

# womens VOICE

Womens magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

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## Xmas on the dole

# Fighting Women



Throw away those flowery notelets—send *Womens Voice* postcards for Christmas and all the year round. Featuring Anna Walentynowicz, the Chix Strikers, Anwar Ditta and the Liverpool Typists. 50 pence for the four-card set, including postage. Rush orders to: *Womens Voice Cards*, PO Box 82, London E2. (Make cheques, POs out to *Womens Voice*)

## OUR POINT OF VIEW

# No cuts! No rate increases!

CUT SERVICES or put up the rates? This is the question that has been put countless times by Labour councils in the last couple of years.

Which would you choose? Or would you rather not be forced to choose at all?

Most people don't want to see hospitals closed, the price of school meals up and the number of school books down, fewer houses being built for those who are homeless or who live in inadequate housing now—and all the other services which are being cut as a result of the Tories' economic policies.

But, equally, most people do not want to have to pay twice for these services—and that's exactly what a supplementary rate means. You've already paid for public services through local rates and taxes, but if you want to keep them you'll have to pay again.

There is a Bill before Parliament, introduced by the Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine, which will make local councils who want to maintain services hold a referendum asking people to choose either cuts or higher rates. The Bill also says that if a supplementary rate *is* levied 'non-domestic rate-payers'—businesses—should have to pay proportionately less.

The Labour Party is against holding referenda on the cuts and rates. They believe that supplementary rates *should* be levied in order to pay for services, rather than let them fall under the Tory axe.

But we are against referenda because we don't believe that people should have to choose at all. Labour councillors all too often make the mistake

of thinking that it is only the better-off, the people who own large houses, and the businesses who will suffer by levying extra rates. But council tenants pay rates too—often almost as much as their rents.

It *is* possible to maintain services without increasing the rates—but only by defying the Tories and their laws. Local councils make massive interest repayments to banks on money they have borrowed. That interest lines the pockets of people who are already enormously wealthy, but are greedy for more. Local councils who proudly call themselves 'left-wing' should prove themselves by making a stand against the bankers and refusing to pay.

If they were backed up with the support of the local community, by the action of local workers—both public and private sector—the Tory government could be defeated.

But it doesn't look as though Labour councils will make that stand. And where referenda have already been held, the result has been to cut services.

But that's not necessarily the end of the matter. In Coventry, the council announced cuts—and 4000 of the council's workers refused to accept them. They are now on strike against measures which will deny them their jobs and their services. Three-quarters of the strikers are women, because their jobs and hours are on the line now.

Coventry council workers are showing the rest of us that there is only one way to get the Tories and their policies out—industrial action.

For the last six months, the SWP has debated at length whether the Womens Voice groups set up by women in the SWP have been the most effective way of organising around women and relating to struggles involving women. In the October issue of *Womens Voice* the two sides of the argument were published.

At last month's SWP conference the decision was taken to disband Womens Voice groups and make work around women the responsibility of

the whole party. This does not mean that we are no longer interested in readers of this magazine who are not members of the SWP; on the contrary, we want non-members to continue to work with the SWP around a whole range of issues—unemployment, anti-nazi work, solidarity work with strikes, etc.

*Womens Voice* magazine will continue to come out monthly, providing news and analysis and taking up the arguments for women's liberation and socialism.

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## Labour cuts – women strike!

**'I've got a husband and son at home who haven't worked for years. When they talk about pin money I think, what a cheek.'**

Lou works at the Henley College of Further Education in Coventry. Like all the other cleaners, kitchen staff and caretakers who work in Coventry Council's schools and colleges, Lou has been on strike for the past two weeks. They are striking against proposed cuts by the council which will, among other things, top 10 per cent off the cleaners' hours, meaning they will have to work harder for less money.

'I didn't vote for Thatcher. But I was dying to see a woman get in. Now look at her. And why do they keep pickets to six? On Tuesday we linked arms but were threatened with the police so we let them in. If we'd stood firm not so many would have got in.'

Dozens of picket lines have sprung up round Coventry. Most, like the one at Henley, are made up mostly of women and clearly defy Thatcher's picketing law.

Labour Coventry council is picking on the NUPE women and men because they think low paid part-time workers are the easiest to start on, and will be less worried by worsening conditions and possibly losing their jobs. They couldn't be

more wrong. Coventry has gone from being a prosperous motor city to very high levels of unemployment in a matter of years. Many of the women, like Lou, are the main or only wage-earners. They have seen the car industry decimated by redundancy and short time working, and feel that now they have to fight.

Women pickets—cleaners and kitchen workers—at Whitley Abbey Comprehensive school made their position clear. 'If we don't make a stand now they'll come back in April and hit us again.'

They knew they were being picked on as some of the lowest paid workers. They say that if Michael Edwardes can get 38 per cent, who says there's no money?

Labour's cuts follow a referendum held in the town which made voters choose between cuts and rate rises—which Michael Heseltine's new bill going through parliament will make law. If it becomes law, we will see Coventrys all over the country. The Labour council does have another option from rates rises or cuts. It could refuse to do either and really fight Heseltine.

'We're not just out here for our jobs, we're out here for our children. We want this council to stand up to the Tory

government,' said one woman at Whitley Abbey—but the chances of that happening are remote. The council would rather do the Tories' work for them.

Luckily they're not getting it all their own way. The strikers have the support of the other manual workers, who have agreed to a one day stoppage if the other unions agree. The teachers have refused to cross the picket line at one school and have collected over £2,000 in the first week of the strike. Students at Tile Hill College have already come out for a day in support. But more is needed. An all-out strike by all council employees is the only way to bring the council to a halt and force back the cuts. Local factory visits and increased pickets of council buildings can also help spread support for the strike.

The strikers are determined to stick it out, but they desperately need solidarity and financial support from other workers. One said, 'Never mind, we can have eggs and chips on Christmas day,' but they need to win before that if the cuts in Coventry aren't to become the shape of things to come elsewhere.

**Lindsey German**

## Eight weeks and still fighting

AGAINST ALL the odds, the mainly women workforce of Commonwealth Curtains in Kirkby, have been sitting in at the factory for eight weeks to prevent closure.

The round-the-clock occupation is being maintained by a hard core of 40 workers. Although they have received no strike pay from their union, the GMWU, their determination has never flagged. Now the convenor, Josie Hart, feels certain that they are in sight of victory.

'I'm sure our jobs will be saved. We haven't struggled on for all this time just to leave quiet.'

The workers at both Ford Halewood and Yorkshire

Imperial Metals threatened to strike if bailiffs broke the sit-in, and have donated regularly and generously to the strike fund. The Right to Work Campaign has been taking delegations of workers around the area most days and has ensured a regular flow of cash into the occupation's coffers.

If the plant is re-opened it won't be because of behind-the-scenes talks between union and management, but because a group of women workers have refused to 'see sense' and give up.

**Alan Gibbons**

*Donations and messages of support to: Commonwealth Curtains Occupation, Admin Gate, Kirkby Industrial Estate, Merseyside.*



Women from Commonwealth Curtains occupation in Kirkby.

## Staffa strikers stay united

WORKERS AT Staffa Products have now been on strike for eight weeks. Support, both financial and practical, continues from all over the country. The mines in West Scotland and South Wales have blacked Staffa motors, so too have both registered and unregistered Docks.

Morale on the picket line is good, Margaret Seymour, Ngaire Withers and Margaret Cole of ASTMS said. When they first occupied they thought it would be over quickly.

'We thought it would be a couple of weeks and then we'd be back in. Now each week starts and we never know what's going to happen. Every week though you think it'll be the end and we'll have won.'

ASTMS made the strike official from the beginning and paid out strike pay. This has helped them a lot. But, as Ngaire Withers said:

'Now Christmas is looming and some of us are single or widows so things are going to be a lot harder. But we wouldn't cross the picket line... ever, not while the strike is on. The members that are crossing the picket line always licked the manager's boots, we knew they wouldn't stick with us.'

These three women had been involved in the Union before they went on strike, but Margaret Seymour feels they have learnt a lot.

'It really opens your eyes to

what happens to people when they're in struggle. You see people on the TV, but you never really understand what it's like. In future I'm going to be looking much closer at disputes, I want to know what's really going on.'

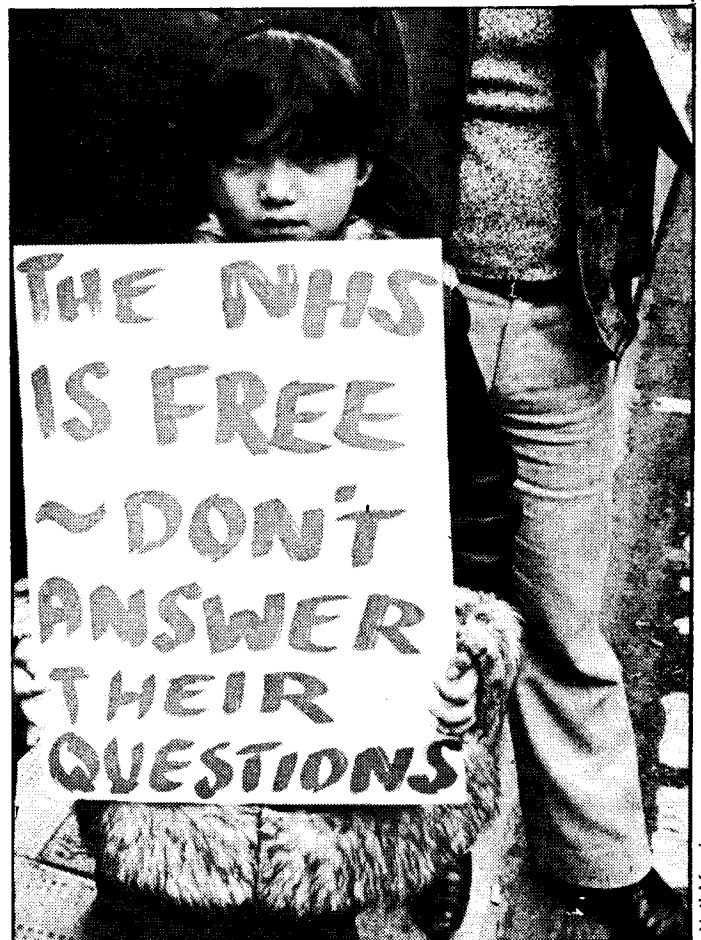
As office staff, they hadn't known the AUEW members before, but during the strike they have all got on well together.

'The men are OK. They treat us as equals, but they keep watching their language. They don't expect us to make the tea for them or anything—everything is shared.'

Gary Evans, an AUEW member, hadn't expected the women in the office to come out. He had a traditional view of women at work. Now his attitude has changed.

'I thought that the women just worked for pocket money, so they wouldn't be bothered to fight. They've been great on the picket line and delegations, doing just as much as the men—if not more!'

**Julie Leadbetter**



Neil Martinson

On 28 October there was a protest outside University College Hospital in Central London against the proposed questionnaire for 'overseas visitors' who want NHS treatment. In reality this means that black people will be asked to produce passports and other documents before being given medical treatment. The protest was strongly supported by the staff at the hospital, and the unions — NUPE, NALGO and ASTMS — have said they are completely opposed to this racist study.

# Liverpool typists :- a sell-out

The 350 typists, secretaries and machine operators at Liverpool city council who have been on strike for the last five months over re-grading have agreed submit their claim to a local working party—a form of arbitration.

The terms of reference for the working party had not been finally worked out when *Womens Voice* went to press, but its decision will be binding, there will be no guarantee of back pay and the typists will return to work before the working party begins to meet.

The decision was taken by the typists at a mass meeting only a week after they decided to escalate the action being taken by other NALGO members in Liverpool in support of the typists' claim. Despite the support for escalation, shown in a ballot of the whole branch, NALGO's national executive advised the branch to delay the escalation until further talks had been held with the employers on the possibilities of arbitration. They typists were told that if the escalation went ahead the action would be unofficial, and that their strike pay would be withheld.

The NALGO officials negotiated an agreement on arbitration with the local employers, and the strikers were told this was the only hope of a wage increase. The mass meeting voted overwhelmingly to end the strike this way. **CATHY WADE** was the only typist to vote against arbitration and to continue the strike. She told *Womens Voice* why.

