

Womens VOICE

**ISSUE NO. 2
10p**



**FOUR PAGE PULL-OUT
ON ABORTION
DEMONSTRATE AGAINST
THE ANTI-
ABORTION BILL**

WOMEN WORKERS WEEDED OUT ...AGAIN

'Weed out the Working Wives' runs the headline in the Daily Mail. Women with young children should stay at home quip the experts on the radio chat programmes. From all sides comes the argument—one solution to the unemployment problem is for women to stop work. Someone has to go. Why not start with the married women, they work for extras, and we cannot afford extras.

We're against all redundancies. We think everyone should have the right to work. We'll fight for every job. Unemployment is a waste of human resources. Lots of houses need building, we would all like to have cars, washing machines, more buses on the roads, more hospitals. Only when you work can you afford to pay for these things. When you're out of work, and can't afford to pay, factories are shut down and people are thrown out of work. It's a vicious circle.

The bosses employ people to make a profit. When it is profitable for women to work they beg us, even force us, to work. In the war women were expected to work. There was nothing odd about women welders, lorry drivers, builders. But when they can't make a profit the old ideas conveniently come flooding back—a woman's place is in the home.

If the battle against redundancy is lost then very often workers say well it's only fair that the women should go first. The family doesn't depend on them. In their homes there are two incomes, and if someone has to go, better that it is the additional income rather than the only income.

For a start one in five women is the sole wage earner for their household. And then, is it fair? Who will decide? Let's see where this argument takes us. First of all, every family will have to be means tested. If married women shouldn't work and bring in the extra money then presumably, sons, daughters, grandfathers and other assorted relatives should also be taken into account.

And of course, to see that all this is done fairly, according to the rules, a whole army of spies and snoopers will have to be employed to see that the means test is accurate.

This is where the argument leads too. If the 'household income' is the test for who goes first then every little detail of our lives comes in for scrutiny under the guise of being 'fair'.

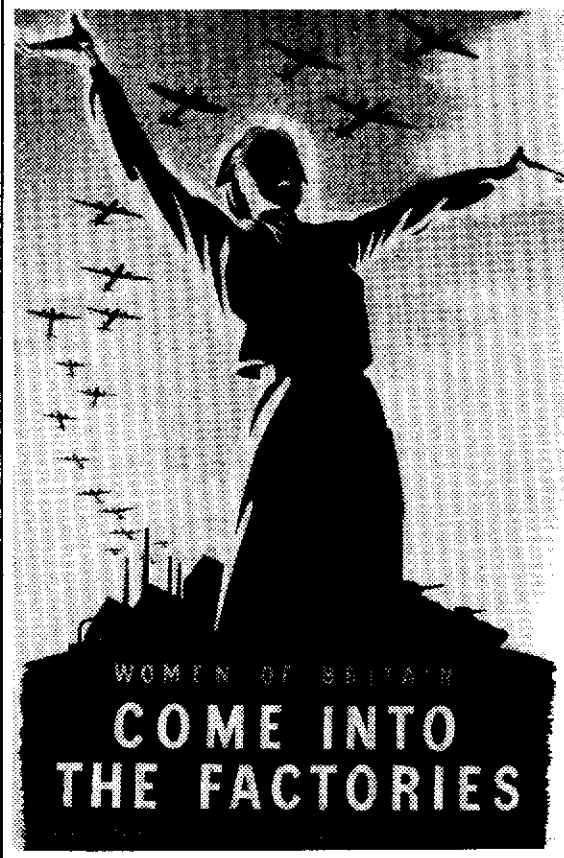
Of course no one wants that. More often the call for 'women out first' is tempered by the feeling that women should be at home or want to be at home, to do what the Mail calls the 'most important job in the world'

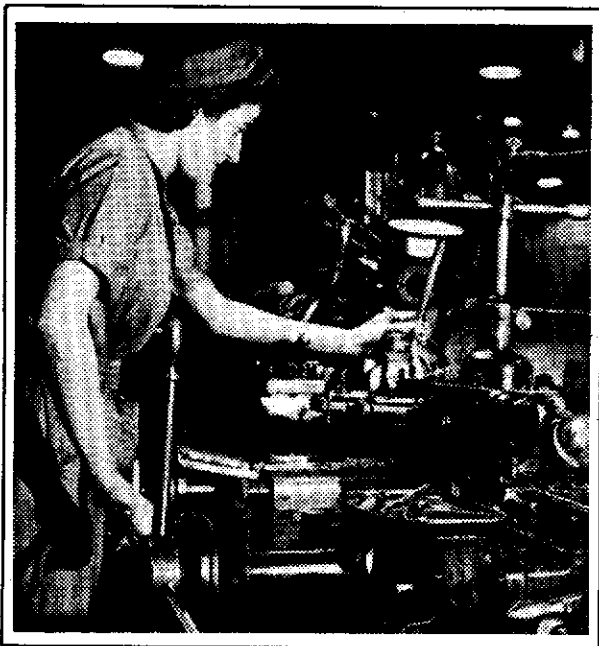
Our answer is simple. Some women want to be at home. Other women go to work because the family needs the money. And prefer to work because at work we are independent people—that's where we meet people as equals. Too often that doesn't happen in the home.

So we have this to say to the Government and the bosses — we have the right to work. Just don't expect the women to solve your problems.

The 'amazing adaptability' of women was unearthed during both world wars. All sorts of child care facilities cropped up to accommodate the needs of working women.

It's odd that now when our wages are a part of the essential household budget, we are being thrown on the dole and are being told that 'a woman's place is in the home'. Maybe they just don't make women like they used to—but we don't think so!





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**Cover picture
Syd Shelton**

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We have been inundated by articles and letters
and they haven't all gone in. But we still want
to go on receiving them.

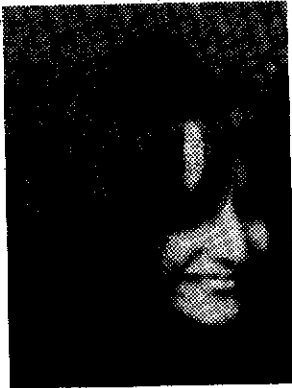
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Womens World

by Judith Condon



Woodrow Wyatt millionaire publisher and Sunday Mirror columnist spends most of his time denouncing trade unionists. He's quite famous for it. But this time he's got stuck into the bookies. He's making some enquiries on behalf of the Tote.

It seems Ladbrokes and Mecca and the rest, sprouting new branches on every High Street, are making their millions out of horse-racing without giving back their fair share. Race courses decline, trainers go broke, and the four-legged prima-donnas get sold abroad.

'Scandalous!' barks Woodruff. 'They are parasites, living off the racing industry.' But here he comes to ride them down. Good old Wyatt. Wyatt Twerp.

'Make the bookies pay!' ... now there's an idea.

Let's see. The refined sugar industry is making a lot of money lately. The British Sugar Corporation, with just a third share of the home market has just had an 87 per cent jump in profits in a year, from £7.6 millions to £14.3 millions—not bad little ol' profits by any standard. Tate and Lyle are also making out fine thank you, having got a tidy £112 millions out of the Government's scheme to save them from the sugar shortage. (note for young readers: the term 'Sugar Shortage' was coined in 1974, meaning rip-off, or treble-the-price.)

Now what have bookies and refined sugar got to do with each other, you may be asking.

Well, how about if the sugar bosses had to pay for all the health that keeps them going? How about if they got sent every dentist's bill? How about if they got fined for their lying slogans, such as 'Sugar gives you energy' which, being interpreted, means no more nor less than 'Sugar gives you fat.'

Then we could make the tobacco millionaires pay for all the hospital treatment for lung-cancer victims, and for all the fires caused by cigarettes, and for cleaning up public buildings and public transport of ash and dog-ends.

Come to think of it, Wyatt, how about ambushing those bandits holed up at the stock exchange, Biggest Bookies in town. Or maybe those boys are just too big for you...

Watch it! Duck! Here comes the backlash. The Festival of Light van is coming down your street in the next few months. Have you got your Licence to View? Remember if you are a church-going, clean living rate payer, and already have a licence, you have nothing to fear.

Festival-of-Light-Eliminates-Sex-from-the-Home (FLESH) agents will ask you just two simple questions: Are you normal? Can you control yourself? ...

The BBC last month shelved a programme in their series 'So you think you've got Problems', normally put out Sundays on Radio

Four. The programme contained a discussion between four lesbians, talking about the custody of children, old age, and the problems of 'coming out' for gay women.

Taking personal responsibility for the decision to shelve it is Ian McIntyre, controller of BBC Radio Four. He first knew of the programme's contents when he read Radio Times. His reason? Lesbians on a Sunday would offend people.

Now there's no doubt some people would have been offended, not least those who have been encouraged by their religious advisors to think of homosexuality as a sin or a disease. And there's no doubt the BBC would have had some irate telephone calls from Mary Whitehouse's supporters.

So what? 'If You Think You've Got Problems' has established its reputation by being forthright sympathetic and honest. Ian McIntyre clearly wants to put the clock back. Just lately he's been

reorganising Radio Four to cut down the 'magazine' presentation of current affairs, and restore the weight and authority' of the news bulletins.

Only he didn't exactly go out of his way to consult the journalists and editors at Radio Four, who are consequently up in arms.

But then, we don't know that he consulted anyone about his views that lesbians are 'inappropriate on a Sunday'. Or did someone consult Ian McIntyre?

Only a couple of months ago Thames Television withdrew a documentary series about changing sexual attitudes in Britain, for fear of 'offending some viewers'. Once again, the programme was based on real-life and had involved in this case extensive interviewing and research. What Thames discovered was that most people now have very much more liberated attitudes towards sex. They do not follow the strictures of the church when it

comes to making decisions about their private behaviour. This, the truth about most people, was judged to be offensive to some people. So the programme was shelved.

In case there's any doubt about who are the spokesmen for 'some people' let them speak up.

The Festival of Light has just published a report called, 'Age of Consent', on homosexuality. They are campaigning for a Parliamentary select committee to be set up to investigate the 'spread of homosexual practices and its propagation in Britain.'

While at the General Synod of the Church of England next month they'll be debating a motion 'Blasphemy During Broadcast Programmes' which in all likelihood will lead to the Bishops charging the BBC and ITV with Blasphemy, for misuse of the Lord's name.

In the face of such activity Ian McIntyre has shown cowardice, if not collusion. Sexuality, especially homosexuality, are OK subjects, it seems, if they are treated in a comic or titillating way. The trousers can go on dropping and the wrists being limp. But don't discuss it seriously and directly, whatever we do.

If Ian McIntyre can't defend a programme like 'If You Think You've Got Problems' from the whitewash brigade, then Lord help the news.

Last month we told the story of six months old Stephen McDonald. A printing error made it appear that he died in a council house.

The ghastly fact is that little Stephen froze to death in spite of all his parents' efforts to keep him warm, in a council HOSTEL for homeless people.

Quiz Answers.

- 1 The victim in rape cases cannot now be named during the trial. The man's name may appear in the press only if he is found guilty.
- 2 Just 198.
- 3 Michael Bergerac, boss of Revlon cosmetics. He gets £21,000 a week.
- 4 56p per hour.
- 5 The Co-op! The case was successfully taken up by the shop-workers union, USDAW.
- 6 The Queen.. Workers on Crown estates have no legal cover under the provisions of the act; nor do workers employed by local authorities.





