



**womens**  
**VOICE**

May '78

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Issue 17

**Votes for women-fifty years on**



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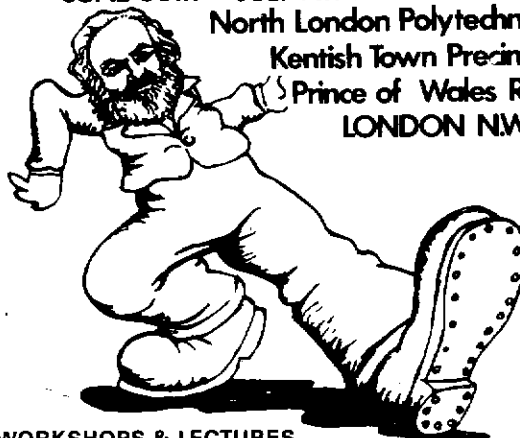
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womens magazine of the  
Socialist Workers Party

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# OUR POINT OF VIEW

## **NF=NO FUN AND NO FUTURE**

**CARNIVAL** is the best answer we have to the National Front. Hundreds and thousands of people all united for one purpose — to oppose the evil racialism of the fascists.

Its an event with a difference. Usually we are out leafletting, demonstrating, or getting knocked about. This time we're out enjoying ourselves. There is a new slogan. NF = No Fun. We mean to have fun.

Afterall, we all can't always be dwelling on the hard times, and the things that go wrong.

Ironically, it is often because they think the National Front offer some way out of all their misery that a lot of women will support them in elections. Labour and Tory alike don't seem to be able to, so lets try someone new they think.

Their politics have a simple appeal. Are your children not getting the education they need? It's because of all these black kids

cluttering up the classrooms, taking up the teachers time. What a disgusting argument to use! Is your estate run down? It's because the councils waste their money housing black families. Why make them take the blame!

They hold up a mythical picture of what a white Great Britain could be like, and a lot of women fall for it.

In the Council elections the National Front have 1500 candidates standing. A lot of them are women. Women like their Parliamentary candidate in Brixton, Helen Stevens, ordinary housewives, who seem convincing in what they say.

We have a lot of convincing to do too. We know the National Front's racialism is poisonous. It divides women against each other. The only way to put a stop to that is by organising: meetings on estates, leafletting around the houses, building Women Against the Nazis into a really energetic campaign against the National Front.



# NEWS



Ann Kenward (left) makes her point simply with this cartoon (right) on her canteen wall.

Picture: Beeban Kidron

## WE'VE EQUAL PAY

NINE WOMEN working on Camden Council building sites won a long drawn out battle for equal pay. Their case has been going on since October '76. The Equal Pay Tribunal ruled in favour of the women on April 10.

The increase means that the women will receive about £10 more a week in their pocket. They will also get a lump sum back-payment for the last two years.

Ann Kenward, TGWU shop steward, spoke to *Womens Voice*.

'It's a fantastic victory. I've counted every second and felt very frustrated with the waiting. The case was cancelled four times. I've even developed a nervous twitch. Throughout the two years we have stuck together. And it's been worth every second.'

'The stewards committee started the ball rolling as soon as they heard that there was a man on another site doing the same job for more money. Management called him a 'labourer' which meant that he got £3 a week more than us basic wage plus a standing bonus bringing his wages up by about £17 plus more than us.'

The stewards committee together with us women on the sites took our case to Camden Law Centre. The Law Centre negotiated with management. After a couple of meetings management point blank,

refused our claim. By then we had had enough, we made up our minds to go to the tribunal.

'The men on my site weren't opposed to what we were doing. The Joint Shop Stewards Committee supported us all the way. Now we have won the men are pleased. They'll all be clamouring for canteen jobs now!'

'I started working for the council in March '76 just after the Equal Pay Act came into existence. In two years our wages only went up from £30 to £34 take home. We work from 8.00am to 4.00pm with a half hour break at lunch time and ten minutes in the morning and afternoon.'

'We have to buy the food out of our own money then sell it. Management say that we should make a profit. The thing is that we don't want to make a profit out of the workers on the sites. In fact we get together with the unions steering committees to decide on fair prices. It's more a question of not making a loss, let alone a profit.'

'One weekend the canteen was broken into. All my stuff was stolen. I approached management for the money to replace the food but they refused to compensate me. I told them that I had no tools to work with, meaning food, because that was my tools. If a carpenter's tools

get nicked he or she gets compensated. This argument went on. Anyway I told the men that there would be no food until I got my money back. So I ended up not cooking for a week. Eventually management agreed to give me the money 'if it didn't happen again!'

There is this terrible sense of isolation being the only woman on a site surrounded by men. I try to get my ideas across but it's difficult when you're stuck in the kitchen making the tea, doing all the things men expect women to do. I'm quite lucky though. There is a woman carpenter on my site and she has given me a lot of support.

'On the last day of the tribunal I felt a bit downhearted because it had gone on for so long. I didn't think we would win because of the results of other cases that had gone before us and lost. I knew that ours was a good case but even so.'

'Then when they ruled in our favour I felt elated but I just couldn't believe that we had actually won. It's a fantastic feeling, when it sinks in, to be a part of a group that has come through and won.'

'All nine of us went to the tribunal—we were in seventh heaven. As far as the pomp and ceremony goes at the tribunal I couldn't stand it. There was only one woman on the bench which is usually the case. Men are always the majority on these various committees and tribunals. I don't think it's right.'

'I just hope that our victory is encouragement for other women fighting for equal pay. I'd say to other women fighting—don't lose heart.'

Gail Cartmail

□ ONLY 32 per cent of women who took their cases to the Equal Pay Tribunal have won. Just 409 women out of 1257.

□ EQUAL pay? The hard facts. Male manual workers earn £27.80 more than women manual workers. And male non-manual workers earn £35.10 more than women non-manual workers! (Department of Employment figures)

# THE EOC IN ACTION

□ THE Equal Opportunities Commission employs 120 people. Its budget is £1½ million a year. What does the EOC do?



## TELEPHONISTS PULL OUT PLUGS

AFTER 7 years of delays and empty promises, telephonists at Camden Town Hall felt their patience was exhausted. On April 13 they came out on strike for the same grading as the night shift workers which will mean an extra £7 a week.

The whole of Camden Council is in chaos! The dispute goes back to 1971 when management couldn't recruit staff for the night shift—an emergency service used by council tenants. They upgraded that work by 2 grades. With one recent exception that work has been done by men.

Then in 1973 the night workers were also awarded 14 per cent shift allowance. The women on strike don't object to this allowance being paid, but are challenging the fairness in the difference in grading.

The telephonists collected over 400 signatures in support of their claim in just 2 days. NALGO at branch level has declared the strike official. Management, on the other hand, has been predictably 'bosslike', with the deputy chief executive telling the women to go home (without pay of course) as he doesn't want them sitting around doing nothing!

It is becoming clear that the issue goes deeper than differentials. NALGO reps have found that the telephonists' job has not been looked at for grading purposes since 1963. Consequently, their status does not reflect the increased pressures and responsibilities which the job involves, compared to 15 years ago. The switchboard is a reception desk, information centre and public relations office. As well as needing all the personal qualities to deal with angry, confused or anxious callers, the telephonists have to be fully trained by the GPO before they are taken on. All this for a take home basic rate of £38 a week.

NALGO reps are currently in charge of negotiations but there is no doubt that the crucial factor in deciding the outcome of the dispute will be the determination of the telephonists themselves and the support they can organise within the rank and file membership of the union.

Jackie Price NALGO

**STOP PRESS:** Kentish Town offices of Camden Council are now on strike too.

## EQUAL PAY AT BSC

MADGE Burrow fought for and won equal pay. She works as a truck driver for the British Steel Corporation at Stocksbridge and Tinsley Park (Sheffield) in the special steels division.

There are very few women employed in the massive Tinsley complex. She's the only female shop steward and the only steward representing lower paid workers.

Madge became involved in union work (in the General and Municipal Workers Union) three years ago when the firm she worked for were taken over by BSC.

The unequalness of the Equal

Pay agreement struck her. Although she drove the same trucks as the men, she'd been paid less. Also women were paid 81p an hour for sweeping up—the men got 97p an hour.

She felt the men were not representing women impartially. The men argued that work done between 6am and 6pm (the shift most men work) should be paid at a higher rate than the 7.30am-4pm shift (the shift most women work).

Madge argued that most of the production took place between 7.30am and 4pm on a five-day week. Women could not work overtime because of home commitments.

## CASE 1

WOMEN at Yardley's in Basildon went on strike for equal pay last year. The women are almost all on the lowest grade, Grade 7, paying £45 a week. The men start at Grade 6, paying £47. Only two men are on Grade 6. Most of the others are on Grade 5, paying £48 a week.

The women lost their fight. Joan Penfold, Transport Union convenor, told *Womens Voice* what has happened since.

'When we came back off strike a woman from the Equal Opportunities Commission got in touch with me. She asked me to send all my papers off—all the details of the strike.

'She said if she thought we had a case she would continue with it in the next stage after arbitration.

I never heard more—except a letter to say 'We have received your papers'.

'The next thing was that I received all the papers back with a letter that said, 'We are returning your papers.'

They never sent a letter to say "Sorry, we don't think you stand a chance. You don't have a case." I've never heard a word since.'

## CASE 2

THANET District Council advertised for toilet cleaners. The man's wage was £45. The woman's was £43. The only difference was that it said the man must be able to drive.

I wrote to the Equal Opportunities Commission asking why can't the woman be the driver and have the same wage as the man? I sent them the advert.

They didn't reply to that. They just sent me a load of pamphlets. I don't know if they wrote to the council or anything.

I wanted to know if there's anything we could do to stop this unequal treatment. So I wrote to them again. I am still waiting to hear from them. They must be paying a lot of people a lot of money for doing very little.

Jenny Hand, Thanet



The Yardley women (picture above) leaving Transport House after their night of occupation.

She won the fight for equal pay.

At first the men did not accept her as a shop steward. She's now highly regarded by fellow workers and was voted on to the section council by her shop steward committee. The opposing candidate was a man.

Madge has always been a fighter at home and at work. A few months ago she moved on to a new council estate. The roads were not made up. The rain seeped through the insulation ruining new decor. The doors didn't fit. The road crossings were too far from access roads. Then the

heating failed.

She and her neighbour formed the Langfelt Action Group. They have 263 fully paid up members. (There are 269 occupied houses on the estate.)

They have had one heating rebate and are still fighting the council on this issue. Her estate is linked to the Kelvin estate and now they are setting up a joint action campaign. Madge's final words: 'I never give up.'

Madge Burrow was interviewed by Jackie Creeghan

## AND SO IT GOES ON

IN AUGUST 1977 six women at the Triplex Foundry, Tipton, West Midlands put in a claim for equal pay with the 25 men they worked with.

Eventually in February 1978 an Industrial Tribunal ruled that the women should have equal pay with the men—this means the women will get £10-£11 more each week. They will also receive back pay of about £1000—their claim being dated back to the Equal Pay Act.

A lot of the success of the claim is due to the determination of the women, their shop steward and their union, the Transport and General Workers Union.

In August management as good as agreed to pay the women the same as the men but refused to give them back pay. So the women went to the industrial tribunal where conflicting evidence was given.

The shop steward Hilda James had taken photographs of the women doing the same work as the men, management claimed that the same work was not done. After a visit to the factory the tribunal had no doubts and ruled that the women should have the same pay as the men.

Why were management prepared to go to such lengths? They are not going to appeal against the tribunal's decision. After all, way back in 1977 they agreed the women should have equal pay. Why did they argue against the women's claim? **Triplex has about 20 subsidiary factories in the area.** Already some of the women in those factories are putting forward equal pay claims—The decision of the tribunal on Triplex's case should affect the other claims. Management fear so and we hope so.  
**Ann Moran, Wolverhampton.**

## EQUAL PAY BUT LESS

OSRAMS in Gateshead claim that the women get equal pay. Everyone who works there is graded, according to the job they do, on a 1-5 scale. Most of the women are considered to be unskilled and so are on the lower grades. The men are considered to be semi-skilled or skilled (they are maintenance workers etc) and are graded higher. So the men get a bigger wage than the women.

The women have complained about the heat in the factory. The management won't install a ventilation system because of the expense. Instead they have fitted a few small ventilators/air conditioners around the shop floor which don't help.  
**Pat Barlow**



## THORNS CLOSURE

**"Here you are, dear minister of unemployment, 2000 more for your books".**

This is the message Rosaleen Aherne thinks the Thorn Management Board will be giving to the Government next Monday. Rosaleen has worked for Bairds (Thorns) in Bradford for the last five years. She is an ASTMS Shop Steward.

Now they want to close the Bradford plant all together leaving 2000, 77% of them women, without jobs and little chance of getting another. We interviewed Rosaleen about the situation and this is what she has to say:

'We heard quite early in the year that there was going to be more redundancies.

When they actually told us the factory was going to close it was like a brick at the back of your head. I was sick, proper sick, it took my speech, it was horrible. It made me really angry and I would fight to the end. If we lose, they're going to have to throw me out bodily. Most of the workers though are frightened of taking action.

They think they will get less redundancy pay because they are breaking their contract. They are all looking for somebody to blame instead of knowing that its the company that is at fault not any of its workers.

