

# womens VOICE

20p April '80 Issue 40

**Support our Irish sisters**

**Homeworkers:  
the poorest paid**



# WOMEN'S BOOKS FROM BOOKMARKS

## WE WILL SMASH THIS PRISON

**Indian women in struggle, by Gail Omvedt**  
 'One of those books which you should read even if you don't have a particular interest in Indian politics because it shows how even these most downtrodden women have a vision of the future and know they have to fight for it' — Womens Voice  
**£3.25 including postage** (part of the Bookmarx Club choice for Winter 1980 — send for details).

## FINDING A VOICE

**Asian Women in Britain, by Amrit Wilson**  
 A perceptive, surprising and often alarming picture of British society and what it means to be an immigrant, a woman and a worker straddled between two cultures.

**£2.75 including postage**

## THE BRIDE PRICE

**A Nigerian Novel by Buchi Emecheta**  
 Aku-nna is thirteen when her father dies. Old enough to be inherited by her uncle as a future source of income...

**£1.10 including postage**

## THE MATCHGIRLS STRIKE 1888

**The struggle against sweated labour in London's East End by Reg Beer**  
**90p including postage**

## ON OUR BACKS

**Sexual Attitudes in a changing Ireland by Rosita Sweetman**

Vivid interviews with Irish women  
**£1.15 including postage**

## ALEXANDRA KOLLONTAI

**A biography by Cathy Porter**  
 A thorough, if uncritical, biography of the most famous woman Bolshevik  
**£5.40 including postage**

## BENEFITS

**A novel by Zoe Fairbairns**  
 Political turbulence in the dying years of the twentieth century. Feminism has become a threat to the social order...  
**£3.30 including postage**

## FAT IS A FEMINIST ISSUE

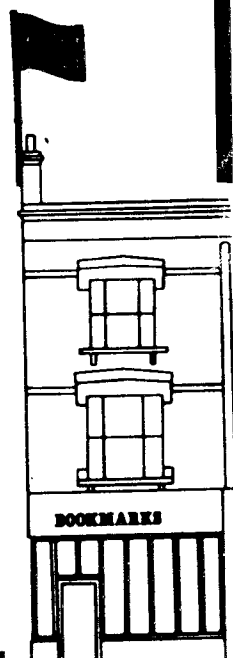
**How to lose weight permanently — without dieting by Susie Orbach**  
 Fat is not about lack of will power or self-control. Fat is about protection, sex, nurturance, mothering, strength and assertion. Fat is a social disease.  
**£1.00 including postage**

## POSTNATAL DEPRESSION by Vivienne Welburn

A lucid and provocative attempt to stimulate discussion about a neglected area of women's experience. It will also give comfort and information to sufferers.  
**£1.40 including postage**

*All available by post from  
**BOOKMARKS,**  
 265 Seven Sisters Road,  
 London N4  
 (prices include postage).*

Come and see our newly expanded, double-decker bookshop — two floors of socialist, feminist, trade union books and pamphlets. Just round the corner from Finsbury Park tube station on the Piccadilly and Victoria lines.



FROM BOOKMARKS

**Socialist Worker**



**A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE!**



**Abortion on Demand**  
**No Return to the Backstreet!**

**Socialist Worker**

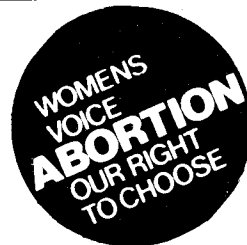
**FAMILIES TO LOSE £12 A WEEK**

Thatcher's policies will cost families with two children on a gross income of £60 to £80 at least £12 a week.  
 At the figures on this page are based on an average of the whole population.  
 This does not include pensioned state and prescription charges.  
 This enormous cut in the weekly wage has been estimated by the Child Poverty Action Group. It means that many families will be forced into the margins of poverty.  
 Think about it. £12 a week off your wages.



For up to date information about the antics of this vicious Tory government read **Socialist Worker**.

Send just **£1** for eight issues to **Socialist Worker, Box 82, London, E2**



Two new badges from Womens Voice  
**Abortion our right to chose**  
 15p each plus 10p postage  
**She's no sister (Margaret Thatcher that is)**  
 20p each plus 10p postage  
 Money with orders please. Add 10p postage whatever number your order.

## WOMENS FILMS

A new collection of short films that stimulate discussion about traditional female roles, is now available for distribution in Great Britain. The films are particularly suitable for use with young people.  
 For a FREE brochure describing the films and how to obtain them, please write to:  
 Women's Films Brochure  
 Liberation Films  
 2 Chichele Road  
 London, NW2

## THE WOMEN'S THEATRE GROUP 'My Mkinga'

A new play about American 'aid' to East Africa—the dumping of dangerous contraceptives!  
 Suitable for women's groups, health workers and contraception campaigns.  
 For further details write to:  
 The Womens' Theatre Group,  
 5 Leonard Street, London, EC2 (Tel: 01 251 0202 or 01 250 0775)

## Feminist Silver Pendants and earrings



New prices due to Silver Surcharge

- No 1 Pendant with beads (Length 22mm) **£4.35**
- Earrings **£7.00**
- Earrings with beads **£8.70**
- No 2 Same size and prices as No 1
- No 3 Pendant **£4.35**
- Pendant with beads (same size as No 1 and No 2) **£5.20**
- No 4 Pendant **£2.90**
- Pendant with beads **£3.75**
- Earrings **£5.80**
- Earrings with beads **£7.50**
- No 5 Pendant **£5.05**
- Pendant with beads (Diameter 25mm) **£6.15**
- 18" Silver Chains **£1.50**

**35p for packing & recorded delivery**

Postal Orders / Cheques payable to

**JEANETTE HONAN**

35 Prospect Road, Birmingham B13 9TB

# OUR POINT OF VIEW

## A Little goes a long way

TO BELONG to a union, work in reasonable conditions and earn a decent wage for the hours we give up to our employers is the right of every one of us.

At least, that's what we say. Of course our employers don't agree. They want to squeeze every last penny out of their workforce to keep up their profits. After all, that's what they are in business for, they will claim.

That's the contradiction in interests between us and our employers that just won't go away. At least, not until we have socialism. But many of us, in the meantime, do manage reasonably well. We want better conditions, more money, job satisfaction, but what we have is at least tolerable.

Not so for the women who work at Chix in Slough. They have been on strike for over three months now. They were earning miserable wages, some of them only £19 a week. Their working conditions were out of the last century. The union wasn't recognised. They were humiliated and despised by their managers. They came out on strike.

How can they win after all this time?

The women's own confidence and determination isn't enough. There have been dozens of similar strikes of Asian women. All courageous, but most of them beaten by ruthless managers who know that time will do their dirty work for them.

So it's up to the rest of us to do what we can. Blacking supplies is the most effective support in any strike – but few *Womens Voice* readers will be in any position to help there. We can black the product – if you see Chix bubblegum, don't buy it. But the dent we will make in those sales figures is likely to be very

small; more a point of principle than a realistic proposal.

So what can we do?

A little, but a lot.

If every reader of *Womens Voice* collected some money, from people at work or home, friends even, and sent it together with a message of support and the names of the donors, it would show the women at Chix that there are other women who will stand by them. And the money will help relieve their pressing financial difficulties.

Money and signatures should be collected at public meetings, on the streets with the sales of *Womens Voice*, in union meetings.

There is another reason for doing these things. The Tory Government is pushing its now notorious Employment Bill through Parliament.

The Bill will guarantee the failure of the Chix strike. It will prohibit 'secondary picketing'. It will be illegal for workers who supply Chix to black those products or their delivery. It will be illegal for the women themselves to put a picket on at those other workplaces. The pressure on small groups of workers like them, fighting for basic trade union rights, will be enormous.

So every time we argue in support of the Chix strike we are arguing against that Bill. That's the way to get the people we work with to see how important it is that we all stop work on 14 May – the day the TUC has called a general strike against the Bill.

We've won the campaign to defeat the Corrie Bill. Now let's direct all our energies against this one.

### FEATURES

**Home Truths about homeworkers** pages 14 and 15

**Interview: Anna Boguslawska who survived the Holocaust** pages 16 and 17

**Short Story** pages 18 and 19

**Changing the law on illegitimacy** page 13

**Jobs women do** page 11

**NEWS** pages 4 to 10

### REGULARS

**Womens Health on food allergies** page 12

**Reviews** pages 20 and 21

**Your letters** pages 22 and 23

**Jane writes about sex and boiled eggs** page 24

**Sport keeps you going** page 24

**A Tale for the summer** page 25

**What's going on** page 26

**Our next editorial meeting will be on Wednesday 30 April. If you would like to come give us a ring on 01-986 6222. If you would like someone from the editorial board to come and visit your Womens Voice group, just give us a date.**

Published by Elophintin Ltd,  
PO Box 82, London E2  
Printed by East End Offset, PO  
Box 82, London E2

## ARMAGH JAIL - TALES OF HORROR

AS THE blanket protest in the H Blocks of Long Kesh enters its ~~fourth~~ year, the 37 women on protest in Armagh are being forced into the 'dirty protest'.

Womens Voice outlines the recent events in Armagh and describes the International Women's Day picket of the jail organised by Women Against Imperialism.

IN MARCH 1976, Roy Mason, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland created a new law. He removed political status for the prisoners of Northern Ireland. Since then political offences have been classed as ordinary crimes. Prisoners in the H blocks went on the blanket, they refused to wear criminal uniforms, they refused to co-operate with prison rules. They are left naked 24 hours a day. Their food is cold, the screws brutalise them, they have half an hour's visit a month and are frequently subjected to humiliating anal searches after their visits.

The women in Armagh have always been allowed to wear their own clothes. But on February 7 this year, there was an unprovoked attack on the women by 40 male screws and 30 female screws. Since then the women have not had a change of clothing, are locked up 23 hours a day and only allowed to use the toilet once a day. They have to say when their periods are due. If they come on early, they just have to bleed, when they do get sanitary towels, they are rationed to two a day.

Maura McRory, chairwoman of the Relatives Action Committee told the story: 'The girls were told they were getting a chicken dinner that day. They thought that meant an important visitor was in the jail and had to be impressed. They went into the canteen. There 40 male screws disguised as maintenance men lay in wait. One of the prisoners asked what was going on. They said the cells were to be searched and the girls were to go back one by one for strip searches. The girls said they'd only go all together.

This is when they were beaten and I mean beaten.

2 Loyalist women who were serving the food went to stop

the screws who were wielding batons, defending themselves with ladles. They too were badly beaten.

The Northern Ireland Office deny that there were any beatings—they say IRA uniforms were found and this is why they searched.

All parcels are scrutinised before the women get them, so the prison authorities would know exactly what goes in and out of the jail. It does the NIO little credit that they used the finding of dark skirts and light shirts as an excuse to beat up women.

As a result of this attack, the women are now escalating their

protest. Some women have had their pots removed. If they are only allowed to go to the toilet once a day, it's obvious they have to spread the excreta as high on the walls as they can. The screws blocked up the windows to stop them getting rid of it through them.

By forcing Republican prisoners into so called 'dirty protests' the prison authorities and the NIO are increasing the hostility of the Catholic population. It seems they are holding on to the denial of political status as if it is the only weapon they have left against the defiant spirit of the Republican Movement.



Photos: Derek Speirs IFL

"One, two, three, four, Open up the Armagh door!" chanted demonstrators at Armagh jail.

## SCHOOL CUTS

A FIGHTBACK FOR EDUCATION Conference was held in London on Saturday March 1. Of the 120 present there were 85 delegates from 70 delegating bodies and 35 observers. Among the delegating bodies there were 15 NUT Associations and 24 schools, trades councils, FE colleges and Parent Teacher bodies.

The main discussion was around the code of practice against the cuts. All the points arose out of the most recent experiences of fighting the cuts, and speakers from Avon, Leicester, Rotherham and Manchester illustrated this.

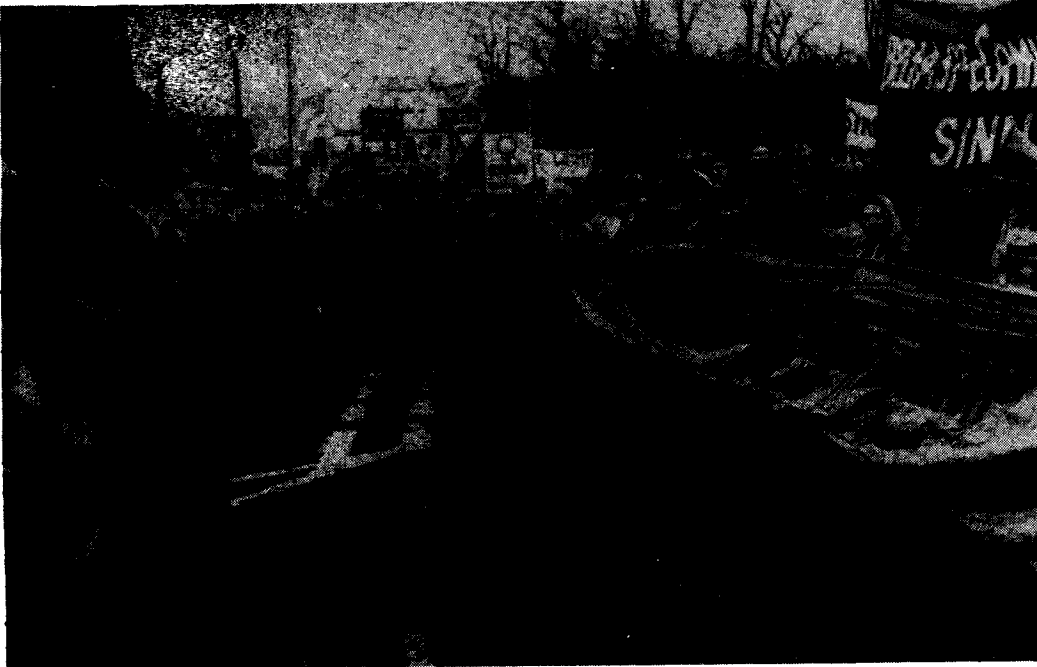
The highlight of the conference for most of us was a speech from Sadie Blood, a school dinner lady from Warrington. She told a story of how her full time union official said: 'Don't worry, I'm fighting the cuts, there won't be any sackings.' Sadie said 'Come off it! You must have sold something if you've done a deal.'

The official said 'Oh yes, I've agreed to natural wastage.'

The women in Sadie's kitchen were taken in, thinking this meant the council would be sensible and not waste money on things like painting the ceiling, and their jobs would be safe. Of course it didn't work out like that and they are now short of helpers in the kitchen!

The sectional and local struggles that our union, the NUT is pushing will fail. Unless we have joint action against the cuts, we cannot win. One opportunity for this will be the TUC day of action against the cuts on May 14th. The conference pledged to work for unofficial action on that day if the NUT fails to call official action.

Jeannie Robinson



## International Women's Day Political Status Now!

500 PEOPLE gathered outside Armagh Jail on March 8, International Women's Day. Among them were 200 women from England, 80 from Southern Ireland, a delegation from the Movement de Liberation des Femmes from France.

The protest prisoners had been moved from the top floor of 'A' wing to the basement where they couldn't see the demonstration. But the prison authorities weren't as thorough as they thought. One girl had been forgotten about and as the crowd sang 'The Womens Army is marching', some pigeons fluttered away from the window of her cell, and a green towel appeared, a symbol of resistance.

Mary Williams, Pat Arrowsmith and Jeannie Hilton, Womens Voice members from London were there that day. They describe the experience:

'Peering from an upper window of the prison were three male prison officers. It is they who deny the women free association, who deny them remission, who keep them in appallingly unhygienic conditions, (one cold shower for 37 women) who give no ante-natal care and separate mothers from their babies when they are six weeks old.

'Standing in the cold below are relatives and friends of the prisoners. About 70 Loyalists gather on the other side of the square, the relatives shout "Come over, we'll fight you as long as we have to."

