

womens **VOICE**

20p May '80
Issue 41

**Prescription charges up
Child benefits slashed
Gas and electricity up
Health service wrecked
Food prices rocket**

**After twelve months of the Tories
we've had enough!**



spare Rib

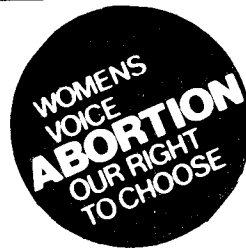


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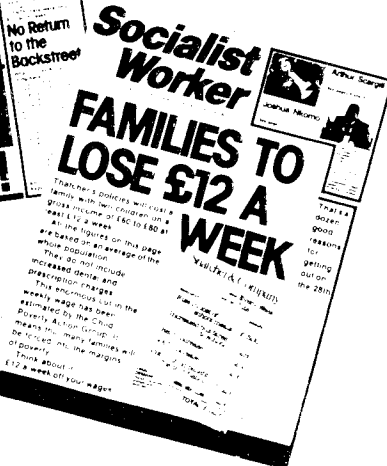
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OUR POINT OF VIEW

May 14 — a beginning

OVER 1½ million people are now unemployed. That's official. By next year that figure will be 2 million and official figures leave out the people who don't bother to register for work because they won't get any benefit. The real figures are even higher. They are so high because it is the deliberate policy of the government to push people out of work. Production is lower now than it was during Heath's three day week.

At the same time, benefits are being slashed. Earnings related is to be abolished, and unemployment and social security payments won't be raised in line with inflation. Thatcher wants to increase the number of unemployed *and* make them even worse off.

The Tories reckon that with these levels of unemployment they can keep wages down in most areas, and they can frighten workers from taking action to improve their living standards. To back it up they are trying to push through laws which will try to stop

trade unionists organising effectively, and which will make it much more difficult for unorganised workplaces like Chix or Kleins to win trade union recognition.

Many workers want to fight these laws and the other attacks from the Thatcher gang. They get little help from the trade union leaders, like Moss Evans over Leyland or Bill Sirs over the steel strike, who give into the employers and government pressure with hardly a fight. The TUC has called a day of action against the Tory Laws on 14 May. Yet most of the organisation has come not from the national union leaderships.

Despite them, many thousands of workers, women and men, will take strike action or some other form of protest action on the day. May 14 has to be the beginning of a massive campaign against everything the Tories stand for: the unemployment, the price rises, the cuts in public spending, the attacks on our living standards. A campaign to get rid of the Tories altogether.

Death of a princess

IT'S NOT often that a television programme creates international incidents and diplomatic crises. But one did recently. It reconstructed the public execution of a Saudi Arabian princess and her lover for adultery. There was an outcry. Lord Carrington apologised on behalf of the British government to the Saudi Royal Family. The British press which usually reserves its most racist venom for Arabs, was for the most part remarkably moderate. The Observer even compared the executions to being hanged for stealing a loaf of bread in 19th century Britain.

The reason for all this, which contrasts so strongly with the hysterical outbursts against Iran, is not hard to find. Britain is dependent on the Saudis for oil, and is willing to stomach the grimmest barbarities to preserve that supply. The Saudi regime which Britain supports is one where the extremes of wealth and poverty are glaring.

Its oil wealth should allow every one of its citizens to live in relative comfort. It doesn't. Nearly all of its goes to the fabulously wealthy few while the pass of the population lives in dreadful poverty. The British government is committed to preserving that wealth and that inequality.

The way that women are treated in Saudi Arabia is a disgrace. They do not have even the limited rights that women in countries like Britain have. That the British Government condones this shows their hypocrisy. The princess was a member of the Saudi ruling class. Her fate was bad enough, but at least she and others like her have some small escape through their wealth. For most women in Saudi Arabia there is no escape from a life of hunger, disease and misery. Release from the laws which oppress women so hard will also have to be release from the economic conditions and the rulers who run Saudi Arabia.

FEATURES

Iran—the Womens Revolution *Pages 12 and 13*
Workplace nurseries and how to get them *pages 16 and 17*
Womens liberation in Russia *Page 11*
May Day poster *pages 14 and 15*
Journalists—Women in the union *page 18*

NEWS *pages 4-10*

REGULARS

Health: the coil — another story *page 19*
Reviews: *pages 20 and 21*
Open Door on Gemma and your letters *pages 22 and 23*
Jane looks at faithfulness *page 24*
Womens Sport on snooker *page 24*
Tales we tell our Sisters *page 25*
What's going on *page 26*

Our next editorial meeting will be on Wednesday 28 May. If you would like to come give us a ring at 01 986 6222. If you would like someone from Womens Voice to speak at your Womens Voice group, give us a date.

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After 12 months of the Tories...

'Labour isn't working' said the Tory poster. Margaret Thatcher knew what she wanted to get Britain working. A stronger police force and increased defence spending, and our welfare to the wall. Public spending cut by £4 billion this year. unemployment up to 6.1%, inflation running at nearly 20%. That's 12 months of Tory rule.

Labour wasn't much better. But what they tried to hide the Tories do openly. Prior, Joseph and Carrington stand for big business and wealth. They want to slash workers' rights to maintain profits. This is how they've begun to do it.

THE UNIONS

The Employment Bill now going through Parliament captures the Tories' attitudes in a nutshell. It attacks the right to strike, the right to picket, the closed shop—the very heart of trade unionism.

This bill will further attack women workers by removing their right to keeping their jobs after having a baby if they work in firms employing less than 20 people. Women who will still be entitled to their jobs after maternity leave will have to follow much stricter rules in notifying their employers.

HOUSING

One year of Tory housing policy makes you wonder if Maggie Thatcher has ever heard of people *renting* houses. If she has, she obviously didn't like it because she's out to hit tenants as viciously as she can. Shelter said the Housing Bill is 'the most socially irresponsible housing plan put forward by any government during this century'.

It forces councils to sell their houses. Prospective council tenants will be forced to find somewhere else; and if they are lucky enough to find private rented accommodation, they will have no guarantee that they will not be evicted 6 months later.

The sale of council houses will also reduce the number of houses available to the already homeless. In other words the bill increases the number of homeless while decreasing the number of homes available to them.

The Tory government has cut the rate support grant, forcing up rents to make up the difference. Rents could rise in this way by as much as 20 per

cent.

The Tories intend to go on as they have set out. By 1984, they proclaim, housing expenditure will have been cut by 48 per cent!

EDUCATION

The national education budget has been massively cut. We've been promised an even bigger cut for next year. Already 10,500 teaching jobs have been axed. Classes are swelling to 35, more than what they were pre-war. The falling birthrate, we're told, justifies all this. But in Warwickshire, for example, 295 teachers have been cut when in fact falling rolls would 'justify' only 100. The falling birth rate is used as a phoney justification to cut education spending.

Local authorities no longer have to provide school meals. In some areas this will mean no hot meals. In others, a school meal could cost as much as 65p. Not only will dinner ladies be laid off, but also mothers who work will have to find extra childcare facilities for the lunchtime period.

Thatcher the Snatcher has certainly lived up to her name. She is taking away school provisions that the Education Bill of 1944 took for granted!

SOCIAL SECURITY

Before her election, Thatcher promised to stamp out 'scroungers'. What she's done is to increase the number of unemployed, and to make them more dependent on means-tested supplementary benefits.

The new law will cut the real value of benefits, with 'increases' below the rate of inflation. There are specially big cuts for families with children and those receiving injury benefit. The earnings-related

supplement will be abolished. Strikers' families will not only lose their right to claim £12-16 per week, they will lose their right to an urgent needs payment, leaving them helpless in emergencies.

Child benefit will go up by 75p only, when £1.25 is needed to keep up with inflation. These cuts are supposed to be 'necessary' to 'encourage' people to look for work, and to save money. But more money could be saved simply by going after the *real* scroungers—like the businesses which get away with millions every year in tax dodges. What these cuts are really for is to make an example of those on the dole. Their life is to be made as hard as possible of those on the dole. Their life is to be made as hard as possible so that workers will be scared to strike, in case they end up on the dole.

THE TORY BUDGET

The first Tory budget gave to the rich. The second took away from the poor.

In the first, VAT went up 15 per cent: ie heavy indirect taxes for the poor. Only people earning over £20,000 a year benefitted from the much heralded tax cuts.

The second budget is even more vicious. Earnings related benefit is being phased out—but we still have to pay earnings related contributions. Prescription charges are up to £1 per item—now most people will think twice about going to the doctor. And our health goes further down the drain with the ending of free dental treatment for 16-18 year olds. This was a 'sick' budget in more ways than one.

It has taken away even the measly allowances we had.

Marnie Holborow
Lin James

NEWS

Cuts kill

TWO PEOPLE were arrested, fined £140 and bound over for painting a zebra crossing outside a school in Moulsecomb, Brighton.

Since September, Moulsecomb has lost two lollipop ladies. Moulsecomb mothers started a campaign to get them back.

More militant action followed. Ten zebra crossings have appeared. So far the council have spent £600 on scab labour to remove the crossings. More money has been spent on countless police patrols and stake outs to try to catch the painters. All to save £14.70 a week lollipop ladies' wages.

Brighton Womens Voice has joined the campaign since November, helping with leaflets and petitions, raising support at the Trades Council, collecting money and providing painters. On May 14, we are planning to demonstrate in the town centre, in support of the TUCs day of action against the Tories.

Brighton Womens Voice

Wanted-a union!

75 MAINLY WOMEN clothing workers at Klein Bros, Salford came out on strike eight weeks ago, when management refused to let them belong to the garment workers union, NUTGW.

'After a week out we received dismissal notices accusing us of irrational and unprovoked behaviour and saying if we didn't go back to work on Monday we would lose our jobs. Two weeks later came a second dismissal notice, then our P45s. Everyone on the picket line is in the union now—about 70 women and 4 men. The women's husbands have given us support, and some have come to the picket line.

Helen Mayell and Anne Barber

Kleins women need money, messages of support and help on the picket. Send collections to:

Klein Bros strikers, c/o John Cotterall, Voscop, 39 Fir St, Cadishead, Manchester M30 5AR Phone 061 775 9540



Andrew Ward (Report)

Chix—a fight for all Asian women

CHIX SWEET factory at Slough is a "small employer". The new Tory Employment Bill will destroy any employment rights or security their employees may have had. On Wednesday 16th April a delegation of Chix strikers lobbied Parliament against the Bill.

Mrs Jangeer Kaur has worked at Chix for nine years. Her husband is retired. Their youngest son's wedding last summer used up all their savings, and to pay their monthly rent of £36.50 and keep the family, she has to send her daughter-in-law out to work. This decision grieved her immensely, as, by tradition, a new Sikh bride does not do any work for at least a year.

Mrs Sarjeet Kaur has been at Chix for ten years. She has four children of school age. Her husband is paralysed in one side, and they manage on his invalidity benefit and her strike pay.

In spite of all these problems,

considerable progress has been made. The strike was timed for a period when Chix was flooded with orders, and production is now hugely expensive for management to maintain. Glucose supplies have been blacked by the Tunnel refinery GMWU, and the International Foodworkers Federation will ensure that it is not supplied from abroad. Management are having to buy sugar in sacks and have it delivered at night. They are having to pay their scabs double the usual rate to keep them. Delivery lorries are increasingly difficult to hire, as more and more workers black the firm.

