

womens voice

MONTHLY PAPER OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST WOMEN

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THE HORRIFIC TOLL

A report from the research organisation Worldwatch Institute has revealed the horrific toll of suffering in those countries with restrictive abortion laws, where self-induced and backstreet abortion is the way of life - and death - for thousands of women.

"Morbidity and mortality are extremely high" it states, "and impose a heavy burden on existing health facilities for 'medical salvage' procedures".

"The largest maternity hospital in Bogota, Columbia, devotes a **FULL HALF** of its beds to cases arising from complications of illegally induced abortions; and Cairo University Hospital finds 50% (half) of its maternity budget consumed by such cases."



What does the Pope have to say in the face of such facts?

Only that contraception is against god's will, and abortion along with masturbation and sex outside marriage, is sin.

The extent of suffering, all over the world, throughout recorded history, of women faced with unwanted pregnancy will never, can never, finally be calculated. All we can do now is to stand and fight those who would seek to add to the toll. We have had enough of your

bigotry, your cruelty and your inhumanity. If it had been up to you we would never even have had the most basic forms of contraception. Every gain that women have made has been in spite of your ideas, your money, your churches, and your armies.

By opposing us on this issue you are hastening the day when we break your power, your grip on the world, for ever.

NO RETURN TO BACKSTREET ABORTION

Build a mass campaign!

There is no way to opt out of the abortion argument. There is still no fool-proof contraceptive, safe for all women.

Imagine you're pregnant. There may be 100 reasons why you can't or don't want to have a child at this point in your life. The only real choice is between: abortion by knitting needle, gin or in some dirty, back-street 'clinic'; or abortion in a national

health hospital or out-patient clinic, free and safe.

If there were any other options, millions of women would not have risked their lives in the past and in the present by resorting to abortion in dangerous and inhumane conditions.

Every woman has the right to choose when and if she will have children. Why should Bishops, Members of Parliament, judges or anyone else think they have the right to make that decision for her. They don't have to live with the consequences.

Who will suffer most from restrictive abortion laws? Women without the money to pay for safe private abortions in luxurious Harley Street clinics - working class women again.

The 1967 Abortion Act was a big step towards legalising our right to free abortion on demand. It was no longer a criminal offence to have or perform an abortion. For the first time the right to an abortion on social grounds was recognised. Now there is a real danger that these gains will be lost.

March

The anti-abortionists have been organising and, finally, in 1975 found a good stooge in James White M.P. His attempt to restrict our access to abortion facilities has fallen. But make no mistake about it, the present Select Committee was reconvened to consider 'matters contained in the James White Abortion (Amendment) Bill. Who can we trust to fight for our right? Not the Labour Party, not the Conservative Party, not the M.P.'s (even the few women among them) are not up to it. **There's no future for the National Abortion Campaign** becoming another Parliamentary pressure group.

That's the lesson that comes over loud and clear from the experience of the last few

months.

Now we're taking to the streets again. As Womens Voice has consistently said we must. Once again we have to turn our efforts to building a mass active, campaign.

We've got our resolutions passed by many unions and by the Trades Union Congress. But we know that resolutions are not enough. We know that trade union leaders are not interested in waging war on James White any more than on prices, or against unemployment. At the moment all they are interested in is saving the Labour government at all costs.

Build

The only way those resolutions are going to mean anything is if we use them to go to women and men on the shop floor and build our support from there.

In this campaign, as in fighting welfare cuts, and in fighting for the right to work, Women's Voice stands for direct action to win the day. And for a democratically organised fight back, involving rank and file trade unionists, housewives and students. You only beat people like Leo Abse by showing you have power and numbers. He will never in a thousand years be won over by polite argument in pannelled rooms.



THEY'RE MARCHING FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK

REPORT AND PICTURES

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All Out April 3rd

Demonstration
All Out Saturday April 3rd.
Assemble Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, 1.30pm.
No return to Backstreet Abortion!
Free Abortion on demand! - A Woman's Right to Choose!

DON'T BLIGHT OUR WHITES

Over 100 women marched to Leeds Civic Hall last Wednesday to protest about the council's threat to close 3 of the city's wash-houses. With brilliant white knickers hung over some of the placards, they were there to tell the councillors that the wash-house was one service that they weren't prepared to see cut.

The wash-houses have been in use since the beginning of the century and not only do they ensure a cheaper, cleaner, quicker wash, but also a community spirit has grown up around them. Elderly women particularly rely on them as a meeting place.

The council are arguing that the wash-houses are subsidised by £700 a week and so aren't viable; but as the placards on the demonstration pointed out, that's nothing in comparison to the amount which is frequently spent

on lunches and banquets for the councillors. As one woman of 81 told Womens Voice after sitting in the gallery at the Council finance meeting - "If they only ran the city's finances the way we ran our homes, they wouldn't be in this mess now!"

Despite the rantings of Tory councillors about the wash-houses only being "gossip-shops" the wash-house women won the day. The move to close the wash-houses was defeated and they've been given a reprieve while further economies are looked into.



NURSERIES Action speaks louder than words

Education cuts hit in all sorts of ways which might not seem obvious at first. One of those ways in the higher education sector - is the cut-back in nursery provision for students and staff in colleges. These provisions have always been far from adequate - and very often non-existent. So even before the cuts were introduced, the National Union of Students was committed to a campaign of obtaining nurseries in every college.

Some small successes have been achieved over the years. But the cuts are now meaning that even the gains made are being taken away again by the authorities. This has provoked a response from students and staff at many colleges, such as Middlesex Polytechnic. Two years ago students and teachers fought to get a nursery for the children on campus. After a militant campaign the demand was won. But now the fees are so high that only the most senior lecturers would be able to afford them - at nearly £5 a day!

Sit-in

So now the nursery is threatened with closure - because no-one can afford to use it. Last month the students responded by occupying for a week over that and other cutbacks.

This occupation was one of several in campaigns to get nurseries. North East London Polytechnic students sat in their principals office - with some children - and stayed there for 2 days - despite police being called.

In Bristol University the 2 day occupation produced a firm commitment from the authorities for a nursery next academic year - a real victory for the students. And their success encouraged students at Exeter University a week later to stage a similar occupation - of their Vice Chancellors office.