NAFF PROPS UP RACIST BOSSES AT GRUNWICKS

by Susan Moroney
Grunwicks Strike Committee

I knew when I started working at Grunwicks that something had to happen. Conditions were really bad, especially on the factory floor. I worked in the office, so I wasn't treated too badly.

The women on the factory floor were treated worst. Most of them are Asian. They've had a really rough deal because they're quiet and they don't talk back.

You had to put your hand up to go to the toilet. And if you were pregnant you weren't allowed to go to the clinic. They told you to go on Saturday—but the clinic was closed on Saturday. It's really degrading.

'The management were racist too. They used to talk about the women, saying they're stupid and they couldn't understand English,—but they understood every word.

People were sacked on the spot for saying no. Besides the bad pay, we had to do compulsory overtime. 'We just walked out one day, after someone was sacked. A week later, we all got a letter from the management saying we'd all been sacked for participating in a strike.'

'If you mentioned a union before the strike, it was hopeless. No one would listen, everyone was scared because if you stepped out of line you were sacked.

'It's probably the same in a lot of small factories like Grunwicks. You

have to wait till something happens—and everyone will see why the union is so important. Most of us joined the union the week after the strike began.

'We've been out for 23 weeks



picture: John Sturrock (Report)

now. Since ACAS the Government conciliation service has been called in, it's drawn out the dispute and damped down the militancy. We've been hanging around and waiting for their decision. It's been a long time and it's getting boring!

'This strike could have been won already if we'd occupied the factory. We would have held the place and the management wouldn't have been able to do anything. The postment started blacking the mail for Grunwicks—and that would have won the strike, but they were stopped by the reactionary National Association for Freedom.

'The only thing now that will really help is the postmen, but there's not much chance of that because of the National Association for Freedom. We've had a lot of support from local trade unionists.

'The women from Trico are giving us a lot of support. When they came down to the picket line while the postmen were blacking, 50 police turned up! The Trico women come down evenings to help the pickets, and they've also been sending money and giving us support.

'We won't go back till we win. It's the principle. We won't go back till we've got everything. We've been messed aobut too much.'

PART-TIME FIGHT ON

London part-time teachers have been engaged in a campaign for better conditions for 2 or 3 years now. A Part-Time Charter has been drawn up, showing our contribution to the education service on the one hand, and our low pay and bad conditions on the other.

This has been widely circulated in London NATFHE (college teachers' union) branches, and activities have been co-ordinated by the London Region Part Time Staff sub-committee. The Part Time Charter has now been accepted as London Region policy—but it's

clearly up to members at branch level to argue the case and to try to get in touch with all the part-timers in their colleges.

In our branch, we've found out that by persistent introduction of motions at branch meetings, getting in touch with as many part timers as possible, we've been able to make full time staff more sympathetic to our position.

**MORE NEWS
OVERLEAF**

NEWS

HOW ARE the education cuts going to bite in your area? People who live and work in Essex have just found out—400 part-time school cleaners are to lose their jobs as well as 200 part-time and full time school meals workers. Piano accompanists, swimming instructors, maintenance staff, office workers, foreign language assistants, are all to be axed. Children are to be discouraged from sitting CSE exams. You would be forgiven for thinking that the education system was for the benefit of the children who go to school and the workers who work in it.

Why not take Womens Voice round the schools—anyone can walk in and speak to the cleaners and dinner ladies.

THE SACK IN REVENGE FOR EQUAL PAY

by Jenny Spencer

Four women at Rascal-Milgo in Hook, Hants. won an equal pay claim in a Tribunal last August. That gave them an £11 a week raise. But now, they have been made redundant because 'there is no work for them'.

One of the women, June Summerville, told Womens Voice that their work is being contracted out to other small electronics factories. The firm has had 8 temps and one contract worker employed since Christmas—and some departments are still working overtime 4 nights a week! And there is no work?

The employers are determined to fight the equal pay ruling. They've appealed once and lost—now they're appealing to the Employment Appeals Tribunal. Rascal-Milgo have not even paid the women the extra £11 a week they won back in August.

Rascal-Milgo, part of the Rascal group, are frightened of unions. They refuse to recognise the Transport and General Workers Union in the Hook factory, and there is a claim for recognition in at the moment.

It's very convenient to get rid of the active trade unionists like this, but the women are determined to fight. They're claiming unfair dismissal and intend to press the claim even though the management are offering sizeable pay-offs.

Rascal are no doubt very worried about their three bigger, unorganised factories in the area (Bracknell and Reading), where hundreds of women could claim equal pay if the Tribunal's decision is upheld.

BIRMINGHAM ROVER

'YOU CAN'T WORK HERE' TGWU TELLS WOMEN

Sheila Macgregor

Three women in the Rover car plant in Solihull, Birmingham, received letters from the Company recently giving them a start on the track.

When they arrived to start work they were told there had been an 'error'. They couldn't start.

The 'error' was that they were women. And the problem arose because the women had filled in job application forms and signed them only with their initials and surname. The forms went into the wrong file—the male file.

All new jobs at Rover go through the unions and the senior stewards in the TGWU keep two files for job applications, one for men and one for women.

Two of the three women were then offered driving jobs, a traditionally female job in the plant. They were jumping the queue for women's jobs, jobs for which other women had been waiting for up to a year. Other women drivers and one of the stewards quite rightly objected.

But their objections were not listened to. When the Company told the women to start work, the union called a meeting for all the drivers and the women were told bluntly by the senior TGWU stewards that if they made an issue over these two jobs or went out on strike, they might well be out on strike until June!

Under the pressure the women ferry drivers agreed to let them start. There are still no women on the track at Rovers.

One of the arguments used by the leading male stewards was that if women started work on the tracks they would have to work nights. It sounds progressive. But no one works nights at the Rover, though men sign a form agreeing to.

One man has worked for 21 years in the plant and has still not worked one single night.

If the Company want to start a night shift it's a battle the entire workforce will have to fight. But the other question is this—if it comes to a job and agreeing to work nights, or no job at all, what do you do? As one woman put it:

'I think the women should have the chance to come in. With mortgages the way they are and the problem of getting jobs women should have the right to decide whether they do nights. There are so many other jobs women could do—in the stores, inspection—if a woman can come up with the qualifications, she should get the job.

'Most of the jobs are unskilled, and if the Company can train up the men who know nothing about the job they can train the women.'

At present the question of nights is being used as an excuse to stop women getting any jobs at all. One steward is heard to have said that women would start on the track over his dead body, and rumour has it that the senior stewards intend to call a mass meeting of all the women to put a resolution that no women should be able to work nights.

If such a resolution goes through unemployed women will have no chance of a job in Rover.

Instead the women should pass a resolution calling for all jobs to be open to women, and no shift working to be done anyway.

It's ironical that since the Sex-Discrimination Act came into force the only jobs where the opposite sex has been allowed in is on ferry driving traditionally a woman's job, where a few men have been started. No women have been started on traditionally men's jobs. The Convenor is all in favour of equality for women but if women were to get jobs on the track that, in his opinion, would be to discriminate against men.



picture: John Surrack (Report)

FILING CABINET MILITANCY?

The Industrial Tribunals in Scotland are not any more in favour of equal pay for women than they are in Britain.

Out of 43 cases heard only 13 have been won for the women. But Jimmy Milne, the General Secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, is still arguing 'It's not the Tribunal's fault. It's the legislation.'

Certainly the Equal Pay Act's criterion of 'broadly similar' work is vague and gives rise to plenty of loopholes. But tribunals have leapt through these loopholes.

In Scotland even the basic structures of the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts aren't there. There is no branch office of the Equal Opportunities Commission. There is one Scottish member of the Commission, who gave good news to Scottish women by reporting 'Scotland is high on our priority lists as far as an office is concerned.' After an office, what then!

Three million women are entitled to receive child benefit. One million women still haven't applied. That's scroungers for you.

RACIST COLQUHOUN

In last month's Women Voice, we interviewed Maureen Colquhoun. She explained the dilemma that Labour MPs find themselves in—how hard it is to stand by socialist principles when the Government is demanding Party loyalty in forcing through massive public expenditure cuts, and bailing the employers out of their crisis.

Many readers found her confusion the most telling part of the interview, since it raised the question, why stay in the Labour Party at all.

But how confused can you get, Maureen? Since our interview was published Maureen Colquhoun has been in the news again because she thinks Enoch Powell may not be such a racist after all. People ought to listen to what he has to say. The Labour Government should take notice.

How can a Labour MP voice such opinions? Everyone 'knows Powell is a racist. Everyone knows he is in favour of immigration control and repatriation.

The truth is that the Labour Party gives way to the racials all the time, and Maureen Colquhoun goes with them.

The kindest thing to say is that she has completely flipped her lid. Whatever the cause, we only have this to say: Maureen, you may consider yourself a feminist and a socialist, but we want nothing to do with your feminism or socialism so long as it is smeared by this concession to the racials.

Picture: Chris Davies (Report)



SAVING OUR HOSPITALS IN LONDON & NEWCASTLE

by Wendy Plimley

Women's Voice supporters have been taking to the streets in South London and Newcastle to launch the "Save Our Hospitals" campaign. So far in South London, the Womens Voice Group has held two Saturday street meetings in the busy Balham High Road shopping centre. Using posters, placards and a loudhailer, they soon had queues of people to sign their petition calling for an end to the plans to close up to four hospitals in the area. Many shoppers who signed were appalled at the management's proposals for cuts, which include the possible closure of the Weir Maternity and South London Women's hospitals. Very few had any idea of the plans, not surprising, since they were contained in confidential documents to the Community Health Council (supposedly the consumer's voice in the Health Service!).

The Womens Voice supporters were very nervous about speaking in public at first but they forced themselves to do it and actually found it easier than they thought, especially if they wrote down something first and read it out. It can't have been too terrifying, as they're now planning more street meetings in other shopping centres!

One of the Womens Voice Group, Jenny Wienstein, is the Secretary of the Save Our Hospitals steering committee in South London.

The campaigning of the Womens Voice Group and Right to Work committee has encouraged union representatives from the South London, St. James's, Springfield and St. George's hospitals to join the committee and there is a real chance of starting a fight against the management's plans.

The Newcastle Women's Voice Group also held a street meeting on

a Saturday lunchtime. They attracted queues of people to sign their "Save Our Hospitals" petition. They eventually got 600 signatures and sold 33 copies of Women's Voice. They also made an impression on the Newcastle General Hospital, where four wards have been closed. They sold 41 copies of Womens Voice and went around the hospital talking to nurses and other hospital workers.

There is anger everywhere about hospital closures and cuts in health care. There is also ignorance and confusion about what's happening, because of the secrecy and devious tactics used by hospital managements. But there is no doubt that women are going to take the brunt of the attack. The massive extent of the closures of maternity hospitals and wards, women's hospitals, gynaecology and children's wards will mean unsafe and dehumanised, production-line childbirth, and even increased infant mortality. The cuts in general hospital services will turn wives and mothers into unpaid nurses, cooks, laundry-maids, domestics and eventually undertakers.

SAVE OUR HOSPITALS CAMPAIGN CONFERENCE

Saturday 19 March

Portland Hall, 16 - 22 Riding House Street, off Great Portland Street, London W1

Note new Venue



send for delegates' credentials and further details: Right to Work Campaign, 265a Seven Sisters Road, London N4

Accommodation and babysitting can be organised.