The women who have achieved all this have been on the picket line day in, day out for seven months. That time has only strengthened their resolve not to go back to work without the protection of the Union. Daily, they face racist comments from passers-by, hostility from members of their com-

munity who hold the traditional view that women should not be at work, financial hardship, worry about their families' welfare, and lack of support from the non-union workplaces around them. And yet, the women remain solid in their determination to win the strike.

"We have had a lot of support from outside" said Mrs Sugnadevi. "What we need now is not more money or newspaper articles, it's people down on the picket lines helping to turn back lorries, helping to humiliate the scabs, and helping us to look after our children."

Mrs. Kaur summed up their feelings: "I am near retirement age, but I must help to win this strike. We must give a lead to other Asian women, to give them confidence to fight for their rights. If we lose, it is a step backwards for all Asian women workers."

What you can do:

- go to the picket line so that some of the women can go home to look after their families.

- get your union branch to send a delegation to the picket/send a donation.

- don't buy Chix sweets.

- if your firm uses or supplies Chix, get blacking working.

- make May 21st a womens picket: 6am onwards, Chix, Farnham Rd, Slough, Berks.
Rehana Minhas and Susan Pearce.

Steel women—we were proud to be pickets

The steel strike is over. The union leaders settled for little more than had been on offer for the last month. The governments strategy of sitting it out and waiting until the steel workers got tired was successful. Support from other workers like the Liverpool dockers came too late to change the direction of the strike. But it showed that even in a badly organised union, workers can get organised to fight. The surprisingly large number of women steel workers, and some of the steelworkers wives, organised for mass pickets and were some of the most militant fighters for 20 per cent without strings.

Jan Neilsen talked to Ann, Jackie, Paula and Liz from Stocksbridge about what became the longest national strike since 1926.

TO START there's one thing we want to make clear. The press has got it all confused, they keep going on about steelworkers wives. We're not steelworkers wives—we are steelworkers. We can't get it through to people. We are on strike—we are picketing.

Did you come in contact with the women who organised the get back to work protest in Sheerness?

The police kept them away. They collected in the town centre, they were going to march on the works—to show us.

We saw two women coming up the road with a banner. As soon as we spotted them we ran towards them, they ran like bloody hell. And one of the lassies from Scunthorpe got arrested for trying to throw an egg at them. The policeman caught hold of her, squashed the egg in her hand, arrested her for carrying an offensive weapon. So we said 'everytime you have an egg for breakfast its an offensive weapon'.

The women we did see brought their kids to hide behind. There's no way that we would attack a child. But we'd attack the women if they attacked us. We said on the way down if we got attacked by them we aren't going to just stand there.

There was a lot of publicity about sheerness. What was it like there.

In Sheerness it was reported in the local paper that we'd been throwing pepper in the babies

eyes. We hand't even seen the women with kids when this paper came out. When we read it we couldn't believe it. People stood around with the kids pulling faces at us all the time. There were no pubs open to us, so we had to take off our badges and coats just so we could go in and buy a paper. What makes us so mad is that they all try to make you feel like filth. Everywhere we go we have to take insults. But we're proud of being pickets.

During the strike you've all come into close contact with the police. What are your feelings about the police's role in the strike?

When we went to Sheerness we saw a terrible amount of police brutality. Not just on women, they were rough with the men as well.

We saw the police drag blokes off down side streets and hold their hands behind their backs and kick them in the balls. They all linked arms, a bloke gave them the signal and they all charged us and women were trapped between their own pickets and the coppers. They had the S.P.G. there as well.

They also got hold of a woman from 'the Times', she was a reporter. They hit her, she told them who she was, they said they were sorry, apologised they did, they even smoothed her hair out, cause she came from 'the Times'.

Unless you've actually been a victim of police brutality, whether on a picket line or wherever, you wouldn't believe it unless you saw it. We wouldn't have believed coppers were such bastards before the strike.

What is going to be the effect of a £12 cut in benefits paid to strikers, the Tories have announced in the budget?

They talk about taking £12 off. They can take what they like because we aren't getting any so it doesn't make any difference to us. It makes us mad to think that people believe that we're getting money for this strike

because we're not. We get something when we go on picket duty, but people think that we're getting Social Security. They just won't believe that we aren't getting any and that's because of the lies told by the media.

There are people with young babies getting it, or if your wife doesn't work you get it, but that's the only way. But those poor buggers are getting £12.50 a week now. If they get £12 knocked off they've got 50p left. How stupid can it get?

People have had their gas and electric turned off, their phones cut off. There are people having to sell their homes because they can't afford to keep them going, but then there's nobody who could afford to buy them off them. Everyone is in the same boat.

Liz I've had to give up paying my insurance, that's what really upsets me. I've been paying that for 20 years now and I can't afford to pay it anymore, cause all my money's gone.

Ann All this time people are living on their savings. When you think you save all that time for when you get old, so that you can have it a bit easier or help your kids out. You don't save for a strike, I save for my kids. But that's what people are living on now. How long the strike goes on depends on how long your savings are.

What has been the feeling of the men about having women on the picket lines?

A lot of the men don't like us being here. But why shouldn't we be on the picket line? We've done as much as any of the men. We've been on every major picket line with the men. We've been at Hadfields, we've been at Sheerness. We've had to do all what they've done, take the abuse. The fact is that we've loved being pickets. And we'd do it all again if we had to.





John Sturrock (Report)

Women strike out

Womens Voice talked to Joan Rudder, Sheffield organiser of the SWP, about how the women in Stocksbridge and sheffield got organised, in steel. WE STARTED trying to organise about three weeks into the strike. One of us went up to Stocksbridge and went through the picket lists. Many women had put their names down to picket but had never been called. We contacted them to

come to a meeting on how to organise round the strike and about 60 turned up. There were a lot of complaints about how they weren't being involved so we decided to book a coach down to Sheerness.

From then on, there was always a coach of women going off to the various flying pickets.

Organising women made a fantastic difference to the

atmosphere of the strike.

They were always referred to as the Stocksbridge women. We thought they'd mix in with the men after a bit but they didn't. Of course they mixed socially, but they organised themselves and decided what their targets would be. When the strike ended they all went back into work wearing their badges, which said 'Steel Womens' Power'.

Bristol's black and white victory

THE PEOPLE of St. Pauls in Bristol won a victory on the Wednesday before Easter, when they drove the police off the streets in a black and white revolt. But it took the police only eight hours to begin their retaliation for the hiding they got on the streets of St. Pauls.

Avril told us what happened. 'I was asleep in bed when I heard loud banging at the door. I knew what had happened earlier in the area, but I didn't leave the flat because of my two year old daughter. I ignored the banging, but it got so violent I thought the door would break down, so I went to the window. There were hundreds of police on the street, and about thirty outside my house. They told me that if I didn't let them in to search my flat they'd smash the door down. They told me they didn't need a search warrant.

They searched all over my flat. They woke up my little girl. All next day she was trembling and crying. The police were so nasty, and for no reason. They were just trying to get their own back for being humiliated by the kids earlier. But the people on the streets had a right to fight back against the police and to take stuff from the shops. I blame Maggie Thatcher and her government; they take away jobs, put people on the dole, and now they want to cut the dole money and even tax it! We just won't be able to survive. There's one law for the rich in this country and another for us poor.'

Mrs Slupska said:

'I had Easter eggs in the cupboard for my children. It took me a long time to save to buy those eggs. The police took all away. I couldn't afford to buy replacements.'

A Women's Voice reader in the area said,

'It was lovely to see the expressions on people's faces when they were able to take what they needed from the supermarket and tobacconists. Big beaming smiles, passing gifts of chocolates and cigarettes to strangers, it was like Christmas.

What happened in St Pauls was sparked off by the police raid on the Black and White cafe. It's going to happen again this summer, in all likelihood.

Even for those in work the pay doesn't rise with inflation. There comes a point where we have to make a stand and fight for a better deal, a better life, the right to control our own lives. The knowledge of the victory we had with the black and white revolt in Bristol is with us.

Katrina Tully

FAT is a class issue. 73% of working class women in the 40 to 59 age group are overweight, compared to 57% of middle class women, and only 49% of upper class women. Among younger women 70% of working class women from the ages of 20 to 39 are overweight, compared to 38% of middle class women and 27% of the upper class. (Overweight means over the medically recommended weight for their height.)

Did you know that sales of slimming foods reached £160 million last year, and are expected to top £200 million this year? Drugs to suppress the appetite cost the NHS £3 million a year. Three quarters of the country's 17 year old girls are estimated to be on diets, and 250,000 women in Britain are suffering from anorexia nervosa – the illness which leads to compulsive self-starvation.

A 35-YEAR-OLD woman goes into a coffee bar after a keep-fit class early one evening. She accepts a lift from the waiter who, she is assured by a woman also working in the coffee bar, lives in her direction. She is violently raped by him and a friend.

A 14-YEAR-OLD girl is attacked with a milk bottle in the garden of a friend's house.

A COLLEGE STUDENT goes to a student dance and is raped in the loo by a member of the band.

All these cases were recent events in Lewisham, SE London. Now local women are organising a demo against rape and violence against women, and calling for more sympathetic treatment from police and the local health service.

Demonstrate: May 10, 11am, Ladywell Park Fields (BR Ladywell)

All banners and placards welcome.

Answering back

No to divorce?

Dr Mia Pringle is head of the National Children's Bureau, and a person taken seriously by the media and professionals concerned with child care. She recently suggested that couples who have children should be legally bound to each other for fifteen years, whatever happens to their relationship. Divorce for couples with children would be illegal.

Many women felt threatened and guilty after hearing Dr Pringle's advice. Many, after suffering years of misery and oppression, are thinking about sane alternatives, knowing that the hope that things will get better as the children get older is a lie.

They know that they are trapped in an identity-crushing role. Some of them might break loose, throwing out the dead years, but it's a daunting step, full of doubt, having to bear the weight of pain suffered by the children, dealing with your own pain, and because society marks you as failed, the isolation.

But she may have come out of an infinitely more isolated marriage. The kids are at school, mum's got a part-time job, picks the kids up then returns home to more work. Dad gets in, tired sick of the oppression he has been subjected to all day. At home he becomes the oppressor, expecting to be free of any household task or emotional demands. So you get the situation of one parent supporting the whole unit.

Maybe the woman marries a man, has a child, and slowly becomes aware of the child she has married, or the jealous, possessive man who beats her up when his blindness becomes total.

That one or other of the parents is dominant is sadly accepted. How many jokes about who wears the trousers, how many degrading surveys in magazines ask: IS YOUR PARTNER: EXTREMELY JEALOUS/ SOMETIMES JEALOUS/ NOT JEALOUS ENOUGH? Women are not expected to want to have the same freedoms as men. Men, victims of the same sexism and macho conditioning, play the role.

'Drunkness, cruelty, infidelity, are generally accepted as sufficient reason for a marriage to break down. People openly welcome divorce for these reasons, they are obvious, like a child's broken limb, and therefore acceptable.

But there are other, hidden, instances. The husband is apathetic, the wife is under pressure, trying to live up to her mother's standards. The kids don't get bashed, they get ignored. They are faced with a parent who needs their support, love is given out in great lumps, then withdrawn for long periods.