'The Royal Ulster Constabulary cordon them off. The RUC presence is more prominent than the army. They are avoiding trouble, there are too many visitors from England who might take any stories

of violence home with them. The RUC jeer and laugh at our speakers. We were not intimidated, the speeches, songs and chants continued. We knew we had made contact with the women in the jail. We could hear them banging on the cell doors. We were jubilant.

'We continued our songs of solidarity and protest which called for self determination and British Troops Out of Ireland. We moved off, but what reprisals were waiting for the women left inside?'

Fifteen women from Manchester Women and Ireland group went to Ireland for the weekend. Anne Littleboy gives her impressions:

'We felt quite apprehensive, not knowing what sort of treatment we could expect from the security forces, whether we would be arrested or deported or beaten up on the picket line like the 11 women from Women Against Imperialism last year. They were arrested and brought to trial not because they are feminists but because they dared to question the role of the British state in Northern Ireland and the disgusting conditions and brutality in British prisons.

'One of the most important things that came across was that people asked why we hadn't been over before to show our solidarity. Women Against Imperialism had broadened out the issue of National Liberation by including the question of women's liberation as an essential part of the struggle for a United Ireland.

'It struck me that it's not easy for Irish men and women to protest on the streets of Belfast and Derry because they face the violence of the army and RUC. The previous Sunday a nine year old child had

ended up with his skull caved in by a rubber bullet during a march to Long Kesh.'

Maura McCrory, who lives in the heart of West Belfast where Army harassment and brutality are part of daily life, and who has herself a son on the blanket, said: 'It was fantastic that English women came to support us. They want to show that they as British women don't want Britain to rule Ireland.'

But is this enough? Marie Mulholland of WAI said:

'In a way it was an anti climax. What can we do? It wasn't enough. We left the girls behind, they're still in there. We have to accelerate the process of alleviating their conditions, if not freeing them altogether.'

Melanie McFadyean

## GAY STUDENT VICTIMISED

IN OCTOBER last year Geoff Brighton a student at Leeds University applied to do a one year postgraduate teacher training course. He was accepted subject to passing a medical and his final degree exams which he takes this summer.

He attended for a medical and passed, but was called back and asked if he was homosexual as recorded on his medical file. Geoff replied that he was. The doctor then insisted that he attend a psychiatric interview before he would issue the certificate of fitness. Without

this certificate Geoff cannot attend the teacher training course and so cannot become a teacher. He quite rightly has refused to see a psychiatrist. A campaign is being mounted by the gay students and gay teachers group to stop this discrimination.

We held a successful lobby of the NUT executive on Saturday 16th and there will be a meeting at NUT conference to win further support. For copies of the petition circulated by Rank and File teacher write to: PO Box 82 London E2. Jeannie Robinson

# Now to fight for better facilities

ATTEMPTS TO get the Corrie Bill through its third reading have failed so far. The concern for human life of the bill's supporters went so far that they tried to get bills on free transport for the handicapped and child safety put off so that their restrictive laws could get through.

But opponents of the bill have managed to talk it out every week it has come up. Its only chance lies in three months time on July 4th when there is another day free. Even then success for Corrie is unlikely.

The size of the anti-abortion campaign has shocked all but

the most bigoted. Friday evening demonstrations to coincide with the bill's readings have attracted up to 2000. The National Abortion Campaign are planning another large demonstration in June.

Hopefully the defeat of the Corrie Bill will mean that we will be able to campaign for more and better abortion facilities and for a woman's right to choose. It is still the case that the availability of abortion depends on where you live and how sympathetic or otherwise local gynaecologists are.

Perhaps our legislators will begin to realise that women don't want this sort of restriction and will stop backing bills which aim to take women right back into the thirties. If they don't one thing is certain—next year another Corrie will come along with another bill which aims to cut the time limit for abortion and alter the grounds. **Lindsey German**

## CORRIE'S EFFECT IN IRELAND

CORRIE'S BILL had one good effect in Ireland. It brought Irish feminists out for the first time to agitate on the issue of Abortion.

Since the 1967 Abortion Act was passed in Britain the number of backstreet abortions in Ireland has fallen to almost none. Irishwomen have been making free use of the British abortion facilities, with approximately 9,000 now going to Britain every year. The Catholic Church has begun to be very concerned about this and in the last few months the media have been giving considerable coverage to the question. So far, public debate has tended to be between those who condemn abortion (and contraception and 'promiscuity' and homosexuality) outright and those who see it as a terrible evil whose existence we must recognise. Then, out of the blue, Corrie's Bill galvanised the women's movement (specifically the 32-County Feminist Federation) into organising a picket of the British Embassy over its implications for Irish women.

Corrie's Bill has been defeated for the present and Irish women can continue to avail of the 1967 Act at the rate of 20 a day. However, that is obviously not good enough. It is a very expensive, secret and therefore humiliating way for Irish women to exercise their right to choose. The women's movement and the left are beginning to realise that Abortion is a real issue in Ireland today, and the coming year should see a new breakthrough in debate and agitation on the question.

**Mary Gordon**

## NALGO action!

All over the country people will be getting away without paying their rates. This isn't a generous move on behalf of the government; it's because NALGO members are refusing to send them out.

NALGO members in local authorities were promised a comparability study as part of their 1979 pay deal. When the offer was finally made it was a miserable 6-12 per cent. NALGO turned down the offer, talks broke down, and the National Executive Committee surprisingly took the initiative.

Members have been instructed, amongst other things, to refuse to handle rate demands, not to co-operate with outside contractors, and to ban overtime. A one-day strike has been called for April, and the Air Traffic Control Officers will be striking over Easter.

The response from NALGO branches has been fantastic. Most have had meetings on the industrial action and are supporting it, but a ballot is going to be held.

The press have already started bleating about the 'nastiness of NALGO'; but NALGO's problem is that it hasn't been nasty enough in the past. If they win a decent pay offer through this action, perhaps it will be a lesson and an inspiration for the future.



Jane Munroe

## Wreaths for those who died in the backstreets

THIRTY WOMEN died from backstreet abortion in 1966, the year before the Abortion Act became law. Womens Voice in London decided to protest over the number of deaths the Corrie Bill will cause if it becomes law.

We made 30 wreaths from coathangers, decorated with paper flowers and ribbon, to represent the 30 women. We also made an effigy of Margaret Thatcher, abortion snatcher, to protest at the government's support for restrictive laws.

A small but brave contingent of us marched down the Strand and Whitehall to aly the wreaths on the cenotaph. We wore placards proclaiming 'no return to the

backstreets' and chanted through a megaphone. Although marches within half a mile of parliament are forbidden the police didn't attempt to stop us but just told us to keep the noise down.

We laid the wreaths but as soon as we had left the cenotaph the police rushed over, gathered them up, and threw them in the nearest rubbish bin.

Enraged to see our handiwork tossed aside, we ran over, salvaged the wreaths and carried them on down to parliament, where we stuck Thatcher's effigy on the railings.

We arrived just in time to see the MP c-clearing off for the weekend as the debate finished.

## CHIX BEGINS TO DRAW SUPPORT

The fight to get your union recognised is long and hard. Asian women at Chix bubblegum factory in Slough know it only too well. They have stood on the picket line for months now, six long winter months. It is only recently that they are beginning to get the sort of support they should get from the rest of the trade union movement. Chix women were out on the TUC demo on March 9, collecting money for their strike. They have been going round factories in North London getting money and support for their mass pickets.

Make sure you help Chix strikers. Organise a collection where you work, or at your union branch or trades council. Try to get to one of the pickets with workmates or other WV members. The main pickets are every Wednesday starting at 6.30 in the morning at the factory in Farnham Road, Slough, Berks. Send donations and messages of support to M. Anwar, 271 Goodman Park, Slough.

## WOMENS TUC—IT IS ACTION WE NEED

250 WOMEN from 56 different unions descended on the seaside town of Brighton on the 14th and 15th March for the 50th Womens TUC.

'What struck me about the agenda was you get the feeling that the conference reaffirms the same old motions year in year out, with the vain hope someone in the TUC will take them up' a NGA delegate Kate McPherson told Womens Voice. 'The best part of the conference for me was when the meeting opened, and we heard a brief history of womens struggles from, the Matchgirls strike to the

Trico equal pay strike to the Chix recognition strike today. It's good for us to be reminded of our potential. Later one GMWU delegate made one of the most enthusiastically received contributions on the Chix strike, and the conference moved to send a telegram of support for the mass pickets . . . The trouble is the conference didn't draw the political lessons of our past experience.'

'When we discussed the Employment Bill, there was no mention of the attacks on picketing, the closed shop and the introduction of secret ballots. The meeting limited itself to

the "womans" issue of the attack on our maternity rights. Yet I can see women being in the front line on the ENTIRETY of the Employment Bill.'

Kate is right, the womens TUC missed out on any constructive discussion on how the proposed anti-union laws will affect womens union organisation, and how to fight them. Many women in newly organised workplaces, with little or no organisational tradition will suffer hard. Employers are already undermining union representatives and stewards by 'direct communication' to their workforce, thereby bypassing elected union reps. This combined with the introduction of secret ballots, will put all the balls in the employers' court, undermining our right to collective discussion, debate and decision making.

We must campaign in every shop stewards committee, union branch and trades council for strike action on May 14 and be sure that we carry the arguments with rank and file members on the shop floor.

We need look no further than the Chix recognition strike. If the Tory proposals become law, the Chix strikers would be manning a very lonely and ineffective picket line. With picketing limited to only

workers involved directly in the dispute, local trade unionists would have to confine their support to financial collections and the very means to winning the dispute; an effective picket would be outlawed.

It's not good enough to wait until the proposals become law and then make militant noises, what is needed is a campaign to argue at our union branch meetings, shop stewards committees and trade councils, and aimed at rank and file workers to understand the repercussions of the anti-union laws. We need a commitment from our organisations to DEFY the law, when it enters the statute books.

For Kate McPherson, this years Womens TUC was her first: 'I can see the value of 250 women from all different industries and unions sharing their experiences and ideas, though I'm sure the best discussion were held outside the conference . . . It was good to hear so many women with the confidence to speak up at such a big meeting.'

But at the end of the day, although this conference has a role to play to remind the TUC that a third of its members are women workers, I feel the conference is one million miles away from the shopfloor, where our power really lies. We'll wait forever if we rely on the TUC leadership to fight our battles for us, and it's this point that the conference seems to miss.'

Yolanda Bystrom

## A woman's place

THE TUC Womens Conference has its origins in the campaigns of the Womens Trade Union League, a body set up in the 19th century to protect the interests of women workers. Along with the National Federation of Women Workers, women in the WTUL campaigned for their rights to trade union organisation as well as to decent wages against the resistance of both their employers and of male trade unionists. The WTUL had always held a conference of delegates interested in women's trade union organisation during the week of the annual Trades Union Congress. The practice continued until the WTUL was 'taken over' by the TUC in 1921. The General Council of the TUC, set up in that year, included a special Women Workers Group. This ensured that at least two women would be members of the TUC's newly formed General Council. But the practice of a special conference of trade unionists concerned with the organisation of women was dropped. Many trade union leaders were not so concerned to organise women workers now that the number of women at work was cut back by unemployment. A woman's place, after all, was in the home.

Pressure from women themselves led the the first annual women's conference, held in September 1926, following the defeat of the General Strike. The General Council of the TUC had, at this conference, made a determined effort to control proceedings and women delegates, feeling their status as second class citizens in the trade union world, complained that the agenda 'savoured of a happy evening for the poor'. Things have changed a bit since then of course. Between 1930 and 1980 the number of women in trade unions has risen from under 1/2 million to over 3 1/2 million—an enormous increase.

Some of the problems which we are facing today have changed very

little since that first conference. As in 1926 we have an anti-trade union government concerned to shackle the trade union movement by legislation. As in 1926 unemployment is high and likely to rise, with women particularly hard hit by the loss of jobs. As in 1926 women are under-represented within the trade union movement and we still have only two places for women on the General Council of the TUC. As in 1926 there is a widespread complacency about the fact that women get second best—both at work and in their unions.

The women's TUC is a strange affair. After fifty years it could quite reasonably be suggested that it has done little to improve things for women. It can be seen as a non-event in which women trade unionists are permitted by their (male) trade union leaders to get together and discuss issues which are never going to be taken seriously within the movement at large. Since the conference has no powers it cannot change anything and its status is, in any case, only advisory. Despite all of these disadvantages, it is clear that the Women's TUC provides a forum to discuss ideas which are vital to women trade unionists. Key issues for women are debated within a forum which is more sympathetic than the annual Trades Union Congress. On the question of abortion, on protective legislation for women workers, on public expenditure cuts and on many other issues, the Women's TUC has provided a platform from which campaigns can be launched. Campaigns may not always mean action, but action is unlikely without campaigns. In the face of a savage attack by a government led by Britain's first woman Prime Minister, the importance of these campaigns is growing. At times like these, a woman's place is in her union.

Jan Druker



Mark Risher (IFL)

## Knit-in at Mother Red cap

TWENTY WOMEN and one man who invaded the dismal lounge bar of The Mother Redcap pub in Camden Town, London, were ejected by police, for committing the intolerable crime of knitting.

Our protest followed the throwing out of three women on 18 February, who accidentally discovered the publican's rules on women and knitting when they were commanded to leave as one of their number put the finishing touches to a pair of gloves.

The trouble began on March 3rd, when the barman, alarmed at the sight of 20 women requesting pints and halves, refused to serve us. They could not give a reason but seemed

to suspect that we might want to knit in their pub.

They did serve the man with us however, so after some delay we sat down with drinks, and, seizing our needles and knitting patterns, cast on.

The horrified publican alerted the local constabulary to this organised menace. Soon eight enthusiastic policemen appeared, but quickly became embarrassed when they saw the nature of the protest. Sheepishly they instructed us to leave. How strange, Could it possibly be that they just don't like unaccompanied women in pubs?

Avril Levi



# Answering back

## Secondary Picketing

ONE OF the most heavily publicised and controversial proposals in the Tory Employment Bill concerns something called secondary picketing.

It aims to stop workers on strike from engaging in any effective action that could win their dispute. It aims to destroy the very roots of our strength — the solidarity of working women and men in struggle.

At the Chix sweet factory in Slough, women have been on strike for over 24 weeks fighting for recognition of their union, for better wages and better conditions. At present they get as little as half the going rate for their job.

Many people have supported them over the weeks. Every Wednesday there is a mass picket and Womens Voice members have supported it. In February's Womens Voice we carried a picture of Mrs Desai, militant leader of the Grunwick strike, on the picket line talking to the Asian women of Chix.

All of these people are secondary pickets. So too were all of the thousands of women who supported the work-in at the EGA hospital for women.

And if the Tory Employment Bill becomes law, they would all be illegal. It would become illegal for anyone to support a strike they believed in.

You may have noticed that in the papers and on the tv, there has recently been a concerted effort to paint a picture of the secondary picket as a mean, trouble-making, intimidating bully boy. The truth is they are just ordinary working class people supporting other working class people.

In fact, the term 'secondary picket' was only invented during the lorry drivers dispute last winter because they won their strike by effectively stopping the movement of loads by picketing.

If the Bill becomes law, it will be illegal for strikers to picket any place other than where they themselves work, as the lorry drivers did with such success.

Steel strikers would be unable to picket the docks for example or to ask the dockers not to allow supplies of imported steel through the ports.

Picketing can often only be effective if it is more widespread than the locality of an individual workplace, and that means secondary picketing if the dispute is to be won.

Not only would strikers themselves be illegal if they went to picket elsewhere, but they would be unable to enlist support even for picketing their own workplace. Anyone picketing, who is not a striker at a particular firm would be illegal, like the women who have supported the Chix strikers. Mass pickets would become impossible without that necessary support and many more strikes than at present would be lost before they were even begun.