Womens Voice supporters can play a fantastic role in building a national "Save Our Hospitals" fight back:

1. Find out what cuts are taking place -

Walk into hospitals, talk to staff and ask to see union representatives;

Go to the monthly meetings of the Area Health Authority and Community Health Council, which are open to the public.

Look up their minutes for details of long term plans and proposed cuts. Look in the local library for the Registrar General's figures on death rate, infant mortality, etc in the area.

2. If hospital workers are taking action, offer to help by leafletting estates and shopping centres, taking round petitions, organising public and street meetings, lobbies of management offices, demonstrations, pickets, etc, by introducing them to other local militants in the public sector and outside workplaces.

Go on marches, pickets and lobbies with Womens Voice banners and placards, and sell Womens Voice and Save Our Hospitals badges. Make sure that hospital workers see the rank and file paper "Hospital Worker" and know about the national "Save Our Hospitals" conference for hospital union delegates on March 19th.

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3. If hospital workers are inactive, collect petitions around the community to demonstrate the strength of feeling locally, hand out leaflets at the gates of the hospital (6.30-8am or 4.30-6pm), in canteens and rest-rooms inside the hospital, to patients on the wards and visitors at visiting time. Bombard the local press with letters, local radio with phone calls. Why not try getting John Pilger of the Daily Mirror to come and write about the state of your local hospitals?



Picture: Andy Ward (Report)

NEWS

MAGNAVOX

EQUAL PAY: LOW GRADES ABOLISHED

TWO hundred women at Magnavox, in East London, have made equal pay a possibility for thousands of women in the engineering industry.

Last year the management introduced a job evaluation scheme to regrade the womens jobs to give them equal pay. The women got no extra money and found themselves almost all in the bottom three grades.

One group, the coil winders, were put in too high a grade and management, discovering their mistake, said they would have to cut the women's wage.

It was the last straw for the women who knew the grading scheme had diddled them out of equal pay. So they came out on strike, demanding that all the women in the lowest grades, 6, 7 and 8, be upgraded to grade 5, the semi-skilled rate.

They didn't get all they wanted, but the women were moved up one grade—from grade 8 to 7, from 7 to 6, and from 6 to 5.

There are a quarter of a million women in engineering. When the Equal Pay Act became law in 1970 the Engineering Employers Federation did its best to make sure that women didn't get equal pay. The best way to avoid paying up was to regrade jobs, putting all the women into the lowest grades.

The Engineering union, the AUEW, agreed with the employers that all women would be put onto the semi-skilled rate to give them better wages. But the employers have been able to create more and more semi-skilled rates with the women on the lowest.

So women in engeering still don't get equal pay, unless they can do away with the grading scheme, or get all the lowest grades abolished.

The women at Magnavox have gone one step in that direction. Grade 8 has gone.

If you are in touch with women or men, working in engineering tell them about the strike at Magnavox; find out what the grades in the factory are; see if the women do get anything like equal pay. Start the fight for equal pay now.



picture: Syd Shelton

CLEANERS' ASBESTOS STRIKE

"IF IT'S SAVED A LIFE, IT'S BEEN WORTH IT"

by GARRY BUSHELL
AND JENNY JACKSON

Five women cleaners at the Holbrook Annexe of Northeast London Polytechnic have been on strike for four and a half months. Womens Voice went to speak to them.

WV: Why did the strike start?

Ann: Over the health and Safety Act being broken. We were allowed to work for three months while asbestos was being sawn up illegally. The workmen were all non-unionised. They told us they were working in plaster-board.

MARY: We were ignorant about the dangers of the material, otherwise action would have taken place sooner. There were no warning notices. By law the place should have been empty.

WV: What did you do when you found out it was asbestos?

Ann: I phoned up the regional officer of the General and Municipal Workers Union, Bill McCall. He said, 'Ann. I can't get down there till next wee.' So we carried on sweeping.

When he did come down, he

brought us out. And then after a week, he turned management side. He refused to call out other GNWU workers in the poly. He's kept us isolated from other GMWU members.

I phoned up the shop steward, Eve, and she didn't want to know. McCall had warned her not to have anything to do with us.

We leafleted the other women cleaners in the poly. Out of 41, only one turned up.

WV: Is the union doing this because you're women?

Mary: It's nothing to do with us being women. McCall was exactly the same with the ambulance men when they came out on strike in December. He sold them out.

WV: So why do the union officials sell out?

Mary: They're appointed officials, not elected. They're appointed for life. We've got to remove these people. We ought to be able to give them a vote of no confidence and get them out.

If the members only knew their strength. We need a new system, we want a new system, the officials are our servants, we are not theirs.

They are so corrupt. They won't do anything for us. We have to take action ourselves.

WV: Have you been on strike before?

Ann: This is the first time. Mary's worked here 12 years, Flo 9 years, Queenie 10, me 10, and Lorraine since last July.

Mary: Four years ago they built a TV studio. They were sound-proofing it. We were sweeping it up. Then we all got itchy, all our arms were itching and bleeding. When we

complained, we were told we were sweeping up fibreglass. We complained to the union, but nothing was done.

Ann: The G&M claim to have done the most research into asbestos, but they haven't got a safety department. We haven't seen anyone from there.

The safety rep here in the poly is the scabby caretaker who swept up the asbestos dust, washed it, polished it. He's useless.

WV: The G&M has thousands of women members. Has the women's organiser come down to help?

Ann: The only one we've seen is Bill McCall.

WV: What's it been like for you and your families whil you've been on strike?

Ann: It's a great strain on all of us. We've been picketing seven days a week, from 6.30am till 11 pm some nights.

Mary: My family's browned off. They're disgusted with the poly being allowed to break the law and get away with it.

WV: Has it been worth it?

Ann: If it's saved someone from dying from asbestosis or suffering, then it's been worth it.

STOP PRESS

The women have been offered a settlement which includes their demands of a register of all people who have used the building when the asbestos was there, three weeks back pay plus pay while the industrial cleaners come to safely dispose of the asbestos and talks to unionise all the workers at the Poly. Also Lorraine Webb will be reinstated.

Ann Nicholson told Womens Voice, 'This is what they agrees to at the meeting on Thursday. We are keeping up the picket. We don't trust them b . . . s till we get it in writing.'

*Ann Nicholson told Womens Voice, 'This is what they agreed to at the meeting on Thursday. We are keeping up the picket. We don't trust them b * * * * s till we get it in writing.'*



The above badge has been causing some red-chiffon faces at Tory Central Office. Its the Young Conservatives' idea of a jolly slogan.

Send your news to Womens Voice. Next copy date: 21st February.

THEY STILL WANT STRIPPERS

by Elaine Delay, NELP.

A motion was passed in our last Union meeting to change the union policy on sexist entertainment at North East London Polytechnic. Previously, strippers had been banned.

The motion was proposed in a very trite way, and the reason for it

was simply that 'three clubs have complained that they can't have strippers'. When I spoke against it, I was heckled, whistled and booed at.

Since the meeting, though, we've got organised. We need 150 signatures to call a speical general meeting—we are circulating a petition to do this. Then we'll see the policy changed again.



Employment Protection Act
1975

MATERNITY LEAVE

HOW GOOD IS YOUR MATERNITY AGREEMENT?

Judith Hamilton

Now the Employment Protection Act clause on maternity leave is working most unions will be negotiating or renegotiating agreements. Here's a checklist to help you.

1. PACKAGE DEALS: Insist that an agreement embodies ALL the (minimum) conditions of the Employment Protection Act, (see Womens Voice, January 1977) so that no-one is forced to choose overall worse conditions because of one better clause that maybe in the Act.

2. UNMARRIED WOMEN: The agreement must apply to ALL women. The Sex Discrimination Act still allows discrimination against unmarried people.

3. ELIGIBILITY FOR MATERNITY PAY: One year's employment in that job is the current norm. Negotiate to reduce this. Remember that maternity pay will come from a central fund.

4. CONTINUOUS SERVICE GUARANTEE: This means no loss of entitlement to holiday pay, sick leave, promotions, pensions or redundancy pay. It takes 2 years extra work to make up for a break in service caused by pregnancy.

5. LENGTH OF LEAVE: The Employment Protection Act gives 6 weeks on full pay and up to 12 more weeks of maternity allowance. It's possible to have up to 40 weeks off. Many agreements give more weeks on full pay and some on half-pay.

6. SICK LEAVE AND HOLIDAY LEAVE: Pregnant women are not sick and they need holidays. Maternity leave should not be counted as either. Illness during pregnancy should not be taken out of maternity leave.

7. TIME OFF BEFORE THE BIRTH: The length of time should be flexible to suit the mother's wishes. Under the EPA 11 weeks is the maximum, without losing the right to maternity pay. The agreement should cover for any extra time needed (e.g. for health risks such as German measles) or provide an alternative safeguard.

8. NO WITHHOLDING OF PAY: Many agreements are conditional on a return to work, and may withhold pay until some time after the return, or reclaim it. The effect of this 'post-maternity' qualification is that many women forfeit maternity leave—however long they've worked previously. Even the best agreements still insist on some indication of an intention to return.

9. EXTRA UNPAID LEAVE WITH GUARANTEE OF REINSTATEMENT: Women might want a year or two off to look after the baby. Or they might be forced to stay at home because there are no nurseries. About 80 per cent of women with children under 5 years old do not work.

10. PAY FOR FIXED HOLIDAYS: Teachers and other workers with fixed holidays may have to fight for full pay when holiday periods overlap with discretionary parts of maternity leave. Employers often claim that a pregnant woman should treat this as part of maternity leave.

11. TIME OFF TO VISIT CLINICS: The agreement should cover visits to ante-natal and child-care clinics.

12. PATERNITY LEAVE: Men should have a few days leave around the birth of a child.

13. FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY LEAVE: Men and women need time off to look after members of the family, without this cutting into their own holiday and sick leave.

An Apology: last month's information about Nalگو was wrong. Those conditions are just a new model. Current NALGO conditions are much worse: 4 weeks' full pay and 14 weeks' half pay, some of which may be withheld for three months.



Stop the Closure of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital

Delegate conference, Saturday 12 February, 11am - 1pm.
Write to the EGA Hospital, Euston Road for credentials.

NEWS

Dinner ladies toss in the ladle

Last year the Government decided to save money on school meals by putting the price up from 10p to 25p. The increase starts next September.

Now the Government wants to save another £45 million on school meals. They can't put up the price yet again, and they can't reduce the nutritional standards any further. But the money still has to be saved.

Dot Langthorn is a school dinner lady in a North Manchester secondary school. She helps serve 300 meals a day. She told Womens Voice:

'They can't very well reduce the nutritional value of the food because it is already inadequate. At my school they only have potatoes three times a week. They used to have cod. Then it was coley. And now its fish fingers. I have stopped my own son, aged 10, eating school dinners because they are nothing but stodge.'

'To achieve this sort of cut they are going to cut staff by about a third, stop replacing the already inadequate equipment, and totally cut out choice.'

'They will have to introduce soya

protein, which Manchester have always said they wouldn't. And the children who already blame us for rotten food won't eat it.'

