

# womens voice

Womens magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

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## women in **POWER**

**The power to control our lives, to put us on the dole, cut our wages and destroy our services. Inside we take a look at women who have that power**

WHEN WE'VE CLEANED  
THIS BUILDING FROM  
TOP TO BOTTOM  
WE'LL HAVE EARNED  
THE SAME AS HE DOES  
WHILE GOING  
FROM TOP TO BOTTOM  
IN THE LIFT



The Tory government, well known for its staunch defence of workers' rights and decent working conditions, is paying its 6,000 cleaners in the Civil Service wages that are below the official poverty line.

The Low Pay Unit surveyed 500 Government cleaners and found that most of them have to work at least 13 hours a week—in the early mornings or late evenings—just to earn the same as a single person with no dependents gets on

supplementary benefit.

Nearly one third of the cleaners' households (that includes the income of other members of the family) receive less income than the supplementary benefit rate for a married couple with one child.

Most cleaners employed by the Government work 20 hours a week and take home between £23 and £26.

**In this issue...**

We take a look at women in power in 1982—who they are, what they do, and why they don't and can't act in *our* interests .. pages 14 and 15.



The right to life? How can handicap amongst babies be prevented, and how are handicapped children cared for?  
Plus: our abortion rights under attack in the unions ... pages 12 and 13.



Deportation orders against black and Asian women are increasing—Caroline Beatty discusses what they mean and what others can do to help ... page 11.

**Some new regular features**

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## Womens Voice looks back at 1981

1981 WAS not a good year. The fights to save jobs or for better wages and working conditions were few and far between—and nearly all of them were lost. Thousands of workers accepted redundancies without any fight at all—for example, the traditionally militant Talbot plant at Linwood in the West of Scotland closed without resistance from its workforce. Union leaders successfully stabbed in the back the longest and most bitter struggle of the year, Laurence Scotts, and gave little or no support to other strikes and occupations. The Tories have never enjoyed such a successful attack on the rights of workers—unemployment continues to soar, wages are kept down, anti-trade union laws have been passed with more in the pipe-line.

It's a depressing picture. But what's important is that there *have* been struggles, though small and mostly beaten. Despite the extent and success of the Tory offensive, things will not get better if socialists bury their heads in the sand or turn to 'armchair politics'.

We must always look for those pockets of resistance, look for workers who are prepared to fight back, and offer them our support. We must always argue in our trade union branches for support for struggles—for money, for blacking, for shifts on the picket lines.

In that way we can build up the confidence, strength and organisation of the working class which has been eroded

over the past few years. Then when an upturn in class struggle does start to take place, we will be in a position to respond.

### JANUARY

65 journalists, mostly women, occupied their offices over 10 threatened redundancies. All were sacked by their employers, BPC.

The Camden Journal strike had been going since Christmas Eve—another dispute over redundancies.

Timothy Sainsbury, the Tory MP, dropped his proposed private members bill to restrict the 1967 Abortion Act—he'd been frightened off by the 'fanatics' who forced the Corrie bill down.

### FEBRUARY

The miners forced the Tory government to back down on their threatened closure of pits. When the miners came out on strike, the Tories found the necessary money to keep the pits open within a matter of days.

240 women in a jeans factory in Greenock, Scotland occupied their factory against closure. The long struggle of the Lee Jeans women became an example for the rest of the trade union movement.

Longworth Hospital, a long-stay geriatric hospital near Oxford, was threatened with the loss of 13 beds. The workers occupied to save their jobs and the service they provided.

### MARCH

Civil servants all over the country began to take selective action in pursuit of their pay claim. They wanted 15 per cent, and the government offered seven per cent.

Anwar Ditta, who had been fighting to bring her children to Britain to be with her, won her case.



The Lee Jeans occupation continued—with massive support from workers all over the country. They said, 'We are no "rag trade girls". We are women workers fighting for our jobs.'

The Social Democratic Party was launched. One of its leaders was Shirley Williams, well known for her anti-abortion views.