Employers in this country own everything in our society. They own the factories, the machines and the goods that come out of them. The only thing we have is our labour. Withdrawing that labour — going on strike — is the only means we have of protecting our wages and our living and working conditions. Calling on solidarity from our sisters and brothers is our only strength. It is this they are trying to take away from us. If they thought they could get away with it they would make striking illegal too.

So remember, the next time there is a picket outside your local hospital protesting against its closure, you could be an illegal secondary picket.

# The Iron Lady walks again

WE INTERVIEWED Marilyn Hall, who went on her first ever demonstration on March 9. She dressed as the Iron Lady for the TUC demo against the anti-union laws. She is a steelworkers wife and her husband Kevin is a member of the NUB strike committee at Stanton.

'I went on the demo to back up my husband and because I support the steel strike. I didn't realise how many people are protesting about Thatcher. How did she get in if so many are against her now? But I



John Surrack (Report)

thought of voting for her—I didn't though. You see, I felt a woman would know more about family problems—prices, kids etc. I thought she'd be for the woman and mother.

'When I put on the Iron Lady outfit it brightened up the procession. People were laughing and cheering. I felt I'd done something positive and taken a step forward for myself. I'd do it again.

'I dreaded the steel strike but I knew it was for the best. I've compared Kevin's wages with other people's for a long time now. He had to live at work to earn a decent wage. He had to do that much overtime.

'I've been fundraising for the strike—a raffle, a jamboree, jumble sales. We went to the party for steelworkers kids organised by WV and other women. There's not much support from some other strikers wives. Some husbands don't talk to their wives about what it's all about and then they keep their men at home.

'I don't think they should go back until they're satisfied with the pay offer. What's the point of going back for less? I'm glad I married someone like my husband.

## Petticoat Pickets No Way!

ON PICKET LINES, in the strike HQ, incanteens, taking coke to picket lines, organising socials and kids parties, making banners and badges. You name it and you'll find women who are in support of the steel strike actively involved in it.

The attitude of men who picket alongside women has also changed. At first there was a bit of animosity. But after proving to them that we were not just petticoat picketers, as the papers say, but effective picketers, they are now taking us seriously.

As the strike is biting financially, surprisingly the number of women getting involved is growing. Some women in Sheffield organised a social for the pickets and their wives and husbands. We took around 50 names of women who wanted to help. Many of the wives told me how hard it was to manage financially but the thought of accepting

BSC's present offer of 14.4 per cent and job losses brought the angry response: 'You must be joking'.

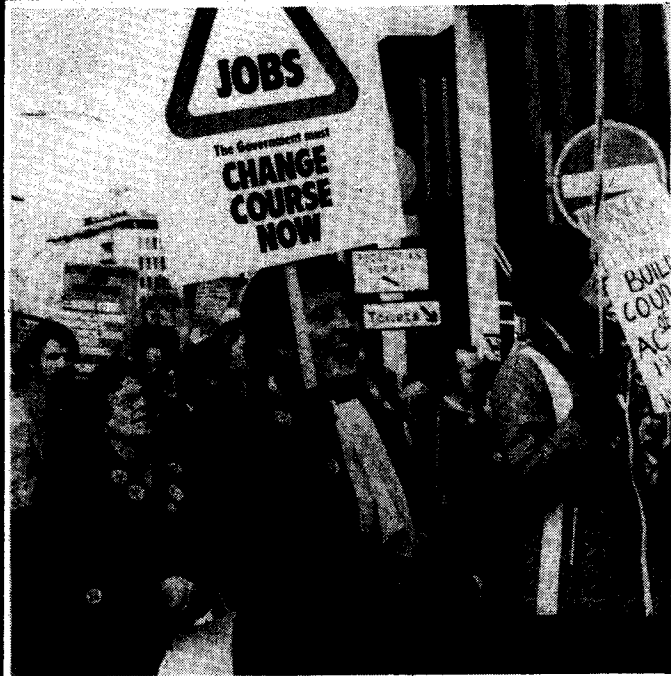
One wife told me: 'I want to get involved now more than ever to show all concerned I am 100 per cent in support of my husband sticking out for 20 per cent. And if you ask me the way prices in the shops, electricity and all the other bills are going up, the unions involved in this strike didn't ought to be settling for any less than 20 per cent but should be thinking of upping it to 30 per cent.'

At the end of the social, tears came to my eyes as I saw men and women stand together with arms linked and raise the roof with the chant of 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, Out, Out, Out!'

Sue Lawson



## MR SCROOGE IS ALIVE AND WELL!



OVER 100,000 trades unionists marched through London on March 9 to protest at the Tory government's Employment Bill, which will attack many trade union rights, including secondary picketing and maternity leave. Many women were on the demo, which was organised by the TUC, including Chix strikers and steel strikers.

The next day of action is May 14 where we should fight for a national one day stoppage. Get a resolution

through your trade union branch now.

**Fight the employment bill with Womens Voice**

Why not hold a meeting in your area on what the bill means and how to kill it

Speakers from 01 986 6222

Kill the bill WV stickers 30p per sheet incl p&p

Petitions against the bill 2p each

Posters £1 per 50

All from Womens Voice, PO Box 82 London E2

THE MAINLY women workforce at Klein Brothers clothing manufacturers, Salford, finally decided they had had enough of 19th century management attitudes and walked out.

The crunch came over the works canteen. It is fitted with excellent up to date equipment but all the workforce ever got for dinner was tea and toast.

In addition, management often intimidated the younger girls, telling

them that if they wouldn't get out and get chips for them, they would lose their jobs! Finally on 21 February management stopped the sale of sandwiches in the canteen, which had been organised by the women on a non-profit making basis.

The workers stayed in the canteen until the director came and gave them an explanation. When he finally did come he told them to get back to work and all the women walked out.

The 120 workers at Klein Brothers have no traditions of trade union organisation. None of them were even in a union. Since then 75 have joined the garment workers' union (NUTGW). They have come out again now because the management refuses to recognise their union and they plan to stay out until it is recognised.

The management maintain their patronising attitude. They have said the women should have asked for permission to join the union. They are harassing the strikers, and have accused several of them of pilfering.

The strike remains strong. Only 9 people are still working and the pickets are in good spirits.

They need financial help and messages of support

Send to: Klein Brothers strikers c/o John Cotterall, Voscop, 39 Fir Street, Cadishead, Manchester M30 5AR Tel: 061 775 9540

Anne Barber

**DID YOU know that there are over 300,000 single women caring for elderly parents in Britain?**

**DID YOU know that there isn't a single woman on the Parliamentary committee examining the Employment Bill: the Bill that threatens to savage maternity rights.**

**DID YOU know that the number of immigrants to Britain fell by 4 per cent last year: the wives and children of men legally settled in Britain have to wait two years just for a first interview if they want to join them from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh.**

**DID YOU know that in all the other countries of the Common Market, you get the right to maternity leave as soon as you take a job: only in Britain do you have to have worked in the job for two years.**

## CORRIE DOWN AND OUT

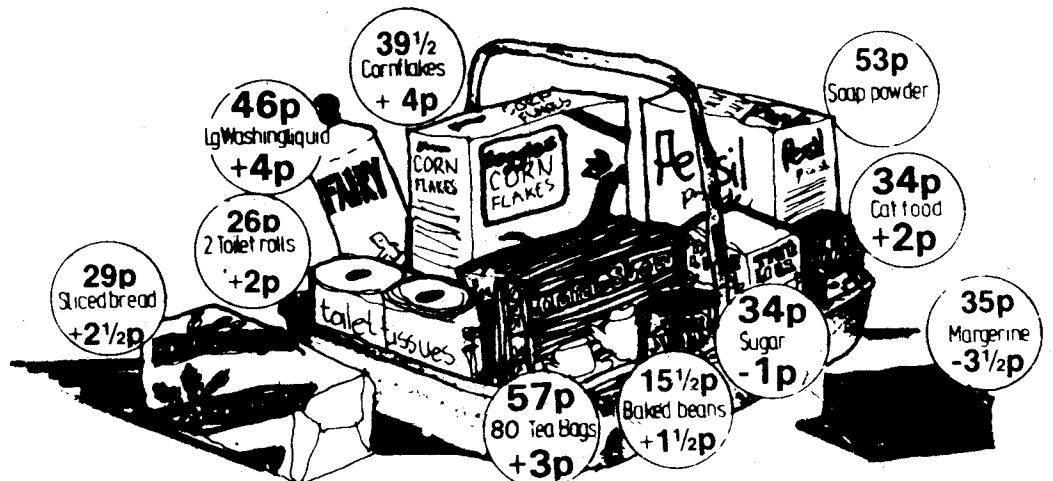
THE CORRIE BILL is dead! At last John Corrie has had to admit defeat. His Bill to change the 1967 Abortion Act has bitten the dust just like the White and Benyon Bills before it.

## NO MEN, PLEASE!

WE ALL know the discussion on abortion makes tempers flare high but never so high as the anti-abortionists in Grays, Essex. They had a mass mobilisation for our meeting on 'A woman's right to choose'. Bring all the old and young they could find. But we made sure the real issues came out that its our right to choose whether and where we have children. The anti-abortionists make it obvious where they stand. It was summed up when one of them shouted from the audience 'there is a 100 per cent safe contraceptive—don't sleep with men.' They also referred to the speaker as a whore. It's obvious that for them the sanctity of life really means madonnas and forced morality.

Jan Neilsen

## Womens Voice Shopping Bag



Total in June 1979 £3.13 Total in March 1980 £3.69 Increase 66p



## ILKESTON

WE HAVE finally formed a 'Womens Voice' group in Ilkeston. At the moment our numbers are small but we feel we have achieved quite a lot in the short time we have been together.

There are only two or three women who wish to be actually committed to the group, however we have several more who are not yet ready to become members but are willing to help in whatever activities the group involves itself in. We are hoping in the future to enrol these women but are quite content at the moment to let them take their own time about deciding just how involved they wish to become.

When the group first started the Steel Strike was in full swing. We wanted to find ways of helping the steelmen and their families and also of course to reach as many wives as possible with a view to explaining what Womens Voice is all about.

As someone pointed out, the children are among the first to be affected when Dad's money is cut short. We thought a party for these children would be ideal.

A jumble sale was suggested and agreed upon.

The jumble was collected and the sale held one week later. It was very successful and raised £37.

The party was a bigger success than the jumble sale. There was more than enough to eat. The SWP provided a disco. There were sweets and balloons and each child went home with two or three presents each. In all 46 people attended.

The food left over was taken to the pickets at Etwell Hospital, which is in occupation. The group has met three times since and has arranged for a vanload of its members to help out on the picket line at Etwell Hospital. We have also started a petition on the Market to stop the hospital from being closed. We have handed leaflets out explaining this and also what the cuts mean. We sold

Womens Voice at the same time and got the buyers' addresses on the petition. We also invited a sub-postmaster to one of our meetings to talk about the suggested payment of benefits through banks. This would mean the closure of the small post offices.

We now hold regular fortnightly meetings and have invited members of another WV group to come and talk to us on the Tory Attack on Women and Sexism. Some of our members gave a talk at the Ilkeston School to the VI form, on abortion. We have been invited back again.

We plan meetings on Battered Wives, Rape, Womens Health, Women at Work, The Family. We are going to continue the petition about Etwell Hospital and sell WV at the same time to get contacts and we hope to sell at a factory. Ilkeston Womens Voice

## SW LONDON

MORE THAN fifty women met together to discuss 'The Way Forward for Womens Liberation and Socialism' at a meeting set up by SW London Womens Voice Group together with Womens Aid and other local Womens Groups. The idea arose after some of us had attended a debate between the local Labour Party and the SWP where the whole platform and most of the speakers from the floor were men. It was evident from the Womens Debate that women are equally capable of discussing politics although in one evening there was only really time to identify the main issues which we intend to explore in more detail at a week-end workshop. Some of the topics we propose to cover are the relationship between the Womens Movement and the Labour Movement. Why are many women reluctant to join left groups? Is consciousness raising political? Do we need a Party? Look out for details of this exciting event! Jenny Weinstein

## SUSSEX

WE HAVE collected £70 for the Chix strikers and are sending a minibus to their picket line. We are trying to get our students union to donate £200 to the strike fund, even though we could get taken to court for making the payment. We are arguing that unless these women can get their union recognised they don't have a hope in hell of getting better conditions or pay, let alone opposing the Tory anti union laws like the attack on maternity leave. What we can do as students is send as much money as possible to the strike fund and support the mass picket. Sussex University Women Voice

## WANDSWORTH

LAST FRIDAY, 7th March, a dismal group of parents and children clustered in the rain outside the Nightingale Lane Day Nursery to make what they



In Ealing, West London, parents and children have taken to the streets to demonstrate against education cuts.

thought would be a token protest as this much needed resource fell under Wandsworth Tory Council's ever active axe. But one resourceful young protester, aged nine, whose little brother attended the Nursery, found her way round the back and into the building—so everyone else followed.

Since then the Nursery has been occupied by single parents and their families who have moved in. During the day Mums and child-minders drop in to offer support and use the excellent play facilities and large garden which it would be quite criminal to waste.

Peter Hamilton, a single father whose child used to have a place at the Nursery told *Womens Voice*:

'All the children who used to have places at the Nursery have been moved to other Nurseries

in the Borough. Those Nurseries are now overcrowded and it means that people on the waiting list will have to go on waiting. We intend to stay here until we are given a guarantee by the Council that this Nursery will be reopened and no other Nurseries will be closed.'

It is no coincidence that one of the Tory Councillors on the Social Services Committee, Councillor Jessiman, owns a chain of private Day Nurseries. We understand that he is one of three private businessmen who have expressed an interest in the building. It costs £20 a week to leave a child in one of Councillor Jessiman's Nurseries while hundreds of needy children in Wandsworth are being left with illegal minders or even on their own in the house because of the lack of proper Day Care facilities. J. Weinstein

# WHOSE CHILD?

**A change in the law which would take away the stigma of illegitimacy sounds like a good thing. But this new parliamentary Bill contains clauses which we should be wary of, writes Jean Gribben**

LEGITIMACY and illegitimacy are only legal terms, and are the concern of the rich who have to worry about who is going to inherit all their money. So what's it got to do with us?

Quite a lot, in as far as an 'illegitimate' child has an unmarried mother. The Law Commission published a paper on 'abolishing the status of illegitimacy' in July last year, and the implications of it are serious for single mothers.

At the moment the law on illegitimacy is, to some extent, in favour of the unmarried mother. A man can be registered as the father on a child's certificate if both the mother and the father request it, or if the mother requests it and provides a declaration of paternity made by the man. The father's name can also be added later at the mother's request if there is a finding of paternity in a court hearing. The father's consent is not needed for this.

**'A man's name should be entered on a birth certificate whenever the court makes a finding of paternity, even if the mother does not consent'**

But one of the proposals in the Law Commission report is that 'a man's name should be entered on a birth certificate whenever the court makes a finding of paternity, even if the mother does not consent'. It's also been suggested that a man's name should be entered as the father at his request alone; the mother would only have the right to challenge *his* paternity.

If this became law the man would have automatic right of access to the child, and therefore to the woman. This, in turn, will make it much easier for him to claim custody. He will have knowledge of the mother's lifestyle and, if it does not follow the 'acceptable' pattern, he will be able to use this information against her to prove her incompetence as a mother, in court proceedings. Hard as it may be for the Law Commission to comprehend, many women caring for their illegitimate children have made a positive decision to bring them up without the assistance of, or interference from the 'legal' father.

Although state assistance for unmarried mothers is completely inadequate, it does exist. The DHSS are already trying to make single mothers claim financial support from the father by going through 'Affiliation' proceedings — the

procedure is often unpleasant and the order is difficult to enforce. This pressure can make it difficult for a woman to seek assistance from the DHSS.

**'The registration of the father on the birth certificate will make the single-mother's claim for assistance more difficult'**

The registration of the father on the birth certificate will only make the mother's claim for DHSS assistance more difficult; she will be dependent on the father for financial support for her child.