**'WHEN WE voted to escalate the action, the council was in a weak position. Jones (the city council leader) never wanted arbitration, but we forced him enough into a corner for him to agree—and that shows that we could have forced him further if we'd escalated. We could have won.'**

'Most of us voted for the working party because we *know* we've got a justifiable claim. Most of the women think that because of that, the working party is *bound* to give us what we want — but you only have to look to see what happens to other strikers' justifiable claims during arbitration to realise that we won't get what we want.

'Our branch officers were much too worried that NALGO nationally would withdraw official support for the strike. Their loyalty is divided between backing the national executive and the typists—and now it looks like the NEC have won.

'The officials are frightened of the membership. They're terrified of taking a hard, political stand in case they're rejected and lose their positions. So they take the broadest, widest view possible, and that means they're negative about action.

'It's difficult to believe that the NEC told us to call off the escalation after the mass meeting. What's the point of having votes if our own union tells us that we can't act on the outcome of that vote? If we'd gone ahead with the escalation anyway, NALGO nationally would have made the strike



Tessa Howland (IFL)

**Shirley Graham will be deported if the Home Office has its way. Except Shirley isn't going to sit back and accept this as her 'fate'. She has lived and worked in Britain since 1974 and throughout that time has kept in constant contact with the Home Office about her circumstances. She is one of the growing numbers of black and Asian women who are having their rights removed because of their colour and their sex, and because it's convenient for the Tories.**

• For more information contact the Shirley Graham Defence Campaign, c/o 285 Romford Road, Forest Gate, London E7. 01-555-3331

unofficial and stopped our strike pay. Now I think it was a mistake to ask them for full strike pay, because it means that we really depended on them for the money. That's what forced us to arbitration in the end—the fact that a few bureaucrats sitting in a committee room in London can decide for us whether or not we continue our fight. The money's so important in a strike—but we should have asked for the support and solidarity of other trade unionists, and got it that way.

If we'd done that *we'd* be in control of the strike.

'When the results of the working party are known, and awful lot of us are going to be disappointed. A lot of people will begin to think that there's no point in taking action in the future, because we came out for five months for something a lot less than we wanted. That has to be countered by people continuing to be involved in the union, getting typists to stand in the Shop Stewards elections which are coming up. We have to argue with people who feel bitter about the union that they only way they'll change the union, the leadership, is by fighting within it.

'In a few months time, I'll still be saying to people 'we could have won', because it's true. The next time we come out, the first thing we'll do is win solidarity from other workers, and if we have that we don't have to worry about or depend on the union officials and leadership. That's the way to win, and that's what I've learnt in the last five months.'



John Sturrock (Network)

## Black the goods, picket the factory



GLENCROFT KNITWEAR is like a score of other sweat shops in the city centre of Glasgow, churning out 'genuine hand-knitted' Scottish sweaters for the upper end of the market. But since 10 August Glencroft has changed totally. On that day 15 women were sacked for joining the Hosiery Workers Union, following the firing of a supervisor. Since then the women have been picketing, fighting to get their jobs back and recognition for the union.

45 scabs, some young girls, recruited from the dole to do the strikers' jobs, have been crossing the picket line daily. Leslie, the nephew of Leon Newman, Glencroft's owner, asked one of the women on the Strike Committee, 'How does it feel to be a 27 year old bitch?' One of the pickets told me he then, 'spat on my good skirt, it made me feel sick'. But despite the insults, the assaults and the constant police presence the strikers have stood their ground.

One of the strikers, Betty O'Brian, told me why she stuck it out: 'I'm a hand knitting machinist and was on piece rate. I could run off 14 jerseys a day—one of these costs £25 in the shops, I got 68p to knit one. Some people only got 23p for knitting a jersey. You weren't allowed to talk and if you went to the toilet in two's you were pulled up and if you wanted a smoke you had to sit out in the middle of the factory to see how long it took you!'

The women single out their manager, Friedman, who sacked them, saying he's two-faced. When they were offered a five per cent wage increase he took them all aside and encouraged them to threaten a strike until they got offered more, as he'd get the same increase—he wanted the women to fight for his wage increase! It didn't take him long to sack them when they went on strike after he sacked a supervisor.

The strikers know exactly how they can win. As Winnie McGeoch points out, 'We need a mass picket of about 1,000 down here. To win we'd need to stop production which means stopping the yarn going in. There's only 14 of us standing here, we feel neglected!'

The union full-time officials, who've hoped some deal could be arranged through the Industrial Tribunal, aren't interested in organising mass pickets or the blacking of Glencroft goods. Instead they are 'reviewing' the strike weekly and becoming an increasingly

rare sight on the picket line. One woman commented that it's no wonder that one of them has piles as all he does is sit on his arse!

The Strike Committee, together with the Right to Work Campaign, have organised blacking, pickets of shops selling Glencroft knitwear and mass pickets. On one mass picket when the women were joined by delegations from Yarrow shipyard, Bl. Albion plant and Barr and Stroud Engineering, Marion Ross told me 'We're pleased they turned out. Usually if it's just us that's when people cross the picket line. There's one guy, a homeknitter, who always crosses but because the lads from the shipyard asked him not to he just turned away'.

**Chris Bambury**

*What you can do:*

- Don't buy Glencroft knitwear.
- Support the mass pickets every Tuesday morning at 7.15.
- Send donations and messages of support to: Glencroft Strike Committee, c/o NUHKW, 44 Kelvingrove Street, Glasgow G3

## He FALEd miserably

**A STRIKE** by about 50 women at J and A Bingo hall in Kirkby has won union recognition, although the shop steward for the women, who was sacked, has not yet been reinstated.

The workers, mostly part-time, decided to join the Transport and General Workers Union after they had spent six weeks working in freezing cold conditions because the hall's heating system had broken down. One of them, Dot Quirk, contacted the TGWU office in Liverpool and, at a meeting where all the women joined up, Dot was elected as the shop steward.

The women's boss, Andrew Fale, refused to recognise the union. He'd been underpaying the workers for years: some were earning as little as £18 a week for 20 hours. After a row between Dot and Fale, Dot was sacked for 'gross misconduct'.

After a few days notice, giving Fale a chance to reinstate Dot, most of the workforce came out on strike. The picket line was strong and succeeded in turning away all but 50 or 60

of the Bingo hall's average of 700 customers. Fale shouted abuse at the pickets, calling them 'riff-raff'. The quick reply from one picket was, 'We're the "riff-raff" that make your profits'.

After two days on the picket line, the local TGWU official called a meeting of the women to tell them of discussions he'd had with Fale. The agreement was that Dot would be suspended on pay until an Industrial Tribunal decided whether she'd been fairly sacked, and that Fale would recognise the union. The T&G official told the women that they would have to return to work.

The women changed their attitudes about unions and management in the course of the strike. The local press reported that the pickets had beaten and kicked people in order to stop them going into the bingo hall. One of the women told me, 'I've read newspaper reports about strikers and violent picket lines before. Now I don't believe a word of it.'

**Margot Long**

### DON'T WEAR THIS LABEL

MARION ROSS from the Glencroft Knitwear Strike Committee in Glasgow says: 'We're asking people to look out for this label and not buy Glencroft sweaters. By boycotting Glencroft you can help us win back our jobs and get union recognition.'



# Anti-abortionists campaign in COHSE

At the 1981 Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) conference, a resolution on affiliation to the National Abortion Campaign (NAC) was carried by a clear but narrow majority. But two months later, the National Executive Committee overturned conference decision and decided not to take action on this resolution until it had been fully discussed again at the 1982 conference.

This decision was reached as the result of a campaign within the union by members of the anti-abortion organisations, LIFE and SPUC. They circulated branches advising them to write and protest to the union about affiliation to 'an extremist organisation who are child-killers and advocate abortion on demand up to an unspecified time'.

This kind of hysterical ranting by the 'right-to-lifers' is no more than we can expect from people who wish to force their own consciences on everyone else. These people preach about the right of the foetus, but deny women any rights whatsoever.

This is clearly a class issue—attacks on abortion are attacks

on the rights of working class women. Women with money and social standing have always had easy access to abortion and will continue to do so. Anti-abortionists wish to curb the rights of ordinary working women to choose their own destinies, and to take us back to the horrors of backstreet abortions and knitting needles.

In 1971 COHSE adopted the 'Working Womens Charter', of which one of the provisions was for free abortion to be readily available. NAC is campaigning for safe, NHS abortions for all women in need who have made their own choice. This surely is a basic human right—CHOSE must affiliate to NAC and honour conference decision. Otherwise the word 'democracy' in our union will become meaningless. Resolutions passed by branches will be meaningless along with conference itself—and we may as well leave policy making to the union's General Secretary and the executive.

*Sue Rigby  
Ross-on-Wye Hospital for  
the mentally handicapped.*

## Coat hangers through the post

A FEW WEEKS ago every MP received in the post a coat hanger and an information sheet about the lack of abortion facilities in Northern Ireland. It is a part of the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign's fight to get the 1967 Abortion Act extended to Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland there are few abortion facilities, the choice for women is quite clear—have the child, come to Britain or go to the backstreets. And considering the fact that the cost involved in travelling to get an abortion is £200 and that in Northern Ireland there is 50 per cent unemployment, this cuts down the choices somewhat. The death of Charlotte Hutton in Belfast in July 1979 from a backstreet abortion

highlights the problem only too clearly.

The 1967 Act is far from perfect—but it does allow us some choice, and the women of Northern Ireland are being denied that choice. They certainly won't receive it through Parliament either. Out of the 12 Northern Ireland MPs, 11 are known to be anti-abortion, and from experience we know that there aren't many other MPs who are prepared to herald a fight for positive legislation in Parliament, and even if they do it is likely to be smashed by anti-abortion MPs.

The only way that the women of Northern Ireland will get free and easy abortion is by taking the issue into the trade unions and onto the streets.



Shirley Williams, the SDP candidate in Crosby.

## Abortion under attack

Our abortion rights are under attack again.

In the local by-election in Crosby, near Liverpool, SPUC are supporting, and campaigning for, the Tory candidate, Mr John Butcher (an unfortunate name!) on the issue of abortion. By the time you read this, SPUC will have handed out over 150,000 leaflets on the streets of Crosby and will have asked people to vote for Butcher on the single issue of abortion. They would have given their support to Mrs Shirley 'I'm a Catholic and a well-known anti-abortionist' Williams, who is also a candidate (SDP) if she had promised to vote for future amendments to the 1967 Abortion Act. But she wouldn't.

There is also the disgusting campaign by LIFE. It is a campaign which is based on pure hypocrisy. 'Right-to-Lifers' are sneaking about our hospitals and spying on doctors and patients. It was LIFE who brought the prosecution against Dr Arthur, who was cleared of attempting to murder a handicapped baby last month. They are also trying to get an MP to sponsor a bill through Parliament titled the 'Protection of Disabled Children Bill'. If it was passed, many more handicapped babies would be born. For an organisation who claim to care about people, they have a horrific way of showing it. They are condemning many women to live a life of hell, and allowing them no part in deciding their future.

## Scrap this form

SIR HENRY YELLOWLEES, Chief Medical Officer, has recently sent out a letter to all doctors who said that social factors contributed to them granting abortions. Sir Henry says that 'non-medical factors alone do not provide legal justification for termination .... There has to be a current medical condition which puts at risk the life,

or, physical or mental health of the patient'.

This was a result of the new notification form which doctors must complete and return to the DHSS not later than seven days after an abortion is performed. Many doctors are worried at the consequences of this, it is also a worrying fact to many women. The form should be scrapped.



## Every child a wanted child

More than 40 women formed a picket outside Leicester Crown Court where Dr Leonard Arthur was accused of attempting to murder a three-day-old mongol baby.

We were protesting at the activities of the anti-abortion group LIFE in bringing this, and other, cases into the courts, causing untold misery, not only to Dr Arthur, but to the parents who had declared that they did not wish that the child should survive.

Although being a small and unrepresentative group, LIFE are gaining increasing power through the threats of litigation and are placing doctors in the intolerable situation of being unable to make a decision in such cases that is in the best interests of all concerned.