Sometimes the woman can get positive help, but in most cases all the help she will get will be Valium, which will keep her functioning quietly. If she goes completely funny, she will go to a mental hospital, and learn how to behave in an acceptable way, within the confines of marriage.

The child who is battered may become a violent parent. The isolated child develops personality problems that isolate it all its life. A dominant mother or father can make the child oppressively dominant, or closed off, apathetic, a burden on their partner.

To suggest that a rigid fifteen year contract would help prevent these abuses is grossly naive. You cannot impose contracts on feelings, changing circumstances, life.

There are many crippled adults and children now, who have been given 'the best years of their parents lives'. The sacrifices are not worth the cost, the cost is often destroying.

Nursery closing? don't cry! occupy!



Drawing: Joan Lee

WANDSWORTH'S TORY COUNCIL has closed Nightingale Day Nursery. During the picket on the day of closure, some of the parents moved in and occupied the nursery. They have been there since.

I talked to Annette, one of the parents: 'The way in which the Tories handled the closure of the nursery is scandalous. Mothers first heard of it in the papers. Tory councillors had made the decision before any council meetings, there wasn't even a token display of democracy.

The Nightingale Nursery had been deliberately run down so the Tories were able to argue that it was 'under used'. The crunch is coming. The Council had a meeting just before Easter to get a high court order for the occupiers to be evicted. Tory Councillors told Annette that she should 'get a nanny'. They

added, 'What you need is an au pair'. She would have to 'make arrangements'.

As a single parent she has spent all her time making arrangements. As Annette pointed out, childminders are not a good alternative to nurseries. Nurseries are open all year round from 8am to 6pm. They bring women together for support. Social Services have admitted on the quiet that they have to keep unsuitable childminders on their register because the demand for day care is so great.

Whatever the outcome of the occupation, Annette said: 'We don't kid ourselves that the Council are going to re-open the nursery but what we have done is to make mothers and staff in other nurseries aware of what is happening and realise that it is possible to fight.'

Debbie Carrington

CHILD CARE CHARTER

NURSERY NURSES, bottom of the child care heap for so long, are getting organised. They've been ignored by their council employers and by their unions. NALGO and NUPE, for years—'after all, looking after children is just child's play isn't it?'

But now nursery workers in London are determined to make both the bosses and unions sit up and take notice of them. Inspired by the success of social workers and residential workers who formed their own action groups last year which set off strikes and industrial action, they've formed the All London Nursery Workers Action Group (ALNWAG).

Over 100 angry nursery workers turned up at the first big meeting. Fed up with rotten pay, long hours, bad working conditions, inadequate training, being taken for granted, and, on top of all this, cuts in day care, they've come up with an eight point charter and went back from the meeting to raise the demands in their own nursery union branches.

Vanessa Stilwell

For more information and copies of the Charter ring:

Becky Zagoule (Ealing) 01 994 3045

Mary Brahim (Tower Hamlets) 01 981 1619

Heather Pieri (Wandsworth) 01 642 8472

women fight for place at the bar

THE Working Men's Clubs have become the newest battleground for equal rights for women. There are 4,000 clubs affiliated to the Club and Institute Union (CIU).

At issue is full membership rights for women. No woman can hold a pass card (which entitles male members to admittance into any of the 4,000 affiliated clubs). No woman can be delegated to Conference. In some clubs women can't go into the games room.

A campaign has now been launched named ERICCA (Equal Rights In Clubs Campaign for Action). The Eccles AEU Club joined the campaign by electing three women delegates to the CIU Conference. One of the delegates was MADGE HARWOOD, treasurer of the club who talked to JANIE LIEVOW.

WE knew they wouldn't accept women delegates. They stated that no delegate would be allowed in without a full affiliation card, so that was women right out the window for a start.

'The AEU Club gives women full membership of our club but we still can't have full membership of the CIU. About three years ago we had a men's games room but we've stopped all that. At Patricroft Working Men's Club, they have a line on the floor so women can't cross even to watch the games.

'We brought 30 pickets including eight men to the Blackpool Conference of the

CIU. There were 160-200 altogether. Typical remarks from delegates were 'Why aren't you at home doing the washing' or 'in the kitchen'. Others shouted 'Where's your husband?' to which we replied 'Minding the kids so we could come here.'

'The majority were quite hostile. They were down to Blackpool—away from their wives which they seem to crave so much—for a day conference and then an evening's entertainment which included a beauty contest of girls from affiliated clubs—none of whom are allowed to be full members.

'When the Morning Star reporter went into the hall, she was received by a slow handclap by men who obviously don't believe women should be reporters either.

'I think the picket gave a lot of the women an education. They're used to seeing miners pickets on the telly and all that. Now they know what it's like to be on the receiving end.

'Most of the arguments against women's rights are terribly old-fashioned. As if women haven't been workers for years. We have a 70-year-old woman member at the AEU Club. She told me that if her

husband (who's 80) wasn't ill she would have gone on the demo: 'I worked in ammunitions during the war. I always thought I should be allowed full membership'.

'Another local Working Men's club, Taylors, doesn't allow women on their committee, but everytime they have a Charity Night all their wives do all the work—making sandwiches, selling tickets, bingo. Oh, and it's alright for women to clean up after, or to be barmaids. We're allowed to be skivvies but nothing else.

We now know that you have to get resolutions in by a certain date to be raised on the agenda. We'll start picketing other clubs which don't allow women to be members. We're prepared to disrupt the Conference if necessary.

'But it's no good having the Executive on your side if the delegates to Conference vote against you. We've got to find out what the situation is in the local clubs and push from below. And this will have to be done all over the country until we win at Conference.'





MEDWAY WV GROUP — BUILDING AFTER THE ABORTION CAMPAIGN

When the Corrie Bill reared its ugly head, Medway WV decided to initiate a broad-based campaign in the area, the Medway and Gillingham Abortion Campaign. The campaign organisers were WV members and other women active locally in the labour and womens' liberation movements. But combining with other groups, rather than just individuals, we had a ready-made network of contacts, sympathisers etc, which we knew would make it easier to approach trade unions, trades councils and so on.

We began our campaign by leafletting, mainly in shopping centres, with NAC leaflets. After a while, we produced our own leaflets—which have the advantage of being cheap to produce, as well as enabling us to advertise our group! One of these leaflets contained a model resolution for trade unions, which we also gave out at a local factory. We produced a petition against restrictive abortion legislation, and demanding better abortion facilities in the area.

In the course of the campaign, it became clear to WV members that if we were to really change attitudes among people who are not involved already in the trade union movement, we would have to concentrate our activities in a more consistent, regular way than by leafletting shopping centres. The SWP had a number of factory bulletins which went in at regular intervals, which we knew the

workers discussed during their breaks and after work. We asked the SWP to include material on abortion and other women's issues, which we prepared from articles in Womens Voice. At the same time, we heard of a local factory, Guards, in which most of the workforce was female. We decided it was time to launch a bulletin of our own.

We knew very little about the working conditions of the women, so we did not know what we should write about. We put in a general article on Equal Pay, and on the other side of the newsheet we put a rather hard-hitting article on abortion. We learned afterwards that the Equal Pay article had not been widely discussed by the workforce as it did not relate directly to their situation, but the abortion article had been discussed and strongly supported by a few of the women. We also learned that some unionised staff were keen to get more women in the union, so in No. 2—which we put out some 6 weeks later—we wrote about the benefits of unionisation, why women need the union, and so on. In No. 3, we will be continuing to talk about women and the union as well as talking about Medway WVs planned activities around the Cuts. We hope we will establish contacts inside the factory who may be involved in the production of future bulletins, but we realise that we may have to be patient for a few more issues before we make that contact.

Lici Kopiej

SOUTH BIRMINGHAM WV — WOMEN AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

Inspired by the WV pamphlet, 'Job Massacre at the Office', we decided to organise a meeting about the new technology and word processors. Although many of the women in our group do not work in offices as such, new technology is still going to affect us. Did you know that there already exists a private hospital in Germany that is virtually run by a computer? If it discovers a nurse has a slack period on her ward—ie time to have a quick cup of tea—she suddenly finds a pile of clean linen arrives for her to deal with! And in some places you're not even safe in your own home—like in Northern Ireland. Police there have a direct link to a computer that even knows what colour your front door is. If you are unlucky enough to have repainted it recently, you may well find yourself taken in for questioning—after all according to the computer, you've lied about the colour of your front door!



Radiographers demonstrate against the recent Clegg settlement.

Mark Rusher JFL

Anyway we ended the meeting by deciding to start campaigning in our own area. We will use the WV pamphlet and try to get across the idea that new technology means fewer jobs for women. As our speaker said at the end of the meeting, during the industrial revolution, a group of people called Luddites, used to go round smashing up the new machines that were taking over their jobs and they were very successful in some areas. We need to work towards the same kind of success!!

CENTRAL LONDON WV

Over the last few months the WV groups in the area have concentrated on anti-Corrie work. Being Central London, it was fairly easy to get women from the colleges and workplaces on the demonstrations to Parliament, and we had a good WV presence.

Now we're planning a series of public meetings on a district basis, in an attempt to pull together the women from the different groups. Within the district we have groups in Pimlico, Fleet St and the Polytechnic of Central London. If you're working, or a student, in the area and interested in joining a group contact Ann Rogers (0462 33211).

MERSEYSIDE AGAINST DEPO-PROVERA

After a report on the local television about Depo-provera, Merseyside WV decided to hold a public meeting on it. We had three speakers—Jane Leighton, the jour-

nalist, who had done the tv report—Dr Katy Gardner, a local GP, and a speaker from our own WV group. It was quite a successful meeting; about 30 people attended.

We advertised the meeting by giving out leaflets outside factories, hospitals and in the main shopping area. A petition was made for people to sign at the meeting, and to take into their workplaces. This is what it said: 'We, the undersigned, believe that the contraceptive drug, Depo-provera should be withdrawn until such time as the long and short term effects of the drug have been fully investigated and proved safe!

We are now organising campaign meetings around Depo-provera. We are writing a letter to the local press explaining the dangers of Depo-provera and asking women who have been given DP, or have been offered it, to get in touch with the local campaign. We are also approaching the Community Health Council and Family Planning Clinics, to find out how widely used it is in Liverpool. Then we can write a local leaflet. We have affiliated to the National Campaign against Depo-provera and am waiting to receive more information.

Jane Mudd.

NORWICH WOMENS VOICE GETTING OFF THE GROUND



RUSSIAN WOMEN'S LIBERATION

'NO ONE BUT OURSELVES'

'I INTEND to pursue my feminist activity because I consider feminism to be progressive, and because the women's movement is an essential part of the world democratic movement.'

With these defiant words Tatyana Mamonova declared in a letter to the KGB that despite harassment and interrogation she intended to remain a feminist activist.

Last September she was one of a collective of women who had produced the first issue of an illegal women's journal *Women and Russia*. Published in Leningrad, the journal included articles from women as far away as Novo Sibirsk. It was the first time that the dissident movement in the Soviet Union had produced any material specifically dealing with the situation of women.

Women have been involved in the dissident movement. Some became involved because their husbands or sons were arrested. Others became involved in their own right as dissidents. Helen Bonner was already a well known protester when the Western press started referring to her as Mrs Sakharov — a name she herself never uses. Half the members of the Free Trade Union founded in the Soviet Union to fight for rights like the right to organise and the right to strike, were also women.