All these actions have strengthened the nursery campaigns and left the students involved feeling confident of winning their demands.

They show that this sort of direct action can win demands and is ten times more useful than years of negotiations.

Although these actions were seen as part of a national campaign, there was predictably little support from the NUS and its executive member responsible for the women's campaign - Penny Cooper, who seemed to know little and care less about the occupations. **If the fight is to continue - it can't rely on people like her, but should try to link militants involved in the campaign with one another in an attempt to build a national fight.**

They must think you print the money yourself

One of the major things which causes a lot of worry to women is prices. Prices of food, clothes, etc.

Let's take food first. I know from my own experience that before you go out of the street door, you're worried sick about:

"I wonder if I've got enough money to buy a bit of meat for Sunday."
 "I'll have to cut down on the amount of potatoes I buy 'cause they're so expensive," or
 "I won't be able to buy the kids their special weekend treat - a nice cake or some biscuits that they look forward to. I can't afford to buy fruit anymore."

The list is endless. Therefore, before you even get to the shops to do the weekend shopping, it is even more of a bind than usual. More often than not, I end up buying a steak and kidney pie or the pre-packed, very small chops (that are supposed to be used for stews).

Although there's more fat and bone than meat, you get about 8-10 of them, and it fills the plate more so you don't feel so guilty about not having much of a good 'Sunday dinner'. It's amazing how WE always feel guilty about not being able to buy a leg of lamb or a joint of meat. And yet we're not to blame at all! That's just one of the indoctrinations that are pounded into our heads, that if we can't look after our families properly i.e. good, balanced diet we are failures as wives and mothers. NOTHING is ever said about low incomes and NOTHING about rising prices to cope with. Why not?

There is another thing that is heartbreaking about doing the shopping. That's when you take the kids to the shops. After that you're back home with the kids and you're wondering how you're going to get them to school while you go out. The kids are crying and



Picture: Angela Phillips (L.F.)

Shall it be an apple or an orange this week?

football, or he's got his feet up in front of the T.V. watching 'his' sports programmes, which the kids would spoil for him if we didnt take them.

This is another indoctrination. Women are trained that it's their place to do the shopping, cooking, cleaning, ironing, etc. 7 days a week. It's a man's place to work 5 days a week, and evenings and weekends are for relaxing and doing what they like while the women runs round them.

The added responsibility of taking kids shopping with you is so great. They cry and nag you silly for a pair of shoes that their friend's got:

"They're really nice mum, please can I have a pair."

Their faces light up, hoping that you're going to come out with the answer they want to hear. But instead it's the same old story of

"I'm sorry, I just can't afford them, they're too much money."

The same applies for clothes. The kids go crazy if you can't afford to buy them a nice thing or

anything else they want. They seem to think you print the money yourself.

And what about us? What about when we want something for our 7 day week. It's amazing how when we do 7 days, 7 bloody days work, we don't even get 'pocket money'. If we need something, we just hope and pray that there's enough left out of the housekeeping money, but how often is that? Is there ever? It gets to the point

COVENTRY: THE PARTY'S OVER

There are now over 17,000 workers on the dole in Coventry, and each week sees more jobs being axed. Over the past few months the national press and T.V. have focussed their attention on the town because of a bye-election.

The Labour government suddenly needed the votes of Coventry's workers to save its skin.

In zooms Geoffrey Robinson, ex-boss of Jaguar, driving, yes, a jaguar, to tour the factories.

where you have to break into the rent money to buy the kids the things they need, break into the other bills and try to spin things out a bit more. And where does that leave you? **WORRIED AGAIN.** Not this time about the necessities like food and clothing but about the bills. So we're in a vicious circle. A circle that has to be broken. But how? Let's put our heads together, ALL of us, write to Womens' Voice about your own experiences, how do you cope, who do you share your worries with. We can join Womens' Voice groups. I'd love to meet more women who share the same problems and worries as me, I'd love to talk to you. It's such a good feeling to realise you're not on your own, there is some-one who wants to listen to you. Without each other we can't do anything about our situation. I don't know about you but I'm fed up with the **WHOLE BLOODY DEAL** we've got.

JEAN CLARK

Meanwhile in the Tory corner is right-wing, Old Etonian, Jonathan Guinness, well-heeled, and frothing at the head. Known for racism and razor-blades.

As if that wasn't enough, here come the big boys. In slips Maggie Thatcher into town to chat to the party faithfuls. And big-hearted Cyril Smith, riding in a bus. (Well, imagine him in a mini).

Much more sinister, The National Party and their more openly fascist counterpart, The National Front, seized on the chance to

GLENNIS TEW

WHY IS LABOUR ACTING TORY?

Denis Healey, Labour's Chancellor of the Exchequer, has just announced the most savage cuts in the Welfare State that this country has ever seen - £3,000 million over the next four years. Whatever happened to the Labour Party vision of a full Welfare State, no unemployment and a re-distribution of wealth in favour of the working class? The 1945-50 Labour Government began moving in this direction - this government is busy dismantling its inheritance.

In 1945 Labour won a landslide victory in the elections. The working class, sick of war and sacrifice, wanted to see the last of the slumps and depressions they'd suffered in the thirties. As Quentin Hogg, now Lord Hailsham, put it at the time: "If we don't give them social reform, they'll give us social revolution".

The ruling class realised, nervously, that with workers on the move, some reforms would have to be granted.

The picture today is totally different. The small minority who control the wealth, who make the decisions that determine whether we have a job, a home or a living wage, is feeling the pinch. Their profits, earned for them by us, have been suffering recently. How are they going to push those profits back up? By attacking our wages, jobs and welfare services. And how is

the Labour Government reacting? By doing a better job of 're-distributing wealth' than any government the big business men have ever seen. £3,000 million off public expenditure, mostly off welfare services. £1,500 million to big business by cutting its tax bill.

Betray

David Malbert reported in the London Evening Standard that his City business friends, though of course opposed to Labour when they first came in, have

now quite come round to the idea. They're doing such a wonderful job.