Everyone is worried that if they did take any action they wouldn't get support throughout the group but nothing *but* action is going to save that place. It can't just be at Bradford though. We can't do it ourselves, we've got to show strength right through the group or

it's going to be no threat at all.

Management have quoted all sorts of figures and they say labour costs are too high. But only 8½ per cent of the total cost is labour. What they really want to get rid of in Bradford is the £6,000,000 overheads.

They can't just stop producing colour T.V.s on July 28th.

The Management have been planning this closure for years. They have been moving parts.

Also any T.V.s that were money-making have been taken away after a few test models have gone down the line. We designed the 9000. That was a money making T.V. Everybody wanted it.

They took it to Gosport and left us with the one we've got now. There's so many little bits and pieces that no one can produce it quickly.

You don't know who to feel most pity for because there's pity all around. There's people there that are one parent families, loads of them whether they're unmarried, divorced, or widows.

There's people whose partner is unemployed. Then there's those who are 'unemployable' who have reached the age when no one wants them. When they got past 40 there's no chance of another job. Then there's the likes of me that is going to go absolutely crackers.'

Workers like Rosaleen at Bradford and Enfield *do* think it is worth fighting for their jobs. The *Womens Voice* Group in Bradford is helping in this fight by giving out Bulletins produced by rank and file workers at Enfield and Bradford.

**Interview by Jenny Brook and Sue Strutt**

## KENNINGS VICTORY

EARLIER this month 30 engineering union workers at Kennings Car Hire Cheetham Hill, Manchester, came out on strike.

The dispute was about the sacking of a shop steward in the maintenance shop. Union members had been about to start a series of half-day stoppages for the most basic improvements in working conditions.

Joan Hall was treasurer of the strike committee. She talked to *Women's Voice*.

'I'm a driver. My section was not directly involved, but we've come out in support of the mechanics.

'We've only been unionised for about eight months. Last time I was in the union was 30 years ago.

'Since we've been out we've discovered that the male drivers are on more money than we are. It's about £4 difference—just because they're called 'van salesmen'.

'That's the next thing we're going to sort out. Since we've been out we've learned a hell of a lot. My section is very small. But we're all out and we're picketing on a rota basis.

'And it's effective. We've turned away all the delivery vans. That means we've stopped the oil and the spares. It's been stopping our section that's done the company the most damage.'

**Anne Robertson**  
**STOP PRESS:** Since the interview the steward has been reinstated.

## PEANUTS

JANICE Kempson works a six-day week, 8am to 8pm. She takes home just £23 a week.

She and other workers at Windsor Safari Park—many of whom earn even less—have just about had enough. The keepers joined a union to try to improve both their own and the animals' conditions. (Since last June the animals' food rations have been cut by 75 per cent.)

The strikers face evictions from their accommodation.

Tabitha Howard explained that her accommodation is a trailer, in which the only running water is condensation and damp. Two toilets and showers some distance away are shared by 20 workers.

Tabitha has to pay for her own electricity and heating. She has no money left by the end of the week as it is so expensive to keep the trailer dry.

Windsor Safari Park is owned by Trident Television who reckon they are losing £10 for every car turned away by the picket line.

Donations and messages to: Doug Cartlidge, Safari Park, Windsor, Berkshire.

**Kathy Karban, Reading Womens Voice**





Picture: Laurence Sparham (IFL)

## NURSERY PROTESTS

CANTERBURY *Womens Voice* has been actively campaigning for more nursery places over the last six months. Now, 17 miles away in Thanet, one charity-run day care centre is closing. There are 6,500 pre-school children in Thanet (an area including the major towns of Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate) and only 44 nursery places are provided by Kent County Council.

Some *Womens Voice* members joined with women and children in picketing a District Council Meeting, to push the Council to provide more nursery places and to make good those that will be lost when the centre closes in July. The picket made front-page news in the next day's paper with the heading 'Angry Mums March on Town Hall'. We are planning further action including a picket of a Community Health Council Meeting, a County Council meeting (with *Medway Womens Voice*) and further petitioning.

Jenny Hand  
Canterbury Womens Voice Group

AN ALARMING situation has recently come to light in Wandsworth. There are 66 vacant

council nursery places, 22 of which are in Balham.

One reason given for this is that 'there are no suitable children'. Yet we know of many mothers and one-parent families living in bad housing and high-rise flats, desperate for a nursery place.

With the local nurseries campaign and the Balham under-fives Group, we have been out on the streets talking to mothers about their experiences.

Some didn't know they could apply, some didn't bother because they thought it was too difficult, others had given up because they had been rebuffed by the social services so many times.

What the mums want is a more flexible system with drop-off creches allowing them to leave their children when the need arises. They want nurseries based on the local community with stable staffing and smaller groups.

And this is where any campaign must start—with people's *real* needs and not with what some middle-class bureaucrats think we need.

If you want more information or to help in the campaign telephone 673-1329.

Marion Upchurch

## NURSERY OCCUPIED

ON MARCH 21st, two days before it was due to close, South Oxford Nursery class was occupied. When parents went to pick their kids up about half stayed on in the class after school and locked themselves in.

Oxford City Nurseries Campaign was formed a year ago after we heard South Oxford Nursery was to close down. We went to the County Council's schools sub-committee and discovered the Council was proposing to cut 80 of the 500 nursery places in the city.

A public meeting was called, and parents, teachers and supporters formed the Nursery Campaign to fight back against the Council. Since then we have tried petitions, meetings, lobbies of the Council (with our children), and letters to Councillors. Local papers have given us a lot of support.

The Council did reduce the places to be lost to 35. But that was 35 too many for us—and 30 of them were the South Oxford Nursery class, near the city centre in an area with immigrants and single-parent families.

We did our own survey in the area to show the real need for the nursery. We took it to the Council, and a deputation went to Shirley Williams, who said she was

powerless to act.

The closure was set for the end of last term. We decided we were *not* powerless to act—we occupied it. Since then the nursery has been run by parents and supporters—with three qualified teachers, either unemployed or working only part-time.

We got immediate support from NUPE, who told their members not to cooperate if the Council tried to cut essential services.

Letters of support and donations of over £500 have come in to the occupation from union branches, playgroups, students bodies and individuals. Thousands of people have signed our petition supporting the occupation.

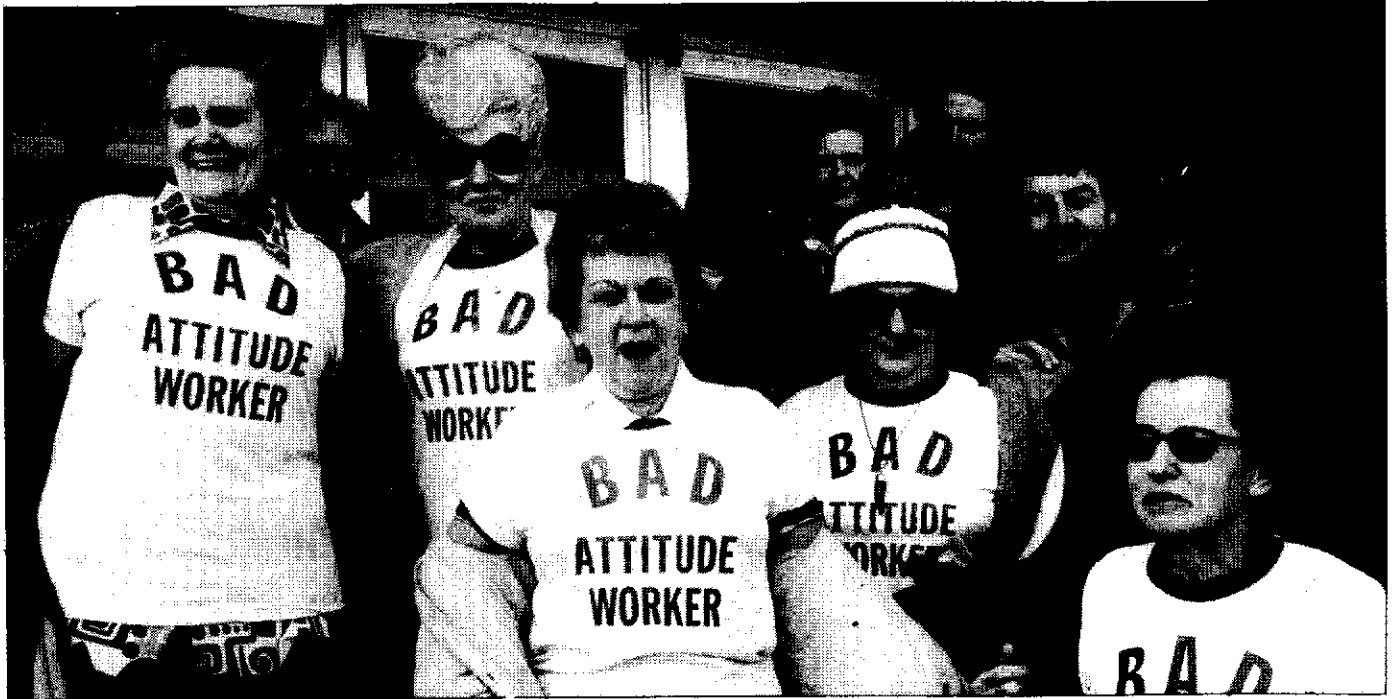
The Council played 'Wait and See' for a month, to see if the occupation would fizzle out. Instead it grew stronger. As we go to press they are seeking a court order to have us evicted. But they haven't beaten us yet.

Whatever happens, we will have some hefty bills for electricity and gas to face eventually, and they might even try to charge us rates! We need money to keep the campaign going, as well as the actual occupation. Please send letters of support and donations to: Michelle Flood, 35 Alexandra Rd., Oxford. By *Womens Voice* members in the Oxford Nursery Campaign



□ SCOOP, the Sheffield Campaign for one-parent families, picketing the town hall in Sheffield in April during a visit by the Secretary of State for Social Services, Roland Moyle. SCOOP is demanding a new benefit for single parents, the provision of suitable housing, care for school kids during the holidays.





□ The chairman of the Goodyear Corporation claims that 'bad worker attitude has led to elimination of thousands of production jobs at Goodyear in Akron, Ohio.' Twelve women—most of whom have worked there for over 30

years—replied with these specially designed T-shirts. 'We made this Goodyear,' said Cornella Rife, 'They made money off us, and now they're moving down South'. She has worked in air springs for 37 years.

## STARVED BACK TO WORK

AMERICAN miners were on strike for 110 days—right through the winter. It was a bitter strike. One miner was killed.

The miners were starved back to work. They finally voted to accept the third contract offered them. This contract takes away the right to free medical care. It also makes it harder to go on unofficial strike—many unofficial strikes in the mines are about safety conditions.

Cynthia Bumbico is married to a miner in southern Ohio. She helped on the local miner's relief committee. She told *Women's Voice* why.

'The miners have been on strike for a decent contract to work to for the next three years. The first contract they were offered was so bad, it was a step backward. Before the last contract expired, everybody knew there was going to be a strike. We had saved a bit of money for it. But last time the strike only lasted six weeks. You missed one month's pay. I don't think anybody expected it to go on this long.

'But the problem was that the coal owners weren't bargaining in good faith. There was a clause—a stinky, little clause—it made me so mad. It said that any miner's wife who gets pregnant during the strike could not have any pregnancy-related benefits. For the past 30 years, miners and their families have had free medical benefits. When you think of what medical costs are in this country, that's

really important.

'Well, the women were so mad. A friend of mine had already gotten pregnant during the strike.

'During a strike you are relaxed, you are both at home, a lot of women get pregnant then. It made me so mad that the coal companies were doing this to women. It would have caused hard feeling between the women and their men. Luckily that clause wasn't passed. I think that was one of the biggest reasons why the second contract was turned down.

'In the end we did lose our free medical benefits. Now we have to pay the first 200 dollars of the family medical bills. This will probably mean our local medical clinics will have to close down. Two months into the strike, Tony and the other miners in his union branch got together and decided to set up a relief fund. People were getting disconnection notices to cut off the gas, the electricity, the water, the phone. People were having their cars repossessed. They were being evicted from their homes. It was really terrible.

'I told Tony I wanted to help—type, anything they needed to be done. Another miner's wife did the same thing. We started on the clothing at first, sorting out the clothes to be distributed.

'Then we did the food. It was sent by different unions from all over. Ever since that I have been down there. It seems like months, but it's



just been the last three weeks.

'We got 40,000 dollars in money in four weeks. Plus two loads of food and the clothing.

'We also started filling out application forms for strikers who had disconnect notices or eviction notices. We'd send them to welfare first, but some counties just wouldn't give them welfare. We had to take care of those people.

'As far as I know this is the only district that set up a relief fund. This was really well organized. They went out speaking around the country, wherever they could. We sent hundreds of letters out asking for support.

'I like working with other people

and meeting those men that are part of the district. It's nice knowing people Tony works with.

'We didn't have somebody ordering us around. We organized it all ourselves. This was probably the most positive thing I have done in years. I felt like I was really helping to fight this contract.

'The contract was passed the third time. It's worse than the 1974-1977 contract, but it's better than what they offered at first. I think if other union branches had relief funds, the contract would have been rejected again. It was in this district. But they were starved back to work in other districts.