But these women never raised the question of women's liberation. Women in the West may have concluded that meant that women in the Soviet Union were not fighting because they are more emancipated than women in the West. But this is not true.

Women in Russia lead a life whose pressures are remarkably similar to those we face. They work in the worst paid,

most boring, jobs. And they have all the family and household responsibilities too. In 1976 one Soviet sociologist estimated that women spend up to 12 hours per week on cooking while men spend about an hour and a half, and that while women spend six hours a week doing laundry, the average man spent only fifteen minutes. All this in a country where 90 per cent of women go out to work.

The familiar situation is made worse by the fact that there are few consumer goods such as washing machines and tumble driers, and that the shops are always surrounded by endless queues. Shopping is a nightmarishly time consuming task.

In an article in the official magazine *Novy Mir* one woman described how mothers cope:

'Today it is Shura's turn to do the shopping for the "mums". Our arrangement here is that every day one of us does the shopping for the rest. And we have asked to have our lunch break from two till three when there are fewer people in the shops.'

The very burdens on women prevented them from organising to change them. Crushed between work at home and in the factory, queuing for every household item, always tired, they never had time. But they did show their discontent.

The traditional family began to experience many difficulties. The divorce rate soared — many of the women giving their reasons for divorce as drunkenness on the part of the husband. And one study showed that while only half of divorced women wanted to remarry, over 70 per cent of divorced men did. The traditional attractions of family life for women seem to have disappeared — for Soviet women are choosing to have far fewer children than before. The birth rate has dropped dramatically. Women prefer the nightmare of the 'meat mincer' as *Women in Russia* describes the abortion clinic, to the joys of childrearing.

That *Women in Russia* appeared at all is remarkable. Even more amazing is that the women signed the articles with their own names and even included photographs of the contributors.

So what then was the nature of the magazine that these women produced? Were they provocateurs as the KGB suggested?

In the introductory letter from the editorial board the women state 'we can be sure that no one but ourselves will help us. It is by coming together to talk about our bitterness and suffering, by understanding and changing our own



Russian political prisoner Julia Voznesenskaya one of the writers on women in Russia. Three articles from the magazine appear in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*. 45p from 136 Kingsland High Street, London, E8.

experience, that we shall be able to find a solution. Only in this way will we, and thousands of women who suffer like us, actually help ourselves. '...We hope that our joint efforts will bring us back from the point of disaster, that they will relieve women's suffering and set women's liberation under way.'

And in the articles women write passionately about the reality of women's lives — of the pain of childbirth and abortion, of the difficulties of bringing up children, and of the hideous insensitivity of men.

Their words will strike a chord in many women. But their conclusions we cannot agree with. They see men as the enemy, and particularly working class men. In their manifesto they end: 'The conservatism of the alcoholic masses, the blind animosity toward women displayed by that proliferating, single celled organism, that giant amoeba without will — that is the outrageous brake on social progress.'

These women are so disillusioned with men and with the society they live in they have placed their faith in building an alternative based on 'female values' and even religion.

They are wrong. But they are none the less brave for all that. Their actions are the first signs of a women's movement in Russia since the 1920's. But alone they cannot fundamentally change the society they live in. Only a united working class can do that. But they have brought a vital ingredient into the dissident movement — feminism.

Anna Paczuska



A Socialist Workers Party pamphlet

Price 35p plus 15p postage
10 copies for £3.25 post free
from SOCIALISTS UNLIMITED
265 Seven Sisters Road
London N4 2DE.
Please make cheques/POs
to 'SW Recordings'

In 1917, for the first time in world history, a workers' government took power in Russia. Out of the bloodbath of the First World War an alternative and better society was born. But within 20 years it was dead, murdered by a new class, a new despot — Stalin. Why did it happen?
This pamphlet gives some of the answers

Alan Gibbons

RUSSIA

How the revolution was lost



IRAN

Lifting the veil of oppression

NOTHING is normal. We go to work, but if there are demonstrations, we don't go to work — we go to the demonstrations. There is no such thing as legality. There is no state. Only a state of chaos. They can enforce no regulations. Illegality doesn't mean anything. They can have their parliament, their constitution, their law and order, but it doesn't mean anything.

Women were very much involved during the revolution, in demonstrations. For the first time they actually went out of their homes to join a mass movement. They might have had problems, like being out all day, and in the evening they are asked, 'Where is the dinner? Why are the kids crying?' But that didn't stop them.

I went to Iran six weeks after the revolution and missed the most exciting part of it. Others who were there had the most fantastic stories, especially of women in the south of Tehran, which is the poorest section, the slums. The women

Shirin Irani spoke to Womens Voice about the events still taking place in Iran — much more than we are led to believe when we read the newspapers.

were the ones who made the barricades and the Molotov cocktails. In Kurdistan as well. Women played a fantastic role, the whole time. Despite all the attacks from the new government, the Kurds in reality do control their territory. The women set up their street councils; they organised the fighting.

In a Tabriz there was a big riot by the Turks. They were running the whole place; they took over the television and radio, they occupied the airport, the whole city. But when you looked at the city, it was as if it were a city with no women. Places like that are very backward as far as women are concerned.

The first attempt by Khomeini to stop the women was on 8 March 1979. Everybody was going out to celebrate International Women's Day and Khomeini said we should all wear veils. When I reached the meeting no women wore veils. In fact we had women joining the



Unemployed women on last year's May Day demo in Tehran. Their banner reads 'equal wages for men and women workers'.

demonstration who wore veils who said, 'We can't suddenly change, we have always worn veils, but we shouldn't be forced to wear or not.' There were half a million women on the streets. People just joined and joined the demonstration.

We marched to the Prime minister's office, very noisy and very militant. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard started shooting in the air to get us to disperse. Most people like myself with children left. But for the whole week the demonstrations continued. At the end of the week they announced on the radio and television that really they didn't mean it. 'We told you to wear a veil for your own good. Your hair will be much prettier if you cover it from the dust. You should keep your beauty for your husband, not the men in the street.' But basically it was a victory for women.

But the question of the veil has not been the real issue.

Two or three weeks ago in one of the girls high schools, the government sent someone to the headmistress to say she must wear a veil. The next day they came with a woman wearing a veil to take her place. So the headmistress called a mass meeting of the students, explained that she had been sacked for refusing to wear a veil and left. The students said to the veiled woman, 'We are going to count to 15, and if you are still here we will not be responsible for your safety.' They beat her up very badly. She had to go to hospital. The students set up a student council and ran the school for a couple of weeks. Then the authorities came and closed the school down. These things happen all the time. It doesn't matter if they close the school. We are still in a revolutionary situation. Things don't function as normal. As a taxi driver told me, 'We don't need schools. Our children are learning more from the experience than they would from ten years at university.'

The real issues that women are fighting are other things. The constitution was boycotted by all the left because it is very anti-working class. For example, if workers go out on strike they are considered counter-revolutionary and must be crushed.

They have brought down the age of marriage to 13. The laws we had under the Shah still exist. Women have no right to travel. They can't work without their husband's permission. They have no rights to their children. Divorce is the right of men. The real fight is on these issues. We along with all other oppressed people fought for the revolution, why should we not gain from it? Why should we be worse off in some ways? Some of this is due to the economic situation. When there is no work, women are the first to be sacked.



The 6000 strong meeting of women which was candle lit after the fascists cut off their electricity.

Prostitution is another big issue. After the revolution the Shah's supporters burned down a big section of Tehran called the Castle, where prostitutes and their children lived. The slums. Those who had money had to move and rent places. They have been treated like animals. The others have been put in something like an institution, which teaches the women trades like knitting and tries to get them to marry. They cannot possibly find a job because of the high unemployment. Men can marry four women officially, and besides that they can marry temporarily – for half an hour, a day, a month, two months. When the contract finishes, the woman is out on the street. So now people phone the institution and make a temporary contract. Basically it is prostitution. BUT THE WOMAN DOESN'T GET PAID FOR IT. She gets food for a month or two, but then she is out on the street. Prostitution will get even worse and spread all over the place.

The experience women have gained has forced all the political organisations to form women's sections. For example, we have 47 left newspapers – including women's papers, minority papers. Several of the organisations are very big – a quarter of a million. Half of the members are women. Despite that, none of these are really interested in women. But it's up to the women to take the issues seriously. We have set up the United Council of Women which is made up of women from all these groups. We have had two very successful meetings. One was in October. 7-8,000 women came. We started the meeting in a big hall, and the fascists came and tried to come into the hall. We had very good stewarding, all women inside the hall. The fascists cut off the electricity. So there we were – it was dark, no microphone, nothing. Everyone took out lighters, matches. There was complete silence so we could hear who spoke. The meeting went on for six hours!

For the second meeting on International Women's Day, everyone brought a box of candles in their pocket!

If there are sackings, or rapes, especially for women who have been politically

active we try through this organisation at least to make propaganda, leaflets, letters to newspapers, meetings. We have attracted more white collar women, not working class women. We try to work among working class women, but that will take time.

In factories where there are mostly women, they have set up factory councils. These factory councils run the factories. There is constant fighting between management and the councils. Management try not to intervene directly because when they do they get locked in their offices or beaten up. Now what they do is hire thugs or Islamic Revolutionary Guards to fight with the workers to try to break them.

In a factory of mainly women, the women organised the fighting. A woman among the workers saw her fiance among the thugs who were attacking them. She threw her ring and a stone at him and shouted that someone who tried to break the workers unity would never share her life.

The attitude of men towards women hasn't really changed. Even on the left, in theory, yes, in reality no. In Iran we still have the old system of Islamic patriarchy, although the nuclear family is beginning to replace the patriarchial system.

All the schools have student councils. Teachers have their own councils. They are running the affairs of the schools. If the kids are not happy with a reactionary headmaster, they go on strike. Sometimes they succeed, sometimes they don't. If there is a demonstration, they go out to join it.

The economic situation means life is worse for many workers. Iran was completely dependent on the West for spare parts, skilled workers, etc and that is cut off now. Building workers were in a better situation than other workers before the revolution. They owned a house, a television, a radio, a car, washing machine, etc. Since last year they haven't had work. First of all they have had to use their savings, then start selling their things. Now you see masses of people – if they have kept their cars, they have become drivers. Or they get a stall to sell books, food, sandwiches. Or if they can't all afford a stall, they sit in a corner on the street. If you stop your car, 50 or 60 people rush up to try to sell you ice cream, chewing gum, anything. Unemployment, poverty, nothing has changed – like health or education. The government is not a revolutionary one. One section of the upper class took control from another. The real freedom existed for only two days.

People have gained so much experience – peasants, workers, students, women. Despite all the killing, they won't give up. They won't allow repression to be restored.



WOMEN UNITED
WILL NEVER BE
DEFEATED.

THE WOMEN'S CAUSE
IS MAN'S!

TOGETHER, DWARFED

THE RISING OF THE
WOMEN MEANS THE
RISING OF THE RACE.

THEY RISE OR SINK

GODLIKE, BOND OR FREE.

JENNYSON.



A. GARLAND. FOR. MAY. DAY. 1980.

.BASED ON THE ORIGINAL OF 1895 BY W. CRANE.