What's gone wrong? Has Labour forgotten his own Party's Constitution? (It does exist and does contain aims which might lead you to think that Labour is committed to protecting working class interests). The Labour Party is committed to one thing, above all else: staying in power, - and putting the economy 'to rights' so that it can reform it. Has Harold also forgotten that capitalism is a system run in the

interest of the ruling class and a time of economic crisis means reducing working class living standards? He certainly hasn't forgotten that reforms must wait until profits are booming.

A lot of people, agreeing that there's not much hope from the 'official' Labour Party, look to the Labour lefts and the TUC for a fight back against these blatantly anti-working class policies. Such people are beginning to feel the disappointment of their own mistake. For all their fine words, the Wedgewood Benns and Jack Jones are trapped in the same parliamentary illusions as Wilson, Healey & Co. Liberal MP, Cyril Smith's

revelations of the 'cosy arrangements' in Parliament - of how the Tories make sure enough of their MPs are away so that Labour won't be defeated, are all part of this. It's not just that Parliamentary 'democracy' is a sham. It's also that the Tories don't want Labour out. Labour can buy off the TUC so much more effectively than the Tories.

If the only alternatives you can see are a Labour or a Tory government then, yes, a Labour government is preferable. Maggie Thatcher would be that much more vicious than Harold. That's why the 'left' leaders MP's and trade union leaders have to keep on selling us all out - just to make sure that the preferable alternative, a Labour government, stays in.

There is no way to achieve socialism through Parliament. The Labour lefts and the TUC have exposed their impotence. They are forced by the real powers-that-be to be as reactionary and as anti-working class as any Tory. The only way to 'redistribute wealth' in favour of the working class is by completely transforming the basis on which society is organised.

Not until society is run by us and for us will the vision of socialism (even the limited vision the Labour Party stood for) become a reality. This transformation can only be brought about by us - the workers, women and men, acting together to build a new life.

SO IT'S DOWN TO US



'Stop the Cuts - Save Jobs' demonstration in Birmingham

Picture: Dave Evans (IFL)



HOW CAN I KEEP MY SHOPPING BILLS DOWN?

By buying things that don't have the Price Check symbol on them. Which should be easy - very few of the things you'd want to buy are included anyway. There's hardly any food items, electricity is excluded, so are stamps and fares. But if you should want a Swiss army knife, or a tent - and with housing being what it is you never know when you might need a tent - well don't buy one with the red triangle on.

Why? Well, before releasing the magic triangles on an unsuspecting public, Shirley Williams went around all the manufacturers, asking them which of their products *wouldn't* be going up in price. And then she slapped on a Price Check tag.

Which is why you won't find much food in the scheme.

As we all know, food is going to cost a lot more soon - 8p a pound on butter, 4-6p a pound on cheese and 1p a pint on milk for starters. Electricity will slide up another 11% or so without anyone noticing until the next bill comes, and as for bus fares...

So when you're shopping, remember that the red triangle shows what won't go up, and no red triangle shows what will. So hurry, hurry, buy now while stocks last....

Anna Paczuska on why we need a rank and file movement

"When you are fighting unemployment, you can't rely on the official union structure. You've got to take the initiative yourself and try to get the support of other trade unionists" said June Young. June an unemployed Bristol schoolteacher with two children is going to join the Right to Work March, backed by sponsorships from rank and file trade unionists working in education. She is going because she has decided that the only way she can effectively fight for a job and defend her interests as housewife and mother, is to join with other rank and file trade unionists to try to force trade unions to fight in the interests of the membership.

Surely the one thing a unionised worker can expect is that her union will automatically defend her interests?

In theory that's the case. Trade unions are organisations formed to defend the interests of workers against the employers. But in practice there are conflicts between the leadership and the membership. These occur because conditions for union leaders are vastly different from their members. Many are elected or even appointed for life and are not answerable to their membership. They are much better paid than their members. They are far removed from

the influence of the office or shop-floor.

Most trade union leaders declare themselves in favour of equal pay and equal rights for women. Thousands of trade union resolutions bear testimony to this. Yet although unemployment is rising twice as fast among women as among men, and employers are using the situation to keep wages low and deny women equal pay - not one trade union leader has initiated any action to defend women's wages or jobs.

In fact just the opposite! Jack Jones is leader of the Transport and General Workers Union which has a large number of women members. In 1968 he thundered: "I believe in getting what you can on the basis of organised strength. The workers of this country, and this includes women, should have a good standard of life for 35 hours work and no overtime".

Now faced with unemployment rising twice as fast among women as among men, and employers are using the situation to keep wages low and deny women equal pay - not one trade union leader has initiated any action to defend women's wages or jobs.

So, women up and down the country have taken action them-

selves. Nurses in Macclesfield and Carlisle went on strike in defence of jobs. In Glasgow, South Wales, Sheffield, and Derby, women workers have been fighting for equal pay.

What emerges from these actions is that where women gain the support of other workers, they are successful. Where isolated they lose.

And if the unions are to be effective weapons in the hands of workers, and workers are to successfully defend jobs and wages we need to organise more unity and stronger links between workers in the unions. We need a united campaign for democratic control of the unions so we can force the

trade union leaders to act on our behalf. We need to build a rank and file movement that will overcome all the divisions between men and women workers and fight equally for all jobs - part time and full time men's and women's. We need a movement that will fight for the right of all women to work. We need a movement that will as a matter of course take initiatives like that taken by women workers at AB metals in Abercynon who raised a collection and sent a delegation with tea and food to a nearby factory which had been occupied in defence of jobs. Above all, we need a movement that will defend every single job of every single worker.