Interview by Jenny Jackson

## ABORTIONS IN ITALY

IF YOU are under 18, it is illegal for you to have an abortion unless your parents agree. If you are over 18, it is illegal for you to have an abortion unless the father of the unborn child agrees.

This is the oppressive reality facing Italian women after the passing of the abortion law in Rome.

The new law allows a woman to abort when 'the physical or psychological health of the mother' would be endangered by pregnancy and the 'economic social and family conditions' of the mother are taken into account. It is now possible for a doctor to demand the consent of the father before he performs an abortion. The woman's decision is entirely taken out of her hands, forcing her, yet again, into a role of

dependence.

In the voting for this amendment, the Communist party and the traditional left abstained. So concerned were they with maintaining their position as a party of the Government, that they sold out the hundreds of women that last year they had promised to support.

Predictably, the Italian press has represented the passing of the law as 'a step forward for women' as the Communist paper *Unita* puts it. Television talks about women being guaranteed a basic freedom. What freedom? A law that will perpetuate back-street abortions, that denies the woman the right to choose, that makes her someone incapable of taking any decisions herself?

Marnie Holborow, Milan.

## AND IN OHIO

CINCINNATI, Ohio. 45 people picketed a bank which has donated money to the anti-abortion group, Right to Life. Right-to-Lifers have firebombed abortion clinics and tied themselves to operating tables while women are in the middle of their operations!

We had terrific picket signs. The spirit was great. Two of the three TV stations in town came, and we got good coverage on the late news. The best part is that we've had several calls today from women who saw the leaflet.

Debbie Roberts.

## BACKSTREET ABORTION IN LEICESTER

ONLY ONE in five women who have abortions in Leicestershire can get them on the National Health Service. The other legal abortions are done by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service in Birmingham or Brighton—minimum cost £68 (not including travel and accommodation costs). A private abortion costs over £200. The alternative to this is a backstreet abortion. Here is a recent case.

Mrs A was told by her own doctor that she had no physical or social grounds for abortion. However he noted she was suffering from 'pregnancy depression' and that she should not be given any unnecessary medicines which he feared she might misuse.

In fact she clearly had grounds under the 1967 Abortion Act to be referred for an NHS abortion—her mental health and social reasons.

When she saw the other GP in the practice, she claimed her marriage was breaking down. He said he could not recommend her for an

abortion, but if she came back he'd consider referring her to the BPAS in Birmingham.

She didn't do this because it would have involved delay and it would have meant an overnight stay. She did not want her mother to know what she was going for.

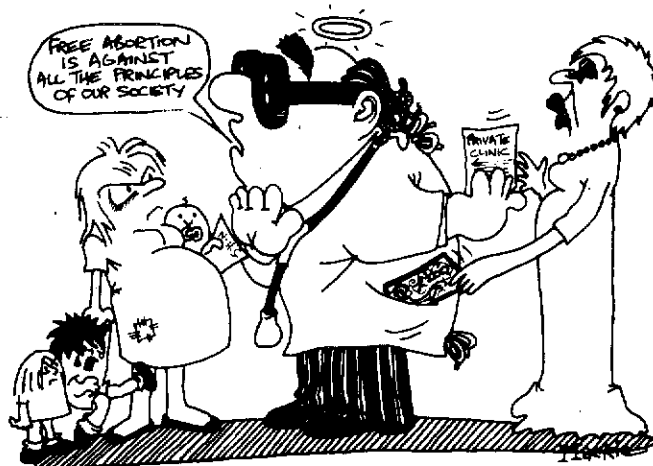
So she had a backstreet abortion. The day after the abortion she was admitted to the infirmary very ill, bleeding and in severe pain, with an incomplete septic abortion. If the abortionist's advice had been followed and an ambulance not been called, she might well have died.

When Mrs A first went to her own GP, she was two months pregnant. With the approval of two doctors, as the 1967 Abortion Act stands, on psychiatric and social grounds she should have had a safe legal abortion.

In Leicestershire this act is clearly not being properly implemented. The National Abortion Campaign continues to campaign for NHS outpatient abortion clinics and for a woman's right to choose.

Irena Randle, Leicester NAC

# CUTTY SARK BULLETIN.



## MORE PLEASE

WE RECEIVED copies of nine *Women's Voice* bulletins this month. They are from St James Hospital, Leeds; South East London Hospitals; two from Gray Dunn's Biscuit factory, Glasgow; Cutty Sark, Glasgow; Scholls, North London; Tyneside *Women's Voice*; Glasgow Hospitals; and Leeds *Women's Voice*.

Here is an extract from one of the best.

• Many women workers are sick of the union in St James. Some are seriously talking of leaving. They are sickened by the way that the management has sacked Tim South, the NUPE branch secretary, and been allowed to get away with it.

Many women are rightly disgusted by this. But what about the lack of confidence of so many women workers themselves, in standing up to union officials and to management?

One woman shop steward has talked to *Women's Voice* about the problems of women hospital workers. She spoke enthusiastically about all the benefits that the union can win for its women members with their support.

As a shop steward, for example, she can fight to protect women from potentially dangerous jobs, by

demanding improved safety conditions. She can fight for a woman's right to sick or compassionate leave, when she has to take time off work to nurse sick, or dying, relatives.

When it comes to holidays, a shop steward can fight to ensure that women can take their holidays when they want and need them, rather than at the convenience of management.

Above all, a steward can fight to ensure that her members are treated by their 'superiors' with the basic decency and respect that is too often reserved for the highest ranks alone.

But the shop steward we spoke to stressed that such rights and benefits can only be fought for and won with the backing of all the women members.

Apathy and disillusion is no way to fight.

As women in the unions we must become strong.

We should be at the union meetings and become shop stewards.

We must be heard.

St. James Hospital, Leeds, *Women's Voice* Bulletin

Send three copies of your bulletins to: *Women's Voice* Bulletins, PO Box 82, London E2.

## ABORTION CENTRE

WE WANT a day-care abortion centre in Wandsworth. Wandsworth Area Health Authority have at last agreed to consider the idea, put forward by the Community Health Council.

The local National Abortion Campaign group and the *Women's Voice* group will be at the AHA meeting to make sure our demands are heard. It will cost £30,000 to set up and run the centre.

The centre could cater for 15 abortions a week—the number currently performed in the Wandsworth area.

How many more women are there in Wandsworth who fail to get an health service abortion because of unsympathetic GPs or waiting lists? We must campaign for the centre to be expanded so abortion is readily available to all women.

Virginia Morton

# NEWS



# INTERVIEW

**Morla Gonzales is a refugee from Chile. She arrived in this country in March with her husband and two young children. Thousands of families like theirs have had to flee their country since the military coup in 1973.**

**The coup had been planned by the American Government, the CIA and ITT, a mammoth international corporation, all wanting to**

**protect their interests from the left-wing popular unity Government that had been in power since 1970. Its President, Salvador Allende, had introduced many reforms. The Chilean people had begun to control their own lives. Only to be cut down in their thousands by the most brutal military power in the world.**

Our lives changed completely on the day the military smashed our peoples government. My husband was among the thousands who were immediately put in prison, interrogated and tortured. He was left incommunicado for four months. We were not allowed to visit him. When we did get to see him it was for half an hour a week, across a table, supervised by a guard with his machine gun pointing at us.

At the time of the coup our second child, Claudia, was only six months old. When Eduardo, my husband, was finally released after two years in prison she was afraid of him. She did not know who he was.

We were not re-united for long. Although Eduardo had been released from prison he was still to be exiled down

in the south of Chile. It was the policy of the Junta (the military government) at the time to exile people like my husband, who were sympathetic to the Popular Unity Government, away from the industrial cities where there was still the possibility of organising resistance to the Government.

When we joined him we were fortunate to be able to live with some relations. We were dependent on them for every need, every meal. It was impossible for Eduardo to find work. No one who has been a political prisoner in Chile can get a job.

In the years since the coup the economic situation in Chile has become really bad. The official unemployment figure is 16 per cent but the real figure is more like 40 per cent. Most people are dependent on the Government work

programmes, which is called 'minimo' — this provides labouring jobs, usually for a 50 hour week, so that you can earn a pittance.

In a month you earn 60 pesos. A cheap pair of shoes costs 6,000 pesos.

You can imagine how difficult it is to clothe a family on that. Cooking oil has gone up from 2 pesos a litre to 50 pesos. Before, under the Popular Unity Government, working families had begun to buy more goods, more clothes, a radio. Now we are worse off than ever.

For women there is no possibility of finding a job. Prostitution has risen enormously. In some streets in the capital, Santiago, the men are attacked by the prostitutes, vying for their trade. Under the old government you didn't need to sell yourself like this. The number



**Prostitution has risen enormously. Under the old government you didn't need to sell**

**yourself like this. Now there is no alternative for many women.**

of prostitutes had gone down. Now there is no alternative for many women.

Everything has changed in Chile. All the people are frightened, demoralised. You don't talk to your neighbours unless you know them well. In the early days the military controlled the streets, arresting people wholesale. In four years the population has been decimated; killed, imprisoned, exiled.

Today the Government is perhaps more subtle. The police and the military dress in plain clothes. You don't know who they are. So you don't talk to anyone. People disappear. 2,500 are registered on the official Amnesty International list as disappeared, but there are many more, including several of our friends.

To get someone officially registered as

disappeared you have to go to a lawyer in the city and most country people cannot afford to do that.

There isn't the shooting in the streets now, but the noise of gunfire at night is so common that you don't notice it. No one goes out after dark. There is nothing to do anyway, all the theatres and clubs were shut down. There is no social life any longer.

I don't believe that the Chilean people are totally crushed. There are resistance committees. Bit by bit the people are beginning to regroup and fight back, but it is very, very slow. Every day the military discover resistance organisations, often as soon as they are set up. The comrades who work in these committees are respected by all the people, but very few

dare to join them.

We had to leave because we had no prospects, no future. We had no chance of getting a job, or a house, and there was always the possibility of Eduardo being arrested again. We are not happy in exile, but for the sake of our children we will not despair. We want to learn all we can from you, and hope you will learn too, from our experience. **Interviewed by Anna Keene Morla and Eduardo are at present living in the reception centre for Latin American refugees in this country. The English people who run the centre have an incredible amount of work and would very much welcome any help. If you speak Spanish and can spare a little time, please contact the centre through Womens Voice.**

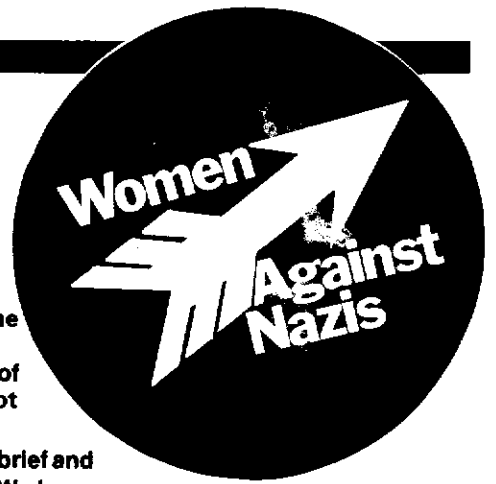


Picture: *Marcia Phillips*

**Bit by bit the people are beginning to regroup**

**and fight back, but it is very, very slow.**

# ORGANISE AGAINST NAZIS



WE HAVE recently formed a new section of the Anti Nazi League, Women Against the Nazis. Our aim is to involve more women in the fight against the National Front. There are groups already formed in some parts of the country, including women of very different political opinions. Our idea is to go out and reach women who are not touched by traditional politics especially women on housing estates.

For this we have written a pamphlet to be sold from door to door, at price 5p. It is very brief and to the point, talking about what the National Front means to women here and now. We hope that you will be ordering your copies right away! Also our badges are now ready—if you did not get them at the carnival. If you are interested in Women Against the Nazis, perhaps you can get your local Womens Voice group to take up the campaign, but do remember that the idea is to involve as many women as possible.

So far we have been very successful, and the Women Against the Nazis leaflet which you may have seen in the Feb edition of Womens Voice has been sold out as soon as we got it from the printers—twice: that's 100,000 copies already. For any further information, or help phone or write to Women Against the Nazis, Anti Nazi League, 12 Little Newport St. W.C.2.  
Anna Keene

OUR OWN theatre group—never! Or so we thought until we found ourselves producing our own Anti-Nazi League play.

Last summer two of us were chatting about how clearly ideas can be expressed through films, songs and plays. As we talked we began to realise that we could use these methods to bring our ideas to a wider audience, in a more interesting way. We decided to form our own Womens Voice Theatre Group which could write its own short plays and sketches on different aspects of women's lives; in the home, at work, about maternity leave, or redundancies

The first reaction to our proposal was full of doubt. "we're not actresses", "we couldn't do it", "I'll be too scared", but in the end six women met together and our plans got underway. None of us had any experience, except one woman who is a drama teacher.

Someone suggested that as the Anti Nazi League had a big public meeting planned for the following month in Glasgow we should aim to give our first performance at it, with a play on racism.

First we decided what we wanted to cover: Judge McKinnon's speech, Margaret Thatcher's recent outburst, the NF in elections, how the NF are Nazis, and throughout, what effect fascism has on women. We prepared slides of Nazi Germany, we wrote songs, like 'I'm dreaming of a white Britain,' and kept it short.

Having decided what scenes we wanted we wrote our dialogue for each one. This is the most important part of writing a play you have to think about what you are trying to say, and whether you are getting your message across.



