



womens Voice


20p March 79 Issue 27




IT'S
ILLEGAL!



IT'S
A
SIN!




...AND
YOU CAN'T
GET IT
ANYWAY!



HAVE YOU
NOTICED WHAT
HAPPENS WHEN
WE TALK ABOUT
ABORTION?



SEE
YOU
THERE!



WHAT GIVES THEM THE RIGHT TO TELL
US WHAT TO DO WITH OUR BODIES?
DEMONSTRATE WITH US FOR
FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND...



ON SATURDAY
31ST MARCH '79
SEE PAGE 18..

Team Two

PRESENTS



BELISHA BEACON

by Eileen Fairweather and Melissa Murray

A fast, funny, irreverent show about Womens Liberation. 13 to 17 March, ICA, London, every lunchtime.

Tour plans: 27 February to 3 March - Kent, Surrey, Sussex. 6 to 10 March - Manchester and area. 20 - 24 March, Derby, Notts, Leicester. 20 to 31 March - London and area. 3 to 7 April - Reading, Oxford, Windsor.

For bookings in these areas and more information, ring Jenny Rees 01 997 2318 evening, 01-969 2296 daytime.

**contraception, abortion &
no forced sterilisation
women
decide!**



**international
day of action**

LONDON, MARCH 31st

Hyde Park 1.30pm to Trafalgar Square Rally

international campaign for abortion rights (ICAR) 111 Gough St, Soho, London WC1

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Exhibition space in back

SOCIALIST FEMINIST NATIONAL CONFERENCE

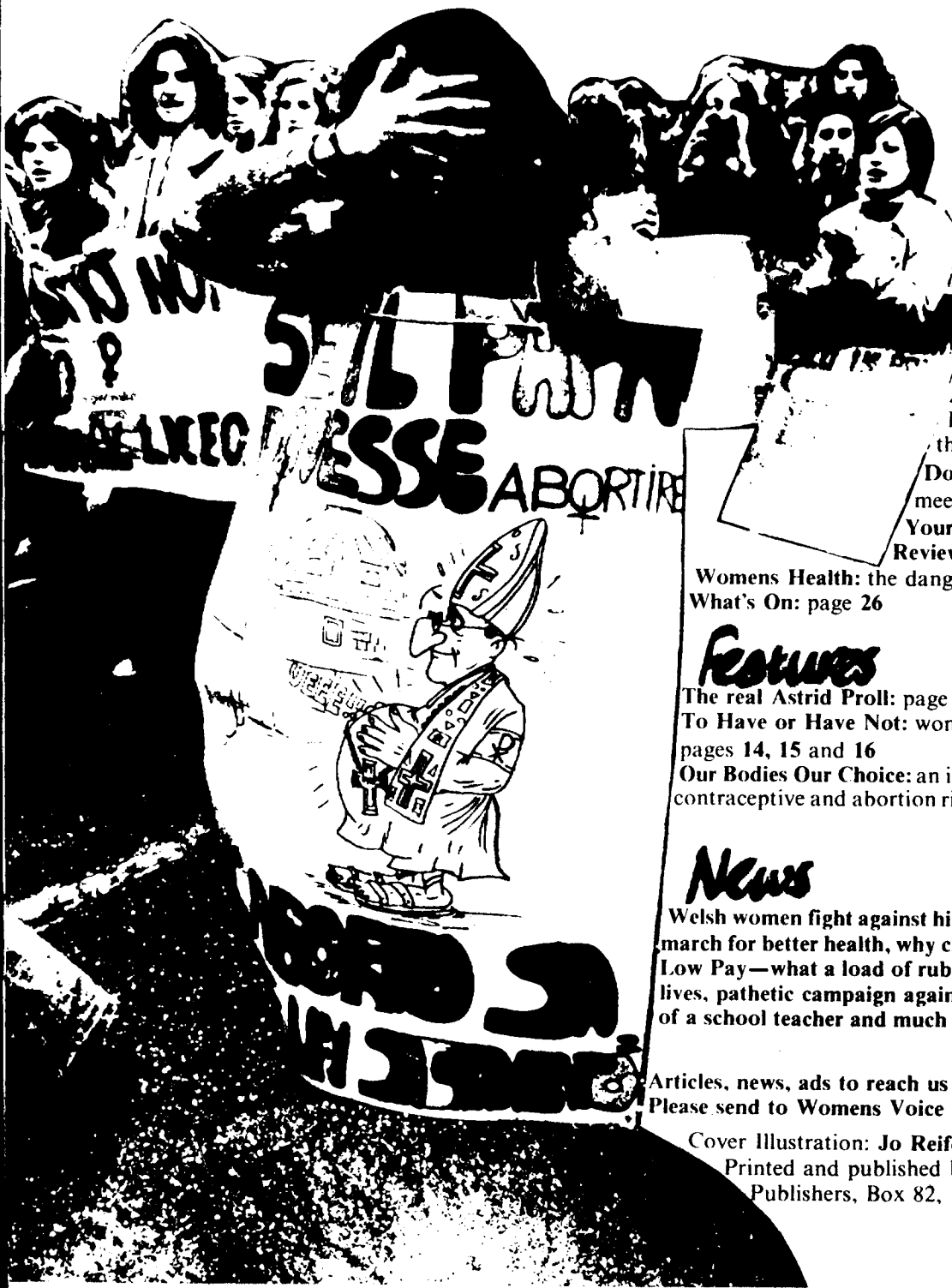
City University, London March 24/25

The focus for the conference will be on
Socialist Feminist strategy and tactics.

Socialism tends to concentrate on class war,
feminism tends to concentrate on sex war.
Socialist feminists have tried various ways of
putting them together, but to do this properly
implies a completely new approach to the
ways we organise and in the kinds of politics
and theory we produce.

The success of the conference crucially
depends on the active participation of groups
and individuals.

Please send offers of help, papers (to be typed
on A4 stencils), or requests for further
information to Socialist Feminist Planning
Group, 27 Villa Rd., Brixton, London SW9



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Articles, news, ads to reach us by 23rd March.
Please send to Womens Voice Box 82 London E2

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OUR POINT OF VIEW

Virginity tests- stop this vile racism

A 35-year-old Indian teacher arrived at Heathrow Airport to meet her fiancé. What happened next was an obscene nightmare.

'I was sent for a medical examination by immigration officials. A woman told me to take all my clothes off. I was given nothing to cover myself with no dressing gown or blanket although I asked for one. I waited like that for 20 minutes.

'Then a man doctor came in. I asked to be seen by a lady doctor, but they said no. I was most reluctant to have the examination, but I didn't know whether it was normal practice here. So I signed

the consent form. I was frightened that otherwise they would send me back.

'The doctor was wearing rubber gloves and took some medicine out of a tube and put it on some cotton and inserted it into me. He said he was deciding whether I was pregnant now or had been pregnant before. I said that he could see that without doing anything to me.

'I have been feeling very bad mentally ever since. I was very embarrassed and upset. I had never had a gynaecological examination before.'

The Home Office has tried to deny that these disgusting examinations ever take place. But this time there is written evidence the consent form.

These internal examinations were supposed to be banned in 1974. They obviously were not. How can we believe the government when it claims once more to 'ban' them?

The so-called 'virginity tests' are fake. Mr Robert Winston, a gynaecologist at Hammersmith Hospital, told the 'Guardian' that these tests would not prove whether she was pregnant at the time, and might not even prove whether she was a virgin.

Medically they prove nothing. So why are they given? To frighten and harrass Asian women. There have been no reports of these 'virginity tests' being made on White Rhodesian or Canadian or New Zealand or French women.

Although there are four times as many white immigrants as black.

The racism which comes out of these medical examinations is not an accident, not just one unfortunate exception. This racism is part and parcel of the immigration laws. The racism is bred by the immigration laws themselves.

If you have laws to keep certain people out of the country—blacks, Asians, Jews, whatever—then the immigration officials will find ways of keeping these people out. It is no surprise that the National Front boasted of having a branch at Heathrow Airport.

The 'virginity tests' are not the only barbaric practices carried out in the name of the Immigration Act.

Before relatives are even given permission to join their husbands and fathers here, they must travel hundreds of miles to the capital and be interviewed. They are interviewed separately each interview lasting up to six hours.

If members of the family answer a question differently—for example, 'How many bushes are there in your village?' or 'What is the exact colour of your goat?' or 'How many times did you sleep with your husband when he came home in 1972?'—then the immigration officer decides they are lying and are not relatives. The humiliating 'virginity tests' take place in India too.

The Immigration Act is racist. There is no humane way of keeping families separate. The Immigration Act strips every person of their self-respect. It denies the right of privacy in even the most intimate things.

Womens Voice is totally opposed to any immigration controls. As a Womens Voice member who is a doctor in Gravesend, put it, 'Virginity tests prove nothing. They are an assault, an indignity and should not be done on anybody. The immigration laws as they stand at present are discriminatory against people of Asian or black origin. As long as these laws are in force then this type of thing will continue.'

Gravesend Womens Voice and the local Punjabi paper EKTA are appealing for information about any more cases of virginity tests. They are demanding a full enquiry, and if the government refuses to hold one, they will hold their own.

Every Womens Voice Group which has contact with the Asian community should do the same. You can get a copy of the Punjabi appeal for information and a translation in English from Womens Voice: Write to Womens Voice 145 Vale Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent.

Let us force an end to this vile racism which is an insult to every woman in Britain.

photo: Mike Sheerden (Report)



RED HOT VICTORY!

I FEEL like a different person now, a real person, not just the little housewife sitting at home. This fight has given me a real feeling of confidence in myself, an identity which I never felt before.'

That was Jean Williams talking. Jean, her husband Ashley and three other women, Maria, Maureen and Gill, have led a militant campaign over the last eighteen months to persuade the Pontypridd Council convert their expensive electric central heating to gas on the Glantaff estate. They have finally won.

The fight really began during Jubilee week when they all got together for a street party and discovered that heating bills of several hundred pounds a quarter was not an individual problem but a common one.

Their first action was to chain themselves to the railings of the town hall one night last May. Gill told us:

'It was like we were criminals! We didn't intend to stay for more than a couple of hours but when we saw the support from the Socialist Workers Party and Womens Voice, from the railway men who brought us tea and even from the police who brought us blankets from the cells! - we settled in for the night.

They invaded council meetings, occupied the Electricity board and held numerous demonstrations. Maureen spoke about the way that the campaign had changed their views about politics and action:

'We've learned a lot from the campaign. It's made us all more political. I think there's no doubt that we couldn't have done it without the support of Womens Voice and the SWP. They made us realise that we had to do it ourselves, that we had to do it through action.

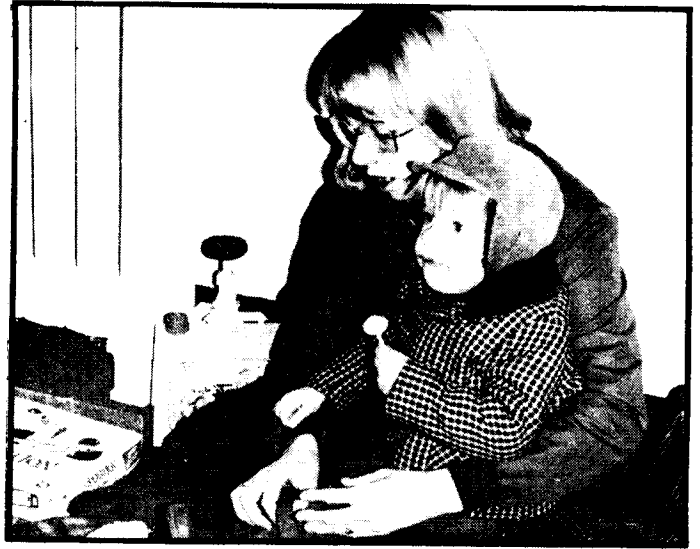
'I'd get up and go anywhere now to help other people fighting. I think getting as many people involved as possible is really important. Just imagine if there had been 40 of us chained to the railings instead of four at the beginning.'

Winning the issue felt a bit like an anti-climax. 'We've enjoyed the campaign. We've laughed and cried our way through it and its not been easy,' said Jean. 'But we're going to go on from here, I don't think any of us could stop now and go back to what we were before.

'We've all become involved in the Right To Work Campaign, and signed up for the March to the Welsh TUC because unemployment is so high round here and we've come to realise that we're unemployed people, not just housewives. We're also going to get other things going on the estate, like repairs and refuse points.

'If the Council think they've heard the last of us now, they've got a shock coming to them!'

• Mary Ann Stuart



HEALTH CUTS PROTEST

Sixty of us, our banners, our babies and a bus livened up the shopping in the Holloway Road as we marched demanding a better health service in Islington, Camden and Hornsey. We want the day care abortion centre at the Whittington Hospital to be opened, we want the Elizabeth Garrett

Anderson Hospital to be kept and improved, we want a decent wage for health workers, and we want more money for our health service. *Women for Health* has just begun its campaign—if you'd like to join in contact the Islington Community Health Council on 226 3043, or Womens Voice on 439 3764.



photo: Laurie Spurrham (FFL)

STRIKE REPORTS...



photo: Johns, Stapprock & Reports

year extra, but the price is too high.

We are standing our ground. If the council can afford to offer that sort of money then we want it, but on *our* terms. That means on the basis of our *present* grading system with no loss of jobs and no victimisations. The suggestion of a reorganisation scheme is a separate problem and we are only prepared to even talk about it after our wage claim has been settled.

• **Gerry Harris**
Tower Hamlets Nalgo

General Workers, took the case to the tribunal. The first date set for the hearing was in February 1978, it was finally heard in October.

The tribunal revealed that, on average, the women were earning £10-£15 less than the men. The women were asking for consideration of three points:

- 1) Equal pay for day work
- 2) Guaranteed wages for women as well as men
- 3) Equal pay for piece work.

The women won their case and the findings were clarified for the company. However management have totally disregarded them. The women are on official strike and will remain on strike till management agree to their demands.

Management's response to this has been to threaten to lay off the rest of the factory.

• **Maggie Bolton**
Black Country Womens Voice

EQUAL PAY

SEVEN women in the Core Shop of the Triplex Foundry, West Midlands, are on strike after a long battle with management over equal pay.

