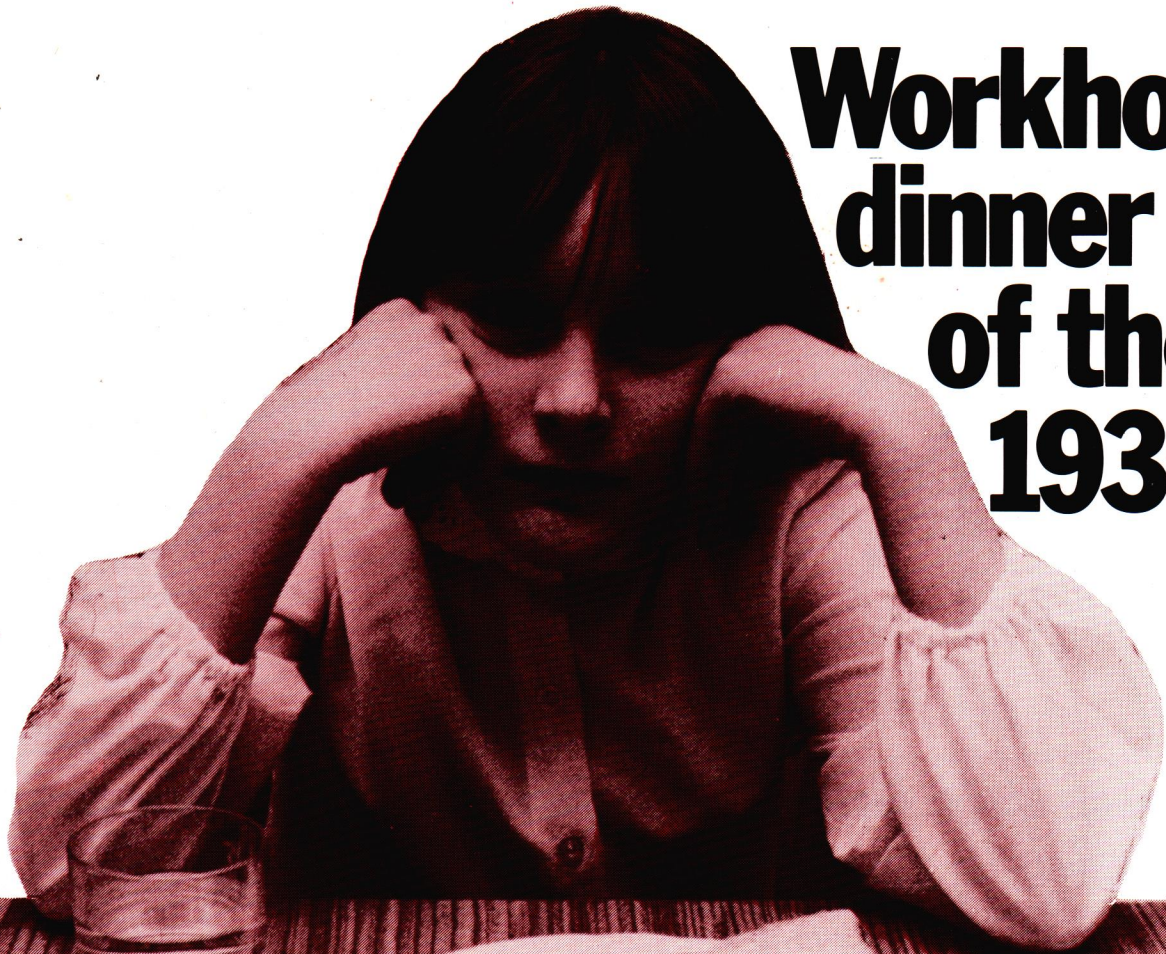


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March '81 Issue 50 Price 25p

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dinner
of the
1930's...**



the school meal of the 1980's

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BOOKMARXCLUB Winter '81

This is the list for the first quarter of 1981. You may join for the quarter simply by selecting books to the value of £6.50 or more at book club prices (heavy type)—the normal retail price is in brackets. Books may be collected from Bookmarks or will be sent by post.

1 **Southern Africa After Zimbabwe** £2.20 (2.95) by Alex Callinicos. Black rule in Zimbabwe and how apartheid in South Africa is being undermined by a wave of worker and student struggles.
2 **Ireland, from Civil Rights to Civil War** £2.90 (3.95) by O'Dowd, Tomlinson and Rolston. Shows that the contradictions in the policies of the British state are an integral part of the problem in Northern Ireland.
3 **Stuart Hood on Television** (£2.20) (2.95) Looks at the way words and images used by TV are chosen
4 **If This A Man/Truce** £1.40 (1.75) by Primo Levi. An Italian partisan captured in 1943, describes his deportation to Auschwitz and his trip back after liberation
5 **Xantho and the Robots** 75p (95) by Sheila MacLeod. Role of emotions explored through attempts to programme robots to respond to them.
6 **Blood of Spain, The Experience of the Civil War 1936/9** £3.95 (4.95) by Ronald Frazer. Possibly the best history of the Civil War told by those who took part.
7 **Who's Watching You?** £1.20 (1.50) by Crispin Aubrey. Countless examples of surveillance demonstrate the existence of an arm of state committed to the status quo.

8 **Ever Since Darwin: Reflections on Natural History** £1.20 (1.50) by Stephen Gould. Witty and readable articles about the links between biological and social theory
9 **The Word for World is Forest** 75p (95) by Ursula Le Guin. Imperialism, American style, explored through Science Fiction.
10 **Hear This Brother** £1.10 (1.50) by Anna Coote and Peter Kellner. Stuffed with up-to-date figures about how women are discriminated against.
11 **Emigrants** £2.20 (2.95) by George Lamming. This novel describes the

experiences of four West Indian men newly arrived in Britain.
12 **A Great Love** £2.00 (2.50) by Alexandra Kollontai. A story of a love affair, and two related essays.
13 **Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution** £2.80 (3.50) Ivy Pinchbeck's classic work on the subject
14 **Unity is Strength** £2.20 (2.95) From the Latin American Bureau, a study of the working class in Latin America.
15 **What Price Happiness, My Life from Coal Hewer to Shop Steward** 60p (75p) by Dick Beavis. Autobiography

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ROSA LUXEMBURG



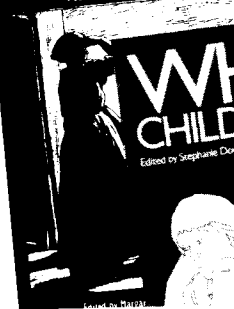
TONY CLIFF

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Before she was murdered in Berlin during the German Revolution of 1919, Rosa Luxemburg made important contributions to socialist and Marxist thinking - on the role of the party, on imperialism, on the importance of strikes, on reform and revolution. This is a short account of her life and thought.

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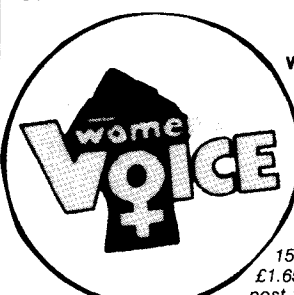


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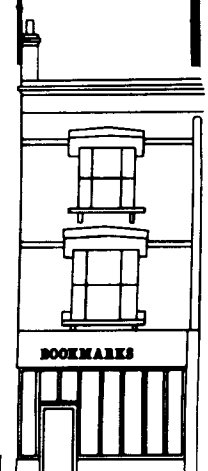
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Red, silver and black.

20p each plus 15p postage, £1.65 for ten post free



OUR POINT OF VIEW

Discount Sainsbury

A BILL to restrict the display of pornography in shop windows is being proposed in Parliament by Timothy Sainsbury, a Conservative MP.

Most pornography simply presents women as passive objects to be bought. It assumes that women have no other role in life. We are against pornography for that gross misrepresentation of women. We are against it because it reinforces divisions between men and women.

But we cannot support the Sainsbury Bill for two main reasons. Firstly, it does not attempt to argue that pornography is degrading, but merely says, 'let's hide it away under the counter'. This Bill is a throwback to Victorian morality, and represents the most reactionary ideas about sex.

Secondly, we cannot support state censorship. Attempts to inform people about their sexuality

to give them greater pleasure from sex are opposed just as much by the morality brigade as pornography. The state might ban the overt display of pornography, and its next step might be to ban the sale of Womens Voice or Socialist Worker on the streets.

The Sainsbury Bill is not going to stop the sale of magazines which present women as mere sexual objects. It ignores, some of the worst offenders of sexist stereotyping—advertising and the media. Our job is not to give support to a reactionary law, but to argue with people at work and people we live with, and to fight the forces of reaction which encourage, both economically and politically, pornography and sexual stereotyping.

A miner problem

THE MINERS have won. Faced with the prospect of a national strike against closures, Margaret Thatcher and the Tories said they had withdrawn their plans. Why?

The miners had declared their intention to fight for their right to work. That alone would have severely disrupted industry. But a national miners strike would have involved more than miners. The policies which wanted pit closures are the same policies which have already destroyed our

health service, forced unemployment to 2½ million, and attacked womens rights on an unprecedented scale.

A miners strike would have united miners, unemployed, women and men in their opposition to the Tories. That's precisely what happened in 1974 when their strike brought down a Tory government. It could have happened again. The Tories caved in because they are still scared of us.

womens
Voice

Womens magazine of the
Socialist Workers Party

womens
Voice

March '81 Issue 50 Price 25p



the school meal of the 1980's

Cover photo Henryka Hanzlik
Back cover by Jill Brownbill

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'I'm on this demo because I hate Tories'



John Sturrock

OVER 80,000 people gathered in Glasgow for the biggest demonstration Scotland has seen for many years. Many had never been to a demonstration before. There was a really good atmosphere, a sense of unity, a feeling that the fightback is spreading. Despite the freezing cold and snow the message was clear: Thatcher out. For once even the police looked benevolent.

Carrying a Right to Work placard, Janet Moore, a member of the civil servants' union in a DHSS office told *Womens Voice* 'I'm on the demo because I hate the Tories. Where I come from — Ayrshire — unemployment is very bad. We used to have a great mining industry, now we have nothing. Demos don't do enough on their own but it shows the unity of workers and non-workers.' Anne-Marie Shields and Angela Cavanagh from Cumbernauld said they were on a Job Creation Scheme at Secretarial College where they are treated like

kids. 'We're 18 years old and get £23.50 a week. Bus fares cost £10 a week. For every job here there's 20 chasing it. It's terrible to have to leave your home to try and get work. We think something positive should be done after this demo. Someone should go and hijack Margaret Thatcher. We reckon an all out general strike like in the 1920's—that's what we have to do.' Half submerged under a pile of Socialist Workers she was selling Jane McLenechan from Paisley said, 'Tony Benn wouldn't do a hell of a lot more

than this crew for us. The Labour left wouldn't carry out the politics they're talking about. All they've ever done is talk—it was the Labour Party that did the job of getting the Tories to Parliament. The way to fight redundancies isn't by waiting for the next election but by doing what the women in the Lee Jeans Factory in Greenock have done. They give the lie to the myth that women aren't interested in their jobs and are only working for pin money. A woman's right to work is just as important as men's.' Penny Packham

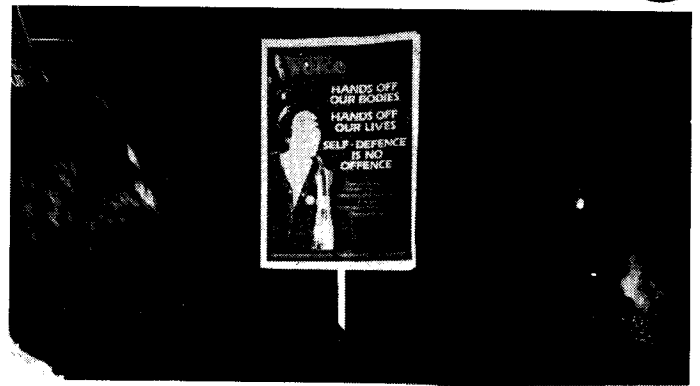
I DON'T SWEAR — BUT I'D LIKE TO

ANNE WILSON is a kitchen assistant at Esk Valley College in Mid Lothian. Before she worked there she was a home help. Anne is 57 years old and has been a National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) shop steward for 21 years. She was interviewed by Penny Packham.

'I work 35 hours a week and walk out with £38.05. It's not a paying wage at all by the time your superannuation and all is paid. If you're single you come out with £36.62. Quite a lot of the staff here have to pay their bus fares off their wages. Counting it all up in the week, Penny, it's a lot of money. The bus fares were coming down 20 per cent, but the Secretary of State stepped in and put them up 15 per cent instead. We're just going to get a 7½ per cent rise. That doesn't even cover the rates. They've just gone up 15 per cent, and next year it'll be 100 per cent! They should've brought them down for the working class. And the school meals—look what they're doing down in England—make no mistake it'll happen here.

'For the miners I'd have brought the women here out in full force if I'd been asked. In full sympathy. It's happened at the right time for the water men, to give them confidence. We can't do without water and they're very, very low paid.

'I'm going on the demo in Glasgow on Saturday to see what Michael Foot has to say about all this unemployment. I'm looking to the future and my grandsons. What future is there for the young ones? I can't see there being any jobs. At least, on Saturday, we'll be recognised because there'll be a massive turnout. Everybody's really fed-up with the cutbacks, Penny. You're never sure of your job. It's a very depressing time for everybody and see the Tories, I dinnae swear, but I'd like to. Thatcher has got the right name—the Iron Lady. To me she's just pathetic. She's just sitting there lining her pockets. She's not walking out with £38 anyway!'



What a demo!

NEARLY 2000 women, from places as far afield as Hull, Middlesbrough, and Portsmouth, supported the Reclaim the Night demonstration in London on the evening of Saturday 21 February.