## APRIL

Riots in Brixton, South London, shook the Tories—but an even bigger shake-up was on its way.

Campaigns began round black women threatened with deportation under the racist immigration laws. Nasira Begum, due to be thrown out of Britain because she unknowingly married a man who was already married, was the first to get national publicity.

More than 400 people marched from Leeds to Manchester on the CND trans-Pennine march.

## MAY

The first injunction under the 1980 Employment Act was served on seven workers at Chlorides, East London, who were striking over a wage claim. They were prevented from picketing the main depot—and their union leaders made no protest.

The People's March for Jobs set off from Liverpool at the beginning of May, and arrived in London at the end of the month. The 500 unemployed were met by more than 150,000 trade unionists and others in a massive demonstration against unemployment.

## JUNE

650 workers at Laurence Scotts Electromotors in Manchester occupied their factory against closure. One of the workers, Joan Drabble, said: 'Arthur Snipe reckoned without the workers when he announced the closure. This man has never come up against militancy. He's just being a bully boy. Well, we're not having it.'

Susan Shell, an employee of Barking council, was sacked for

being gay. The decision of the labour controlled council was upheld by an industrial tribunal.

## JULY/AUGUST

Hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money was spent on the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer—and unemployment was past the three million mark and still rising.

400 typists, secretaries and machine operators at Liverpool city council came out on strike over a regrading claim.

The Laurence Scotts occupation was smashed by bailiffs—but the workers continued to fight, mounting daily pickets on the factory.

The civil servants were sold out by their union leaders, who had consistently refused to call all-out, indefinite strike action.

Cynthia Gordon, who had been fighting a deportation order, won her case.

Black and white kids up and down the country rioted through the streets, fighting the police and burning buildings.

## SEPTEMBER

250 workers, including 50 women, at Barnes Flexible Packaging in Manchester, occupied their factory to save jobs. One of the workers, Pauline Beddows, said: 'It began as a fight for better redundancy pay, but now we're convinced we have to fight for our jobs. I'm not working for "pin money"—I'm working to make a living'.

15 women came out on strike over union recognition at Glen-croft Knitwear in Glasgow.

The Lee Jeans workers won their fight—the factory was bought and the jobs were saved.

## OCTOBER

Nearly 1,000 people marched from Liverpool to the Tory party conference in Blackpool on the most militant Right to Work March yet.

400 workers at Staffa engineering in East London occupied their factory against closure.

Nearly a quarter of a million people took to the streets of London to protest against nuclear madness in CND's big-

## OUR POINT OF VIEW

### Don't sell women workers short

SHOULD WOMEN go first when there are redundancies? Yes, according to some trade unionists at Hoovers in Merthyr, South Wales.

They are arguing for more redundancies among women at the plant than among men.

The basis for their argument lies in an agreement made between management and the engineering union (AUEW) some years ago. The agreement divided the workforce into grades, and divided one grade—the semi-skilled—into 'men's jobs' and 'women's jobs'. The latest union agreement takes this further and argues that women cannot be transferred to men's jobs or vice versa.

When the question of redundancies came up in October, the AUEW convenor, Mr Bish, argued that the semi-skilled grade should be treated as two grades—men and women. The result of this is that more of the women's jobs will be lost than the men's.

This came as a shock to many of the women in that factory who believed that redundancies would be on the basis of last in, first out. Most of their jobs in that case would have been safe, since all the workers recruited in the last three years have been men.

The dispute sums up everything that is wrong with the British trade union movement. The original agreement which divided the jobs into men's and women's was a mistake. It only served to reinforce the divisions which already exist among men and women in many workplaces, and allowed women to remain ghettoised in particular jobs.

Now there is a dispute which, instead of being aimed at management, who are imposing crippling redundancies at the plant, has sections of the workforce at one another's throats. Who benefits? Management, because the workers are fighting each other, and not fighting the bosses.