To settle had failed after attempts the issue with the management, their union, the Transport and

'9 per cent is a load of rubbish' and dumped our smelly refuse on their steps to prove it.

After three weeks of hard graft producing bulletins and leaflets, we decided that we needed some positive action to focus the attention of the public on the strikers. We approached the GMWU strike committee and spoke to the pickets to get their support. We leafleted estates and the local shopping centre. Then on Saturday 40 of us women and dustmen marched on the council offices laden with sacks of rubbish.

We left our placards on the top, and Monday morning it was still there and still stinking.

• **Marion Upchurch**



LOW PAY

WANDSWORTH Womens Voice and their supporters showed Wandsworth Council what they thought of the offers made to the low paid workers in the hospitals and the council.

Last Saturday afternoon we said

OUT FOR SEVEN MONTHS

SOCIAL WORKERS

IN TOWER Hamlets the social workers are still out on strike, although some of the social workers went back to work about a month ago.

We have now been out for seven months and for half of that time management have refused to speak to us and our representatives. The reason that they gave for this action was that our representative on the Whitley Council, a government sponsored body, on which both staff and management sides sit, was on strike. Despite the fact that the management side of the Whitley Council have condemned this action in writing, they still refuse to talk to us.

Management are trying to take this opportunity to introduce a reorganisation scheme. Before the strike there were thirty vacancies and during it a further thirty positions have become empty.

We do not know the exact content of the scheme but we believe that it will involve shelving

these sixty jobs and redistributing the money that this will make available.

In order to cover this loss of jobs the whole area organisation will need to be changed. The proposal may be that the present seven area social work teams will be reduced to four. This will mean that people will have to travel a long way to visit a social worker, and similarly we will have to make long journeys.

It looks as though this centralisation will be carried even further. For instance, some special care units, such as the foster and adoption care and community care teams, may well be abolished. Hospital social workers will also be moved into the four new area team offices.

If this type of agreement was made then we would be going back to jobs that we have never done before and the pressure of work would be so great that the quality of care would suffer very badly. Both we and the public would suffer.

For some of the lower paid amongst us such a redistribution of resources could mean up to £1000 a



photo: Mark Ruster (TFL)

CIVIL SERVANTS

THE CIVIL service ground to a halt last Friday, 90 per cent of civil servants were on a one-day strike for their pay claim.

Kate Burn told Womens Voice, 'We had quite a lot of people on the picket line. Only about 10-15 per cent of the members went to work. Now we have to continue the action by working to rule.'

'I have never heard anything

about women here working for pin money. Women get about £10 less than men in the same grades.'

Civil servants were striking because the government refused to honour an agreement that they be paid a comparable amount to workers in private industry. They also have not agreed to give back pay if the claim is settled after April 1, when the new agreement takes effect.

WOMEN WANT TO OBEY US SAYS MAN

BRITAIN'S first and only anti-Women's Lib organisation has been formed by a man! He is David Stayt (ex-RAF pilot and senior planning officer).

The Campaign for the Feminine Woman regards Women's Lib as a dangerous cancer and perversion in human society which must be eradicated.

The Campaign believes 1) The male role is naturally dominant and assertive and the feminine role is naturally submissive. 2) The man is rightly the head of both the woman and the family and should be their protector and provider. The feminine woman wants to be a wife to a dominant responsible man, and

to submit and obey in the context of love. 3) Married women should not be enticed (!) and forced into employment outside the home. 4) School children should learn the value of the different sex roles and be educated accordingly. The increase in female violence in and out of schools is due to this perversion; girls trying to be like boys. 5) Women should not take on weapon carrying, violent, or power roles. The Y-chromosome makes men the leaders and fighters. 6) Legislation, trade union and EOC pressures, propaganda and attitudes in the press and TV to further the unisex perversion must stop. 7) The Women's Libbers are obsessed with the erroneous notion that every human activity must be done by both sexes and that their rights, duties and wants are the same. They hate beauty and romance. 8) There is no contradiction between femininity and intelligence.

You can contact this organisation at: David Stayt: Fossebridge 454, Mrs Deirdre Barnes: Shrivvenham 782880.



The advertisers of Jaffa orange juice have done it again! Their latest ad is of a dignified, virile 'man'. At first glance it looks as if the advertisers have seen sense and got rid of those pictures of fat bosomy women. But wait a minute, what are those badges on his lapel—you've guessed it—pictures of fat bosomy women. So get out those stickers sisters and wherever you see that ad slap on a few remarks of your own.



NEWSGIRL
Hold, breathe, bright and beautiful... she's 20-year-old Rosie, our very first Newsgirl. We'd like to thank her for bringing the Nottingham Evening News to you. We hope you do too. Rosie's fresh-faced appeal is just the sort we need to bring you the news in a way that's fun to read. Look out for more Newsgirls from now on!

Rosie is just the tonic

Front claim quashed Euro race hots up

Owen pens a lament to the trees

A POET is kicking up a fuss about trees which keep on biting the dust. Now he's penned some poems to stop the problem getting any worse.

Freezing? It's good for you

IT'S a cold winter in the big freeze. It's a sign of a healthy environment, say experts.

Up in arms Experts study 'UFO'

THE 100 political parties have gathered in London to discuss the state of the nation.

Waste

Reveal

STRIKING PAGE 3

WHEN the 28 journalists at the Nottingham Post followed the call for all the provincial journalists to strike, their management told them that the action would only result in them all being sacked. Regardless they took action. That was in the middle of December.

When the strike was resolved in January on a national level, the Nottingham management refused to accept the no victimisation clause and the journalists stayed out to fight for reinstatement.

The journalists suggested that a strike paper should be produced and we, the Nottingham Womens Voice group agreed. Until one day when we were standing on the picket lines supporting our fellow trades unionists in their fight to keep their jobs, we heard rumours that a 'page three' pinup was to be included in the paper. Needless to say we were really disillusioned with the journalists and questioned their motives for including this kind of thing. We argued that as trades unionists they could not support the exploitation of women's sexuality in this way. No one would take the responsibility for having made the decision to have a 'page three'.

We were told that we should write formal letters of complaint to the editorial board and that these would be printed. We did, and they were not. So we produced a leaflet to be distributed on the picket line, saying that we would continue to argue for them in our trades union branches, and support them in every way possible but that they in turn had a responsibility to us to withdraw the 'page three' as it insulted us and many other women trades unionists.

Their response to our statement was all based around the selling capacity of things like page three. Even one of the three women journalists said that it was okay by her as long as it sold the paper. What we had thought was to be a strike paper had turned into a commercial exercise. Even the controversy over the pictures had become a selling point. Under the picture in the third issue they printed a voting slip asking people to send them in with their vote as to whether the page should stay or not. Their reason for doing this had little to do with any notion of democracy and a lot more to do with the fact that it was yet another thing with which to sell the paper.

In the fourth issue the page was withdrawn. In its place there was a small space allowed by way of explanation. This contained a brief analysis of the voting slips saying that the No vote had won, this seems pretty dubious. But most importantly of the three letters they printed not one was expressing the opinion that the page should go. They still don't seem to understand what we are saying, why it is we object to this kind of use of women's body's and what it is that makes us any different from the Mary Whitehouses of this world.

This is just one example of the kind of sexism that we all come up against in our trades union activity. While we still recognise the importance the journalists' strike has in that it represents the last vestiges of trade unionism at the Post and will fight for them all we can, we will all have to argue very hard against these kinds of attitudes.

• Nottingham Womens Voice

+SAVE OUR HOSPITALS+SAVE OUR HOSPITALS+SAVE - PAYING WITH OUR LIVES...

THE newspapers told us recently that it cost a woman much more than a man to insure herself against ill health. A woman often has to pay half as much again to get the same private health insurance as a man.

The insurance companies are no fools. If they charge a woman more it is because women's health is more at risk. All the illnesses associated with child bearing are *extra* health risks for women. They come on top of the 'normal' illnesses of our society - cancer, bronchitis, arthritis and so on.

But women don't just have their own health to worry about. There are also the children because it's usually we who have to take them to the clinic and the doctor. That's why the fight against health cuts has been led by women. We in Womens

Voice have been involved in campaigns to prevent hospital closures and to keep open maternity and children's wards. We have also been involved in fighting to improve womens facilities - like getting day-care abortion centres and well woman clinics. But we have to realise that each local cut and closure is part of a much wider picture of cuts in the health service as a whole.

The cuts were very carefully and deliberately planned as far back as 1971. In 1971 Conservative Minister Anthony Barber tried to cut back on health spending. All he could do was increase prescription charges. The Tories, with the agreement of the Labour Party, then planned a massive reorganisation of Health Service administration. The aim was to take control out of local hands and out of the hands of the medical profession who were too emotionally involved in their work to agree to cuts.

The new administration was based on huge regional councils and area councils. Each Regional Council was told its funds by a central committee, who then told the Area Health Authority who then let the Community Health Council deal with the protests. This new administration was inefficient, complicated and costly. That didn't matter - it was very good at cutting.

The cuts are necessary because the health service budget has been frozen, with only an allowance for inflation. This means that when a new hospital opens, another has to shut - to make up for the extra cost.

For instance, the Hallamshire in Sheffield has just opened so the local hospital for mentally handicapped has got to close!

When the Health Service started in the 1940's it had 500,000 hospital beds. There are now only 400,000 for a larger, older population. The hospital service is ceasing to 'care' for long term patients. Elderly people, the mentally ill, the chronically sick, cannot get into hospital anywhere.

And David Ennals lies about the reasons for the cuts. He says resources are being diverted from better off areas like London to areas like Liverpool and Sheffield. But what's better off about London? Local London hospitals like Hounslow get shut down, wards get shut down and nobody anywhere seems to benefit.

Except private medicine. More and more workers are being forced into using private insurance schemes like BUPA, because they can't risk the agony and time off work caused by long hospital waiting lists. That is why BUPA representatives now visit building sites, in search of workers who can't afford to wait for operations on hernias, varicose veins and piles.

Why *has* the government cut a service that is so important to our lives? In the last three years the government has cut health expenditure by a quarter. Defence spending on the other hand has only gone down by three per cent!

The answer is that most of the health budget comes out of general taxation. But the government has had to divert enormous funds from general taxation into industry in order to keep private and public industry afloat. So the money that should have gone into keeping us healthy goes instead into trying to

keep British business in the world market.

This money comes straight from our pockets. Hardly any companies pay company tax. Any profits they make they keep. But our money goes to bail them out when they're in trouble.

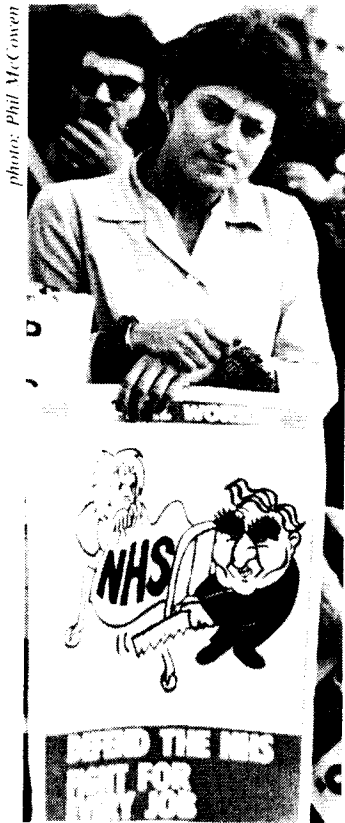
It's the same story in education, housing and all the other social services. Working class people are paying for a crisis they did not cause. And it is the women who suffer most. Our health suffers, the health of our children suffers, and we will be expected to fill the gap left by a bankrupt health service.

If old peoples' homes are shut who looks after the aged parent? The daughter, the neighbours, the home-help and occasionally the district nurse.

These people have one thing in common - they are all women. And as the health service breaks down, the burden of care will fall more and more heavily on us.

As women it is important for us to fight for the little we have won. But each local fight is part of a national problem - the fact that we are paying out of our pockets and with our lives and health for the failure of British capitalism. In the end, we're fighting the whole system.

• Joan Smith



+SAVE OUR HOSPITALS+SAVE OUR HOSPITALS+SAVE +

photo: Mark Risher (L.F.L.)

photo: Phil McConven

SAVE OUR HOSPITALS+SAVE OUR HOSPITALS+SAVE+SAVE



photo: Laurie Sparham (L.F.L.)

THE Soho Hospital for Women, which has for years provided gynaecological and X-ray treatment for women from all over London, now faces closure.

At a time when the Government is glibly condemning hospital workers for putting patients' lives at risk, it is itself pushing ahead with a cuts programme that endangers patients' lives far more seriously than any group of striking workers ever could.

If the Area Health Authority's proposals go ahead, the Soho Hospital will lose at least two wards, 14 jobs and 24 beds. They say that other beds in the Middlesex Hospital, which are now empty due to understaffing, could be used to cover the Soho closure.

The Community Health Council, the local body that is meant to protect the interest of the residents in the area, seeing the AHA's proposals, went one better. They proposed the total closure of the hospital! Because only 2% of the women treated at the Soho, they said, were from the local area, they felt quite justified in eliminating the whole hospital since they, of course, only represented local interests.

They also justified total closure of the hospital by saying that this way more money £328,000, to be exact would be 'saved'. Last year alone the Government *underspent* its allocations by approximately £70 millions in the Health and Social services sector.

Central London Womens voice group decided that something had to be done to save our hospital. We sent off letters to the AHA and the CHC putting our arguments. As a

result of our pressure the CHC has withdrawn its proposal for total closure, though it is still wavering about the closure of the two wards.

Womens Voice members spoke at the CHC's open meeting, at which certain members of the CHC were won over to our point of view. At this meeting, another reason for the CHC accepting the closure was given - that they knew the hospital to be taking on private patients. Officially the hospital claims that no private treatment takes place in the hospital.

It seems then, that Harley St. private doctors are allocating their NHS beds to private patients. The CHC's answer to this scandalous situation is simply to eliminate the hospital. But that will do nothing either to stop private practice or to ensure a better NHS service to more women. The hospital has to be kept open as a fully NHS hospital with all private beds, both official ones and unofficial ones, eliminated in order to provide a decent service to all women.