The demonstration, organised by the National Union of Students, sang and chanted its way from the Thames Embankment via Fleet Street (where a letter of protest at media abuse of women was handed in to the offices of the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* newspapers) to Leicester Square, on the edge of Soho's sex-shop land.

The police did not allow the marchers to carry torches, but banners, WV placards and a barrage of noise made it impos-

sible to ignore the march.

As crowds of theatre and cinema-goers stopped to watch, smile encouragement or (in the case of some groups of men), jeer, hundreds of leaflets were handed out to explain what the march was about.

A rally was held back at the Embankment, with speakers from NUS, Womens Aid, and Womens Voice. Everyone agreed that the march had been a great success, which had, for a couple of hours at least, 'Reclaimed the Night' for women in London and given them the confidence to go on demanding the right to walk the streets at night free from fear.

Susan Pearce

LEAVE OUR JOBS ALONE



John Sturrock

TEN YEARS ago the big American VF Corporation opened a factory in Greenock, near Glasgow, to make Lee Jeans. It was sited beside a sprawling housing estate on the edge of the town, which meant it had plenty of jobs for women, close to home and schools. These jobs gave hope to an area which even then was suffering from high unemployment.

Ten years on the hopes of the 240 Lee workers have been shattered. Their bosses have decided to close the factory and move the work to the company's three Irish factories.

Maybe because they were on short time or maybe because nearly all of them were women, management thought it would be a pushover. They were wrong...

The workers, members of the Garment Workers Union (NUTGW), have occupied the factory—24 hours a day. No stock or machinery is moving. Since they have half a million pounds worth of jeans in the factory, they have a powerful weapon.

Their families are supporting them, drivers and postmen are refusing to cross the picket line,

but the women realise they cannot win on their own. They plan to visit other workplaces to collect for their strike fund and gather support.

They have already shown that a couple of hundred women are in the front of the fight to save jobs. If they win it can help hold back the flow of job losses and help build the fight against the Thatcher government.

What you can do:

Raise the occupation in your workplace/trade union branch. Send a message of support and a collection.

Visit local workplaces in your area, asking for their support for the occupation.

We are producing leaflets and stickers explaining what's happening and why the women should be supported. Send for yours: **£1 per 100 leaflets plus 30p postage. Stickers 40p a sheet including postage.**

Glasgow WV (from a *Fulcrum* put into local factories in Glasgow)

Hospital staff stop closure

LONGWORTH is a long-stay geriatric hospital outside Oxford. The Area Health Authority want to cut 13 beds and move the patients to a short-stay hospital. This would mean that beds for patients who genuinely need short term care would not be available, and those who need a long-term care will be forced back to their families.

The workers are determined to stop this threat to their jobs and their community and have occupied the hospital and operated a 24 hour picket on the gates. After attempting to break the occupation by moving staff and failing to replace them, the AHA has tried to move patients by pretending to send them on 'holiday', they then resorted to forcibly removing 4 elderly patients.

The Occupation Committee is continuing to fight, demanding that patients be referred to Longworth from another local hospital. The local branch of COHSE is supporting this



Women in Gloucester occupy their local paper, the *Citizen*, in protest at the cutting of lollipop women who help their kids across the road.

Since the occupation over 400 mothers and supporters have picketed the local council and won a minor victory. The council aren't cutting *all* the lollipop women now—but they are looking for other areas to cut.

demand, but if the National Executive of COHSE had given more support the AHA couldn't have behaved in this manner in the first place.

On the day the hospital was closed, Lady McCarthy, Chairwoman of the AHA and member of the local Labour Party, attempted to hold a press conference to gloat over their victory but it was broken up by angry staff. All messages of support and donations to Myra Bungay, 13 Bowbang, Longworth, Oxfordshire.

Oxford WV.

NAMIBIAN WOMEN ORGANISE

The South West Africa People's Organisation, SWAPO, is the Liberation Movement of Namibia which fights against control of their country by South Africa. Since 1969 the Womens Council of SWAPO has been fighting for womens political rights. Mary Williams went to meet Nankifu, a part-time worker for the Womens Council of SWAPO in Britain. She asked Nankifu why women are organising in Namibia and why her work in Britain is important.

"We want every women's organisation to understand the suffering of the people of Namibia, we want them to know that we are fighting and we want to tell them how they and we want to tell them how they can help us."

Many women in Namibia are isolated in the rural areas or in the townships. The men are working on 18 month or two year contracts in South African owned uranium or diamond mines or in foreign owned industries. The women live by growing what crops they can (the best land was taken from them by colonial settlers), or by taking a job as a domestic servant for a rich family in the towns.

From the beginning SWAPO realised the importance of mobilising women. It has taken a few years to convince the women of the need for their support. Nankifu explained "Women in Namibia have been

frightened. South African troops have raped us, tortured us and accused us of harbouring SWAPO members, they have burnt houses and destroyed food as a means of destroying SWAPO."

The task of mobilising women is a task for women. Women have always done the lions share of the cultivating, preparation of food and the childcare. The German colonial system and now the South Africans are only manipulating a division which existed already. "We have to be involved in the struggle in a way which takes account of our needs as women, and we have to be sure that the equality we achieve in the struggle against South Africa is not taken away from us when the struggle is over."

This is why the 1980 SWAPO Womens Congress is so important. "It is the first Womens Congress that we held and for the first time we are electing our own officials. We discussed openly the problems we have of ensuring that womens issues are taken up in SWAPO." I asked her how the women intended to do this, "We must keep up the momentum of the women's struggle in Namibia, and keep the issues alive in the minds of women. We also rely on you. We rely on the support of women's groups throughout the world, they are sharing the same problems and together we must find the solutions."

GAY RIGHTS AT WORK CONFERENCE

**MARCH 28
SHEFFIELD**

pass this motion:

This branch recognises that gay people need positive encouragement to defend themselves against victimisation at work. We call on the union to publicise the work of the Gay Rights at Work Committee, undertake to distribute its material through the branch, and agree to sponsor the conference in Sheffield on 28th March 1981.

Donations to 7 Pickwick Court, London SE9

BPC march on



Andrew Wlard Report

BPC occupiers march through central London, joined by 200 journalists and trade unionists from the area in support of their dispute.

THE LOCKED out NUJ members fighting redundancies at BPC have heard little except rumours from their management. There seems to be a possibility that Robert Maxwell of Pergamon Press will put in a bid for their company — and despite his 'membership' of

ASTMS, his track record as an employer is very similar to that of Rupert Murdoch. A 'concession' from him might well mean that the threat of redundancy is lifted — for a few months.

But morale is still high in the occupation and on the picket lines. On 9 February, 350 peo-

ple took the dispute out of the office block occupation and on to the streets as they marched from Bedford Square through the heart of publishing land to Covent Garden. The march brought together all the NUJ book branch chapels, who handed in a joint letter of support to BPC's head office. The march aroused a lot of interest from passers by — you don't often see placards and bannets in Bloomsbury!

The march showed that while the BPC management might want to hide away "to sort out their financial problems", their workers are still fighting for their jobs and for their union organisation. Tom Macafee from Gardners brought down a donation of £100 for the dispute in a magnificent display of solidarity last month — a reminder that organisation, determination and solidarity saved jobs at Gardners. The same qualities can defend a woman's right to work at BPC. They've got the organisation and the determination... we have to help supply the solidarity.

There are regular pickets on the Macdonald Futura (BPC) offices at Shepherdess Walk and on the BPC building in Worship Street. If you can't get down to the picket lines — where help is needed urgently — then send your messages of support and donations to the BPC Chapel, c/o NUJ Book Branch, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

Maddy Cooper
Hackney WV

NEWS TV toddlers strike

GRANADA TV WORKERS in London are fighting to save a workplace creche which they won three years ago. They went on one-day strike in London last month.

The creche was originally opened on an 'experimental' basis. Management refused to commit themselves to permanent childcare facilities. Because of this many parents did not want to risk disrupting their children's lives by putting them in a creche which could be closed at any time. When the only child to take up a place was approaching school age, management said it would end the experiment as there was no 'demand', ignoring the fact that another child was waiting to take up the facility.

The decision to fight met with an excellent response. In London only 8 out of 50 workers are women but the men, many of whom have children of their own, gave wholehearted support to the campaign.

Last month the first ACTT (the television technicians' union) women's conference passed a resolution demanding childcare facilities as a right for all workers. The ACTT have agreed to open negotiations in support of this demand, but the workers currently taking action want creches set up for all Granada employees, not just ACTT members.

In Manchester more than 200 Granada staff held a demonstration in support of the London strike. Granada was asked to provide £7,000 to fund a creche for Granada employees together with Manchester's NALGO offices workers from the local authority and the Equal Opportunities Commission. They refused, arguing that the London creche had failed, but ignoring the fact that more than 100 people at Granada in Manchester need creche facilities. The action this week has given Granada management a taste of what is to come if they don't agree to the demands.

Anne Rogers
Liz Bloor



Nick Oakes IFL

Action has been escalating over the Camden Journal dispute in an attempt to force management to negotiate over the closure of the paper and the sacking of nine journalists. In an act of defiance to Priors 'six pickets' the National Union of Journalists have called for mass pickets of the Camden Journal's printworks in Nuneaton every Thursday. Hundreds turned up for the first show of strength, the more the merrier the next time!

Support these mass pickets—phone the Strike Committee for details of transport on 01-485 8207/8

Answering back

Scroungers?

THE DHSS is planning a tougher crackdown on what they call 'social security scroungers'. The unemployed and single parent families are to come under special scrutiny. Single mothers are to be specially investigated for 'signs of male presence', and questions will be asked of neighbours, employers and friends.

The Tories want the poor to carry the can for the mess they're making of the economy. They've *cut* benefits by a real five percent last year, and are going to cut them again this year. On top of that, they've tightened up on 'extra needs' payments—special grants for clothing or other essentials. But they want to do more than this. They also want the poor to take the blame for the mess.

The anti-scrounger campaign is *not* about saving money—it's been proved time and again that it costs more to employ snoopers than they ever reclaim. But by making a fuss about so-called scroungers, they are saying that if you're unemployed it's your own fault. If you're a single mother you should also be punished—no sex life for you, not unless you get some man to pay the rent. If you're poor, *you're* bringing the whole country down.

It's a massively expensive propaganda campaign. It diverts attention away from the people who are really responsible for unemployment and poverty—the employers and their Tory friends. They hope 'scroungers' will make easy scapegoats.

The incredible hypocrisy of the whole campaign is revealed when you look at what the Tories are doing about tax evasion. £3,500 million a year is lost by people cheating on their tax—yet the Tories are *cutting* the number of tax inspectors. Or what about employers who pay sweatshop wages below the miserable legal minimum? One in three of the shops, cafes, factories, etc inspected are found to be underpaying—cheating their mostly female employees of over £32 million a year. Yet the number of wages inspectors is being cut by a third.

Social security benefits are set at such a pathetically low level that it's almost impossible to live on them, and as benefits are cut, it's getting worse and worse. People are being forced to try and earn a bit on the side, or other little fiddles, in order to live. This money is chicken feed compared to the Vesteys fiddling their way out of millions of pounds of tax.

We don't accept that 'scroungers' are a problem. Not while Prince Philip gets £200,000 a year, just for being his wife's husband. Not while the tax avoidance experts, Rosminster, continue to have meetings at the Café Royale to consider how to market their latest tricky schemes to save the rich from paying tax. And not while some live in the lap of luxury while others have to choose between food and warmth. Those forced to live on social security are the victims of the Tories' policies—not the cause of the problem.



Young protestor fights the cuts

COUNCIL DEMO HALTS CUTS

A LARGE and vocal lobby of the Hackney Social Services Committee meeting on Friday 13th February put a stop to further cuts in some of the Borough's services.

More than 300 people—council workers, parents of children in Hackney nurseries, and kids—were crowded onto the town hall steps.

The lobby was organised by NALGO, NUPE and Hackney Under Fives, to protest against council proposals to increase charges for nurseries, telephones for the housebound, meals-on-wheels, lunch clubs, holidays and aids for the elderly and disabled, and *cut* the entire out-of-hours social work team, 25% of the staff in the Borough's day nurseries, and 5% off grants to community nurseries.

The total loss would be 130 jobs. And these proposals follow a year of cuts in Hackney's desperately inadequate social services.

But this time 200 angry demonstrators crowded into the Council chamber and made sure their elected representatives voted *against* further cuts.

The problem is—what happens next? Central government has cut the money allocation to Hackney Council. Friday's decision means that the Social Services budget will be referred back to a *closed* meeting.

Closed, that is, unless union members and supporters open it to all those it affects, and make sure the cuts they resisted so successfully on Friday 13th aren't slipped in through the back door.

Sue Finch
Broadway Market Nursery

OVER 250 women gathered in London on Saturday 21 February for the National Abortion Campaign's (NAC) forum on a woman's right to choose. The discussion was varied and lively and centred around topics like international solidarity, parliament, 'can abortion be a single issue campaign?' and loads more.

PS: Remember 14 March—NAC and Trade Unions Conference.

THE DHSS have prepared a new form for doctors to fill in after all abortions. It drops all questions which say where the abortion was carried out (NHS, Charity or Private). It also drops the questions on the occupation of the women. If this form is used it will make it impossible to find out where abortions are being carried out and who is getting them. This information is crucial when abortion facilities are threatened and the facts are needed to win the argument.

ARMAGH: SOLIDARITY DEMO FOR NEW HUNGER STRIKE

THE HUNGER strikes by Irish Republican prisoners in the H Blocks of Long Kesh and in Armagh prison ended before Christmas, when it seemed that some concessions had been won from the British Government.