The narrow limits of trade unionists like Bish mean that, instead of trying to organise a fight against the whole idea that Hoover has the right to throw hundreds onto the dole, they accept that jobs have to go. It is always the case that once redundancies have been accepted, sectionalism between workers comes to the fore. The fight to save the women's jobs has to be part of an overall fight to save *all* the jobs and, that way, the workforce does not accept having to pay for Hoover's crisis.

Unfortunately the fight is not taking this course. The women have taken the dispute to the Equal Opportunities Commission—which takes it *away* from a real fight, and towards the sort of agreement which is now causing the problem.

Instead of going to the EOC, the women should take a lead in showing the male workforce how to fight. They should fight for *their* jobs—and we should support them in that because they challenge some of the worst chauvinist prejudices about women workers—but they have to go further. Victory at Hoovers means a united fight to reject the redundancies and protect all jobs, which means mobilising and fighting on the shopfloor—not relying on the local trade union leaders to cook up deals with management which sell women workers short.



gest ever demonstration. Similar-sized demonstrations took place all over Europe.

The mostly women workforce at Commonwealth Curtains in Kirkby occupied their factory to save jobs.

#### NOVEMBER

4,000 council workers in Coventry came out on strike against the cuts, fighting for their jobs and local services.

The Liverpool typists, after

five months on strike, agreed to return to work and submit their claim to arbitration.

24-hour-a-day picketing began at Mining Supplies in Doncaster in support of the Laurence Scotts fight for jobs. Most of the pickets were unemployed workers.

#### DECEMBER

The Polish government enforced martial law, outlawed political meetings and industrial action, and arrested the leaders of Poland's free trade union, Solidarity.

# NEWS

## Strike marks start of Heseltine fight

ON DECEMBER 1 over 20,000 teachers from schools and colleges together with parents, kids and members of NUPE and NALGO marched through London to protest against the Tories plans for local government cuts. Although the strike was called at short notice it was well supported, the majority of schools in London were closed for the afternoon.

The strike was over Heseltine's planned bill for 'Local Government Finance' which aims to force local authorities to make massive cuts, especially those it regards as 'high spenders'—most big city areas like London. The strike was successful because we spelled out to people what the bill will mean to the education service and for working class families. In London it will be disastrous—it will hit hard at the whole idea of parents 'right to work'.

The areas most likely to be cut are those that the Tory government made non-statutory last year. It is no longer legally necessary for local councils to provide nurseries or school meals or transport, so these areas are going to be the first to go. This means there will be no full or part time nursery

education, which many working mothers depend on. Also the educational evidence is overwhelming that children benefit from nursery experience and their later development is significantly helped. The right to a hot meal at dinner time, will disappear. This threatens all parents right to work as children will just be sent home in the middle of the day. In addition in London we have after-school play centres and youth centres which look after children until 6 o'clock, and in the holidays. These are of greatest benefit to working parents.

These sort of cuts clearly hit mainly at women workers. The majority of our 'mums' at school go out to work or work at home. But also the education service employs mainly women. It is estimated that if the school meals service is shut down 5,000 jobs in London would go. If all the nurseries and community education facilities go that will be another 5,000. But it is not just these jobs, the private sector like the food and transport industries, will be affected in turn.

It is estimated that one in five of London teachers would have to be sacked to force up class sizes to the national average. In London 'standards' have been

going up, children tested at 11 now do better than the national average although ten years ago London kids were well below. This has now been achieved through smaller classes and stability in the teaching force. All this would go and working class kids would be the first to suffer.

On December 16, Heseltine announced that he was withdrawing his Bill and replacing it with a new one. Some Labour MPs have hailed this as a victory. The section of the Bill that forced local authorities to hold a referendum if they wanted to levy extra rates has been withdrawn, as has the section hitting ordinary households rather than big business. In its place Heseltine is proposing that there be no right to levy supplementary rates except in 'exceptional' circumstances. Really this is *no* victory. Labour councils know it is political suicide to pose to working people the choice 'shall we cut?' or 'shall we put up your rates?' The Croydon by-election vote for the SDP was in no small part due to the massive rate rises in London.