'If they cut the staff like that we would have to see some of our friends going down the road, and we just couldn't cope with the extra work. At the moment we are often glad to cover for someone off sick to get extra money, as we only get 89p an hour.'

'There are only eight workers in my kitchen, plus the supervisor and there is already a dispute about replacement of staff who have left. I am convinced they are trying to cut by the back door.'

'The women aren't interested in politics, and they blame the unions for the state things are in. So far they haven't come to the union meetings. But when Rita, the girl they are trying to sack, came to the one to discuss her case she said it was really interesting and she would come again. They have just divided our branch into small local meetings so it might be easier to get them there. I think they will be really shocked by this sort of cut. I don't know if they will fight—but we'll have to try.'

"We felt the married women should be cut first"

150,000 women are being denied benefits by the Government because they are women.

Heather McMahon had to give up work to look after her paralysed husband. She applied for the new invalid care allowance and started receiving money in November last year.

Then the Government stepped in and appealed against the payments—on the grounds that Heather was married and 'should have been at home anyway'.

The Department of Social Security said 'We just couldn't afford to give this to everyone, We

felt the married women should be the ones to be cut first.'

Womens Voice supporters in Glasgow are organising a campaign to get the allowance paid to married women. If you know of a married woman should be the ones to be cut first.'

Womens Voice supporters in Glasgow are organising a campaign to get the allowance paid to married women. If you know of a married woman in a similar position who is willing to help with the campaign, or if you would like to help yourself write to us and we'll put you in touch with Glasgow.

Married Womens Invalid Care Allowance

I'm interested/I know someone who is interested in helping with the campaign.

Names.....

Address.....

Send to Womens Voice, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2.

DEBATE THE NAC

Dear Margaret

At the last Steering Committee meeting of the National Abortion Campaign (11.1.77), a representative from the Socialist Workers Party gave an outline of its plan of action to defeat the Benyon Abortion (Amendment) Bill. We understand that you have decided to hold a demonstration and rally on the afternoon and evening of the 25th February (the date of the Second Reading of the Bill). We also see in Socialist Worker that a call has been put out to members of the SWP/Women's Voice and NOISS to build for this demonstration.

At no time has NAC or any of the other organisations involved in the campaign against the Bill been approached for consultation and discussion about: a) the wisdom of calling for a demonstration on that day, in terms of plans already made for the week ending the 25th by organisations in the campaign; and b) how the forces that have been involved in the campaign over the past two years can work together to build the broadest and most effective campaign against the Bill. We feel that the tactics used for fighting the Bill should be planned on the basis of using these forces in the most positive way, and not, as the sister from the SWP suggested, on the basis of the more activities the better. We cannot see how the demonstration, particularly because of the way it has been put forward, will do anything except fragment the campaign, and we see no possibility of it having any effect on what happens in Parliament, which is surely the major reason in mobilising against the Bill in the first place.

In view of the above, we cannot support your call for a demonstration, and will not be building for it. We intend to continue with the plans to which we have already committed ourselves for fighting the Bill—a week of action leading up to a lobby of Parliament and rally on the 24th February, and a national demonstration in May. These decisions have been taken at open meetings over the past weeks that the SWP has had every opportunity to attend and to which we would have welcomed contributions. We ask the SWP and Women's Voice to commit themselves to these initiatives, and to work within the campaign already in existence to defeat the Benyon Bill. We therefore ask you to withdraw the call for a demonstration on February 25th.

Yours Rose Shapiro
pp National Abortion Campaign
Steering Committee

Dear NAC,

You want to know why we have called a demonstration during the debate on the abortion bill. You say it cannot possibly influence what happens in Parliament—presumably because it is happening at the same time as the debate,—and you are annoyed at us for calling it independently of the NAC campaign.

We think the campaign has to organise the largest number of women against this bill, so that MPs are forced to take notice, by sheer weight of our number. MPs depend for their livelihood on votes. Let them see that we threaten their votes and we may influence what they do. They will be swayed by a massive campaign, just as they were when In Place of Strife and the Industrial Relations Act were defeated, when thousands upon thousands of trade unionists demonstrated and campaigned.

We knew this new anti-abortion bill was coming. We knew that the moral backlash which James White and Leo Abse are riding high on, had not suddenly gone away. For us abortion

rights have come to represent all women's rights—lose on abortion and the onslaught will really begin.

This new bill will revive the campaign, but only if the maximum number of women hear about it, and see that there is something that can be done about it. That's why we think there needs to be a demonstration on the day,—not to influence the MPs but to get the maximum publicity for what is happening in Parliament.

That has always been our policy in NAC—to build an active campaign which involves masses of women. It is difficult to keep up the tempo of a single issue campaign. It takes a new bill, an outrageous statement, a ban or prohibition for people to be able to focus their attention. And a campaign also needs to keep growing—there were 40,000 women on the first big NAC demonstration. They are the ones who could build the campaign, not day by day perhaps, but for the big event.

When we heard just before Christmas about the bill we phoned NAC office to find out what was happening. We were told there were plans for a conference in March and a demonstration in May. Nothing was planned for the day at that time.

What were we to do? Go to the steering committee, for three, four, five weeks and have our suggestion rejected, too late to do anything about it as has happened in the past. Or did we go ahead with our own plans hoping that our lead would find a response in those women who are against the bill.

We always argued for an elected steering committee so that decisions like these could be taken in a democratic way.

And we have always argued for more activity. After the June demonstration we argued for another demonstration. It took us six months to win the vote, and even then that decision by a national planning meeting was greeted with suspicion by the steering committee.

At the same time we argued for picketing the enormous SPUC demonstration in London. You wouldn't support it, so we organised independently. We organised the demonstration inside the House of Commons during the debate on the Select Committee report, whilst you publicly disclaimed any responsibility.

We went through the same argument about the SPUC rallies last autumn. You wouldn't support the pickets so we organised them independently of NAC nationally. In some localities we recalled meetings of NAC and organised pickets jointly. If Womens Voice had not taken the initiative NAC would have done nothing.

We do believe in the more activities the better. And the more militant the better. We don't believe in tailoring what we do to what is going on in Parliament, and the influencing of people therein. That's why we are still going ahead with our demonstration.

Of course we will support other NAC activities, so long as they are designed to involve large numbers of women and not the highly conscious few. If this second reading of the bill goes through we will campaign, as we did before, inside the unions. We will support a national demonstration. But we will not sit in endless meetings for others to waste our time.

Womens Voice, NOISS and the SWP will use every resource at its disposal to defeat this bill. That is our reason for calling this demonstration.

Margaret Renn
SWP/Womens Voice.

A new anti-abortion bill is being debated
in parliament. We say:

NO RETURN TO BACKSTREET ABORTION

1967

The Abortion Act became law making abortion legal in the majority of cases. It said that a woman could get an abortion if:

1 Continuing the pregnancy would involve a greater risk to her life, to her physical or mental health, or to the mental and physical health of her existing children, than if the pregnancy were ended.

2 There was a substantial risk that the child could be born seriously handicapped.

3 The abortion was carried out within 28 weeks of conception.

4 The woman's environment, or her social environment, made the pregnancy impossible.

This, the social clause of the 1967 Abortion Act, has given relief to hundreds of thousands of women: women whose contraceptive failed; women with large families; girls who didn't know about contraception, or didn't know how or where to get it; women who simply could not afford another child; women living in already cramped, unhealthy conditions.

The 1967 Abortion Act for the first time gave most working class women access to safe, legal abortion on the National Health Service.



"Well speaking as a Catholic I don't think we really want an abortion do you"

1977

William Benyon, Tory MP for Buckingham, moves a new bill to make abortion illegal again in the majority of cases. His bill will:

1 Ban all abortions after 20 weeks except where there is a grave threat to the mother's health

2 Insist that all abortions to be notified to the woman's GP and all advice given to girls under 16 to be in the presence of her parents.

3 Restrict the charities that run abortion advice centres and clinics making abortions more expensive

4 Give the police the right to snoop into the records of abortion clinics and centres.

5 All of these restrictions and more would make abortions more difficult to get, costlier, and would encourage every backward idea about women's right to control their own lives.

Benyon: anti abortion and anti kids

William Benyon is Tory MP for Buckingham. In his constituency the local council tried to stop all school dinners in order to save money. They decided not to go ahead with that plan and closed all the nursery schools and school libraries instead. *That is the depth of his care for children and women.*



TAKE TO THE STREETS!

Demonstrate
Friday

25 February
Assemble 12.30,
West Smithfield
(Farringdon and
Blackfriars tube
station) Rally in
Central Hall 3pm.
Bring banners,
and your children

National Abortion Campaign

Procession and
Rally

6pm, Procession leaves
Victoria, Bressenden Place, to
Lobby of Parliament 7.30,
Central Hall, Westminster

SIX QUESTIONS ABOUT ABORTION

Isn't contraception better

Of course it is, but there is no contraceptive that is 100 per cent effective and safe for all women. Many women cannot use the pill, others cannot use the IUD, the two most effective methods. Many women, and many more young girls, do not know where to get contraceptives, or are afraid or too embarrassed to ask.

The more readily available contraception is, the better sex education, the less abortions there will be. Even then there will be some women who will need abortion as a last resort.

If abortion were free wouldn't more be wanted

The decision to have an abortion is never an easy decision. It never will be, no matter what the law.

Before abortion was made legal women still had abortions in nosh private clinics if they

Is abortion dangerous

It is possible now to detect pregnancy earlier than ever before. Modern abortion techniques make it a quick and simple operation carried out in the first few weeks of pregnancy.

Abortion carries less risk than child birth. In 1972, there were 9.6 womens deaths per 100,000 abortions, compared to 18 womens deaths per 100,000 live births. It was these figures that made the anti-abortion campaigners say that the 1967 Abortion Act gave abortion on demand, because all abortions were safer than pregnancy. Most abortions are in fact done during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, with less than 1 per cent of abortions carried out after 20 weeks when the risk is much greater. Most late abortions are done for medical reasons.

Why do you campaign for abortion

lower stems if they could not.

Since 1967 there has been an increase in the number of abortions because a lot of women who would never have dared ask now know they are likely to get an abortion.

But it is not always easy, as hospital consultants have the final say and many of them are anti-abortion. The number of abortions is now on the decrease: 1974 - 163,117, 1975 - 140,521.

Abortion is the same as killing

isn't it

Murder is an emotive word used by the anti-abortion campaign. To believe abortion is murder is to believe that life begins from the first moment on conception.

The law says at the present time that abortion can be carried out until the 28th week of pregnancy because that is the earliest possible time that the foetus, if born, can survive outside the womb.

Who should we think of first, the foetus which is not capable of life outside the womb, or the mother who is already having to cope with life and would find another child an impossible burden.

Abortion is not yet available to every woman who wants an abortion. If a doctor refuses you an abortion it is possible to get one privately. The more abortion is restricted the higher the price will be. That is why abortion must be free, carried out on the National Health Service like all similar operations.

We also say that the final decision for an abortion must rest with the woman—she is the one who has to weigh up all the consequences. Her decision should not be hampered by financial considerations or doctors' prejudices.