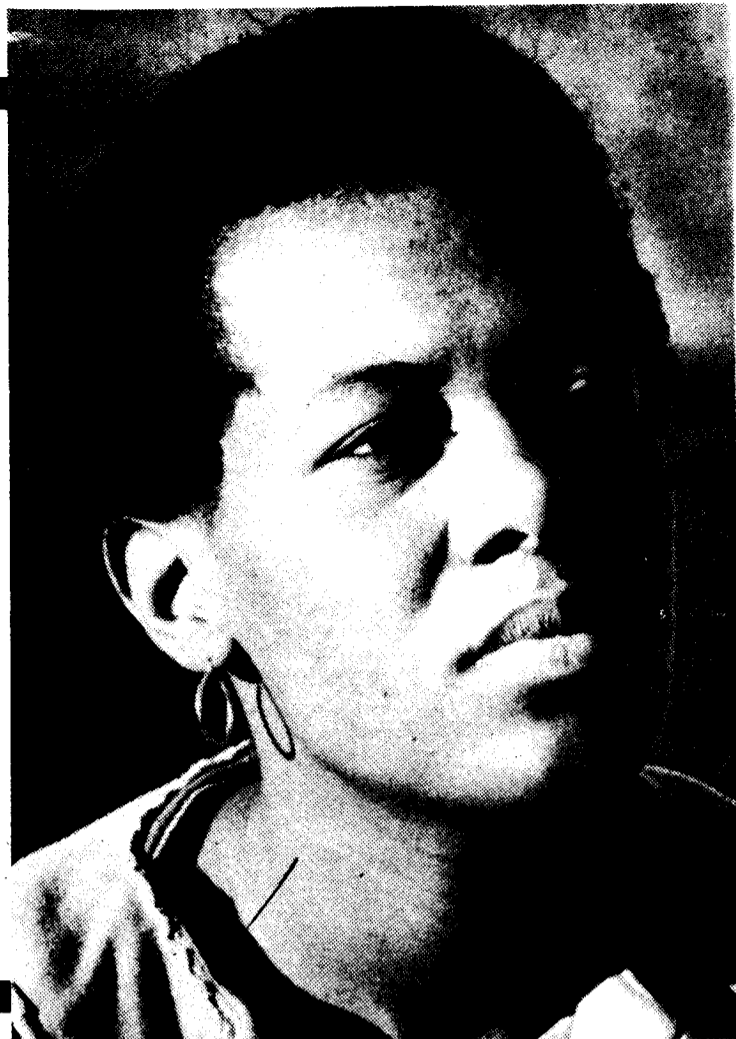
WHEN THE PRAYING HAD TO STOP

You may have seen posters up outside churches at the beginning of the month advertising "Women's Prayer Meeting". The posters were usually in the form of a prayer: "Dear God, please help us to pray for our country and our people. Amen." The posters were usually in the form of a prayer: "Dear God, please help us to pray for our country and our people. Amen."

You see, the prayers this year were composed by South American women whose main oppression has been the fact that they are women. The prayers were usually in the form of a prayer: "Dear God, please help us to pray for our country and our people. Amen."

middle-class solace that usually gets dished up from our pulpits in sermons. The prayers were usually in the form of a prayer: "Dear God, please help us to pray for our country and our people. Amen."

I've always thought black women are real strong



Bobbi Harrison is a young black woman who lives in Chicago, U.S.A. She has been a member of the International Socialists for about a year.

Women's Voice was especially pleased to interview her recently to ask her how she felt as a black woman socialist in a predominantly white organisation, and how I.S. is breaking down the barriers which in the past have held back black and white militants from joining together in their fight against racialism.

Bobbi has two children, and at the time of talking to us she was expecting her third.

"I've always had the feeling black women are real strong. In the U.S. we've always had to struggle and fight just to live, right from the days when we were slaves being raped and exploited by the white masters.

There was a time, a bad time, when black women in this country found it easier to get work than black men. We were always wanted for the shit jobs

the scrubbing and serving. So black men always felt super-threatened. They were treated like dirt by the white bosses. So when they came home to their families they wanted to be dominant. But black women had the regular jobs, they took the strong role, leading in the family.

Now in the sixties, it became easier for black men to get jobs, for instance in the auto plants. And when Black Power came along the men thought they were somebody. It made them feel they were as much a man as any white man. They had identity. The black movement uplifted them and made them feel like humans;

I was in the Panthers. But I always thought there was something wrong there. I ran into a few whites who wanted to join but they couldn't. It didn't fight racism. It alienated us from the fight against racism because we were separated. The movement here in the sixties burnt out a lot of blacks and made them want to hide.

But then, what point in joining an all-white political organisation? When I joined I.S. that's what it seemed like, I found so few blacks inside. I found we had to fight racist ideas inside the organisation as well as at work in the plants, we had to fight to get it taken seriously.

What really pulled me into I.S. was I helped to bring together a rank and file auto workers group. It gave me a real feel for the rank and file work the I.S. was doing. I saw they were serious, doing the work from scratch. Before I only saw them on demonstrations the way a lot of people do.

Now I find it's not real hard to be a black woman in the organisation. And we've been able to recruit black men. But still not black women. Most of them work and then they get home and they have all the work at home to do. We're trying to gear our talks and our work towards them.

Sometimes it's hard for white women comrades to talk to black men about politics and about bringing their wives round to meetings. But they just have to get in there, not be shy, and say, "It's your duty to introduce me to these people".

One guy I know, his wife just wonders where he's going when he goes to meetings. These white women who come around talking about politics seem like loose women, you know, taking their husbands off to "meetings" they don't know where. Unless we can really get through to the black women then we'll really lose out. The black men will have to choose between their wife or politics, unless the men and women get involved equally, to help each other together. The black family is different. Black women feel more threatened.

Two new black members, one steel worker and his brother just out of the navy, came to our meeting about women last night. It really made them think. They'd never thought about sexism before.

Then not long ago we showed that film "Blow for Blow" here in Chicago. You know it's a French film about some women workers who occupy their factory, and lock up the boss in his office. You see their husbands, they get left at home trying to feed the babies, they don't know how to do anything. I thought that film was really terrific. I gave a talk and we recruited five people to I.S. there.

EQUAL PAY VICTORIES...

Women workers in Glasgow are winning all down the line. With the help of their brothers on the shop floor, Equal Pay is being made a reality despite management's using every trick in the book to avoid it. There have been three strikes in the area over the last few weeks. Two have been clear victories, and at the third they're still out and fighting.

★★

At the Wheway Watson factory, workers have won

a £5 to £7 increase. The wages of the women workers have now been brought into line with the shop-floor workers in the factory. The women picketed every day, and turned back most of the deliveries. A number of the men on the shop-floor had been laid off because they refused to handle blacked goods. Wheway Watson make pit gear, and support from the National Union of Miners was an important factor in their victory. They've won Equal Pay but only by determined strike action.