So instead of levying extra rates Labour councils will have to levy massive initial rates. They know this will be death electorally. This is why many

Labour councillors are prepared to fight and are making alliances with trade union leaders to resist the Tory Bill. In Hackney local ILEA councillors and the NUT are calling for a massive day of action in January and this is being spread around London in defiance of the Tory plans. Heseltine is still building into the Bill, financial controls, so local authorities will get no grants if they do not cut. This withdrawal of grants will inevitably mean cuts will be made

We need to build for this day of action and to involve *all* workers, public and private, and the unemployed because these cuts will affect all of us and in particular a womens right and ability to go out to work. The lessons of Coventry and Lothian are clear: only rank and file trade union organisation based in the workplaces, with a firm commitment to solidarity with which ever section is hit first, is going to succeed. The ancillary workers in Coventry gave a lead.

We need to make sure that by the time the Heseltine cuts bite we have organised for—no loss of jobs, no cuts in services, and maximum solidarity.

**Jeannie Robinson**

## Threat of walk-out ends typists strike



THE LIVERPOOL typists finally returned to work last month after 23 weeks on strike for better wages. Their claim has been submitted to local arbitration.

After the typists voted to go to arbitration, the dispute escalated again because Trevor Jones, the council leader, wanted an assurance from NALGO that scabs would not be disciplined or expelled. A packed NALGO branch meeting voted overwhelmingly to take industrial action in all departments unless Jones backed down.

Faced with this threat, Jones agreed to an 'acceptable form of wording' that meant a victory for the union.

Jones and the rest of the council backed down in the face of a threat that the entire NALGO branch would come out on strike. That one incident, so late in the dispute, shows how the Liverpool typists could have won their claim. If united all out action had been taken early on, the typists could have won their claim. If united all out action had been taken early on, the typists would not have been

forced into a position where they had to turn to arbitration.

Arbitration is never a satisfactory answer to a dispute. It means that the final outcome has to be acceptable to both parties. Past experience shows that the outcome of disputes which have gone to arbitration favours the bosses.

The action which forced Jones to back down over disciplining scabs was the key to the whole dispute. The typists needed action from other council employees in solidarity. Any move in that direction was thwarted by the national NALGO executive.

The typists will be disappointed with the outcome of arbitration but their six months on strike were not a waste of time. The women have changed during the strike—they will continue to be active in the union and will not accept the patronising attitudes of their bosses. And in a year when very little happened industrially, they will remember the strike as one where a group of women workers fought back.

**Harriet Sherwood**

## Police attacks on black family

ON 6 NOVEMBER three van loads of police with dogs turned up at the Stoke Newington home of Mrs Knight and her family — allegedly to investigate a fight. Mrs Knight was kicked and violently assaulted — leaving her with injuries to her head, arms, thighs and coccyx. Her two eldest daughters received similar treatment and all three were arrested.

Mrs Knight's injuries were so bad that she had to be taken from the police station to Hackney Hospital to have her wounds stitched.

All the time she was in the police station she was led to believe that her youngest daughter, aged 6, was still at home — on her own — when

she too was in the station.

After her release she made a complaint to Scotland Yard. The police returned, this time arresting her 19-year-old daughter and charging her with grievous bodily harm.

Her daughter is now out on bail, but is forbidden from going anywhere near her home.

A defence campaign has been launched and its first activity — a march against police harassment through Hackney — was very successful.

*Claire Harris*

For more information, contact the campaign c/o the Family Centre, 50 Rectory Road, London, N16.

## In prison for murder he didn't commit

A YOUNG black man was been sent to prison for life for a murder he didn't commit.

Newton Rose — from Hackney in East London — is now serving time for the murder of Tony Donnelly on 8 May, the day of the GLC elections.

That night Donnelly should have been serving as a scrutineer for the National Front Constitutional Movement. Instead he went to a black club, Flamingo's, and left with some black girls to walk them home.

He was found dead early next morning, having been stabbed through the chest.