The Illegitimacy Law as it stands at the moment offers more protection to women than the Law Commission proposals do. To discuss it in terms of '...the status of illegitimacy should be abolished...' sounds pretty uncontentious. But it soon becomes clear that the new proposals are an attack on single mothers and their basic rights to control their own lives.

We are forced into a position where as socialists we have to argue in favour of an Act which is about bourgeois property rights, in preference to proposals which would weaken the rights of single mothers.

Illegitimacy is a bourgeois construct and will have no place in a socialist society. But within the present system we have to resist Law Commission proposals.

And what about the rights of the child? We only have to look round to see that they have no say. In a socialist society, without the property relationships which govern the present system, the upbringing of the child wouldn't necessarily rest with the 'mother' or the 'father'. The constraints of the family and ideas of ownership wouldn't control relationships.

**'We are forced to argue in favour of the Act in preference to proposals which would weaken the rights of single mothers'**

Since the Law Commission's paper on illegitimacy was published they have been inviting comments on the proposals from the public, and these may be taken into account when they present their proposals in a report. The report will probably contain a draft Bill, and this may become the basis for government legislation.

The Rights of Women Collective have a bundle of documents giving a breakdown of the present law on illegitimacy and the implications of the Law Commission proposals. It's available from 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1, price 50p. The relevant HMSO report is Working Paper No 74 of the Family Law Commission Report.  
**Jean Gribbin**



# WOMENS HEALTH

## Food for thought

THERE'S NOTHING more depressing—not to mention frustrating—then to feel persistently unwell.

Symptoms like aching limbs, headaches, nausea, sinus congestion, piles, even tiredness and feelings of panic attack some people so consistently that they despair of ever feeling completely well again.

The doctor says he can find nothing wrong, tells the sufferer to pull herself together, and more likely than not prescribes drugs to combat individual symptoms, or else pain killers and anti-depressants.

It may never occur to either doctor or sufferer that she is the victim of a widespread modern complaint—chemical allergy.

Two books published recently\* claim that allergic reactions account for a host of symptoms and general ill-health among people in the so-called advanced societies. Our bodies, claims the writer, are assaulted day in, day out, by powerful chemicals which can have alarming effects. First on the list comes the food we eat.

Yes, different foods can produce remarkable reactions from the human body. It's long been known among migraine sufferers, for example, that cheese, chocolate and alcohol can make their condition much worse. Eczema in babies is often an allergic reaction to cow's milk or certain other foods. Similarly gluten, found in wheat and other cereals, can have a devastating impact on children allergic to it, even retarding their growth.

But what about eggs? Or sugar? Or beef? Can such common items in our diet ever affect the health of adults?

If you're allergic to a single food, say bananas or tomatoes, and you come out in a rash when you eat them, most probably you'll be only too aware of the cause and effect, and avoid that food in future.

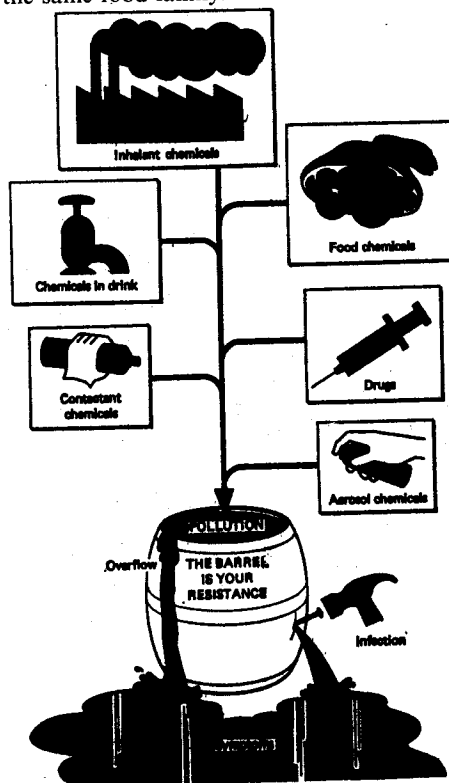
But if you found you had, say, aching joints one day, probably the last thing you'd think of is what you'd had to eat about four hours before.

To make it more complicated, you may be allergic to a whole group of foods, which you might never realise are chemically related. And because you eat many different foods at the same meal, you might find it almost impossible to isolate the guilty culprits.

\*Not all in the Mind

'Chemical Victims' by Dr. Richard Mackarness (Pan paperbacks)

Some people are allergic to certain cereals or grasses, for instance. Then they might also be allergic to the flesh of animals fed on corn. Or to beer, which is brewed from barley. And to sweet-corn, and cane sugar, members of the same food family.



Another complicating factor is that so many modern convenience foods are polluted with chemical additives, which may not only be extremely harmful over a long term, but which may also produce severe allergic reactions in the short term. Among these come monosodium glutamate, anti-oxidants, stabilisers, and all those sundry chemicals listed simply as 'flavourings' and 'colourants'. Because of the power of the industries which turn out these products onto an all-too trusting public, little control is exercised over their testing and use. Some of the dyes used in processed food (the red dye used on kippers and in soft drinks, the purple dye stamped onto the skin of bacon and lamb) are thought to be carcinogens (cancer-causing agents). But they may also prove poisonous in other respects. Some people, for example, have found they are

allergic to the dye used to colour the outside of pills prescribed by their doctors!

If you think you may suffer from food-allergy, what can you do?

First of all see whether your doctor knows anything about it, but don't be surprised if he just laughs at the idea. Most doctors still subscribe to the idea that just about all illness is caused by germs, or else it's just in the mind. Treatment for allergies is hard to come by on the National Health Service, and in Britain, as yet, little work has been done on food-allergy. One or two private doctors can offer help, but of course that costs money.

You can investigate your symptoms yourself, however. If you consult an allergy-specialist, and he thinks you may be suffering from a food allergy, this is what he will advise.

For a week you must be isolated from your normal diet: you will be reduced to eating one or two simple foods that are generally found to affect people less than most others: One such diet is to eat nothing but pears and lamb (including lambs kidney, lambs liver etc). You must drink only spring-bottled water, as your domestic water supply contains chlorine and possibly fluoride. You must not take any salt or seasoning, and you must not even lick envelopes as the glue contains corn-starch. Obviously, for this week, you will need great determination and support from your friends or family. But having got through it, you will have a clear idea whether you are suffering from a food allergy.

Why? Because, most strangely, when you first cut out the thing you are allergic to, after about three days you feel much worse. Your body has become so poisoned that you are almost dependent on the food that is causing the trouble... as when alcoholics try to withdraw from their 'poison'. But after a week, your system will have begun to clear, and you will feel much better. If you are not suffering from food allergy, your symptoms will not take this curve, getting worse then better, so you can assume the answer lies elsewhere, not in your diet.

If food allergy is suspected, you then begin to introduce different foods back into your diet, one or two at a time, and see which brings on your symptoms again. Once the pattern becomes clear, either you must avoid that food in future, or else, if it is an item of diet that is hard to avoid, you can undergo a series of injections to de-sensitize your body to it.

Allergy-theories are gradually becoming more acceptable as explanations for ill-health. Obviously there is a danger that such ideas become fashionable, and are exploited where they have no relevance. Nevertheless, those who have gone through with investigating their diet, and have had de-sensitizing treatment, testify to the incredible and dramatic change from persistent illness, even to the point of wanting to commit suicide, to complete well-being.

For non-sufferers too, the idea of simplifying our diet, cutting out over-refined foods, especially sugar, and avoiding all those chemical additives—in other words eating fresh, not processed food, has to make sense.

JUDITH CONDON

Next month: The threat to health from household products



# JOBS WOMEN DO

*Di Price works as a road sweeper for Lambeth Council in South London. She has a nine year old son, Matthew, and lives on a council estate. She was interviewed by Mary Phillips.*

How did I get this job? Well, I was working in a hospital at the time. It was hard work with a lot of responsibility (I was in the sterilising department) for low wages. I had to travel a long way and didn't get home till late, which was no good for my small son.

Then one day I saw a man sweeping the roads and I asked him about getting a job.

There are 20 women road sweepers in Lambeth now, out of a total of 240. And we all used to work from North Street depot, a little sub depot, well out of the way. Now the council has finally decided to implement the Sex Discrimination Act and opened up seven of the depots. They had always said it was too difficult because of toilet facilities and so on.

With road sweeping it's an early start in the morning. We started at North Street at half past seven, but in the winter months you start at half past six. You have what's called frost call, and then there's an emergency service (that's a 24-hour full cover, gritting the road etc. You can be called out at three o'clock in the morning.) I decided this year that they could put my name down for it.

You get a certain amount of grit that covers the week. There are grit boxes at the side of the road—actually it's rock salt—and then they have a gritting lorry. They bring it round full of grit and you jump up on the lorry and throw it off, trying not to hit people. Last year they weren't even ready for it and they ran out of rock salt. You had to break the ice up with shovels.

Mostly we clean the streets, sweeping them from one end to the other, clearing the gutters, picking up litter with a shovel, and even unblocking the drains with a thing like a grappling hook. We also have to pull out weeds.

The Council is so mean: the buckets we use have holes in them so that people can't steal them! Even the bags for rubbish have 'For Council Use Only' written on the sides.

We're issued with boiler suits, donkey jackets, and wellies. Usually they're too big. We have said something about it several times. They just seem to think that it's a bit unfortunate.

On average I take home £54 for a 40 hour week. We were squatting when we got the flat on Tulse Hill Estate, under the hard-to-let scheme. It used to be £24.28 a fortnight, and now it's gone up. On top of the rates it'll mean an increase of £3. If you're on what I'd call 'equal low pay' you can't afford the flat on your own.

The woman next door looks after Matthew and when I worked at North Street that cost me £10 a week. In the school holidays I send him to my mother

in Cornwall. If I couldn't do that obviously I couldn't work. I'd go mad. I can't afford to go down there. It costs me £35. And what happens if Matthew gets sick? I wouldn't get paid then.

As the parent you've got the ultimate responsibility. The onus is on you. It seems that if you can't carry out an obligation to look after your child there's something wrong with you.

It's bad if you're ill. You couldn't have a week in bed with 'flu, because of the child. There should be more facilities made available for women working in Lambeth, like nurseries. Most of the women have children. Some have got four or five kids. They often have to pay a baby minder. It's far better to have a well run, well supervised nursery than some baby minder (I'm not getting at baby minders). Far more women would be able to work knowing that their kids were well looked after. Because most women *have* to work now.

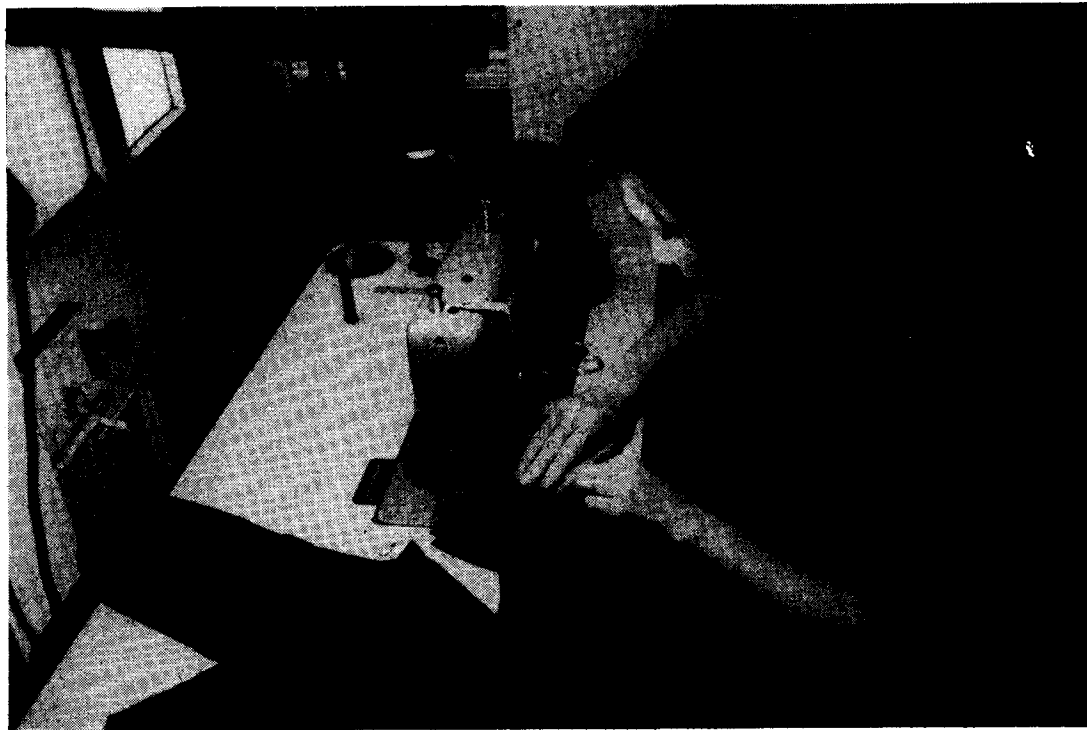
We're in the Transport and General Workers Union, and the meetings are outside working hours. There's no women's section in our union. We ought to try and get one.

There's not many women blue-collar workers in Lambeth council. There's two painters and decorators, I think, and a few women in the parks. They're all very isolated.

Do I like the job? I do it for the money, not the funny. You get stared at, and people come up to you and ask if you enjoy it. I say to them, 'Well, would you?'

# HOME TRUTHS

Researched and written by...



Pam works at home. She spends about 45 hours a week painting toy soldiers. For this she gets £10-£18 a week; an average of 40p an hour.

In the last four years she's had two pay rises. She has to pay the costs of lighting and heating her home during the time she works. She and her family have to live with the smell of paint. She gets no paid holidays and no paid sick leave.

No one knows how many homeworkers there are in Britain or how much they are paid. It is thought that there are about 250,000, excluding baby minders, and that most of them are paid under a pound an hour.

The work is usually semi-skilled or skilled, the homeworkers are nearly all women, and the reason for doing it is rarely 'pin-money'.

The most common reason is childcare. Nurseries are non-existent in most workplaces, baby minders are expensive, and the government is busy cutting what state provision there is. The alternatives are not to work or to work at home. For women who are

single, or who cannot manage on pathetic supplementary/unemployment benefits, or whose partners are low paid or unemployed, there is no alternative at all.

Another large group of homeworkers is Asian or Cypriot women. Traditional social values often means that it is frowned on for a woman to go to work, but the families need the money. The women end up taking in work, usually from the clothing industry, at a rip-off rate.

Homework varies, although the most common types are machine sewing, knitting and crocheting. Glove making, assembling mascara brushes,

packing greetings cards and lampshade-making are others.

Two-thirds of the homeworkers surveyed by the Low Pay Unit last year earn less than 60p an hour. The lowest paid are knitters and crocheters, who make jumpers selling at extortionate prices in London shops.

But the amount of pay isn't the only thing homeworkers have to put up with. Their employers save money by not having to pay the overheads of factory production. Lighting, heating, electricity for machines, sometimes even the machines themselves are paid for by the homeworkers. Often they

have to spend money on bus fares or postage if the company refuses to deliver and collect work.

The laws about health and safety in workplaces partially cover work done in the home, but there is no way of implementing them. Flammable materials, unguarded machinery, dangerous substances such as glues, paints and varnishes, dust, fluff and noise are all occupational hazards.

Lilian has been making gloves at home for a Devon company for six years. She does it because her husband is a low wage earner and there is no one to look after her small daughter. She earns about 51p an hour, and gets no paid holidays or sick leave. As well as that she is never sure of how much work she will be given. If there's no work she gets no money.

Some homeworkers, like Pam, are covered by a Wages Council. The Councils are supposed to set legal minimum wages and conditions for about 3 million workers, which includes about 30,000 homeworkers. Most homeworkers don't even know of their existence.

But the minimum wages are pretty miserable. For most industries the Wages Councils recommend about £1 an hour, but the effectiveness of that is poor. For example, over 50% of homeworkers in the toy industry earn less than 50p an hour, and yet the majority are covered by a Wages Council.