Doing this, and discussing the speeches, gave us great confidence, and we found that 'acting' was easy. We weren't learning lines and taking on personalities that had nothing to do with us. We were saying what we believed to be right.

When it came to rehearsing we found the experience of the drama teacher was invaluable, to prevent us standing in front of

each other so that nobody could see us, or speaking so that nobody could hear us.

On the night we booked the hall for two hours before the meeting began so that we could get ourselves ready. Tapes, slides, space all under control. They were two terrifying hours.

But we did it, and the discussion afterwards, when Paul Holborow, of the Anti Nazi League had introduced the meeting was excellent. Since then we have been asked to put the play on at another six Anti-Nazi League meetings!

Didi Ross

## Manchester

On 14 April North Manchester Womens Voice picketed the offices of our local paper, the Middleton and Blackley Guardian. We were sick to death of the space they were giving to racist and fascist letter writers.

There have been a lot of letters from NF supporters, but the one that finally stirred us into action was one from a local churchman. He claimed to stand for equal rights for everyone, whilst being in favour of repatriation for all immigrants. Letters are normally restricted to 300 words. He got 1000!

We sent in a reply, and then picketed the office and leafletted the nearby shopping centre.

The other local papers and TV were invited, but they would not come. 'Our editor won't let us cash in on other people's misfortune' a sympathetic journalist told us.

Sandy Rose, Manchester

## North London

A street meeting and leafletting of estates are being organised following a Women Against the Nazis meeting in North London. Twenty five women, including several sixth formers from a local girls school discussed racism and the problems created by the fascist organisations like the National Front and the ways we have to find to combat them. Reaching women, particularly black women and involving them in the Anti Nazi League needs a special effort.

## Badges

1 for 15p + 10p p&p 25 for £3.50 100 for £10 post free

## Leaflets

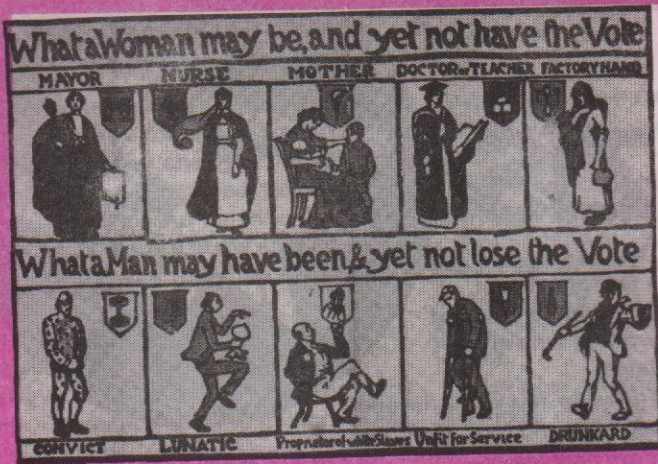
£3 for 1000 £1.25 for 250 including postage

## Pamphlet

1 for 5p + 10p p and p, 20 for £1 + 25p p & p, 100 for £5 post free

Money with orders please to Women Against the Nazis, Anti Nazi League, 12 Little Newport Street, London WC2





# THE FLAME

IN 1867 John Stuart Mill spoke in the first House of Commons debate for Womens Suffrage.

He began:

'I know there is an obscure feeling, a feeling which is ashamed to express itself openly—as if women had no right to care about anything, except how they may be most useful and devoted servants of some man. It will be said women do not suffer any practical inconvenience, as women, by not having a vote. The interests of all women are safe in the hands of their husbands, and brothers, who have the same interest with them.

'Women need other protection than that of their men. I should like to have a return laid before this House of the number of women who are annually beaten to death, kicked to death, or trampled to death by their male protectors; and, in an opposite column, the amount of the sentences passed, in those cases where the dastardly criminals did not get off altogether.

'We should then have an estimate of the value set by a male legislature and male tribunals on the matter of a woman, which, if there is any shame in us, would make us hang our heads.'

It was the beginning. Debates on votes for women took place year after year. Four times before 1906 womens suffrage Bills passed their Second Readings in Parliament. Every time a loophole was found to put off the day. Until 1928, just 50 years ago, when women finally won their right to vote.

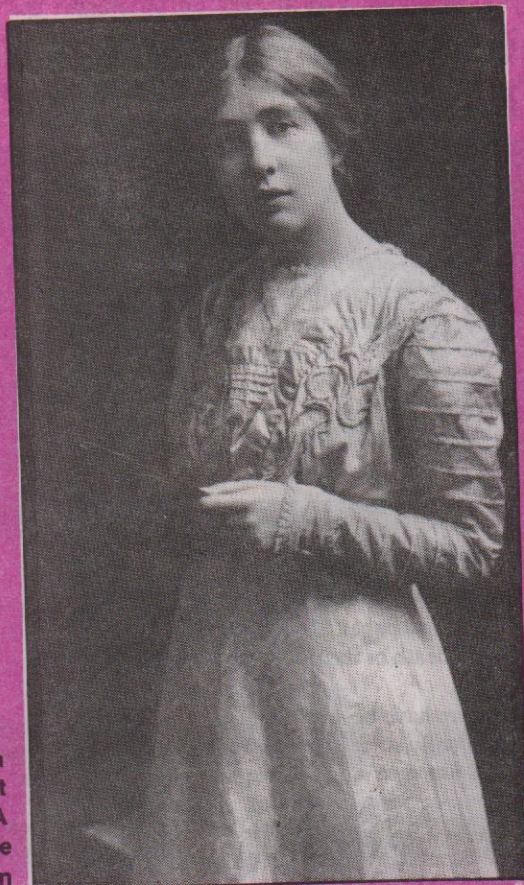
Until the end of the century, the fortunes of the Suffragette Movement ebbed and flowed. Committees and societies were set up, meetings organised, MPs lobbied. But it seemed as if there was no way that Parliament would concede this equality to the women.

In October 1903 Mrs Pankhurst organised a meeting in Manchester of women and formed a new organisation, The Womens Social and Political Union. This new organisation was different in the old suffrage societies. Mrs Pankhurst had energy and determination. Her daughter Christabel had the flair to shake the movement out of its rut and into new life. She believed not just in votes for women but in womens pride and self-confidence.

In 1905 Christabel and Annie Kenny, a mill girl from Oldham, went to a meeting in the Free Trades Hall in Manchester to ask Sir Edward Grey if his Government would pledge itself to Womens Suffrage.

Exasperated by their refusal to answer her Annie Kenny jumped on her chair and put her question again and again, until stewards bundled both of them out of the meeting and down the steps. As they got up to address the crowd flocking out of the meeting the police moved in and arrested them both. They refused to pay their fines, and went to prison. Hannah Mitchell, a local seamstress, remembered the impact the events had:

'Twenty years of peaceful propoganda had not produced such an effect, nor had fifty years of patient pleading which had gone before. The smouldering resentment in women's hearts burst into a flame of revolt. There began one of the strangest battles in all our English history. It was fitting indeed that it began on the site of Peterloo, where three-quarters of a century before, a vast crowd of men and women met to demand the franchise, only to be trampled down by the yeomanry sent out to repress them. Some indeed had died there, but their spirits survived. The North was roused, and neither Sir Edward Grey nor the Party were ever able to damp down the fire they lit on that October



Right: Sylvia Pankhurst  
Below: A suffragette demonstration





# OF REVOLT

evening in 1905.'

The Government of the day was the prime target. Meetings were interrupted, with women climbing in through roofs and cellars if they weren't allowed in through the doors. The arrests increased. Imprisonment was inevitable as the women refused on principal to pay their fines.

The campaign affected everyone:

'A discreet public schoolmaster would suddenly learn that his sisters were in Holloway Gaol. An eminent general would read that his aged mother had been arrested for bawling in Palace Yard. A girls high school would become aware that its venerated ex-headmistress had been hustled through the streets by police constables, followed by a jeering rabble.'

For working class women the problems were enormous. You couldn't become a suffragette without shaking to its roots the existing pattern of your life:

Hannah Mitchell was typical:

'No cause can be won between dinner and tea, and most of us who were married had to work with one hand tied behind us, so to speak. Public disapproval could be faced and borne, but domestic unhappiness, the price many of us paid for our opinions and activities was a very bitter thing.'

The Government was so determined in its opposition that it demanded forcible feeding for hunger striking suffragettes, and when that failed to dampen their determination they introduced one of the most vile laws ever.

The Cat and Mouse Act, as it became known, allowed the hunger strikers to be released from prison when their life was in danger. Once their strength was restored they were imprisoned again, to hunger strike again.

The effects of hunger striking on the women were horrific. Sylvia Pankhurst described its effect:

'There is always a horrible taste in the mouth which grows more parched as the days pass, with the tongue dry and hot and thickly coated. Each day one's bones seem more prominent, the flesh falling away, the skin shrivelled, the hands and feet a dull purple with bright red streaks. Pain settles in the small of the back and in the chest; occasionally a sharp stinging pain in the right breast. Gripping pains seize one suddenly in the stomach and abdomen. The pulse becomes swift and irregular. There are palpitations and pain in the region of the heart. There comes at last a constant ringing in the ears, when one is lying flat, which changes, if one stands up to a deafening roar.'

Women would go through this agony over and over again. The Cat and Mouse Act had been supported in Parliament in 1913 by MPs of every Party, including some newly elected Labour MPs.

The suffragettes should have had from the beginning the support of the Labour Party and socialist organisations. They were supposed to represent the fight for working class rights and democracy. But they were terribly shortsighted when that democracy included the women.

The aspiring Labour MPs didn't want to sully their image, as the womens campaign became more militant.

Many socialists suffered the same blindness. The movement was dismissed as middle class, or sowing illusions in Parliamentary democracy. True, a vote once every five years is an insult to the very meaning of democracy, but no vote is an even greater insult. The fight for the vote was a fight against everything that was degrading to women. The women fought, to the death. No opposition could dampen that flame.

Margaret Renn



Top:  
Suffragette  
addressing the  
workers at  
Portsmouth  
Dockyard  
Left: Mrs  
Pankhurst,  
standing, and  
Annie Kenny  
Below:  
Christabel  
Pankhurst





# ACT NOW!

# SAFETY FIRST

UNDER THE Health and Safety at Work Act, employers have a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all employees. Union members have the right to elect Safety Representatives to negotiate with the employers for protection. This right comes into operation in October 1978 when employers are forced, by law, to agree to negotiations.

Many employers are trying to push harmful agreements through before October. It will be difficult to renegotiate. **DON'T LET THEM FOOL YOU**

### Union Safety Representatives

□ Union organisation is vital. Only union members can elect safety representatives. Only unions have the strength to insist that the law is

implemented, and to challenge a management definition of 'reasonable' health and safety provision.

□ Elect your safety representative as soon as possible. The law makes

provision for training of reps. Make sure your rep is allowed paid leave to attend a course. The TUC has set up courses already. Contact the TUC Education Department or your local Workers' Educational Association or College of Further Education for details. Find their telephone number from the directory.

□ Make full use of the right of access to company records and information on health and safety.

□ Make full use of the right to call in the Factory Inspector (in the phone book), and experts of your choice (get help with this from the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science, address below).

### Information

□ Find out the hazards in your job. The TUC courses will teach you how to construct a questionnaire for your workplace which will help to identify hazards.

□ Two useful books are 'The Hazards of Work'



by Patrick Kinnersly (Pluto Press), and 'Working for Your Life—A Woman's Guide to Job Health Hazards' by Andrea Hricko and Melanie Brunt (USA).

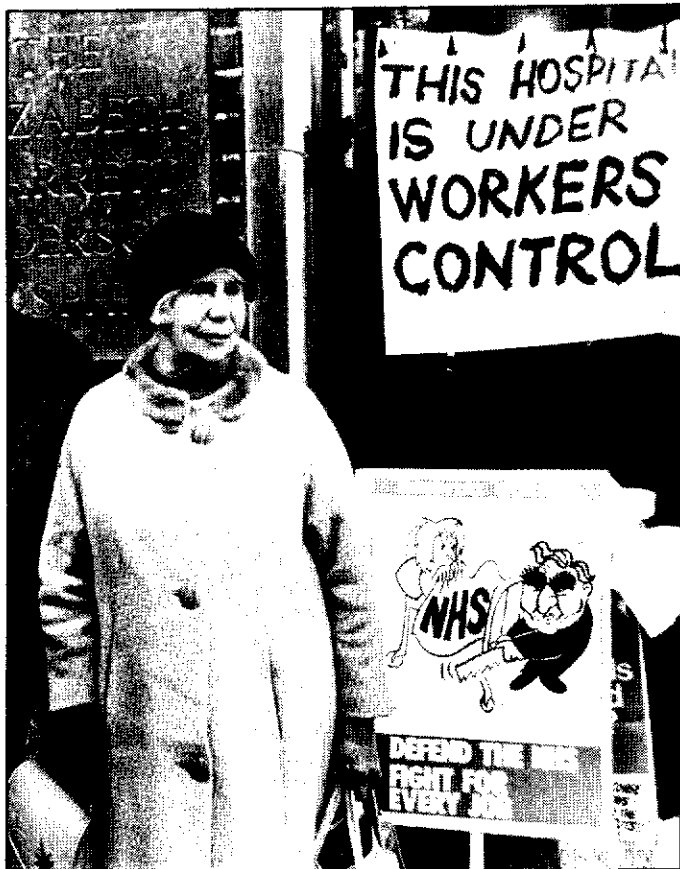
□ The Women and Work Hazards Group, BSSRS, 9 Poland St, London W1 (01-437-2728, afternoons) are very willing to help with enquiries, and will provide speakers for branches whenever possible. The HAZARDS BULLETIN is available from the same address,

£1.50 for a year's subscription.