But its is now clear that the concessions are *not* being implemented, so the fight for full political status must go on. The men in the H Blocks have resumed the 'dirty protest' and have announced a new hunger strike to begin on March 1st.

But what about the women in Armagh? Since the end of the hunger strike little has been said—either in the press or in the prisoners' campaign itself—about them. We have heard about the clothing issue (a demand that the women did *not* have, because they already wore their own clothes); and the vindictive treatment of the men by the screws.

But nothing on Armagh. And now we hear in the media that the women are likely to 'follow

the men' on hunger strike.

We need to fill this silence on the women. Mairead Farrell, Mary Doyle, and Mairead Nugent stood *beside*, not behind, the men in the H Blocks.

As working-class women in the Catholic areas of Belfast, they have fought the British presence in Northern Ireland through defence of their streets, through pickets of the Royal Ulster Constabulary stations; in other words, through their active involvement in the struggle. That struggle changed their lives and their own idea of themselves as women. As the ex-prisoner, Rose McAllister, said, 'Women are brave. They're the ones on the spot, and they won't budge. I thought politics were what you found in Sinn Fein. I wasn't aware that we women were making politics on the streets. That's when my eyes actually opened to the political power of women organising among themselves.'

A new book, Nell McCasserty's *The Armagh Women*, has just been taken off the market because the husband of one of the women says his wife has no right to speak about him in public.

That's what women in Ireland are up against. The Catholic church decrees they are not to use contraception, let alone abortion, and pontificates to them about being 'good wives and mothers'.

And that's why the Armagh women need our support. They are fighting not only an occupying army, but also of the values imposed upon them by the Church.

In 1979, a group of women from Dublin and Belfast organised a demonstration in solidarity with their sisters in Armagh. The RUC viciously broke it up and arrested 11.

Two of the women were imprisoned in Armagh for non-payment of fines. On International Women's Day in 1980,

over 500 people, (200 from Britain) attended a protest at the prison.

This year is even more important than last. Humphrey Atkins, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, still wants to brand the women as criminals for their fight against army and police harassment. Even the hunger strike to near-death of three women and seven men prisoners, even the fact of thousands of people marching in the streets in support of political status for them, has not made him budge an inch.

So this year we are going back to Armagh on March 8th. We are going there to show the women inside that we support them. We shall not let them be forgotten.

Marnie Holborow

• The weekend delegation to Armagh is organised by the International Women's Day Organising Committee. For details tel: Eileen Lochran on 0001 629 625.



OUR CONFERENCE AND THEIRS

THE NEED for united action to fight the attacks on all workers, and women in particular, was emphasised throughout the Womens Voice conference held last month in London.

More than 200 women discussed the cuts, wage restraints in the public sector, redundancies, violence against women, and women and socialism in the main sessions. Organisation and direct action were agreed to be the only effective ways of fighting attacks from the Government and employers.

But the political atmosphere at the moment means there are a large number of issues and campaigns that do not only involve workplace activity. The conference concluded that Womens Voice should join with other organisations to fight around issues such as CND, the Right to Work Campaign, rent and rate rises, and that we should argue for our ideas for action within those campaigns. Through working with other groups Womens Voice will be able to involve larger numbers of women in our activities on a wider scale.

At the same time we must not neglect the work that we do around strikes and disputes, and we must continue to organise our own meetings and activities.

As part of this political perspective the conference decided that Womens Voice must be seen as a national organisation and that the Womens Voice steering committee should consist of one delegate from each group or region. It was felt that this structure would make it easier for groups to keep in touch with what was happening in other areas.

Womens Voice magazine is a central part of our organisation; both as part of our national identity and as a focal point for organisation. There was a lengthy debate on whether we should continue to include the words 'Women's magazine of the Socialist Workers' Party' on the editorial/contents page. Some sisters felt that these words contradict the 'Where We Stand' on the inside of the back cover, which includes the statement (Womens Voice) 'is organisationally independent but based on the politics of the SWP'.



John Sturrock

HEARTS AND ROSES weren't around for Thatcher when she arrived in Eastbourne to address the Young Conservatives Conference on St Valentines Day. Instead over 600 demonstrators, mostly kids, turned out to tell Thatcher what they thought of the threat of nuclear war — *jobs not bombs!*

The debate at the conference arose out of a confusion about the meaning of the words 'organisationally independent'. What is meant is that Womens Voice supports and endorses the politics of the SWP (we agree with the class analysis and the need to destroy the structure of capitalism through revolution in order to build a socialist society) but that we (and the SWP) also see the need to organise *as women* to fight our particular exploitation and oppression under capitalism.

By saying we are organisationally independent we mean that Womens Voice organises its own activities and meetings, that doesn't contradict the statement that we are politically part of the SWP. The debate was a useful one, and at the end the conference voted to keep the words 'Womens magazine of the SWP'.

This session was followed by workshops, one of which was about writing for Womens Voice.

The other workshop was about how we can involve our-

selves in local strikes. Women shared the lessons from the BPC and Gardners' occupations and the strikes at Camden Journal and Chix.

That was just the first day! Sunday morning was taken up by two main sessions, with workshops in the afternoon. Violence against women was the first subject for debate. We discussed why violence occurs and why it is in the interests of capitalism to keep men and women divided. The conference agreed unanimously that men are *not* the enemy against whom we should direct our fight, and neither should be ask the state or the police to protect us.

The last full session of the conference was about women and socialism. Sadie Blood told the conference that her experience both at work and in her personal life had led her to join the SWP, and that the fight for women's liberation could not be seperated from the fight for socialism.

The workshop on CND in the afternoon concluded that Womens Voice members should be

actively involved in CND and should argue the socialist case against nuclear arms. The Nationality Bill was discussed at another workshop and the outcome was that members could put to good use the experienced gained from local Campaign Against Racist Laws groups as we had done with NAC groups, and that we should all propose resolutions in our union branches opposing the Nationality Bill.

Sisters in the workshop on Ireland were told of the situation of prisoners in H-Block and Armagh, and that Womens Voice groups should try to send a delegate to the picket of Armagh Womens Gaol on International Women's Day. The workshop on pornography decided that Womens Voice should oppose the Sainsbury Bill against pornography.

The weekend gave us a starting point for a whole range of debates, and it was encouraging to see so many new faces. We sorted out our perspectives for the year ahead, and left ready to start fighting.

THE BABY GAME

'It is clear that the consensus of opinion at present is that it would be wrong simply to redistribute existing resources to the disadvantage of working women'

With those words Lynda Chalker, Parliamentary secretary for Social Security, announced that the government would be dropping its plans to change the way that cash help is distributed to pregnant women. The plan was to 'reform' the present system of maternity payments. Maternity grant, maternity pay from the employer, and maternity allowance based on National Insurance contributions were to be reallocated, supposedly in a fairer way, with the most needy women getting the most.

But because the total amount of money available was not being increased it would have meant that some women would have had their benefits cut to provide the

increases for others. By sharing poverty around the government hoped to create the impression that it was somehow being fair and just. At the same time the discussion about the plans diverted attention from the fact that there has already been a cut in the benefits. The decision to pay 5% less than the amount needed to compensate for inflation has already decreased the total value of the allowances—whoever collects them.

The government explanation for the decision not to make any changes does, however, provide some comfort. The Tories don't see any point in

to return to work. They can demand this anytime after 7 weeks after the birth of your child.

Some women lose their rights to reinstatement altogether. Small firms employing less than six workers do not have to re-employ a woman if it is not 'reasonably practicable' to do so. Before the Employment Act you could claim unfair dismissal if you were refused re-employment. This no longer applies if small firms.

And even if the employer does take you back—you may not get the same job back. The new law allows the employer to offer you a suitable job 'not substantially less favourable' than the one you had. If you 'unreasonably' refuse such a 'suitable' job you lose your



10th Week
Discover you're definitely pregnant. Panic and take an extra turn.

11th Week
Miss a turn to decide whether you're thrilled or horrified.

25th Week
Write to your employer to say you're taking maternity leave and intend to return.

26th Week
Employer docks pay for time off at ante natal clinic. Miss turn and take him to Tribunal.

27th Week
Fill in form BM4 for maternity allowance. You're so organised — take another turn.

29th Week
Stop work. Relax and miss a go.

32nd Week
Apply for £25 Maternity Grant. This sum has been stationary for years. Miss a go.

41st Week
Baby born! Claim for child benefit £5 plus £1.25 for single parent and complete form M11 for supplementary benefit and Family Income Supplement.

42nd Week
Throw a six to move on whi you recover from post natal depression and writers cramp.

49th Week
Employer wants confirmation of your return to work. Hurry and take an extra turn—you must reply before two weeks.

56th Week
Write to your employer to say you definitely intend to return. 3rd time lucky—throw a three to continue.

upsetting the vocal and organised women workers who at present do best out of the maternity benefits system.

But even these women will have to work hard to claim what they are entitled to. The procedure for getting maternity rights has already been hugely complicated by the changes contained in the Tory Employment Act.

Women taking maternity leave must under the Employment Act give their employer WRITTEN notice of their intentions before leaving, and again before returning to work if they want to be re-employed. The final written notice of your intention to return to work has to be provided 21 days before you go back to work. As well as this, employers can require women to give another *additional* notification of their intention

claim to unfair dismissal.

The overall effect of the new laws will be to confuse and demoralise pregnant women workers.

Many women will not read the actual details of the law for themselves. They will hear that maternity rights have lessened and they will be therefore less confident of their rights in approaching their employers for leave. Employers will undoubtedly use that to their own advantage.

It is up to those women who know their rights to ensure that all women workers know just why they are entitled to, and that they know how to claim it. The NCCL have just produced an excellent handbook 'Maternity Rights for Working Women', which costs 75p and is an essential investment for those trying to manoeuvre their way through the new laws

for the first time.

It is really important that we fight to keep those rights we have. Maternity rights are one of the really positive gains of the last ten years. And they are vital if women's right to work, and hence their right to choose what kind of life to lead, is to be a reality.

Anna Paczuska

63rd Week
Back to work at last! Now you can start campaign for a creche.

60th Week
Employer has sacked three people and is now a 'small firm'. Miss two turns to strike for their and your rights.

'The Sky is Brighter ...'

Noreen Branson's Book 'Poplarism 1919-1925' about the Councillors revolt in Poplar, a poor borough in East London, is an amazing historical account of the struggles that took place there. But it is more than that. It provides an insight into the problems raised by those who wish to confront government policy, at a time when conflicts between local and national government is again on the agenda. Councils like Lambeth are described as being in the tradition of Poplar, but are they? A look at the book provides some very instructive lessons and perhaps some answers to the problems confronting us today.

"EVERY public seat in the council chamber was filled and the gallery was overcrowded'. Enthusiastic crowds turned out to welcome and support the first ever Labour majority on the Poplar borough council. George Lansbury, editor of the 'Daily Herald' was elected Mayor. He described the events as something of a miracle. The miracle was repeated in 12 out of 28 borough councils in London.

These men and women were different from their predecessors. They were not employers or businessmen. They reflected the working class of the borough—they were carters, dockers, railwaymen, postmen, engineers, labourers and housewives, those with non manual jobs were in a minority. They were typical of those who elected them. But they were untypical of the Labour Party. They were pioneers of a brand of socialism, which has long become unfashionable in the Labour Party. They were campaigners, rank and file activists who believed in direct action.

The Daily Herald rejoined 'The sky is brighter and we can all join in a shout of triumph that at long last, the workers are coming into their own'.

Some had been active in the formation of industrial unions, recruiting the previously unorganised—the unskilled and semi skilled. Others had been active in the Irish struggle, and the women in particular had been active in the suffragette movement. Sylvia Pank-



'The Sky is Brighter and we can all join in a shout of triumph that at long last, the workers are coming into their own.'

hurst's East London Federation had been strong in Poplar. Many of these women and men took their inspiration from the great events taking place in Russia, and later became members of the newly-formed Communist Party in 1925. They were no strangers to the hardship and squalor around them. Many had already been victimised for their trade union activity. Some had been imprisoned as conscientious objectors during the first world war.

One of their first acts in office was to pay a minimum wage to their employers of £4 a week. This was to apply to both male and female employees, representing a 25 per cent

increase for the men, but nearer 70 per cent for the women. Poplar became one of the few places in the country where the principle of equal pay was accepted and campaigned for.

Poplar, like other industrial areas, bore the brunt of the post war slump. Unemployment soared, wages fell, diseases like rickets and tuberculosis were rampant in the unsanitary and overcrowded slum dwellings that the bulk of the population lived in. It was against this background the newly elected labour council set about the business of reconstruction.

In those days there was no social security or unemployment benefit. The Poor Laws of 1834 still operated, which meant the workhouse or the labour test. This was devised to discourage 'wastrels and scroungers,' and usually meant spending long hours on tedious and meaningless work such as stone breaking for half the going rate of wages. The method of obtaining poor relief was so degrading that only those driven to starvation generally applied. The system was administered by the Board of Guardians, elected like the council, who were responsible for the unemployed in the Borough.

As unemployment continued to rise it was apparent that previous assumptions enshrined in the Poor Law were no longer applicable. By this time unemployment had become a reality for thousands. Procedures designed to test 'willingness to work' were a nonsense when there was no work to be had.

Poplar council took the view that it was a national problem and that boroughs like their own with high unemployment, should not



Union Place Collective

Lambeth workers in the week of action against the cuts.

have to bear the brunt of the costs of caring for the unemployed from their local rate. They refused to operate the household means test or the labour test and they paid a higher rate of relief than anywhere in the country.

Since the government refused to provide the funds to operate the scale of relief necessary in boroughs like Poplar, and certainly refused to accept the high levels of relief being paid, Poplar found itself in confrontation with central government.