Apart from the lack of publicity about the Councils, they're much too kind to the employers. If a firm refuses to implement a minimum wage set by a Wage Council, they are fined a pathetic sum of money. The homeworkers would be fined more if they were caught travelling without a ticket on the underground.

Because there is no employment protection for homeworkers, it's very

## Number of women doing types of homework

Knitting and crocheting	13
Machine sewing	10
Typing	3
Glove making	3
Packing cards and envelopes	3
Lampshade making	2
Marking exam papers	2
Assembling mascara brushes	1
Assembling tennis balls	1
Assembling Christmas crackers	1
Assembling wigs	1
Stamp sticking	1
Toy painting	1
Telephone answering	1



# Written by Harriet Sherwood

difficult for them to make demands on their employers. The employer will simply give them the sack.

Most homeworkers are regarded as self-employed by their firms, but many would be able to win employee status if they took their cases to an industrial tribunal. Some have done so.

Hourly rates of pay of the women in the survey	
0 - 20 pence	13
21 - 40p	5
41 - 60p	10
61 - 80p	0
81 - 100p	5
101 - 120p	4
120p +	2
Incalculable	4

Mrs Cope was dismissed without warning or compensation after she had worked for seven years for Airfix Footwear Ltd assembling shoe parts. She was paid weekly, but her employers deducted neither national insurance nor tax from her wages. Her dismissal was on the grounds that she was self-employed.

Wages inspectors working for the wages councils, checked on the earnings of the following numbers of women:

1967	2417
1970	3305
1973	2606
1976	1134

All the figures in these tables are taken from a survey of 43 homeworkers conducted by the Low Pay Unit last year. *The Hidden Army* costs 90p, from the Low Pay Unit, 9 Poland Street, London W1

Mrs Cope fought for recognition as an employee and for compensation. The industrial tribunal decided in her favour: that she was an employee. Her work could have been done in the factory, and she was under the company's discipline. Airfix Footwear appealed, but Mrs Cope won her case and her compensation. She was left with heavy lawyer's fees.

Mrs Spinks took her case

to an industrial tribunal, and won employee status. She worked at home as a machinist to daily deadlines. But because she didn't have a contract of employment and regular wage slips, she couldn't prove continuous employment and sufficient hours of working each week. She lost her claim for redundancy payment.

Homeworkers are isolated and unorganised. Without the basic employment protection they are in a weak bargaining position. The TUC has nodded

### Comparative prices

	Prices paid to homeworkers per article	Retail prices per article
Lampshade making	30p	£2.50 to £6.50
Packing/filling	0.0024p	15p to 22p
Machine sewing	17p to £1.20	£3.50 to £20
Assembly	2p	£1.80
Making Christmas crackers	5.8p	50p
Machine knitting	30p to 45p	£32 to £40

its head at homeworkers in the form of a statement, but in terms of its efforts to organise and help homeworkers it has done very

little.

In their statement on homeworking the TUC apologises for and excuses its past attitudes by saying: 'Homeworking was seen as a potential threat to trade union organisation in the factory and to established terms and conditions of employment'.

The TUC's attitude now is that homework fulfils a need for those who want to

work but are tied to their homes. Trade union organisation should be 'extended' to homeworkers so that the trade unions can 'improve the position of homeworkers'.

And, yes, trade unions should encourage homeworkers to join. What the TUC doesn't say is that it is difficult for homeworkers to bargain collectively and to take industrial action effectively while they are all working in their individual homes, not knowing each other, and coming together

only for a monthly union meeting.

Neither does the TUC say it wants to remove the need for homeworking - inadequate childcare, miserable social security benefits, pensions reduced to nothing by inflation, the low wages of the partners of homeworkers.

Leave it to us, they say. Join us and we'll do the rest.

There's no easy answer. A GMWU homeworkers' branch in Torrington, Devon, set up in 1975, has negotiated substantial pay increases for its members, but they're still working at home, with all that it involves.

Homeworkers are terrified to speak out. One woman who initially agreed to be interviewed for this article changed her mind at the last moment. Despite assurances that her real name would not be used, she thought her identity may be able to be traced by her employers.

But perhaps saddest of all is the response to publicity about homeworking. Groups such as the London Homeworking Campaign and the

Low Pay Unit find that, when their addresses are given or when they appeal for homeworkers to contact them for advice and help, the biggest response is from people, usually women, asking where they can get work.

Homeworkers are largely forgotten by the government, the media and the organised workforce. Fighting against appallingly low wages in the public sector is an important struggle, but the lowest paid workers of all must not be ignored.

Find out which factories and firms in your area employ homeworkers (statistics are kept by local authorities under the Factories Act, although they only cover certain trades and often aren't properly maintained). Raise the issue in your union branch and local trades council.



# Holocaust; how I fought to survive

**Poland was invaded by Nazi Germany at the outbreak of the Second World War. Of its population of 30 million seven million had died before the war was over.**

In August 1944 the people of Warsaw made one last attempt to rid themselves of their Nazi rulers. Their uprising was to coincide with the arrival of the Russians, and was intended to show the Western allies that the Polish people were united and strong, and would not be liberated from one country's grasp only to be handed into another's.

Their fears for their future in Russian hands was justified as the fate of their courageous uprising was to prove.

Anna Boguslawski was a member of the underground army in Warsaw. It was a miracle that she survived to tell what happened.

She has written a book, a diary of the days of the uprising because, as she says: "I wanted to remember how people behaved in this moment of strength. There was so much sacrifice and suffering, it couldn't be covered in silence."

After a few months of war, Poland was occupied. People thought about how to defend themselves, but we didn't believe such a state of things could last. Our belief in the West was enormous. We never doubted that the Germans would be defeated.

The underground army was organised to defend ourselves. Hundreds and thousands were recruited. We all worked in units of five. I knew only those five names; the person in command of the units perhaps knew a few more key people, but no one knew more than they had to.

It was dangerous work too. If the Germans discovered a unit of the underground resistance, they shot or tortured everyone, or put them into concentration camps.

One day a young man came to my father's house. He ran in and ran straight to my sick mother's room and hid there. Then the Germans arrived, demanding to know if my father had seen a young man come in. He said no. If they had realised my father was lying they would have shot everyone in the house.

We had secret courts in the underground, that tried the people who collaborated with

the Germans.

They also dealt with the Germans. If they were too cruel they were sent letters telling them they would be shot. And they were. My brother was one of the group who shot the Governor of Warsaw.

We had our own press. No one read the daily paper edited by the Germans. We had several papers secretly printed. They were small, like a magazine, and passed from hand to hand. You gave them to people you could trust.

It was always a chance to survive. If you did nothing the risk was the same. If a German was killed, 100 or 500 would be killed in retaliation. They put the Gestapo at both ends of a street and everyone in it was shot. If the people shouted out the Germans would fill their mouths with cement.

Thousands were killed in this way - relatives didn't know what had happened. Weeks later the Germans would paste up lists of names in the streets advertising how many had died in these revenge killings. They wanted to be sure we knew what they had done.

I was expecting a baby when the war broke out. My husband

was arrested and taken to a concentration camp. I never saw him again. So I was on my own.

When I was pregnant I was always hungry. It's hard being pregnant and hungry. So I learnt all about the black market. We worked from eight in the morning to three in the afternoon. Then I visited friends who gave me small amounts of food. I'd be out selling them the next morning at five, and that way I could afford milk and eggs for my baby. The black market saved Warsaw from starvation. But it was dangerous. If the Germans found people with food they were shot.

To live was dangerous.

When Eve was one year old I started working full-time for the underground, collecting food for hospitals, transporting ammunition around. It was exciting passing the soldiers, with ammunition hidden in your bag!

Life was hard. The Germans made a law that no one could earn more than they did before the war, in spite of very high inflation. I earned enough to buy a kilo of sugar a month! But, if you could prove you were working you weren't sent to Germany. People without jobs were sent to Germany as slaves.

Before the war I had been working in the Association of Polish Co-operatives. It organised co-operative shops and distribution, agriculture and financial help. All the profits went to the members. The co-operative movement here in Britain has decayed now. But the co-operative movement in our country then was really something very big. It is a movement about democracy, because it destroys profit, it is anti-capitalist.

Some hoped we could destroy capitalism altogether this way. But capitalism isn't so easily destroyed.

When the Germans came they closed the co-ops and took over the lorries and the distribution network.

**Anna  
Boguslawski  
interviewed by  
Margaret Renn**



# 1945

The uprising was organised to show that we had a right to our country. We had to show the world that the Poles were themselves chasing the Germans out of Poland. It began on 1 August 1944.

Three hundred thousand people died during those two weeks. Everything was destroyed; people, buildings, paintings, archives. There were hundreds of thousands of young people who had trained for four years to fight the Germans and it was difficult to hold them back. We knew that if we didn't win they would destroy us.

We knew days before that the uprising was coming. My job was running a kitchen for the army, quite near to my house. When I got to work that day I was told there was going to be an inspection, that was all, but I wouldn't stay for it, I needed to go and look for potatoes.

I was out looking for the potatoes when the fighting began. I couldn't get back. It was very highly organised, starting in several districts at once, at exactly the same moment.

Perhaps it was lucky that I was out. My own district was taken by the Germans within 24 hours, and almost everyone was killed.

I spent the next two months living in a house with people I had never met before. That was how it was - everyone was together. That was why the fighting lasted for so long, everyone supported our army. Those one million people in Warsaw were all together.

Only the work that had to be done gave you the strength to stand up to the terror of it. The German aeroplanes flew overhead every half hour, from eight in the morning to eight at night. At any moment you could be killed.

There were so many practical problems to deal with you had no time to think. I was head of a children's kitchen. We fed 150 children and babies everyday. Those babies were

dying without our help so I had no time to think about myself.

Instead you had to think: where to get food, how to cook it, how to feed the children during the bombardments. I got up at 6 every morning and didn't stop until after 6 at night when the work was done.

We had civilian officers as well as those for our army, and they had to decide who needed most help with food. It was all soup and bread. But in practice we fed everyone. When a mother came from another district with a child that had not eaten for two days we gave them food.

Everyone looked for work and there was plenty to do. Besides the soldiers, there were hospitals to run, canteens to feed the people - that meant finding food for 1000 in our district.

Fighting went on everywhere. The population kept changing as people escaped from the Germans in one district.

Everything was free. We paid for nothing. Papers, hospitals, doctors, food. It was a life without money. Little boys delivered letters, and ran with the papers. We still had several even during the uprising. Boys too young for the army were liaison officers - running between the lines. They often got killed.

Fortunately I had sent Eve away from Warsaw before the uprising began. I knew children who were caught up in it who were neurotic for the rest of their lives. It was so frightening.

Then one day the canteen was bombed. The whole street was bombed. We would hide in the cellars during the raids, but when buildings five stories high collapse those cellars become graves. Wherever you went it was dangerous.

The day after they bombed the canteen the Germans came into our district. I was taken to a transit camp. I left Warsaw with nothing but the clothes I stood up in - a summer dress, a linen coat and bare feet and



# 1975

sandals.

Anyone who could work was sent to Germany. The old and mothers with children were allowed to stay. I was lucky. I managed to persuade them I should stay.

There were thousands of us who had nothing. We had no food, no clothes. But the war showed how people were ready to help each other. All the refugees from Warsaw were given help to survive, by people who were so poor themselves. Warsaw became a dead town. Everyone left or was taken away. Even after the uprising was over the Germans continued to dynamite the buildings. It was left in ruins.

Whether the uprising was right or not I don't know. Perhaps only the historians can tell. But you must remember we thought the Russians were coming to our help. We could hear their guns firing they were so close. They gave the message to start the uprising, and then they didn't come.

I saw my daughter again after two months, and two years later I escaped from Poland, this time from the Soviet police. It was a crime to

be in the underground army! The Russians sent people from Poland to Siberia and the concentration camps there.

We escaped into Germany, and then to Britain, where we spent another year in a camp.

Eve kept me alive in those days. I always had to work and to think about how I was going to organise her life. That gave me energy and stopped me thinking about my future.

It was a hard time for women. They had to fend for their families as the men were either fighting, or in the camps; sometimes they escaped to the West, or perhaps they just couldn't work. So the women had to work. They became the heads of the families, taking responsibility for everything.

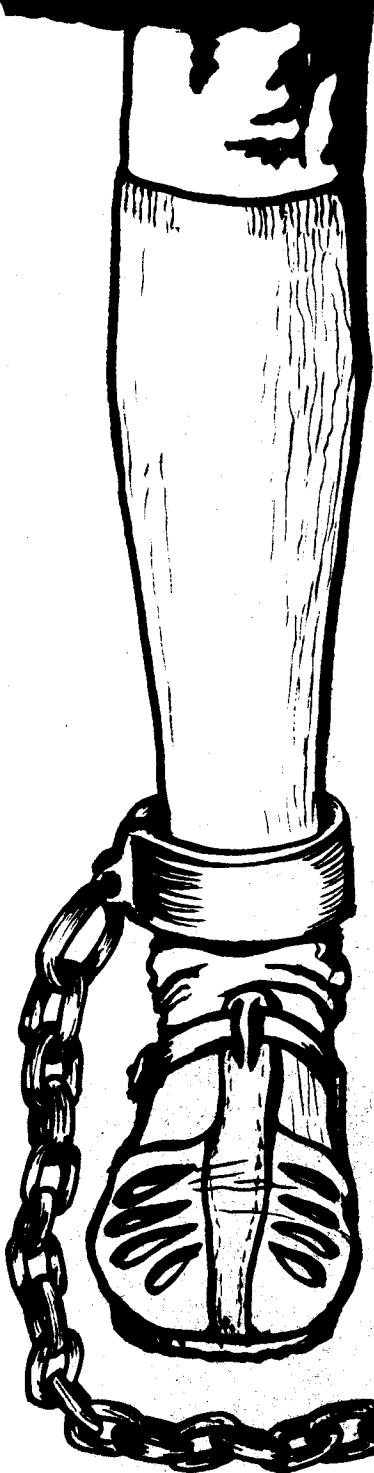
My mother died during the uprising. She was ill. The people who knew her said it was her luck that she died, her life would have been hell had the Germans got her. Everyone, sick and healthy, were shipped out to the camps. So I thank god that she died and didn't have to try and survive as we did in those terrifying days.





# SCHOOL GIRL

BY  
CHANIE  
ROSENBERG



Linda worked busily at her maths. She was fascinated by the subject and good at it. She had a secret ambition which she divulged to no one, not even her friends. She intended to go to university to study maths.

In her small village no one in living memory had gone to a university. They were agricultural labourers, roadworkers, gas or sewer workers, cleaners, factory hands in the town five miles away. They left school as soon as legally possible (or before) and found work as soon as they could, which wasn't easy in North Cornwall.

Linda had an advantage over her elders. The comprehensive school she went to in the town did A levels, unlike the secondary modern schools the villagers had previously attended, and that promised a passport to the university, to freedom, to the end of the narrow life of the village.

She was an avid reader, and from as long as she could remember she had looked upon her village as a backwater. At first she had longed, and later definitely intended, to leave it, to taste the interesting and exciting life at the centre of things for which the books she read gave her a taste. She did not know how she came to be different to the rest of the villagers, but she was.

She had to make the leap herself. She couldn't tell her parents. First of all they would think her mad, certainly too big for her boots, a cut above her family and neighbours. 'What on earth do you want to go to the university for? That's not the life for a girl,' they would undoubtedly say. They would also be hurt—their cosy plans for her to be married to a nice local boy and produce grandchildren handily nearby were being stopped. She loved her mum and dad and felt sorry for them, so she kept her intentions strictly to herself.

But her ambition led her on like a bright light in the darkness. She worked at her lessons every moment she had off from school and from helping her mum look after the family. It meant burning the candle at both ends a bit, as her mum was expecting another baby and wasn't always feeling well. Her two younger brothers were not expected to help out. And dad, who worked on the roads, always came home so late and so tired, and sometimes disagreeable.