We have got a petition against the closures in the Soho hospital underway, and it is gaining support. We hope to be able to have a trades union delegates' meeting opposing the closures in two months' time.

Meanwhile we are picketing the AHA's meeting where the fate of the Soho will be decided on **Wednesday March 14 at 5.30, at 14 Bishops Bridge Road.** We hope many Women's Voice readers will come and support us. If any one would like further information about the **Save Soho Hospital Campaign**

please phone Marnie at 249 5958.

• Marnie Holborow

BULLETIN

Here's an extract from a bulletin given out by Leeds Womens Voice outside St James Hospital. Perhaps the same idea could be taken up by other groups.

WOMEN—on the lowest pay, first to be made unemployed, taking some of the dirtiest and hardest jobs, forced to do part-time and shift work and on top of all that having homes and families to care for. Why should this always be our lot?

Whether it's the laundry and kitchen workers, domestics or nurses - we women do some of the most essential jobs in the hospital yet we get least pay. None of us gets paid much more than £1 an hour. We also have to work shift work and weekends. Hospital hours are practically impossible if you have a family: either you leave at 7.00am and leave your husband to look after the kids or you work after five and don't see anything of your family.

The press often say that women do not need a living wage - who do they think that they are kidding - who would work under these conditions unless we had to. *One out all out.*

It is not just a man's fight - Alan Fisher wants to withdraw the 'key workers' waterworkers, dustmen and ambulance men to win the fight. Who does he think the key workers are? We are all as vital as they are and we deserve as good a wage as they do. If we let the men go it alone two things are likely to happen - the women will be sold out and the men are going to lose, for unity is our strength. We have a right to a living wage and we will have to fight to get it. So let's remind Alan Fisher when he comes to Leeds next Saturday that we are the biggest part of his union and he 'better start taking us into account.



In 1901 there were 1.5 million people in England and Wales who were 65 or over, 6.4 per cent of the population.

In 1971 there were 6.5 million, 13.3 per cent of the population.

Probably there'll be an extra million by 1991, with a disproportionate increase in the very old.

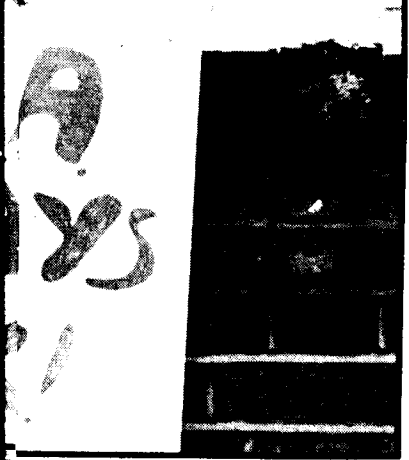
This means that instead of cuts, an overall increase in NHS services of about 25 per cent would be required by 1991 just to provide the same appalling standard of care for the old that existed in 1971.



photo: Angela Phillips



photo: Laurie Sparham (L.F.L.)



SAVE OUR HOSPITALS+SAVE OUR HOSPITALS+SAVE OUR HO

NALGO MATERNITY CONFERENCE

200 DELEGATES from NALGO branches all over the country, attended the conference on maternity rights. The conference was very encouraging and a great deal of useful information came out of it.

Until 1977 women with more than one year's service for their authority were entitled to some paid maternity leave. When the maternity provisions of the Employment Protection Act (EPA) came into force, the national negotiators put the existing minimum provisions together with the minimum allowed

under the EPA in such a way that it is now very difficult for anyone to work out what she is entitled to.

The discussion and workshops in the morning were on maternity leave agreements. The present agreement allows for 29 weeks' leave, with only 6 of these on full pay. We should aim for a full year of leave after the birth with 24 weeks on full pay; 5 days paternity leave and the right for a woman to return to a job at her previous grade within 5 years of the birth. A perfect maternity leave agreement is quite

useless without adequate provision of day nurseries.

The afternoon session opened with a history of day nurseries showing that they have been provided only when it has been politically expedient to do so. The needs of women have never been taken into account.

A woman from Camden NALGO, where there has been a successful day nursery for the past two years, gave a lot of practical advice on how to win and run a day nursery. She said that day nurseries generate their own demand and must be open for at least eighteen months before their success can be judged.

From the discussion that followed it became quite clear that

maternity leave and nurseries are part of the same campaign. There are two lines of attack that can be pursued: the first is for maternity leave to be negotiated as part of the annual pay claim and seen as an integral part of our service conditions, not as an item to fill in time before the tea comes round.

The second, is to develop and strengthen local negotiating channels and campaign at branch level to use these to win local agreements on maternity and paternity leave and work place nurseries. This has been done successfully in a number of London boroughs, it is now up to women elsewhere to get together and campaign for better facilities.

• Lilian Goldberg

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

8.15 I arrive at school, make some tea and then prepare the work in the childrens' books.

9.00 'The welly scramble', my class is 4-5 year olds and most of them need help with coats, gloves etc. Everyone of them has brought something to show me, from a chewy toffee to a picture of Superman. (Who, by the way, has now superceded John Travolta in the popularity poll.)

9.05 Collect the dinner money, plus other monies, such as biscuit money, money for apples, school fund, and also a collection for retiring caretaker.

9.15 Assembly mine this morning.

9.30 Back to class to take the register, and the oral news session. Newstime can also be their fantasy time. They also realise that they too can be entertainers, and make the rest of the class laugh.

9.45 Formal work session the class is in one large group, and two small groups. I work with one, language then number. The second group does creative work, either painting or playing with clay. I here is also the Wendy House. The third are working with number or language games, or on activities which develop motor visual skills. During this session one child wanted to be sick (luckily a false alarm) so I took him to the loo. Then took several others to give their mucky hands a scrub. On returning from the loo, screaming can be heard coming from the Wndy House, inside Stephen was crying. Apparently Becky was pretending to be a were wolf, who was going to eat him up. For a change the roles are reversed here, and instead of the boy scaring the girl, it's vice versa with Becky. So I consoled Stephen.

10.20 Everybody starts tidying up. This is a crucial part of their training, to be tidy. Unfortunately this tidying up resulted in the chalk box being spilt all over the floor, resulting in even more tidying up.

10.25 Two kids hand out the milk

and straws. After milk they go to the loo and get on coats, hats gloves etc. (All coming for help of course, roll on Velcro Parkas!)

10.40 I give out apples and biscuits and they go out to play. I spend a few minutes tidying up their tidying up and getting out books etc., for next session, before dashing down for a really welcome cup of tea.

End of Playtime. Not bad today, only two cut knees, and one bumped head. So I packed them off to the welfare assistant for that vital plaster, the playground status symbol.

11.00 Look at the paintings they've done and Brian teaches us a new song.

11.05 First group now do creative fantasy and language games. I work with the other two small groups. These children are all school latecomers and are still doing letter co-ordination. Their pre-number activities include sets, matching shapes etc etc. Groups like this need to be as small as possible at this stage infants really need as much as one-to-one work with the teacher as they can get.

11.40 Change groups around so they've all done some creative etc. Take a group to book corner for 10 minutes for sound flash cards these are the alphabet and words from the reading scheme.

11.50 Tidy away and gather together. Derry gets a clap from the kids and a jelly bean from me as he's started a reading book.

11.55 Take 'dinner children' to toilet, check they've washed their hands. Send 'home children' to cloakroom (luckily next to our classroom. Help them on with their coats.

12.00 'Home children' go home, 'dinner children' go to the dining room and I go to the staffroom for my dinner.

12.30 We're making Valentine Cards today, so back to classroom, to cut out cards and hearts and tissues, cover 'messy area' with newspapers and get out scissors, glue etc.

1.30 Kids come in they make

their cards in groups of four, and other children play with large play apparatus, and sand and water, painting and modelling etc..

2.20 All cards done so grab 10 minutes with the readers.

2.30 Tidy up again! gather together for some songs and look at the cards, here we discuss who they'll give them to - most of them want to give it to their mum, but Nicky thought she'd be different, she's giving hers to Micky Mouse!

3.30 Tidy up again. And generally clear up. I use this time for wall displays, mounting work etc. But I do usually try to get away for 4.00.

As a class room teacher two points struck me when writing this article.

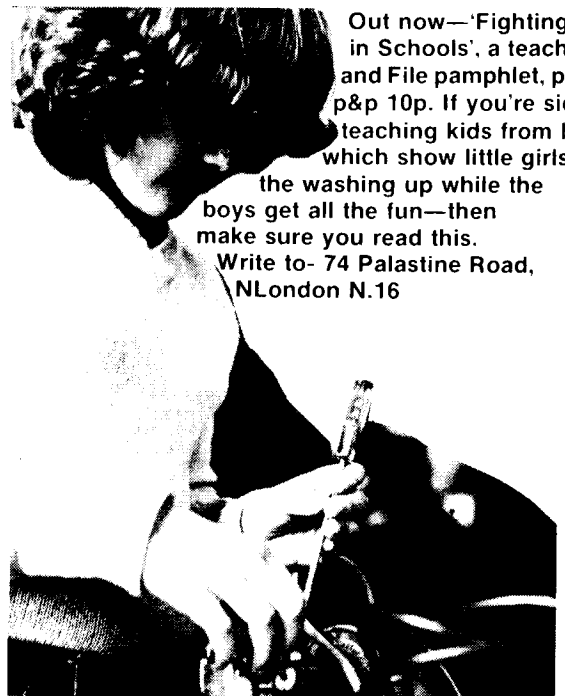
1. We really need more trained ancillary workers in the classroom. Every few minutes I spend doing a shoelace (and the children go through the coat routine 8 times a day) is a few minutes spent *not*

teaching one of my children, and that means one of *your* children!

2. The percentage rise currently being negotiated the N.U.T. is a disgrace. With a percentage rise, a top Head gets sacks of cash (an increase of £5062 and the average classroom teacher gets buttons (£780). We should be fighting for a flat rate increase so that the cash in real terms goes to the shop floor worker the classroom teacher. That's where the real work goes on.

• Sue Hornby
a Liverpool teacher.

Blot, magazine of the National Union of School Students. Issue No 2 now out. R.E., bullying, trouser protest, puberty, being gay, skan, school dinners, files on students, abortion and having babies. 5p plus postage from 302 Pentonville Road London N1.



Out now—'Fighting Sexism in Schools', a teachers Rank and File pamphlet, price 15p. p&p 10p. If you're sick of teaching kids from books which show little girls doing the washing up while the boys get all the fun—then make sure you read this. Write to- 74 Palastine Road, NLondon N.16

AS I write this in front of the tele I feel so angry. The Transport and General Workers Union have accepted the Government's offer to the low paid.

It's a sellout! The trouble with the offer made to low paid workers is that it's not enough, and it discriminates against women. This was the feeling at a meeting with our Town hall cleaners.

'Don't the unions know that the majority of low paid workers are women who work part time. This offer won't benefit us at all'.

Another woman said: 'But we *do* work 40 hours. It's just that we squash the work we do into 30 hours.'

The decision of the meeting was to reject the offer, and to begin the fight for our wage claim. A one week strike was agreed on to start with.

Picketing was also arranged for the following day, at the nearest council depot. Our area, Greenwich, appears to be the only borough not doing anything about the claim. So we decided to try and pull out the men. A dozen or so of us met outside the depot at 6.40am, and not one man crossed the picket line.

We got them to hold a meeting and they voted to do the same as us. During the morning the T&G Works Convenor came down and told the men to get back to work. He said the union had accepted Callaghan's offer and that we women were 'out of order'!

The next morning we did two more depots. I was at the largest one with six other women at 7am. We stopped nearly everyone and spoke to them. The majority of them said 'They were with us'. The stewards called a meeting. The works convenor turned up again and told the same to these men. With those instructions they were out the gate before you could blink, mind you they weren't quick enough to escape our abuse. They made us sick because it's always the men that say women hold us back or women work for pin money. Lil, who is on the picket line is married. Her husband works at the GPO. He gets up at 3.30am to get ready for work. She's up at 5am to clean the Town Hall where she's worked for 15 years. 'This is my first strike', Lil puts up with this 'life' hardly ever going out, because both of them are too worn out after working such unsocial hours.

None of these women have ever done this sort of thing before, especially arguing with other workers, who should be out with them. 'If this claim is won in this area, you would have got it on the backs of us women workers'. We learn the arguments fast. It takes a time for us women to move, but when we do, my God we could move mountains! Three of us went up to Hackney strike meeting.

We were given a really warm reception.

When we got back to the picket line the men were returning back to the yard. They couldn't look us in the face. They were embarrassed. Really ashamed. I've always wondered how it feels to be called a scab, and by the look on some of their faces, it can't be a pleasant feeling. But we've got no time for scabs. We want them with us. It's their fight too. Men and women fighting together united is the only way to win.

• **Peggy Eagle**

Mary and Janet are part-time orderlies at



photo: Virginia Turbett

HOW WE FIGHT..

Hackney Hospital, working from 5 to 8.30pm, laying the tables and washing up for the evening meal. They have been on strike for a week in support of NUPE's claim. A mass meeting has just voted to go back to work and accept the government's offer. We asked them about the strike:

'A lot of the women want to come and do their work and don't want any hassle. Quite a few of the women didn't agree with the strike. A lot of them couldn't really afford to come out but who can? But somebody's got to stand and say we've had enough.

I think that if you're in the union you've got to support it.'

They voted against the offer at the meeting— so what made people accept it?

'People were frightened that they'd lose the £4.50 offered. The Prime Minister keeps saying that there is *no more* so they felt they had to settle for what they could get. The deal itself is more confusing than any help.

...WHY WE LOSE

THE TRADE union leaders and the government have acted hand in hand to keep women low paid.

As the stories on this page show, women will get very little. If you work part-time, the offer of £3.50 means that you end up with around 50p. And you have to work 40 hours to get the extra £1 that is being offered.

One of the biggest cons in the wage deal is the promise of comparability. Every hospital cleaner knows that if she is compared with a cleaner in a hotel—she isn't going to get a wage rise.

Alan Fisher of NUPE is very good at passionate speeches, but he gets scared when the ordinary membership puts a bit of passion into the picket line. If Fisher earned what you earn he might have fought a bit harder.