★★

At Magnetic and Electrical Alloys in Hamilton, women workers have won a £7 to £14 increase.

Major wage differences existed between female staff in MEA and female staff at another BICC plant Telcon, a few miles away. The Telcon workers gave financial and moral support to the MEA strikers. The strikers also had the backing of the shop-floor workers, who refused to handle any goods which got through the picket.

★★

The strike at Cockburn's Valves factory in Hillington Estate is still going on. The 42 AUEW/TASS members say they will not go back until the company pays the women their money.

Management have refused to budge, and have done nothing except send the strikers a letter telling them to go back to work.

Support

The dispute arose because men were getting up to £20 a

.. AND PITFALLS

'We've won. We've morally won. For the first time we are united.' This is what Tom Evans, AUEW District Secretary told a mass meeting of GEC Treforest workers on Friday, 5th. March. And in the same breath he persuaded the strikers, 400 women and 28 men, to return to work after being out for 5 weeks.

The strike was yet another over equal pay. The women workers were striking for a £3.45 rise to give them the full male semi-skilled rate.

After 4 weeks outside the gates they were offered £2.50 which the union District Committee urged the strikers to accept, and to hell with the principle. This would bring the women's pay up to grade C, the lowest grade for semi-skilled men.

Sell-out

At a mass meeting, the strikers rejected the £2.50. In the words of one young striker, 'It's £3.45 or nothing. We're not going back now.' Many women were angered at this turn-about by their union officials - angered also at the non-appearance of strike pay. Some of the women made their feelings clear: 'If

Tom Evans sells us out, we'll break his bloody neck.'

Yet within a week, the local AUEW officials were insisting that £2.50 was all they could expect, and the strike was over. Why? How had the women's solidarity been broken? Quite simply by the threat of redundancies. Evans told last week's mass meeting about GEC's planned redundancy programme: 500 redundancies in Scotland, 1,150 in the North East, 600 in Coventry as well as one factory being closed down all together. Then came the bomb-shell. 95 jobs to go in Treforest. It was with this that he gained acceptance of the £2.50. He was doing GEC's job for them.

Aim

One of the lessons learnt at Treforest was that you can't beat a massive multi-national combine like GEC by sitting back and waiting for the 'professional' negotiators on the union side to do it for you. You've got to do it for yourselves, united. That's the way to win.

BABS JAMES (CARDIFF)

What do you think of the Equal Pay Act so far?

RUBBISH!

Anne Hunt working for a factory dealing with wallpaper sales gets much less than the man working beside her who deals with paint. She took her fight to court... the first woman in Britain to do so. She lost.

Violet Pittam who checks the work of quantity surveyors at the Royal Ordnance Depot, Bicester, took her equal pay claim to a Birmingham industrial tribunal. All she asked was to get the same as the lowest paid men working at the same depot. But the tribunal said no one did the same work as her, and upheld the system of fixing her rate as a percentage of the labourers' rate.

LETTERS

GREETINGS FROM AMERICA

The International Socialists US wishes to send you best greetings for March 8th. International Women's Day.

This year, working women in the US have been involved in important struggles in the rank and file movement and in the fight against racism.

In January an organisation called Women Against Racism (WAR) was formed in Detroit. It organises in support of busing, the policy which has black and white children taken to schools outside their immediate neighbourhood in an effort to integrate education. It also fights to defeat racist organising and stands for full social, political and economic equality for minority peoples.

SUPPORT

Women Against Racism has held several successful demonstrations against anti-busing and a racist organisation called Mothers Alert Detroit (MAD); we believe we were responsible for the lack of violence against school children when busing came to Detroit.

In Louisville, Kentucky, where we have already seen racist mobs attacking school children, Women Against Racism will be inaugurated this Saturday March 6th.

Another area of women's activity has been in the key unions and industries in the United States. This March 31st, the contract for the teamsters (truck-drivers) union—the largest and most powerful union in the world—expires. A rank and file organisation, called



Anne Mackie - editor of the US truck drivers' rank and file paper, and a truck driver herself.

Teamsters for a Decent Contract, has been formed, and women have been involved in it from the beginning.

Also in the Teamsters Union, a movement called UPSurge has been set up, with its own rank and file newspaper, for workers in a nationwide company called United Parcel Service. UPS employs 70,000 teamsters and the newspaper UPSurge already has a circulation of

15,000. You will be interested to hear that the editor of this paper is a woman truck driver, and women are leaders in all forms of rank and file activity.

In both the United Auto Workers (car workers) and in the Communications Workers of America (telephone workers), women are leaders in the rank and file groups, and involving other women in the struggle.

We believe that as the economic crisis gets worse, more women will start to fight back.

Finally we send our greetings for we know about your work in involving women in the struggle. We hope the Right to Work march from Manchester to London is a great success, as well as the International Women's Day march.

In solidarity and sisterhood,
Barbara Winslow
International Socialists Women's
Organiser, US.

the patients for the night. Through the night general nursing duties are carried out.

In the morning dirty beds are changed and the patients are cleaned up. She cooks the breakfast, feeds the helpless patients, cleans away the trays, empties the commodes, and then hands over to the day staff nurse at 8.30 a.m.

Extra

All that for an average wage of 60p an hour. On Saturday nights we get an extra 5p an hour as the boss terms these as 'unsociable hours'. There are different hourly rates for some workers even though we all do the same work. The work force—being shift workers and being split in different houses—have very little communication with each other. Any approach to other nurses is met with apprehension because of the fear that they may lose their jobs, especially as the type of employment open to working class women with husbands and children is getting more and more difficult to find.

Reading about other women's jobs and what they're doing at work and at home in 'Womens Voice' cheers me up. It makes me feel I'm not the only one!

PEGGY EAGLE,
KENT.

You cheer me up!

Dear Womens Voice,

I've never written anything before, and I find it difficult putting words on paper. But when I was working Monday night I felt really pissed off and angry about having to work nights to make money, so I started to write about where I work:

I am a night worker. I work as an auxiliary in a private nursing home. The fees are £75 a week for a single room and £55 for sharing a room with up to three others. I won't bother to mention the was in which these old people are exploited. Given that they can afford such high fees every week till they die, they surely must have done some exploiting themselves in their better days.