-FREE ABORTION
ON DEMAND -
A WOMAN'S
RIGHT TO CHOOSE.

THE WELFARE
OUR SOCIETY NEEDS
OUR PERSISTENT
CO-OPERATION

I DO NOT REFER
TO MYSELF AS A
HOUSEWIFE - I DIDN'T
MARRY A HOUSE.
WILMA SEFT-HYDE

EQUAL RIGHTS
FOR ALL -
PRIVILEGE FOR
NONE.

THE RIGHT TO WORK
THE RIGHT TO STRIKE
THE RIGHT TO
UNIONISE.

FULL MATERNITY
BENEFITS AND
FULL NURSERY
PROVISION.

EQUAL PAY AND
RIGHTS
FOR WOMEN.

PRODUCTION FOR
USE - NOT FOR
PROFIT.

Taking the children to work

STATE NURSERIES are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. The inadequate provision which existed this time a year ago has been decimated as part of the Government's cuts in public spending.

Most unions have negotiated maternity rights in the last five years. These vary considerably, but allow mothers the right to return to their jobs having had a child—although the Tory Employment Bill plans to change that in some workplaces. This right is useless unless some kind of childcare for the under fives is provided.

Inadequate state provision has led some unions to negotiate for workplace nurseries. Criticism of this kind of childcare is strong—from both trade unionists and employers. Trade unionists have argued that it is the state's responsibility to provide nurseries, and that workplace nurseries tie parents to jobs. Employers have also said that it is the state's job to provide childcare, but for a different reason: they don't want the responsibility, financial or otherwise. But for many working mothers, or would-be mothers, the chance of a workplace nursery is the only chance they have.

In 1975 (the latest available figures) there were 90 workplace nurseries, providing places for 2,571 children—less than one in a hundred of under-fives.

Harriet Sherwood talks to Lorraine Huddle. Photos by Jane Munro

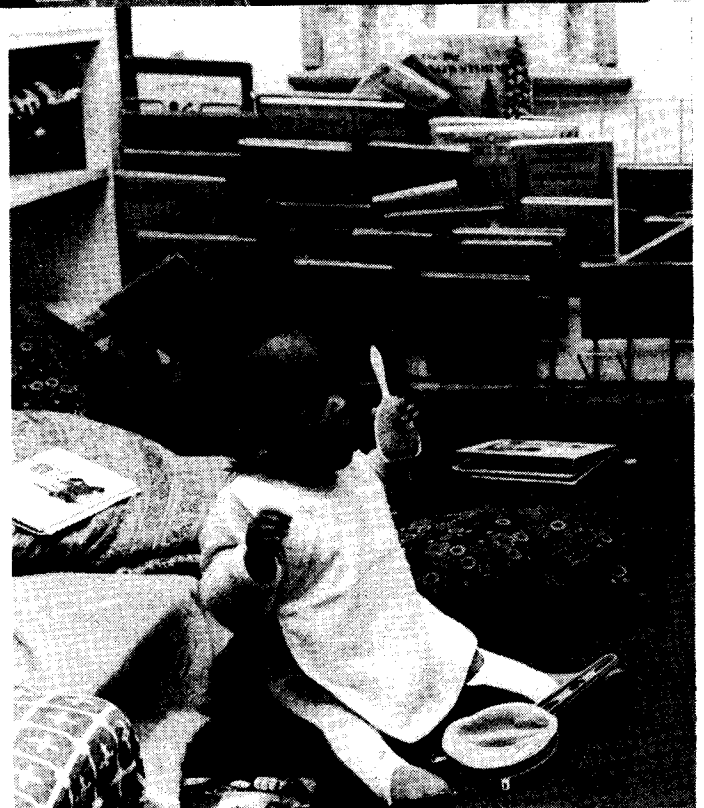


Kingsway Children's Centre has been open for two and a half years, although negotiations lasted for two years before that. The idea was to set up a workplace nursery for the children of trade union workers in the area, although now NALGO is the only trade union employer involved.

Lorraine Huddle, whose two year old daughter is at the nursery, was involved in the negotiations. 'I can't say we needed to fight very hard for the nursery', she says. 'The employers were very shrewd—they didn't want to lose their professional women workers who had decided to have children.'

'Lots of women wanted to have children but even though the Employment Protection Act was in force they couldn't return to work because there were no child care facilities.'

Estimating demand was a problem. It's easy



enough to find how many mothers would prefer a workplace nursery to their present arrangements, and how many women are planning to have children in

the foreseeable future; but it is impossible to estimate how many mothers do not work because of the lack of facilities.

Kingsway Children's



Centre provides 30 places, and about a third of those are reserved for 'babies' (children under two years old). It is run by a committee of staff and parent representatives and is financed partly by the employers, who pay two thirds of the total running costs, and the parents. The fees work out to £65 a month for employees, which, as

Lorraine points out, is fairly prohibitive for low paid workers.

The nursery is called a children's centre because it combines day care with education. 'Most parents agree that their children have learnt skills such as talking and co-ordination at a very early age,' says Lorraine. 'The nursery stresses non-sexist education and provides a stimulating environment.'

But the Kingsway nursery is not without problems. A recent blow was the closing of Covent Garden Community Gardens, which was the only decent piece of greenery in that part of London. An office block is being built in its place.

One of the disadvantages of a workplace

nursery is the travelling involved. Bringing a two year old into central London in the rush hour can't be much fun, and Lorraine thinks this is one reason why the demand for places at the Kingsway nursery isn't as high as expected.

'Quite honestly I'd rather have my child in a state nursery', says Lorraine. 'But I can't see much possibility of that now. The Tories are bent on chopping nurseries along with hospitals, jobs, housing—the list is endless. You can't isolate nurseries; fighting for them goes hand in hand with fighting for all the other things we need, and fighting against the whole crazy system by which our society is run.'

The first hurdle, in some workplaces, will be persuading the union to campaign for a nursery at all. The notion that it is 'outside the union's scope of work' is fairly common in some of the traditionally male-dominated trade unions. The issue of childcare may need a lot of lobbying from women within the union before negotiations even begin with the employers. Trying to assess demand can be a problem. If you use a questionnaire you have to remember that the need for a nursery

may also extend to men. It's impossible to discover what the future demand will be, in terms of mothers who cannot work now because there is no-one to look after the children. But in 1972 37.2 per cent of women who couldn't work said they would return to work if child care facilities were available.

Most successfully negotiated workplace nurseries are in buildings or rooms which have at one time been nurseries—so it is worth looking out for an empty one.

Many employers are reluctant to take on sole responsibility for providing a nursery, and often the demand is not high enough in one workplace to justify it. The answer to this is to find out if other unions/workplaces in your area are interested in participating in a scheme.

If the employers agree to setting up a nursery it is important that the union is involved in the organisation and, later, the general administration of the nursery. For example the union should help decide the initial pay of the nursery workers.

If a workplace nursery is not possible because of a scattered workforce, or a suitable location can't be found, then consider pressing for a nursery/childminder subsidy from the employer.

Most important, a nursery campaign shouldn't be isolated from a general campaign for better opportunities for women.

Pamphlets on setting up workplace nurseries are available from the following:

TUC, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1

NALGO, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1

NUJ, Acorn House, Grays Inn Road, London WC1

Equal Opportunities Commission, Overseas House, Quay Street, Manchester

THE WOMEN BEHIND THE NEWS

by Anna Bradley

THERE ARE thousands of women working in the printing industry, both as clerical staff and as journalists. In the NUJ, of a membership of 29,000, more than a quarter are women.

The largest concentration of women NUJ members work on women's magazines or similar publications. Although the content of these magazines has improved vastly recently, with excellent articles on subjects such as contraception, they all have one thing in common. They encourage the myth that a woman's place is in the home.

Women's magazines are a housewife's friend. The problem pages tell her she is not alone with her marital problems; the short stories provide an escape from daily routine. She is taught to cover up for real losses in household income by buying cheaper cuts of meat and spending a little longer preparing them so no one notices. All the handy hints about shopping, cooking, making the best of your house and of yourself, foster the attitude that a woman's main function in life is to look after her family.

The irony is that as women journalists we are writing this for ourselves as well. How many of us still go home and do the cleaning, the washing, the cooking and look after the children? There is a tendency for women journalists to see themselves solely as journalists—forgetting that they are also women.

Other publications are even more oppressive to women. We work on papers that blow a rape case into a headline implying the woman got what she deserved, papers for which pictures of naked women are the major selling point. Some of us may have 'made it' into a man's world, but let's face it, it's still a man's world.

Women like us should be taking a leading role in changing this. After all, we have access to the powerful media. But we cannot use it, because we have no control over what we produce. It is all a question of the freedom of the press, and both as women and as trade unionists, we should be fighting for it.

Why are women not more involved in our union? Part of the reason lies with old problems, such as the timing of union meetings, lack of confidence in public debate, and lack of encouragement. If we are to play an active role in the union, we must speak and make sure we are heard. A cross

on the ballot paper or a face in a union meeting is the facade of democracy; we need active democracy if we are to get anywhere.

Perhaps another reason why women don't get more involved is that they don't see the necessity. They either think that their annual increase will arrive regardless, or they are aware of the need to participate, but not of the need to do so as women.

Although it may be true that your annual increment will come through, some demands, such as better maternity leave or plans for a creche, will almost certainly have been lost. No one is suggesting that wages should be shelved in favour of other things, but we should get both. Those who enter the arena solely as journalists on an 'equal footing' with the men, have to ask themselves whether the job they have won for themselves entails supporting a myth about women—one that we should be breaking once and for all.

We will not be able to change any of this by individual action. We can only win if we organise together, grouping as women to work within our unions. This will give us the confidence to speak at union meetings, and the numbers to win.

The strength of any organisation depends on the involvement and support of its members: if a quarter of the NUJ are not wholly involved then not only will the union be weaker, but we cannot expect our demands to be priorities.

There is another large group of women in the print industry, members of Natsopa, the clerical union. At present Fleet Street is under seige. New technology is being introduced on many papers that will make vast numbers redundant: one in four secretarial jobs are to go. It could be your paper next, and although your job as a journalist may not be threatened, no one knows what the impact of the new technology will be in the future. It could be our jobs next.

Women, like men, have a right to work and must fight for that right. That means fighting for other women's jobs as well as our own. If we allow other women's jobs to go, then we won't have any legs to stand on when it comes to fighting for our own. When jobs have been scarce even trade unionists have turned round and said women's jobs should go first. It happened after the war, and it could happen again.



WOMENS HEALTH

INTRAUTERINE DEVICES

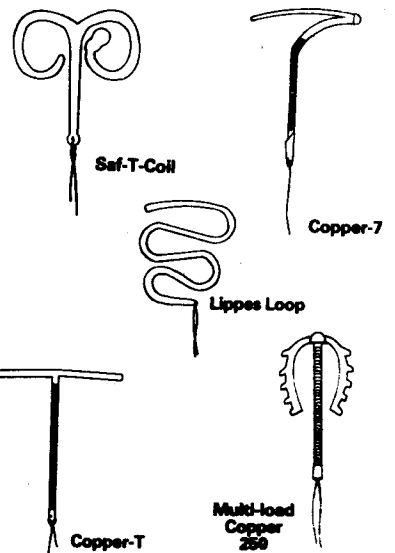


Women have the right to all the information about all the forms of contraception in order that they can make an informed choice. Because there is no ideal form of contraception it is essential that the facts be available and be discussed objectively.