The councillors took a course of action that was to have profound effect. They embarked on a rates strike. They refused to levy the rates for central bodies like the London County Council and the police in a bid to pressurise the government to equalise the responsibility for the unemployed, through the rating system, from the rich boroughs to the poorer ones.

The reaction to Poplar's decision was mixed. In the borough the councillors campaigned in their union branches and in the trades councils and estates for support for their decision. A decision not taken lightly, since they were breaking the law. Support was not lacking among local people. Elsewhere however the reaction was less enthusiastic. Very few believed they could win.

'Nobody supposes that this new form of strike can be successful, because no Government could possibly allow a local authority to set the ordinary law in open defiance.' *East London Observer*. Poplar could not win was the general opinion outside the borough. But support for the council's actions was demonstrated by the very large public meetings called to explain the council's stand.

There were divisions within the Labour Party over Poplar's stand. The London Party under the direction of Herbert Morrison issued circulars condemning Poplar's actions as irresponsible and illegal. Other boroughs were urged not to follow Poplar's lead.

Labour had to be seen to be responsible and good administrators if they were to win the votes of the middle class electorate, which Morrison and others saw as vital if Labour was to be capable of becoming a party of national government.

In this atmosphere of heightening support and the continuing threat of social disorder resulting from the appalling conditions of the unemployed, the Poplar councillors were released from prison. As a result of their actions a new Bill was introduced, which pooled the costs of unemployment relief throughout London. Poplar council was one of the main beneficiaries. It was hailed as a victory for direct action. And so it was. It was felt by the critics to be 'a great discouragement to those who believe in constitutional action and a great encouragement to those who believe in revolutionary methods.' There were those in the labour party who believed this also.

They hoped that by their imprisonment they could bring the plight of Poplar to national attention, and by their example to generate a campaign capable of making the Government succeed. And against all the odds their action succeeded.

Ten of thousands of people marched with them to prison. The women got the best send off of any of the councillors, although they had to argue with their supporters to be allowed to be imprisoned at all. Thousands gathered outside the women's houses prepared to refuse to allow the sherriff to take them away. Susan Lawrence addressed the crowd: 'We are here representing a principle which we have the right to defend as well as the men. If you prevent us going you do us the worst turn you can.'

This was 1921. There was a massive campaign for the release of the Poplar councillors. Other councils were considering whether to follow suit, and it began to look as if the

actions of Poplar would snowball.

Meanwhile the critics of Poplar's stand kept silent.

The council were to come into conflict again with the Government over their insistence that they continue to pay relief in excess of that laid down, to maintain the minimum wages to their own employees. They also clashed with the government when they paid assistance to strikers, during the unofficial dock strike in 1923.

On these issues they were less successful than previously. Against a background of heightening slump, and the capitulation of the trade union movement over wages, the £4 minimum paid by Poplar was now 40 per cent above what other local authorities paid and 70 per cent above the earnings of industrial workers. The failure of other boroughs to follow also left them isolated. In these circumstances, with the added threat of surcharging and the introduction of the Audit Bill which would disbar 'erring' councillors from holding office, the Poplar Council was forced to compromise.

Yet Poplarism should be an inspiration to us all. As a result of being prepared to make a stand, of sticking to principles held and believed, even to the extent of going to prison, of showing the government they meant business they were able to force the concessions they believed necessary to defend the standards of living of the people who elected them. They campaigned both in the trade union movement locally, and won the confidence of the electorate which backed them to the hilt. And as a result improved their vote in each subsequent election.

How does this compare to the stand Labour Councils are taking against the Tory cuts today? Of course the situation is different, but nonetheless there are some general conclusions that can be drawn.

All the Labour Councils that issued the declaration against cuts in services and jobs, who said they would not sell council houses, who would defend the standards of living of those in their boroughs are in various stages of capitulation. Lambeth, one of the more militant sounding in its opposition to the Tories, is busy passing on the cuts in the form of massive rates increases, and is now prepared to sell council houses. Camden Council see no alternative but to stop wage increases, to make cuts, to sell council houses and to increase the rates. These councils are now drawing protest against themselves, rather than the real enemies.

The problem these councils face, is the same problem faced by Poplar council. There is no middle road, either you accept government policy or you fight it. This can only be done by refusing to implement cuts, refusing to increase rents and rates and going bankrupt if necessary.

Like Poplar in the past, it means winning support for a policy of defiance. This can only be done by action, not words, and mobilising the maximum number of people onto the streets in the fight against the Tories.

To fail to fight is to open the floodgates of reaction which the extreme right breed on. Already the signs are there.



Union Place Collective

In Lambeth, anger against Thatcher and the Tories is plain to see.

Linda Quinn

SCHOOL MEALS OF

Between October 1979 and October 1980 the number of children taking school meals dropped by more than 1.3 million. The main reason is the massive rises in the price of school dinners. The main effects are a poorer standard of meals for children and huge numbers of redundancies in school kitchens. *Womens Voice* spoke to school dinner staff in Leicester and looks at the service being provided around the country.

Last November Lincolnshire County Council announced that they would abolish all school meals. The previous April the council's education committee had raised the price of a school dinner in primary schools to 50p. A cash cafeteria system was introduced in secondary schools, and students were expected to pay 91p for fish fingers, potatoes, peas and a sweet—a meal which previously cost 35p. The number of pupils taking school meals dropped by nearly 40 per cent.

But Lincolnshire County Council changed their minds about abolishing the service entirely. Instead they put a proposal to NUPE, the union which represents most school meals staff. We will keep the service, the county council said, if you will agree to compulsory redundancies and an end to holiday and sickness payments. The union refused to break their national agreement. There will be no school meals for primary school children in Lincolnshire from the end of this term, and secondary school meals will be abolished from the summer.

Lincolnshire is only one example of what is happening all over the country: There are countless others. Dorset no longer provides school meals for children under 12 and Bromley Council in Outer London decided to stop hot dinners and substitute a filled roll, a yoghurt and maybe soup for 50p. Not surprisingly a third fewer dinners were taken up in the following year.

All of this is a result of the Tory's Education Act, passed last year. It abolished a previous law which required local education authorities to provide meals to a certain standard. The old school

dinners, meat, two veg, pudding and custard) no longer have to be provided. In many areas they are already just a memory.

The main reason for the Tories passing this law is that, as usual, money looms large in their thinking. Abolishing traditional school meals mean that profits can be made on cheap snacks, many of which take little preparation. That leads to the real saving—wages. The figures speak for themselves.

Bromley's 'saving' meant the loss of 4000 hours work for school meals staff (the equivalent of 200 jobs). Dyfed imposed a 20 per cent cut in staffing levels for primary schools. In Wiltshire a proposed 25 per cent cut in staffing levels is being introduced by bringing in light lunches instead of traditional meals. In East Sussex the council has imposed a 20 per cent cut in hours across the board.

When parents have to pay 40p a day for a meal consisting of sausage, bread and a cornflake cake, it is hardly surprising that many of them opt for sandwiches. There is a direct link between higher prices and an increase in kids taking packed lunches. Schools with 55p charges have had an average drop of 54 per cent in take up of school meals. Schools with 35p charges have had a much smaller drop of 9 per cent. Fewer numbers of children taking meals means, in turn, cuts in working hours and more redundancies.

Major arguments centre around the long term damage to children's health and physical development from the disappearance of the traditional school meal. Nutritionists argue that standards are falling. Tory



Barbara Weightman

councillors claim the old system resulted in tons of wasted boiled cabbage. They say children prefer the new snack meals. *Womens Voice* went to Leicester to meet some school meals workers and see for ourselves what the standards were.

The Queen Elizabeth 1 College is a school for 16-18 years olds in the middle of Leicester. Fourteen women work in the kitchen. When we arrived, just before midday, they were at their busiest time. The cafeteria system means a much bigger variety of food. Pizzas and hot dogs seemed very popular, so did egg and chips. All the kids we talked to seemed happy with the choice, quality, and price—27p for a pizza, 16p for chips, 10p for a half pint of milk.

Barbara Weightman, the supervisor, told us what she thought. 'This age group don't want to go back to the old system. We've gained customers by going cafeteria.'

The other women agreed.

Yvonne Dancy has two children at a primary school with old-style dinners. They take sandwiches. 'You never know what they're getting. You can provide a meal but if the kids don't want it they won't eat it. The snack system is marvellous. If parents could see the food they wouldn't complain.' The staff point proudly to the standard of cooking. All pies and cakes are made in the kitchen. Pizzas contain at least an ounce of cheese. Dairy products are sold at cost price—cheaper than in any shop.

But even they have problems. Leicestershire council are insisting that the provision of meals becomes self-sufficient; that the kitchen breaks even not only with food, but also pays the huge costs of gas, electricity and rates. Barbara says that this is impossible.

At the moment the large schools in Leicestershire are safe, but the cuts have already forced 180 school kitchens to close. This is nearly half the total number

THE 1980s



choice and variety and many of them always refused the old school dinners. It is in the primary schools that the problem is at its worst.

Here the choice is limited. Either parents are forced to pay astronomical prices for a meal which may be left half-eaten, or the food is of poor quality. Publicity was given recently to a school in Blackburn where one meal of sausage, bread, cake and water was meant to be well-balanced but less nutritious, in fact, than a similar meal provided 50 years ago in a local workhouse.

In Leicestershire the unions have got an agreement that if a kitchen is closed it won't be used for anything else, so-in theory-it would be relatively easy to restart the service.

In Lincolnshire it will cost a fortune to restart school meals under another government. If expensive equipment and buildings are sold off or converted for other use, will a Labour government make the money available to restart a full service?

The Tories claim they need to cut the school meals system to make it profitable. Mr Michael Fitz-Herbert-Brockholes, Tory education committee chairman on Lancashire County Council, was quoted in the Guardian as saying that the primary responsibility for feeding children rested with their parents. Children could get a good breakfast at home he said, and a square meal when they returned.

The Tories are destroying the whole idea of school meals as a welfare service. And capital expenditure on school meals is unlikely to be made a priority under a future Labour government.

The cost of dismantling the service is difficult to measure. Equipment will be sold off at a loss. Some workers will receive redundancy payments. And a big loss will be in the health and development of young children.

The Tories have been able to dismantle these services without much opposition.



Yvonne Dancy

NUPE and the other unions involved have done little to protect jobs. As usual, the livelihoods of mostly part-time women workers are not high on the priorities of the union officials.

When the whole structure of local government and welfare services is being destroyed by the cuts—imposed by the Tories, and Labour before them—it is unrealistic to expect the service to be restored by a new government. Only by taking action now to defend jobs and services will we do that. Occupations of school kitchens involving workers, kids and

parents would be one way of saying: 'No, we're not having any more cuts.'

There are many, many criticisms that most working people have of Thatcher. Socialists go further and argue that the system that breeds her type is at fault.

But most people would agree that a system which fails even to provide decent food for our kids is one that we should scrap altogether.

**Report by:-
Lindsey German
Harriet Sherwood
Photographs by:
Alaric Bamping**

Figures provided by NUPE School Meals Survey, Accurate until November 1980.



Leicestershire's policy is that if less than 70 per cent of children take school meals, the kitchens are closed. Village schools are badly affected, and in many the 'solution' will be cold sandwich lunches. Already in Leicestershire there has been a lot of 'natural wastage' and many women have had their hours cut by half.

The Queen Elizabeth 1 college now has its menus worked out at County Hall, rather than decided in the kitchens themselves. This has the effect of cutting hours and making the women's work more difficult.

Barbara believes that the Tories are not committed to the school meals system. In trying to move with the times, to keep up with what kids today want, she aims to help keep school meals alive in Leicestershire. She wants to win back some of the children who now bring sandwiches. 'The cafeterias do bring sandwich kids back into school dinners'.

The older kids like the

THE TRUE SOV

Samizdat literally means 'self publishing'. It is the word used to describe the unofficial and dissident literature of Russia and Eastern Europe. Until last year samizdat literature never mentioned womens politics. Then a group of women from Leningrad published 'Women and Russia'. It was the first feminist writing and therefore significant. But it was also disappointing in its anti-working class, anti-male and pro-religious stance.

Below Vera Slutskaya reviews another more recent writing about women's situation in the Soviet Union.

This document by a Soviet feminist is especially important for several reasons. It is written with verve and irony. It is clear and well-thought out, quite different from the angry, bitter, outpourings of the Leningrad group of feminists whose writings have already reached the west.

The author lives in Latvia and writes in her own language, *not* in Russian. So this document is proof that feminism is spreading, that it isn't confined to a few dissident women poets in Leningrad. She reveals that the life of the Soviet woman is harsh even in Latvia, where living standards are higher than in other parts of the Soviet Union. She is not an intellectual, but, as she says, 'an ordinary Soviet woman', a *bricklayer*. Her views on the position of women in the Soviet Union are in some ways reactionary, but at the same time understandable. And it is important that we should understand them, because they are *typical*.

They should be looked at in the context of the new Soviet Labour laws, which came into force on January 1. These ban women from many heavy and well-paid jobs, but not from low-paid bricklaying.



They are designed to force women back into the home. They have been passed because the growth rate of the Soviet population has sunk to almost zero. The Soviet rulers now need women to have children, more than they need them in the labour force.

B. Jankauskene's article shows why Soviet women are willing to agree to this. She sees that women have two jobs. They are manual labourers and they are housewives and mothers. They are terribly overworked and perpetually exhausted. Then she sees that it seems that women in the west don't have to work so hard, that a family can often afford to live on the husband's earnings, leaving the woman with just one job—that of a housewife and mother. She envies them. She thinks 'It wouldn't be at all bad if here in the Soviet Union we 'liberated' women were subjected to just a little slavery: We wouldn't have to work so hard.' She doesn't mention other alternatives such as—the mechanisation of labour, higher living standards, more nurseries, men helping in the home—because they don't seem realistic to her. Her

solutions are narrow but her statement is still a bitter exposé of and a passionate protest against the exploitation of women in Soviet society.