The real tragedy, the real scandal, is that so many handicapped babies are born at all. In 1979, 2,000 babies were born with Spina Bifida, Downs syndrome,

and other deformities. Yet now we have the technology to detect most serious foetal abnormalities early in pregnancy. But when such screening became established at Leicester hospitals, LIFE campaigned in opposition, since detection of any serious foetal abnormality might lead the mother to seek an abortion.

Screening should be available to every pregnant woman as a right, and every child should be a wanted child—particularly under the grip of the ruthless, hypocritical Tories who claim to 'care for the family' yet cut its support and resources.

Women must have the right to choose, to determine and control their own lives. They must not be dictated by the church, state or any doctor—and least of all by organisations such as LIFE.

Enid Khan



## In brief

THE LATEST abortion figures show that in the first six months of 1981 80,773 were performed in England Wales — only 29,310 of these were performed on the NHS. This is obviously a result of continued Tory cuts in the health service leading to many day care abortion clinics being closed. These figures are also very worrying.

DR THEODORE Reed, of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, has developed a method of temporary sterilisation called Tubal Occlusion. Under a local anaesthetic, silicone is injected into the fallopian tubes. The silicon hardens in five minutes. In this way the ova cannot reach the uterus to be fertilised. The operation only takes 30 minutes.

Women who have had the operation can have the silicon removed when they wish to become pregnant. So far, 300 women have been treated without any apparant ill-effects but the United States administration will not ratify the process until it has been tested on 1,000 subjects!

From Marie Claire, a french magazine.

MEET THE JOBS EXPRESS  
JOIN THE FIGHT FOR JOBS

OCCUPY, ORGANISE, KICK THE TORIES OUT!

March and rally in Central London  
Sunday Nov 29th

ON YER BIKE  
TEBBIT



# SAVE

## ST MARYS HARROW RD

# Hospital sit-in still going strong

St Mary's hospital in West London has been in occupation to stop the closure of four vital wards and restrictions on admission of patients to casualty departments.

The occupation has been supported by staff and ambulance crews who have put their jobs on the line by refusing to carry out the hospital administration's instructions.

Management has responded by suspending trade union members. This happened after the administration staff closed a ward using police and the security officer. An elderly patient returned from X-ray and was

left locked outside her ward, crying and upset. She wanted to go to the ward she had been in during her stay. Two porters were suspended when they refused to move her into another ward.

A TGWU steward has been given a final warning because of her determined opposition to the cuts. Her workmates have backed her and went to the head administrator to defend her. When he refused to lift the warning, they locked him out of his offices, and it is now the base for the occupation committee.

Sue Large

P&P Hospital Defence Committee. Union Office. St Marys Hospital. Harrow Road. W9

# Hit the bosses where it hurts

Otis Elevators, an American multi-national, are the proud owners of a picket line in Leicester! Last month they bought Evans Lifts, where 70 TASS members (the white collar section of the AUEW) have been locked out since 11 September. They are demanding a wage increase in line with inflation, a 35 hour week, a full six weeks holiday a year and the operation of a closed shop. Of course Otis have stated that they are 'unhappy with the present situation' and no doubt they are trying to 'resolve it satisfactorily', but when TASS representatives met with the directors of Otis they all agreed that they were vehemently anti-union.

The workers on strike range from draughtsmen to filing clerks—over a third are women, many of whom worked in the wages department.

Support for the strike has come from the local Trades Council, the TGWU executive, AUEW executive and the many local trade unionists who have collected money and raised support in their workplaces for the strike. Although support from the workers still inside the factory has been slow, one worker explained; 'We've had very little support from the workers inside the factory. They're not very well organised—I think the reason is that they're scared of management'.

One of the women from the wages department said, 'I'm not particularly bothered at the moment, up till now we've been managing alright. My husband is a labourer in Evans—he's in the AUEW. He's been helping as much as he can. But he's only one on his own, and he can't do a lot on his own, but he's upsetting as many of the right people as he can.'

The picketing has been having an effect on Evans, but the key to winning the dispute is by blacking, which looks as if it may be on its way. It is by hitting the bosses where it really

hurts—their bank balance—that they can be forced into a tight corner where they have to negotiate with the strikers.

Send messages of support and donations to: D Dixon, 42 Elmfield Avenue, Leicester. Cheques should be made payable to Evans Lifts AUEW/TASS Fund.

# Low pay – no way!

- The wages of women who work in the public sector as cleaners, nurses, clerks, dinner ladies etc, have dropped in comparison to average earnings, according to a survey by the Labour Research Department.

In 1975 dinner ladies earned 59 per cent of the national average wage. Now they earn only 50 per cent of the average. Women clerks in the civil service now get paid only 65 per cent of average earnings, compared to 95 per cent six years ago.

- Baroness Lockwood, Chairman (!) of the Equal Opportunities Commission, reckons that the Equal Pay Act has made a significant

difference to women's earnings. Why then are women's wages only 73 per cent of men's, and why have women's wages *dropped* in comparison to men's in the last two years?

Instead of giving its grants to fancy research units which only tell us what we all know anyway (well, all of us except Baroness Lockwood), the EOC would be better off supporting women workers fighting for better wages or their jobs. Perhaps the 350 striking typists in Liverpool should send the Baroness their electricity/gas bills, rent and rates demands for the last few months, and ask for an EOC grant....

# NEWS

# TOYS



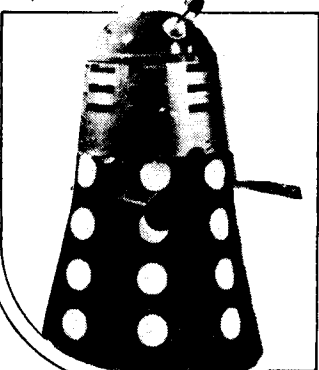
A wax doll of 1865

**Millions of toys will change hands this Christmas. In money terms they will represent about half the £700 million which it is estimated that the British toys and games market is worth. But this year the Christmas offensive by the toy firms will be more desperate than usual.**

The British toy firm Lesney has announced that it continues to make a loss, while Japanese toy exports are up 96 per cent.

Radical changes are occurring in the kinds of toys which children (and their parents) buy. Traditional toys are being replaced by space age gadgets and electronic games and this has had a devastating effect on the British toy industry. Airfix—the firm that makes Meccano and Great Model Railways—has collapsed, to be taken over by the American firm which makes Action Man and Star Wars. And while Lesneys trebled their losses, the American firm Fisher Price announced that it is to treble its factory size in Britain.

Toy imports from Japan and America have been rising steadily ever since 1975. But there is little mileage to be gained from simply seeing this as yet another area in which outmoded British industry is being over taken by the Americans and the Japanese.



What is interesting is to look at the kinds of new toys that we are buying now and thinking about how that affects children.

Toys have existed in every civilisation. Remarkably, there was little variation in the basic kinds of toys which appeared in different societies in the past. Balls, rattles and even yo-yo's turn up in different places, not in sequence but often centuries apart as do dolls.

The first toy industry developed in Germany. Craftsmen began to produce toys for sale, making the newly invented optical toys and mechanical models of the period, as well as traditional dolls' houses and dolls. Gradually factories for manufacturing toys were built. By the beginning of the twentieth century, toy making was one of Germany's most important industries. One quarter of the toys were exported to America.

The embargo on imports from Germany during the First World War sparked an independent toy industry outside Germany. In America mothers even destroyed toys with a 'Made in Germany' label on them.

After the war, in the 1920s, there was a move away from war toys and tin soldiers. This trend was to be reversed during the 30s when re-armament stimulated the production of toy anti-aircraft guns, searchlights and barrage balloons.

But an important development was taking place at the same time. The work of the educationalist Froebel in the latter half of the nineteenth century and of Maria Montessori in the 1920s stimulated interest in toys and their effects on children's ideas. Froebel stressed that children learned through discovery. Maria Montessori believed that children wanted to 'work' rather than 'play' Such ideas led to the production of the first educational toys.

Firms like Fisher Price

now flourish producing just these kinds of toys. Fisher Price are famous for their bright coloured and durable toys for nursery age children. The successful formula is no accident. The toys are designed after intensive investigations and observations of children's play. The company runs a nursery in New York where children are observed playing with Fisher Price toys through a one way mirror. The observations are interpreted and passed on by a psychologist employed by the company. The result—an immensely successful 'scientific' commercial venture.

This scientific approach to toys is worrying. The problem is not the slick high pressure research and marketing techniques—capitalists use such methods everywhere. What bothers me is that this approach to toys profoundly affects the way our children experience the world. Toys are essential to children's mental and physical development. Some aspects of this are obvious—learning to manipulate and handle various materials for example. What is less obvious are the ways in which toys enable children to adjust to society.

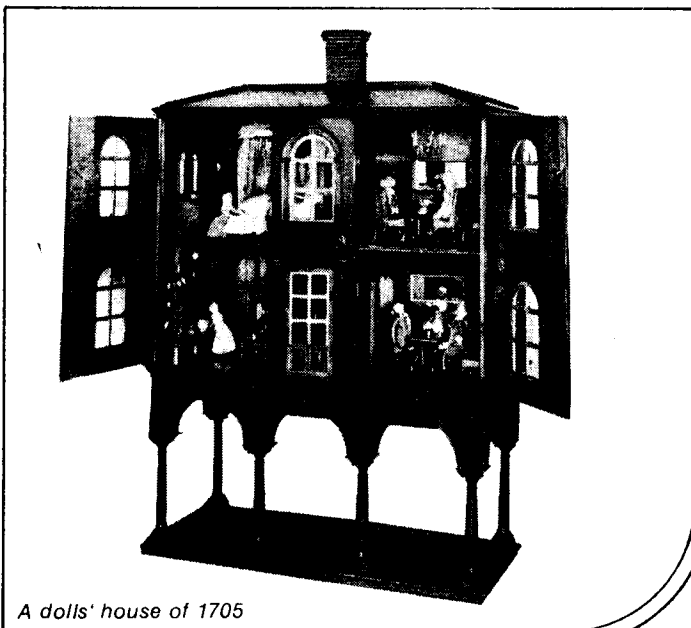
If you think about it the limitations of the world



imposed by rigid models like dolls' houses or toy hospitals are infinitely greater than those imposed by balls or tops which leave children a great deal of scope for learning about the world through experiencing it, rather than seeing its values in miniature in their toys. That's not being anti-toy. But the more complex the toy, the more rigid the set of ideas it imposes upon a child. And the trend as shown by the profit figures, does seem to be toward more complex toys.

Feminists have long pointed to the way that 'dolls for girls' forces sexual stereotypes onto young women. The solution to that is not simply 'dolls for boys'. All the toys we give our children reflect the values of the society we live in. When buying toys for children we should bear that in mind. Kids need room to think as well as being in touch with the latest developments. Complicated educational toys could stifle rather than help our children precisely because they are so exactly researched.

**Anna Paczuska**



A dolls' house of 1705

# The living flame of revolution

*Rosa Luxemburg was a Polish revolutionary who spent most of her political life active in Germany, inside the German socialist party, the SPD, and then, following the Russian revolution, in the German Communist Party. She was noted not just for her ceaseless activity, but for her writings and her opposition to the imperialist slaughter of the First World War. Her life was brought to a tragic end in January 1919 when she and her fellow revolutionary Karl Liebknecht were murdered by right wingers in the middle of the revolutionary upsurge in Berlin.*

*SHEILA MCGREGOR reviews two new books from Pluto Press on Rosa Luxemburg – one a selection of her letters, the other a reprint of the classic biography by Paul Frohlich of Luxemburg's life.*

Rosa Luxemburg was undoubtedly one of the greatest revolutionary socialist leaders of the twentieth century, 'the finest brain amongst the scientific successors of Marx and Engels,' according to Mehring. Any collection of writings or letters by Rosa Luxemburg ought to be measured according to the insight they give into the ideas and life of this great revolutionary socialist, but if that is the test, then 'Comrade and Lover' must fail miserably. Not only must it fail, but it is an insult to Luxemburg herself.