Too often articles are published which fail to show all sides, and so will only reduce our choice still further. Of course women should be informed of all the risks, but these risks must be compared to the risks of other forms of contraception and or unwanted pregnancy.

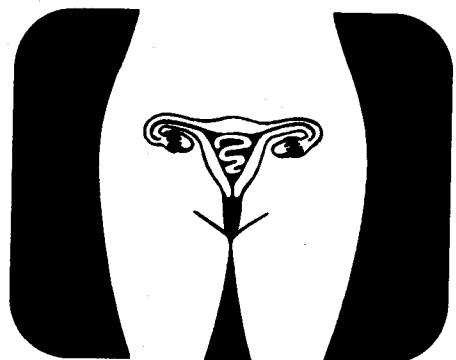
The risks of infection, sterility and death are far higher from abortion than the use of the IUD—but as an ardent supporter of 'abortion on demand' I would want to see these 'risks' discussed in perspective. I am certain that if an article had been produced concentrating solely on the 'disadvantages' of abortion—it would not have been published, if at all, without an equally lengthy exposure of its 'advantages'.

Profits are made from the exploitation of all aspects of sexual activity. No form of contraception is exempt from this—even where no device or drug is required—there are books, charts etc., and every imaginable profitable trade for the 'failures'. There isn't an 'ideologically sound' method of contraception.



Whilst it is true that nobody knows exactly how the IUD works, it is believed that it works in a combination of the following ways:-

- a) by increasing the mucus at the entrance to the uterus (womb)—cervix, making it harder for sperm to enter.
- b) by slowing down the movement of the egg, from the ovary to the uterus, which inhibits fertilisation.



Artist's diagram showing a Lippes Loop in the womb

c) by acting as an irritant, it vastly reduces the likelihood of implantation of a fertilised egg and should this occur it is likely to be dislodged.

d) With any copper devices, by making the environment in the uterus non-viable for the sperm and/or egg.

By no stretch of the imagination can this be called "setting up a low-level infection."

Only two women out of every hundred who use the IUD for a year, are likely to become pregnant. By far the greatest risk is

the likelihood of the IUD being expelled by the body, particularly during the first period following insertion. The expulsion rate is high at this time and as this frequently occurs without the woman realising (causing no pain or discomfort), it is essential that women check that the device is still in place. The second most common side-effect is an increase in the pain or heaviness of periods. Many women, however, experience this only during the first or second periods following insertion. Women who already have excessively heavy or painful periods, should not be, in general, advised to have an IUD, but this must be their choice.

Infection usually occurs as a result of the IUD irritating an already present infection, an ill-performed insertion or in young women. If a cervical smear is taken prior to insertion (by an experienced doctor) such risks are greatly reduced. Generally an IUD should not be recommended for women under 20, but again this must be their choice.

It is very rare for infections to lead to sterility and usual anti-biotic treatment is effective. Ectopic pregnancies and perforation of the uterus are exceedingly rare, particularly with the commonly used forms of IUD, that is the Copper T, the Copper 7 and Lippies Loop. (Criticisms of the Dalkon Shield are well founded, but it is misleading to include this horrific device with other IUD's).

The advantages must also be considered and many women successfully use the IUD to control their fertility. The IUD has a low failure rate, cannot be forgotten, does not interfere or interrupt sexual enjoyment, and does not involve the use of drugs.

Within the women's movement we must fight to increase our choice—we must demand research into well tested alternatives. Meanwhile, however, we must get our politics straight. 'A woman's right to chose' should apply not only to the decision concerning continuing or not continuing a pregnancy, but to all aspects of our sexuality, including contraception. We are in a society that inhibits our ability to make 'choices' from birth. Education alone cannot of course undo our socialisation, but honest and complete information can open doors. It should never be assumed that all women know 'all about contraception'. Merely scaring the hell out of your sisters inhibits women making informed choices—an accusation we are all used to directing toward those who advocate birth control as population control; the 'medical profession'; the anti-abortion lobby; the present Tory government

MARIE GREEN

REVIEWS

ALEXANDRA
KOLLONTAI
CATHY PORTER
VIRAGO £4.95

WHEN women in the SWP (then the International Socialists) first produced *Womens Voice* and began to argue for activities and meetings specifically for women, it was to the Bolshevik Party and the German Social Democratic Party that we looked for example. We had a hazy notion that Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollontai had organised women for socialism in just the way that we wanted to.

Over the past few years much of interest has been written about Alexandra Kollontai. This latest book by Cathy Porter is the best yet.

Alexandra Kollontai was first active as a socialist lecturing and organising in the workers' clubs in the early 1900's. She was an exceptional speaker and a talented writer who early on committed herself to the Bolshevik Party.

She was an aggressive feminist and a revolutionary socialist. Her activities in organising women were marked by an uncompromising opposition to the antics of the bourgeois feminists and by a constant emphasis on the need to organise women along class lines.

She was intensely involved in the Russian Revolution, both in her post as Minister for Social Welfare, and within the Women's Department, speaking and writing, urging women to play a central part in the building of socialism.

Her politics declined with the fortunes of the revolution. Her ultra leftism led her to support the Workers' Opposition, but not Trotsky against

Stalin. In 1926 she was given a diplomatic post in Finland which she fulfilled by being a constant apologist for Stalin's terror within Russia itself.

Cathy Porter has written a thoroughly absorbing and readable book about this inspiring woman. But her enthusiasm has led her to be uncritical of Kollontai's faults.

Alexandra Kollontai was a Menshevik, an ultra left, anti-abortion and strongly in favour of motherhood for all women in the interests of the socialist state.

Bear those facts in mind when you read this interesting and well researched book. But read it all the same. It is a really 'good read' and a mass of information about how women in the Bolshevik Party organised. It is a part of socialist history which should be better known.

Anna Paczuska

THERESE RAQUIN:
A WOMAN STRIVING
TO BE FREE
PENGUIN CLASSIC

EVERY woman has felt the conflict that exists between what society expects us to be and what we are. You're selfish, we're told, when we pursue what we feel to be right for us.

In the nineteenth century, it was much worse. Zola's novel *Therese Raquin*, televised on BBC 2 last month, is the story of this conflict. Therese, because she is isolated, can only feel guilt about her 'selfishness'. Her struggle to assert herself against what society wants her to be thus ends in disaster and tragedy.

She was expected to be indebted and grateful to everyone. To her aunt, who had brought her up; to her husband, Camille, who had rescued her from the shame of illegitimacy; and to the little Parisian shopkeeping world that had given her a fixed 'place' in society. Her role was to look after the sickly Camille and help run her aunt's dingy haberdashery shop. The monotony of her existence was broken only by the Thursday evening visits of old friends of Mme Raquin, who were as deadly and predictable as the games of dominoes that they played.

Suddenly, into this drab world behind the dusty shop window, comes Laurent, a friend of Camille. Therese's affair with him becomes the expression of her revolt against all those years of frustration and monotonous

passivity.

But even now, she is dependent on Camille for both home and job. She has to continue the same hypocrisy of her childhood, and confine her affair to secrecy. This enforced secrecy transforms what could have been her self-assertion into self-reproach and guilt. From then on, it is a downwards spiral — to murder of Camille, to remorse and finally to suicide.

The problem was that she had no means of striking out. In the suffocating world of the French shop-keeping class, where no bonds of solidarity existed outside the tightly closeted family, her revolt could only be an isolated, emotional one. Zola shows elsewhere that women can forge solidarity with each other. Therese has no such outlet.



When Zola wrote the novel in 1867, it was scathed as being 'pornographic' and 'obscene', for the passionate love scenes it described. But, as Zola pointed out, the true obscenity of the book is how the characters are prisoners of their environment. His description of this claustrophobic and sterile world (as dead as the corpses he describes in that memorable morgue scene) shows what women's oppression was at that time. There was a victim of it.

Marnie Holborow

MARY DALY
Gyn/Ecology
Women's Press £3.95

SOME books ask to be judged by their covers. This one proclaims that it 'is a book unlike any other. It invites us to acknowledge without forgiveness or collusion those forces which have shaped our lives...it is a work of revolution.'

Naturally I came to the book with high hopes. I can remember the effect of a book making similar claims which I read when I was 17, *Women, Resistance and Revolution* by Sheila Rowbotham, which confirmed me as a feminist and started me thinking about the necessary connections between feminism and socialism.

It was full of heroic visions of strength and courage, of women fighting as comrades in arms and lovers, in Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam, throughout history.

There wasn't much in there about the boring routine of getting up on wet Saturday mornings to sell papers, or leafleting at dawn with numb fingers. After seven years of that, I felt I could do with a new burst of inspiration, a reminder of the fight for bread and roses. I didn't find it. Instead, I found a book which is often funny, perplexing, shocking, irritating... and finally, downright disappointing.

The image of women as

Mary Daly Gyn/Ecology

The Metaethics
of Radical Feminism

'Outrage,
hilarity, grief,
profanity, lyricism
and moral daring
join in bursting the
accustomed bounds
even of feminist
discourse'

Adrienne Rich. *New York Times*

eternal victim comes through with a hideous clarity in accounts of foot-binding in China, the ritual murder of widows in India, genital mutilation in Africa; the image of the Amazon voyager, the free-spinning raging Crone who has broken through the web of mystification and oppression, does not have anything like the same reality. It's a horror story without hope.

Already I have seen admiring references to Mary Daly's concept of 'reversals', a process in which things and words are juggled to seem their opposites, a conjuring trick with reality. Marx described similar tricks. He showed how capitalism reduces workers to mere 'hands', and how the products of these hands come to have a life of their own, independent of and more important than their producers.

So Mary Daly's analysis of reversals isn't so novel after all, and while Marx showed the connections which link the way we see our society, and the way we are seen within it, to the roots of society in production and its control, Mary Daly relates all

these conjuring tricks to a single, simple cause: men.

Years ago, Kate Millett rightly laughed at D. H. Lawrence's grandiose claim that the penis was the bridge over the chasm into the future: she pointed out that in view of average penile length the future didn't look too bright. And if the penis is not an adequate tool for guiding us into the future, it's equally not up to the job of explaining the whole history of the human race.

Another feature of the book which has attracted praise is its radical use of language. Mary Daly goes back to the roots of words, sometimes with surprising results. 'Haggard' turns out to be quite a good thing to be, 'Untamed; an intractable person, a woman reluctant to yield to wooing'.

Sometimes the process has interesting sidelines, I was intrigued to learn that 'cretin' and 'christian' are the same word, but in general I found it a peculiarly lifeless, dictionary-bound sort of cleverness.

Her words continually set puzzles for the reader, but

they are puzzles solved to little purpose. You can't learn that much about words simply from the dictionary, in the same way that you don't learn much about China, Africa, India or America if you view simply in terms of sadistic practices directed at women. You end up not learning much about women either.

There is much more to history than simply a long catalogue of men mutilating and women mutilated; even here class gets a passing mention, but there's no way of understanding it within the terms set by the book. And in the end, these limitations mean that the ending, which I think is meant to be triumphant, feels flat and unconvincing.