But things were not going badly. Her teacher was pleased with her exam marks and had taken the trouble to speak to her of the advantages of going on to the sixth form in just over a year's time — as if she needed persuading. After the holidays she would be in the fifth form, she was in the top maths set and she would be taking the GCE exam...

The time approached for the new baby to be born. Linda looked forward to it excitedly.

The great day came, and mother was whisked off to the hospital in an ambulance. Father went there straight from work, and Linda looked after her younger brothers. It occupied her a little too much for her liking, as she had to wait on them hand and foot, but that would be only temporary. By staying up later she still had time to do her homework and be properly prepared for school.

Father did not come home that night, nor the next day or night. Linda did not know what to do. She could not go round to the hospital, or the boys would not be looked after, and there was no telephone. On the fourth day he staggered in, haggard and bleary eyed.

'Father,' she gasped, 'what's happened?'

He did not reply, but slumped into a chair with his head in his hands.

Linda was terrified. She had never seen her father like this. What tragedy had taken place at the hospital?

'Is it the baby?' she asked.

He shook his head.

'M-mother?'

He nodded. 'She...' He broke down sobbing. Linda, shivering with anguish for her father, put her arm nervously out and around his shoulders.

Her mother's heart had not stood up to the birth which had been difficult, and now she was no more. The baby was perfectly healthy. After the funeral the social worker came to see father. The baby was still in hospital. Linda hovered outside the room, anxiously trying to listen in without being seen.

'We are looking into what arrangements can be made for the baby,' the social worker began. 'Have you a mother or mother-in-law who could bring up the child?'

He shook his head. 'They're dead.'

'Any other relatives — sisters of yourself or your wife?'

'They couldn't. They've got their own families and no spare room. Anyway they wouldn't. They'd help out, but not bring her up.'

After a moment the social worker continued.

'We could think of putting her in an orphanage.'

'No,' snapped the father. 'No orphanage.'

'Well, have you thought of a suitable arrangement?'

There was a pause.

'Linda.'

Linda jumped.

'But she's at school.'

'She's almost sixteen, so it doesn't

matter,' said father.

'Isn't she doing exams in the summer?'

'I dunno. Maybe. But it doesn't matter. She can leave at easter. Or before. Mostly the people hereabouts leave before. She wouldn't need to work. I earn enough to keep us going and I can get more overtime if we need anything special for the baby. Linda's a good girl. She'll take her mother's place nicely.'

There was a pause.

'Want to keep the family together. Don't want a kid of mine in an orphanage.'

'Yes, I understand,' the social worker said doubtfully.

Linda stood transfixed. Her whole world suddenly collapsed, crushing her to smithereens. She froze for a while, then had a fevered impulse to rush in and scream 'NO! Not me!'

She darted forward, and as quickly retreated, a rush of thoughts crossing her mind. What could be done with the baby, after all? For her to be responsible for the child's going to an orphanage was too much to bear. Her dad had been in an orphanage, and the tales he told were not pleasant. Her ambition, after all, concerned only herself. It was selfish. Here was the whole family, five people, needing her, relying on her. People she loved.

She crept away and lay down on her bed. For a long time she was too shocked to cry. The tears flowed through that night, and the next night and the next. Gradually she surfaced. Her resolve slowly returned. She would try somehow to manage her schoolwork in spite of the situation. It was now September. The 'mock' GCE was to be held in January. She would keep up at least the maths, hopefully do well in the 'mocks' and sort out something then. Till then, arranging with aunts and neighbours, and social welfare people, she would get to school as often as possible, even if not absolutely regularly. The future might yet work out alright.

When the baby came home Linda looked after it and shopped, cooked and cleaned for the family for the whole of the first week. She continued for another week which, fortunately, was half-term with no school. She had told her teacher of her intention to continue with the work, had gone over difficult passages with her, and was managing to cover some ground.

During the half-term she did the rounds of relatives and neighbours in the village, and spoke to the social worker to try and get the baby looked after in school hours. People were willing to help even though it was not easy for them.

She went back to school after the week's absence. Work was a little more

difficult as she had not covered exactly the same ground as the rest of the class. But this was a minor setback.

Then the baby got sick. It looked like a cold at first, but very soon the child was having convulsions and seemed to stop breathing. Father raced round to a neighbour who had a van, and the two of them rushed off to the hospital. They stayed overnight with the baby and were told to come back the next day after some tests were taken.

The baby was sent home, with strict instructions about feeding and a warning to keep a careful eye on her and come straight back if she had a bad turn.

Linda could no longer leave her with relatives and neighbours, and the social worker could not organise anything quickly. She had to stay home. This time she did not have the opportunity to consult the teacher, nor did she have the right books at home. The baby took a long time to get better. Linda got more and more tired with the work, responsibility and anxiety of looking after baby and family, and worrying about her own prospects. She lost weight and started looking drawn.

But she continued to nurture hopes. When the baby was asleep and the housework more or less finished she would sometimes look tenderly at the small helpless child and weave the complicated network of the future. After fifth and two sixth form years the little girl would be three years old, and with welfare assistance the family's total dependence on her could end. She would be home in the holidays anyway, and these made up one-third of the university year.

Before the end of term she managed to get to school one day to pick up books and go through the syllabus with the teacher. She hoped to be able to make up the work during the christmas holidays, to be prepared for the 'mocks' straight after. The 'mocks' were her immediate goal. They were crucial for her future. If she did well, one way or another she would get her teacher and the school to fight on her behalf to carry on. And she felt sure they would do so.

But with the family home there was even less time. The boys, even if they could be cajoled into helping, were so slow and useless that they were more trouble than it was worth. In spite of extreme tiredness she still tried to do something late at night.

By and large she was not too despondent about her progress and hoped for the best.

The baby got completely better over christmas and arrangements reverted to their previous state in time for the new term. The exams started on the second

day back. Linda worked late every night. She was very tired, thin and pale. But she gathered all her resources for this test.

At last the exam was over. She could not judge how well or badly she had done, but at least she could relax for a while before the final spurt for the real GCE exam in June.

She stayed at home for a week looking after the baby and family and gathering together some strength. But she arranged to go back to school to get the results of her exam and carry on.

The teacher brought in the exam scripts. People were talking and laughing in an unconcerned way. But Linda was tense. Her whole future was in the balance now.

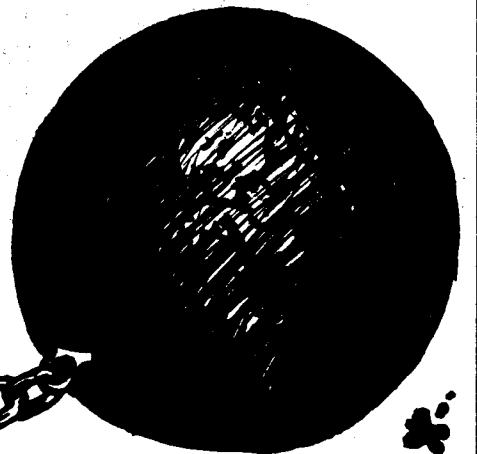
After an introduction the teacher started reading out the results. Anna 73 per cent, George 64, a cluster round the 50s, down to the 40s, the 30s. Her heart stood still. The 20s. Still her name was not called. The teacher must have misplaced her paper. 'Linda 18 per cent. Of course your unfortunate loss has caused this low mark. It was to be expected in the circumstances.'

Linda didn't move. She just felt the tears filling her eyes and rolling down her cheeks. She could not stop them.

The teacher handed out the scripts for the pupils to check. Linda went through hers anxiously, wondering how she had gone so wrong as to get that low mark. It had never happened before. She hoped against hope the teacher had simply forgotten to include a large chunk of marks in the total. But as they went through the scripts it was obvious that her work was just not up to standard. The realisation dawned on her that what she had been through had taken much more out of her than she had imagined. Stealthily it had sapped her ability.

She sank back in her seat, now hardly heeding the tears that streamed through her closed eyes. At the end of the lesson her friends comforted her, saying it would be alright for the actual exam in June.

Linda went home. She never returned to school. She became one of the village women.



# REVIEWS

**FRANKIE ARMSTRONG — AND THE MUSIC PLAYS SO GRAND. SILENCE — 4652 SAM DISTRIBUTION 0764/315 90**

WE NEED more records like this one. It's overtly political, simple folk. Women singers nowadays are not always what they used to be. They no longer confine themselves to the sweet and beautiful, coy, gentle image of pre-feminist days.

Even so, there is still precious little in the way of explicit songs about us, our struggles, our history. Women in America are ahead of us in this respect. There are large numbers of records made by women, about women, thrown up by the gay and feminist movements.

In Michigan last summer, a four day Women's music festival attracted some 8,500 women. So it's nice to see something on our side of the Atlantic which helps us catch up.

Frankie's choice of songs achieves a good balance between traditional and contemporary. Peggy Seegers 'Winnie and Sam' (about wife beating) and one of the Seeger and McColl songs about gypsies work very well. There are songs about factory life and domestic drudgery. There are poignant old songs about women suffering and others in which the woman refuses to suffer or play the helpless victim. There's even a hostile male chauvinist ditty which is given a twist at the end to make it our own.

It's a selection which, if you sing a bit yourself, makes you reach for the guitar and try fitting a few chords to the tunes. The words are supplied on the cover and it will be a good source for our own music making — and that too, is

something we need more of. (By the way, Frankie has also collaborated in the production of 'My Song is My Own', a collection of 100 women's songs, published by Pluto Press and well worth having.)

Frankie Armstrong has one of the most powerful and clear voices I have ever heard, although this record does not do it justice. The treble tones seem overmodulated and you have to turn your treble control right down to compensate. When I heard her sing at the Hudson River Revival in New York State last summer her voice rolled over you, saturating the air with its resonance.

On the record she's no longer amazing, just good. She sings a lot unaccompanied, but on the record she uses a modest instrumental backing for some numbers which, in my opinion, sounds better.

We want more records like this. It's good to hear songs about ourselves and good to sing them. Keep feeding us the material and we'll echo it through the land.

*Ewa Barker*

---

**PROSTITUTES  
JEREMY SANDFORD  
PALADIN  
£1.95**

---

WE USUALLY only hear about prostitutes who are involved with famous men, and command thousands of pounds for their services — the Christine Keelers and Norma Levys.

Most prostitutes aren't like that. They are street walkers, or club hostesses or work in massage parlours. They earn more than their sisters in factories and offices — but not that much more.

And of course they run risks of beatings-up from

clients and pimps, of disease, and sometimes of death.

Jeremy Sandford has written a book which gives us lots of insights into the lives of prostitutes. Based largely on interviews with various women, and much of it in their own words, it is a sympathetic explanation of why girls go 'on the game', what happens to them, their feelings for their children, the different sorts of prostitutes and many other things. It shows that far from being glamorous, the work is hard and the women are at the mercy of their pimps, who take much of the money, or police who have sex with them in exchange for not arresting them.

The book puts forward various solutions such as ending harassment of women for street walking. It deals with the hypocrisy of society without going into the reasons why society is so hypocritical.

But the book is very readable and interesting with many useful facts.

One minor quibble: the book is a serious and sympathetic study of the problems faced by prostitutes. Why then does the cover have to be a titilating picture of a woman's naked breasts?

*Lindsey German*

---

**MY BRILLIANT  
CAREER**

---

'IT IS lonely being independent' Aunt Gussie tells Sybilla as she struggles with a dilemma common even today: a career or marriage.

For Sybilla the decision was far more complex than it might be for young women now. She was brought up in the Australian outback, with little schooling, few books, but a huge dose of that urge to independence which makes

many of us feminists.

Given the opportunity to leave home for the comparatively enriching society of her maternal grandmother Sybilla starts out on 'My Brilliant Career' — the title of her novel.

Her discovery of her sexual feelings towards the man who wants to marry her becomes some of the most powerful scenes in the film, even though there is no bare flesh in sight. The film was produced and directed by women, so perhaps that has a lot to do with it.

If you need cheering up, or you want to be encouraged to go on in the battles that crop up every day try and see this film. It's on at the Cinecenta in London so it may go out on general release. And don't believe the rubbish that gets written about it in the national newspaper reviews — this is not just another love story, it's the finest piece of cinema you will see in a long time.

*Margaret Renn*

## HER STORY

*Her Story* will be appearing soon in *Womens Voice*. We will have articles about women and their history. Women have always been active in making history — but not necessarily getting the credit for it!

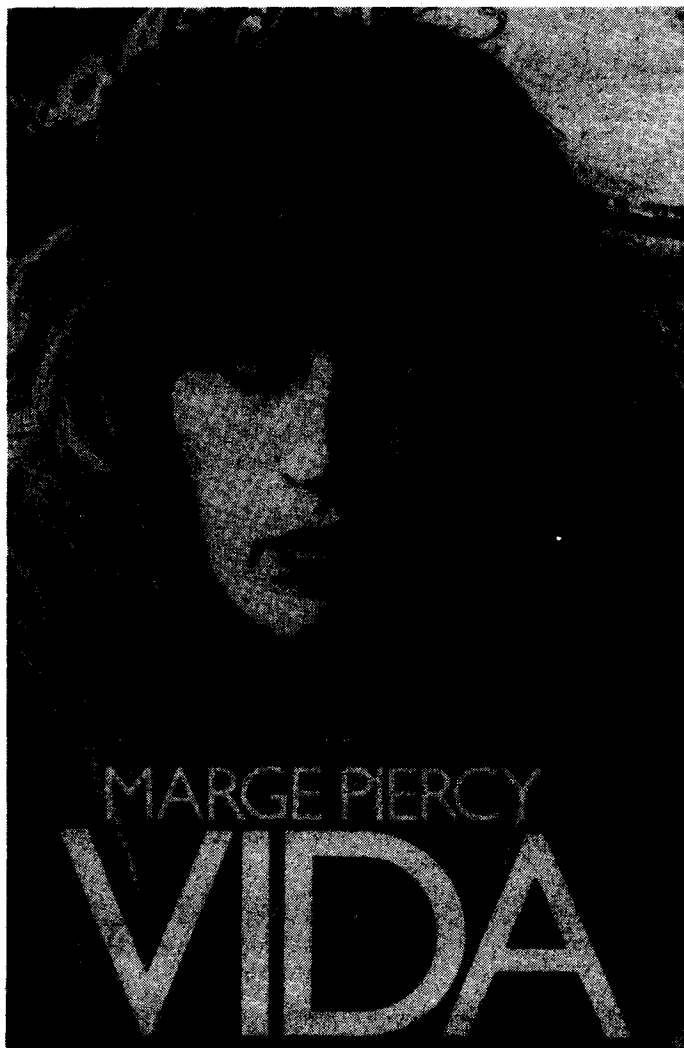
Do you know of any women in your area who have stories and experiences to tell? It may be a famous tale for example an interview with a Suffragette, or a small dispute which was known only to a few.

We would like your stories. Send them in now.



VIDA  
MARGE PIERCY  
THE WOMEN'S PRESS  
£4.95

MARGE PIERCY's new novel  
is about a fugitive Vida



Asch. Vida was involved in left wing politics during the sixties and as a result she finds herself going underground in order to hide from the FBI.

This may sound a bit far-fetched, after all how many

of us could imagine having to live life as a fugitive. It certainly seemed to me a bit much to believe, and that meant that the whole book had a gloss of unreality. However, it did not spoil it altogether.

I soon realised that the framework was really only used to put Vida in a situation in which she had to question all the most basic assumptions about life. When Vida goes into hiding she leaves her husband, her flat and her belongings, in short, she loses all her security.

She is thrown into a completely new dimension in which she is totally reliant on the goodwill of a few for food, clothing, shelter and income. She has to travel all the time, in flight from police activity and in turn, this affects her relationships. She can rarely see those she really cares for and is forced to rely on other fugitives for friendship.