Firstly the basis of the selection by Elzbieta Ettinger is dreadful:

❖ In preparing this volume, I had several options: publishing all the letters; selecting letters dealing with Luxemburg's involvement with the Socialist International, The Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, the Polish Socialist Party and the German Social Democratic Party; or concentrating on her personal relationship with Jogiches. While the first two would have provided students of the European, and especially the Polish, Russian and German socialist movements, with a wealth of material, they would have left Luxemburg as she is at present—faceless. ❏

In other words, Ettinger has decided to prove Rosa Luxemburg is a human being.

❖ The third choice would reveal a woman, hitherto unknown, whose sex did not diminish her political stature and whose politics did not interfere with her private life. It would also expose the fragility of the concept that a woman cannot, without giving up love, realise her talent ❏



**'In Rosa Luxemburg the socialist idea was a dominating and powerful passion of both heart and brain, a truly creative passion which burned ceaselessly. The great task and the overpowering ambition of this astonishing woman was to prepare the way for social revolution, to clear the path of history for Socialism. To experience the revolution, to fight its battles, that was the highest happiness for her. With a will, determination, selflessness and devotion for which words are too weak, she consecrated her whole life and her whole being to Socialism. She gave herself completely to the cause of Socialism, not only in her tragic death, but throughout her whole life, daily and hourly, through the struggles of many years... She was the sharp sword, the living flame of revolution'**

*Klara Zetkin in an obituary to her close friend and comrade Rosa Luxemburg.*

How anyone can write such patent nonsense is almost unbelievable. Rosa spent much of her time in prison because of her political work. Does she think prison does not interfere with your private life? Apart from that, anyone seriously involved in political work knows it interferes in your private life. Ettinger makes the classic mistake of equating Luxemburg's personal life with her political life:

❖ Luxemburg projected her ideal of a perfect international union of workers onto her union with Jogiches, and neither stood the test of life. Blind to the complexities of human nature, she was determined to make both Jogiches and mankind happy, but on her own terms ❏

Such lines only show the

devastating ignorance of Ettinger herself. Apart from reducing Luxemburg from a political leader of some stature and following, it makes it sound as if her politics were personal and voluntaristic. Where is the appreciation of the writer of such works as: *The accumulation of Capital* or *The Mass Strike*? It is not to be found in Ettinger's introduction because she herself is patently not concerned with revolutionary socialism and Luxemburg's contribution to the socialist struggle, but merely concerned to prove that Rosa is a woman and had the same problems most women face.

She argues that Rosa Luxemburg was initially uninterested in the struggle for women's rights and it was only later in her own political isolation she turned to women. Strangely, she does not point out that Zetkin was one of Luxemburg's closest friends and Zetkin was the leading comrade in Germany in the socialist struggle for women's liberation. Ettinger intimates that Zetkin's attitudes to politics were very different from those of Luxemburg's instead of the truth, that Luxemburg and Zetkin both implacably fought bourgeois feminists. She actually implies that Luxemburg's critique of the German Social Democratic Party was that it was made up of men:

❖ Men, she realised, controlled the German Social Democratic Party. Under their leadership the party grew increasingly conservative, more interested in the worker's wages than in his political growth... ❏

What an insult to Luxemburg, who, years before Lenin, analysed the paralysing effect of bureaucracy and reformist trade union politics on the working class movement. That kind of shoddy writing, political distortion and transformation of a leading revolutionary into a radical feminist is unforgivable. But the inanities continue to the end. Luxemburg was battered to death by the butt of a soldier's rifle on the orders of right wing

social democrats. Ettinger has this to say about Luxemburg's death:

On both sides of the barricade, revolutionaries and conservatives, her political friends and enemies, breathed a sigh of relief at her assassination...

That kind of writing I find disgusting and revolting and could only be written in total ignorance of the workers' movement then or now. What about all the men and women who died because they remained loyal to Luxemburg's ideas? What about the 1,000 soldiers who had been willing to testify in her defence in 1914, when Luxemburg was being tried for incitement?

Ettinger has chosen 103 out of a 1,000 letters. It is difficult to make an assessment of her selection because I haven't read the other 897 letters. It seems to me, however, even on the selection we are presented with, that Ettinger cannot substantiate her main thesis about the relationship between Luxemburg and Jogiches. Zetkin, who knew them well had this to say of Jogiches:

He was one of those very masculine personalities—an extremely rare phenomenon these days—who can tolerate a great female personality in loyal and happy comradeship, without feeling her growth and development to be fetters on his own ego.

Who knows whether Jogiches was really an out and out bastard? Does it really matter?

What seems to come through in the few letters you can read in this collection, is that like many political personalities, Rosa Luxemburg's moods and confidence fluctuated wildly according to the political situation in the outside world. What is clear, is that she was a lively, determined person who had all the normal aspirations of normal people. She liked money, a comfortable living, to wear nice clothes, she wanted to have a baby. She even got fed up with politics interfering with her personal life. But so what? Aren't all revolutionary socialists human beings? Is that what we need to know about Rosa Luxemburg. Is that why we are interested in knowing about her?

It seems to me that Ettinger has fallen into precisely the trap of personal politics which only does the cause of women's

liberation, the revolutionary movement and Rosa Luxemburg's memory great harm. What we need to know about women like Rosa Luxemburg is the political life she led, the inspiration she was to the working class movement, how she built and led, that she was a great orator, one of the greatest marxists of the twentieth century. Leave it to bourgeois society to reduce her to the 'The Little Woman'. As Irving Fischer writes in the Postscript to Paul Frolich's political biography of Rosa:

It is true that her violent end and the discovery of her sensitive letters have intensified the interest in her person even further, but her work and her aspirations are still—in both east and west—misinterpreted and attacked, distorted or hushed up.

Ettinger's book is written proof of that. Read Luxemburg's letters by all means but read her writings yourself—and read Paul Frolich's biography for details of her life and work.



*Comrade and Lover.*  
*Rosa Luxemburg's letters to Leo Jogiches.*  
*Edited and translated by Elzbieta Ettinger. Pluto £3.95.*

*Rosa Luxemburg by Paul Frolich*  
*Pluto £4.95*

# Whatever will she do?



**'MUM'S THE WORD'** said the front page of the Sun, and all the other national papers rejoiced the wonderful news—the Princess of Wales is pregnant. Big deal! was *Su Weston's* reaction to the news. *Su* has a seven year old girl and was married for nine years.

POOR KID! Whatever will she do? She's only been living with the guy for three months, surely that's not long enough to know whether they've really got it together or not. I mean, how, after so short a time, does she know whether they've got a permanent relationship or not or whether he'll run out on her. It's a good job she got married, at least he can claim the £25 grant that might pay for a few nappies, that's if he chooses to give it to her—she isn't entitled to anything in her own right.

She can't even be certain about where she's going to have it, the local hospital could shut at any time because of the Tory cuts.

It wouldn't be so bad if she wasn't so young. How can a girl barely out of her teens cope with the responsibility of being a mother? She'll have to give up the things that young girls do, no more parties, discos and things. It's such a tragic shame.

What would you think if you heard of a woman in this position? Would you say she was irresponsible, a possible burden on society, in need of help from a social worker, recommended for an abortion or should be aided in a fight for a place in a nursery, good housing... the right to keep her job?

NO! This is no ordinary pregnant kid. This is an event the world has been waiting for. This is a child that will be kept in luxury, cushioned from the realities of life by our work and money. The Princess of Wales won't have to worry about whether or not she can get maternity leave or if she's fully paid up with her National Insurance to qualify for benefits. She's got a job for life, living in luxury while we pay, she's part of a wealthy class—the privileged few. It doesn't matter that she is so young to take on the burden of caring for a child. She won't have to do it. Nannies and servants will take care of all the nasty, burdensome tasks.

She'll give birth in a comfortable, private, and no doubt expensive room, not an overcrowded, understaffed, outdated maternity hospital. 'Our Princess', along with the other women of her class, will never know the uncertainty and difficulties that young working class girls have to go through when they find out they are pregnant. She will never know because she belongs to a class that have nothing in common with the lives of the majority of women. It should be every woman's right to have the freedom and choice whether to have children or not, and if we do, to have the time and the facilities to be able to enjoy them. We will never have this until we grab it from the few who do—to allow freedom and choice for the majority and not the minority in society.

VALERIE MOORE, 34, is married with two boys aged 14 and 12. She worked as a typist until April this year and her husband is being made redundant this month.

'I haven't been able to get another job, and my husband who is a sheet metal worker is being made redundant on 18 December—what a Christmas present! Christmas won't be as good this year, although he will get redundancy pay but we can't use that in case he doesn't get another job.

'We're not finding it *that* bad although we've had to cut down on holidays. It's not affecting the boys yet, but we can't afford to get them what they want for Christmas. They keep saying "we want this or we want that", but we just can't afford it.

'If I had my way I'd bleeding shoot Thatcher, and Labour aren't much good now—they can't come up with the goods, they're too weak. I've got no faith left in them.'



# Xmas DO

Nearly one in five of Newham are on *Julie Waterson* and unemployed women striker what their this year.



KAREN McFADYEN is 16 years old and has been on the dole since leaving school.

'My two brothers and my dad are on the dole as well and my mum can't work because she's got a bad heart, but my other sister works. I only get £6 to myself, and that's to last me for two weeks—you can't do anything with it.

'Christmas this year will be terrible, it wasn't too bad last year because my dad was working, but now we can't afford anything. I like Christmas, it's good because you can get together and have a laugh—some laugh this year.

'I just wish that she'd get out—that Thatcher. She hasn't done nothing for us.'



LISA MULLARD is 18 years

'Before that I worked in a looking for any job really, but wasn't making an effort to

'Christmas doesn't mean miserable this year, looking

'I don't think Thatcher don't think they've done

All Photographs by Susan Pearce

# son the DOLE

people in London borough  
the dole this Christmas.  
*Susan Pearce* asked four  
and the wife of a Staffa  
Christmases will be like



**SUSAN O'DUNOYE, 20**, is married with nine-month old twins. She has been married for two years and for one year of that her husband, Steven, has been on the dole.

'He used to work at Banner and Co packing bottles, but a year ago they told him they didn't want him anymore, so they made him redundant.

'We can't manage, by the time you pay the rent and buy the cheapest meat there's nothing. But we have to manage for the kids. The dole only give you enough to survive. But my mum helps us out which is just as well. He does want a job—but he can't get one anywhere.

'I'm having to go to my mums this Christmas. I'm lucky—some people on the dole will have to sit on their own with nothing. And that Thatcher doesn't help much, she's terrible.'



**WENDY SMITH, 22 years old**, is married to Staffa striker Eddie Smith who has been on strike since September against the closure of the Staffa factory. Wendy works as an insurance clerk.

'My parents are having to help us out just now, my money only covers the house and my mum and dad have to pay for everything else.

'We're having to go to my mum's this Christmas because we can't afford to buy a Christmas dinner with Eddie being on strike. We won't be able to buy presents like we did last year. Apart from dinner at my mums, it'll be like a normal day for us.

'A lot of the wives must be saying that now they've got their P45's (the

company have sacked all the strikers and sent them their P45's, holiday pay and sick pay) they should be out looking for work. I thought that at first, I thought that it was all over—but it will be okay as long as they don't sign on the dole. It'll take a lot to keep morale high now.

'I was saying to Eddie that all the other women, wives and girlfriends, should come down to the picket line, so that they'll feel a part of things. It's a shame that the wives can't get together to raise money for presents for the kids at Christmas. It's alright for me because I don't have to worry about kids, but it must be terrible for those who have them. I think that's why a lot of the men will be wanting to go back, because of Christmas. But they must stay out and fight.'

old and has been on the dole for a year.  
hion shop and I've been to college. I'm  
ey stopped my dole recently—they said I  
a job! I'd like to know where they think  
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**POR-  
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**BY  
AGNES  
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LEY**



*Portraits of Women in Chinese Revolution is available from Bookmarks, 265a Seven Sisters Rd, London N4, price £3.50.*

# Silk and Socialism

*AGNES SMEDLEY grew up in a poor mining family in Missouri at the turn of the century. Her socialism and feminism grew out of the experiences of her working class background. She taught herself to write and became an inspired and inspiring socialist journalist.*

*Here is an extract from a collection of her writings, Portraits of Women in Chinese Revolution.*

Just as I arrived in Canton in the hot summer months of 1930, another General was killed by his body guard for the sake of the fifty Chinese dollars offered by a rival General. The Kwangtung Provincial Government was semi-independent, but in the hands of generals who took by violence what they considered their share in the loot of the south. They whirled around the city in bullet-proof cars with armed bodyguards standing on the running boards. Such was the spirit of the generals and of the officials whom they brought to power with them.