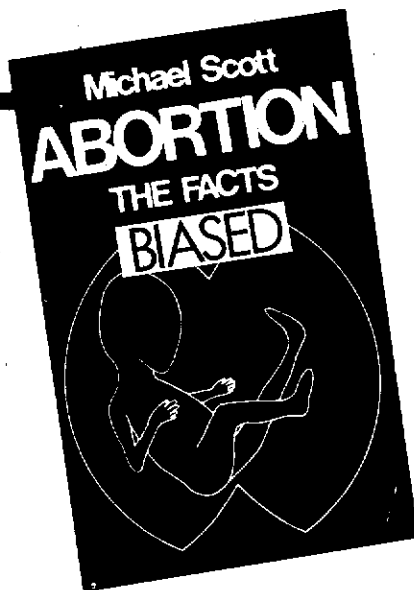
Why is the right to abortion so important

Women have been fighting for hundreds of years to have more control over their lives. Abortion is one of the most important rights that has been won. If the anti-abortion lobby succeed in changing the law it will be a defeat for everyone who has ever believed in women's rights.

STOP THE ANTI-ABORTION BILL NO RETURN TO BACKSTREET ABORTION

womens VOICE

ABORTION



This pamphlet came into the hands of Womens Voice with **biased** scribbled on the front cover. It attempts to gain support for the anti-abortion ideas of SPUC and concludes by inviting young schoolgirls to join its ranks. Women campaigning for abortion rights are described by Michael Scott as 'female chauvinist sows'.

Well, Mr Scott, despite your apparent 'knowledge and experience' of pregnancy I'm glad to say that there are many girls who are not taken in by your **inaccurate** and crude rantings.

If SPUC propaganda is being distributed in your school why not send it in to Womens Voice.

WHERE THE UNIONS STAND

National Union of Journalists—*abortion on demand*

Civil and Public Servants Association—*abortion on demand*

National Union of Public Employees Executive—*abortion on demand*

Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs—*opposed to James White anti-abortion bill*

Engineering Union (AUEW)—*opposed to James White bill*

TASS, white collar section of AUEW—*opposed to James White bill*

General and Municipal Workers Union womens conference—*voted to 'preserve the spirit of the 1967 Act'*

National Association of Local Government Officers—

What you can do

WOMENS VOICE and NOISS, the student organisation of the Socialist Workers Party, have called a demonstration for February 25, the day of the second reading of the *Benyon Bill*. We have to make as much of an impact on that day as we can. We have to let as many women as possible know about the threat of this anti-abortion bill.

■ Hold a street meeting in the local shopping centre with leaflets, a local petition, Womens Voice and Womens Voice abortion badges.

■ Put leaflets in all the places where women will see them: community halls on housing estates, doctors surgeries, family planning clinics, laundrettes.

■ Tell the people you work with about the bill. If the second reading is passed you will be ready to put a motion in your union branch.

■ Organise a meeting on abortion in your area. Speakers can be arranged through the students and womens departments of the SWP. Ring 01 739 1878 Speakers notes are also available—send SAE to Womens Voice, 6 Cottons Gardens London E2.

■ Use the centre pages of this issue! Put it up on noticeboards at work or in doctors surgeries, family planning clinics, community halls on estates.

■ Write to your local newspapers. Try to get onto your local radio station as a feature. Or, if that fails, phone in during one of the phone-in programmes.

■ Let us know what you are doing and what's happening in your area.

■ If the bill gets a majority vote in Parliament then the fight to defeat it will start immediately.

■ It means doing all of the above to build a campaign to defeat the bill. Only numbers can influence how MPs vote when the bill is finally put to them.

■ Move a resolution through your trade union branch to commit your national executive/conference to outright opposition to any changes in the law, and to commit any MPs sponsored by the union to vote according to union policy.

■ Support the National Abortion Campaign demonstration in May—details as soon as they are available.

The TUC Congress passed this resolution at its 1975 Congress: "Congress opposes the attempt being made through the Abortion (Amendment) Bill to weaken and restrict existing legislation governing abortion.

"Congress further recognises that in many areas, the 1967 Abortion Act has not been implemented and the decision on abortion is left to the doctors rather than the woman concerned.

"Congress therefore calls upon the General Council and on all affiliated trade unions to campaign actively in the Labour movement a) to defeat the Abortion (Amendment) Bill and any other attempts to introduce restrictive abortion legislation.

b) for the right of *all* women to adequate services for contraception and abortion on request available free of charge on the NHS and

c) to resist any changes in the 1967 Abortion act which would produce conditions detrimental to the health and welfare of the women in this country."

opposed to James White bill
National Union of Teachers—*has no policy. It is 'outside the auspices of the union' came the reply from head office*

Confederation of Health Service Employees *no policy*
Transport and General Workers Union—*no policy*
NATFHE (*teachers in further*

education colleges,) are reconsidering their policy after the amalgamation of two unions to form NATFHE last year.

Many unions are officially committed to actively oppose restrictions to the 1967 Abortion Act. But it is up to the members to make sure that the policy is put into practice.

The song of Mary Smith, baby killer

Brecht wrote this poem in the 1920s, when he was in his mid-twenties.

He was writing for an audience far more steeped in religion than we are today. What's interesting is that he throws the official bourgeois-religious morality right back in their faces. The people who would utter pious moral phrases like 'All God's creatures need each other's aid' are precisely the people who would condemn Mary Smith as a killer without hearing her story.

Brecht doesn't tell us in so many words that Mary Smith was a servant girl, slaving away for a

pittance, having to keep her pregnancy quiet for fear of losing her miserable job, quite apart from the moral indignation she would have faced as an unmarried mother. But that becomes clear as we read the poem.

Things have changed, of course. Still, there's a lot about this poem that reminds me of the moral outrage that so easily gets evoked by the mere word 'abortion'. It reminds me of all those church-going ladies who are brought by their priests and ministers to SPUC anti-abortion rallies. Like the people Brecht is speaking to in his poem, they are refusing to use their imaginations to understand the circumstances that might lead other women to need an abortion. That means they are refusing other women the right to choose, and driving them to illegal, dangerous back-street abortion.

The church doesn't even allow women to be priests, and in many cases doesn't allow its priests and ministers to marry. What can they possibly know about the problem? Still, they preach from the pulpit that contraception is a sin and abortion is murder. You can't preach, decree, or legislate real life out of existence. As socialists we try to improve bad conditions, not pretend they don't exist and condemn the victims.

Brecht hadn't consciously become a socialist when he wrote this poem though there's a good socialist anger in the poem. Later, he joined the German Communist Party and was exiled from Fascist Germany for his actions as well as his poems.

There's a new 3-volume selection of translations of his poems out in paperback at £1.95 per volume. This translation isn't actually as it appears in the book, because I found their version a bit too gentle and dated. Still, his anger manages to break through at times. They're not easy poems to read, but they're well worth the effort and many of them are very funny. The first volume is his early poetry, 1913-28. 'Mary Smith' comes from that period. The second, 1929-38, covers the period of the Depression and the early years of Fascism, through to Brecht's exile from Germany. This is the period when Brecht became an active Communist. The last volume takes us through his years in the USA, return to Germany and death in 1956 as the Grand Old Man of socialist theatre in East Berlin. Try him out in the book shop: it might well be worth £1.95 a book.

Liz Mackie

★ Published by Eyre Methuen. All SWP bookshops have them. If your local book shop doesn't, you can order by post from: Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4. Add 10% for postage.

Hackney Gazette AND NORTH LONDON ADVERTISER FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1937 No. 15,349 MURDER HUNT LAUNCHED BY POLICE A NEW-BORN BABY BOY FOUND DEAD IN BAG

Detectives are
checking clinics
and hospitals

This headline appeared in our
local newspaper the day we
were laying out this page.

Mary Smith: Month of birth, April.
Under age. No distinguishing marks.
Orphan, suffers from rickets.
No previous convictions. Claims
to have murdered a baby
as follows:

She says, when only two months gone
she visited a woman in a basement
and tried to get rid of it
with two injections.
Apparently it hurt, but it didn't work.

But please, now, don't get morally outraged
For all God's creatures need each other's aid

Still, she says, she paid cash
as agreed beforehand.
She tightened her belt
and drank a lot of gin with pepper in
but that just made her vomit.
Her belly went on swelling and
she had a lot of pain,
especially standing at the sink.
She was still having growing pains anyway.
She prayed to Mary a lot
and kept her fingers crossed.

But still, please don't get morally outraged
For all God's creatures need each other's aid.

It seems that prayers didn't help:
Well, it was a lot to ask.
As she grew bigger
she began to feel faint sweeping the floors first thing.
Also she came out in cold sweats,
especially when she knelt at Mass.
Still, she managed to keep her condition secret
till her time suddenly came.
Most likely, they say, because
it never occurred to anyone that such a plain girl
would fall into temptation.

And still, please don't get morally outraged
For all God's creatures need each other's aid.

That day, she says, first thing,
while she was scrubbing the steps,
she felt as if there were nails
scraping inside her belly.
She was shaking all over.
Still, she managed not to show the pain.
All day, she worried about it,
hanging out the washing;
in the end, she realised she was going to give birth.
Her heart felt like lead.

It was late when she got to bed.

But please now, don't get morally outraged
For all God's creatures need each other's aid.

She was called down again when she was
already in bed:

It had snowed, and she had to sweep the path.
That took till eleven. It was a long day.
It was night before she could find the time
to give birth.

She says she gave birth to a son.
The son was pretty much like other sons;
but she was not like other mothers; all the same,
I've got no reason to despise her.

But still, please, don't get morally outraged
For all God's creatures need each other's aid.

So let's hear the rest of her story
about what happened to this son
(she says she doesn't want to hide anything)
so that we can see where we are, you and I.
She says she hadn't been in bed long
when the pain got really bad.
All on her own, not knowing what should happen
She fought to stop herself screaming.

And still, please don't get morally outraged
For all God's creatures need each other's aid.

With her last bit of energy, she says,
because her room was now ice-cold,
she dragged herself to the lavatory,
and there (she can't give the exact time)
without more ado, just before dawn,
she gave birth. By now,
she says, she was really confused
and being half-frozen, because snow gets in
to the servants' lavatory, she could hardly manage
to hold the child.

And still, please don't get morally outraged
For all God's creatures need each other's aid.

It happened on the way back to her room.
Although he'd been quiet up to then, she says,
the baby began to cry. That made her so annoyed,
she says,

that she hit it with both fists,
over and over again, blindly,
until it finally stopped.

Then she took the dead baby to bed with her
for what was left of the night.
And in the morning she hid it in the wash-house.

But please now, don't get morally outraged
Above all, God's creatures need each other's aid.

Mary Smith. Month of birth, April.
Died in prison in Manchester.
Unmarried mother, found guilty,
shows you the crimes we all commit.
You, who gave birth in soft, clean beds
and called your pregnant bellies 'blessed'
do not condemn the out cast and the weak:
Her sin was grievous,—but her suffering great.

That's why I ask you not to be outraged
For all God's creatures need each other's aid.

Bert Brecht

Natalia Gorbanevskaya

For three years from 1969 to 1972 Natalia Gorbanevskaya was incarcerated in one of Russia's psychiatric prisons.

Her crime? In August 1968 with seven other people she was involved in a demonstration in Moscow's Red Square. The demonstration came four days after Russian troops invaded Czechoslovakia to put down the Prague Spring.

The demonstrators' banners read: 'Hands off the CSSR' 'Long live free and independent Czechoslovakia' 'For your freedom and ours'.