### Why not start the ball rolling

Organise a union branch meeting, get a speaker, produce a leaflet about the hazards of your job. Aim to start your negotiations soon. And if your workplace isn't unionised, arrange an informal meeting, and make sure you have lots of union membership forms—most people will join a union which will fight for their health.

# SAVE THE EGA!



ONCE AGAIN the powers that are trying to close the EGA. Regional Health Authority met on Monday 24 April and took this decision. Only 10 of the many EGA supporters were allowed into the public gallery to hear the discussion. The others were kept out by a band of 'nervous looking men in suits', who were described by one local health worker as 'hired guns'.

Robin White a steward from the nearby Royal Free Hospital, said, 'The authority must have felt their case was too weak to stand up to supporters arguments. A physiotherapist from my hospital said that meeting had shattered her faith in the people who run the health service. We never realised how thoughtless and ignorant of peoples' needs our bosses are'.

The EGA sees about 24,500 out-patients a year and has had letters of support from the National Council of Women, Women's Institutes, the Mother's Union, the League of Catholic Women in Scotland and many others; an enormous cross-

section of women who want (and pay for with their taxes) this kind of service.

The EGA, which used to perform 200-300 abortions a year, is now not performing any. Why? Because the hospital lift has been unsafe for two years which means that the EGA has to perform operations at the Whittington Hospital, four miles away. There, they have only limited operating time which means no abortions, as priority must be given to cancer patients. The area health authority say that to repair the lift is a waste of public money.

Only £120,000-£150,000 is needed to make the EGA comfortable, hygienic and safe. University College Hospital has just been given £250,000 to tart-up its entrance hall.

Ninety percent of our medical ills aren't treated by the highly elaborate equipment available in the big teaching hospitals. What is needed is more out-patient treatment, more preventative medicine, more research into women's health — in other words the kind of health service the EGA provides.

**ALL local womens groups, pensioners, tenants and workers organisations must be prepared to move quickly in defence of the EGA. If the management try a raid on the hospital as at Hounslow, people must be able to get down to stop it within minutes. So, get a group of friends together. Let one person give their phone number day, and night, to the EGA stewards and then that person can phone the others and sound the alarm. Everything you can do now to save the EGA matters.**

# STOP PRESS

# DEBATE

## The women's liberation movement an end to chaos

Dear Sisters

Everyone who cares about the liberation of women must have been totally dismayed to witness the events on Sunday April 9th at the plenary session of National Womens Liberation Conference in Birmingham.

Women were leaving the hall all through the afternoon as though shell-shocked. That's the end of sisterhood, said one. This is my first conference, I'm never coming again, said another. This is appalling, my time is too precious to waste like this, said another. Thank God



there are no men here to see it, said another. Some were in tears, some utterly dejected, some just plain seething angry.

How long can we expect three thousand women to come together to go through this? Is it right that we should have been talking of the conference, as some speakers did, as an ordeal you congratulate yourself on surviving through?

More important still, did that whole day of screaming and jeering and bellyaching and headaching advance our movement one jot? Or are we really in the business of tearing each other apart at a time when our ideas have spread to countless thousands of women outside our immediate ranks, and yet when their conditions of life are under serious threat from reaction?

It's easy enough to blame the crazy minority in that hall who wrecked the meeting from the front. But what can you expect? Aren't we all to blame? If you bring together three thousand people into those conditions without any agreed formula for proceeding, then of course it ends in woman shouting at woman down mikes on opposite sides of the room. In a situation where the loudest

The Women Liberation Movement held its most recent conference in Birmingham on April 8 and 9. 3,000 women attended.

On the first day everyone was divided into small workshops which discussed a variety of issues, along guidelines suggested by the conferences organisers, but in fact ranging over those things the women involved in each group were most interested in. In the evening specialist workshops were organised.

The workshops were as constructive and informative as the women in them could make them. It was a day well spent was the general feeling.

But on the second day, when the conference was gathered together in one large session, the amicable atmosphere disappeared.

Womens Voice members at the conference felt so appalled that such a large gathering could be so negative that they wrote the following letter to the feminist press, Spare Rib, Wires, to contribute our ideas on a debate which must surely now take place. How can the Womens Liberation Movement move out of this chaos?



voices are left to win, of course they do so. But isn't that one of the things our movement is supposed to be fighting against?

All of the good work is going on locally, and in specific campaigns. Women's Aid, NAC, YBA Wife, Rape Crisis centres, there are many, many examples of the things we have built, quite apart from the

advances being made in the unions and political groups.

Was any of this reflected in that plenary session? Was it hell! But there were hours of complaining against the queues and the accommodation. No wonder no one wants to organise these conferences. At a recent Socialist Feminist Conference in Manchester there was a lot of sympathy for sisters in left-wing organisations along the lines that we should support those women who have to battle with men all the time. Believe us, in none of our meetings have we ever been



Picture: Angela Phillips

oppressed a fraction of the way women were oppressing women in Birmingham on April 9th. It was worse than oppression. It was downright tyranny. Eight years ago many of us were at the first National Conference of the movement, held in Oxford. There we were, not knowing how our movement would develop, not knowing each other, not yet having proved that we could build any campaigns among the masses of women who hadn't even heard of us. But there was far more sisterhood and solidarity and sense of purpose in that meeting than there was in Birmingham. Is this what we've achieved in our eight years?

Surely the time has come for the womens movement at national level to take a serious critical look at itself, and honestly to decide if its methods need changing. We hope in circulating this letter to help begin an urgent debate about basic principles, methods and organisation at all levels in the womens movement. We feel certain we are not alone in feeling as we do about the un-creative chaos that was April 9th.

In sisterhood

For a socialist/feminist revolution  
Womens Voice



# HEALTH IS NOT A PRIVATE PROBLEM

**THIS ARTICLE** is written by a group of six Danish health workers. They have been in Britain for two weeks visiting hospitals affected by work-ins and campaigns against the cuts. They conclude that our health service suffers from many of the same faults as their own, especially in the way that general practitioners work. Here they describe their attempts to pioneer alternative approaches in medicine.

IN DENMARK we have begun a debate about how to make radical changes in the relationship between doctor and patient. What follows are some brief examples of the approach taken in one experimental group practice.

Jane and a member of her group went to the doctors for a cough mixture for a bad cough which keeps her awake and annoys her room mates. This is an easy problem for the ordinary GP: write a prescription, which takes five minutes. But these doctors want to find out why she has a cough. According to a friend, Jane coughs because she smokes too much at meetings. 'But I couldn't stop smoking at meetings' she protested when the doctor suggested this was the cure. Together, Jane, her friend and the doctors discover that Jane's problem isn't her cough but rather that she doesn't feel at ease in her

group and is unsure of herself. The solution is not cough mixture but for the doctors to come to Jane's group and to discuss her problems and try to find answers to them.

What is different in this kind of practice? First, disease isn't considered a private problem, confined to the person who is ill. You will often find the causes of your illness in your working conditions or in your home life. Illness is often a signal from your body that something is wrong somewhere, but not necessarily in your body.

Another patient, Marie, visiting the doctor complained about having terrible nausea every morning. She had been ill and had thrown up several times in the past weeks. She was now certain it wasn't food poisoning. The doctor asked her where she worked and she said that she worked in a welding hall. They discussed whether the welding smoke might be to blame. They decided it was better to visit the workplace and see if anything was wrong. After this the doctor told Marie that she and her comrades didn't know how poisonous all those metal smokes in the welding were and that they had better have a meeting to discuss how to change the working process and what danger signals they should look out for in future. Of course this kind of health service is only possible where the workers control production and their own conditions and where they are able to cooperate with the health sector. They can change production methods so they don't get ill.

In the primary health sector, people come to the doctor with a lot of questions about their symptoms and their worries. In five minutes they are out of the door, prescription in hand, but no wiser than when they came in. It is the same situation in hospitals: nobody has the time to talk and explain; nor do the health workers learn anything about people's conditions. People are reduced to the level of a machine that has to be repaired.

If people get to know their own body, they will be better at taking responsibility for not getting ill. We think it is important for those in the health sector to encourage people to ask questions about their health and the

living and working conditions that make people ill. Knowledge about the prevention and cure of illness should not be confined to the doctors.

Now we don't want to deliver a moral lecture and say that it is your responsibility to change the way doctors and patients communicate; that it is your fault that the health sector is just papering over the cracks rather than tackling the real problems. We know that with all these cuts in the health sector, it is not a question of individuals changing the way they behave. The claim for a better health service has got to come from the people through their unions, social movements, political parties. However, try and discuss your living and working conditions with your workmates; think about when and why you get ill and how you would like people in the health sector to cooperate. We think that it is obvious that living and working conditions should not make people ill. But unfortunately, because we are living in a capitalist society, they do. This is a very short explanation but we would like to start a discussion that will end with new demands being made on the health service.

## WOMEN'S HEALTH



# ORGANISING A WOMENS VOICE STREET MEETING

A LOT of people don't like coming to meetings, so one way of putting our ideas and arguments over to a bigger audience is to take our meetings to them: in the streets.

**Topic:** Pick a topic that lends itself to a street meeting. Subjects such as dialectical materialism or the nature of capitalism are not suitable, unless of course your group is extremely imaginative.



...simple placards...



**Time and place:** Decide on a time and place that are appropriate to the issue. Equal pay, for example would make a good lunchtime factory gate meeting; price rises is best on Saturday mornings or late-night shopping evenings, or outside a popular local supermarket. A campaign issue like abortion can be taken anywhere, anytime, for instance on a housing estate, in a shopping centre or outside a hospital. For a local industrial dispute or hospital closure, cover other factories and hospitals when most of the workers are coming and going. Check your times well in advance and visit the place first to find a suitable spot where plenty of people will pass by and where there is space for paper-sellers and perhaps a bookstall with leaflets and petitions. Remember you want to be seen and heard.

**To Prepare in advance:** **Leaflets:** they should be short, concise and attractive. A pictorial leaflet often gets the message across better than lots of words. Put a contact address on the bottom. **Petitions:** A petition is a good way to get women to stop and talk. You can send a petition on prices to local newspapers, on abortion to local MPs. It won't win your campaign for you, but it will help. Both petitions and leaflets can be produced on a duplicator (see Womens Voice, January, 1978). **Loudhailer:** Try to persuade all the women coming to the meeting to speak; that way nobody feels a fool because everyone has to get up and speak. You can use the leaflet as a guideline but get everyone to write down six sentences on a bit of paper so they won't be stuck for words. If the meeting is about a strike, try to get one of the women involved to come along. **Placards:** they should not be too wordy but consist of short bold statements about the issue. You can have them on sticks for women to carry, or have two hinged back-to-back to stand on the ground. **Displays:**

should be attractive and informative. Folding wallpaper pasting tables are useful here. **Street theatre:** this could be a short improvised play if you feel up to it, or otherwise just a bit of dressing up to draw attention to yourselves. You need at least six women to have an effective meeting. One woman will always be speaking, two or three selling Womens Voice. If you have a leaflet or petition, that takes another two or three. A bookstall turns it into a much grander affair. Two women, one speaking and one selling Womens Voice can manage: it will be exhausting but its better than no meeting at all!

Notify the local press. Prepare half a dozen press statements and if they send a photographer, get copies of their photos and send them to Womens Voice. Alternatively have your own photographer there (not colour for Womens Voice, please).

**On the day:** Arrive in good time; arrange to meet near the place you have chosen for the meeting and all go on together, making sure you've got *all* your equipment. You can't hold a successful meeting if the leaflets are late arriving or the loudhailer has disappeared on a demo in some other part of the country.



**After the meeting:** Remember to get someone to write a report for Womens Voice. Go to the nearest pub and have a good drink— you deserve it!

In conclusion, a successful street meeting is made by good preparation, and good organisation on the day. It is often useful to have a workshop a couple of weeks before the street meeting if you can so that all the group gets involved and feels confident and well-prepared. Also remember that the point of a street meeting is to get across ideas or information and to get some response. Remember to speak to people, follow up useful contacts, involve those who have shown interest immediately: for example give them leaflets to take to the factory or give out elsewhere, give them petitions, invite them to your next meeting, invite them to the pub after the meeting and get their names and addresses.