The trade union leaders wanted to sell out the low paid so they wouldn't be an embarrassment before the general election.

That's why they've also drawn up a Concordat which seeks to destroy a lot of our most basic trade union rights like effective picketing and the right of workers

It's all bits and pieces to make the wages up. The basic pay's no good—anybody who's not on a bonus system or overtime their pay's very low—they're who everyone's fighting for. And anyway, some people can't work overtime.'

Mary and Janet work 21 hours (6 days) a week and take home between £21 and £27 depending on whether they work Sundays. So they don't qualify for the £1 comparability pay anyway and come off even worse than the full-time day staff.

'You've got to get a job to fit in with the kids, because if you have to get a child-minder (£12 a week) it's not worth working. My husband finishes work at 5 so he can look after the kids till 8.30 and we can still go out in the evening. I waited for years to get a job with these hours—there's a three-year waiting list to get a part-time job in the schools'.

• **Barbara Andrews**

in services like hospitals to control their own wage deals. The Concordat seeks to put more and more power into the hands of the officials and less in yours.

What is The Answer? We've got to rely on ourselves. We are the rank and file. We have to oppose rubbish like the Concordat and we have to keep on working in our unions. Let's make sure our shop stewards are good fighting women who will involve us in all the decision making.

If we start organising against bad conditions, health risks and low staffing levels and link up with other men and women to get these things sorted out—then the next time there's a wage fight we'll be used to working together. Then we'll have a much louder voice. They're our unions—let's fight to control them.

The Anti-Concordat

Several trade unionists have written a pamphlet explaining the dangers of the concordat. If you want a copy write to 37 Cecile Park N London N8 or ring 01 340 1766 or 01 805 1628.

The story behind Astrid Proll

photos: Pat Richards (Report)

WHEN Astrid Proll was arrested last September, her friends started a campaign to fight for her release, and to counter the way she was treated by the press. In some ways the campaign has been very successful: the gutter-press image of 'Miss Terror' with a gun in her handbag has been replaced by some good articles showing Astrid not as a 'terrorist' but as a woman who had to struggle (despite broken health) to establish a different kind of political life as a socialist and a feminist.

The friend in Germany who told her to go to England because of the strong women's movement here, gave her good advice. Women here are involved in political struggle in ways that are impossible in Germany our unions are stronger and women are learning traditionally male skills and fighting for better pay. Astrid was able to train as a car mechanic and work with unemployed school-leavers, most of them black and often in trouble with the police.

She had tried to live like this in Germany too. There she also worked with unemployed school-leavers and with the foreign 'guest workers' who do all the rotten under-paid jobs that keep the German economy going. It is important to know this because the German press want to make the 'two halves' of her life seem quite separate: they don't want to recognise that the Astrid in London, 'a nice woman who got caught because she helped a black kid in trouble' is the same person as the monster terrorist of the banner headlines.

The German government wants her back so they can use her for their own propaganda. When they get her back in gaol they'll try

to crush and intimidate her and to turn her into a police informer. They did this to Karl Heinz Ruhland (another member of the Red Army Faction), whose sentence was dropped in exchange for information about other 'terrorists'.

It is not unusual for political prisoners to be treated like this (it happens in Northern Ireland) but the situation is worse in Germany. Karl Heinz Dellwo has been in isolation since his imprisonment in May 1975. When he protested about his conditions and tried to tell people outside what has happening, visits were stopped and he was thrown into the punishment cell. He was tied to the floor with iron rings for 48 hours. As there was no ventilation he nearly suffocated and he had to lie in his piss and shit watched by a television camera. He is still in prison.

It is hard for us here to appreciate how paranoid and authoritarian German society is. After the war, the Americans filled the German civil service, the police force and the



judiciary with ex-Nazis. The ex-Nazis are still there. None of the normal kinds of political struggle that exist here (student politics, union activity, protests against nuclear power stations) are tolerated. Anyone on the left is branded as a 'terrorist' and thousands of people have lost their jobs because they are considered 'hostile to the constitution'. There is even a law (paragraph 88) which means you can be imprisoned if you are overheard saying something 'un-constitutional' in the street.

It's not surprising that socialists should feel so isolated that they *do* turn to terrorism. Astrid Proll did, and although she has lived a different kind of political life here, she is not prepared to denounce the friends she worked with and was supported by in Germany.

Recently she said in an interview that she wouldn't choose to live an 'armed underground political life' any longer. Such politics lead to an almost complete cutting off from the people whom you actually mean to reach. They are not effective and cannot succeed. 'When I am isolated, I cannot live, cannot develop and cannot change anything.' In England she can and she should be free to do so.

When Astrid was arrested, the British government quickly changed the extradition law so that even a British citizen could be extradited.

They did this to suck up to the West German Government and Astrid is being used as a pawn in the game. You can help by sending postcards to the Home Secretary, demanding Astrid's release and making the government aware of how much support she has here.

A COUPLE of us organised Hackney Womens Voice first public meeting 15 months ago and we have kept up regular meetings ever since. Although we managed to interest a fair number of women in the group at first, we seemed to be all over the place, so six months ago we went back to some basic lessons.

We wanted to build a solid group of 6-8 women in order to reach outwards more effectively and confidently. We had plenty of contacts so we put a lot of time and energy into seeing each other more regularly, talking to others and building our sales up. We've found that people see the group as *their* group and that any contribution they can make to it is worthwhile, however small it seems. Everyone feels they have a part to play; and don't just go along to meetings that are organised by someone else.

We used various things to help this along - we sold Womens Voice every *week* in the market and tried to get as many women as possible to go there. It gives us a chance to talk *and* gets us out to the general public.

We also try to involve as many women as possible in doing the simple, basic things like making posters, writing, printing and distributing leaflets, putting ads in and so on.

This helps people to feel involved and gives invaluable experience - but we learnt quickly never to ask or expect someone who's never done it before to do it alone - the reaction is blind panic and certainty that 'I couldn't do it', 'I can't write'. So we make sure that someone experienced does it with the 'novice'.

The other thing we found was that even some of the most confident of us are very reluctant to speak in public, even from the floor, so we keep our meetings as informal as possible. Many of the speakers who have visited the group have rarely, if ever, been in the position of 'addressing a meeting'. So it's helpful all round to make the set-up as friendly as we can.

The last meeting we had was great. It was about Iran and a Womens Voice member invited an Iranian friend to give us a more personal view. She was not in any group or involved with Womens Voice. It was tremendous. She came out with all the reasons why there should be a revolutionary feminist movement in Iran and what it should take up. She was so enthusiastic and heartfelt about it that it was really easy for us to feel involved. The discussion went on so long that we nearly missed the pub! (She also really enjoyed it and left wanting to be in touch with her nearest Womens Voice group).

We had other discussions along the same lines and our confidence in expressing opinions and arguing has grown enormously.

By the New Year we'd built quite a solid core to the group and now needed to turn outwards. The Low Pay Campaign was the ideal issue for us. In Hackney there are six hospitals. As we had several hospital worker members who were rather isolated, we decided to concentrate our energies in this area rather than stabbing around trying to do everything and ending up doing nothing. We were also keen to start a sale outside one of the hospitals at shift change time. So we decided to build this sale and

possibly work towards a regular bulletin. This would not only bring us useful contacts and help the Low Pay Campaign but could also help our members inside the hospitals to build more and involve people in the unions.

The sale has now been done three times, selling two, then six, then eight copies in an hour, so we're quite excited about it. People are beginning to recognise us, and smile and pass comment (usually sympathetic). We've handed out leaflets each time, first the Womens Voice Low Pay leaflet with an advert for January 22 Day of Action; then an advert for two meetings of the £60/35 hour Action Campaign with special reference to women; and finally our own Low Pay leaflet advertising a Womens Voice Low Pay meeting to be held in addition to our regular public meeting.

We plan our monthly meetings three at a time to give people plenty of notice and we try to get different people each time to make the various arrangements and publicity.

We now need to involve the next 'layer' of interested women as our basic group is fairly stable. We have been getting a regular 15-20 people at meetings and about 10 at the discussion meetings. We try to take it in turns to chair the meetings - and introduce discussions so that we all gain experience.

Of course, our biggest problem is that nearly all our members and contacts work full time and some have children and families to cope with too, so time is always short. We can't expect too much or put too much pressure on people who have so much to do already; and we must make sure that we can back people up with babysitters etc. One of our members had some friends at work who were quite interested but they don't go out at night on their own (understandably) so getting to an evening meeting is difficult. Family and work commitments leave very little spare time.

We also try to hold meetings in a library or

Around the groups

Around the groups will be a regular spot for reports of your Womens Voice meetings and activities.

Please try and keep your reports brief and please try to send us photos, black and white print. If you haven't got anybody in your group who is a dab hand with a camera let us know about your activity and we'll try and send someone along.

Around the groups will be a good way of keeping in touch with what other women are doing—a swop shop of ideas. So please send us stories about your group even if you think it isn't important, another group may benefit.



Photo: Charles Fellowes

community centre rather than a pub as we've found that many women don't like to arrive at a pub on their own.

Sometimes too, we don't seem to be able to get anything right. Like when we went down to the picket at the Garners Restaurant (they are striking for union recognition) in London. Half of us got lost on the way and wandered round half the Garners restaurants in London trying to find the rest

(though those of us who did get there really enjoyed ourselves once we got over the initial embarrassment).

But slowly and sympathetically, (we hope) we're getting over some of these problems and are generally quite enthusiastic. Now we need to continue expanding our area of activity and get out to reach as many women as possible.

• Jane Handscorn

A RIGHT

"Economics is what makes us dependent on men. You have to break out or break away."

Joyce is 26, black, and lives with her three children in a council flat in Hoxton, East London.

"I was 18. He was my first boyfriend. I was doing my O levels at school at the time. I got pregnant, failed my O levels and got married all in one year. I wanted to get married and I wanted the kid. It seemed the natural thing to do at the time.

We lived with his parents in one room. 10 months later I had my second child and the third three years later. I started evening classes in between pregnancies. It was a big thing for my husband that his wife shouldn't work. He wasn't earning enough, we started to have rows. I felt I had declined, I couldn't afford anything. I was giving everything to the kids and leaving myself out.

No, the kids weren't planned. I was on the coil. But abortion's out for me personally.

My husband and I drew apart. He didn't want to involve himself in my life. I did more than my share. He wasn't even there to appreciate the home I'd made in our new council flat. I sat there and watched the flat on my own. I realised I could live without him and decided to call it a day.

I'm on social security. I get £41 a week for

myself and three kids. My rent is £13.25. That leaves me with £28 for everything, bills, fares, school meals, nursery. But I know I can cope without a man. Eventually I suppose I'll want to be with a man for emotional satisfaction, but I'm so occupied working out my own life and the kids' lives.

I feel I'll remarry, but at present I think I have to get myself in a better economic position before I get involved with another man. Economics is the crunch. I can only have economic independence by educating myself. I'm going to a Further college. You don't have to pay fees if you're on SS. My education is central to my life.

Economics is what makes us so dependent on men. You have to break out, or break away.

I'm glad I've got my kids, I'm young, they're young. They're great, they are my little friends.

I'm not too mad on love any more. I don't let it rule my life. I mean I'm not ruling it out, warmth and security are important but love gets you into a lot of trouble.

If I meet another man, he's got to have respect for my ideas, be on the same level. I believe in equal rights for women, in abortion on demand, all that. I'm not changing for anyone. Everyone has expectations, but it's the women who change themselves to fit the men's expectations. The kids don't change me. We're a mad lot, me and my kids.

The kids just got on with their lives. I've been frank with them, I've told them why we split up. They accept it. Children aren't silly, there's no point hiding things from them. You can't just sit and mope."



*Do we really have the right children or not? In theory, v
ever before. But
In the following interviews
all, women
Interviews by Melanie Ma
Pictures by J*

CHOOSE



"I chose to have a baby when I already knew that I was gay."

Sylvia is 32, gay, and lives with her baby twins and a group of women.

"Originally I had decided to have the baby with a gay bloke I know but even though we loved each other it was difficult to break down the barriers. Once you've defined yourself sexually it's hard to reconsider. Artificial insemination wasn't common knowledge then, but I considered it.

Then I met a young man with a beautiful smile and a good line in chat-ups. We had a one night stand. I slept with him because I wanted to know what it was like with a man after 6 years of being gay. Also I did want to be pregnant. I didn't see him again because he wasn't a sensitive lover.

Kids change your life incredibly. Having twins is especially difficult. It can really isolate you. It's 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And having twins seems to isolate you from women with one baby. You are boring—your whole life is childcare.

I think lesbian, hetero-or bisexual mothers all have the same problems. In a way I'm better off than straight women because I live with a group of women who babysit and cook and clean. We're not wealthy, but we've recently been rehoused by the council. When I was six months pregnant we were evicted from a squat.

I felt strange at first about being a gay mother. I don't tell people, only close friends. At the Mothers and Toddlers club I

go to, I don't tell anyone. I haven't got the nerve. It would become a source of gossip. I'd feel like a freak side show.

I'll be completely honest with the kids. But I think they'll figure it out for themselves. Kids usually know when their parents are gay.

I feel that women should neither be pressured or discouraged about having kids—it's an individual choice. I feel that in a way the Women's Movement has made women feel guilty about having kids. Why women want to have kids goes so deep, you can't really explain it, can you?"

"I'd have done anything not to be pregnant."

Carol is 36, and lives with her two children.

"When I got pregnant 11 years ago, apart from pills from the back street chemist, which usually didn't work, the only way to get an abortion was to be referred to a psychiatrist. I had this terrible two hour long cross examination. He asked really personal questions about my sex life and relationships and everything. Neither of us wanted a child, but the doctor thought it would be good for us. I was refused the abortion.

As far as I was concerned it was a disaster, I'd have done anything not to be pregnant. I didn't want children at all, which was partly a reaction against the circumstances of my school mates. So many of them got pregnant and were stuck at home from about 19 years old.

I was angry that I wasn't allowed to have an abortion. I was angry with the doctor, and

It is this really so?

we tried to find out how, if at all we can do choose.

MacFadyean and Elana Dallas.