Vida is certainly a 'good yarn', as they say — it moves fast, it flows well and it is very alive. But somehow it lacks the conviction and strength of her novel 'Woman on the Edge of Time'. I enjoyed it, but I was a bit disappointed so at £5.00, it's probably a good book to buy jointly for a Womens Voice group library.

Anna Bradley

## LOVE STORIES BY NEW WOMEN

WOMEN'S PRESS  
£2.25

'During the last decade work in the office has frequently been impeded by crises in the love lives of the staff (all women) and the women writers whom we publish.'

This is the opening comment in the editors' introduction to Love Stories. It is a phenomenon any working person recognises. The stories themselves are dense with references to experiences that will strike chords in most readers' memories.

'Verg has been my lover, my friend, my husband, and my enemy, that's too much to take lightly,' says Esther, the victim of her husband's violence as she explains why she doesn't leave him. (*The People of Colour*, Jean Thompson)

'They are telling me to get a man so that I can become visible and acceptable again. I miss a man. I miss lovemaking. I'm 47 and I miss it. But sex isn't all there is' says the widow in *Learning to Meditate*, by Helen Barolini.

There are echoes in all the stories. But do the 'new women' say anything new about love, about how women cope with it, about how our attitudes have changed with the women's movement? Perhaps what is new is the determination of women not to see men as the centre of life.

'All through the loneliness of the night I know that I want freedom more than sex . . . would like freedom shared—sharing separate and equal freedom with a companion.' (*Learning to Meditate*).

Marilyn MacLean

## THE LITTLE DISTURBANCES OF MAN GRACE PALEY VIRAGO £2.50

SUBTITLED 'Stories of men and women at love', this small book of short stories is like the little ripples you see in a stream. Gentle passing episodes in the life and loves of women and men.

It is the men who disturb and the women who wait, watch and who absorb the disturbances, like the solid banks of earth. And like the banks of a stream they mostly hold up but sometimes collapse only to hold up again further down.

The women have a quietness about them, almost a resignation about the things in life that are inevitable, the disturbances. But there is never despair. On the contrary there is a subtle humour, a soft irony of the sort that often holds us women together.

Like Aunt Rose in 'Goodbye and Good Luck'. She goes her own way, which is a scandal to her family, a bohemian way of life with the long term part-time love of an actor tied by marriage to another. As she gets older her family pity her but never understand her. She says with indignation: 'Poor Rosie! If there was more life in my little sister, she would know my heart is a regular college of feelings and there is such

information between my corset and me that her whole married life is a kindergarten.'

The situations and the people are all those we recognise in our own lives, like Virginia who is deserted by her husband in 'An Interest in Life'.

But at the same time there is an atmosphere throughout of the very slightly grotesque, of everything being slightly larger than life, one step removed from reality. But it is a very small step.

It is an enjoyable book. For the shortness of the stories it says a lot. Like the stream the stories and their characters flow, who knows where, there for all to see but somehow intangible.

Mary Ann Stuart

# God is not a woman, is she?

**MOST BRANDS** of religion offer a certainty in a rapidly changing and frightening world. It offers a meaning to meaningless routines like housework and factory work. It gives a purpose to purposeless things like suffering, disease, poverty. It says these are part of God's plan for us and are tests set for us to prove our worthiness for pie in the sky when we die.

This stops you complaining about your life or your work. You accept, you endure, you do not try to change things.

This religion is weakening. It teaches you to rely not on yourself but on a power greater than you, not to plan, but to find 'God's plan'. Not to be filled with a burning desire to right this world because it is all we have got, but to endure patiently and so win the next world.

Women are more likely to fall for religion because they are women. As women, we lack the self-reliance men are encouraged to have. We are taught to rely on others—husbands, parents. We do rely on men in many practical ways: for money or household jobs. Many men take the major decisions in the home leaving women with the trivia. So many women lack confidence and independence compared to men, and they see politics as a mans concern. Instead, they put their reliance on the one that never lets them down—God.

Religion helps to keep us in our place as women. Not just in the crude way

that Adam was told to be the boss over Eve. Not just in that it stresses womens role as mother, homemaker, wife solely; not just in that it represses us sexually making us guilty and embarrassed about our own bodies and sexual desires, but religion also encourages us to be less confident and self reliant by putting ourselves in another's hands—God's. This is what women who support Corrie have fallen for. Yet this happens at a time when women need to develop precisely those qualities if we are to build a socialist womens movement that will help to change society so that war, poverty and misery will be a thing of the past and love, in all its forms, can flourish.

There is something to be salvaged from religion. The stress on personal relationships, the daily reflection on the day. How have I dominated, belittled, bullied anyone today? Should I have been bolder and said something there?

How often do we stop and ask ourselves are our relationships socialist? Would we be ashamed to admit to our socialist friends the way we bully our kids or belittle our man or patronise other women?

The womens liberation movement opened up this question of personal relationships being political when it examined how men and women relate. We must extend this to parents and children's relationships, to comrades, to workmates. Jeannie Shaw

# Womens Voice versus USSR

*Dear Women's Voice,*  
IN THE February issue of Women's Voice I read the astonishing statement: 'The Russians in Afghanistan are doing exactly what the Americans did in Vietnam'. In Vietnam the USA attempted to destroy a country and its people. It razed towns and villages with saturation bombing, and, with chemical warfare, rendered large areas of fertile land permanently uncultivable. No-one but you appears to have suggested that the Russians are doing this in Afghanistan.

Neither are they trying to enlarge their 'empire'. In the USSR all capital is compulsorily invested internally in the state and may not be invested abroad.

Afghanistan borders onto the USSR and also onto China, but Vietnam has no common frontier with the USA, which was not threatened from that quarter. The Soviet Union has long been surrounded by American-British bases, and it has taken drastic actions from time to time to secure its frontiers in Europe and Asia. China now having aligned itself with the West, means that the Soviet Union is again in grave danger of simultaneous attacks

from both East and West. The USA, having failed in south-east Asia, now threatens from the south-west, by its presence in the Gulf. It now also has 'the China card'.

All but American jingoists, British and European right-wingers and the Socialist Workers' Party appear to concede that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is partly defensive. The SWP has an anti-Soviet fixation. In this it keeps bad company.

The USA has committed more, and worse, international crimes than any country on earth. The USSR has been much less aggressive, whatever else may be said against it. It recently made concessions in Europe, and offered more. The West replied: Cruise missiles to you.

It is necessary to face up to the realities of the international situation and our position in relation to it. Our main task in this area is to try to smash NATO. We can point out, for example, that the USA, which has never yet received a bomb or missile in any war, is putting us in its front line with nuclear bases here.

Kathleen Jones  
Shrewsbury

# WHAT ARE THE ALTERNATIVES

*Dear Womens Voice*  
Much as I enjoy the magazine, I was disappointed in your article about the coil in last month's issue. I can understand why the two women interviewed were against the coil—it doesn't suit everybody. But then neither does any other contraceptive, and there are many women who use the coil quite happily

I have had a coil for five years. I'm on my second one, and am due for a new one to be put in soon. Apart from slightly heavier periods I have had no side effects from the Copper-7 coil, and it has many advantages: I don't like the cap, my husband doesn't like sheaths, the pill gave me rampant thrush. As far as I'm concerned the coil is a big improvement on the contraceptives I've used before.

I was annoyed you only gave

the disadvantages, and am worried that you may have put some women off trying the coil. After all they are hard enough to get, in the first place (many doctors won't give them unless you have had a baby). Obviously if you try a coil and it doesn't suit you, then give up and try something else—but please don't put women off when the alternatives aren't so hot either. Trish Calvert  
Bradford

# TO THE COIL

*Dear Womens Voice*  
I was very disturbed to read the article about IUDs in the March issue. As someone who has suffered coil infections myself, I was pleased to see that the dangers and side-

effects of IUDs are being publicised. What I was extremely unhappy about was that this article did not explore the alternatives for women who may decide that these risks are unacceptable.

Rather than have an article that only exposes the 'horrors' of IUDs, what is needed is a follow-up. A comprehensive review of the state and availability of contraception.

Family planning services now run by the NHS are declining drastically. Sessions are being cut, doctors are seeing more patients in the existing times, and are being forced to give an inferior service to women. An investigation into the experiences that women have when trying to get good services from NHS clinics and/or their GPs would be useful. It's difficult to express to sometimes harassed staff in clinics what our fears about contraception are.

There's a need for WV to run a good review of contraception, the services that are offered, and how to get the most information and help out of the staff who are there.

For women who have had infections with IUDs and are concerned about their future fertility, we should be pressing the NHS to make fertility tests available.

As a general guideline to women who are concerned about the quality of advice that they get about contraception, the bigger clinics like Brook, Margaret Pyke and the private clinic Marie Stopes usually provide a better service.

Jane Foster  
London

## HAPPY USER

*Dear Womens Voice*

Your article about the coil, although very frightening, hasn't put me off keeping mine. I had it fitted after an abortion, having used the cap for years, and forgotten it a few times.

Your article is an excellent warning to all coil users. I will now be sure to have mine checked regularly and will observe all changes in my body resulting from it.

Ann Smith

## Chuff chuff

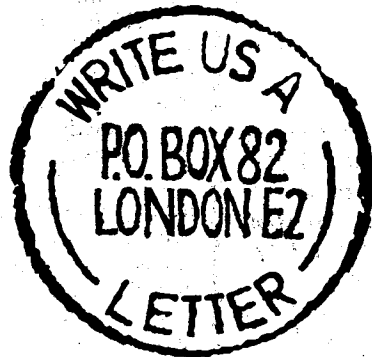
*Dear Womens Voice,*

Seen in a toilet at Kings Cross: 'Why are there no women members of ASLEF (the train drivers' union) - a woman's right to chu chus!'

D. Waterman

P.S. Seen on a badge: 'Women are called birds because of the worms they pick up.'

# LETTERS



## Love is a myth

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
Love is synonymous with brain damage. Women who have discovered 'lurv' seem to become more and more blinkered and decreasingly cerebral. To be 'in love' plays havoc with women's psyches. Millions of songs have expressed the strait-jacketing effect that falling in love has on a person:

Falling in love again  
Never wanted to  
What am I to do  
I can't help it!  
The idealised love spectacle is epitomised by the scene in 'West Side Story' when Maria and Tony discover each other, never having met before, across a crowded room - the background goes blurry, the couple move towards each other oblivious of others dancing, their eyes meet, they touch, their hearts pound... All very touching but devoid of any reality.

The scene portrays exactly the girl/boy bourgeois romantic con which oppresses women (and men) in their relationships.

The obvious progression from the love scene is sex, marriage, children and so on, shackling both for the sake of love. The effects of romantic, idealised love differ for men and women because of the roles we are expected to play in society - it is usually passive for women.

I resent the wasted time and energy I spent as a teenager dreaming of the day I would meet Mr Right - I never met him! I still resent the powerful influences that result in the girls I teach wasting *their* time doing the same thing.

Love is a word that we use to mean a whole mixture of emotions and fantasies. It is a word I have used to describe how I feel about my child, but for most women it means dependency, insecurity, vulnerability and oppression.

Liz Balfour was right, love is a myth.  
Lynda Woodroffe  
Kilburn

## The man at Atlantic cafe

*Dear Womens Voice*

In your last issue you published a photograph of a recent protest at the Atlantic Cafe in Brixton. I would like to point out that Ian Mackintosh, who took the photograph, had been asked not to attend this protest, which was for women only. Arrangements had been made for women photographers to be there.

As one of those women, I was extremely annoyed by Ian's presence. Presumably he saw himself as somehow separate from the protest, and therefore

## WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU

Letters to Womens Voice should reach us by 17 April. News and ads the same day. It helps if we are getting close to our deadlines for you to telephone and say an article is on its way.

The deadline for features, Tales, short stories, is 10 April.

If you would like to write reviews, of books, films, records, send us your name and address, and we'll get in touch.

not unwelcome, despite the fact that he was getting in the way of women who were trying to take photos. Such detachment seems to indicate a lack of sensitivity to the feelings and circumstances of the protest, which must result in less accurate representation, as one can record an event more effectively if one is involved in its context.

Ian did not show us his photos, or tell us that they were being published in Womens Voice. It seems that many such left-wing men regard women's events as material for their own photographic consumption and financial gain. Perhaps it is necessary for women to establish their own photographic agency, so that they have the means to represent their own activities and keep men, photographers or not, out of women only demonstrations.

I am not arguing that there should be no men at any demonstrations etc involving women's issues. But on this particular occasion it was decided at the meeting beforehand that the protest against this man, who had pretended to employ a woman from our street and then tried to assault her, should be made only by women, to demonstrate to him that women alone are strong and powerful.

Carly Tucker  
London



# Dear Jane

One of the well-known women's magazines recently had a letter about the quality of sex in a long relationship. The letter bemoaned the fact that over the years the sexual relationship had not developed as much as other aspects of married life. Cooking had progressed from basics to gourmet meals, but not so sex.

This caused myself and some friends to remark rather sourly that in many relationships it felt as if the quality of sex went from gourmet meals down to basics like boiled eggs. Sex at the start of a relationship, especially if it is full of head-spinning love feelings can be very passionate, exciting and compelling. Partners may have sex very frequently, each time will seem special and different. Then, for some people, the rut can set in. Somehow, somewhere along the way, especially if people live together or spend a lot of time together, that 'specialness' about sex can gradually ebb away. It's not

just a case of waking up one day and finding that the first blush of love has disappeared, but that routine domesticity and familiarity have suddenly transformed the passionate thrice nightly epic into a minor event on alternate Wednesday nights, sandwiched between tooth-brushing and lights out!

The plain facts of life and sex are that it just isn't like the romance books, or the sex manuals. Many people become disappointed that the quality/quantity or intensity of their sexual relationships change. Because sex is so romanticised, and the way that we feel at the start of relationships may seem to support this, it's easy to think that changes in sex are marking the decline of the whole relationship.

Sex has enormous power attached to and invested in it. The romantic myths about it imply that if sex between two people is good, then it's because they are in love, and that sex is an expression of this love. So, if the sex isn't going too well,

this means that you're not expressing love feelings very well. This is the point at which people can start to feel doubts and guilt.

Well, what can be done about this? There is a whole industry which is devoted to dealing with people's hopes and fears about their sex lives. From sex-shops to sex aids, trendy sex manuals (Joy of Sex is actually called a 'gourmet guide' to love-making! sic!) to agony columnists, and onto psychosexual counselling. Those who have an 'honest' approach to giving advice and information on sexual problems will admit that in most cases it's a matter of trying to change attitudes and ideas about what sex, love and emotions are. It's rarely to do with the mechanics or athletics of sex.

I think that trying to get rid of some of the mystique about sex can help allay our fears about it. It's not always easy to talk about, because sex is such an emotive and threatening

subject. Telling a partner that you feel you might be in a sexual rut isn't saying you don't care about them, or threatening them, but it can certainly feel like that. Sex is a very important part of relationships, but not necessarily the most important thing. When sex is elevated to a mystical love experience, it's also often treated very seriously. I think that this can be fatal. If we took all aspects of our life as seriously as sex, then life could be pretty gloomy.

Because sex between real people isn't always going to be magical and heady, it doesn't mean that trying to break out of the alternate Wednesdays rut isn't a good thing. Sex doesn't happen by itself—it has no power of its own. Sex is created by the people participating in it. If they think about sex, care about it, and can laugh about it, then the boiled eggs may be a little more palatable.

JANE FOSTER

## Yours Worried

## Everybody's doing it...

EVERYBODY's doing it — from Jane Fonda to half the Womens Voice Editorial board!

Keep Fit is described in the North London Michael Sobell Sports Centre brochure as a strenuous activity. And so it is.

It is one form of hard physical activity that is regarded as wholly acceptable for women to engage in. And it is very heavily subscribed to. But it is not regarded as a sport. Most of the women who do it — and they are mainly young women — don't regard it as a sport. Neither do most instructors.