I interviewed them all and put no stock in what they said. They treated me magnificently, for foreign journalists seldom or never went south in the hot summer months. So I had a Government launch to myself, with an official guide to show me factories, paved roads, new waterworks and the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall. For truth I depended on Chinese university professors, an occasional newspaper reporter or editor, teachers and writers, the German Consul in Canton—and on my own eyes and ears.

The real reason I went south in the hottest part of the year was to study the lot of the millions of "silk peasants" in a silk industry which was rapidly losing its American markets to Japanese magnates. But I did not wish to see the silk regions as a guest of the powerful Canton Silk Guild, for the Guild, after all, was like a big laughing Buddha, naked to the waist, his fat belly hanging over his pajama belt. At last I found a group of professors who were engaged in research in the industry. One young expert was leaving for the Shuntek silk region for a six weeks' inspection tour. I went

with him to the Canton Silk Guild, where he argued with a suspicious Guild official until given permission to travel on Guild river steamers and enter the region in which millions of peasants toiled. There the millionaires of the South Seas had erected many large filatures; the spinners were all young women.

Next day the young expert and I boarded a river steamer. Some twenty or thirty Guild merchants were the only other passengers. The steamers had armour plating and machine-guns to protect the merchants from "bandits". The "bandits", I learned, were peasants who took to the highway for a part of each year in order to earn a living.

## **'They're too rich — that's the root of the trouble'**

I once calculated that, if these "bandits" had attacked and captured our steamer, they would have secured enough food to feed a whole village for months. At meal times the merchants hunched over the tables, eating gargantuan meals and dropping the chicken bones on the floor. They talked of silk, money, markets, and of how much their firms were losing. The silk industry was indeed fighting for its life, but if there were losses, it clearly did not come out of the hides of these men. I pined a little for Jesse James.

My young escort was awed by these men, but when he spoke of the silk peasants or the girl filature workers, hostility and contempt crept into his voice. His particular hatred seemed to be the thousands of women spinners. They refused to marry, and if their

families forced them, they merely bribed their husbands with a part of their wages and induced them to take concubines. The most such a married girl would do was bear one son; then she would return to the factory, refusing to live with her husband any longer. The Government had just issued a decree forbidding women to escape from marriage by bribery, but the women ignored it.

"They're too rich—that's the root of the trouble!" my young escort explained. "They earn as much as eleven dollars a month, and become proud and contemptuous." He added that on this money they also supported parents, brothers and sisters, and grandparents. "They squander their money!" he cried. "I have never gone to a picture theater without seeing groups of them sitting together, holding hands."

Until 1927, when they were forbidden, there had been Communist cells and trade unions in the filatures, he charged, and now these despicable girls evaded the law by forming secret "Sister Societies". They had even dared strike for shorter hours and higher wages. Now and then two or three girls would commit suicide together because their families were forcing them to marry.

For weeks my escort and I went by foot or small boat from village to village, from market town to market town. The fierce sun beat down upon us until our clothing clung to our bodies like a surgeon's glove and the perspiration wilted our hat bands and our shoes. At night we took rooms in village inns or pitched our camp beds under mosquito nets in family temples.



All the roads and paths were lined with half-naked peasants bending low under huge baskets of cocoons swung from the ends of bamboo poles. Market towns reeked with the cocoons and hanks of raw silk piled up to the rafters in the warehouses. Every village was a mass of trays on which the silkworms fed, tended night and day by gaunt careworn peasants who went about naked to the waist.

At first curiously, then with interest, my escort began to translate for me as I questioned the peasants on their life and work. Their homes were bare huts with earthen floors, and the bed was a board covered by an old mat and surrounded by a cotton cloth, once white, which served as a mosquito net. There was usually a small clay stove with a cooking utensil or two, a narrow bench, and sometimes an ancient, scarred table. For millions this was home. A few owned several mulberry trees—for wealth was reckoned in trees. But almost all had sold their cocoon crops in advance in order to get money or food. If the crop failed, they were the losers. Wherever we traveled the story was the same: the silk peasants were held in pawn by the merchants and were never free from debt.

Only as we neared big market towns, in which silk filatures belched forth the stench of cocoons, did we come upon better homes and fewer careworn faces. The daughters of such families were spinners. It was then that I began to see what industrialism, bad as it had seemed elsewhere, meant to the working girls. These were the only places in the whole country where the birth of a baby girl was an occasion for joy, for here girls were the main support of their families. Consciousness of their worth was reflected in their dignified independent bearing. They could not but compare the dignity of their positions with the low position of married women. Their independence seemed a personal affront to officialdom.

### 'It isn't true that these girls had communist cells!'

The hatred of my escort for these girls became more marked when we visited the filatures. Long lines of them, clad in glossy black jackets and trousers, sat before boiling vats of cocoons, their parboiled fingers twinkling among the spinning filaments. Sometimes a remark passed along their lines set a whole mill laughing. The face of my escort would grow livid.

"They call me a running dog of the capitalists; and you a foreign devil of an imperialist! They are laughing at your clothing and your hair and eyes!" he explained.

One evening the two of us sat at the entrance of an old family temple in the empty stone halls of which we had pitched our netted camp cots. On the other side of the canal rose the high walls of a filature, which soon began pouring forth black-clad girl workers, each with her tin dinner pail. All wore wooden sandals which were fastened by a single leather strap across the toes and which clattered as they walked. Their glossy black hair was combed back and hung in a heavy braid to the waist. At the nape of the neck the braid was caught in red yarn, making a band two or three inches wide—a lovely splash of colour.

As they streamed in long lines over the

bridge arching the canal and past the temple entrance, I felt I had never seen more handsome women.

I urged my young escort to interpret for me, but he refused, saying he did not understand their dialect. He was so irritated that he rose and walked toward the town. When he was gone, I went down the steps. A group of girls gathered around me and stared. I offered them some of my malt candy. There was a flash of white teeth and exclamations in a sharp staccato dialect. They took the candy, began chewing, then examined my clothing and stared at my hair and eyes. I did the same with them and soon we were laughing at each other.

Two of them linked their arms in mine and began pulling me down the flagstone street. Others followed, chattering happily. We entered the home of one girl and were welcomed by her father and mother and two big-eyed little brothers. Behind them the small room was already filled with other girls and curious neighbours. A candle burned in the centre of a square table surrounded by crowded benches. I was seated in the place of honour and served the conventional cup of tea.

Then a strange conversation began. Even had I known the most perfect Mandarin, I could not have understood these girls, for their speech was different from that spoken in any other part of the country. I had studied Chinese spasmodically—in Manchuria, in Peking, in Shanghai—but each time, before I had more than begun, I had had to move on to new fields, and all that I had previously learned became almost useless. Shanghai had its own dialect, and what I had learned there aroused laughter in Peking and was utterly useless in the south. Only missionaries and consular officials could afford to spend a year in the Peking Language School. Journalists had to be here, there, and everywhere.

I therefore talked with the filature girls in signs and gestures. Did I have any children, they asked, pointing to the children. No? Not married either? They seemed interested and surprised. In explanation I unclamped my fountain pen, took a notebook from my pocket, tried to make a show of thinking, looked them over critically, and began to write. There was great excitement.

A man standing near the door asked me something in Mandarin, and I was able to understand him. I was an American, a reporter, he told the crowded room. Yes, I was an intellectual—but was once a worker. When he interpreted this, they seemed to find it very hard to believe.

Girls crowded the benches and others stood banked behind them. Using my few words of Mandarin and many gestures, I learned that some of them earned eight or nine dollars a month, a few eleven. They worked ten hours a day—not eight, as my escort had said. Once they had worked fourteen.

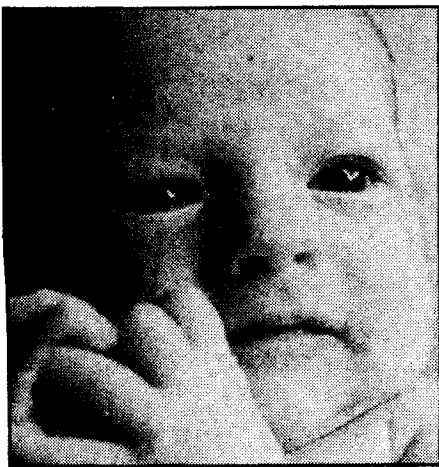
My language broke down, so I supplemented it with crude pictures in my notebook. How did they win the ten-hour day? I drew a sketch of a filature with a big fat man standing on top laughing, then a second picture of the same with the fat man weeping because a row of girls stood holding hands all around the

mill. They chattered over these drawings, then a girl shouted two words and all of them began to demonstrate a strike. They crossed their arms, as though refusing to work, while some rested their elbows on the table and lowered their heads, as though refusing to move. They laughed, began to link hands, and drew me into this circle. We all stood holding hands in an unbroken line, laughing. Yes, that was how they got the ten-hour day!

As we stood there, one girl suddenly began to sing in a high sweet voice. Just as suddenly she halted. The whole room chanted an answer. Again and again she sang a question and they replied, while I stood, excited, made desperate by the fact that I could not understand.

The strange song ended and they began to demand something of me. They wanted a song! The *Marseillaise* came to mind, and I sang it. They shouted for more and I tried the *Internationale*, watching carefully for any reaction. They did not recognise it at all. So, I thought, it isn't true that these girls had Communist cells!





# The missing children of Argentina

Simon is from Argentina. He was 20 days old when he was arrested with his mother at her flat in Buenos Aires in July 1976. His mother Sara Mendez was illegally transported to Uruguay, and held in the women's prison of Punta Rieles. Simon has 'disappeared'.

Since the 1976 military coup several thousand opponents of the regime have 'disappeared'—they have been detained, detained or abducted by members of the security forces, and never heard of again. No group has escaped—trade unionists, students, journalists—even children.

The first act of the military junta was to dissolve Congress and ban all political and trade union activity. Special squads were set up of men from all branches of the armed forces: their task—to stamp out all resistance. Their job was to capture and interrogate all known members of 'subversive' organisations, or their sympathizers, or their associates, or anyone else who might oppose the regime.

A familiar pattern emerged. Victims were dragged from their homes at night by men who identified themselves as agents of the police or armed forces. When relatives tried to find out what had happened to them, the police or army would deny any knowledge. In fact the victims were usually taken to secret camps where they were tortured. One of the most notorious, in the Navy Mechanics Training College, was less than a mile from the football stadium where the World Cup was held. The majority were never seen again. Often, after being told they were being 'transferred', they were taken away and secretly executed.

In 1973 the armed forces had seen prisoners freed under an amnesty: on the other hand they had learned from Chile to beware of openly violent

repression: the crude brutality of the Pinochet regime had earned international condemnation. Liquidating the enemy, but in secret, was the policy chosen. It avoided the embarrassment of legal proceedings, it foiled the efforts of friends and relatives, it could always be denied.

It had one other advantage—the intimidation of the entire population. The repressive value of a policy of 'disappearances' was spelt out by the Nazis: '...The prisoners are to be transported to Germany secretly... These measures will have a deterrent effect because (a) the prisoners will vanish without trace, (b) no information will be given as to their whereabouts or fate.'

The United Nations has information on over 7,000 people who have 'disappeared' in Argentina. Among them are a number of children, some arrested with their parents after raids by security forces, others born in captivity to women pregnant when abducted. Many have been 'given' to military families who could not have children of their own.

Despite the violence and the intimidation, the people of Argentina carry on their struggle. The Grandmothers and Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo continue their courageous stand, publicly calling for the return of the 'disappeared', and searching for their children and grandchildren.