It's not really such a mammoth task and usually everyone enjoys themselves.  
Marion Upchurch

**D.I.Y. D.I.Y. D.I.Y. D.I.Y. D.I.Y. D.I.Y. D.I.Y.**

WHEN OUR Women's Voice group decided to book Counteract's play against rape, *She Asked For It*, we had moments of doubt. Perhaps it would be awful, embarrassing, would not relate to

women in Cardiff? We needn't have worried. The play is very exciting to watch, and the discussion it provoked later on in the pub, and for days after, proved its worth. Counteract believe

that rapists are not just peculiarly sick men, but that rape is *just one* of the aggressive pushy ways in which men treat women in our society; that it is the logical outcome of seeing

women not as real people but as objects—incapable of knowing their own minds, or even of having a mind! If you haven't seen *She Asked For It*, I'd recommend booking the play. Counteract

will give you all the advice you need about how to go about arranging a performance. Contact Debbie See on 01-251 4977, or 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0AT  
Bronwen Davies

## 'SHE ASKED FOR IT'



Picture: Mark Rusher (IFL)

## BREAKFAST WITH A SMILE?

I BOUGHT this book because it claimed to provide recipes using whole or natural foodstuffs. In fact it makes only a few token gestures in the direction of pure foods,

No, what makes these recipes different is the even more than usually sexist way they are presented. 'Breakfast with a Smile' immediately assumes the traditional division of labour: the woman cooking and waiting upon a family, which

always consists of husband and several children. The point is made that a poor breakfast can lead to 'lassitude . . . and an inclination to fight with the boss'!

At lunchtime we meet more stereotypes. Firstly we have a male builder who comes to 'do some house repairs' and for whom the obliging housewife has made some tea. Next we meet some 'office secretaries' snatching a hasty snack because

'they want to spend most of their lunch hour choosing new shoes.'

Lastly, there is the busy housewife herself who fails to have lunch because she waits to eat with hubby at night. When he fails to turn up, or is late 'she is left high and dry, ravenously hungry, and without even the energy to do anything about it.'

A picture of woman so totally dependant on her husband that although starving she cannot force herself to

eat without him! 'Don't be Late for Dinner' is the most explicitly sexist of all.

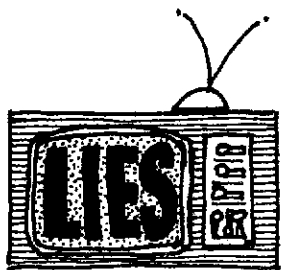
We learn that women have always shown their love for their families through food, which is seen as consolation to the husband for the 'ravages of the day'. Too bad about the woman who also has to go out to work, then rush back to prepare the meal, and nowhere a hint that the rest of the family might help out. . . .let him collapse

in the armchair, keep the children out of the way and give him a drink... to act as a gentle restorative....'

This review may sound exaggerated. It isn't. The book contains not one single reference to anyone besides the wife/mother shopping for, preparing or serving food. It is not only an insult to women, but also to the many men and children who enjoy cooking.

Wendy Mustill





### Mr and Mrs ITV

NOW WE come to our quiz game of the week. . . yes, it's Mr and Mrs! May we have our first couple please. Yes! Mr and Mrs Joe Soap. Joe is pretty stupid by trade and we won't even mention Mrs Soap because of course she doesn't really exist! Now Mrs Soap, what colour socks—without looking now—is your husband wearing tonight? (this is just to test that she laid them out for him beforehand as every good wife should!)

Oh! She doesn't know! Sorry Mrs Soap, that's a sock in the teeth for you when you get home tonight!

Every day thousands of women are beaten by their husbands, they are beaten week after week, for years on end, like Elsie from Manchester who took it for 12 years and then was told by her solicitor that it would only make things worse if she left him.

**Brass Tacks, BBC2**  
Wed 12 April presented the real problems of battered women and the National Womens Aid Federation which is being forced into closing at least one refuge in Manchester because of lack of funds. Earlier

As long as He needs me  
I know where I must be  
I'll cling on steadfastly  
As long as He needs me  
**BUT**

He never does a thing,  
Just sits there criticising  
Waiting for me to bring  
His wish in everything  
**STILL**

As long as He needs me  
To wash and pour his tea

in the same evening three 'ideal' couples simpered and chuckled their way aimably and stupidly through a contest to find out which was the 'best' couple.

The questions were deep and searching indeed, probing the very roots of the relationships.—Does your wife leave the kitchen light on when you are eating your tea in the living room? Are your husband's pyjama pants secured with buttons or a tie?

And while this farce is played out, the refuge, the only place the women could turn to is closing. Other women are sitting at home dreading the return of their husbands, drunk and vicious and Elsie goes back to her husband.

It is time for women to speak out, to organise together to provide refuges, places where they can go and know there is always a place for them, to organise to change the society that traps them in this irrevocable cycle and to dispel the myth once and for all of married bliss, of ideal couples with 2.5 children where wife serves happily and is rewarded by a hand with the dishes now and then. Because it is only when this is broken that women like Elsie will begin to live their own lives, make their own decisions, regain their self respect and hold up their heads in pride at being women.

**Mary Ann Stuart**

I'll clean up endlessly  
As long as He needs me  
**BUT**

He never will wash up  
Or lift a dirty cup  
That's not my job says He  
And leaves it all to me  
**STILL**

As long as He needs me  
I know where I must be

I'll cling on steadfastly  
As long as He needs me.

From Gordon Primary School  
production of 'Oliver'

This is  
my life



Barbara Wilson is a receptionist in London. She has four children and a grandson. Here she tells of her 15 years as a socialist in Australia, and her experiences as a battered wife.

I WAS a 'battered wife' for ten years. Until, in 1971, I got my husband out of the house. That year we had the best Christmas ever. We had come to Canberra in 1957; he was Australian and thought we'd have a better life.

Talk about a cultural shock! I have never felt so alienated and after London it seemed like a waste land. Canberra was suburbia, full of Government offices, the University and of course the Federal Government.

I wasn't allowed to go to work. Women stopped at home. You couldn't go to pubs, if you did you were regarded as a whore.

I'd always been involved in politics. When I was 17 I had gone to live in Soho, in London, a very liberating experience, especially just after the war.

Those feelings soon faded. I had my first child in 1950, my second in '53, the year the Rosenbergs (The Jewish couple who were supposed to be Russian spies in America) were murdered. I spent hours going round with petitions for their release.

In 1965 when my youngest child was 3 I went to work in Canberra Hospital as a nursing auxiliary, and for the first time I met women who had been battered like I had. I didn't have to pretend I'd fallen downstairs or walked into a door or something to excuse black eyes and bruises.

I found it difficult to blame my husband. I knew he was frustrated by the system in the Civil Service where you almost had to deny your own identity to 'get on'. People even changed their religion to conform with the boss. I know that a lot of women do feel inadequate in these situations. That somehow it's their fault that they are being beaten up, as a punishment for something, but what? It produces terrifying inertia.

When I nearly lost my eye I thought, that's it, and went to a lawyer. I wouldn't have done it without the support of those women I met in the hospital. One or two friends I told never spoke to me again.

Australia entered the Vietnam war. It had an enormous impact on everybody. People demonstrated in a way unheard of. 120,000 people taking over the streets; fantastic! I had joined the Australian Labour Party in 1962 but the local party was pathetic. Canberra was traditionally Labour, but soft. Vietnam changed many of these people. They suddenly looked quite radical.

At the same time the Aboriginal people, about the most oppressed in the world, had decided to fight for land rights. They put up their tent embassy on the beautifully manicured lawns next to the artificial lake in front of the House of Representatives.

There were violent demonstrations. The police were particularly brutal, and working in the out-patient department of the hospital I saw the results of their work.

At last things were changing. But I couldn't stay in Australia. My husband gave me the money to come back to England, and I started living again, a new life that had some point to it.

On my way back to England I stayed with my sister in Italy and had a long holiday. I read a book by Paul Foot, Immigration and Race in British Politics. It was one book out of dozens that were around, but it was clear and uncompromising. The aboriginals had brought out a lot of racism in Australia, not only against themselves, but also the Yugoslavs, the Greeks, Turks and Italians. I just thought: what am I doing sitting here?

Politics in Britain had changed in the 15 years that I had been away. But I had always been a socialist, and I had never let that go.

# YOUR VOICE

## Passports—Housewives only need apply.

Dear Womens Voice

I thought other Womens Voice readers might be interested in a story I heard at work recently.

I work for the Inner London Education Authority as a general school attendant. In my school alone there are 20 women (and one man) employed as attendants—so imagine the number of women who come into that category throughout the country.

A short while ago one of the women applied for a passport, and was amazed to receive her application form back with the information that, despite having worked there for five years, being a 'general attendant' was not an occupation.

According to the powers at the Passport Office, she had to change her form so that her occupation was 'housewife'!

It certainly shows what importance the civil servants place on women's full-time employment outside the home! I'd like to see what happened if the male attendant applied for a passport using the same occupation.

Faith Mitchell  
East London.

## More on Margaret.

Dear Womens Voice

A lot of the current press campaign against Princess Margaret is not at all anti-royalty. It's just pseudo-moralistic double-standard clap-trap. Don't worry, if it was a middle-aged prince sporting round with some young starlet they'd be saying what a ripping virile fellow he was, and to hell with the cost. A middle-aged woman and a young man and they all act horrified.

The way I look at it is, right on Princess Margaret! She's the single woman most likely to bring about the downfall of the monarchy in the next ten years!

Kate Childs  
Northants

Dear Womens Voice

Compare the attitude of people to Princess Margaret and Roddy the Body, saying her private life should be her own, to the cohabitation rule applied to others who live on social security (but not quite up to the £55,000 a year standard!) An interesting example of double think!

Incidentally, let's not forget that the allowances paid direct to the Royals only represent about 2-5 per cent of their annual income. It's only supposed to cover the wages bill for the servants. The upkeep of

the palaces and yachts and parks is charged directly to government departments. And on top of that, they have massive private wealth, rent from farms, profits etc. Not exactly a hard life being a royal scrounger.

Jenny Austin  
Birmingham

Dear Womens Voice

Judith Condon is quite right to protest against the concerted attack on Princess Margaret. The princess is being attacked, not as a parasite, but as a woman having a liason outside marriage.

A few years ago one could read in European newspapers that the Duke of Edinburgh was having an affair with his secretary. No British newspaper dare suggest such a thing. We had never heard of Edward VIII's affair with Mrs Simpson until he wanted to marry her, though it was common knowledge in Europe and America.

Attack the monarchy and all it represents, but don't pick on Margaret. Instead, attack the double standard of morality which condemns a woman, but not a man, for sex relationships outside marriage.

The sufferings of both Andrea Earl and Pat King (April Womens Voice) can be traced back to one prime cause: paternal authority. The patriarchal system, which

monarchy represents, is older than capitalism, and, without a struggle, will not disappear along with it.

Kathleen Jones  
Shrewsbury

## Childbirth Addresses

Dear Womens Voice

I have been asked to write to you about the options which are available to the pregnant woman and which are not usually publicised. She does not have to go to a large hospital to have her baby unless she has some serious complication, which must be explained to her. She can have her baby in a G. P. unit, or a woman's unit, or she can have her baby at home.

If you would like to have your baby at home you can obtain all the information you need by writing to the following addresses:

□ The National Childbirth Trust,  
9, Queensborough Terrace,  
Bayswater, London W2 3TB.

□ Margaret Wright, Society to Support Home Confinement, 19, Tynedale Terrace, Beuton, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 12.

□ Mrs S. Wellington, Association for the Improvement of Maternity Services, Riverside Herb Gardens, Hossenford, Tor Point, Plymouth.

You will find they are all very helpful.

Edna Ashworth  
Bude

## The Coil and those pills

Dear Womens Voice

I was looking through some back issues of Womens Voice recently when I came across an article in which it was pointed out that women who have an IUD (coil) fitted should be wary of taking aspirin since this will destroy the Prostaglandins which are produced by the IUD—and to a certain extent by the brain.

I would like to add that Paracetamol, and indeed all analgesic/antipyretic and distalgesic drugs will do the same.

Therefore women using an IUD should be extremely wary of taking any of these drugs, especially continuously, as they stand a greater chance of becoming pregnant. The drugs which come under this heading are: Aspirin, Paracetamol, Panadol, Dispirin, Hedex, Codeine, Calcium aspirin, Phensic, Distalgesic, Anadin, Aspro, Feminax (for reducing pain with periods) and indeed all other pain killers, headache tablets etc.

S. A. Marais  
S.R.N.  
Cambridge

## Alone in a room: Two readers reply to Jean Clark.

Dear Womens Voice

I related very strongly to the panic and desolation that Jean Clark describes (WV March), of being alone in a room, and trying one way or another to blot out the negative feelings that arise.

I spent the best part of one whole summer in a similar state of turmoil and disorientation—when I was supposed to be working on a literature project. I was unable to link my 'work' to my social needs (for co-operation, recognition, communication) and as a result found it impossible to concentrate or work alone in my room; but equally found I was unable to relate to people, felt I had nothing positive to give them, found it difficult to express my needs and all the rest. I used to wander aimlessly for hours about the town, or hole up in my room for the best part of a day or evening—eventually getting a job just to lend structure to my life.

However, what helped the most towards the end of that summer was finally talking to a few friends who had similar experiences.

We agreed that the panic of being alone is, for many women, linked to the feeling of not-existing—in quite a literal sense—when no one is around. We realized the extent to which we depended on other people (not necessarily men, though

obviously their voice predominates) telling us who we are, or who we should be, such that we actually lost our sense of self, if no one was there to give us an identity. Related to this was the problem, in being alone, of being consumed by the present reality—finding it very difficult to imagine the future, or do things which would actually determine the future. I stopped doing nearly everything which didn't have an immediate effect—including writing letters, for instance, because I had to wait for a reply... because I had to think about someone being absent from me!