Jane Henriques.

also the whole system. Perhaps I could have played harder at being mad.

Once he was born, and he was there, I was quite happy about it despite the struggles, and I couldn't imagine it being any other way.

11 years ago women accepted a lot more than they do now, and there was no question of me doing anything but staying at home and looking after the baby, and maybe doing a boring part time job later on.

It's a circle - you perhaps only settle together because of the kid, and yet it destroys the relationship. Bad housing, no money, all the conflict because I wasn't content just to play that mother role: neither of us wanted to be the one that had to stay in.

If you had a decent house, and were organised, and had chosen the time and the relationship, there'd be less stress, but stuck in a council estate outside the town, I couldn't accept it. Nobody should have to."

"They always became my children the moment anything needed doing for them"

Christine is 26 and lives with her second husband and two children. She describes two kinds of married life.

"Unfortunately, or fortunately, whichever you choose, I have been married twice. The first time I got married I was 17 years old, and 8 weeks pregnant. Not an ideal start, but with some financial assistance from my parents, we managed to set up our own home, and six months later Louise was born.

Louise's father, Robin, worked shifts and as much as he liked to think that he helped in the home, his total assistance amounted to him making a cup of tea, once every blue moon. His job was at Kellogs slogging his guts out for US!

At this time I must admit that motherhood had taken a grasp of me and I seemed to live in a world of babies and talcum powder!

After three years of a general progression from nappies to potties, and gas to gee gees, the usual indoctrination took its course: "*another baby stops the first child being selfish*"

"two's such a nice number"
"an only child is a lonely child"

I actually fell for the rubbish and nine months later I went into hospital to be induced into labour.

Somehow things seemed different. Every five minutes a nurse seemed to come in and stick a syringe in me, until when I actually gave birth I was too drugged up to care whether I had had a monkey, let alone a boy or a girl.

After a few weeks at home, with what had started out as *our* baby but suddenly became *my* baby, I started to examine my so-called life. What a servant I really was. I hardly went out, except shopping. At least Robin saw different faces every day.

Home had suddenly turned into the new wing of Holloway. As much as Robin stressed how he carried such a responsibility for having two children, they always became

needed doing for them.

But even my own mother thought that I had a good deal! Deal! This was my life, not a business venture, or was it? My wages were certainly below any union minimum, and what a good productivity deal he had negotiated, with the Christmas bonus of a winter's coat, and two weeks holiday every year, not an offer to be snubbed.

The irony of it all, is that it wasn't until I had flu one February that I realised how empty and dull my life was. On reflection the children were my life, my reason for getting up each morning. Together Robin and I had no life, unless life meant that one of you was the cook, nanny, cleaner, nurse, children's entertainer and mistress.

We parted. I just couldn't stand the boring existence any longer.

I'm married again now, and at first it took some time to get used to the idea of sharing jobs and responsibilities around the home. Taking turns in washing up, ironing, cleaning etc all seem the norm now!

Perhaps marriage could be compared to baking a cake. Where if you get the ingredients right, you can't fail. But don't make my mistake, read the method properly the first time!"

"I had a sense of experiencing control over my life and my fertility."

Nadine is thirty and lives with her two daughters and their father.

"I got pregnant accidentally. I already had two kids and one was only nine months old. I was still breastfeeding. She deserved all the attention I had energy for. I had just gone back to teaching. I wanted to concentrate on my work and involve myself in life outside my kids, and in addition there was the economic pressure. It was ironical that at the moment that I had decided I was through with big time motherhood I should get pregnant.

Never in my life had I faced such a decision. I didn't want the child or the abortion. I just kept wishing I wasn't pregnant.

My first thought was that there was no question, I must have an abortion. Then over a period of days I realised it was very important to feel I could choose, that I could go on or have the abortion. The father was very supportive, and although he wanted an abortion he was very prepared to let me choose and affirmed his support in my decision.

The first few days were ghastly. Having had kids before I kept projecting what was inside me into the future. I had fantasies about my little baby being sucked down a canula and disintegrating. In some ways I think it's tougher for women to have abortions if they haven't got kids because they don't know what they're choosing to give up.... the tenderness, joy, love, passion, nappies and broken nights.

One difficulty was the deadline, if I couldn't make the choice by then it would have been made by default, and then I'd have

decision. One of my major realisations was that there wasn't a right decision, but rather that we were going to make a decision and whatever decision it was we were going to make that the right one.

I talked to lots of people about it. They were very supportive, the father was fantastic.

What surprised me on the day was that I enjoyed it, the clinic at Mile End hospital was marvellous. Everyone helped me to feel that I'd made a positive decision and I had a sense of experiencing control over my life and my fertility.

Before I had the abortion I was frightened of feeling guilty, frightened of feeling I had killed my baby, but I don't think I actually ever felt guilty. It was almost as if I had felt I ought to feel it. I thought I might feel weird in the month that it would have been born. I didn't: I felt relieved. It was important to me that I had gained the confidence to make such a decision—one which contradicted my whole upbringing. It was very liberating.

That projection, agony and fear about what is inside you, about scrunching up a baby... it's not rational. An eight—or ten—week—old foetus isn't "human". It's too easy for women to subordinate their needs.

Even if you're not sure of your choice, plan an abortion, keep your options open."

"I don't think I could stand that denial of my freedom"

Melly is 28 and single.

"I'm confused, I mean I'm nearly 30. I always thought of having kids as something I'd do one day. That image I had as a kid "when I'm grown up (21), I'll be married and have kids and cook meat and two veg and my husband will come home from work, tired, affectionate and hungry." It hasn't worked out like that at all. I'm fiercely independent and not at all keen to have children tugging at my time. As for the husband bit, ugh.

Sometimes when I'm with my friends' babies I love them. The way babies seductively press their little warm faces into your neck, their utter trust in you, it moves you and I long to have one of my own. Then they start to cry, you're nicer to them than you ever are to anyone else and they become apoplectic; their backs stretch, you can't even hug them and then I'm consumed with hatred and I want to throttle them.

Maybe I'll have one by accident. But it's the way they take your life away from you. I don't think I could stand that denial of my freedom. And I'd never have one unless the father had the child at least fifty per cent of the time. And I'd be jealous, I'd rather be the kid than the mother.

I think about it a lot and it makes me furious that I am forced by my anatomy to decide within the next few years, whereas men can go on deciding until they're 70 or something. I've got the right to choose, but only until I'm about 35. And that's very young.

Given my own violent confusion and the violent confusion of the world, it doesn't seem fair on a child to subject it to a life with me. I just don't think society is organised for women to have kids and lead their own lives, but I'm sure it could be."

HOLDING A PUBLIC MEETING

ORGANISING a Womens Voice public meeting may seem like an enormous task but it's really a lot easier than most of us imagine.

After deciding on a theme or topic for the meeting (and remember not to choose something too obscure) make sure that your speaker is booked well in advance. This gives you a couple of weeks to sort out everything. A list of speakers can be obtained from the Womens Voice office. Then it's just a series of steps that follow each other, automatically.

Venue

When booking the room, make sure it is within easy access of bus routes, if at all possible. Ask the proprietors if they don't mind you advertising the room on a poster. (It may seem a very trivial point, but some people do like to be consulted over things like this).

Publicising the Meeting

It has been well proven that the best form of advertising is with bright, attractive posters. The Womens Voice office has blank posters available, with the Womens Voice letterheading, which just needs the details of the meeting put on them. (A large felt-tip pen is ideal). Using these does create a better impression and attracts peoples' attention. Put the posters up in well-frequented, local haunts ie community centres, health centres, coffee bars, libraries, schools. All places that women frequent. In other words don't put them up somewhere where women won't see them!

Leaflet

Keep your leaflet short! When you are doing your shopping with three kids in tow, you do not want to be handed a ten page document. On one side just write the title of the meeting, ie Abortion, Womens Health, Low Pay etc. Underneath, write a short resume, containing a few facts and inviting women to come along and discuss the topic. On the reverse side advertise the meeting. This can be a smaller, condensed version of the poster.

Distributing the leaflet

Make sure that your leaflet is inserted into every copy of Womens Voice that you sell. On the Saturday sale of Womens Voice in the local market, hand out copies of the leaflet. Try and chat to women about the meeting. The more adventurous members, might like to organise a street meeting to advertise the forthcoming meeting. I think it's best to hand out the leaflet, just a few days before the meeting, this way the details of the meeting stay fresh in the mind.

If you live near any estates, these are excellent places for a mass leafletting expedition. Or if you sell Womens Voice on a

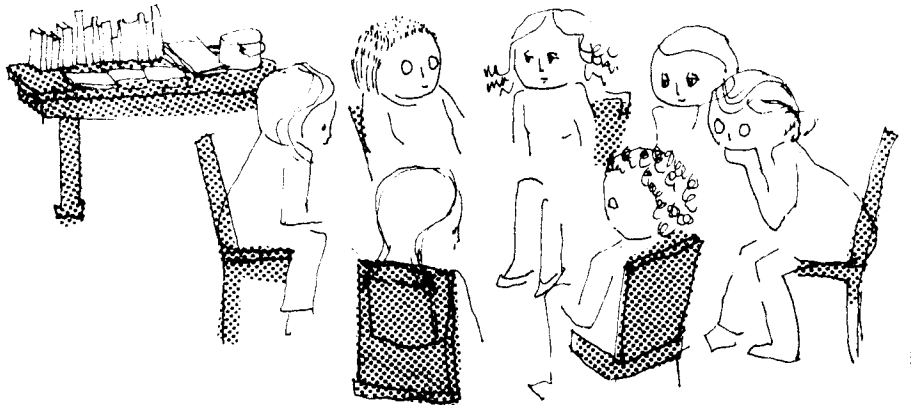


Illustration by Taku

local estate, take the leaflets with you on your sale.

Local papers

Send a copy of the leaflet to Socialist Worker and Womens Voice so that they can be inserted in the Ad's column, for the appropriate week. A crafty way of getting a free advert in the local papers, is to send the leaflet into the paper, and head it *PRESS RELEASE*. Tag along a little bit of information about Womens Voice and they will usually print it. It's free publicity, so why not make use of it.

Supporters

If you have a list of women who have previously shown some interest in Womens Voice but have never been to a meeting before, why not post them a copy of the leaflet. Better still, if you have the time, call round and visit them.

Babysitters

When women ring about the meeting, try and have a few spare bodies available for babysitting on the night. The lack of babysitters is probably the main reason why a lot of women never turn up to a meeting. If you promise someone a babysitter, don't do it on spec. Only to find out that you have nobody available to babysit on that particular night. It is very disappointing to get ready, and then have nobody turn up to babysit!

'The meeting'

If thousands of women do not turn up, our Womens Voice group has found it better to sit in a sort of circle, this way women do not feel so much on 'show', or in the limelight if they ask a question.

At the rear of the room, arrange a small bookstall, consisting of the current Womens Voice with a few back issues. Try and have a few books on show, along with pamphlets, stickers, badges and perhaps a general info

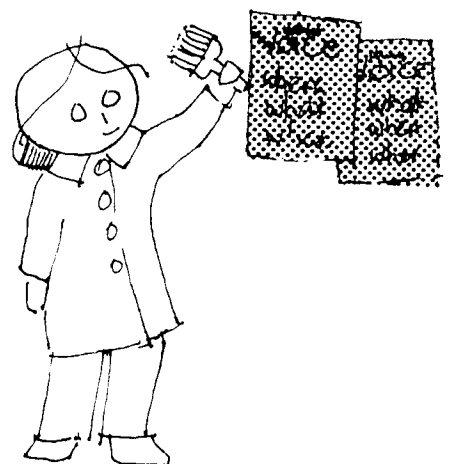
sheet on forthcoming meetings and activities in the area. Most important, if you have a banner, *PUT IT ON DISPLAY*.

Keep the speaker to a time limit (it does prevent people from falling asleep). Afterwards try and encourage people to ask questions, and if need be, to get the ball rolling, ask a few questions yourselves. This keeps the meeting friendly and interesting and avoids those long silences.

Make any announcements at the end, and draw their attention to the bookstall, local and national meetings and activities. And especially hi-light any local campaigns. Take a collection for the room afterwards, even if there was no charge, because the leaflets did not grow, they cost money to produce. Introduce people to the Womens Voice cards, so that if somebody is interested in joining, it might jog their memory.

It's important to talk to women after the meeting, to get to know them. Being friendly doesn't cost anything. A good idea is to go over to the pub for a drink and a chat. Following these basic steps, does make the job of organising a meeting much simpler. For any further information contact the Womens Voice office.

• Christine Fellowes
Hackney Womens Voice



DIYDIYDIYDIYDIYDIYDIYDIYDIYDI

International abortion rights

AROUND the world, women will be marching on March 31. We march in solidarity with all those women who are struggling for the right to choose when and where to have children.

Contraception and abortion are legal in Britain, but there is an enormous gap between what is needed and what is available.

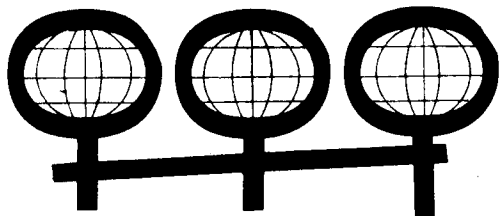
We want to see full contraceptive advice and safe reliable contraceptives. We want an abortion service available at the time of need, uniformly and throughout the country. Some members of the medical profession bully women into being sterilised as the 'price' of an abortion. In Rochdale some Asian women have been injected without their knowledge with Depo-provera (a long term contraceptive drug which can have extremely unpleasant effects).

Where is the control over these doctors and drugs? Why aren't contraceptive advice and supplies available, particularly for young women? Where are the out-patient abortion clinics which women can enter early in pregnancy without completely disrupting home life?

We say.

- ★ Make it compulsory for local authorities to provide abortion facilities. Amend the NHS Act.
- ★ Provide out-patient abortion clinics throughout the country.
- ★ Give safe and reliable contraception free to all.
- ★ No to forced sterilisation.
- ★ Solidarity with women everywhere struggling for the right to choose.

This statement by The National Abortion Campaign Committee is one which Womens Voice wholeheartedly supports.