Concern

Each nurse has one house to herself with about 13 patients. A lot of old people are confused, a lot of old people are confused, bed-ridden and incontinent. There is no help with the lifting of heavy patients, who slip down, or fall out of their beds. No barrier gowns to protect the uniform you have to provide yourself, when changing beds. When the nurse comes on duty at 8.30 p.m. she makes the drinks, then washes up. She prepares the breakfast trays for the morning, and after administering any drugs, settles

Well, International Socialists, do you

or don't you?

Dear Womens Voice,

I have just received my new IS membership card which states: 'All members shall be members of an appropriate trade union.' Comrades I am 'A Housewife'. I have no trade union. Does this preclude me as a member of IS?

In Kath Ennis' pamphlet, 'Women Fight Back', she says that housewives are not a separate issue, with separate problems from the working class. But they are. They are part of production only through their husband, which reduces them to chattels once more.

Women who work are once more part of the community, of the union, of the workers' fight. But the housewife is set apart. What union can I join? What trade union work can I undertake? Am I classified as employed or unemployed? Can I join the Rank and File movement?

This letter is not intended as criticism, but is genuinely a plea for direct help and a clear IS line.

Fraternally,
Eunice Sharples
Darlington

WOMEN'S VOICE REPLIES:

Of course we are very glad to have you join IS!

We in IS believe that only the mass of workers can liberate themselves from wage slavery and bring into being a socialist society. No one else can do it—only working class men and women, through their own activity, united together.

Obviously some groups of workers who are stronger and better organised will take the lead. Some have the extra power of working in those key industries which, when they stop production, quickly bring the bosses to their knees. Remember the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974 which defeated the Tory government. Fantastic!

But we don't believe this means other socialists such as yourself should sit on the sidelines, or just make the tea, as in some political parties! Far from it. That is a sure way not to learn and develop your organising, speaking and writing skills.

BUILD

Remember how housewives took to the streets in Russia in 1917, demanding bread, and precipitated the revolution. There have been several cases in history where housewives have been right at the front of the struggle—in spite of all the difficulties of organising together.

At the same time, revolutionary socialists cannot afford to be romantic. We have to be very practical, and put in our effort

where it can have the best result.

Right now there should be a Right to Work committee in your home town—if there isn't one already there should be soon. They will be needing all the support and help they can get. There are thousands of women as well as men unemployed in your area.

WORK

Housewives often have an hour or two they can make free one morning in the week to go and contact unemployed workers at the dole. Or to go to the factory gates at lunch time and talk to women workers about the need to fight the anti-abortionists. There may also be a local campaign against welfare and education cuts for you to be involved in. And finally we mustn't forget selling Socialist Worker and Womens Voice.

We hope Womens Voice is of help to inspire other women like you—whether in paid work or not—to join with us and dump this crazy system once and for all. That's the one and only reason we're here for.

Oh, yes! If there is no appropriate union for you to join, for instance if you are a housewife or a retired worker, then obviously that's alright. As you will see on your membership card, housewives, pensioners, unemployed workers and strikers also pay a reduced sub. You certainly can join the Right to Work Campaign too.

IT'S THE FAT PROFITS THAT ARE UGLY..

Dear Womens Voice,

I thought it was a pity that your article on slimming (Feb. issue) did not make clear the real reason why women worry about their weight. The article says 'why is slimming by and large a female obsession - you see some nasty sights in trunks on the beach too'. Why should a fat person be a nasty sight? Fat people of either sex are 'unattractive' purely because we have been conditioned to see them as such.

And this conditioning takes place because it means big money - slimming foods for fat people, hair transplants for balding people, muscle building courses for skinny people - all make big money and all play on our feelings of inferiority.

It is true that women are more oppressed by the need to make themselves 'attractive' but men are now catching up in these stakes. The advertising, cosmetic and other bosses would like us all to feel oppressed about our appearance

because that makes for bigger profits - and a more obedient workforce, because people who feel inferior are not so ready to fight back.

So it is not enough to educate men that women should be able to dress and look as they want to look, and vice versa - that no one should feel bad about feeling fat, thin or anything else. We have to destroy the whole system in which a minority decides what is attractive and what is not - the system is called Capitalism and it condemns millions to misery because they are labelled 'unattractive'. It is one more reason why it should be destroyed - one more reason why I am in I.S.

GORDON DAVIE
WALTHAM FOREST I.S.

FUND

Thanks to your efforts and the money you have sent us, Women's Voice has been able to send £98 to the Right to Work Campaign. Thank you!

Picture John Sturrock Report



Three women were ejected from the House of Commons during the debate. They were kept in the cells until well after the vote had been taken.

Clowns, villains and corpses

Last month 313 MP's voted overwhelmingly to reappoint the parliamentary select committee examining James White's anti-abortion proposals.

During the debate, on what they tell us is a highly serious and crucial moral question, there were never more than 50 of the noble members present to hear the argument. I watched them from Strangers' Gallery - grey corpse-like figures, draped along the benches, feet on the table, dozing fitfully and chatting among themselves.

Enter Jill Knight, radiantly ghastly as ever. "None of the allegations in the book 'Babies for Burning' have been disproved. ...those who support quicky lunch-time abortions also tend to support the Soviet Union."

That's where it all started didn't it?"

A cry of "Rubbish"! from the gallery. A prowling bouncer in fancy dress removes the offender.

Next Andrew Bowden, Supporter of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, and member of the Select Committee. Adopting a sinister tone, he said, "We reject the idea of abortion for social convenience; there are too many girls under 16 getting abortions; we must ask ourselves why is this happening?"

Up pops James White, chief clown and villain. "E...er, at no time did Babies for Burning influence me in any way". He's on record as saying it was his main source of information.

Patrick Jenkin took up the pose of a moderate. He saved his

concern for the handful of doctors opposed to abortion. Puffing himself up with pride and self-importance, he declaimed "Freedom of conscience is the very stuff of liberty," then almost took a bow. But not freedom of conscience for women of course.

Spectacle was rapidly turning to black comedy.

Abse rose to his feet. Leo (a woman's friend) Abse, the ringmaster. The only person alive to have heard the (non-existent) Litchfield tapes.