Relatives of missing people

'The fact that a woman prisoner was pregnant never led to her getting any special consideration under torture. The case who did not lose their babies on the torture tables, having survived the interrogation stage, were thrown into the cells under the same conditions as the rest... When their pregnancy was very advanced, they were admitted to the infirmary and were given a

little more food. They were given a layette for the baby, stolen in other operations. When there were only a few days left before the delivery, they said that they were taking them away to the Military Hospital' ...'From the moment of arrival, the fate of both was sealed: for the mother, "transfer", (removal to another detention centre, or death) for the child, an uncertain future.

Under no circumstance could it be handed over to relatives, as it would be living proof of the mother's fate. We took it that the Naval Hospital had a list of couples, of the navy, who could not have children and who were willing to adopt the children of disappeared or dead prisoners.' (From testimonies by former prisoners.)

# WOMENS HEALTH

## Women's jobs on the line

Recently the bosses' 'union', the CBI, and the TUC expressed *some concern* about the extent to which mental strain and ill-health among industrial workers may be caused by the nature of their jobs, especially repetitive and machine paced tasks. So they commissioned a series of studies from the Medical Research Council (MRC) to examine specific aspects of this problem. One of these studies was of women production-line workers.

Most research in the past has been done on male workers, but the results from these studies do not necessarily relate to the experience of women's employment. This is for several reasons. Women are concentrated in different sectors of industry, and even when women work in the same factory as men the jobs they do differ. Also there has been, in recent years, a huge increase in married women entering the workforce—whether it be in full-time or part-time employment. So the study took into account women workers *in relation* to their family responsibilities.

The MRC undertook their research in three food factories, belonging to three large multi-plant companies. The women from the three factories did very similar jobs—working on a production line. Some did manual jobs, like assembling boxes by hand, some watched that production went smoothly or minded operated machines. All jobs were repetitive and boring. Some production lines were not as modern as others and some factories employed fewer workers than others. Shifts also differed. Unsurprisingly, the MRC found that the experience of all three sets of women were the same or differed very little.

The researchers could only find one woman worker who said she enjoyed her job! The vast majority of women worked, not out of choice, but out of necessity—in order to pay bills and ensure that their kids had clothes on their backs and food in their stomachs.

One of the researchers was extremely surprised by the way in which the women related to each other on the production line; most of the women stared in front of them and for long periods didn't speak to one another. It would seem that the researcher had discovered *alienation*. And alienation leads to relationships, whether in work or at home, being distorted.

'I get up at quarter to five ... get the children up at half past six ... I go out about ten

to seven. I get home at lunchtime, make the beds and do the housework ... I make the dinner, get the children to bed and that's it really. Most nights I'm either doing the garden or the ironing. I never really do sit down ... I go to bed between 10 and 11, otherwise I can't get up for work.'

'I could feel myself, you know, shouting at the children for nothing at all—or banging around the house and generally getting everybody down.'

The MRC came up with very predictable conclusions. These were that women are subject to many pressures; heavy domestic responsibilities and dependent children living at home. That women workers are caught in a vicious circle, a constant round of activity where their day begins at five or six and ends about 10 or 11.

### Fighting back

What the study didn't talk about, unsurprisingly, was how to fight back. There was a brief reference to making all factory jobs for women part-time, but this was dismissed when they discovered that women worked for the money and not for the enjoyment of it all.

I spoke to Avril Huxtable, a TGWU shop steward from Thorns Electrical in Enfield Middlesex, about her experiences at work regarding health and safety.

'Women are coming into work because they're so bleeding desperate for money—half of them are not even fit for work. If someone gets a virus or something it means that everyone gets it, but they don't want to take time off because they can't afford to and that leads to everyone getting generally run down and tired.'

'That's where the union gives you the strength to fight back. We should be fighting for jobs making sure that we have reliefs and floats to give us a break off the line, and ensuring that workers' jobs are replaced.'

'Fighting for a shorter working week with the same wages would lead to less stress and we'd be healthier than we are now. We can't allow things like the sacking of cleaners and not replacing them. It ends up you clean up yourself or you work in unhealthy conditions.'

'The machine always has the upper hand, it means that women are on a razor's edge of exhaustion and management can get away with what they want to. We have to watch staffing levels all the time. For example, the management changed the staffing levels in our canteen at work which meant there weren't enough workers to do the work.'

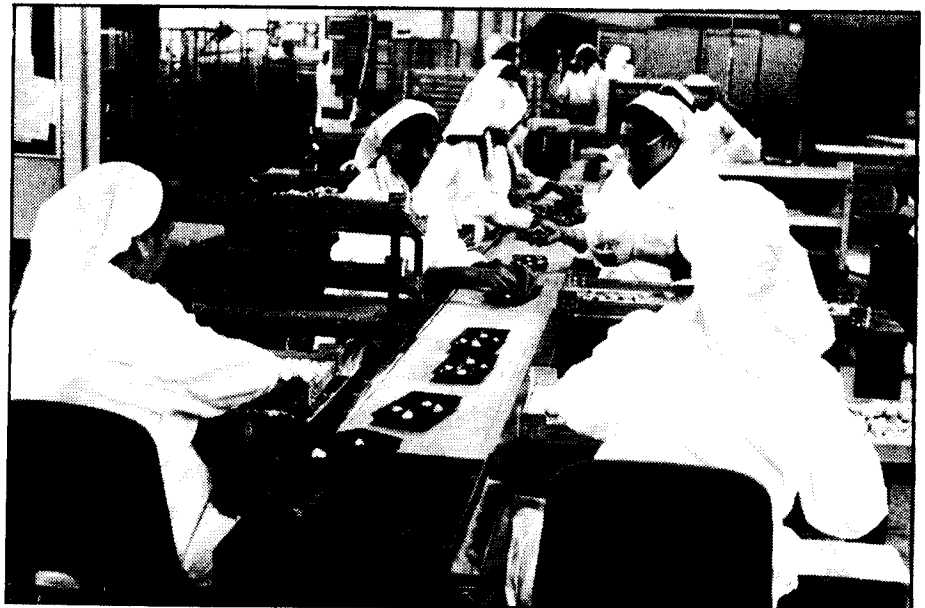
Every woman in the canteen was showing signs of stress. They had headaches and looked all nervous and tensed up, they were obviously very unhappy. Just doing their job and going home. None of them were members of a union until fairly recently. I've been arguing with them that the only way they can change things is by fighting collectively. I talk to them and give them encouragement I can't change things for them—they have to do it themselves and they're starting to get organised now.'

Thatcher is creating a law of the jungle, the survival of the fittest. We have to stop people feeling isolated, we can change things in work for the better, through the union.'

'Don't let anything be taken from you—we haven't got enough now.'

We don't work because we *want* to; very few people do. We work because we can't survive without the money. The conditions under which we work are important. We are the only people who can ensure that we have good working conditions and we will only get that by organising together on the shop floor.'

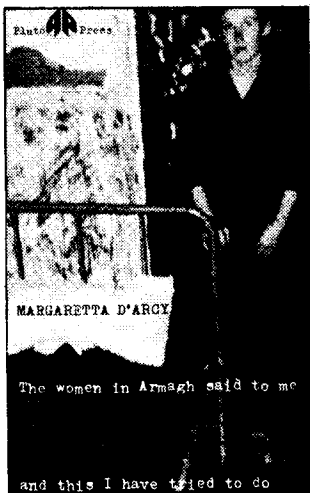
Julie Waterson



# REVIEWS

## Something old, something new, something borrowed...

This month, with Christmas in mind, we thought we'd remind you of some books that have been in print for years, and some that are new, the sort of books you might like to give and, no doubt, would like to receive. We've included some which are expensive because Christmas is just the opportunity you might need to ask for them. Or perhaps it's a time for you to splash out on yourself—books last so long and can give so much pleasure they're worth every penny. It's a hotch-potch of a selection—we hope you enjoy some of them!



**Tell them everything  
Margaretta D'Arcy,  
Pluto, £1.95**

'The women in Armagh said to me tell them everything and this I have tried to do.' It's not a very long book and the first half is a confusing and long winded account of how Margaretta D'Arcy came to be in Armagh jail for three months. The description of life in the prison is harrowing.

**Food without Frontiers  
Gerard Chaliand,  
Pluto, £2.50**

Part of Pluto's 'Big Red' series. A useful introduction to foreign food, with straightforward, main course recipes.

**Girls, Wives, Factory Lives  
Anna Pollert,  
Macmillan, £3.95**

A rare, detailed and often funny account of life at work—in the factory.

**Fanny  
Erica Jong, Granada,  
£1.95**

A new novel by the author of *Fear of Flying*, a book you either loved or hated.



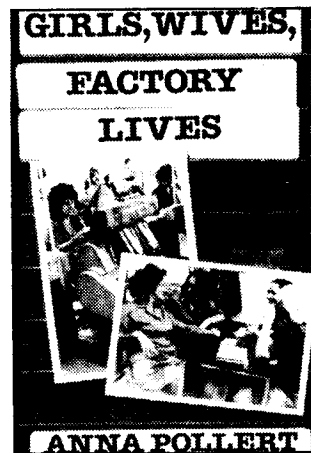
**Some old favourites...**

**The French  
Lieutenant's Woman  
John Fowles,  
Granada, £1.95**

This is the original book, not the book of the film, and a really good read. A story of Victorian morality and a woman's attempt to break out of its constraint.

**Martha Quest  
Doris Lessing,  
Granada, £1.50**

The first volume in the Children of Violence series, which follows Martha's life



through childhood in South Africa, to marriage, divorce, membership of the Communist Party and emigration to Britain. There are five books in all.

**The Feminine  
Mystique  
Betty Friedan,  
Penguin, £1.95**

The book that marks the birth of the Womens Liberation Movement in America—first published in 1963 and still worth reading.

**The Second Sex  
Simone de Beauvoir,  
Penguin, £3.50**

First published in 1949. Simone de Beauvoir's great treatise on women's oppression. She has written an autobiography and several novels:

**A Very Easy Death  
Penguin, 90p**

A touching account of her mother's death from cancer. Recommended for anyone who finds themselves in such a situation.

**Hidden from History  
Sheila Rowbotham,  
Pluto, £2.95**

A potted history of women in history.

**Scream Quietly or the  
Neighbours Will Hear  
Erin Pizzey, Penguin,  
£1.50**

Whatever the criticisms of Erin Pizzey now, this book was the first time anyone publicly acknowledged wife battering.



**Some reprints...**

**Maternity, Letters from  
Working Women  
Edited by Margaret  
Llewelyn Davies,  
Virago, £2.50**

Letters collected by the Women's Co-Operative Guild and first published in 1915. They tell a terrible tale of motherhood in the days before contraception was widely available.

**Testament of Youth  
Vera Brittain, Virago,  
£3.95**

One of the best books written about life during the first world war.

**The Hard Way Up  
Hannah Mitchell,  
Virago, £2.50**

Hannah Mitchell was a socialist and suffragette. A sentence from her book provides the title for another, more recent book about the

suffragettes: 'No cause can be won between dinner and tea, and most of us who were married had to work with one hand tied behind us.'

**One hand tied behind us. The rise of the women's suffrage movement.**

**Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, Virago £3.50**

A history drawn mainly from the working class North East of England.

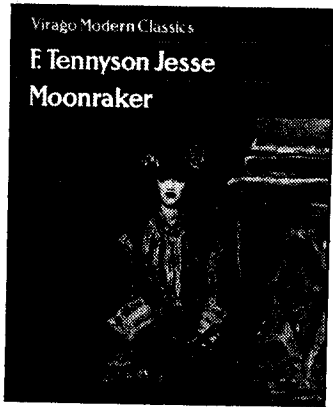
**The Cause Ray Strachey, Virago, £3.50**

A short history of the womens movement in great Britain

Mostly about middle class women, but it's interesting to know what a struggle it was for women to go to University, become doctors, lawyers and nurses.

**Moonraker F Tennyson Jesse, Virago, £2.50**

Expensive for what is really a short story. It's all about pirates, Toussaint L'Ouverture and women's liberation. Quite a mix and pretty exciting stuff.