I don't think I could have articulated my 'problem' in this way, if I had only just thought about it on my own. In fact, I seriously doubt whether I'd have ever got beyond that stage of avoiding confrontation with myself. I'm not claiming to have solved these things totally—though I sometimes think that realizing what lies behind fear is the closest to a 'solution' we're going to get. In any case, I hope these notes may help Jean prepare herself to 'get up and fight again', as she puts it. Or even better, if she wants to venture a bit south on a Monday evening, our Socialist/Feminist group meets every week, from 8 pm. at 1, Adelina Grove in Stepney—and she'd be more than welcome to join us.

Sue Roalman  
Stepney

P.S. We can't be switched off, but we're a better earful than Radio London!

P.S.S. Just a final note about fearing empty rooms, which occurred to me; I don't think it's a uniquely female experience, either. The dream which Ralph Ellison describes in his novel *Invisible Man*, about inflating to grotesque dimensions to fill out an empty room, seems to describe an analogous experience. The question is—what are the negative and the positive

aspects of being dependent on others for our identity?

Dear Jean Clark

Your letter (March 1978) cut right into me, arousing strong instincts of sisterhood, and a desire to reach out and comfort you. I have shared some of your experiences—broken marriage, custody problems, and the like,—and like you I took them all from the standpoint I'd been trained to assume. Oddly this was not a standpoint fed to me by my immediate family, nor did my husband, nor does my lover, fit the description of 'male chauvinistic pig'. No, it's the much more insidious influence of society at large, a background culture that it's difficult to fight against, to hit out at, that I feel is really to blame.

The only comfort for us is that we are not alone; we have each other; women can understand, and through understanding, help. And eventually society must change, with the result that you and I (or at least our daughters) and the thousands like us will think differently, respond differently and not always need to fight because the battle (and the war) will be won. Yes, I know I'm an optimist, but then you have to be, don't you.

Susannah Storm

## Remember Palestine.

Dear Womens Voice

It was quite encouraging that Womens Voice had at last decided to run a feature on Palestinian women and thereby recognised both the revolutionary AND the feminist content of such a struggle.

I promised a copy to all the women I knew, both Arab and from the Women's Movement, but nearly regretted it when the article was published. Not only had half the article been cut out, but it was subbed in such a way

# YOUR VOICE

## REMEMBER PALESTINE



that it conveyed a totally different meaning to the one originally intended. Some sentences were taken out of context, and what's more, tricky words like 'terrorist acts' were used, which would certainly make any Zionist jump with joy, and which has put us at the level of the Daily Telegraph!

It is ESSENTIAL to rectify these errors in your next issue and point out that the Palestinians have been fighting for years a hard and enduring liberation struggle against the Zionist Israeli 'state' and calling them or their acts 'terrorist' is more than just a word, no matter what you think! The Palestinians are engaged in an ARMED STRUGGLE and backed up by the whole Palestinian people, and any Socialist amateur could

hopefully differentiate this from the isolated Red Brigade-type terrorist acts.

Moreover, you make the unforgivable mistake of calling the Christian inhabitants of Lebanon 'Lebanese' and the Moslem ones 'Arabs', which is really playing into the hands of reactionaries like the Phalangists who fought the whole war on the basis of this mythical differentiation!

As a revolutionary Arab, I consider this article a flop. Although it presents certain facts, it is too dry, too disconnected to make any valid point about the Middle-East and Palestinian women, and certainly in my view contains no revolutionary spirit at all.

No hard feelings, but please, try to be sure of your ground before asserting anything.

Lina Ibrahim

## WV gets a look in.

Dear Womens Voice

Look at this frame from 'The Silent Three of St Botolph's'—the cartoon strip they run on the Guardian woman's page.

Don't you think the magazine pictured lying on a table in the Webbers' house looks rather familiar? . . .

Miranda Chayter  
Islington

## Letters please...

Please keep sending your letters in, but keep them as short as you can. We don't like cutting....but reserve the right to do so if it means squeezing more letters in.

Letters for June's Womens Voice should reach us by May 20. Don't forget the new address. Write to Letters Page, Womens Voice, Box 82, London E.2







THIS year, for the first time since '75, we're not threatened by an anti-abortion bill in parliament. For the first time we're on the offensive, campaigning for the day care facilities we need.

But this is only a breathing space; we

haven't won yet. The next session in parliament will bring another Private Member's bill, or (if the Tories win the next election) a government bill to restrict the abortion law.

We know what those restrictions would mean: panicking when your period's overdue; waiting weeks for appointments when every day makes abortion more difficult; as a last resort, a terrifying session with a back street profiteer.

The abortion law must be extended, not restricted. Every pregnant woman should take the course she thinks is best for her, having a child or not. It must be up to the woman to decide, not the barons of the National Health Service.

We've learnt how to fight for this right to choose over the past three years. We've learnt that mass action can stay the hand of the anti-abortionists — but we have yet to defeat them. To put an end once and for all to their attempts to restrict our rights will take the trade union movement turning its good intentions to fighting support for a woman's right to choose.

The National Abortion Campaign is organising a conference for trade unions in November, where delegates from all trade unions can discuss ways of bringing the unions into the struggle for our rights over our lives and bodies.

This year, the Women's TUC Conference passed a resolution calling for day care abortion clinics and for the TUC General Council to organise a national

## TRADE UNION CONFERENCE ON ABORTION

demonstration against any attempts to restrict the abortion law before a final vote on such legislation in parliament. Take up this resolution in your own union branch.

By passing a resolution to sponsor the trade union conference on abortion organised by NAC, sending delegates to the conference, sending a donation to the conference fund, and endorsing the call for a trade union demonstration against new restrictive legislation on abortion.

By publicising the conference in your union journal and in the local press. Contact other unions and trade councils in your area and arrange an inter union meeting on abortion — contact your local NAC group for speakers.

By taking a collection in your branch or shop floor for the conference fund.

Help to organise your conference so that free abortion on request can become a reality.

Sue Watkins  
National Abortion Campaign  
30 Camden Road, London N.W.1

# YOUR QUESTIONS...

*Dear Womens Voice*  
I'M NOT pregnant, but would like to have a baby and as I earn twice as much as my husband I will have to go back to work and he will stay home. My job is O.K., and my husband hates his, so it seems the ideal arrangement, and I don't believe in all that maternal deprivation rubbish.

We do seem a bit unusual though, so I would love to hear how things have worked out for other men and women in our situation.

Sue Sayers  
Gloucester

*Dear Sue*  
If you continue to work after Maternity Leave and your husband stays at home you will actually be better off in terms of the tax you pay. For this to be the case though, you must write off to both your tax office and your husbands instructing them to give you the tax allowances instead of your husband. You will have to have his signature on the letter agreeing to this. Keep a copy. And also ring your tax office to explain what you want.

*More and more women are claiming the allowance but it is still considered a highly unusual procedure by the Inland Revenue*

Once they have transferred the allowances to you you will be given the main breadwinner allowances as well as the wives earned income allowance which should make you better off.

Make sure you also claim allowances for the child, and for a mortgage.

There will be a problem for you if you are made unemployed or if you are off sick. Even if you are paying the full National Insurance stamp you will not be able to claim benefit for your husband as a dependant unless he is registered as disabled. If he was unemployed he could claim for you, but not the other way round. So your unemployment benefit would be at a reduced rate (you would lose £9.10 for your 'wife').

I have spoken to a few couples who have reversed roles. Most husbands seem to enjoy it until the novelty wears off. One complaint that I have heard so often from women at

home, and also men who are unemployed, is that by staying at home you gradually lose all confidence in yourself.

I think you should try to find a nursery or baby minder for your baby so that you can both go to work and neither be dependant. However, it would be very interesting to hear other people's feelings and experiences.

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
I am a divorced woman of 45 and I have joint custody of my two teenage children, with my ex-husband. I have fallen in love with an Australian guy who wants me to go and settle in Australia with him. My husband very rarely sees the kids and doesn't contribute towards their maintenance very regularly. Can my husband stop me going to Australia with my kids?

Suzanne Malman

*Dear Suzanne*  
The only way that you can

emigrate with your kids is to get sole custody of them, and this is difficult to do. You could get sole custody by persuading your ex-husband to agree to it and sign away his rights. If that failed you would have to go to court for a reversal which could cost a lot of money

The courts put great store by the parental bond and in your case they would probably claim that even if your husband doesn't see his kids very much by taking them across the world you are denying him the right to change his mind.

You will have to decide whether you can afford a long legal battle. You might have a point in your favour in court if you marry your bloke and his job requires him to return to Australia. This may seem very unfair as your ex-husband hardly sees the kids but the courts put great store by the family and the biological father even if this means little in reality.

Good luck.

# ANSWERED



# THE CASE OF THE VANISHING WOMEN

## WOMENS WORLD

by Judith Condon

MIKE AND Sharon. Bob and Lol. Pete and Sheila. I'd been collecting those names people stick on their car windscreens.

Of course it was the wealthy trendies and made-it mayors who started it all, with their personalised number-plates.

It was a long while back I started noticing them. But then on Gunnesbury Avenue in West London one day—see how it stuck in my mind—I saw this square-jawed trusting young man driving a white Rolls Bentley and his registration number was PEN 1 S.

Anyway, after I'd finished being sick, I decided I'd better shut my eyes in future whenever one of those statuesque bonnets came into my rear-view mirror. Which, let's face it, can be pretty dangerous.

And that brings me back to Bob and Lol and the rest. What I couldn't understand was, why don't many more women than men get killed in car accidents?

I mean, I've never seen a single instance of where the woman's name is anywhere but over the passenger seat. And everyone knows the front passenger seat is the most dangerous in any car.

My concern came to a head a couple of months ago. I saw one which read Me and Her. I mean, enough's enough. Here was a matter crying out to be investigated.

I hurried straight to Her Majesty's Stationery Office and I bought all the governmental department reports on road accidents and their prevention since the first days of the internal combustion engine.

Two weeks later, I finished reading them. Nothing. I suppose it was then I began to get really excited. There must be a discrepancy in the statistics somewhere. Here were thousands more women getting killed every day on British roads, and no one had recorded the fact.

Or had they?

Could it be, I began to wonder, that the facts had been suppressed?

I went over the records again to double check. Then I locked myself in my room with pen and paper and listed in a column all the logical possibilities.

'Could it be,' I wrote, 'that Bob-and-Lol-type name plates are part of a sinister trap laid by a foreign power with the purpose of discrediting Western Investigative Journalists (as we know) today?' Then I wrote on the right hand side, 'Unlikely.'

Then I wrote, 'Has the increase in gay couples hiring a car (but not yet coming out with single name plates) distorted my data?'

Again I had to write on the other side, 'Probably not. All men and all-female couples ought statistically to equal each other anyway.'

I never wrote, 'Is this an old-fashioned case of male-chauvinism?' To which I could only reply with another question, 'What, in 1999? You must be joking!'

By now I was becoming increasingly nervous. If I was really on to some official cover-up of discrimination in road deaths over a century of private motoring, then successive governments must have cooperated in maintaining the deception.

I took the precaution of locking my room when I left home in the morning, and I always looked down the street before I stepped out of the gate. After all, if I was on to them, they might be on to me.

Somewhere in Whitehall there must be a file marked Statistical Likelihoods of Deaths and Injuries per one hundred Woman Passenger Hours on major and minor Public Roadways in the British Isles, or some such, almost certainly, as I now believed, marked Top Secret.

So began my long attempts to get to that file, attempts that were to lead me close to some of the most mysterious unknown civil servants in the upper echelons of the corridors of power. That story cannot be told here.

I did find the answer, eventually. It was a sunny day and I was driving home.

A Rolls Bentley had come into my rear-view mirror and I was holding my eyes tight shut as is my usual practice.

All at once an image came into my mind. It was a happy Sunday afternoon scene with a family piled into a small saloon car. Dad and son were in the front. Mum and Granny were in the back. Of course!—I almost shouted with relief. There was the answer.

When two couples, or even a family, travel by car together, the women always go in the back, thereby leaving the front passenger seat to Bob's friend, or Lol's dad, or even Bob and Lol's son who likes to sit up front.

My faith in statistics was completely restored. The governments of a whole century have been vindicated. One form of discrimination is cancelled out by another, which only goes to show there's no discrimination at all.

# WHAT IS GOING ON?! meetings, plays, discos, badges, pamphlets, campaigns, concerts

## WV Meetings

- **Aberystwyth Womens Voice** Discussion groups: every other Tuesday. Farmers Side bar.
- **Ashford Womens Voice (Kent):** Thursday 11 May: 'Womens Liberation - has it arrived?' Speaker: Margaret Renn. 7.30pm The Trumpeter Inn (opposite Chartered Consolidated).
- **Black Country Womens Voice** meets fortnightly, Sunday afternoons. 2.30. at 27, Glen Court, Compton Rd, Wolverhampton. Children very welcome. Phone Wolverhampton 23233 for information.
- **Brighton Womens Voice Group.** Meets every Tuesday. Phone Sue 21060 or Manuela on Henfield 3843. Baby sitters can be provided.
- **Canterbury Womens Voice** meets every other Tuesday, 8.00pm at the Jolly Sailor, Northgate. 2nd May—Discussion on National Womens Liberation Conference 16 May — 'Women and the Subversion of the Community' 30th May — Womens Voice Rally and Womens Voice Organisation Phone Barbara, Lyvinge 862742
- **Cardiff Womens Voice Group** meets every other Tuesday, 7.30pm, at Union Books, 58 Bridge Street. If you need a babysitter, phone Bronwen at Cardiff 43480.
- **Central London Womens Voice:** Public meeting 'Sexual Politics and the Right' Speaker Dave Widgery. Thursday 25 May at 6.30pm. The New Inn, Tottenham Court Road — opposite Gooch Street Tube. All welcome.
- **Edinburgh Womens Voice** for information about Womens Voice contact Susie at Book Marx, 130, Morrison Street, Edinburgh. Open 10am-6pm.
- **Glasgow Womens Voice** meets regularly. For information phone Christina - 424-0118, or Sheila - 424-1048.
- **Hackney Womens Voice** meeting Monday 15

May, 8pm, Pornography - Who exploits whom? Speaker Alison Kirton, Dalston Library, Dalston Lane, Babysitting - phone Pauline 800 3586.