"Some women think motherhood a curse. That is not the opinion of this house. Motherhood is a blessing, not a curse!" Official Abse just about sums up what the campaign is all about.

What a lunacy to think of these people, defenders of the status quo, backed to the hilt by the male dominated reactionary Church, - much of whose history could be written in blood - telling us what we must do with our own bodies. Not only that, but what we must feel about giving birth and nurturing a child. As a mother of two, I can say that Abse and his mob are a million light years away from the experience of motherhood.

Controlling our own bodies is the first step in controlling our own lives - something which I feel sure has not been lost on the anti-abortion lobby.

One thing the abortion campaign has done is that many women have begun for the first time to question and put into words the source of their oppression in a political way. Before we only struggled in isolation. We must now collectivise our discontent. It has nothing to do with individual failings as we have been led to believe so long, but it has its basis in the fabric of our society.

SUE BRIGGS

Notices and meetings

Saturday March 20th
11am. Assemble Shepherd's Bush Green for the last stage of the Right to Work March, going to the Albert Hall.

1.30pm Protest Rally to demand the Right to Work. The Royal Albert Hall, London (nearest tube, South Kensington)

Creche facilities at the Imperial College Students' Union opposite the Albert Hall.

March 20th-27th is a week of action for the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC). Make sure that you are out opposing them.
* Picket their demonstrations.
* Organise trade union support and delegations for the pickets, remembering the TUC motion supporting abortion on request.
* Deface their posters.
* Answer all their letters in local papers

April 3rd. National Abortion Campaign Demonstration.
All out. Assemble 1.30pm. Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park. Bring local Womens Voice banners for our contingent on this very important demonstration.

April 10th and 11th
National Working Women's Charter Conference at the Lanchester Polytechnic, Coventry. Delegates £1.50. Observers £1.00. Visitors 50p per day.

HACKNEY NURSERY CAMPAIGN MOTHER'S DAY DEMO
Saturday March 27th. 11am. Meet outside the Ridley Arms (corner of Ridley Road and Colvestone Crescent, E8) marching down Kingsland Road to the Hoxton Market. Please support!

DON'T FORGET SOCIALIST WORKER RALLY, SKEGNESS. EASTER WEEKEND 1977
at the Derbyshire Miners' holiday camp in Skegness. Friday 16 April - Monday 19 April.

You don't have to be a member to come! Lots of events, political and non political, plus entertainments.

STATE OF SEIGE, based on the kidnapping of a CIA agent in Uruguay by the Tupamaros.

BATTLE OF ALGIERS, probably the finest political film ever made.
NB: Any women keen to form Womens Voice seven-a-side football team?
Cost £16.25 per person, covering all meals, accommodation and entertainment.

Book through our local Womens Voice seller.

S.E. LONDON WOMENS VOICE RALLY

On Saturday February 21st women from South East London got together to discuss how the cuts are affecting us. We're facing hospital, nursery and school closures in the area. Our old people are being turned away from homes because they are suddenly 'not' priority'. We found that the economic 'crisis', the government's squeeze is hitting us where it hurts most. As women we're the ones who will have to look after the kids, the old, the sick, bolster the social services and lose our rights to choice, freedom and work into the bargain. We can't work and be the government's alternative Welfare State.

Mary Ashdowne, a social worker, explained the idea behind 'community care'. It means that we have to care, without support from social services. Social workers are being asked to 'persuade' female relatives to provide this care.

We are losing 4 hospitals in the Borough of Greenwich alone. Casualty Departments close with the hospitals.

Surely Casualty Depts are supposed to provide rapid, emergency treatment for accidents. We all know that most accidents happen in the home. It's really good when you have to get a couple of buses with a wounded or hurt kid to get "emergency treatment"!

Julie Fancy, of the National

Union of Teachers, attempted to explain the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay acts to us.

Teachers and students spoke on the effects of the cuts in education. The school rolls are falling in South East London, yet we still have classes of 35 plus. Why? Because there are 2,500 teachers unemployed in London and this number will increase when the training college graduates find they can't get jobs either.

Within 10 years one school in fourteen will be closed in the area. We are offering a fine future to our children.

Our discussion also covered the Abortion Campaign. In our area, Life and S.P.U.C. are always active but they're really on the increase now.

March

The afternoon closed with Gerry Mathews, C.P.S.A., speaking on the Right to Work Campaign. She talked about those 12 women marchers representing us and fighting for our right to work, walking all the way from Manchester to London. Women must fight back for the right to choose and the right to organise. We are threatened by rising prices and the cuts. We can win, but only if we organise.

JILL BROWNBILL (N.U.T.)

REVIEWS

Private Member

PRIVATE MEMBER by Leo Abse
It would be easy to dismiss this book as nearly 300 pages of self-worshipping blather and tittle-tattle. But Leo Abse, in writing it, gives us some insights into just why he's proved such an enemy to millions of women.

In this book, Abse continually refers to the imaginative theories and speculations of Sigmund Freud - which he takes quite literally to be the driving force behind human behaviour. In this way he rationalises his fears of anyone or anything which contradicts his own prejudiced view of life.

Few politicians escape the Abse 'analysis' - for example Clive Jenkins the union leader, is suffering from the trauma experienced whilst being breast fed by his mother. Wedgewood Benn is a rebellious adolescent with oedipal problems. Harold Wilson? Babe and breast problems again!

Abse claims to understand women completely. Our needs, aspirations, sensations, problems. But anyone who deviates from his 'ideal woman' comes in for vitriolic attack. The "vulgar exhibitionist manner and garish colour schemes of women MP's clothes" means they "feel keenly that they have no genital organs to display".

Women should "nurture and care and tolerate, include and preserve". A grown up woman is one who is "reconciled to the loss (of a penis of course!) and can use her "understanding of deprivation and private conflict and deep grief" to transcend trauma and denial" and take her proper place in society. What a load of nonsense!

Incidentally the founder members



of the Abortion Law Reform Association come in for some disgusting abuse. Stella Brown is "a loud mouthed, filthy, story-telling rag bag". Ironic coming from our Leo. "The politics of the abortionist lobby are the politics of hate" he tells us.

Get this obscene book from your library (don't buy it!) See what the politics of hate are really all about, written by this devious, calculating and sickening private member.