**Picture books and books about pictures...**

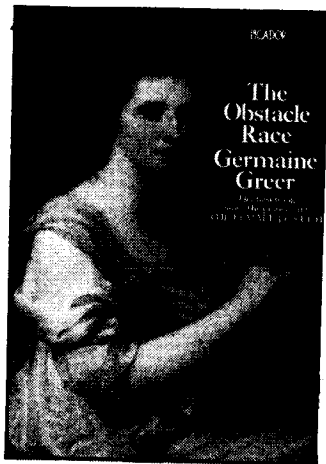
**Women in History Susan Raven and Angela Weir, Weidenfeld, £8.95**

It looks interesting, written by categories—Politics and power, Education and social reform, Travel and exploration—with lots of pictures.

**Women under Apartheid International Defence and Aid, £3**

A picture book of women's lives in South Africa.

There are lots of books now available about women artists



**The Obstacle Race, the fortunes of women painters and their work**

**Germaine Greer, Picador, £5.95**

Why are there so few famous women artists? The answer does not lie in the fact that women have wombs, that they can have babies, that their brains are smaller... the reason is simply that you cannot make great artists out of egos that have been damaged, with wills that are defective... A large book with lots of pictures.

**Prints and drawings of Kathe Kollwitz Constable, £3.55**

A very large book with full page prints from the German artist who died in 1945.

**Paula Modersohn-Becker Gillian Perry, The Women's Press, £7.95**

Another picture book, with colour prints this time, of another forgotten German artist.

**Women Artists Karen Petersen and JJ Wilson, The Women's Press, £4.95**

Similar in format to Germaine Greer's book. Also well illustrated.



**Don't forget the children...**

This section is not, unfortunately, well enough researched and perhaps you would let us know about good children's books so that we can pass on the information, but on show at the Socialist Bookfair were:

**Titch the Cat £2.50 Nowhere to Play £3.75**

Both by Buchi Emecheta, Allison and Busby Buchi Emecheta's books about the lives of immigrant women in Britain were excellent, so these are probably good too.

Picture Lions Children's Series published by Fontana are cheap and cheerful for younger children, usually 80p to 90p. There's *Mog the forgetful Cat* and the *Bag-puss* series.



**...or your diary**

There are now lots of diaries around, all a similar size and price so take your pick:

**The Spare Rib Diary, £2.50**

**The Irish Women's Diary and GuideBook (to the women's movement) £2.10**

**The Big Red Diary and Diary and Directory, £2.50**



**Then there's the Bookmarx Club...**

An excellent way of buying lots of books at reduced prices. Bookmarx buys books in bulk for its club and is able to pass on to its members a 20-25% discount. It costs £6.50 a quarter to be a member and you pay by bankers order or by sending your money direct.

This is a very good month to join as there are so many women's books. These include *Girls, Wives Factory Lives* by Anna Pollert (see above) reduced from £3.95 to £2.95. *Women Workers and the Trade Unions* by Sarah Boston, Davis Poynter, £5.95 reduced to £4.50. *Creek Mary's Blood* by Dee Brown (author of *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee*) reduced from £1.75 to £1.40. *Any Woman's Blues*, stories by contemporary Black women writers, Virago, £3.50 reduced to £2.80. *Burning Question*, Alix Kates Shulman, £1.50 to £1.20; one rebellious woman's search for a life of her own which takes her through the Left in the sixties and into the women's liberation movement. *Tell them everything*, Margatta D'Arcy (see above) £1.95 to £1.45.

Write to Bookmarx now for this the Christmas quarter list. It's just published and all the above titles are available.



All of these books are available from Bookmarx. You can call in any day from Monday to Saturday between 10am and 6pm (7pm on Wednesdays).

If you want to order books by post they are more than happy to send them direct, but you must add 10% of the total price of the books to cover postage. For books to arrive before Christmas get your order to them (with money) at least two weeks before Christmas. If you want to confirm that the books are in stock telephone first to avoid disappointment.

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# LETTERS



## Put the blame where it belongs

*Dear Womens Voice.*

In reply to Olly Evans's letter in your November issue, I would like to make the following points (facts) from which readers can draw their own conclusions.

- In general elections it is usually women who put the Tories in power.
- According to government statistics, in 1971 (figures published in 1973) 39 per cent of the female population of working age (16-60) were not in paid employment. This excludes students and those who had retired early. Given that the total number of women in this age group was approximately 22,350 million, that's an awful lot of women too lazy to sign on as unemployed. The figure nowadays will, of course, be higher, since unemployment and the population has risen.
- As long as women do men's dirty work for nothing they will be seen as 'cheap' labour.
- Looking after children for nothing will only encourage this, and subsequent, governments to cut back on nursery education further still.
- Paying for childcare need not be expensive or exploitative of childcare workers. If several families share a nanny (a man, of course!) the cost per parent may be quite low, especially if accommodation can be provided by one family, instead of a share of the wage.
- Women who live off men's wages are just the sort of parasites Tories love. By playing their 'role' in society

they keep the government happy and men's earning power exploited (given that a married man is prevented from keeping his wages for himself).

Zoë Pitt  
Nottingham

*Womens Voice replies:*

Olly Evans is correct when she says 'don't turn on your own ranks. Put the blame where it lies — on the capitalist state in general and specifically the Tory government'.

Women do not exist in isolation—we are part of a class that which is being hammered for everything we have, and we are being smashed by a class which will benefit from it (and that includes our woman prime minister).

It is a class which also depends on women seeing their 'problems' as separate from the rest of their class, because as long as we're fighting each other we're not fighting the real enemy—the Tories and their friends the bosses. That is why we direct ourselves at women who are fighting these ideas about women being passive, anti-union and not wanting to fight back.

This is not to say that we ignore women at home, but we do not see them as having the power to topple the Tories. It is when they fight alongside the people who do have this power—organised workers, women and men, in the factories—that they will change, and give Thatcher and the bosses a few sleepless nights.



## Football feminism

*Dear Womens Voice,*

When Alan Thompson was writing in the Daily Express about Liz Forsdick being a soccer lineswoman he said: 'I am dismayed that she should have been accepted into what I firmly regard as a man's domain'. And he goes on, 'After all, one of the main reasons man invented games in the first place was to get away from women in order to enjoy a little bit of sane camaraderie and conversation. I shall not shift from the view that women should never be allowed to encroach on masculine sporting preserves'.

I am angered and annoyed at

the continued discrimination that presently exists against women, especially in the world of football.

Why should this perverted/diseased specimen be allowed precious writing space in order to express such unwarranted selfish arrogance clearly but cleverly disguised. And at the expense of women.

Mr Thompson should concentrate on perfecting the art of sports writing. Conceitedly indulging in his privately owned ball game *could lead to damaging results confronted by an irate woman footballer.*

Cathy Gibb (an irate woman footballer!)  
West London

## We are responsible for

*Dear Womens Voice,*

I read about the woman who was acquitted on the charge of murdering her husband because she was suffering from pre-menstrual tension.

Surely what that means is that women cannot be held responsible for their actions for a few days every month before their periods are due?

Obviously a lot of women do

suffer from PMT, and it makes them irritable or depressed—or both. And the woman who killed her husband may have had a very good reason for doing so. But to say that she was not responsible for the act because of PMT is a very worrying argument.

It gives credibility to the ideas that women are irrational and irresponsible due to their

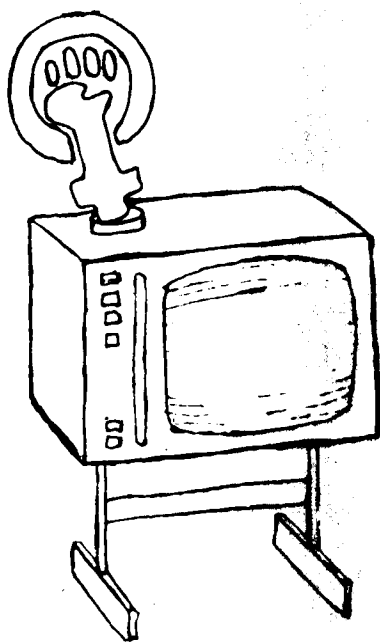


# SANDRA

Seasonal Sentimentality



opme



## The wrong thing at the wrong times

comedy programme is shown on BBC1, also anti-nuke, funny and at times very acid, whose purpose is to show that when the holocaust comes you, me, and the rest of the 93% of the population that owns only 16% of the wealth will be burned to a frazzle. This it shows quite successfully.

There are no prizes for guessing which programme gets the repeat and the write-ups in all the papers.

The same goes for Friday night. *Something Else*—BBC2— is youth politics, carefully controlled, made respectable, stifled, and really a bit dull, by the Community Programme Unit (just as *Grapevine* was). Meanwhile *The London Programme*, ITV, at least tries to come to grips with some of the things people talk about in tea-breaks. Last week it was Ken Livingstone, the hero who has revived at-a-stroke the art of conversation on public transport.

Something rather odd is happening on television these days. Take the nuclear power debate. On the one hand, you've got the Bronowski Lecture on BBC2, the day before the biggest CND demo for twenty years. It is highly intellectual, given by a very eminent professor of something or other that nobody's ever heard of outside the BBC2 research department. It is quite definitely anti-nuke—but the audience is asleep in twenty minutes.

On the other hand, a pilot

But it is put on at 11pm on Friday, when most of us are either too drunk to care, are getting ready to face another sleepless night with the teething nightmare-ridden children, or coping with the thought of another day at work on Saturday.

Which brings me to the point. How many people have seen *Going Out*? I can't seem to find many, which isn't surprising when you consider that it goes out at midnight on a Tuesday night (ITV) and has had media coverage of two lines in the *London Standard*.

This is because *Going Out* is actually worth watching. It's about a gang of young people on the dole in Portsmouth who, like thousands of others have to pass the time. It's about conflicts with parents who are just too young to have fought in the last war, and were brought up in the fifties and sixties with full employment and the attitude that anyone can make it if they work hard enough at it. It's about going to see your mate in to his first day at work—the only one of the gang to have a job since they all left school—and being stopped by the cops on the way back, searched and abused, under suspicion just for being young and out of work. It's about young girls wondering what the hell is going to happen to them, untrained and futureless in a fourth rate city

dump where older men they know pass the time by flashing at them in the subways.

*Going Out* is sympathetic to the gang, it puts over their humour, their friendship, the way they survive. It is lively, full of action and real feelings.

Which is why it's on at midnight on a Tuesday. Because the TV companies have a terrible dilemma. ITV's loyalty to the advertisers and BBC's need for Government-controlled licence money mean they can't put out stuff that's too controversial. But their need to keep the audience figures up means they can't get away with ditching all the good stuff. So they compromise either by dressing up left-wing politics with Oxbridge professors nobody can understand, or by putting programmes on so late that nobody sees them. That way they can't be accused of right-wing bias but they can make sure that, heaven forbid, large numbers of people don't get bright ideas like the state of the world not being our fault, or like perhaps we could do something about it.

Stay up for *Going Out*, suffer the bad language, open references to sex and anti-police propaganda, and you'll see that this is one of many close encounters with the real world they don't particularly want us to have.

Susan Pearce



# why I became a socialist

Ann Flynn is a veteran of sixty years of socialist struggle. Brought up in Glasgow as a child, she describes the experiences which led her to socialism.

I come from a socialist background. My mother was a highland woman, a member of the Wee Free church. All the things that happened to highland immigrants to Glasgow changed her mind about the church and she left. Although I was free to attend the Gaelic-speaking church if I wanted I became an atheist at the age of eleven. My elder sister followed me out of the church—she was an influence too.

Two of my teachers at school were socialists. They were women teachers who had a great effect on me. I remember a discussion during an English lesson. One of them asked us what we would call people who wanted to share out equally all the good things in life. Someone suggested that such an attitude would be Christian. The teacher said 'No, that wouldn't be quite the answer I'm looking for.' So I put my hand up and said 'Socialists!' And she said 'Yes'. A lot of early socialists in Glasgow were teachers, people like Maxton and McLean. So by eleven I was an atheist and a socialist.

Being reared in Glasgow was very important. My mother was a widow and had to take in lodgers. We would hear their conversations. Then my elder sister started work and met a socialist. She would come home full of all the things they had talked about. It was a burgeoning time for a young person.