The freed Spinster may spin, in Mary Daly's phrase; but this book reminds me that spinning sometimes means turning continually round and round in the same place.

So why has the book had such an ecstatic reception? I think because it poses one answer to the dilemma of the gap between our aspirations and the work of organising to realise them. It's a simple answer: ignore the gap, explore your own inner space, have no truck with the world of men and patriarchy, create your own alternatives now, and the oppressive structures which confine women will tumble down like a pack of cards in a conjuring trick.

At a time like this when we're having to fight desperately to stop our limited rights being taken away by dinosaurs like Corrie, it's an attractive solution. But we won the fight against Corrie, and we can win the others too, we can build our own futures for ourselves — but only if we clearly see who our enemies and our allies are.

Men and women will be found fighting together on both sides of the barricades. We need visions to sustain us, to take us forward; I think Mary Daly would spin us down dead ends. In the end, there's no escaping the fact that if you want to grow your own roses, you have to shovel shit as well.

Lin James



GEMMA



GEMMA is a national group for disabled and able-bodied lesbians. Why? Because just as women with disability are not always recognised as having sexuality, so nobody considers that a disabled woman might be gay. Just as disabled people are not all integrated into society, so disabled lesbians are not participating in gay life.

In the first place we have difficulty in getting information about gay publications and the gay scene (if any) in our neighbourhood. A partially sighted lesbian only a couple of years ago came upon a list of gay groups and meetings by sheer chance and could hardly believe all this had been going on for years without her knowledge. Radio, TV and the papers are not exactly full of positive and useful information about gays — some local papers refuse Gemma ads on grounds that they're 'family' papers. Well, we live in families (though some of us live alone or in residential hostels for disabled) and not all of us can 'come out' to the people we live with and ask their help in finding gay friends. Some of us cannot write letters for ourselves, or need help telephoning. Dis-

abled people feel vulnerable—we can't easily clear off somewhere else if the people we live with, having learned of our sexuality, disapprove and become unpleasant about it.

So, contact needs to be discreet in many cases, and an enquirer must be sure her wishes will be respected as to how and when she meets other gays. Gemma is a linking group, we put disabled lesbians in touch with their nearest gay groups, give information about publications and members offer to write or arrange meetings if this is what the enquirer wishes. Our aim is to enable her to participate in the gay community as much or as little as she wants.

We're not a counselling or dating service, the most we can do is try to increase the friendship circle of disabled lesbians so there is more chance of meeting someone compatible, if that is what she wants. Members range from 18 to 77 years.

This year we are preparing for 1981, which is International Year of Disabled People. *Sequel* magazine has invited us to contribute a Disabled Gay Women's Guide page to their Guide (is this a scoop, the first ever disabled lesbians' Guide???) and we look forward to helping produce a Disabled Gays Guide for 1981 with the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. Members will be asked to report on access and facilities for disabled in public and gay venues in their town.

In conclusion I'd like to ask women's groups to make the effort to contact disabled women — and if you have someone who can sign for deaf people, if you produce information on cassette, if your meetings are wheelchair-accessible, please state these facts in all your publicity. We disabled women can contribute much to groups in the way of support, ideas and practical help — more of us will join you if you make us feel welcome and expected

For quarterly newsletter and information about quarterly London meetings please send SAE to Gemma BM Box 5700, London WC1V 6XX.
Elsa Beckett

The strike is over but the wives are still workers

Dear Womens Voice,

I teach in a comprehensive school in East London and at our last union meeting (NUT) the steel workers from Stocksbridge came to discuss the strike and seek our support.

We were actually told the strikers' wives would be talking to the meeting but were soon corrected. They are women steel workers, but for some unknown reason find it very difficult to get acceptance as such. They are always referred to as, 'wives'. Apparently, they've been to places like the Daily Mirror to attempt to publicise their side of things, have stressed that they are real live steel workers and were still reported as wives. Can't the public accept that women work alongside men in steel?

The meeting was lively, lots of questions and discussion. Some of the details and facts that emerged visibly shook us. For example, that ISTC isn't paying any strike pay, that families without children don't get any social security benefits, that whole families work for British Steel and are consequently all on strike without any income at all, that bills and mortgages are being paid by bank loans, and that when all this is over not only will the loans have to be repaid, but all the interest too.

So who's making a fat profit out of all this? Yes, those lucrative leeches with record profits, banks. One of the women said the only way to survive is to lock up house and tour the country fund-raising, feeling deprived and homesick. They've been to see Bill Sirs, but he's OK as his wife has apparently got a small legacy to tide them over. Lucky man, but what about his members? It would be a tragedy if the steel workers were starved back to work, not only for them and their struggle, but for all of us who oppose Thatcher and her lunatic measures. We've all got to defeat this government to preserve our jobs, hospitals, and everything else we value.

Our meeting ended on an uplifting note. When the chairperson asked for final contributions from the floor, an NUT member offered, as he put it, 'the best contribution we can make at this time, money'. We collected over £40, and intend

to collect more. But most important, all those myths about strikers being scroungers were well and truly shattered.

Jill Brownbill,
East London

More Gloom

Dear Womens Voice,

Though I really appreciated your article 'What is the coil?' (March Issue) I felt the whole thing was very one sided—full of negativity and gloom.

At present there are few alternatives to choose from in contraception. I feel many reading the article will proceed to rule out the coil, which to me seems terrible.

Of course I am aware the coil is not the perfect answer, but what is?

Karen With
Reading

Flexitime

Dear Womens Voice

I really must disagree with Lyn Turner's conclusion concerning flexible working hours (March *Womens Voice*). Far from being some evil trap engineered by management to exercise greater control over workers, as she claims, it surely is an arrangement long fought for by trade unions for the benefit of workers.

Of course, it hasn't shortened the working week and nobody said that it would; of course it hasn't changed the system. A great deal still has to be done to improve conditions and women's attitudes to their work. But to try to deter women from seeking flexitime is unnecessary and shortsighted.

Surely it would be better if Lyn Turner had advocated that workers make sure their voice is heard in negotiations on flexitime and, that concessions on casual leave for medical treatment and/or other special leave arrangements are not jeopardised by its introduction.

We have had flexitime for about four years now in our offices (Post Office Telecomes) and I know if you asked anyone working here if they wanted to return to a standard working day, the answer would be a unanimous no!

LETTERS



GIVE CHILDREN THEIR RIGHTS

Dear *Womens Voice*,
Jean Gribbin's article in your April issue seemed to suggest that an illegitimate child still has one legitimate parent—the mother. I have known of at least one case where a single parent was refused a dependent grant for her child when she claimed a grant from her local authority to enable her to take up her university place. She was told to claim Supplementary Benefit for the child.

If she had been divorced or possibly even separated but accepted as the child's supporting parent she would have been given a grant which would have covered the whole year for the child even though her own grant like those of all first degree students would have covered only part of the year. Is this type of discrimination being applied nationally or only by particularly mean grant authorities?

I do not feel we should be trapped into defending the existing status of illegitimate children or unmarried mothers as they have currently neither

status nor rights. Should we indeed be defending the rights of any parent? It is children who need to be given rights with the role of parents changing to that of an older mentor who can ensure that the child is receiving what he/she needs for growth.

Surely our laws for children must be child based and not as they are now—parent based. Women are just beginning to break the legal presumption that they are owned by a man. Let us not put our children further in to this trap. Would it be possible under the new proposals for the rapist who impregnates to claim his legal rights as a father? The only society worth working for is one which recognises the fact that our children are our only future. We need the potential every child offers urgently and every future law relating to children should show this clearly. What is important is not who was there at the beginning of a child's existence but who is prepared to nurture it.

Anne Duggan,
Leeds

Woman who ate biscuit held for 8 hours

A HUNGRY cafeteria worker who took a small packet of biscuits was "deeply distressed" by the sequel, it was said at Manchester.

Alice Crawford, aged 39, never late in 12 years, was kept in a security office for three hours and dismissed

Forking out £1.60 a pound for posh spuds
MRS. CLARK said entered as a del. In the Manchester store people will always buy Jer. sets because they have a good taste better. they really do like it.

Watch out-there's a spud about!

Dear *Womens Voice*

I thought the two recent clippings from the Manchester Evening News may be of interest to *Womens Voice* readers. They seem to me to typify the difference between the working class and the idle class.

On the one hand a woman is paying £9.60 for just six pounds of spuds. On the other hand is a hard working woman treated like a hardened criminal just because she felt peckish and ate a small packet of biscuits at the cafe where she worked.

No doubt the first woman could afford to spend on spuds what the second probably spends on a whole weeks food for her family due to tax evasions and the job perks of her husband—and I bet he doesn't get rushed off in a black maria if he has a whole meal at the firms expenses!

Pat Jones,
Stockport

It has, in my view, contributed to a freer working atmosphere, not least because all the old hassles over being late have been done away with. It enables workers to choose their starting and finishing times each day; workers can avoid the worst of the rush hour travelling; they can make use themselves of peaks and troughs in their work; and yes, lets face it, it does help women

who have homes and children to cope better with their own job.

OK, it's not the ideal solution but we all know how long it is going to take to change both men's and women's attitudes to women's work. So don't deny the benefits that flexitime arrangements can bring to workers while we still have to live with the present set-up.

Veronica Dawson,
Taunton, Somerset.

Rape Crisis

Dear *Womens Voice*,

The information on the Leeds Rape Crisis Centre in March *Womens Voice* is out of date. Our telephone number is now Leeds (0532) 440058 and the phoneline is open between 10am and midnight every day. Our service is run by women for women and is free and confidential.

We will talk to any woman or girl who has been raped, sexually assaulted or threatened; whether the man responsible was a stranger, friend, or relative. We give any emotional support or legal or medical information that is needed; it is up to the woman involved whether we meet her in person or talk over the phone. If a woman needs to go to the doctor, special clinic, or court, or wants to report an attack to the police, we offer to accompany her.

We are trying to get in touch with sympathetic doctors and solicitors in the Yorkshire area (preferably female) who are willing to help us in our work; if you can help, please get in touch.

We are always willing to give talks in and around Yorkshire about our work; so get in touch with us if the women in your trade union, tenants' association, women's group want one of us to come and speak. You can phone us up or write to:

The Leeds Rape Crisis Centre,
P.O. Box 27
Leeds LS27EG.

Any financial donations, however small, are always appreciated and put to very good use as we are always short of money.

Leeds Rape Crisis Centre

Dear *Womens Voice*,

We are doing some work on sexual harassment at work and wondered if you knew of any women who had made complaints against their employers or fellow employees—and if so what has been the outcome of the complaint?

Anne Torode,
Tyneside Rape Crisis Centre
PO Box
Tyneside P O Box 13, Gosforth

Dear Jane

Most people choose to have relationships in which they stay sexually faithful to one other person. Some of us choose that because we think that it is the best way to live, some because it is the only practical way to order our lives and relationships. This choice is not always entirely freely made. There are huge pressures on people to opt for conventional relationships, and housing, jobs, child care and so on can make choosing any kind of shared or communal living arrangements impossible.

If we do choose to live in a one-to-one relationship, then we often find that trying to live within the boundaries we have set ourselves creates conflicts and problems.

Jealousy, especially over a partner being involved in

other sexual and emotional relationships can be threatening and painful. This is one of the reasons that people opt to have relationships in which they remain sexually faithful, even if they do not see this as an ideal way to live. Making such a decision is not always the end of the matter. Being a one person person isn't always plain sailing.