She explains that women in the Soviet Union *have* to work, because wages are very low. 'Shivers run up and down her spine' at the thought of what would happen to her family if she didn't work, 'We would starve, yes, yes starve'. Everything is expensive, a pair of boots costs a whole month's salary. In Latvia, she's lucky, they've got meat, unlike the rest of the Soviet Union, where 'our poets are getting ready to sing funeral odes to it'. But you can still only get decent meat in the market, where the free traders charge exorbitant prices—about £5.50 a kilo. In the ordinary shops there's only bones and gristle.

She relates how the burden of the heaviest, nastiest, least well-paid labour has been shoved on to women. She remarks ironically, 'I have the right to work and I am pleased to have it. How could it be otherwise? I am a bricklayer, I hump bricks about. My female friends aren't scared of manual labour either. Women have already



This little girl has a place in nursery—but for how much longer?

IET WOMAN

taken over the spade the pick, the hod, the wheelbarrow... over from men. They build houses, asphalt the roads, lay paving stones, have building and other materials about. And there's nothing surprising in this! Thanks to the Party and the Soviet government women have equal rights with men. At last men, after doing the manual labour for centuries, have been allowed to rest. Yes, and why should they strain themselves when women have equal rights!

She goes on to say that housework and childrearing are not regarded as work. 'If a woman does the washing, cooks for the family, sews, knits, mends, then she is not creating material value for the state. This means it is not work, but rest for the Soviet woman. If on Saturdays and Sundays she works on the family plot till the sweat pours off her brow, this is a holiday for her. If she is forced, because she can't make ends meet, to spend her brief moments of free time and hours snatched from sleep knitting, sewing or typing to earn money, this is regarded as blackmarketeering'.

Then she tells her own story: 'I was so tired out by hard work, by the easy life of the Soviet woman, and by the days off I never had, that I decided to have a check-up. In the polyclinic I didn't get to see a doctor. There are crowds and crowds of people there. You won't get seen if you wait all day. And if you sit out the queue, it's not worth it. They prescribe pills which you can't get in our chemists. And the special clinics, special chemists, special drugs and special services are reserved for the Soviet aristocrats. Bah.. forgive me, not aristocrats, but servants of the people.. So I took fifty roubles, scraped together with difficulty, and set off in search of a private specialist someone had told me about. I found the house. The door was opened by a partly middle-aged man. I explained why I had come and he told me: 'The doctor of medicine lives on the third floor. I am an animal doctor—a vet'.

'So much the better', I blurted out, 'I want, once and for all, to find out what sort of animal I am'.

The vet's eyes began to pop out of his head. He looked at me as if I'd got a screw loose. And he began to back away.. I went after him. I forced the poor man to hear me out. I began to tell him:

'At work and after work I hurry, I run, my tongue hanging out like a dog's. All day I work like a horse. After work I rush headlong into a shop to buy something. Its full of people. In my haste I squeeze in front of someone and at once I hear an icy voice, 'How dare you push in front of me, you bitch?' Unable to restrain myself, I snap back, 'Stop squealing, you old sow!



A smiling bakery worker—at home she will barely be able to afford to eat meat.

'Finally, weighed down with bags and bundles, like a donkey, I sidle out of the shop and drag it all home. There I dash to cook supper, turning round and round like a squirrel in a wheel. My husband comes in. He's frowning and only mutters angrily,

'What have you been doing, you old cow, isn't dinner ready yet?' Not wanting a quarrel, I stay as silent as a fish.

After supper, my husband sprawls on the sofa and reads the papers or gazes at the television. Or runs away to his friends. I do the ironing. Then I have to tidy the flat, do some dusting, sewing and mending. Oh Yes. I've quite a bit to do! Late in the evening, my husband stumbles drunkenly home and goes to bed. And I still haven't finished the housework. Suddenly he says, 'Kitten, come to me' and, quiet as a lamb, I entwine myself in his arms. So will you tell me, you specialist in four-legged animals, what sort of animal I really am?

The vet looked at me with pity in his eyes and said sadly, 'you are a true Soviet woman'.

B. Jankauskene doesn't know what to do. can't think of any other solution than to give up her job and go back to the home. But she has put her finger on the malady of the Soviet woman and she has dared to protest. Almost every woman thinks as she does, but very few will speak out. For it is very dangerous to be a feminist in the Soviet Union. As B. Jankauskene says, if the KGB (The Soviet political police) find out her identity she may immediately be thrown into psychiatric hospital, or, like the Leningrad feminist, Natalya Lazareva interned in a labour camp. But in spite of the penalties, the number of feminists in Russia is growing.



HALF THE SKY?

CHIANG Ch'ing went down shouting. The woman who was one of the most powerful figures in China from 1966-76, was loudly defiant when the court of the new ruling clique gave her a suspended death sentence, and was dragged out yelling at them.

But if you admire her for that, then there's more that you should know about Chiang Ch'ing.

She was the fourth wife of Chairman Mao (he dumped the third rather unceremoniously in order to marry her). She was his 'secretary' for many years, and became a political leader in her own right with the initiation of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.

Although the charges recently brought against her included abandoning Mao's economic policies, she was in fact following them through with grim determination.

The current regime judges that it cannot yet debunk Mao to the Chinese people. But Chiang Ch'ing and the other members of the 'Gang of Four' inherited Mao's 'seige economy'—the attempt to squeeze more and more productivity out of a peasant-based economy, with no aid or technology from the outside world.

As Mao had demonstrated, this led to bullying and terror, to control the workforce and silence the critics.

Mao had used the 'Hundred Flowers Campaign' in the 1950s to encourage free speech, the better to know his enemies and root out 'noxious weeds'. He boasted that the notorious tyrant, the emperor Ch'in Chih-huang, had only executed 460 scholars, but that he had executed 460,000.

With Mao sick and in retirement, the remaining maoist leaders used the 'Cultural Revolution' to purge opponents in the

name of 'correct Mao-Tse-tung thought'. And the population was encouraged to produce by the Red Guards, with criticism, self-criticism, and summary execution.

It was, literally, a blood-bath—and Chiang Ch'ing presided over it.

As to the 'cultural' idea of the Cultural Revolution, Chiang Ch'ing had produced a series of 'model operas' to replace the very popular traditional operas. Simon Leys has described the process of suppression, in his book *Chinese Shadows*.

... The maoist authorities who fear

when in the pressure cooker of a really good audience the 'Haos' started rocketing about as they had in the good old days small red-lighted panels marked 'silence' would start to blink furiously at the four corners of the auditorium.

'After managing to kill life in the audience, the authorities then killed it on the stage. The repertory was weeded out .. Since the Cultural Revolution *all* the traditional operas have disappeared, and we have only the half-dozen Revolutionary Model

as 'relatively serious, and it is also anti-fascist. The director's skill is marvellous.'

Chiang Ch'ing told her American biographer, Roxane Witke 'Sex is interesting in the first rounds, but what sustains interest in the long run is power.' Witke appears to actually admire Chang Ch'ing for simply getting to the top of the heap.

The maoists used some fine phrases—like 'women hold up half the sky'. But this doesn't mean any more than the socialistic rhetoric of the Cultural Revolution.

Under Mao, decisions about childcare and contraception, whether women should go into agriculture or industry, were subordinate to the demands of the economy. There are few women in administrative or management positions, or in Party posts. Women still have the major responsibility for traditional domestic duties.

Chiang Ch'ing's life was



A street scene during the Cultural Revolution, 1966

nothing so much as spontaneous mass happenings ... started by re-educating the audience. The audience was no longer allowed to roar its enthusiastic 'Hao!' after each virtuoso piece but was directed to clap only as the curtain fell in Western academic fashion. ...

operas on contemporary themes.'

In fact Chiang Ch'ing never confined her *own* entertainment to the model operas. She was fond of western movies—a particular favourite was Garbo's *Queen Christina*: another was *The Sound of Music* which she described

totally remote from the majority of Chinese women. And if some of the abuse hurled at her has been sexist, this does not take away from the fact that she deserved abuse, not as a woman, but as a privileged and ruthless tyrant.

Janet Vaux

WOMENS HEALTH

Poverty causes baby death

IT WILL have come as no surprise to Womens Voice readers to learn that the Tories are *not* going to spend the £25m recommended by the Short Report on the maternity services, to remedy the situation where 5000 babies die needlessly every year and another 5000 are born unnecessarily handicapped.

Many of us, in fact, heaved a sigh of relief that most of the Report was not going to be implemented. Of course we're concerned that perinatal and neonatal deaths and congenital malformations are so high in this country — 14.6 babies per 1000 die in this country compared with 9.4 in Sweden, for instance.

But the Report assumes that increasing medical technology, a foetal monitoring machine for every birth, and phasing out home deliveries is going to achieve that, despite the fact that it admits that there is no evidence to support this.

There has been incredibly little research into the effects of medical technology in child-birth. Such developments as the screening of rhesus negative mothers for antibodies in pregnancy have had a dramatic effect in decreasing baby deaths, but no-one knows, for instance, what are the long term effects of ultra-sound scanning on the foetus. And we know from bitter experience (as well as surveys) that high technology causes distress to the mother during birth, resulting in a high incidence of serious post-natal depression and rejection of the baby afterwards.

In fact, what hard evidence there is presents a very different picture from the Short Report. The Report denounced home deliveries without any statistics on them. Those statistics that are available do not distinguish between deaths of babies born in planned home deliveries outside hospital, and those for instance in a taxi or ambulance, or unplanned home deliveries. Until three or four years ago, however, births in Norfolk were almost all at home, only high risk mothers going into hospital, (and that did not include first or fourth confinements). Yet they had one of the lowest baby death records in the country — because midwives and GPs, not hospital machines, were skilled in predicting high risk mothers. Obviously all high risk mothers



should have access to hospitals with facilities for doing immediate caesarian sections and intensive care cots, but we have as good a record as Sweden when it comes to the survival of low-birth weight babies. Many of these facilities are a case of shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted.

The real issue is what *causes* baby deaths? Baby deaths occur mainly in two groups of babies, those who are underweight (5lbs 8ozs at birth) and those who are congenitally malformed. Seven per cent of all babies in England and Wales are born underweight, a percentage that has hardly changed in the last 10 years, despite the increase in medical intervention in that time. Another interesting fact is that more underweight or congenitally

deformed babies are born in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the North West of England than in the more affluent south and east of England. They are born to working class rather than middle class women. And even where babies from poorer areas are born in prestigious teaching hospitals, such as in East London, the situation is not improved.

In other words, poverty causes babies to die or to be born malformed. And all the antenatal clinics' good advice on sensible diets does little to help. Research has shown that the woman's diet prior to conceiving is as important as during pregnancy, and most congenital malformations occur before the woman usually even knows she is pregnant.

Remedying the poverty that causes baby deaths is just what Margaret Thatcher is not going to do. She came to fame, don't forget, as Snatcher Thatcher when she ended free

school milk and vitamins for thousands of mothers, cheating on child benefit, cutting unemployment benefit and now attacking maternity benefits, quite apart from throwing millions out of work and cutting the spending power of the wages of the rest of us.

Far from improving perinatal and neonatal mortality, Margaret Thatcher is causing it to increase, along with an increase in post-natal depression and congenital malformations. The cost in human suffering is immense, but to the Tories it has the convenient side-effect of reducing future unemployment.

Sally Barrett

REVIEWS

HARD TIMES



Indoors

Working-Class Wives
Marjory Spring Rice
Virago £2.99

THIS BOOK, about working class wives in Jarrow, was first published in 1939. Virago have recently re-published it. *Pauline Doran*, from Jarrow, reviews it for *Womens Voice*.



'Resting'

This book reminded me of how we first started our married life. Although it was far worse for them—they would've had less money. The women had loads of

kids, eight or nine seemed to be the normal, and we've only got two! The women had miscarriages and illnesses that they couldn't afford to get treated at the doctors, only their husbands were covered by the insurance.

The first house Tommy and I had looked alright at first. After a while the walls were black with damp, even the fridge packed up because of the damp! There were mice and slugs everywhere and my son, Thomas, still has very bad bronchitis, probably due to the damp.

The women didn't have the time, or the money, to go out socially. They didn't even have the time to sit and talk. There was no hot water so cooking and washing took ages, the women also had to manage on very little money because their husbands' wages were so low, and the only work the women seemed to do was taking in washing or helping the midwife.

Although the book was a collection of reports and letters I found it interesting to

read. The book, for some, may be hard to believe. For instance, people have become used to going to the doctors when they need to, but the book is all too familiar. People I talk to are becoming scared to go to the doctors with prescriptions costing £1 a time.

Most of the slums described in the book have gone now but they still exist in South Shields and Gateshead.



When Tommy was unemployed six years ago, for ten months, we only got £16 a week even although we had a kid. The council bought the slum we were staying in and put the rent up by £1.20 a week. If Tommy became unemployed now it would be worse, benefits aren't index linked now.

Now with unemployment rising and nurseries being cut back women will be faced with a similar situation that the women of the Jarrow suffered in the 1930's. It could get as bad as it was in the book, but I don't think people will stand for it now. I know I won't!

FIVE YEAR SENTENCE
BERNICE RUBENS
SHERE BOOKS
£1.10

AT FIRST sight the plot of this book is stretching it a bit. A lonely lady who cannot face life without her servile job is saved from suicide because her retirement present is a five year diary. Conditioned since childhood to be obedient, Miss Hawkins uses the diary to give herself orders which she must obey.

Soon her self-inflicted commands are revealing a desire for affection which she has been denied all of her life. As she shows us her emotional needs, we become aware of her inability to fulfil them. Lacking practice at negotiating her relationships and developing her personality, she is manipulated and exploited by a cowardly man.