Demonstrate

Make sure your Womens Voice group is part of the London demonstration. Organise a delegation from your group, and if you work, put a resolution through your trade union branch for support, delegations and donations.

Women all over the world are organising for an International Day of Action on Abortion rights on March 31st. Demonstrations will take place in London, Dublin, Amsterdam, Paris, Brussels. In cities in Australia and America women will also be marching.

Let us unite with our sisters all over the world for the right to control our own bodies.

Contraception, abortion and no forced sterilisation

Women decide

International day of action March 31 '79

Assemble Hyde Park 1.30

March to Trafalgar Square for rally



UNTIL recently according to Italian Law abortion was not only illegal but the same as infanticide, and a crime against the purity of the Italian race.

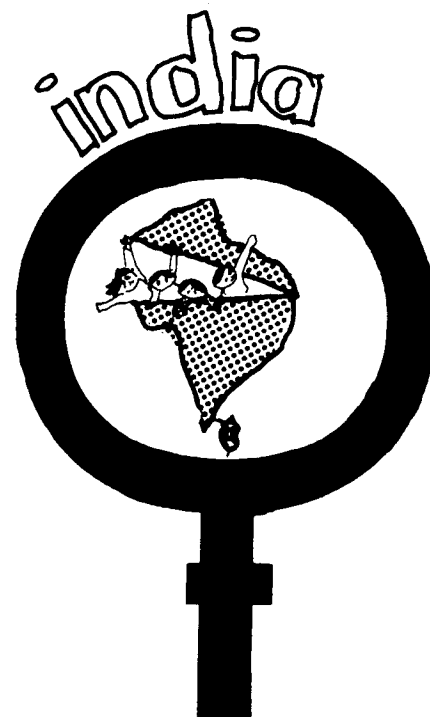
The Catholic church's control over people's personal and political lives made it very difficult to campaign for a better law. However in the early 70's feminists set up centres with the help of the Radical Party and other left wing groups. Here women could receive advice about abortion, contraception and sterilisation. Abortions were also performed at these centres.

After police raids, signatures were

collected for a referendum. There were large demonstration of women all over the country; court rooms, churches and government buildings were occupied. This activity made abortion a public issue.

Eventually a new bill on abortion was drawn up. It stated that abortion was legal up to three months only if continuing pregnancy would involve grave risk to the physical and mental health of the women and substantial risk to the child. So the situation is still bad especially as most hospitals are run by nuns and priests!

In spite of the emergency measures put through parliament, women in the poisoned area of Seveso are still unable to get abortions— even though children may be born deformed. And Pope John Paul and leading Italian churchmen threaten excommunication for women who have abortions.



IN India, as in many other areas of the third world, women have to fight against enforced sterilisation. In the streets of New Delhi they hand out gifts—you can win £5, a transistor radio, and other objects. All you have to do is go for a ride on a bus and return with a certificate.

The gifts are yours in return for sterilisation or a vasectomy. Every where in India men and women are being forced to take bus rides. In four states there is compulsory sterilisation for families of three or more children. In Delhi teachers have to produce five people for sterilisation or their salaries are stopped. But there is a fantastic resistance to this sterilisation programme.

In peasant communities children are needed to work the land. Men and women are sterilised but their problems remain— paying taxes to the landlords, poor agricultural methods and lack of education.

The aim of the sterilisation programme is not to give women the right to control their fertility—but to give the government control over the individual family unit for their own ends.

Japan



IN Japan abortion is illegal unless women fulfil the criteria of the Eugenic Protection Law.

After the second world war there was a population explosion in Japan which make it easier to get abortions - they could be done for economic reasons and only the permission of one doctor was needed.

So by the 1960s Japanese women could get abortion on demand. But a shortage of labour have caused strong moves to restrict abortion rights. Women are being forced to have babies to *increase Japanese prosperity!*

married couples to use contraception on the prescription of a doctor.

EVEN though Northern Ireland is supposed to be part of Great Britain, abortion is illegal in the north, as it is in the south. That is why thousands of Irish women travel to England every year to get abortions. Contraception is available in the north, and women's groups are organising for abortion rights and better contraception facilities.

USSR



IN 1920 Soviet Russia became the first country to legalise abortion! Sixteen years later this right was withdrawn. There was a great deal of opposition by women but their protests could not be effective since all women's and working class organisations had been repressed.

Like Japan, there is a shortage of labour and the state here also makes it difficult for women to get abortions. Women are encouraged to stay at home and have large families. They are given long maternity leave, family allowances and loans to young married couples.

The fight for the right to abortion and contraception is very important to women in Eastern Europe. It is part of their struggle to retain in full their right to work.

united states



ON January 22 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States overturned the Texas and Georgia State Abortion laws by ruling that abortion was *legal* and that a woman's doctor would be the one to decide whether to perform an abortion during the first three months of pregnancy.

But in the USA abortion on demand is not yet a reality. This is because the anti-abortionists are well funded and well organised.

An amendment was passed which forbids the use of public funds for abortion - except where the woman's life is in danger. This makes it difficult for working class women to get abortions. Only 18% of public hospitals perform abortions and in 8 out of 10 states there are no facilities for abortion at all.

Most of the information for this article was taken from a NAC pamphlet 'Abortion Internationally'.

• Alison Kirton.

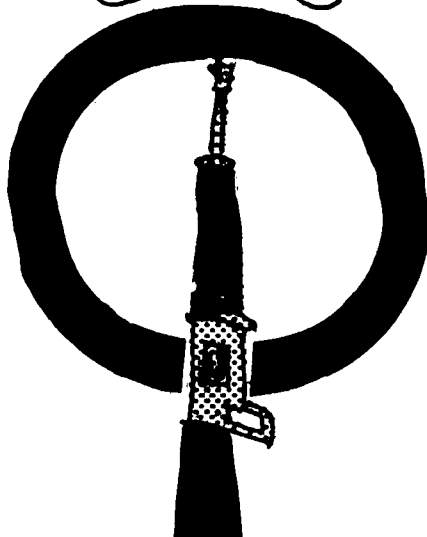
ireland



BOTH contraception and abortion are illegal in the Republic of Ireland. This has led to a vast and ludicrous traffic in illegal contraceptives. However independent clinics have got round the law by setting up clinics which gives contraceptive advice and issue contraceptives for a 'donation'.

This attitude towards contraceptives is because of the influence of the Catholic Church. However it is likely that parliament will pass the government bill which allows

chile



ABORTION in Chile has always been illegal. Women are only allowed 'therapeutic' abortion in a state hospital in two cases; if they have german measles in the first three months of pregnancy or if the pregnancy puts the woman's life in danger. Even then, three specialists have to sign the certificate.

Therapeutic abortion is a legal let out for middle-class women. Legal abortion is not a reality for working class women who in any case couldn't pay the medical fees. Instead they seek out back street abortionists who use rubber tubes, sticks, barbed wire, vegetable roots. This terrible situation is made much worse by the fact that women cannot get contraception.

Political repression in Chile makes it difficult for women to fight. Only when democratic rights are restored will the fight for abortion rights succeed.

there is a demand for paid sex, there will be prostitutes' is only true whilst women are in a position of inferior earning capacity.

Chris Robinson
Hildur Gladwin
Grimshy St Humberside



...and the law

Dear Womens Voice,
Thank you for publishing my letter last month. I would like to add some more information about prostitutes and the law.

Although the Street Offences Act of 1959 states that prostitution is legal, approximately 10% of women in prison are there for 'charges related to prostitution' - this costs the state a lot of money which could be spent on far more important things than causing distress to the imprisoned women, and their children who are separated from their mothers and put into care. There is no legal way for a prostitute to come by a client, she cannot advertise, solicit or even 'loiter with intent to solicit' without fear of prosecution - on the other hand a client is in no danger of prosecution for seeking the services of a prostitute.

Prostitutes can be convicted on police evidence alone (the only other law that operates in this way is the disgusting 'SUS' law). Fines as high as £50 are handed out for first and second offences, and £200 or three months in prison for the third - all these on the word of a policeman alone. Prostitutes are subject to vicious police harassment - even without breaking the law, and particularly when they attempt to organise themselves. No witness need appear in court for a prostitute to be sent to prison.

Jacky Garstin

Where is Women's World?

Dear Womens Voice
I was most disappointed to open this issue of Womens Voice and find no article by Judith Condon. My first act on receiving my copy is to turn to Womens World. The last article by Judith on breast feeding I thought was superb, as did most people I know who read it.

Please bring back Womens World.

In sisterhood
Eunice Sharples

Your letters please
Please send in your letters by March 23. We usually have to cut long letters so please try and keep your letters short!

"Take it like a man"

Dear Womens Voice
I wonder if you could let your London readers know about the following event:

Film Benefit for Peoples News Service, 'Take it Like a Man, Ma'am' by the Red Sisters Collective, April 1st at 1pm in the Scala Cinema, Tottenham Street, W1.

Thanks

Help...

Dear Womens Voice

A couple of weeks ago, a young girl was sexually assaulted and murdered in our area. I have a daughter aged 8, and am now worried when she goes out alone, i.e. to school, or to the shops. This may seem old fashioned, but it has disturbed me intensely. Is it the thought of the actual sexual assault that I abhor, or something which can be just as bad, i.e. warning them (to the possible extent of terrifying them) to keep away from 'dirty men in raincoats'?

How do we cope with this kind of situation?
Sue Finch Hackney

We're not a charity

Dear Womens Voice

On January 22 1½ million workers in NUPE and other public sector unions went on strike - most were women. As low paid women ourselves we went down to the station and sold Womens Voice to women going to the demonstration in London. We sold 35 copies and you can bet that it was read by more than 35 people.

We told the women that there was an article on NUPE and low pay - in fact it was only half a page. Women trade unionists going to demonstrate in London do not want to read how we are going to help them and how all good Womens Voice members should give out leaflets to them.

The other major complaint is the cover. When a huge number of women go on strike, in a period of industrial crisis, all Womens Voice can say on its cover is 'Thank God I've got my bed'.

We think it's about time Womens Voice realised women are militant and stopped treating them as the largest charity in Britain.

Jane Spencer (NUPE)
East Leeds Womens Voice



Illustration By TIKKI

Women's fiction

This month we are reviewing some of the novels written by women and printed by the women's publishers, The Women's Press and Virago. Our selection is based on the novels which people have most enjoyed. If you can't afford to buy some of them, don't forget that you can order them from your library or buy them collectively in your Womens Voice Group.



Our basic aim is to further the goals of the Women's Liberation Movement through our publications. Everything we publish is in some way anti-sexist, feminist and presents the lives and achievements of women without distortions of some of our so called culture.

We welcome feedback and support from our readers. It's a great help if a woman out of London asks a bookshop or library to order our books.


If you have something that you have written, write to us and tell us what it's about and we'll write and suggest you send it if it's suitable. Always keep a copy of

anything you write and send to a publisher as manuscripts tend to get lost in the post.

British fiction rising from women's experiences is only just beginning to appear.

For example Tales I tell My Mother (Short stories, Journeyman Press, written by a collective of women writers) Daughter of Time by Sara Maitland and Piece of the Night by Michele Roberts.

Sybil Grundberg, The Women's Press.

The Albatross Muff
Barbara Hanrahan 
£1.50

This a stark unrelenting book, but very readable. It is written as the diaries of the two central characters, Edith and Stella. I found the book more engrossing when they were adolescents and the reality behind the respectable image becomes explicit. Desire, pain and terror start to push through the veneer, the masks to crack. Nanny, for example, suddenly splits and reveals her confusion and Edith finds her drunk on the bedroom floor.


The father, seemingly as secure as the money he jingles in his pockets, lusts after Stella.

The women are trapped by 'love' because love offers security, acceptance, protection:

"being loved meant you were safe", but it also means pain, domination, childbirth, death. Thus Stella as a very young girl "would do anything to get the cosy feeling that liking and being liked back gave." And then she seeks to please in rigid submission. But she is seen as the sinner and punished accordingly. When Stella becomes pregnant "she was no longer a dear little girl."

"The Albatross Muff" shows clearly the choice - this barbed love, this dubious pleasure or self knowledge, the pain and pride of aloneness. The dying Pensa, worn out after the birth of her eleventh child, whispers to Edith, "None of it is worth it, only yourself, only what is inside." To Edith it became apparent that you could only see properly if you weren't afraid to be different, to be alone.


Kim Longinotto

The Awakening
By Kate Chopin. 
£1

What is really surprising about "The Awakening" is to discover that it was written in 1899. So many of the ideas raised by the novel about the role of wife and mother are exactly the kind of issues women are trying to sort out today.

The story is about a woman who chooses to give up her role as wife and mother in order to find happiness by exploring herself as an independent woman, a painter, and as a lover of a man who is not her husband.

For me "The Awakening" was a marvellous book with a terrible ending in every sense of the word. The end seemed, not as the introduction suggests, "the final act of self determination" but more like the ultimate defeat - where society (or the novel) triumphs after all over one woman's attempt at liberation. Read it and see what you think.
Judith Hinman

The Pearl Bastard
Lillian Halegus 
£1.25

A simple, honest account of a teenage girl's search for some freedom in her life. It deals with the emotional turmoil she goes through on finding that life isn't about freedom, but about violence and hypocrisy.

Frankie hitches to the sea. She is raped by the driver. Afterwards, she feels self-hatred and utter helplessness. Luckily, she is befriended by a woman, Willie.

Frankie has to face many situations this summer. She is bewildered and unsure. Should she try to charge the rapist? Can she overcome her anti-semitism on discovering her best friend is Jewish? ("Fat boys are Jews and old men with beards and long skinny noses and long skinny witch-like women and dark fat round women... Not Willie!")

And then the biggest decision: what to do now she's pregnant. She is overtaken by events out of her control. The option of abortion isn't mentioned. Her parents reject her because she's unmarried. Society is hostile. Only Willie stands by her.

Frankie deals with these problems from her confusion and desperation. The book left

me feeling depressed and rather hopeless. The story is real and honest. But while there are a number of books helping us understand the cruelty women suffer in life, few of them need to fight it.

Celia Shalom

Lives of Girls and Women.
Alice Munro.

£1.00



This book is true to its title. It is very readable because it appeals to many shared experiences. It is set in Jubilee, a little American town, and is told in the first person by a girl called Del Jordan.