Five of the demonstrators stood trial for daring to demonstrate their opposition to the invasion. Three were jailed and two found 'insane' and committed to psychiatric prisons.

Natalia was spared from trial at that time because of her two young children. But her freedom was to last only one year before, in 1969, she was herself locked away in a psychiatric prison. In that year she had continued her work in the underground opposition and published a full account of that demonstration and the subsequent trials in her book 'Red Square at Noon.' This is her story.



'I was brought up in Moscow. I never knew my father. He was a journalist and was killed in the war. My mother was a librarian. My family came originally from the south of Russia, from near the frontier with the Ukraine. My grandparents were poor peasants.

My protest over the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in May 1968 was not my first political activity in opposition to the dictatorship. I was involved for some years in *samizdat*, what you would call underground publishing.

Some months before the invasion I became one of a number of people who came together to write and edit the Chronicle of Current Events, the main underground journal. For my pains of course I was to be subjected to repression and imprisonment in what they call a psychiatric prison.

My experiences in the Kazan psychiatric prison were nothing short of appalling. The most terrible thing in such a place is the torture of time. If you are in a prison camp then you know that however terrible your punishment may be it is for a definite term. But in the psychiatric prison you don't know whether this detention will continue for one year or for ten. That is a fearsome thing.

At Kazan I saw a woman who had been inside the psychiatric prison for sixteen years. Her name was Olga Nozhak. She had taught in a language institute in Moscow. She was about 55 years old. She had been put in the prison for protesting against some aspect of the regime.

Olga simply refused to speak or communicate in any way with the doctors. She considered them to be the enemy, the executioners. As for me, I thought the same. But I didn't say it openly. She did. She had an excellent mind. She read books and papers, sent to her by friends. This refusal to bend to them in any way was the sole cause of her continued detention. She stayed behind when I was finally freed from the Kazan Psychiatric Prison. I know nothing of her fate. Perhaps she was freed. Perhaps not.

When you come to realise that people are kept in these places for ten years or more, it is worse than being given drugs to torture and torment you. The torture becomes an everyday thing, a thing they get you to do to yourself. You just keep thinking, wondering, tormenting yourself, asking 'When will I be free?'

You say to yourself how can you conserve your reason? Again and again I asked myself, 'How can I stop myself becoming really mad?' I found myself always on the edge of madness. I thought: I am going to lose my reason. But I held on.

When I was in Kazan about ten per cent of all prisoners were political prisoners pure and simple. There are now ten known psychiatric prisons in the USSR where opponents of the regime are taken. And of course the authorities decide what opposition is. It can be many things.

Natalia Gorbanevskaya

When people ask me about the opposition movement, about 'dissidents', I think to myself, I prefer the word 'Resistance', the 'Resistance Movement'.

There was of course an older opposition movement with similar ideas, the defence of individual rights, freedom of speech and assembly and the like. But it's not a political movement in the western sense. But in Russian conditions it is a political movement. The government certainly regards it as highly political. In Russia everything is political. For us to have an opinion is already politics.

You ask about samizdat circulation among workers. I know a number of workers who are involved in the samizdat. There was a group of electricians in a hospital at Odessa. There is of course the great working class samizdat author Anatoly Marchenko.

But the workers who are active in our opposition circles are not very many. This is not to say there isn't much discontent in the working class milieu. There is massive discontent. It concerns such things as living conditions, bad working conditions, bad pay and the like. I think we members of the intelligentsia are not taking up these questions that concern the mass of the people.

But the system of course creates certain 'manageable' forms for discontent to take. Just as you might here in Britain have racist feeling against black people, so in the USSR there is anti-Jewish feeling, anti-semitism. Similarly there are people who come to think they are poor because the USSR feeds the whole world, gives great aid and assistance to the poor countries. They know nothing of the exploitation of the third world that goes on under the guise of Russian aid.

So ordinary working class people do grumble and complain. They find outlets for their opposition. But they are other than samizdat. Working class people do know how to read the press. If they see someone like Sakharov being attacked day after day, they set aside the lies and slanders and a grain of truth comes through. In Moscow therefore Sakharov is known to everyone as a defender of all oppressed and deprived people.

As for strikes and rebellions of workers in the USSR, you only very rarely hear of them. We know only of a few cases. You may have heard of the great Novochoerkassk uprising in 1962. This was the rebellion started by locomotive workers and women textile workers over increased food prices and reduced bonus payments.

But there is a question that no-one can ever answer with regard to Novochoerkassk: What happened to the rebels? Novochoerkassk was brutally suppressed and smashed. People who were not killed were 'dispersed'. But none of us who have been in prison camps or psychiatric prisons have ever met even one of the rebel workers. We can only speculate, we do

not know what happened to them. But we think that many were sent to work in the uranium mines.

Some people in the west look to Russia as the land of equality. This is in no way true. Russia is a country of immense, enormous inequality. You just walk down the street and see it. You can tell who does what by how they're dressed: who is a student, who a factory worker, who a party functionary. You witness terrible poverty and also great wealth.

When you see a woman in foreign clothes you say to yourself how does she have the means? Which party shop does she go to? Party shops are for the rich who buy things unavailable to others. They often pay in foreign currency. The people who have access to these places walk very proudly and very haughtily. They wear the clothes not so much as clothes but as a symbol of their position in society.

We have a huge hierarchy of privileged people. The system produces massive inequality. It is a class system in the strict sense of the word.

I now live with my children in Paris working on the magazine *Continent* which publishes material in Russian and other East European languages. In 1974 I was invited to go to France, so I lodged my papers to leave. I got out in December 1975.

I was set free from the psychiatric prison in February 1972. Up until spring 1974 I didn't want to emigrate. But the pressure of the secret police began to mount on me.

After I was freed in 1972 the KGB did not interrogate me. But once a month I was obliged to report to a Psychiatric Institute. I didn't go. So I kept getting telephone calls saying I had to. Then when I went to the place, questions were asked which were most definitely not of a psychiatric nature. They were undoubtedly questions set by the KGB.

This and various other events showed me that my life was still constantly subjected to the surveillance of the KGB. In this condition life becomes more and more difficult. You worry if contact with your friends will not lead to terrible things happening to them.

I worked part time as a librarian during this period, on and off. I continued of course to be part of the underground. It became clearer and clearer to me that one day soon they were going to arrest me. I knew this time it would not be for a few years but for life. I had my two sons and wanted to protect them. So with sadness in my heart I came out. From Paris I do everything that I can to carry on the fight.

You ask about politics. When anyone asks what our programme is I always say, 'The declaration of human rights.' I am for free speech, freedom of assembly and the like. As for myself I am not a marxist. But of course I work shoulder to shoulder with marxists in the resistance, with Leonid Pliouchch, for example, of whom you may know.'

Interview
Laurie Flynn
Picture
John Sturrock

Price watcher

NIKKI MELLOR, says everyone wants to know why the price of coffee suddenly doubled, and just what is the argument about the price of a loaf of bread.

Coffee— who's bean had?

IN Jan 1976 1lb of instant coffee cost about £1.50. By Jan 1977 the cost is £3, and the price is still rising.

1lb of coffee starts off as 20 coffee trees, cultivated and fertilised for 5 years by one of the 20 million people whose lives depend on coffee, most of whom live in abject poverty. Coffee is the largest single commodity traded internationally, apart from oil. It's the main product of eleven Latin American and African countries.

In July 1975 a severe frost in Brazil, heavy flooding in Colombia, the war in Angola and the devastating earthquake in Guatemala wiped out one third of the world's coffee crop. The cost of green beans rose from £500 a tonne (metric ton) to £2,900 a tonne between July 1975 and May 1976.

The growers of the coffee got about 20p for your 1lb in August 1975, just like in previous years. The failure of the crop doesn't mean higher prices for them. It means poverty. In Brazil 250,000 workers have already been sacked.

Coffee growers work on a small scale. They need the income from the harvest as soon as it's picked. They fall into the hands of a group of criminals with one thing in common—money. If you've got about £10,000 to spare—politely called 'risk capital'—you can 'play the futures market'. You buy the coffee, on paper, at £500, and sell at £2,900. You make a 'killing'.

It's a game called profits for the exporters, the merchants and dealers, the roasters and processors, the manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers. They all profit from the 'shortage'.

It's a game called £3 for coffee for us. If the extra £1.50 on your jar of coffee went to the Brazilian workers, things would be different. But it's a game called starvation for them.

Judith Hamilton

Bread— the wrong way to fight...

The bread-delivery men are striking against the lowering of bread prices in supermarkets. If the small breadshops are forced out of business their jobs and wages are threatened. They make more commission out of delivering small batches. And if, later on, supermarkets raise prices even more jobs will be lost, because people will buy less bread.

It was the government which removed the bread subsidy and then allowed shops to reduce prices. It's the big shops, with high turnovers, which can afford to reduce prices for just long enough to drive the small shops out. After that they will

have to go back to making huge profits at high prices. The subsidy used to go straight into profits but it *did* keep prices down. Removing the subsidy creates hardship for workers and their families, for whom bread is an important food.

Striking to keep prices up also creates hardship. In the long run it will not save the jobs—because people will buy less bread. There are two ways to save these jobs and get cheaper bread. One is to fight against the cuts in government subsidies, the other way is to fight against the huge profits that the bread barons make.



Who holds the coffee mountain?

FOLGER COFFEE... a Proctor and Gamble subsidiary put out a statement that there is no worldwide shortage of coffee. 'We can see no reason why green coffee prices should be so high.'

Coffee beans, bought at low prices, can be stored for up to three years. Maxwell House and Nestles control 85 per cent of the coffee stocks coming into Britain.

... and the right

The Manchester Women's Voice group has produced a leaflet about bread prices. We have been giving it out outside supermarkets, and selling Socialist Worker and Women's Voice. Next we will have a petition to bring back bread subsidies. Two women from a local estate have said that they will help with it. Women on the estate are more interested in a prices campaign than anything else. Bread is vital to us—especially when the price of meat and potatoes puts them in the luxury bracket. But union leaders are just playing power games with the supermarket managers. They must be made to fight the real culprits in this price war, and win support from other workers.

Sandy Rose
Manchester



Future food: your loss...

FOOD PRICES WILL RISE 23% IN 1977, according to a leading firm of stockbrokers, W. Greenwell and Co. That means weekly food bills will go up from about £16 to £20.

WHY?

Stockbrokers help to push the prices up. One method is speculating in 'futures'. By buying up a future crop on paper, e.g. coffee, at low prices they can hang on to the shares until they can be sold again at a much higher price, and a fat profit. About 75 per cent of the rise in imported food and commodity prices (sugar, wheat, cocoa, tea, copper, tin, coffee) happens this way.