Brian has never had the strength of character to leave home. He has frittered away his life attending to his mother's fake illnesses and nursing his own feelings of guilt and resentment. When he meets Miss Hawkins in the library he discovers that the opposite sex are vulnerable to his charms and he does not hesitate to make capital out of it.

Things go well for him, but not for her, and when her five year sentence is up, she is even more lonely than before, because she tried not to be and failed. This time though she is not going to die, it must be someone else ... this book is constructed like a thriller, and the plot describes the strategies the two central characters use to capture a portion of life that seemed to have passed them by.

Mary Williams

PROSTITUTE
Director: Tony Garnett
Mainline Films

'PROSTITUTE' is the latest film from Tony Garnett. It has a documentary style and the actors are non professionals.

The film takes a sympathetic look at the lives of prostitutes as women coping with doing a job; struggling against police harassment, madames and pimps; bringing up kids; supporting each other, living, laughing, loving and crying together.

It revolves around two women. Sandra, a prostitute, is married with one child. She lets a room in her house to Louise, a social worker who helps form a group to campaign for change in the law on soliciting.

Sandra is not keen on campaigning and so decides to head for the bright lights of London to make her fortune on the high class circuit.

I came out feeling a great deal of sympathy with the women's fight to change the law. But 'Prostitute' is more than a documentary publicising a campaign. Through the relationship between the

two women, the prostitute and the social worker, the film explores many of the questions we have about sex, love and relationships.

It asks whether exchanging money is the only thing that makes a sexual relationship exploitative. It contrasts sex and love, probing whether the two always go together.

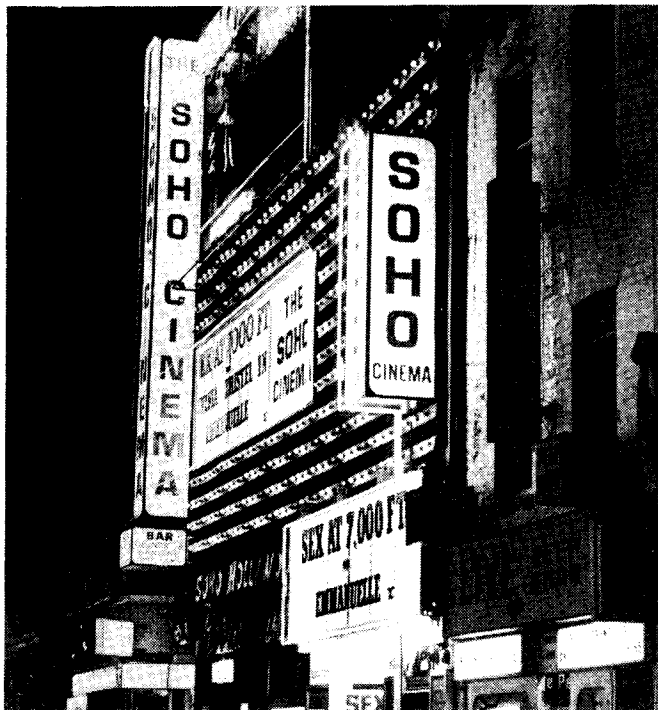
It doesn't offer any definite

answers. But it certainly makes the audience think and rethink.

But the film does not tell you how the women became prostitutes, or why it is the only well paid job some women can do.

This film is unlikely to be shown on TV. But if you get the chance go and see it.

Anne Page.



DIVINE MADNESS
Director: Michael Ritchie

THE STAND up comic is nearly always male. A woman who is funny and retains her sexuality is extremely rare.

Women who make us laugh are usually cast in the stereotyped roles of situation comedy. Others, like Diane Keaton, successfully play in comedy roles. Yet she is funny primarily because she plays opposite Woody Allen, an established funny man, Allen writes the scripts, and it's usually his reactions we laugh at anyway.

Better Midler in *Divine Madness* is hilariously funny and at the same time a celebration of sexuality. She constantly asserts that sex can be funny without women necessarily being the butt of the joke.

The film is of Midler's live stage performance in America with her backing group of three women calling themselves 'The Harlettes'. *Divine Madness* draws much of its inspiration from music hall.

Outrageously bawdy, Midler attacks Royalty: 'Queen Elizabeth is so white, she makes the rest of us look like the Third World'—sex roles and the male ego.

Her performance is above all passionate and powerful. In the best rendering of 'Stay With Me' that I have heard yet, her voice has the ability to convey despair, ecstasy and gaiety. She doesn't sing the lyrics—she lives them.

A woman on a stage becomes a spectacle in a way that a man does not. Bette Midler challenges the audience to take the spectacle to its limits. But she won't let them get away with it. The laughs are on you.

She is certainly not a feminist by any stretch of the imagination but as Bette Midler finished the show with her face a mass of sweat and mascara, there is a stinging self mockery and sting in the tail that make her unforgettable.

Marta Wohrle

And the beat goes on

IT'S 1990, Keith Richards has finally hung up his guitar and retired to Bournemouth. So the Rolling Stones audition for another guitarist and the best one happens to be a woman. Naturally she gets the job. Somehow I can't imagine it happening—but why not?

Last year I was a volunteer worker for a community radio station. On women's programmes I would find myself in the library, clutching a handful of feminist albums. When I never found what I wanted I began to wonder why most women are still ghettoised in music, despite the alleged liberating influence of 'new wave'.

The content has changed since the sixties; compare Janis Joplin to Joan Armatrading. The position of women has mostly not. Consider Polystyrene, Chrissie Hyde and the over-marketed Deborah Harry. They're all in the same position—singing with male bands and making records where men do all the

technical work. Alternatively women can be solo singers or form an all women band. All these of course are valid choices; but why couldn't I find other types of work done by women?

Even the exceptions tend to be the rule, as they are mainly new wave influenced bands such as the excellent 'Au Pairs'. New wave music can be less oppressive to women because some of it is about political issues, including feminism. In contrast there are very few women in reggae, which comes from a culture that subordinates women.

To state the obvious, music is one way of expressing ideas, fantasies and aspirations. In a sexist society the ideas in music tend to work against women. One of the most popular themes in blues and rock is sexual boasting, usually from a male viewpoint, although it's not entirely confined to men and Bette Midler. Another theme is a

particular American expression of personal freedom, songs about moving on, riding the midnight express, leaving behind the women tying you down. As for heavy metal, since I can't find anyone who'll admit to owning a Samson or Motorhead album, all I can do is quote the Whitesnake member who said that women were 'beautiful animals'!!

Although more women are at work now they still form a small minority in radio. For instance, a survey last year showed that Radio Nottingham only had women on air for an eighth of their air time, and men still make sexist comments on air.

I'm tired of being told that women are treated much better since the advent of new wave. I'm afraid the improvement is slight. Don't take my word for it, just turn on the radio for a couple of hours and really listen to what you hear.

Jane Bennett

WHITWASH ON VIOLENCE

Dear *Womens Voice*,

Your editorial on violence against women was an absolute whitewash. Certainly we need to change the world — but to say that male violence against women is the result of pressure at work, misery of the dole etc, and to equate it with women's anger by saying that these pressures 'breed violence in *men and women*' is to totally ignore and insult the experience of every woman. Since when did you see a group of women following men down the street hurling abuse at their bodies, clothes and anything else they could think of? It goes without saying that the female equivalent of the 'Ripper' just doesn't exist. The few incidents of women assaulting men are the result of a *personal* aggression against a particular man, not just any man who happens to be in her path. Yet this is the sort of aggression women face all the time from men. Their common link is the contempt and often hatred that men feel towards women in general.

Since men and women are subject to the same pressures of the present system (i.e unemployment, exploitation at work) that you see as the root of the problem, it is obviously no answer just to get rid of it, and expect all our problems to be solved in the new Utopia. So, how do we organise to make sure that we are all able to have some sort of a dignified life *now* as well as being confident and strong enough to make a feminist and not just a socialist revolution.

You argue for Reclaim the Night marches, self defence and better street lighting. Fine, but you dismiss the call that came out of the experience of women in the Leeds/Bradford area, for 'curfews on men' as being impractical and against the wrong enemy!! It is no more impractical than Fords workers calling for 'nationalisation without compensation under workers control' — and try telling women who are looking over their shoulders or crossing the street when they see men approaching — if they dare go out at night alone — that men aren't the real enemy. When we started talking about this slogan with women at work everyone was suddenly saying 'wouldn't it be great! I could do this or that' all sorts of possibilities opened up and it brought home to us the restrictions that fear of men put on us, and limited even our expectations of a 'good night out'.

To us, the whole editorial reeked of a symptom of that fear — fear of *offending* men. It's about time we stopped worrying about frightening off 'pro-feminist' men — we've been tiptoeing

LETTERS



around their fragile egos for long enough. *We are angry, we do feel aggressive, and we should say so.*

Vicky, Frances and Cathy
London

PART TIME INDEPENDENCE

Dear *Women's Voice*,

I was very surprised to read the views of Jill Lake about part-time working. I am trying to return to work after having a child and for me part-time work represents the first step on the road to financial independence for three years.

We have to live in the real world, not a fantasy world where there are plenty of full-time jobs and good care for young children so women are

prepared to leave their kids all day.

By all means fight for a shorter working week, but part-time work for the majority of working mothers is often the only work they can get or are prepared to do. With women losing jobs at the rate they are we have to fight to defend a woman's right to work at all and whatever hours they wish.

Sandy Rose
Manchester

DIRTY LINEN

Much has been made of the smart little number Nancy Reagan was sporting the day her husband's inauguration took place. But it's nice to know that she didn't have to foot the bill as well. Her white beaded gown cost a cool £5,000 — but lucky for her, it was loaned to her by it's designer. She covered it up with a warm mink — costing £6,000.



HEAR NO
SEXISM



SEE NO
SEXISM

GET NOWHERE

Two more firsts for women. A woman is to cox the Oxford team in this year's boat race, for the first time ever. And an all female team from Yeovil College in Devon won the Young Scientist of the Year award for 1981. And just to push the point home another all female teams from Ireland came third. Come on boys, you're lagging behind!

From the *General Household Survey* (a Government Report) "Persons described as 'not working' or 'economically inactive' are either unoccupied (eg married women not working) or retired.



SO SPEAK OUT
AND SPEAK UP!

Someone sent us a copy of a revolting advertisement, which we will not reproduce, for a new *Corgi* thriller novel. The blurb runs ... "The night a nation 'switched on' TO TORTURE RAPE AND MURDER—live on TV!" Which is about as

sick as you can get. Who writes this stuff? Are there really "authors" around who are so sick they can sit down at a typewriter and churn out this sort of thing. There must be or *Corgi* wouldn't be able to publish such a thing.

Just three weeks after the DHSS announced its plans for another swoop on social security scroungers — particularly the unemployed and single parent mothers — *The Mirror* carried an interesting little item about four social security officials (snoopers to you) who went on the fiddle. They were charging up night lodging allowance when in fact they were returning home. Between them they clocked up £2,500.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Dear Womens Voice,

In 'Letters' (WV December 80), Wendy Pettifer told us she took a week's leave to join the Right to Work March. She is employed, yet she goes on 'holiday' on a march which I thought was for unemployed workers.

In 'Tales we tell our sisters' (in the same issue) the writer informs her snooty relative ... 'I wanted to be unemployed, it's OK for me, it's really frightening for people who want jobs and can't get them.'

The writer does not go on to explain what she means. Is she studying, bringing up children, ill/disabled? I can't think of a reason otherwise, why a socialist woman should want to be unemployed.

I really don't think that items in Womens Voice, like the two I mention above, should go unexplained or uncriticized.

I left it so late to write about this as I thought someone else might have pointed this out. No one did.

Siobhan Scanlan
London

Subsidies - poorest lose out

Dear Women's Voice,

Your article on housing, *And I'll blow your house down* (February 1981) contains a small but significant mistake.

As is correctly pointed out, the government is planning to cut housing by nearly 50 per cent over the next four years, and this will mean heavy cuts to the two main elements of the housing budget — investment and subsidies.

However, subsidies are not "rent subsidies and tax relief on mortgages". By a peculiarity of government accounting, mortgage tax relief is regarded not as a subsidy but as "taxation foregone". This does not mean that mortgage tax relief is not actually a subsidy — it plainly is; what it does mean is that it is not regarded as such by the Government and therefore is not part of the housing budget.

Housing cuts will therefore not touch mortgage tax relief; the only subsidies they will affect are those to council tenants. The massive cuts to housing will thus be borne by council tenants in the form of greatly increased rents and by those who are homeless or in poor housing whose only hope of a decent house is adequate public investment in housing.

Roger Matthews
London

Non-biodegradable toxic shock

Dear Womens Voice,

I agree that Playtex tampons are totally undesirable for a variety of reasons, but as you will understand the reasons which most concern Friends of the Earth are the non-degradable applicator and the added deodorant. In your leaflet you say "These tampons are not covered by protective laws in Britain." I was very interested to read this and I sent a letter of complaint to Playtex. Their reply says that they have had the deodorant tested in a number of ways in the USA.

They say nothing of tests in the UK. Also a tampon is unique in that it is inserted into the body — this deodorant seems to have been tested as a cosmetic, which is normally for external use.

There seem at present to be a number of campaigns going on. We have limited resources and are already up to our eyes in other campaigns, but would like to help the existing campaigns in whatever way we can.

Alison Whyte
Friends of the Earth



Mary Phillips' article on paedophilia brought back memories of the time it happened to me.

I had just started secondary school. He was a middle aged friend of the family with whom I had, up to that point, a very good relationship. His stories about atoms sparked off my first love of science (I'm scientist now) and we used to horse around a bit. I'd comb his hair, or we would wrestle. It must have excited him sexually, although I was totally oblivious of this.