Some books stay with you long after you have read them and forgotten all the names and half of the events. What does stay is what is important. It is Del's first direct sexual experience that is most vivid in my memory. Alice Munro describes it as it really happened with none of the coyness of the adult looking back at herself as a child-woman. It is told without fear or guilt and both the sordidness of the man's behaviour and Del's fascination are told in such a way that the reader almost goes through it with her.

The first sexual skirmish is usually some kind of disaster; illusions of romance are shattered. In the faint horror there is a sense of comedy, of the pathetic activity of the man who lures Del to the quiet river bank and then far from taking her manfully in his arms proceeds to masturbate. She stands and watches. Very soon the whole performance is ended. There is something in the candour of the description that clears away layers of old guilt in my mind when I read it. I wasn't to blame for my early experiences. Through fiction we share experiences and our own are clarified.

Marilyn MacLean



Virago was set up to express the ideas of the Women's Liberation Movement in the widest possible context. The books are published for men and women. Virago exists to spread the woman's point of

view to a mass market.

I think the novel is a particularly good way of expressing the society of any given time. In re-issuing the novels of the past one gets a sense of history. I don't think there's a definition of a feminist novel. We take fiction that's relevant.

Feminism is about relationships between people. We are committed to publishing novels about the way things are. Possibly because women write them, novels have always been about life, about relationships. Feminism is a concentration on relationships between men, women and children. In fiction women are trying to work out their lives in conflict with power, bureaucracy. That's what the new novel we are publishing in September is about. It's called Benefits, by Zoe Fairbairns.
Carmen Callil, Virago.

Frost in May
Antonia White
£1.95



Anyone who has been brought up a Catholic knows the narrow suffocating limits that face you every way you turn. There's nothing you can do without sinning. Girls must beware of impure thoughts, must prepare themselves for obedience and patience.

To break with it is to take a lump out of your life, bleeding raw. You live in fear of facing the world without your faith to protect you.

But one thing frightens you more. What if God should choose you to do his work? No husband, no children, no sunshine. A bride of Christ. The fear of that white, colourless, sad world has you petrified. You can't deny the calling from God, but would it be a sin to try not to listen.

Frost in May is about girls and catholicism. Nanda is only nine years old when her father, a recent convert, sends her

to the Convent of the Five Wounds to be educated. The girls are rich and wordly. They seem to take religion in their stride, divorcing life at school from the gay life at home with schizophrenic ease.

But Nanda tries harder than they all do, because she's new to it all. She inflicts denial on herself. She tries to become a good catholic. She suffers the fear of God's calling.

But right from the beginning of the book you get the idea that her efforts are doomed to failure. She works through her studies, her trials and all the time you sense the worst. Sooner or later the nuns will win, they'll prove that she is sinful after all.

If you've been a Catholic you'll identify with every oppressive image. If you haven't you'll maybe begin to understand the superstitions we had to try and break with. It wasn't easy.

It's a fine book, well worth your time in reading. It's well written and thoroughly absorbing.

Anna Paczuska.

For Love Alone
Christina Stead



This is a strong, dense book—at times it was almost too rich for me. I got lost in the tortures of romance, caught in my own hidden dreams about love, identifying too closely with Teresa's obsession and finishing the book with relief to escape from her world of emotion. I'm sure my relief reflects a desire to be free of those traps of 'love' in which we all, men and women struggle which seem to suffocate us, our need for each other, to be bound to another and yet free.

'Marriage, the institution, depends on the small town, the family house and the back-yard gossip. The big city has given it its death-blow. When nothing remains to the ceremony, the ceremony is of little importance. In the village the traditional relations of man and woman persist, and what makes them like half-effaced and nameless shrines in a pasture, is the opportunity of the modern city'.

In the city Teresa meets a man who loves her 'with the sentiment of his own generosity' and through him she is able to understand that 'woman, as well as man, had the right to happiness! After years of being trapped in unrequited love of the horrible Jonathan Crew and an ideal of marriage which will satisfy her passion for life, she realises the joy and responsibility of loving a man.

'She did not know where she stood, any more than if a high tide had rushed in and swamped the road where she used to walk. What relations had she to Quick, to Girton, to the men who surrounded her, to all men? What was her fate? Here where she stood no old wives' tale and no mother's sad sneer, no father's admonition, reached.'

Quick gives her the freedom to love another man and thus she knows 'this is the only love, but not the first and not the last. I will know how to make myself a life apart'.

It is a book about both the pain and the freedom of love, of a woman taking responsibility for her own sexuality and allowing herself to be changed.

Claire Pollock

This year there was a study of lead levels in children living in Birmingham, close to Spaghetti Junction. It was set up by the Department of Employment.

This report concluded that there was "no cause for special concern about lead pollution from such concentration of traffic".

But one of the people working on the study, Dr Bob Stephens, was very critical of its conclusion. He

thinks the evidence proves something quite different.

He has estimated that 20% of Birmingham inner-city children under the age of 12, have a significant disturbance of their central nervous systems, because of the high levels of lead.

When he tried to make a statement about this at a DOE press conference called to release the report, he was abused and shouted at by civil servants.

What are the effects of lead? Should the government ignore them?

WOMEN'S HEALTH

LEAD—it is poisoning our children



MOST people know that lead is poisonous. Children who chew on anything painted with bad paint can become very ill and suffer brain damage, heart damage, and anaemia. That's why most children's toys are now painted with lead-free paint.

What most people don't know, is that there are now many doctors and scientists

who believe that even very "low" levels of lead can be damaging, especially to growing children, in particular unborn babies.

Even when the parents think that there is nothing wrong, a child may not be reaching her or his full potential.

Lower levels of lead can also make the child hyperactive i.e. unable to keep still or

stop talking for more than a few minutes. Along with this the child may find it difficult getting to sleep. They may be unable to concentrate either on games or work at school.

Last year, Dr. Winneke in Dusseldorf, conducted an experiment on a group of children. None of the children *showed any*

outward signs of illness. But his studies showed that those children with 'high' levels of lead had I.Q.'s of around 5-6 units less than those with lower levels of blood lead.

Another recent experiment carried out in New York by Dr. Oliver David on the blood lead levels of 600 children, has also shown a link between high blood levels and a reduced ability to learn in school.

Children are much more susceptible to lead poisoning than adults because their brains and nervous systems are still developing.

It also appears to affect women's fertility, because the child in the womb is particularly susceptible to lead. In America, studies show that women living near lead smelters suffer more miscarriages.

In this country, studies at Birmingham University have shown that, in experiments examining hundreds of placentas, there was a higher level of lead in the placenta of stillborn babies. The effect of lead on pregnant women is not a new discovery - in Victorian times untrained back-street abortionists used a lead solution on women to dangerously and painfully induce an abortion.

So why isn't the use of lead in our environment banned?

This is where the arguments start between those who want lead to be much more controlled and - guess who - the companies who make lead products. In particular the petrol companies who add lead to petrol so that it doesn't have to be refined too much.

Professor Bryce-Smith of Reading, was actually howled down by industrialists when he got up at a meeting to speak about the damaging effects of lead. The industrialists argued that the amount of lead in the air from exhaust fumes, is a very small proportion of the total amount of lead in the environment. Other sources being lead smelting works, lead pipes, tin cans soldered with lead 'food & drink' and so on.

The government agrees, and won't do anything about lead in petrol.

But as Dr. Stephens makes clear, even the government's own study shows that lead levels are increased by the presence of exhaust fumes.

And they don't tell the public that whereas an average adult will only absorb about 10% of the lead they eat or drink, they will absorb about 40% of lead breathed in from the air. And some people absorb as much as 70% which means lead in the air is much more lethal.

Also they are refusing to take into account the fact that lead from cars settles out of the air onto roads, fields and houses. So food grown in high lead areas can become polluted with lead. Animals can absorb it, and may be eaten by humans. And it can be transferred from children's sticky fingers, or sticky fingered sweets, to their mouths and into their central nervous systems. This could increase a child's daily intake of lead several times over.

The petrol companies argue that to ban lead from petrol would increase fuel consumption, increase the price of petrol and would cause upheaval in the petrol refining industry.

This is how much they value our children's development and future!

In fact in West Germany and the US, lead levels in petrol have been greatly reduced without any of those 'terrible' things happening. In the USSR petrol sold in major cities has been lead-free since 1959.

But our government is, as usual, more willing to accept the arguments of the profit making multinational industries than the ordinary people who suffer because of the industries' drive for profit.

Recently a bill - supported by the anti lead campaign - to reduce lead levels, was thrown out of parliament.

They are waiting for *conclusive* scientific proof instead of acting immediately on the increasing amount of evidence.

While they wait we and our children are suffering from the effects of this odourless, tasteless, colourless metal that is settling all around us.

A mothers view

As a parent I get very angry about lead pollution. I get angry that I live in a society that puts profit before people's health. And lead pollution, like all types of pollution, hits working class people harder than anyone else. Most working class kids live in areas with heavy industry and near busy main roads. It's our kids who are forced to play in the streets. They don't have nice gardens or nurseries to play in. It's our kids who pick up lead from the pavements and pass it from their hands to their mouths.

There is a campaign against lead in petrol and we should be doing all we can to support it. But we should also talk to other mums about lead pollution and the horrific things it does and try and get as many people as possible to know what the symptoms are.

It must be very hard for parents who feel their children might be suffering from lead pollution, to talk about it. If they don't know about the symptoms they might blame themselves or the child.

And if they do know, it must be hard to speak out against it for fear of their child

being treated as subnormal or different. Or for fear that people will not believe them. How can a parent say 'I think my child is too active - can't concentrate - doesn't work properly at school because of something lead - we can't even see?'

Given that lead is going to pollute us for a few years yet, it's worth knowing that there are ways of treating lead pollution in children. Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital in London runs a de-lead programme which seems to have good results. We should all be informed. We must demand that our kids get this treatment if we have even the slightest worry about them.

According to Sally Bundy, of the Hyperactive Children's Support Group, a change in diet (cutting out tinned food) makes a child more resistant.

It does not cost that much to cut lead out of petrol all together, in fact in the long term it's no more expensive. But for as long as they can get away with it, the big oil and lead companies will do so. Though they make enormous profits, big multinationals will always try and make more with no regard for our suffering.

We must start to fight back. We can sue them, like the parents of three children in West London. But more effectively, we can let as many people as possible know about it and organise together to get this poison off our streets.

Contacts:

Campaign Against Lead in Petrol
169 Dora Rd, London SW19. Tel: 01 946 7542.

Recent CAIIP newsletters discuss ways of campaigning against lead locally, and describe the way Greenwich council in London has been pressured into doing a survey of blood levels of children going to a school near a busy main road.

Hyperactive Children's support group.
Sally Bundy, 0962 6872

Ms Bundy has been working with children's diets to make them more resistant to lead pollution.



WHALES IS GOING ON?

Public meetings

● **Hackney Womens Voice Public Meeting**, Monday 12th March 8pm **Abortion — They're our bodies anyway** For babysitters and details Phone Yvonne 802 4386 or Christine 806 6198 (evenings)

● **South London Womens Voice & Lambeth and Clapham Womens Aid** are showing 'She Asked For It' a play against Rape by the Counteract Theatre Group. Tuesday March 6 at 8pm, Surrey Hall, Binfield Rd. SW9 (Stockwell Tube) Tickets 50p, 75p on the door. All welcome

● **South West London Womens Voice** are showing 'Belisha Beacon' by the Pirate Jenny Group on Thursday March 29th at 8pm. Clapham Manor Baths, Clapham Manor St (Nearest tube Clapham Common). Admission 50p All welcome. For more info Contact Marion 673 1329

● **Teesside Poly Womens Voice Day of Events, March 28th** Day of workshops on Low Pay, Abortion, and other topics. Film and social evening, everyone welcome. For information ring Janine at Redcar (73) 4453 and leave your name and address.

Womens Voice meetings

● **Aberdeen Womens Voice**, for more information telephone Liz 51059.

● **Acton & Harlesden Ring** Carrie 993 0356 or Pete 969 9812

● **Bath Womens Voice** meets regularly for details phone Caroline, Bath 315967

● **Birmingham Womens Voice** meets regularly at the 'Holloway' pub, Holloway Road, City centre. For details of next meeting and baby sitters phone Jenny—440 5794. All women welcome.

● **Black Country Sundays** fortnightly, 2.30, 27 Glen Court, Compton Road, Wolverhampton 23233 for information. Children welcome.

● **Bristol Womens Voice** meets every Wednesday at 7.30pm at the Inkworks, 22, Hepburn Rd., St Pauls. (off Stoke Croft) Phone Bristol (0272) 553 740.

● **Canterbury** every other Tuesday at Jolly Sailor Northgate. Phone Barbara (Lyminge 862742).

● **Chelmsford Womens Voice**. For details of local activities, see Womens Voice Sellers.

● **Coventry** meets every other Wednesday, 8.00pm at The Hertford Tavern, off Queens Road (near the Butts). Phone 450-570

● **Croydon Womens Voice** meets alternate Tuesdays. Phone Maureen 660 0989 or Yvonne 664 3768.

● **Ealing Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Maureen 567 7083 or Jane 930 0986 for details.

● **Edinburgh Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on Sunday evenings. Phone Penny 557 0731 for details.

● **Edinburgh Street sale** every Saturday 2-3pm. Meet from 1pm onwards at the Cafe Royal (behind Woolworths, Princes Street). Womens Voice readers welcome to turn up and give us a hand. For more info phone Penny 557 0731.

● **Exeter Womens Voice** for info ring 0392 38022

● **Finchley and Barnet Womens Voice**, fortnightly meetings, for information contact Anita 883-4968 or Glenis 346-7627.

● **Fleet Street** meets every other Wednesday at the Hoop and Grapes Farringdon St lunchtimes from 1-2. Ring Maggie 822 3780 (work).

● **Glasgow Womens Voice** for information phone Clare (959 8924) or Sheila (424-1048).

● **Glossop, Derbyshire**. First and third Tuesdays of every month at 110 Victoria St., Glossop. Phone Glossop 61873 or Claire Glossop 64735 All welcome.