My mother was active in the first big Glasgow rent strikes. We were messengers for the strike and knew a lot of people in George's Cross, where we lived. Our local co-operative was very involved.

## DISADVANTAGES

I first joined the Labour Party in Hillhead. This was a rather respectable area of Glasgow and Hillhead Labour Party was a bit of a trial. Nevertheless, I stuck it out and stayed in the Labour Party for nearly ten years. Then I was out in the streets campaigning against the Means Test and taking part in the great rent battles which were coming up at the time.

I started reading Marx and became interested in the Communist Party. The CP had a splendid organisation of 'street newspapers'. Members of the Party wrote newspapers on black tarmac taking up the width of the pavement. They were magnificent writers. The material would come from a publication called 'Inprecor' which was an unlikely title for a pamphlet which was like a tiny compressed newspaper.

Then I met a marvellous woman called

Ann Morrison who was leading the rent struggles. She had three children and lived in Partick. I was very impressed by the way she fought rent cases. So I was fortunate in being influenced by my mother, my sister and Ann Morrison.

So I joined the Communist Party, and enjoyed being in it. They encouraged us to read and learn and develop our attitudes towards Marxism. My differences with the Party began over arguments about cultural questions. I found that some of the CP members had arrogant and almost vicious attitudes to, for instance, worker's theatre. Vincent (Vincent Flynn is Ann's husband, ex-general secretary of SOGAT and an equally committed fighter for the cause of socialism) and I tried to start a socialist theatre group. We approached the CP about this and it was as if all hell had been let loose. We went ahead anyway and managed to build the foundations of Unity Theatre in Glasgow. Vincent was never in the CP, by the way; he came from a Catholic family and



always said that one Pope was enough for him!

Then the war came. I came out of the CP finally over the question of Russia's treatment of the Jews which I could neither understand nor defend. Vincent was a member of the Labour Party and I joined again. After the war we went to live in England and I was involved once again in housing struggles, as well as odd bits and pieces such as helping Greek refugees. There were terrible housing problems then. Property had been damaged everywhere. There weren't enough houses for soldiers to come back to. The experience we already had of fighting rent battles was invaluable.

While I was working as a social worker I got involved with the Family Planning Association. At the time it was very difficult for single women to get contraceptives. When I first went to London in 1940 I was shocked to find that many women were using contraceptives that weren't medically fitted—they just got them through the post! I was horrified and took myself to the nearest FPA clinic and picked the poorest area I could find to work in. This was just after my son was born and I left him with my mother two days a week while I worked for the FPA.

## MEETINGS

In the sixties I became finally disillusioned with the Labour Party, I couldn't stand it any more. I joined the Socialist Workers Party, or International Socialists as it was called at the time. It felt a bit odd; I thought 'here's me, going to another party, but this one looks like what I've been searching for all my life'. It was lonely in a way, because the party was so small at that time, but the paper was marvellous. I've always, always felt Socialist Worker was something special. I hold Socialist Worker in the same regard as the paper which first helped to make me a socialist—that was the old Glasgow 'Forward'. I've always recognised the same drive in Socialist Worker, because it's a paper which tells about the workers, and believes in the workers, and has a goal for the workers. The paper's what links people up all over the country.

My greatest achievement as a socialist? Probably raising a child who grew up to become a socialist. So many parents sicken their children with politics. Vincent has never given me anything other than support and encouragement. And that's the way it should be.

# Small ads

**HACKNEY WOMEN'S CENTRE Social, Friday 11 December, 8pm, in the Coffee Bar at Centerprise (Kingsland High Street, London E8). Bring your own booze. Raffle. For details of Women's Centre meetings, phone Mary on 249 5723.**

**CONTRACEPTION, ABORTION and sterilisation conference. Saturday 5 December, 10-6pm. Tindal School Community Rooms, Tindal Street, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12. Women only. Registration: £2.50 waged, £1.50 unwaged. More details from National Abortion Campaign, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. 01-278 0153.**

**BACK DOOR BADGES (workers' co-operative)**

"Mother Christmas brings better presents" - 55mm badges - 25p each + SAE

Marriage is a wonderful institution. But who wants to live in an institution?

25mm badges Only 20p each + SAE

**MAKE YOUR M.P. WORK** don't re-elect him

MOST women like the simpler things in life like men.

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**Do it Now! 3 The Warwicks Hampton Magna Warwick CV35 8TF**

## THE WORKER

**THE WORKER:** Monthly paper of the Socialist Workers Movement, Ireland. Price 20p. Contact: PO Box 82, London E2.

*socialist*

# REVIEW



**SPACE WARS:** The latest generation of death machines. All the frightening facts in this month's Socialist Review, the monthly magazine of the Socialist Workers' Party. Plus articles on Poland, CND, import controls and much more. Available from Box 82, London, E2, for 50 pence.


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# NEW RECORD

**BRIXTON**

Burn burn Brixton Brixton Fight on white and black Police out of Brixton Get the rest of bastards off our backs



**ORDINARY PEOPLE**

Ordinary people Ordinary men Ordinary women Dying once again Missing in the Armagh at Wasting in the Armagh at



**BY MIKE CARVER** £1 PLUS 30p P&P

Write to: Bookmarks 265 Seven Sisters Rd London N4

Proceeds from the sale of this record will be divided between the London H Block Armagh Committee and the Brixton and Liverpool 8 Defence Committees

I want to join the fight ...

# join the fight!

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Make sure you get the **Socialist Worker** every week

- FOR liveliest, up to date, inside news on ALL workers' struggles.
- FOR regular, weekly news on all women's issues.
- FOR black and white unity in action.
- FOR Jobs not Bombs. No to Thatcher's missile madness.
- FOR the Right to Work. Employed and unemployed unite and fight.
- FOR workers solidarity and international socialism.



**Buy it, read it and sell it!**

Send to Womens Voice PO Box 82, London, E2.

# DO IT YOURSELF

## SELLING WOMENS VOICE

Womens Voice is a good magazine, it is a magazine that you want other people to buy and read. It is an integral part of our politics—a magazine aimed at women in the process of change. Remember this when you are selling Womens Voice, it helps build your confidence to persuade others as to why they should buy it and read it.

### WORKPLACE SALES

The most important, and best, place to sell the magazine is the workplace. It is always best to sell Womens Voice alongside Socialist Worker—if you can sell one, you can usually sell both! It helps us to keep contact with people on a more regular basis and cements our ideas with those people.

Every place where women are employed is a potential sale. Obviously some are better than others. Hospitals, for instance, are difficult places to sell from the outside, mainly due to the different categories of staff working different shifts. Factories and offices, however, are easier. The traditional factory gate sale is still by far the best.

If you sell to women as they arrive at work, even if just one person buys a copy, the chances are that one copy will pass through several hands in the course of the tea break, the bus ride home etc., and stimulate interest in the arguments put forward in the magazine. Then the next time you sell at that particular workplace you will sell two or three copies. Perhaps you won't sell any, but the important thing is to keep trying—don't give up. It is also important to maintain a regular presence. People will recognise you if you do a regular sale, they'll greet you and some people will stop and talk about our politics. Somehow this makes all the time spent standing in the cold and the rain seem worthwhile!

### LOCAL FACTORIES

Look around at your local factories. You will be surprised at the number of firms there are employing large numbers of women; sweet factories, clothing factories, tobacco factories, laundries etc and every factory with a canteen employs women to work in it.

It's not difficult to find out when the shifts start, just ask someone who works there or telephone the factory. Make sure you get there early, about 30 minutes before the shift starts is usually best, and make sure you are at the correct entrance—the one the majority of workers will pass through. It's best for two people to do a sale together as this boosts confidence (and gives you some

company in the lulls between people arriving for work).

Most importantly, tell people what you are selling, display the paper and magazine well and use your lungs. Draw some attention to some of the features, especially any that might relate to the workers to whom you are trying to sell to. For a first time sale it sometimes helps to give out a leaflet on an issue that affects, or is of interest to the workers there. In fact it is always a good idea to put leaflets inside the magazines and papers that you sell. Anything from appeal sheets and Right to Work information to advertising the next local SWP public meeting. Also make sure that you keep contact with any readers who show an interest in our activities.

### YOUR WORKPLACE

Don't forget that it's also important to try and sell Womens Voice in your own workplace.

Most women work with other women and it's easy to provoke comment on features of an issue of the magazine (men as well as women). Regularly circulate the canteen, changing room etc with copies of Womens Voice and Socialist Worker for sale.

### DISPUTES

Keep your eyes and ears open for local disputes so as you can be aware of anything happening in your locality straight away. If there is a picket line, visit it. Show them the magazine and the paper and ask for a story for both about the dispute. There are *always* women invol-

ved, if not directly then as wives, mothers etc of male workers in dispute.

It is important that we visit regularly, with constant work we can build support for the workers in dispute and show them our politics in action.

In Bristol we sell Womens Voice together with Socialist Worker in shopping centres on a Saturday. We also sell outside meetings—like the Trades Council and big union meetings. It's also important to cover one off events, like CND or a big Tony Benn meeting where we know there will be a fair crowd.

### DEMONSTRATIONS

On local demonstrations sales can be multiplied. Always make sure that the magazine is there with the paper and sold at any local demos.

For large demos in far away cities local transport is often organised. Here again sales can be good, you have a captive audience. And on the demo itself, don't rely on local people to do the sales, sell as well.

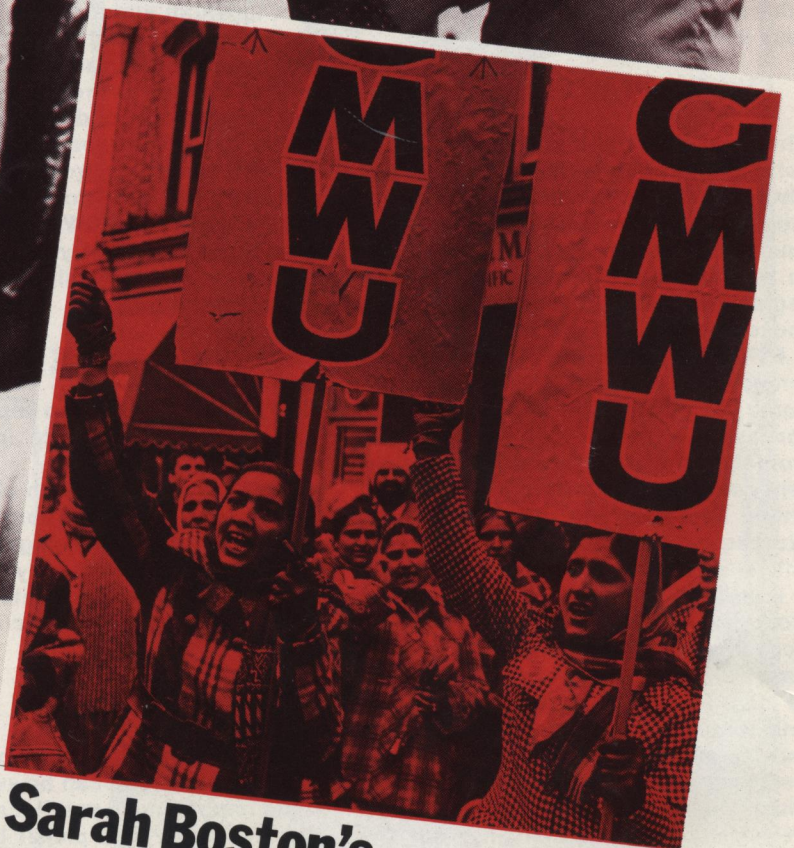
Estate sales are usually a hard slog with small rewards. Blocks of flats are the easiest as far as physical exertion goes (providing they have lifts). Timing is difficult; it doesn't do to ring the doorbell just as the tea goes on the table, or in the middle of bath time!

I have found that although usually quite a few copies can be sold the first time round, the numbers drop considerably the next month/week and so until you have a hard core sale of a few copies. These will be time consuming to deliver, but hopefully after a while you'll get invited in for a chat and be able to involve your readers in local activities.

*Katrina Tully*



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