Then, one day, he went too far. Pretending to spank me, he lifted my skirt and pulled down my pants a little. He immediately put them back and allowed me to get up, but I still remember the shock and bewilderment of it. I didn't know what to think, at that age we are not good at thinking about our feelings, but I began to avoid him.

This was not easy. One day he was invited to a meal and asked to 'look after me' until my mother came home from work. We lived in one small room stuffed with furniture. I tried to ignore him and buried my nose in a book, while he tried to engage me in conversation on the subject of our deteriorated relationship. Finally he said "well, you can smack me for being a bad boy then." I looked up to see him kneeling on the bed, his enormous white bare arse stuck in the air like a monument. I fled to the bathroom and locked myself in. After twenty minutes and an attempt to get me to come out, he left.

It's easy to see the humour of it now, but that's not how I felt then. It took two weeks for my mother to worm the truth out of me, although to this day I don't really understand why I was so reluctant to tell her. She was a most understanding mum, not at all sexually

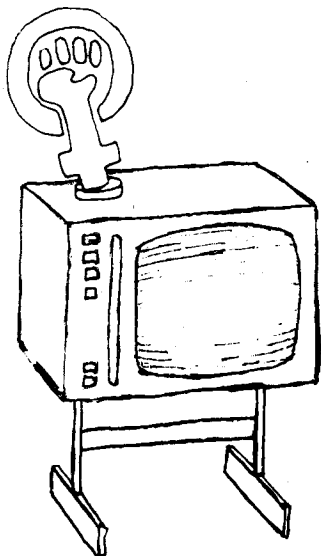
repressive and, as a two person family, we were very close.

Today, I have an ambiguous attitude towards the Paedophile Information Exchange. On the one hand bringing the subject out into the open must be good and anyone who horrifies the Mary Whitehouses of this world can't be all bad. On the other, if PIE aims not only to let paedophiles talk about their problems, but also to make active sexual relationships between adults and children easier, then I find that unacceptable.

I'm not denying that children who have not reached puberty have sexual feelings, but they are unprepared for the intensity and urgency of adult sex and need to explore sexuality in a way that leaves them free to choose. When they become the objects of an adult's lust then in practice that freedom is lost. It is not just that adults already hold power to control children's lives, but they also have the power to dominate how a relationship develops. The child will often not know how to retreat from the sexuality, even if he or she initiated it in the first place. The relationship is profoundly unequal—and not just because of the evils of capitalist society.

For me, the intrusion of sex destroyed a warm and interesting friendship. This friendship had included physical, affectionate contact, yet there had been a definite dividing line between that and sex. Is it too much to expect adults who deal with children to encourage the one but refrain from the other? For me it's not just an academic question, because I now have two daughters, one of whom is very 'cuddly'. What do others think?

Ewa Barker
Manchester



'A Sense of Freedom' did seem a very apt title for the TV play about Jimmy Boyle, who was born in the Gorbals tenements in Glasgow. Jimmy has spent most of his life passing through institutions, from approved school, borstal, to life imprisonment.

The play was extremely vio-

An incomplete sense of freedom

lent and horrific in parts, especially the scene where Jimmy was done over by a rival 'gang', who tried to axe him to bits. Whether it was his 'immunity' to such violence that pulled him through, I just don't know!

He was finally sentenced to life imprisonment for murder and started an amazing battle of guts. He refused to accept the discipline and always retaliated to the screws jibes with violence, even though he knew that that night they would all roll up to bash hell out of him in his cell.... on one occasion breaking both his arms and ribs.

He ended up serving 19 months in solitary ... pacing up and down his cell, like an animal pacing in a cage ... and nearly slashed his wrists, but at

last he twigged that this was exactly what they wanted him to do.... and then he would be truly beaten!

He mustn't let the system break HIM, as it did so many others, still throwing them back into that same system .. and so the vicious circle continued.

Obviously the environment Jimmy Boyle was raised in slums... poverty ... encouraged violence. It was a case of dog eat dog. Everyone fighting for crumbs, sharing none, a system where only the strong survive.

The play didn't make any conclusions, it stated nothing and was in my opinion quite disappointing. All that showed through was the violence.

Nobody bothered to mention that under a different society ...

ie socialism... these conditions wouldn't arise. because there'd be plenty of cake to go round, and people wouldn't end up as scavengers, fighting for an existence, while the big birds sit and cackle.

Christine Fellowes.

The next WV Editorial Board will take place on Wednesday 25 March at 7.30pm. If you would like to come please contact us on 01-986 6222

The WV Steering Committee is on Saturday 11 April. For further details contact us at the above number.

Dear Jane

'FEMINISTS HAVE no sense of humour!' That's an accusation that is frequently levelled at women who object to sexist jokes and comments. As a result of this kind of put down, many women bite their tongues and keep quiet. Sometimes it can seem more humiliating and more aggro than it is worth to comment in those situations. Constantly being aware of sexism and language and humour can be hard work. All day, every day women are surrounded by language, advertising, gestures and attitudes not to mention jokes which are sexist. To react to them all, to challenge each one of them is a daunting proposition, and a full-time job.

What usually happens is that we decide to compromise, that there are situations where we challenge and those where we do not. The problem is where do you draw the

line? What do you do when the bus conductor or shop worker calls you 'love' 'dear' or 'darling'. You know that you are in fact none of these things to him, and your relationship doesn't really call for such terms of intimacy. There are several things that you can do, firstly point this out to him, secondly retaliate by calling him 'love', 'blossom' or something similar to illustrate how inappropriate his attitude is. Or you can ignore it and sit on your feelings.

The first two will probably result in at least odd looks, and perhaps even the 'what is up with you' comments or more threatening behaviour. The same kind of reaction often results if you challenge a sexist joke. Men yawn in a bored fashion and say 'its only a joke you know'. They are not just jokes. Humour at womens expense is insulting, degrading, and

not funny. Why should we find things like that funny or humourous? If you laugh at those jokes, or fail to comment then to an extent you reinforce all the ideas and assumptions behind the joke.

Sexist remarks in your workplace are often even more difficult to deal with. First of all you can not always choose the company that you keep at work, and you have to face them day in day out. However, if you sit on your resentment at remarks and attitudes expressed until you explode or the feelings erupt, then you will be faced with 'but you've never said anything about this before'. Looks of bewilderment and disbelief that months or years of resentment have been building up. Although it may seem difficult, I think

it is easier to make it clear from the onset what you find funny or not, and what is offensive.

There are no easy answers or pat solutions for dealing with sexism in any shape or form. It's one of those things that if you ignore, it will *not* go away. If it passes unchallenged it is in some ways condoned. If we don't want to spend the rest of our lives inwardly grimacing, or seething with resentment and humiliation at the way women are portrayed then we must find our voices and courage and speak up ...*loudly*.

I would like to hear from readers how they deal with this problem, especially at work. We can only learn from each others experiences about this, so come on, share them!

Jane Foster

Yours Worried

why I became a socialist



Purna Sen

Purna Sen literally hit the headlines when she and a friend went to school in boys' uniform. She's left school now and studies at the London School of Economics. She's a member of SWSO, the Socialist Worker Students Organisation.

accused us of wanting to censor the books in the library. We were sent home suspended.

I rang my mum and then the NUSS promised to help. They had a press conference organised for the next day about corporal punishment in schools and they mentioned us. The Press Association took it up—and the phone never stopped ringing.

The head couldn't stand the publicity. He didn't want us back in the school. We were only given permission to sit our exams when we signed a letter saying we wouldn't be naughty and would abide by all sorts of conditions. We had to go in the front door of the school, where only the staff and the prefects were allowed in. We had to sit in a special room, with someone to supervise just the two of us. We weren't allowed to talk to anyone.

The NUSS organised a picket of the school and brought lots of students down from other schools. No wonder we were told to leave when we turned up for the leaving party for the school's sixth form.

One other thing happened which shows just how much support I have always had from my family. My father was in India at the time. He rang me up and said he would back me all the way. He also wrote to the headmaster.

He'd done that once before, when I was 16 and took a day off to go on that big anti-cuts demonstration in November 1976.

I had a Saturday job in a library and had joined the union. The cuts were just beginning then and I noticed people talking about it. Some schools closed for the day, but not ours. So my father just wrote and told them why I wouldn't be coming into school that day.

My parents were interested in politics all their lives. My father's a scientist and is opposed to the misuse of science. That's why he joined CND years ago. And my mother is a pacifist. I remember being taken on CND demos when I was very small.

I also remember being taken by my mother to a women's liberation meeting in 1971. She was very self-confident and independent. I was 10, and bored.

I have always got involved in things. When I was at school a group of us used to go to the Archway Development Education Centre and do voluntary work. It was a resources centre partly funded by Oxfam. We raised money for it at school and organised film shows.

I also joined the union when I worked for a year between leaving school and going to university. I was on the executive, and the trades council as well.

Being a socialist is all these things, being aware. That I think I learnt from my father. He always talked about the grass roots and had a disrespect for politicians. He encouraged us to think for ourselves, never to take the press for what it said. He read the *Morning Star* and I used to buy the odd copy of *Socialist Worker* when I was at school. Gradually I found that the things I read were things I thought.

I have been a socialist since I was at school, but I can't point to any one thing and say at that moment I became a socialist, or for that particular reason I am a socialist. It was so many different things.

I was born in India but eventually arrived in Woodhouse School in Brent, North London—that's in Thatcher's constituency, Finchley and Barnet, which says a lot about the school.

You could tell the different sorts of people in the school—most of them were occupied with their 'A' levels, or intended to go into their family business. They took the attitude—if you don't like it, leave it. But don't do anything about it.

The school had been fighting for years to stop it from going comprehensive and in the end it was decided it should become a sixth form college. So they took in lots of new pupils into the sixth form, Fiona among them.

She came from Hampstead Comprehensive and couldn't believe how our school was run. We all had to wear uniform. We couldn't go out in the lunch hour without a pass and all free periods had to be spent in the library. Whatever the weather, break time was spent in the playground. We had prefects who acted for the staff, a head girl and a head boy. When I was there they even added senior prefects too! With all the extra pupils the school became very cramped and so we were put into the gym to sit some of our exams. It was freezing. Everyone wore polo neck jumpers under their uniform. You couldn't see the boys' because they had shirt collars, but the girls wore open neck blouses. So the head pulled all the girls out of the dinner queue and made them take them off.

I was really annoyed. The one person I always spoke to at times like that was my brother. He would always talk a lot to me and we would get really good political discussions going. I think it was he who told me about the National Union of School Students, and he suggested I write to the local paper and tell them what was going on in the school.

I wrote the letter and then took it round the school to get other people's signatures. I only got 40 out of a possible 200. So I didn't send it I was so fed up.

Uniform became a sore point with us. We had to wear black or brown shoes, no high heels, sling backs, platforms or sandals. White or grey socks, or flesh coloured tights were compulsory. A grey 'A' line skirt, a blue and white stripe blouse, with that open neck!

And a grey jumper or cardigan. Jewellery and make up were certainly not allowed. The boys had one further insult. They had to line up and the headmaster would walk along behind them to see that their hair line was an inch above the collar.

All this thing about how money differences don't show when you have uniform is just so much nonsense. Those like me, with one skirt and one cardigan, were plain to see.

Knowing how we felt one of the blokes passed us a book he found in the school library. We couldn't believe it—*Good Grooming for Girls!* We looked up the classification and found a few more.

We went straight to the senior mistress and complained, but she said they just came with the schools library service and were nothing to do with the school.

My brother stepped in again. He just happened to be working for the library service and told me this was rubbish, the school orders the books it wants. Armed with this piece of knowledge we went back and told the mistress and the librarian, but they wouldn't change their story. Fiona and I bunked school for the afternoon in disgust, we were so cross.

Sitting around that afternoon Fiona suggested we go to school wearing boys' uniform. It was just a joke really, but then we decided we would do it.

We spoke to some of the blokes we thought would be sympathetic and I told my mum. She was all for it, although she was a bit worried about my exams. This was just three weeks before we sat our 'A' levels. Most of our support came from boys, or the younger ones, but not the senior girls, in the sixth form. They didn't want to know. We also dug up the school rules about uniform and found what we had suspected. There were rules for boys and girls, but nothing to say a girl must wear a girls' uniform!

We decided to do it one Wednesday as that was the day Fiona and I had most classes together and could support each other.

Someone suggested we ring up the local Finchley paper and they agreed to send a photographer along at 10 in the morning. We posed for photos and then went into class. The English teacher just ignored us. We couldn't believe it. But in the break the deputy head found us and marched us off to the head master. He just stood there raving and shouting and wouldn't listen to our explanation about the books. He used that argument about freedom of speech and

WHAT IS GOING ON?