- **Halifax Womens Voice** meets weekly. Details from Womens Voice and Socialist Worker sellers. Womens Voice sold every Saturday 12.30-2.30, Co-op arcade, on the Precinct.
- **Hornsey Womens Voice:** Monday 22 May — meeting for anyone interested in setting up a Womens Voice group in the Muswell Hill/Crouch End/Hornsey area: Monday 12 June — public meeting on battered wives. For details see local Womens Voice sellers or ring Alison 263-3477, Janet 444-8922.
- **Lampeter Womens Voice** meet Tuesday evenings in college. Details from Womens Voice seller or write c/o SDUC Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales.
- **North Manchester Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on Mondays. Phone Maureen Tottah 061-205-2867 (after 6pm) for details.
- **Reading Womens Voice Group.** Meets the first Wednesday of every month. For further information and details of other activities, phone Reading 62150.
- **Shrewsbury Womens Voice** - meets on the first Wednesday of every month. We hold other meetings too, so for more information phone Shrewsbury 58830.
- **South West London Womens Voice** meet alternate Tuesdays at 91 Bedford Hill, Balham, SW12. 7.45pm Next Meeting: 16 May. Women and Socialism, speaker Margaret Renn (national Womens Voice organiser) 30 May, Women and Motherhood, speaker Nikki Mellor. 13 June: Pornography, local speaker. We are planning a Reclaim the Night demo in Balham on Friday 19 May. All welcome. Phone Marion 673 1329 for more information.
- **Tufnell Park/Kentish Town Womens Voice Group.** We're meeting regularly. If you would like to join us phone Gail on 485 0954 or Sheila on 263 0351 evenings.

## Womens Voice NOISS Public Meetings

- Votes for Women and Socialism for all
- Wednesday 17 May, SOAS, speaker Jenny Jackson ● Thursday 18 May, Portsmouth Poly, speaker Margaret Renn ● Friday 19 May, Kingsway Tech, speaker Margaret Renn ● Monday 22 May, Central London Poly, speaker Joan Smith ● Tuesday 23 May, Thames Poly, speaker Jenny Jackson ● Tuesday 23 May Kent University, speaker Margaret Renn ● Wednesday 24 May, North London Poly speaker Joan Smith ● Thursday 25 May Bedford College, speaker Jenny Jackson ● Thursday 25 May Reading University, speaker Margaret Renn ● Meetings also planned for: Middlesex Poly, University College, Orpington Tech, Stirling University, Jordanhill College, Lancaster University, Sheffield Poly and university, Teesside Poly, York and Warwick universities.

## Conferences

- **Maternity Rights in Nalgo:** Saturday 6 May, 1 pm 4.30pm, Polytechnic of Central London, 309 Regents Street, London (nearest tube Oxford Circus) Creche. All women interested welcome.
- **Socialist Workers Party Conference for Women Teachers:** Saturday 6 May, 10.30 am Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Sessions on: Women in teaching; How we organise women and the rank and file; Sexism in the curriculum; and an exhibition of sexist schoolbooks and alternatives. Please inform Tina on 021-523-2779 as soon as possible if you need creche facilities.
- **Women Hospital Worker meeting:** Why we build Womens Voice groups. How to draw women hospital workers into the struggle for socialism. Saturday 20 May, 1-5pm, The School, 21 Star Street, (off Edgware Road) Creche and refreshments available.
- **Merseyside Womens Day** 6 May. A day of discussion on 'Womens Liberation - what it is and what we want on Merseyside'. There will be a number of workshops. 10.00 am - 5.00 pm, May 6th, Union Building, University of Liverpool. Registration and details from Anne 051-727-4708. Creche details from Neville 051-733-8216.
- **Scottish Socialist Feminist Conference** Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 May Rosevale Centre, Rosevale Street, Partick, Glasgow. Registration £3, non-earners £1.50 — includes meals, papers, accommodation and creche. Details from M. Brand, 131 Montgomery Street, Edinburgh, 031-661-7315.

● **Blackmailed Back to Work** A Womens Voice pamphlet about maternity now! Price 10p. Send money with orders: 10p each, plus 10p postage, orders under 10, plus 20p postage order over 10. Money with orders, to leave in NALGO. Available now! Price 10p. Send Leave Pamphlet, Box 82 London E2.

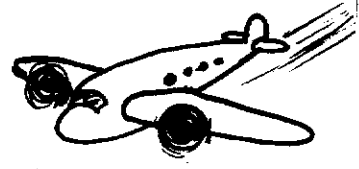
## Plays

- **She Asked for It.**
- **Next Performance** North London/Lea Valley Womens Voice Groups on MAY 8. Phone Mary 802 9563, Alison 251 3175 or Faith 985 0891 for all details.
- **Wolverhampton Womens Voice** Saturday 13 May 8.00pm The Gifford Arms, Victoria Street, Wolverhampton, followed by music and a

late bar. Phone Wolverhampton 23233 for details, or come along on the evening.

## Discos 'n' fun

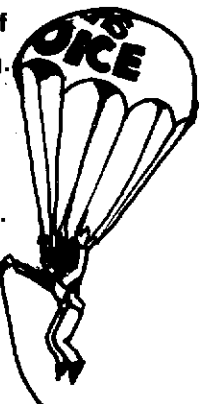
- **National Abortion Campaign Fund Raising Party:** Saturday 13 May, 8.00 pm, 72 Elms Road, Clapham Common South Side, Admission 50p, bring a bottle. Women only.



A day of political discussion, debate, information, and entertainment  
 What is happening to women today, at home, at work, in the unions. How can we fight for womens liberation and socialism. What sort of campaigns do we need. Where, and how should we be organising. How can we build Womens Voice and spread our ideas to an even greater number of women. Just some of the questions we will be asking and answering in the main sessions of the day. We will also be organising workshops in the middle of the day, so that everyone will have a chance to say something.

# See you at the Womens Voice Rally

The workshops will have invited speakers, as well as women from local Womens Voice groups, information sheets, displays.



There will be workshops on:  
**Women at work**  
 Maternity leave, equal pay, workplace nurseries (in private industry and the public sector). Organising at work where there is no union, or a badly organised union. How

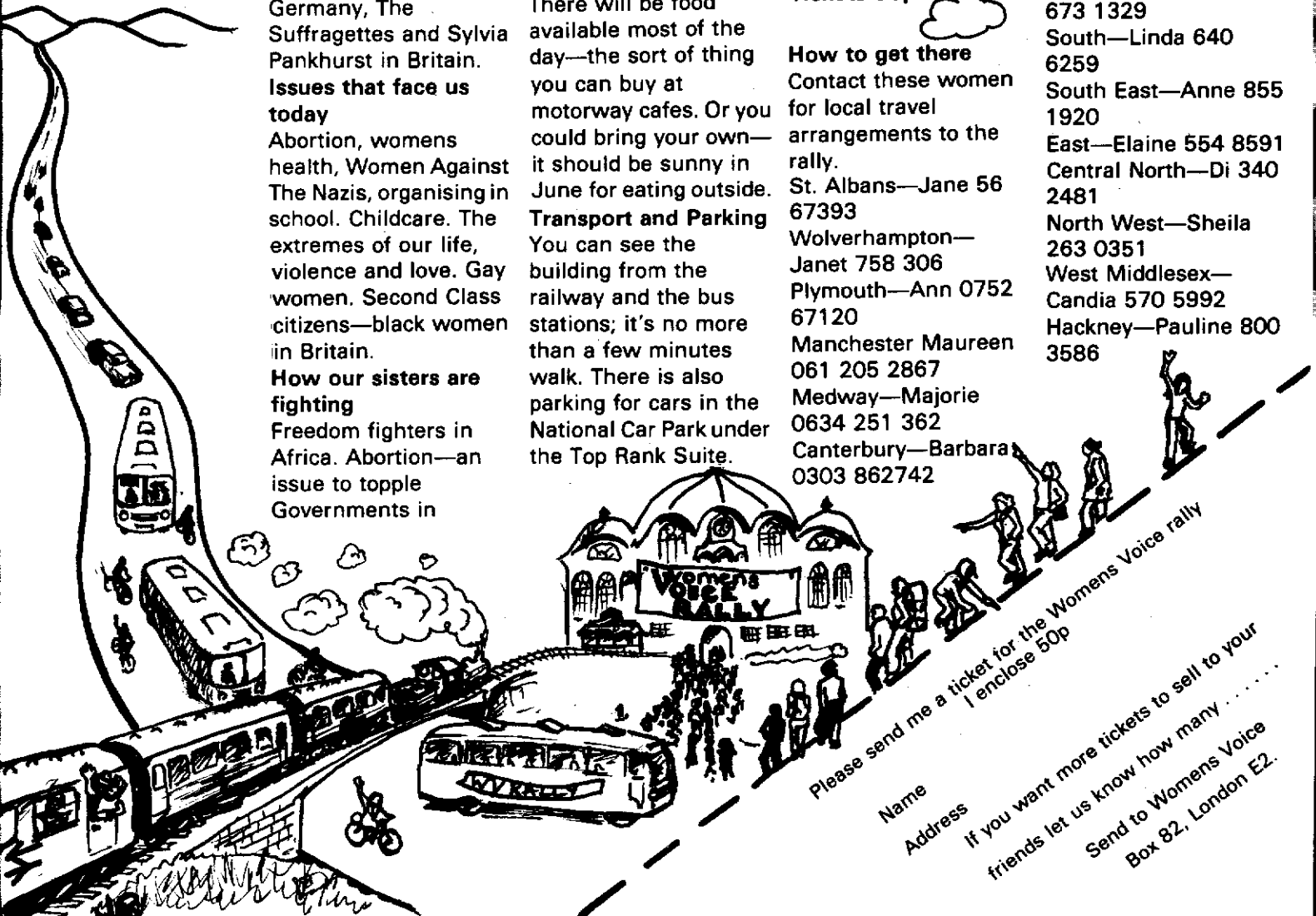
to build a stronger union and involve women members where the union already exists.  
**Our history**  
 How women have organised in the past: Alexandra Kollontai in Russia, Clara Zetkin in Germany, The Suffragettes and Sylvia Pankhurst in Britain.  
**Issues that face us today**  
 Abortion, womens health, Women Against The Nazis, organising in school. Childcare. The extremes of our life, violence and love. Gay women. Second Class citizens—black women in Britain.  
**How our sisters are fighting**  
 Freedom fighters in Africa. Abortion—an issue to topple Governments in

Europe. Women in Eastern Europe, America and Ireland.  
**At the end of the day**  
 we will draw the experience together, and set out the next steps. Where we go from here. How we build Womens Voice into the fighting organisation that we know it can become.  
**Food**  
 There will be food available most of the day—the sort of thing you can buy at motorway cafes. Or you could bring your own—it should be sunny in June for eating outside.  
**Transport and Parking**  
 You can see the building from the railway and the bus stations; it's no more than a few minutes walk. There is also parking for cars in the National Car Park under the Top Rank Suite.

Coaches can be parked near by.  
**Children**  
 We will even entertain the children! Toddlers will be in th nearby Poly, older ones will be taken on coach trips, picnics, swimming (weather permitting). Babies in cots will be in the Top Rand Suite.  
**Tickets 50p**

**How to get there**  
 Contact these women for local travel arrangements to the rally.  
 St. Albans—Jane 56 67393  
 Wolverhampton—Janet 758 306  
 Plymouth—Ann 0752 67120  
 Manchester Maureen 061 205 2867  
 Medway—Majorie 0634 251 362  
 Canterbury—Barbara 0303 862742

Cardiff—Theresa 0222 499579  
 Birmingham—Jenny 021 440 5794  
 Colchester—Elaine 020622 5603  
 Newcastle— Annie Whitley Bay 86149  
 Bedford—Linda 66809  
 Glasgow—Christina 424 0118  
 London  
 South West —Marion 673 1329  
 South—Linda 640 6259  
 South East—Anne 855 1920  
 East—Elaine 554 8591  
 Central North—Di 340 2481  
 North West—Sheila 263 0351  
 West Middlesex—Candia 570 5992  
 Hackney—Pauline 800 3586



Please send me a ticket for the Womens Voice rally  
 I enclose 50p

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 If you want more tickets to sell to your friends let us know how many . . . . .  
 Send to Womens Voice  
 Box 82, London E2.



# Womens VOICE

RALLY

FOR

WOMENS  
LIBERATION  
AND  
SOCIALISM

JUNE 10<sup>th</sup> 1978 SHEFFIELD

1130

Top Rank Suite