It's a strange kind of activity. There you go, once a week for an hour or so of what sometimes seems like nothing short of sheer torture. A far cry from the picture in many people's minds of middle-aged ladies bulging

out of leotards swaying gently up and down to the rhythmic strains of genteel melodies.

It must be admitted that most women go because of what they look like. Their bottom is too big, bust too small or tummy too fat. They don't want legs like football players or arms like wrestlers. They just want to

'trim off that excess fat' though most aren't even remotely plump to begin with. They want to 'get into shape'. And that's what it's all about.

At the Sobell Sports Centre, the gym is surrounded by a balcony. Every week without fail, an audience gathers — all men — watching the bums wiggle as legs pump

up and down on a bicycle in the air. They're sent away but they always come back.

Keeping fit is all about the shape of women whether it is in the minds of the men who ogle or the women who do it.

Nevertheless, it is hard physical activity. It is a sport if you define sport as a recreational means of stretching your body to its limits and keeping fit and healthy.

It's very relaxing. It's an excellent way of burning out all those tensions that build up throughout the week. To feel at the end that you have worked all those muscles you never knew existed, to feel your legs tingle with delicious physical exhaustion, to feel your face glow and your heart race, to feel the blood coursing alive in your veins, is a wonderful way to feel. And if it trims down that tummy a little into the bargain — well, perhaps it ain't such a bad thing after all!

Mary Ann Stuart

# SPORT



---

# TALES WE TELL OUR SISTERS

---

## To shave or not to shave

by Tessa Weare

SPRING arrives. Crocuses burst into colour. Small green buds break out from winter-worn branches. The sun grows warm. Spring bringing its feeling of excitement, newness, adventure, bringing that question, once again, to shave or not to shave?

You see I have a pair of legs hairy enough to make any professional wrestler look virile. Trouble is I'm a woman.

Men are supposed to be hairy. Rippling muscles and curling dark hairs like gorillas and Neanderthal men and Tom Jones. It's a sign of their superior strength and maleness, hair.

But us women, now we're the opposite. We have skins as smooth as silk and as sweet as talc and as hairless as newborn babies and worms and Cindy dolls. We're gooey and harmless underneath. Like children. So we don't have any hair. Everyone knows, don't they, that it's only lesbians and women's libbers who can grow a moustache!

So while men spend thousands of pounds every year buying hair to stick on to their chests, and balding heads and even chins, we spend thousands of pounds taking all our hair off.

But, the voice is always saying, hairy legs do look ugly on women. That's just a fact. Especially if you wear tights. Tights turn them into jungle undergrowth while the ends poke out like porcupine

quills. Add high heeled shoes, and a skirt down to your knees: it's hard to imagine anything more ridiculous!!

Perhaps that's right. Perhaps hairy legs are ridiculous: some redundant apparatus evolution hasn't yet got rid of.

Still, the other day I had a bath with a man I've just fallen in love with. He hadn't seen me naked before. And there we were all warm and sensual and all I could think about was would he stop loving me now he'd seen my hairy legs? And I wonder, if he'd said: 'What beautiful hair shimmers down your calves?' Would I have felt they were ugly then? Would I have cared?

Perhaps our eyes just see things in a certain way because that's what we're used to.

Take Samson and Delilah. In those days to have hair on your head was to be strong if you were a man. When she cut it off she almost finished him. Yet at the beginning of this century to have short hair was to be manly. The army had a lot to do with that, the idea of discipline. To be a proper tough, steel-eyed man you had to have a crew cut.

Then the beatniks came with their beards and everyone thought they were weird. Nowadays few people don't accept beards. Even my boss has one. After that was hippies and long hair. And everyone said you couldn't tell the difference between men and women any more. But nowadays lots of men have hair over their collars, and noone even notices.

The fact is I don't LIKE shaving my legs. I don't want to shave my legs. I stopped shaving my armpits a long time ago, and that is alright. But legs! Every spring I still feel the need to go running to my razor blade!

It's such a palaver: the hair is so thick I get a midnight shadow in the early afternoon. I've tried all the creams and

they only seem to burn little red blotches into my skin, while the hair comes off in uneven patches leaving little forests in a desert of scarred flesh.

I've tried melting wax onto it and sticking those sheets on and ripping the lot off in one go, hair and skin. I never got past the third rip and even then my leg throbbled all the next day.

Bleach was a better idea. But even then you've still got the hairs, only they're sort of mucky blond with black tops.

Some day I dream I'll start a movement like the hippies or beatniks or punks. The hairy legs movement. And everything we wear will be designed to accentuate the hairiness of our legs. At first as we stride boldly down the street men will stop in the middle of their wolf whistle and glare angrily at our calves. The older generation will shake their heads and mutter about our lack of femininity.

Soon the capitalists will catch onto it. Trousers will be made with special holes so the hairs can poke out of them. Tights with stick-on hair. *Woman* magazine will run a feature on the HAIRY LEG LOOK. Mary Quant will design hair dyes to brighten dull calves.

Yes. Yes. I'm going to pack away my razor for ever this summer! I'm going to stop spending hours worrying about my hairs being too long or my stubble scratching my lover in the height of passion. I'm NOT going to shave!!

It's me after all: if people like me they've got to like my hairs too. If people choose to criticise me for something I was born with then they aren't worth knowing anyway. Why should I pretend I'm a hairless woman just because women are supposed to look like dolls? It's about time people, and especially men, realise just how hairy some of us women are!

Yes. Er. All the same I think I'll wear my socks to work tomorrow.

# WHAT IS GOING ON?

## WV groups

● **ABERDEEN Womens Voice** for more information telephone Liz 51059

● **ABERYSTWYTH Womens Voice** meets regularly. Contact c/o Students Union, UCW, Aberystwuth. Babysitting available.

● **Acton Womens Voice.** Ring Ruth 992 9814 or Jude 740 6660

● **NORTH BIRMINGHAM Womens Voice** meets fortnightly. Phone Maggie 021 449 4793

● **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM Womens Voice** meets fortnightly. Phone Jill 021 459 1718

● **BLACKBURN Womens Voice** meets every Tuesday 8pm-10pm Jubilee Hotel (opposite King George's Hall) 673894 for details.

● **BLACK COUNTRY Sundays** fortnightly. 2.30, 27 Glen Court, Compton Road. Children welcome.

● **Bradford Womens Voice** group meets fortnightly. Kids welcome. Contact Janet c/o Textile Hall, Westgate Bradford or phone Trish 306447.

● **Bristol Womens Voice** every Wednesday, 7.30pm, at The Inkworks 22 Hepburn Road (off Brigstocke Road), St Pauls. Ring Katrina Bristol 46875.

● **BURY Womens Voice.** Ring Lynn 061 764 6659 for details

● **CANTERBURY Womens Voice** meets every other Tuesday at Jolly Sailor Northgate. Phone Barbara (Lyminge 862742).

● **COVENTRY Womens Voice** meets every other Wednesday, 8.00pm, at the Hertford Tavern, off Queens Road (near the Butts). Coventry 618956

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

**DUNDEE.** For information on local meetings, contact Audrey, 0382 452687.

● **EALING Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Jenny 991 0443.

● **ECCLES AND SALFORD Womens Voice.** For information ring Jennie 707 2557 or Ann 737 3800

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

● **Enfield Womens Voice** meets every other Monday, 8pm, at SCOPE Community Centre, 232a Ponders End, High Street. For details ring Gill 340 7272.

● **GLASGOW Womens Voice.** For information ring Clare 959 8041 or Dorte 423 1185.

● **GLOSSOP, Derbyshire Womens Voice** meets second and fourth Tuesday of every month at 110 Victoria Street, Glossop. Phone Glossop 64287 for Carol.

● **HACKNEY Womens Voice** phone Pauline 985 3086 or Chris 806 8535 for information and babysitters.

● **HALIFAX Womens Voice** details from WV and SW sellers every Saturday 12.30-2.30, Co-op arcade on the Precinct.

● **HARLOW Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on Wednesday at 8pm. Ring Pat, Harlow 28022.

● **HIGHBURY Womens Voice.** Details ring Elana 359 0842 (days).

● **HORNSEY Womens Voice** meets fortnightly. Ring Jane 348 6712 or Maggie 341 1182 for information and babysitters.

● **ISLINGTON Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Sandy at 802 6145 for details.

● **KENTISH TOWN Womens Voice** meets fortnightly. Phone Gail 485 0954 or Pauline 586 5693 for information and details.

● **LAMPETER Womens Voice** meets Tuesday evenings. Details from WV sellers or write c/o SDUC Lampeter. Dyfed, Wales.

● **LEEDS Womens Voice** group meets every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 8pm in the Central Station Hotel, Wellington Street. For more information contact Gilda 622 800 or Bev 457 098.

**LEICESTER Womens Voice** meets alternative tuesdays. Contact Fiona 0533 62855.

● **LEYTONSTONE WV** group meets fortnightly. Please ring Annie (556 5595) or Pam (558 1509) for details.

● **LIVERPOOL Womens Voice** meets on alternate Tuesdays at 8pm in the County Hotel. For further information phone Jane 727 1182

● **LUTON Womens Voice** meets alternative Wednesdays. Details and babysitters. Ring Jane 421 266

● **MANCHESTER University Womens Voice** meets each week at 5pm in the students union.

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

● **NEWCASTLE Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Liz 854 782.

● **NEWHAM Womens Voice.** Ring Pam 534 1417

● **NOTTINGHAM Womens Voice** group meets 2nd and 4th wednesdays every month at 8pm, 118 Mansfield Road. For further information or babysitters, ring Jane 49502

● **PIMLICO area Womens Voice**—phone Helen 730 7983 or Leslie 834 0760 for further details.

● **READING Womens Voice** meets fortnightly. For details phone Shirley on 585554

● **SHEFFIELD Womens Voice** meets fortnightly at the Prince of Wales. Division Street. For details ring Sue 613739

● **SOUTHWARK Womens Voice**—anybody interested should contact Kirsten Ross on 732 4604 for further details.

● **South London Womens Voice** meets fortnightly, Tate Library Brixton 8pm on Tuesdays.

● **SOUTH WEST LONDON Womens Voice.** All welcome. Information and babysitters contact Marion 947 0560.

● **SOUTH WIRRAL**—Would anyone interested in forming a Womens Voice group please contact Janet, 051 339 6070.

● **STOCKPORT Womens Voice.** For details phone 061 431 7564.

● **STOKE ON TRENT Womens Voice** meets at Knotty Action, Mollart Street, Hanley. Fortnightly. Ring Sandra 814094

● **TOTTENHAM Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Mary for information and babysitters, 802 9563.

● **TOWER HAMLETS Womens Voice** meets on alternate Mondays. Babysitters available. Phone Jane 515 7403.

● **WALTHAMSTOW Womens Voice** meets alternative Tuesdays at 8pm. Phone Pauline 521 4768 or Mary Ann 520 3025.

● **WALSALL Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Ena at Walsall 644205 for details. Children welcome.

● **WATFORD Womens Voice** is being formed. Anyone interested in coming to meetings please contact Davina or Ros. Watford 28500 ext 659

● **Wrexham Womens Voice** Group meets fortnightly from 17 March. Telephone Heather 87293 for more details.

## WV public meetings

**BRADFORD Womens Voice** are holding a series of four discussion meetings at Bradford Central Library, Princes Way, Bradford, 8pm Tuesday, April 1st. Speakers: Audrey Farrell and Trisha Griffin Abortion after Corrie. Tuesday, May 13th. Speaker: Sreelekha Kazi Asian Women in Britain. Tuesday, June 10th. Speaker: Marie Mulholland Women in Ireland. All women are welcome. For help with baby sitters, and more information contact: Bradford Womens Voice c/o Textile Hall, Westgate, Bradford, or see your Womens Voice seller.

**SOUTH BIRMINGHAM WV** public meeting. IS A MACHINE AFTER YOUR JOB? Wednesday 2nd April 8pm. The Greyhound Holloway Head, B,ham.

## Small ads

**OXFORD. NURSE TRADE UNIONISTS RECALL CONFERENCE. LITTLEMORE HOSPITAL. APRIL 27th.** Sessions on ethics and trade unionism, abortion, attacks on the right to organise (Employment bill) and fighting racism. Sponsored by Oxford Hospital Worker, Littlemore COHSE, Ruskin students union, Ruskin trade unions defence committee. Information and registration from J Maguire, Littlemore Hospital, Littlemore. Limited accommodation free on a first come basis. Disco fun night time.

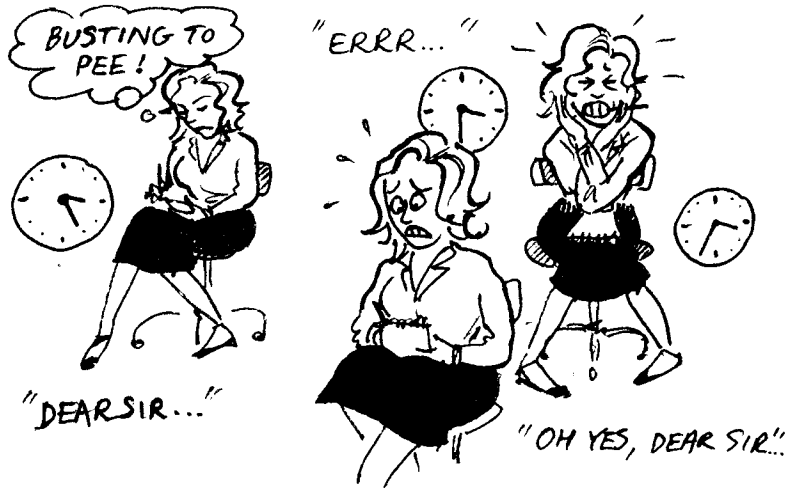
**ST ALBANS TUESDAY 1ST APRIL.** Joint Womens Voice, Gay meeting to discuss points raised at Gay Rights at Work Conference. 2 speakers from GAYPO post office (UPW) gay group, badge stall book stall. 8pm. Beehive pub, upstairs room, Watsons Row, off London Road, ST. ALBANS. 20p SWP, WV, CHE, GCM members, 10p unwaged, 30p others. **TUESDAY 22 APRIL ST ALBANS.** Joint Womens Voice, SWP gay meetings. Speaker John Lindsay, GAY LIBERATION AND SOCIALISM. Book and badge stall. Details as above.

**COVENTRY Womens Voice** is providing ammunition for your arguments. A series of informal educational meetings for womens voice readers. Wed 19 March 8pm Equal opportunities and sex discrimination at work. Wed 2 April 8pm, The suffragettes—what lessons can we learn? Wed 16 April 8pm Women in the Russian revolution. Wed 30 April 8pm Women in Nazi Germany. Phone COV 611581 for details.

**Lesbian Line Gay Centre,** 61 Bloom St. Manchester M1 3JY. Mon. to Fri. 7-10pm. Phone 061-236 6205 for help, advice, information.

**TWO PEOPLE** committed to the idea of wholefood collectives to work initially on voluntary basis, needed at muesli base warehouse. General paperwork, preparing orders, driving, are all part of the job. Anyone with genuine interest in wholefoods, do come and see us or phone. Open Mon. to Fri. 10 till 1 and 2 till 5. **MUESLI BASE, 53-56 Allison St., Digbeth, Birmingham.** 021-643 7200.

# SANDRA



Sophie © '79

## Your nearest Womens Voice Group meets

**Join Womens Voice...**

*Womens Voice* is an organisation that fights for women's liberation and socialism.

We fight for:

- Equal pay
- Free abortion and contraception
- Maternity leave and child care provision
- The right to work
- Against all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, sexual orientation, or race.

Women's liberation is only possible through women organising and fighting for themselves. Women's liberation can only be achieved by linking its struggles to those of the working class and overthrowing the capitalist system.

*Womens Voice* supports the aims of the Socialist Workers Party. It is organisationally independent but based on the politics of the SWP.

**join  
the  
fight**

I want to join the fight...  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Send to: Womens Voice  
PO Box 82  
London, E2