● **Gravesend Womens Voice** meets every third Monday at 8pm. For more details phone Jeffer Gravesend 57095

● **Hackney** phone Pauline (800 3586) for information and babysitter.

● **Halifax** details from WV and SW sellers every Sat 12.30-2.30 Co-op Arcade on the Precinct.

● **Harlow Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on a Wednesday night in Harlow town: hall, 8pm. Ring Bron (Harlow) 415953

● **Highbury Group**. For details/babysitting, ring Elana 439-3764 (days). All women welcome.

● **Islington Womens Voice** meets regularly phone Sandy at 802 6145 for details.

□ **Hornsey Womens Voice** meets fortnightly for info ring Jane 348 6712 or Maggie 341 1182.

● **Lampeter** Tuesday evenings in college. Details from WV sellers or write c/o SDUC Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales.

● **Lea Valley** meets regularly. Phone Mary, (802 9563) for information and babysitters.

● **SE Manchester** meets at the 'Albert', Rusholme, 8pm, every other Wednesday.

● **Medway Womens Voice** meets regularly. Telephone Helen Medway 270 684 or Marge 251 362.

● **Newham** meets Tuesdays and Thursdays fortnightly. Phone Wendy 790 2373. Babysitters available.

● **Newcastle meetings** are the second Tuesdays of every month, Bridge Hotel, Newcastle, at 8 pm 'Nr High Levelbridge), Telephone Number: 813877 Newcastle.

● **Norwich**—every other Tuesday 8.30pm 'Black Boys' pub Colegate. Or further information phone Norwich 29963.

● **Preston** We meet every other Tuesday at the Windsor Castle, Egan Street, (near Meadow Street) at 8pm Telephone Mary—Preston 55739 for more information or if you need a babysitter.

● **Reading Womens Voice** meets regularly. For information phone Kathy on 668 800.

● **Sheffield Womens Voice** meets at 8pm every other Monday in the Prince of Wales pub, Division Street, Sheffield. For more information ring Jackie 665 326

● **Shrewsbury** the first Wednesday of every month. Other meetings too so phone 58830 for details.

● **Slough Womens Voice group**. Meets on the first Tuesday of every month at Slough Library, Ring Mary—Slough 24093.

● **South London Womens Voice Group** meets fortnightly on Tuesdays. Tate Library, Brixton Oval. All welcome. Next meeting Tuesday March 20 at 8.00 at Tate Library All welcome.

● **S. West London Womens Voice Group** meet alternate Tuesdays 91 Bedford Hill, Balham All welcome. More info, babysitters contact Marion 673 1329.

● **Stoke on Trent** would anyone interested in organising with Womens Voice in the Stoke on Trent area contact Sandra 814094.

● **Tower Hamlets** meets on alternate Mondays. Babysitters available phone Heather 739 6668 (home) or 534 7825 ext. 13.

● **Walthamstow** meets every Sunday 3pm. For details ring Jeannie 531 8340, or Pauline 521 4768.

● **York** Meets every 3rd Saturday in the month at the Royal Oak Goodramgate. Full Crèche facilities. Food on sale—do drop in!

Team two are putting on the play **BELISHA BEACON** in the following places. It is a fast and funny look at Womens Liberation:
MARCH 12th - 17th ICA
1.15pm The Mall

MARCH 19th 1.15pm Loughborough University Students union building.

MARCH 20th 8.30pm Leicester Polytechnic 4, Newark Place.

MARCH 22nd 8pm Derby college of further education Harrow St. Wilmorton.

MARCH 24th 7.30 Nottingham University Shorewood Hall

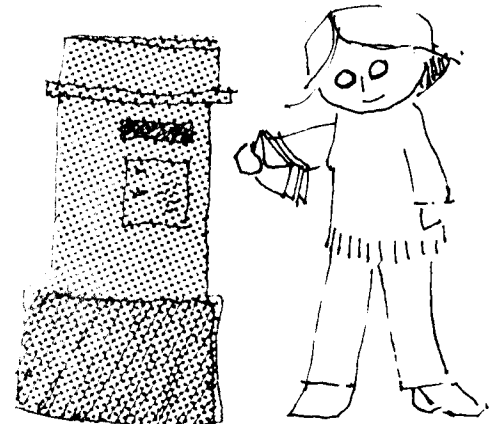
MARCH 26th Islington Womens Voice For information phone Sandy - 802 6145.

MARCH 28th 8pm St Mary's College Twickenham

MARCH 28th 8pm Albany Creek Rd London SE8

MARCH 29th 1pm S.W. London Womens Voice Clapham Manor Baths Clapham Manor St.

MARCH 30th 8pm North Kensington Womens Voice N. Kensington Amenity trust 1, Thorpe Close W1Q.



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LIST A

Bisbee '17 by Robert Houston (no paper edition)

Written by the author of the best-selling '1917: A Year of Revolution' and 'The Russian Revolution', this book is a brilliant study of the 1917 revolution in Russia. It is a must-read for all socialists.

Iran: Dictatorship and Development by Fred Halliday (£1.50)

A brilliant study of the Islamic revolution in Iran. It is a must-read for all socialists.

LIST B

Eleanor Marx (Vol. 1) by Yvonne Kapp (£3.95)

The first volume of a two-volume biography of Eleanor Marx. It is a brilliant study of her life and work.

LIST C

Walraff, the Undesirable Journalist (£2.50)

A brilliant study of the life and work of the journalist Walraff. It is a must-read for all socialists.

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A brilliant study of the art of writing. It is a must-read for all socialists.

LIST D

Blood in the Streets (£1.00)

A brilliant study of the 1917 revolution in Russia. It is a must-read for all socialists.

The Singing Flame by Ernie O'Malley (£2.50)

A brilliant study of the life and work of Ernie O'Malley. It is a must-read for all socialists.

LIST E

A Piece of the Night by Michael Roberts (£2.25)

A brilliant study of the life and work of Michael Roberts. It is a must-read for all socialists.

Men in the Sun by Ghassan Kanafani (£1.50)

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The Other Cinema

Films by women and about women to show at your meetings. Complete list available of the films we have for distribution. Send SAE to The Other Cinema, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London WC2H 7JJ. Telephone 01-734 8508.

Birmingham Womens

Liberation group can be contacted at 76 Brighton Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham. Newsletter available with list of different groups.

Abortion

New group forming to collect information about abortion facilities and set up abortion counselling and referral service. Deptford Womens Centre, 74 Deptford High Street, / 30pm, Tuesday 23 January. Ring Jennifer 732 9218 or Wendy 737 4849.

See Red Womens Workshop

New catalogue and posters now out. Send SAE to 16A Iliffe yard, off Crampton Street, London SE17.

We are now printing for groups meeting posters (+ T-shirts) for meetings events etc. Phone 701 8314.

Women and Health

10th March, Conference at Dacorum College Youth wing, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead. Films, discussions; speakers on radical midwifery and new

methods of contraception. Food and free creche available, 10am-5pm. Entrance 50p, 20p non-wage earners. Details phone Hemel Hempstead 55536.

Rape Crisis Centre

If you have been raped or sexually assaulted and want someone to talk to or need legal or medical advice the Rape Crisis Centre runs a 24 hour telephone line. Contact us any time day or night on 01 340 6145 or PO Box 42, London, EN6 5BU.

Lesbian Line

Lesbian Line is a new phone service for women operated entirely by women and offers help advice and information. Phone between 2-10pm on 01 794 2942. Scottish Lesbians can ring Homosexual Rights Group 031 556 4049, weekdays 7 to 10, weekends 2-30-10pm.

Menstruation

I am writing two books on menstruation for 9-14 year olds and I would like to hear from women of all ages who would be willing to talk to me or answer a confidential questionnaire about their experiences. Please write to Ruth Thomson, 72 Hemingford Road, London N1.

Small ads rates: 5p per word

Join Womens Voice...

WOMENS VOICE fights for womens rights. We want equal pay with the highest paid; maternity leave without restriction; the right to a job; nursery places for all children so that mothers can chose to work; and an end to discrimination in education, training, jobs and benefits; the right to abortion on demand.

To fight for these changes is only a beginning. Womens Liberation means we have to free ourselves from the grip of the rich and powerful whose oppressive rules and ideas are fostered on us from our earliest years. This means we have to fight for socialism too, to free us from a society divided between those who have and those who have not.

To fight we have to be organised: Womens Voice is a sister organisation of the Socialist Workers Party.

Fight with Womens Voice for Womens Liberation and Socialism.

join the fight!

Womens Voice Groups

Scotland
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Central Glasgow
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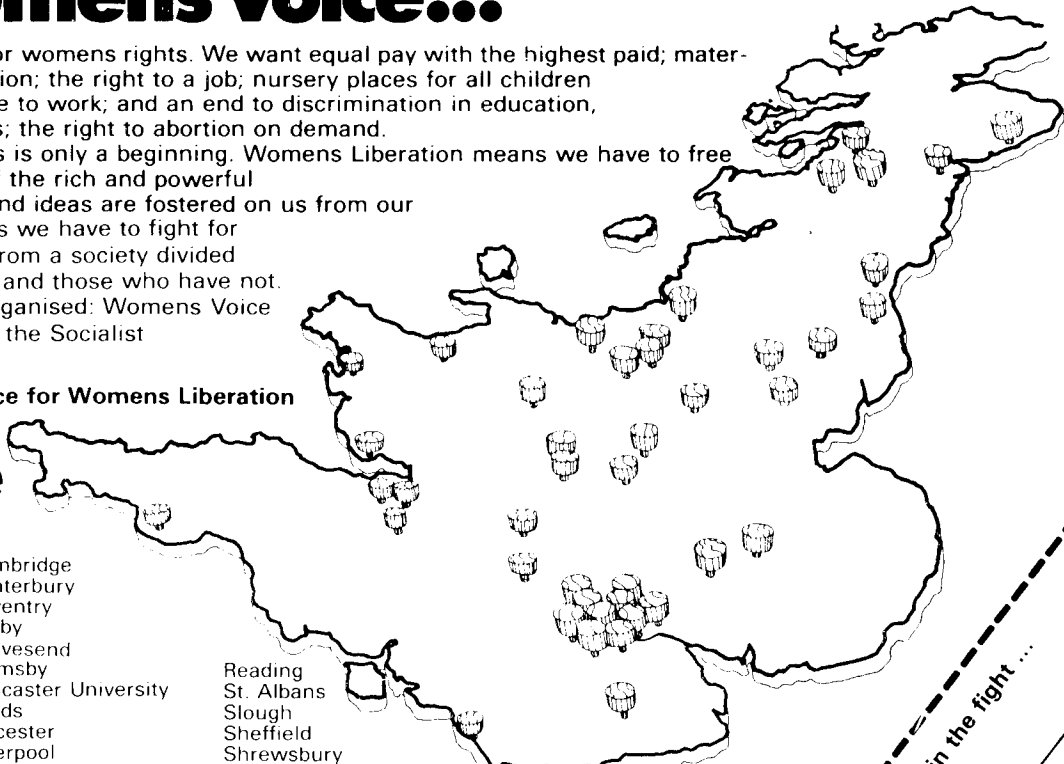
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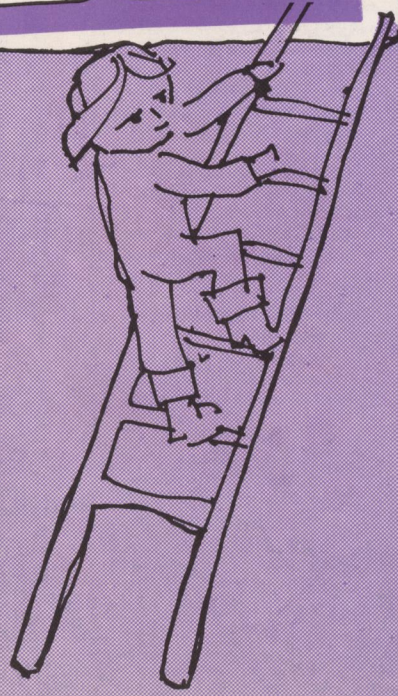
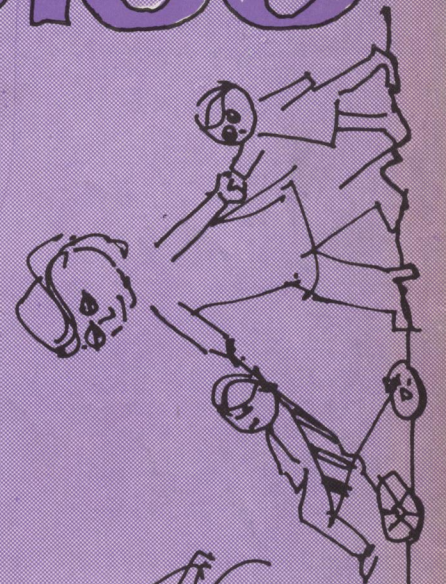
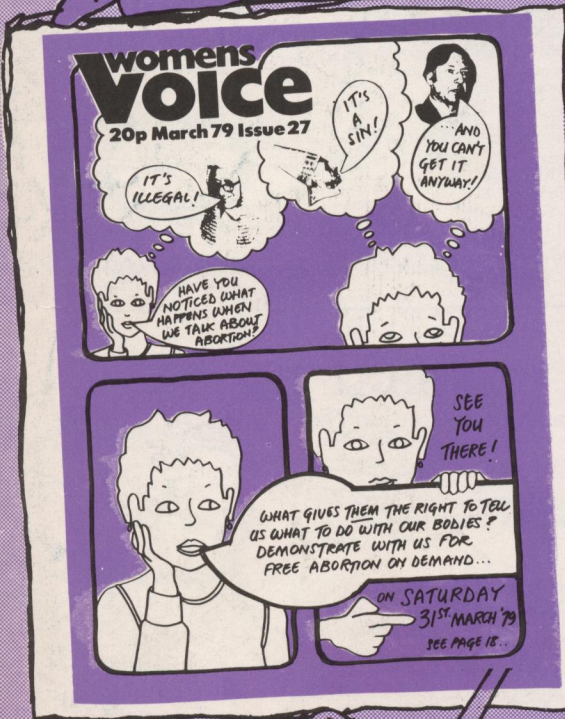
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