Another person may seem attractive sexually or emotionally, which can be a source of conflict. It isn't possible to switch off from people that we meet. We are not sexual and emotional automatons. The biggest problem is how it will affect the existing relationship. It can cause us to wonder if there is something lacking or wrong with our 'permanent' relationship. Because choosing one person is such

a huge 'investment' it seems that there may be no room or time to get to know or to care deeply about other people. The 'all or nothingness' of being faithful automatically seems to class feelings that we have for other people as secondary and inferior. There seems to be no room to share out good feelings of warmth, emotion or sexual response to more than one person without threatening our partner, or saying that what you feel for others must take a less important role.

Living within a one-to-one relationship is not the simple choice between one person and all others, but something far more complex. If we feel that being faithful to one person is a vital part of that relationship, then it affects the way that we relate to the

perceive others.

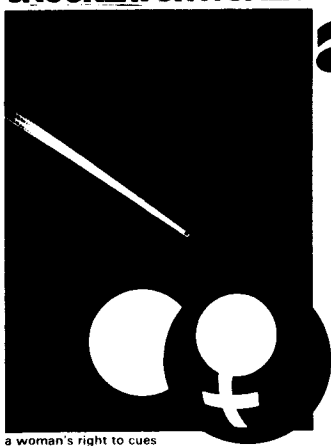
The decisions that follow our feelings are hard to make. We may feel that we are denying ourselves if we cannot develop relationships with more than one person, on the other hand we may feel that there is so much invested in, and so much importance attached to our partner, that other feelings or responses must be measured against that.

Whatever peoples individual solutions to problems within faithful relationships, it is an area where the personal borders on the political, and where our ideas about family, marriage and relationships may seem to contradict our ideals. I would welcome readers thoughts on the subject.

JANE FOSTER

You're Worried

SNOOKER FOR WOMEN



BEHIND THE story of ERICCA, the campaign for womens right in working men's clubs, lies another story, a story of snooker.

Sheila Capstick lives in Wakefield. Her husband is a miner and a member of Wakefield City Working Men's Club. Sheila, as his wife, is a half-member. In the Club there's a games room with a snooker table. Sheila learned to play snooker, taught by her husband and for three years they played regularly at the club. No problem.

Then in March 1979 began a rumour. The Club committee was going to invoke an old club law prohibiting women from playing snooker.

'I couldn't believe it' said Sheila. 'I went straight to the

a woman's right to cues

committee to find out if it was true. They denied knowing anything about it but a few days later this notice went up forbidding women to play.

'I was furious. Back I went to find out what was going on. They said there was nothing they could do. The rules had to be obeyed, and anyway I was only a woman so there was no reason why I should be allowed to play.'

Not being one to sit back and accept such blatant discrimination, Sheila began to campaign for Snooker for Women.

She went out onto the streets gathering support and collecting names on a petition aimed at the Wakefield City Club.

A demonstration was arranged in October at which they would hand in their 2000 name petition to the Club

management. They planned to stay for an hour or so outside the club, making their point to those going in, hand in their petition and leave.

'There were about 50 of us here. It was a dreadful night, pouring with rain, thunder, lightning. When we got to the Club, the management committee were all wearing T-shirts saying 'I'm a Male Chauvinist Pig'.

'We asked them to accept our petition and they simply refused. Wouldn't even listen to us. So we stayed outside in the storm singing and shouting.

'Eventually they called the police.

'This copper came up and asked me if I were planning to stay long. I explained why we were there and told him, we'd stay all night if necessary, until they accepted our petition.

'So he went into the club and

eventually he re-emerged with the secretary who snatched the petition out of our hands without a word and stormed back inside. They destroyed it without even looking at it.

'That was how ERICCA came into being. We adjourned to the pub to talk over our demonstration. We all felt very good about it. It was a real morale booster but somehow it wasn't enough. The question of discrimination in clubs goes much deeper.'

Snooker is symbolic of the attitude to women in clubs. They are only tolerated as half members, unworthy of being more, unworthy of playing snooker.

The shame of it is that snooker is by-and-large only played in clubs. In pubs its pool, the tables are smaller and take up less bar space. It's clubs that have the facilities to provide special games rooms large enough to accommodate snooker tables.

Sheila now plays in the Bellvue Liberal Club, but that is at their discretion.

It's time discretion was ended in clubs. After all, it is a woman's right to cues.

Mary Ann Stuart

SPORT

TALES WE TELL OUR SISTERS



A typists lot

by Sarah Stone

FOR THE last eight weeks I've been on a TOPS course, training to be a shorthand typist at Sight and Sound, a commercial college. It's a battery hen existence. You are taught by tapes. The only male presence in the place is that of a disembodied voice on your headphones giving shorthand theory, dictation, and spelling out the letters to type at ever increasing speeds.

We tend to fantasise about this voice. I reckon it belongs to James Parkes—one of the co-founders of Sight and Sound, who invented their audio-visual system of teaching after being given typing lessons as therapy when suffering shell shock from a torpedo attack!

I have learnt to type and take shorthand, but not to contain my irritation at the attitude to women that the course conveys. It could be intentional. Maybe the office world is full of petty sexism. The earliest example was plausible enough. One of the first phrases the voice in the machine dictated was: 'Type the memo quickly, pet', but it still irked. "Yes," I thought, "type the memo, pet, you domesticated animal you. Type it quickly because time is precious."

Anyway, the shorthand became more complex. We started to receive the gospel

according to Mr Sight and Sound—little aphorisms to translate into shorthand such as: 'I never met a woman who was a good cook, who was divorced, unmarried or even widowed.' Well, now we know the secret of how to get our man. Maybe I should change to a catering course. Worse was to come. These were, after all, only the pithy sayings of a man the war had treated badly. Then the secretarial training began. For some reason personal appearance figured largely in this; lessons were devoted to it. Little tips like 'bathe regularly' and 'remember if you wear nail polish, make sure it matches your clothes.'

We liked this one: 'Neatness: wear light natural make up and have conservatively styled clothing and hair do.'

We were shown cartoons to guide us towards the kind of looks we should cultivate in our new occupation. Of course Painted Dolly was the one to avoid, and Well Groomed Sue, obviously part of the Jaeger set (on her wages?) was the paragon of the three. But Plain Jane mystified us. What is wrong with short straight hair, no make up and glasses?

Mind you, some of the advice was so peculiar that a sort of game started: find the pettiest piece of advice. Joint winners were:

■ Interviews: our advice is not to cross your legs.

■ Telephone calls: your tone of voice is important when making a call—SMILE!

We found out what happened to unsmiling, Plain Jane when she somehow did manage to get a job, by the way. One letter dictation complained of a secretary who was very status conscious and resented making her boss a cup of coffee. 'She feels she is far too important to do such menial tasks.' Well, she had to go, didn't she?

Somehow, I don't think I'm going to make the grade either.

The course has helped me to build up a picture of the sort of person that I should have to be in the office world: a submissive, clean, well-dressed, well-spoken, smiling, not-too-sexy, not-too-drab tea-maker! My duties will be filing, typing (immaculately), taking dictation (have you ever thought

about that word?), taking phone calls and receiving visitors—possibly telling them little white lies to protect the boss, keeping an engagement diary, reminding the boss of anything from an appointment to his wife's birthday.

It reminds me of housework, in a way. You complete it one day, only to be assailed the next day by exactly the same tasks—you never actually get anywhere.

Being a secretary has been 'women's work' for over fifty years. There are Company Secretaries who are mostly men but they are not quite the same thing. Similarly the work done by the County Clerk is not to be confused with most clerking jobs.

Secretarial posts used to be a male bastion—from the time when clerics administered for the medieval church—to the middle of the nineteenth century. With the Industrial Revolution, the rapidly expanding world of industry and commerce lowered the barriers and let women enter the office—for all the usual reasons, a shortage of qualified men, and lower wage demands from women.

But women didn't exactly take on the jobs previously done by men. The whole structure of office work was altered so that women were allotted the routine and subservient functions whilst men were 'freed' for higher things—middle management and specializations which became professions like accountancy, personnel work, etc, and the gulf in terms of status and pay between these positions and the mainly female side is still growing.

One final scene: two of us were given a shorthand dictation test by a member of staff. It started: 'Some men are always in the news. Their faces smiling at us from newspapers and tv screens as they dash from one high-powered meeting to another. The interesting thing is that all these men say, without any doubt, that they could not cope with their fast moving businesses and social lives without the help of one vital person—their . . . SECRETARY . . .'

At this point the test was abandoned as we were both laughing so much . . . but is it so funny?

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** Women's Voice meets fortnightly. Phone Maggie 021 449 4793
- **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM** Women's Voice meets fortnightly. Phone Jill 021 459 1718
- **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.
- **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.
- **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 Women's 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 11am - 12 noon, Co-op arcade on the Precinct.

● **HAMMERSMITH** Womens Voice meets regularly. Contact Kate 748-7336 for details and babysitter.

● **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 regularly. Ring Morag 348 2060 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** Women's Voice meets alternative Wednesdays. Details and babysitters. Ring Jane 421266

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

● **MEDWAY** Womens Voice meets regularly. Telephone Lici, Medway 571628

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

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

● **NORWICH** Womens Voice for more information write c/o 56 St Benedicts St. Norwich.

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

● **OXFORD** Womens Voice meets fortnightly. Phone Oxford 50437 for more details.

● **PIMLICO** area Womens Voice—phone Helen 7307983 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.

● **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** Women's Voice meets alternative Tuesdays at 8pm. Phone Pauline 521 4768 or Mary Ann 520 3025.

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

WV public meetings

CAMBRIDGE Womens Voice The Tory Employment Bill, its attacks on women. Speaker and discussion, Thursday 29 May, 8pm, Mawson Hall, Mawson Rd (off Mill Rd) contact Patricia Cambridge 68226 for more details.

CENTRAL LONDON Womens Voice public meeting Do Women need Socialist organisations? Speaker: Robyn Dacey, Thursday, 8 May, 7.30pm, Prince Albert pub, Wharfedale Rd (near Kings Cross Station)

ILKESTON Womens Voice public meetings: Women in the Home, Tuesday 6 May Women's Health, Tuesday 20 May.

For meeting places, babysitters, lifts, contact Shirly 327908 or Jeannie 303723 or write to Box 21, Ilkeston, Derbys.

SOUTH LONDON Womens Voice Day Conference for all south London groups and WV readers

St Anne's Hall, Venn St, Clapham SW4 10 - 4pm. For further details ring Linda 674 7211

FEMINIST EDUCATION GROUP A course of 10 weekly lectures at The Drill Hall, 16 Chenies St, WC1 16 April - 18 June. Wednesdays, 7.30pm - 9.30pm. Fee £12. Phone Feminist Education Group 202 6610 or 202 3024 or write 55 Station Rd, Hendon NW4.

NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN CONFERENCE

MAY 17 - 18
THE BELLVUE CENTRE
LEEDS 6

Registration:

c/o LEEDS NAC
Flat 1 Bellvue House
Bellvue Rd
Leeds 3

£4 waged

£2 unwaged (Hardship fund available for people who are financially embarrassed)

SANDRA



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.

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