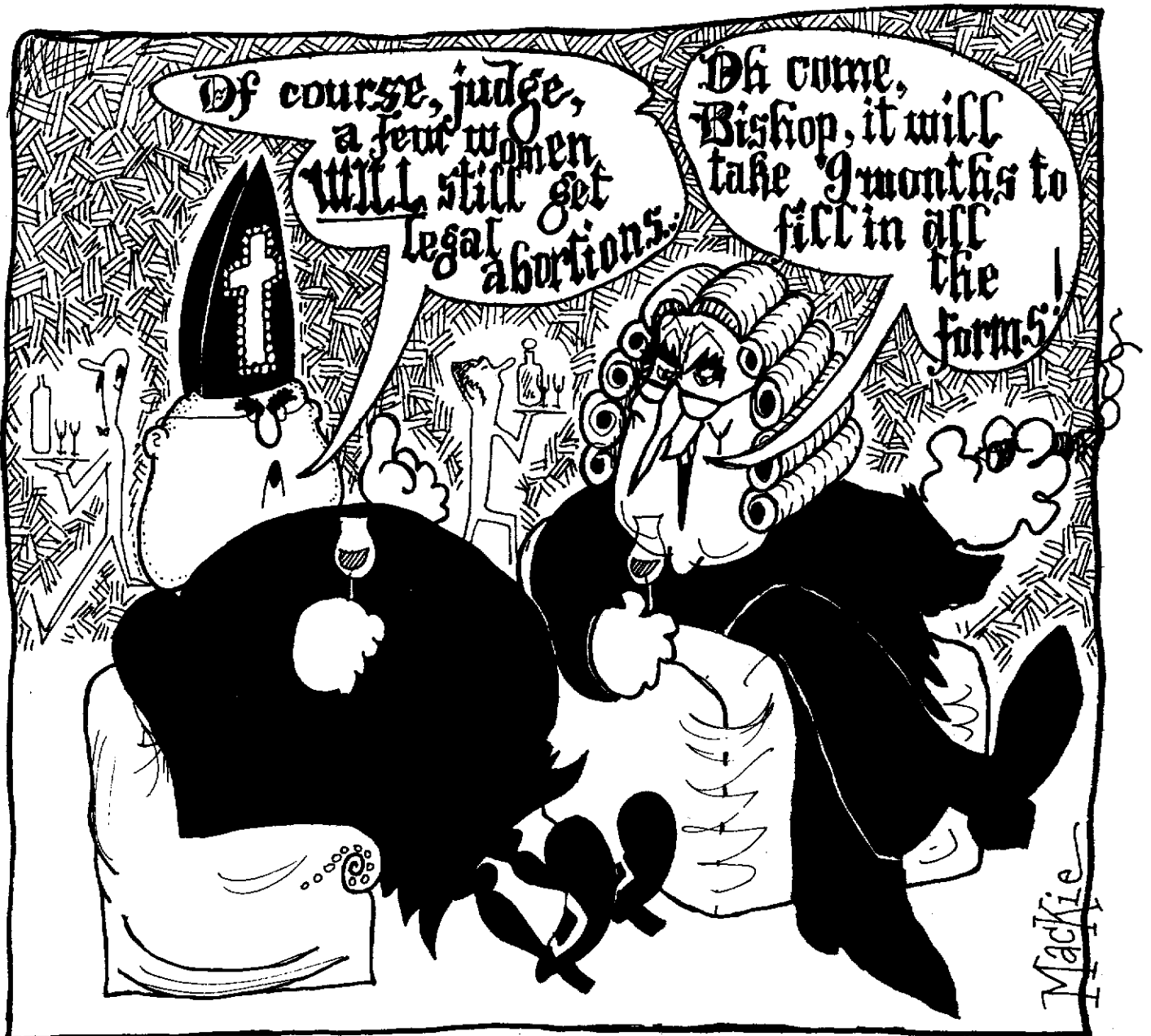
... their profit

RANK-HOVIS-McDOUGALL made £33m pounds profit on their bread production in 1976.

SPILLERS flour hid £2m in a bank account in the Channel Islands to avoid tax.

reverse charge

Many letters have commented on Nikki Mellor (our Pricewatcher's) telephone bill. It wasn't a misprint. Our economist sub-editor has never claimed to be good at arithmetic, and accepts full responsibility. The correct figure is £2.50 - £3.00 a week. Even this may seem high, but both Nikki and Marc are active members of SWP.



'DON'T CRY FOR ME ARGENTINA'

Evita Peron: the biggest social climber since Cinderella

For weeks Julie Covington has been a chart-buster singing 'Don't cry for me Argentina'. But most listeners will not have realised what the song is about. It's one of functions of pop music to make lyrics socially and politically neutral.

The rock musical *Evita*, from which this song (and another hit 'Another Suitcase in Another Hall' sung by Barbara Dickson) is taken by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. They also wrote *Jesus Christ, Superstar*. "*Evita*" is the story of another 'superstar's' rise to personal and political influence before dying at the age of 33. The notes inside the record sleeve say "It is the story of people whose lives were in politics, but it is not a political story. It is a Cinderella story about the astonishing life of a girl from the most mundane of backgrounds who became the most powerful woman her country (and indeed Latin America) had ever seen, a woman not content to be a mere ornament at the side of her husband Juan Peron, the president and Argentine dictator."

The working class make their appearance in the musical in crowd scenes and sentimental references by Evita to the plight of her 'descamisados' (the shirtless ones). But there is no sense of the working class as an important new political force in Argentine life, and how necessary it was to control them in state organised unions. Peronism, and the role that Evita played in it, has to be seen in these terms.

Peronism contained a peculiar mixture of political ideas and practice which was something like the 'populist fascism' of Mussolini. It gave material benefits to the working class, but made sure that the trade union movement was controlled.

Peronism contained a peculiar mixture of political ideas and practice which was something like the 'populist fascism' of Mussolini. It gave material benefits to the working class, but made sure that the trade union movement was controlled.

The working class could have been a force to puncture the capitalist system, and transform it to a revolutionary socialist society. Instead the working class was manipulated until its adulation of Evita could be used to achieve and maintain enormous personal wealth and political power. Evita always remained a woman from an impoverished background who had hit the heights of wealth and personal power. Corruption, political domination over her husband, and an eye for the glamour and riches of an affluent life-style became her central concern.

It's a 'rags to riches' story; the creation of a new star. It's the story of a personality cult, developed by clever stage management of mass rallies, and the projection of her as a personal benefactor to the working class; 'pulling them out of a state of apathy and impoverishment'. The machinery of the state was geared to a fantastic, fascist-like spectacle, with Evita continuously in the limelight. And the impact of this spectacle was maintained by continuously identifying Evita with Argentina and the Argentine working class with Evita.

The myths were sustained through a finely-spun web of lies and deceptions. In the lyrics of the musical *Evita* constantly eulogises the role she is playing in the emancipation of the working class. 'I am only a simple woman who lives to serve



But this is far too simple a view of the meteoric, Hollywood-style rise to fame of Evita. Her rise can only really be understood against a background of change in terms of the shift in Argentina from an agricultural to an industrial economy. This led to the explosive growth of Buenos Aires as a capitalist city, with a new-born, unsophisticated, working class. Without the working class there could not have been any Evita.

*It won't be easy, you'll think it strange
When I try to explain how I feel
That I still need your love after all that I've done
You won't believe me
All you will see is a girl you once knew
Although she's dressed up to the nines
At sixes and sevens with you*

*I had to let it happen; I had to change
Couldn't stay all my life down at heel
Looking out of the window, staying out of the sun
So I chose freedom
Running around trying everything new
But nothing impressed me at all
I never expected it to*

*Don't cry for me Argentina
The truth is I never left you
All through my wild days
My mad existence
I kept my promise
Don't keep your distance*

*As for fortune, and as for fame
I never invited them in
Though it seemed to the world they were all I
desired
They are illusions
They're not the solutions they promised to be
The answer was here all the time
I love you and hope you love me*

Peron in his noble crusade to rescue his people!
'I was once as you are now!'
'I have taken these riches from the oligarchs only
for you—for all of you!'
'One day you will inherit these treasures!'
'Descamisados!'

But Peron, Evita and her congerie of trade union leaders and political bosses were the ones who were lining their pockets, while paternalistically throwing a few crumbs to the working classes. Never were the oligarchs, the middle classes or the ruling class systematically and seriously challenged.



The death of Evita from cancer marked the beginning of the end for Juan Peron. He was so dependent on the myth of Evita that, in order to sustain it, and in a time of economic crisis, he made plans to erect a massive statue of her—bigger than the statue of Liberty. He tried to get her canonised. The myth had become so bizarre that the Church and the military seized the opportunity to overthrow him. At no time had substantial sectors of the working class seen through the fairy tale of Evita and peronism. At no time had they understood that it was a state controlled, repressive ideology working against their long-term interests. The working class had been too weakened to depose Peron, and was so mystified that when he turned his attack on the Church, they sided with the Church. The extreme right triumphed.

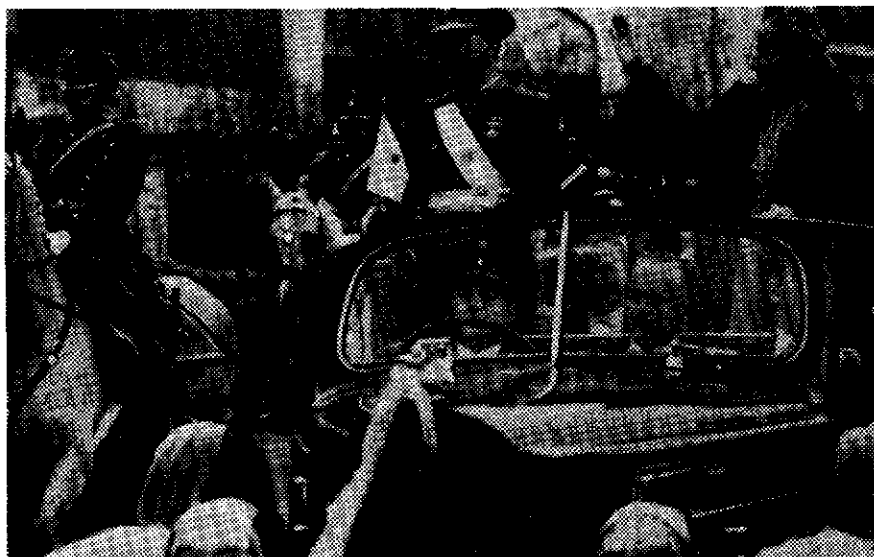
Three memories stick in my mind about political life in Argentina when I was a child. The first was having to read, for half an hour every morning, '*La Razon de mi Vida*' (The Reason for my life) by Eva Peron. All school children, by law, had to read a chapter before lessons.

The second is of Evita's death in July 1952; a three day mass spectacle for the working class was organised by Juan Peron, to glorify his wife. Several million men, women and children filed past the embalmed body of 'Santa Evita', some of them dying of hunger, fatigue and exposure.

The third memory is of the downfall of Peron, in a right-wing military coup, four years after Eva's death. Thousands of children filed out into the school playgrounds to make a bonfire of '*La Razon de mi Vida*'.

But twenty years later the myth surrounding Juan Peron and Evita is still deeply embedded in the minds of the Argentine working class. Peronism gave the working class a collective strength and a standard of living previously unknown to them. But the myth that Peron and Evita built had a simple, false, message: 'We can create a new and better Argentina for the working class at the expense of the aristocracy, the middle classes and foreign imperialism.'

There is certainly no need for Argentina to cry for Evita. Argentina remains the land of an exploited working class, an immensely rich and powerful ruling class, working in close harmony with the Catholic Church, American and European imperialism, and the hierarchy and terrorism of the armed forces. Instead of crying, sectors of the revolutionary and militant rank and file are beginning to understand and organise revolutionary politics, geared to uncovering the capitalist contradictions which are emerging in the worst series of political and economic crises that Argentina has ever known.



