unspecified number. In other words if you get 49 per cent you win. As if the use of telephone votes and postal votes couldn't guarantee that anyway. We've seen it all before.

But at least the Communist Party and International Marxist Group think that was great. The

Morning Star proudly announced on Monday 20 October that the Womens Voice resolution calling for a Steering comming of 20 to be elected direct from conference was defeated. But then the Communist Party never did like running things democratically. After all the rank and file might just take control. The thought of women doing that...

The International Marxist Group surpassed themselves—they put out a leaflet calling for 'Free Abortion on Demand', argued against it in the conference as the wrong slogan, but fail to mention in Red Weekly that the new slogan 'Free abortion on demand—a woman's right to choose' was argued for and won by Womens Voice. It's also nice to know that a handful of women who chain themselves to a railing is praiseworthy (and by the way Womens Voice supports

ALRA right to the hilt on this) whilst 200 going from a conference in support of Womens Voice initiative to a counter-picket of SPUC is substitutionist and disruptive. Neither is it right to mention that the Womens Voice picket was the only voice of protest against the SPUC demonstration.

But if you don't like the facts, you can always distort them.

The notion of the unity of the womens' movement is nonsense. The suffragette women split on the question of class many years ago. One section supported the imperialist first world war. The others became revolutionaries. Politics stay politics whether it's men or women, there is no such thing as 'women's' politics.

The NAC conference was dominated by those committed to working through the Labour Party machine and parliament. Any

sense of action, mass action was missing. There were no spirited feminists even arguing for mass activity for women by women. The only people who argued for a serious orientation to direct action by masses of women were Womens Voice supporters who argued that abortion is a class issue which the working class movement must take on. We have to fight the Catholic Church on the streets as well as in the unions, over abortion as over the control of the Engineering Union where Catholic Action is so influential in supporting reactionary pro-employer policies ie against Equal Pay and the right to work.

Womens Voice will continue to argue in NAC for action and working class politics. We are proud to have picketed SPUC. We are only sorry the hundreds left in the hall did not join us.

We are not afraid of action, nor the challenge of arguing in the working class movement for women's rights. We've only just begun, we've a hell of a way to go, but we've got the fighting spirit. If others feel the same way as us, then join us.



## LETTER

IT IS NOW up to all of us to smash SPUC. They have gone on long enough talking about what they call the right to life of unborn children and not enough about rights of women over their own bodies.

What about the unwanted children that would be born if James White's Bill got passed? Madeleine Simms is right when she says in the New Scientist that women have not got a right to inflict the burden of handicapped children on the state. Why should we overburden the state with unwanted people who take up so much of our resources?

We should now mobilise to get a truly socialist perspective on this issue, and the right of women to choose whether or not to have children.

I was unable to get to the anti-SPUC demo, as it was rather a long way for someone on the SS. I wrote this letter instead and am sending a copy to Socialist Worker as well.

JANE FIELDING  
ABORTION LAW REFORM ASSOCIATION



On the left, Judith Condon moving the Womens Voice resolution for the campaign to involve the whole of the trade union movement. Above, a section of the conference, with Sheila McGregor, editor of Womens Voice, arguing our policy.

# RED BARBARA SELLS OUT ON ABORTION

BARBARA Castle on Monday, 21 October—the Monday following the mass demonstration organised by SPUC—made one of the most disgusting and hypocritical statements ever to the House of Commons on an issue which affects millions of women.

She announced that she was already implementing the recommendations of the Interim Report from the Parliamentary Select Committee on abortion. In other words, the way the Labour government intends to deal with 'abuses' in relation to private abortion clinics is by making abortion more difficult to get—thus opening up the way to the backstreet abortionist. The only way to remove the abuses of private medicine is by expanding the National Health Service not slashing it to ribbons as they are doing at present.

Lady Barbara would do well to recommend the building of special abortion clinics instead of stopping abortion after 20 weeks unless there is resuscitation equipment on hand for the foetus. And if you're black or Irish, watch out. You'll

have to prove you're British as Lady Barbara wants to know how many 'foreign' women are getting abortions over here. If she's so concerned about the exploitation of 'foreign' women in private clinics, I trust she will stop all treatment of 'foreigners' regardless of the complaint. Or does she only care about private abortions not private stomach operations.

She's so concerned that women should have proper 'counselling' before having an abortion. In other words, go through with the pregnancy even if you don't want the baby, and give it away for adoption. After all the market in little white babies is booming.

Even this talk about adequate counselling is rubbish with the cuts announced in the family planning services. The pill—now it's free, now it's not.

It's clear that Barbara Castle and her kind have capitulated right down the line on the question of abortion. The real abuse—that abortions are almost impossible to get on the NHS because of delays, and the whims of individual doctors,

will not be dealt with at all. Instead, the anti-abortion Select Committee will be reappointed to carry on where James White left off. In a few months time there will be proposals before the House suggesting even tighter restrictions on the availability of abortion. The Labour government has sold out—again—to the right wing.

Our responsibility is clear: Womens Voice supporters must argue within NAC for a lobby of parliament when the reappointment of the Select Committee is being discussed in the House of Commons—at the beginning of December.

Womens Voice groups should organise pickets of all the MPs on the old Select Committee. Make our anger heard. Then early in 1976 we should go for a massive demonstration against the proposals the new Select Committee comes up with. We can still stop the Catholic Church and the Labour government if we organise the weight of the working class now. Act on the Womens Voice resolution passed at the NAC conference and start building amongst women workers now.