SUE BRIGGS

Capitalism the Family and Personal Life

SYBIL COCK

Every Womens Voice reader should get this little book. For the first time, Marxist ideas on the family have been put together historically in an easily readable and accessible way.

Zaretsky writes at length about the early feminists, the bourgeois campaigns for the vote and explains why feminist agitation ended for such a long time with the achievement of this limited ideal. He discusses in great and fascinating detail the historical development of the bourgeois family and its rise and fall in England and the USA.

We have heard many of these arguments before but the important new ideas in the book are in the discussion of the way capitalism now ruins our personal lives, our sexuality, our free time. In the earlier period of capitalist development, workers didn't have any spare time, so the emergence of the leisure industry (which makes sure that we continue to behave in a way which makes us efficient as workers) is discussed at length.

There is also a good section on the development of personal life and attitudes towards women and the family after the revolutions in Russia and China. All the way through he emphasises the way our oppression is caused by the system of wage labour and must be fought at the place of work.

Our bodies, Ourselves

I was put off reading Our Bodies Ourselves for a long time by its women's lib cover. It's certainly worth reading through.

It's been put together by a group of women in Boston Massachusetts USA. They are mostly college graduates. They're middle-class and don't pretend not to be. But that doesn't spoil the book.

Because the problems they write about affect all women - from the first chapter about woman's picture of herself as somehow second-class ('I genuinely enjoy loving and raising kids and setting up a home, but I have always felt that it was not important.') to the last chapter on health care for women - coping with doctors who just look at you as if you're imagining the headaches and pain.

It is an excellent book to give a teenage girl. The chapters on the parts of your body, how the pill and other contraceptive devices work, abortion, and having a baby are scientifically correct and fairly easy to understand.

JENNY JACKSON

Our Bodies Ourselves by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective. published by Simon and Schuster. £1.75 or £2.20 with post and packing. **Capitalism, The Family and Personal Life**. by Eli Zaretsky. published by Pluto Press £1 or £1.10 with post and packing.

Both available from I S Books, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N.4 or I S Bookshops in Manchester, Coventry, Birmingham, Hull, Liverpool, Glasgow, Leeds and Dundee.



IS THE WAY TO FIGHT FOR JOBS



A marcher hands out leaflets as the 70 unemployed set off from Manchester.

'MARCH FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK'

'This is a great opportunity to talk to people about why we are fighting unemployment. I've been told so many times that I am lazy because I don't have a job. I can't get a job. That's why I am marching to London. You can't tell me I'm lazy when I'm walking over 250 miles to demand the right to work.'

Nancy Kelly, Glasgow

Pictures: John Sturrock (Report)



Some of the 8,000 who marched through Dundee on March 5th, when 30,000 workers went on general strike to protest against public spending cuts.

After all these weeks and months, I could hardly believe the march had actually started! Imagine over 80 men and women wearing bright orange jackets marching in threes through the streets of Manchester.

We had about 300 more marching behind us in the demonstration to see us off. By about 12 o'clock we'd reached a building site where we heard several men had been sacked that week. After a few minutes we set off again. That site was now out on strike! About two o'clock we stopped on the outskirts of Manchester. We were starving and ate a load of sandwiches. We finished off the day with a big meeting in Oldham shopping centre.



Liverpool unemployed marcher speaking to women sympathisers during the march.

Hope

A foot inspection was announced right in the middle of it. We all sat on the concrete flower beds and took our shoes off to check for blisters. We felt great sitting out in the open after a long day's walking - we knew we didn't have to go any further that day. We stayed in a church hall in Oldham that night. Some of us were asleep before nine.

Getting up at 6.30 on a Sunday morning is not my idea of fun. It was pretty cold. I came down the

stairs with Mary. She had shocking blisters and was hobbling. We had some breakfast and as soon as we were together and back on the road in the sun we forgot all our aches and pains. We marched out of Oldham in threes, on our way to Marsden. A woman, standing in her doorway shouted:

"Are you walking all the way to London?"

"Yes"

"You're going the wrong way!"

The route was taking us North before we headed south through Yorkshire. "Hold on a minute" she shouted, and went inside. She came out with a fiver for us, and wished us all the best.

Our Demands:

ONE: Opposition to all forms of redundancy. No voluntary redundancy, no job loss through natural wastage, for rigorous maintenance of manning levels and job replacement.

TWO: For official declaration nationally of the 35-hour week. For official overtime bans to force more jobs.

THREE: Shopfloor trade union control of hiring, firing and manning levels. No discrimination or blacklisting. Trade union district registration of all jobs and protection of district manning levels.

FOUR: Five days work or five days pay. For occupations to force the nationalisation without compensation of firms that cannot guarantee the right to work.

FIVE: Stop the cuts.
SIX: Break the freeze, for across-the-board increases to protect living standards.

SEVEN: Full wages for the unemployed. £6-a-week increase now for all unemployed workers as an immediate step towards this.

EIGHT: Uncompromising opposition to all forms of racialism and discrimination. For the equal right of women to a job.

NINE: For full trade union rights for the unemployed.

TEN: No co-operation with the employers—no to all participation schemes.

This march for jobs was organised by the Rank and File Right to Work Committee, protesting about the 1½ million people out of work in Britain. From February 27th to March 20th, 80 unemployed workers have tramped the long 250 miles from Manchester to London, holding protests, meetings and pickets along the way, and finishing up at a mass protest rally in the Albert Hall. Their boots and their meals were paid for by donations from over 450 trade union bodies which support the campaign.

The Right to Work Campaign doesn't end after the Albert Hall Rally. This is only the beginning

of the fight back against unemployment.

If you work, and are in a trade union, get a motion raised in your branch to support the right to work campaign. There are pamphlets and badges you can sell to your work mates. Or have a whip round. The campaign needs a lot of money to help the fight.

If you don't work, you can talk to your friends about the campaign and raise it in tenants' groups, NAC groups and womens groups. There are many local Right to Work Committees, which need your support.

This campaign is about US, it is a fight for our rights and our children's rights.



Womens voice joins the march for the final few miles into Sheffield.

Subscribe to Womens Voice

75p for 6 copies. £1.50 per year.
Fill in this form and return to
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