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WOMENS VOICE LOOKING GOOD

Dear WV,
I would like to congratulate you on the new format of Women's Voice. A thinking woman's magazine that looks good too has been needed for so long. The contents certainly lived up to the promise of the design and look of the first issue.

I used to have a hard job of selling Women's Voice, but I sold ten copies easily. And the women were quite disappointed that it is not a weekly. Keep up the good work.

Fraternally,
Lorraine Huddle
Shop Steward, APEX
NALGO Headquarters

WOMENS VOICE IS GREAT CONGRATULATIONS

I've just skimmed through the new Womens Voice—excellent.

Rose Davis, Hull

Congrats on new format. Much easier to awaken interest.

Carrie Lee-Baker, Acton, London
Can you send us a further 25 copies of Womens Voice.

Everyone in the branch thinks the new WV is great—we're selling them like hot-cakes.

Durham Branch SWP

We really like the new WV—and hope to up our sales this month.

Leeds branch SWP

We think the new WV magazine is excellent. We've often moaned about it in the past, but a bit of credit where it's due. It's the first time the women comrades in our district have really started to talk about selling WV!

Norwich SWP

Can we order a further 8 copies of Womens Voice. The demand for this new Womens Vice is far greater than before.

Ormskirk SWP

We've already had 200 copies, can we have another 100!

Newcastle Womens Voice Group.
The reaction up here to the new style WV has been very favourable. We hope you can keep up the high standard you set yourself.

Locally, we hope to organise a mass leafletting/public meeting on the new Abortion Bill and are following your lead on NAC by deciding on the activity we want and asking NAC locally for support. The local NAC has given up any pretence to organise a mass campaign, and has re-entered the women's movement. We would welcome some information about the NAC nationally and what it's up to.

Edinburgh SWP

A MORE STRIKING CASE OF HARDSHIP

Dear Women's Voice,
Surely you could have found a more striking case of hardship than that of Nikki Mellor, living on £56 a week. Are they ever off the phone at £10 a week? Many families don't have anything left after their basic expenditure, and cannot even consider clothes, furniture, holidays and entertainment.

Many of the women I know were understandably unsympathetic, for they have much harder lives. Why didn't you ask one of them? I'm not hostile to Nikki Mellor; everyone should have a high standard of living, without financial worries, but to attract working class women you must present situations they can more easily identify with.

Pat Harlow, Newcastle Branch.

Ed: We asked Nikki Mellor to be our 'Pricewatcher' because her income is about average for the south of England. In fact her £56 is made up of two incomes. The family could not survive on Marc's £36. Many of the comments came from women with young children who don't work, and we accept that this is a time of real poverty. It is still easier for women to find jobs, however poorly paid, in the South East. But Nikki's job is threatened by the cuts. As she says, teaching used to be the way to a secure job for working class women. That is no longer true. She hopes that as the crisis threatens a large group of people who have previously been secure, they will become more politically aware and active.

DROP THE MIDDLE CLASS IMAGE

Dear Women's Voice
As a member of the SWP living in one of the poorest parts of Manchester, I find myself unable to use the latest issue of 'Women's Voice'. Most of the articles bear no relation to the lives of the majority of working class women.

If we are going to observe the effects of rising prices, let's have a typical family. Not many of us have £11.50 left after we've paid rent, food and other main items of spending. It's a case of either a pair of much-needed shoes for our kids or paying a long overdue bill. To be able to 'live out of the freezer and on our savings' sounds like sheer luxury!

Explanation of why we find it so difficult to pay our rent, gas and

electricity might help us to stop thinking that it's failure on our part.

Slick little articles like Judith Condon's on the Oldham footballer don't help either. Although traditionally working class women have been brought up to believe that it's a women's duty to be responsible for household tasks and caring for kids, most of us resent it and realise that it's wrong. However, for those of us fortunate enough to have a husband with a job (usually 10 hours of heavy, boring work) it's much more practical for the wife to be at home to look after the kids and do the cleaning. More useful would be articles about how we can get a society where this situation would never arise.

How about an article telling us why the working classes are particularly vulnerable to the propaganda of racist groups like NF and what the effects on our lives would be if they ever came to power.

If we are going to reach the working classes, we need to drop this middle-class image and get down to earth. We need a paper with articles which apply to our own lives.

Let alone sell the latest issue, I, for one, shan't even pass on my own copy.

Maureen Tootoh, Manchester.

MALE FANTASY

Dear WV
Congratulations on the new Womens Voice. I like the shape and the format makes it much more of a socialist womens paper and less of a pale reflection of Socialist Worker. (I'm also chuffed to see a few of my own ideas incorporated).

I'm actually writing in about 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory', reviewed by Jill Arrowsmith. It might well be a good read, or a pretty picture (if you saw it on telly over Christmas), but it is far from feminist, with its three male heroes and a male villain too.

Even those awful moralising dwarf creatures who work day and night for Willy Wonker, keeping his lead over the other (male) chocolate factories and ruining children's teeth at a profit (it's also not socialist), appear to be male.

Women, where they are included at all, turn up as providers of TV dinners, bullying demanders of fur coats, and drudgy feeble housewives. They're devoid of technical 'genius' and imagination—unlike Willy Wonker; devoid of wisdom or playfulness—unlike Charlie's grandfather.

As a socialist and feminist women, I can't help but find it as annoying as all those other male fantasies.

Kathy Kiernan, Telford.

Write to:
Womens' Voice
6, Cottons Gar-
dens London E28DN



RENT ACTION- GLASGOW

Dear WV,
As the latest in the series of rent increases, imposed on us by the Glasgow District Council, begins to take effect, the new Pollock Tenants Association has decided enough is enough.

At the last meeting, it was decided to withhold the rent increase and to organise a picket of the local factor's office.

The picket took place the following week. We held placards aloft, and gave leaflets to everyone who went in to pay their rents. A good majority of the people agreed with us and did not pay the increase. A few women joined us on the picket and helped to give out leaflets.

This is just the beginning of our campaign. More pickets will be organised in the next few weeks and

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we'll be contacting other local tenants associations. The local Labour Party have offered us support.

If we do not succeed in stopping the increase, then at least we will have made it known that we do not intend to take them lying down. It's time to stand up and fight.
Rena Morris, Glasgow.

DELAYS IN CHILD BENEFITS

Dear WV,
The Government's new Child Benefit Scheme comes into effect in April which means that family allowances will be paid for the first child. £1 for two parent families and £1.50 for single parent families.

I received my book today for the 50p per week and was horrified to see that it is payable in units of £2, once every four weeks. As far as I know, no mention was made of this in the blurb.

Is this just another example of officialdom's way of rubbing our noses in the dirt? That 50p can make a lot of difference—why the hell should we have to wait for it?

This is yet another way in which the Labour government uses the most vulnerable to prop it up.

It's time it was told where to get off.

Jill Brook, Newcastle

PROSTITUTION

Dear WV,
The women's group here in Aberystwyth recently had a meeting about prostitution.

A lot of us read what we could but still ended up very confused. It led to quite a lot of discussion without the SWP branch and also among other Women's Voice readers.

We would very much like to see an article in Women's Voice and hear what other women think about the subject—it might help to pull together some of the confusing and conflicting aspects.

I would also like to say how thrilled we are with the new Womens Voice—the format and the content. It's encouraging when you're fighting sexism not only outside the Party but within it too—from men and women.

Keep it up and we hope to be able to contribute too. We sold out of WV on the first day of selling and had to order more!

Janet Townsend, Aberystwyth
Can anyone write an article on prostitution for Womens Voice—if so let us have it as soon as possible.

WHAT'S ON

NORTH LONDON WOMENS VOICE GROUP

Southern Group

Below you will find details of the Womens Voice Group meetings over the next three months. We hope you and your friends will come along. If you have any babysitting problems, Mandy on 607 8067 will be able to help.

14th February 8pm NIKKI MELLOR: ABORTION — WHICH WAY NOW?

14th March 8pm MARGARET RENN: WHY REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISM NOT JUST WOMENS LIB

These meetings will be held at the Florence Pub, Florence Road N1, just off Upper Street

North Group

21st February 8pm ABORTION ITALIAN STYLE. Speaker to be announced

21st March 8pm MARGARET RENN: THE WOMENS RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

These meetings will be held at The Beehive, Stoneleigh Road, Tottenham N17

We are also holding weekly street meetings around the proposed closure of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital for women, in an effort to get money and support for the workers at this hospital, who are at present 'holding a work in'. Anyone who is willing to help with leafletting, petitioning, selling badges and speaking at these street meetings, or can go and help on the picket line on Thursdays from 6-10 in the evening, should contact Mandy 607 8067

One Year on from the Sex Discrimination Act: A Rally for Womens Rights. February 26, Alexandra Palace, London N22. Speakers, theatre, exhibitions, stalls, literature. Organised by the Working Womens Charter Campaign. For more information write to Mandy Snell, 33 Wemyss Road, London SE3

GLASGOW WV - Education meetings every second Monday, at 7.30 in City Halls, Albion St. Glasgow;

Next meeting 14 February: From the cradle to the grave with a pink ribbon? How women, and men,

are taught their place in society—and what we can do about it.

GLASGOW WOMENS VOICE RALLY, on Sunday March 13th, 7.30pm in the City Halls (room 4), Albion St.

For further details of the rally, contact Sheila Arthur, 041 424 1048.

COUNTERACT needs two women for a play on nursery provisions and women's relationship to capitalism. Although acting/musical ability is useful, commitment to the women's movement and revolutionary socialism is essential.

£35 pw (touring), £31 pw (rehearsing). Drivers needed.

Contact: Counteract, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1, phone. 01 251 4977 or 01 267 5059 (evenings).

THE LEEDS GROUP OF THE NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN has produced a pamphlet called "Abortion in Leeds—Whose Choice?" It is very useful and full of factual information about the law, and the particular situation in Leeds. Copies of the pamphlet can be obtained from the Leeds National Abortion Campaign, 94 Royal Park Road, Leeds 6, tel. Leeds 789168

HARINGAY STREET THEATRE are offering their half-hour play: "A pretty girl like you". It's a unified collection of sketches and songs based on the Working Womens Charter, followed by discussion, to interested groups. Available evenings and weekends. We charge £5 in the London area; expenses elsewhere. For details phone 808 3457. (evenings)

THURS 17th Feb
GUILD HALL, NEWCASTLE
7.30 till 12 with SCRATCHBAND and LIFEMASK plus disco.

QUEEN MARY COLLEGE,
MILE END, E1
FRIDAY 18th FEB
BAMBOO (Ex Reggae Guitars) plus Disco
Benefit for Brick Lane anti-Fascist Defence Fund

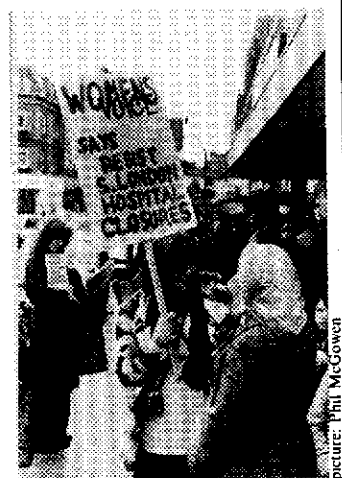
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was terribly shocked in prison. I just cried all the time.

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