WV groups

- **ABERDEEN WV** Liz 51059
- **ABERYSTWYTH WV** c/o Students Union, UCW, Aberystwyth
- **ACTON WV** Ruth or Jude 740 6660
- **NORTH BIRMINGHAM WV** Maggie 021 449 4793
- **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM WV** Jill 021 459 1718
- **BLACK COUNTRY WV** 27 Glen Court, Compton Road
- **BRADFORD WV** Trish Bradford 585 913 for details of meetings and activities
- **BRIGHTON WV** phone 696897
- **BRISTOL WV** Katrina 46875
- **BURTON ON TRENT WV** Kim 33929
- **CANTERBURY WV** Barbara, Lyminge 862 742
- **CHELTENHAM WV** meets every Thursday. For babysitters and information, Jacqui 551 370
- **CHORLTON WV** Claire 226 1048
- **COVENTRY WV** meets Hertford Tavern fortnightly. Mondays 8pm. 361 585
- **COLCHESTER WV** 22 5650 for details
- **DUDLEY WV** Brigitte Brierley Hill 78308
- **EALING/SOUTHALL WV** Christine or Jane 571 1838
- **ECCLES AND SALFORD WV** Jannie 707 2557 or Ann 737 3800
- **EDINBURGH WV** Penny 557 0731
- **EDGE HILL COLLEGE WV** Bev Southport 212 140
- **ENFIELD WV** Nora 807 1741
- **FINSBURY PARK WV** Wendy 01 254 9632 (days)
- **GLASGOW WV** Clare 357 1157
- **GLOSSOP WV** Derbyshire - Carol, Glossop 64287
- **GLOUCESTER WV** Maggie Gloucester 413910
- **HALIFAX WV** every Friday 12-1pm, Co-op Arcade on the Precinct
- **HAMMERSMITH AND WEST KENSINGTON WV** Ginny 749 7292 or Eileen 960 6088
- **HATFIELD AND WELWYN WV** phone Cathy Hatfield 65238
- **HEMEL HEMPSTEAD WV** Val, Berkhamstead 74468
- **HORNSEY WV** Maggie 341 1182
- **KENTISH TOWN WV** Pauline 586 5693
- **KINGSTON WV** Emma 979 9682
- **LAMPETER WV** c/o SDUC Lampeter. Dyfed, Wales
- **LANCASTER WV** ring 36196
- **LEEDS WV** Gilda 622 800 or Bev 457 098
- **LEICESTER WV** Fiona 0533 62855
- **LEYTONSTONE WV** Anne (556 5595) or Pam (558 1509)
- **LIVERPOOL WV** Jane 727 1182
- **LOWESTOFT WV** c/o 107, Montgomery Avenue, Lowestoft
- **LUTON WV** Denise 35 Chatsworth Road, Luton
- **MEDWAY WV** Lici, Medway 571628
- **NORTH MANCHESTER WV** phone Sandy 205 0384 or, Maria 205 7657
- **NEWCASTLE WV** Liz 854 782
- **NEWHAM WV** Pam 534 1417
- **NORWICH WV** c/o 56 Benedicts St, Norwich
- **NOTTINGHAM WV** Chrissie Langley Mill 62356
- **PIMLICO WV** Helen 730 7983 or Leslie 834 0760
- **READING WV** Shirley 585556
- **ST HELENS WV** Carol, St Helens 28178
- **SHEFFIELD WV** Sue 613 739
- **SOUTH LONDON WV** Sally 720 5768
- **SOUTHWARK WV** c/o PO Box 82, London E2 9DS or Elaine 670 3774 (day)
- **SOUTH WEST LONDON WV** Marion 947 0560
- **STOKE ON TRENT WV** Sandra 814094
- **TOTTENHAM WV** Mary 802 9563
- **TOWER HAMLETS WV** Helen 980 6036
- **WALTHAMSTOW WV** phone Sue 521 5712
- **WREXHAM WV** Heather 87293

• **WHALLEY RANGE WV** Claire 061 226 1048

Small ads

HOT GOSSIP at the LSE. Alternative gig and picket. Music from Members and two supporting groups. Monday March 2, 7.30 pm, LSE, Houghton Street, London WC1. £1 advance tickets, £1.25 on the door. All London Womens Voice groups welcome.

The student union of the LSE has policy, passed overwhelmingly at a union general meeting, against racism and sexism. The decision to invite 'Hot Gossip' to appear as a rag week activity goes against that policy. The Open Committee are therefore holding an alternative event on the same night. The dance troupe cost £1800 to hire.

Thatcher degrades Women badges. 20p. Available now from the Womens Voice office

• **LESBIANS supporting Womens Voice/Socialist Worker contact the Womens Voice Lesbian Group. Jane Scragg c/o PO Box 82, London E2 9DS.**

National Festival for Womens Rights
Planning Meeting March 2nd
Help needed to organise events on the day eg bands, films, plays, displays, stalls, exhibitions. All ideas about the event warmly welcomed. 7pm 374, Gray's Inn Rd. WC1.

HISTORY WORKSHOP 15
Brighton, 7-9 November 1981

WE WOULD be interested to hear from any comrade who would like to introduce topics to be discussed under the general headings: Imperialism, Peasantry, People's History,

Labour Party and Social Democracy, Labour Party and Trade Unions, Labour Movement and Education, Labour Movement and Unemployment, Labour Movement and Defence and Disarmament, Teaching History, Trades Councils and their History.

Please contact Andy Durr, 235 Ditchling Road, Brighton, as soon as possible.

I am writing a study of Marilyn French's 'The Womens Room' and its place within the women's movement. I want to obtain a wide range of views on it. Please write to: Dee Keane, 17a Stanley Road, Oxford.

Womens Festival Newcastle-upon-Tyne Poly & University 11-15 March. Details and Accommodation: Philippa Matthews, 37 Heaton Grove, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Tel: (0632) 659 086

WV public meetings

Whalley Range WV public meetings:
Tuesday 3 March The Family - Sandy Rose

Tuesday 10 March Debate with women in the local Labour Party (to be confirmed)
'Thatcher in power - which way forward for women?'

SEXUALITY AND MONETARISM
Tues 3rd March 8.15pm
St Albans WV/Gay Voice joint meeting
Speaker: Anne Neagle
Details: Jane (St Albans 68678) or Richard (St Albans 69041)

WARNING ALL WOMEN

THIS TAMPON CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH!



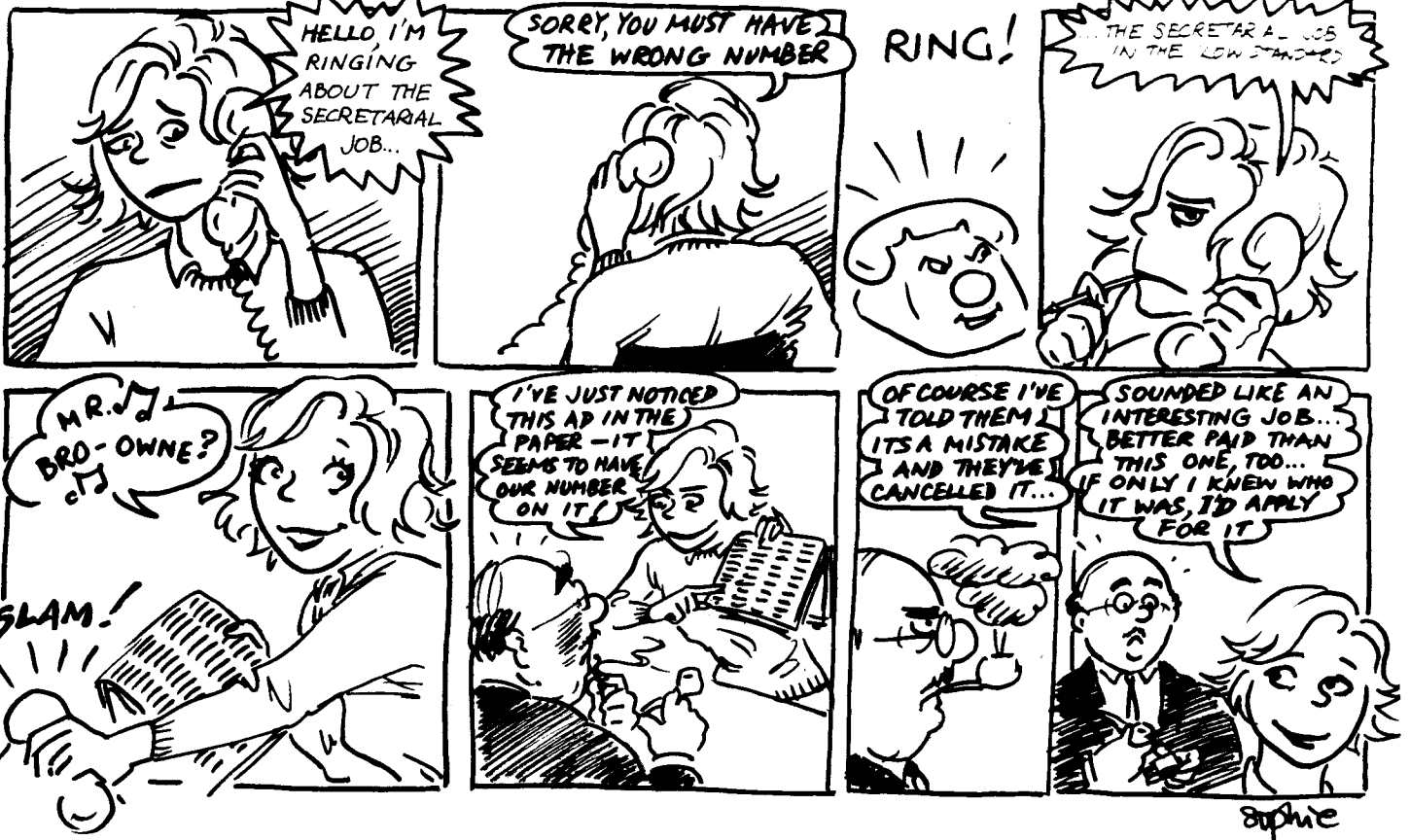
PLAYTEX deodorised tampon increases the risk of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). This is a bacterial infection of the vagina and can be lethal. The symptoms of TSS include vomiting, fever, diarrhoea and body rash. Seventeen women in the USA have died from it, all while menstruating and using Playtex or similar tampons. Fifteen-year old Diane Silva of California and the family are suing Playtex. She died because ill.

These tampons are not covered in Britain.

- Playtex's tampons have six row blood stream.
- The tampons are made of super absorbent polymer.

Get the facts! WV leaflet £1 for 100 orders to PO Box 82 London E2 9DS

SANDRA



Your nearest Womens Voice Group meets

Join Womens Voice...

join
the
fight

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.

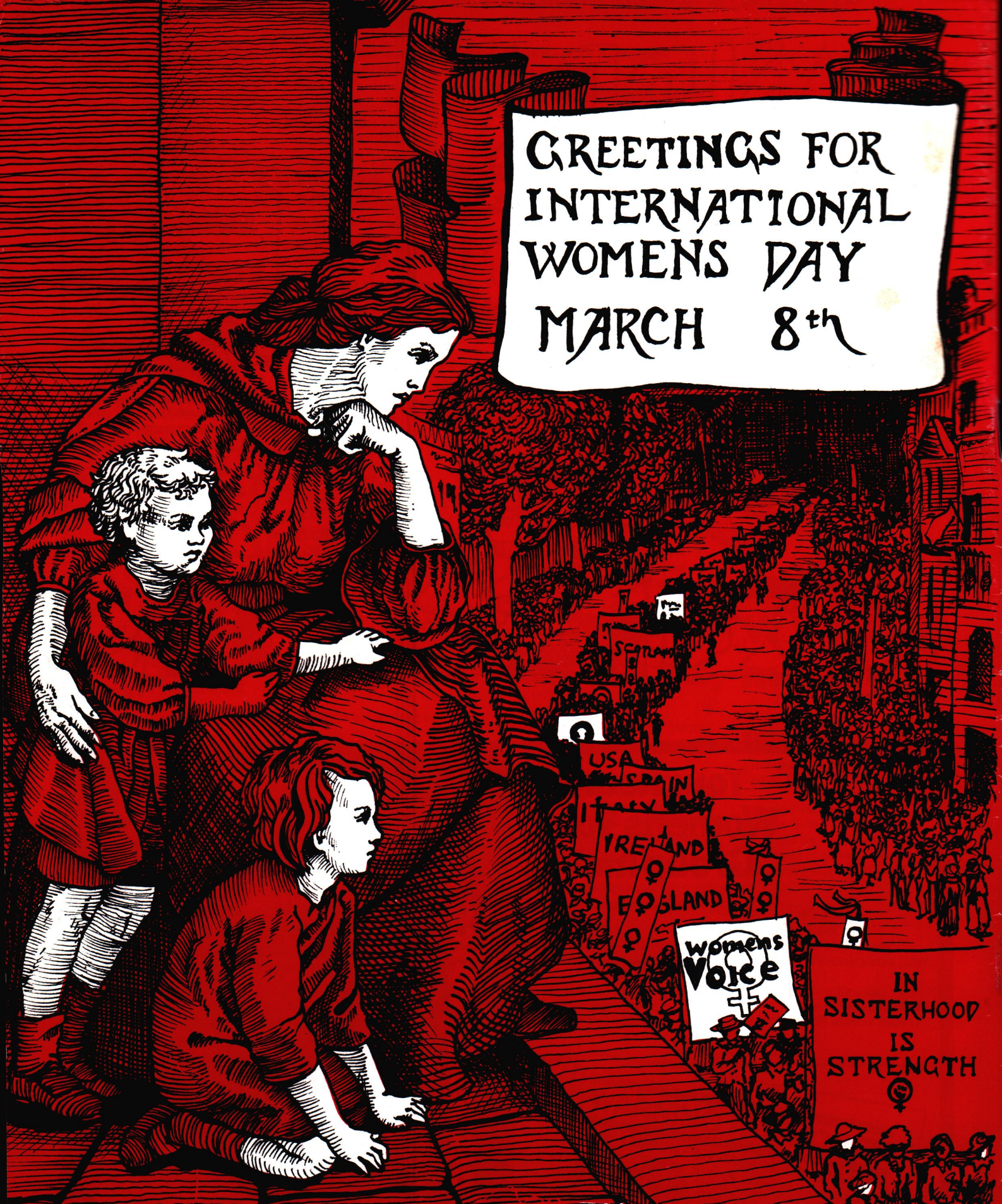
Womens Voice supports the aims of the Socialist Workers Party. It is organisationally independent but based on the politics of the SWP.

I want to join the fight...
Name

Address

Send to Womens Voice
PO Box 82,
London, E2

GREETINGS FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY MARCH 8th



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