Sandra, the girl he walked home, was arrested and harassed by the police who tried to show that Donnelly had been killed by a jealous lover. Newton was a friend of Sandra's and he was hauled in and

charged with the murder.

There was no forensic evidence to back up the charge. All the prosecution had to go on was the statements of three of Newton's friends, made under threat of being charged with the murder themselves.

The evidence of another black girl who said she saw three white men get out of a car, and have a fight with Donnelly in which he fell to the ground must have been ignored by the ten white, two black jury.

What is disturbing about this case is that the police failed to chase up the obvious lead of investigating Donnelly's National Front friends. They stuck to their theory that Newton had killed Donnelly because he was jealous of him and used it to secure a conviction.

## Abortion rights attacked in Belgium

FOUR WOMEN are on trial in Belgium for having an abortion. The trials of ten doctors and one psychologist also began on 9 December—they are charged with performing abortions.

Abortion is illegal in Belgium, unless it is to save a woman's life. The law dates from the nineteenth century, and all attempts to change it have been unsuccessful. But, in practise, abortion has been tolerated since 1973. Between 20,000 and 25,000 women have abortions in Belgium every

year, either in hospital or in one of the 13 special clinics. The clinics, called GACEHPA clinics, are run by sympathetic staff, and provide counselling and support for women with unwanted pregnancies.

The Procurator General of Belgium recently announced that he intended to open proceedings specifically aimed at GACEHPA clinics, and the first trial—involving four doctors, one psychologist and one woman who had an abortion—began at the beginning of September. This trial and the trial of the chief gynaecologist at a



## Coventry strike ends

3500 CLEANERS, dinner ladies and caretakers for Coventry Council have returned to work after four weeks on strike over proposed cuts in their hours. The decision to return was taken at a mass meeting where only 1500 workers turned up, and where it was decided 3-1 to return to work on their normal hours while arbitration took place.

The result will be binding on both the workers union, NUPE, and the Labour City Council. Part of the deal that the strike committee had agreed was that the workers would return to work the next day—Sunday—and clean four weeks of filth in one day for normal rates to enable the children to get back

to school on Monday.

Emma Stratford was one of the people who voted against arbitration and to continue to strike. She told WV why.

'I was not directly affected by this set of cuts but as a NUPE member I was out on strike right from the start, in support of the women and men who would be. Mind you, if the union leaders had had their way I would've been back to work the week before. You could see the strike committee were building towards a sell out when they gave over 500 strikers including me dispensation to go back to work.

'I refused to go back. The only way we could win was by the solidarity of all local authority workers and that did not mean some NUPE members going back. That was really the start of the rundown of the strike.

'We haven't won by agreeing to arbitration. I voted against it because if the talks break down it will be harder to get people out a second time. Members feel disillusioned now. I would have felt like that if it hadn't been for the Right to Work.

I will be pushing for more members to get involved with our union so when it happens again we can tell our leaders what we want them to do. We need support from other workers—if you have that you can win'.

For more information contact the International Contraception, Abortion, and Sterilisation Campaign, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 (01-278 0153).



## IT'S ACTION NOW THAT COUNTS

**ARE YOU a woman? Between 16 and 24 years of age? Smart? Intelligent? Ambitious? Want to earn £150 per week? Skilled or unskilled? Well tough!**

This is the heading of a leaflet aimed at young women to involve them in the campaign for a Woman's Right to Work. The action committee is planning an organising conference in February and hopes for a demonstration in June.

They aim to get the Labour Party leadership and the TUC to call the demonstration. So far they have been unlucky, although the Labour Party is organising a rally-type event on June 5 around the theme of a woman's right to work.

The campaign has other problems. Firstly, by putting the onus on someone else to call the demonstration, the committee is forced into a position of having to make repeated calls for it, without actually getting

down to the job of mobilising. The call first went out last May—and is still being discussed.

Very few people have so far become involved—which isn't too surprising, since there is nothing specific to organise round. It is very hard to visit factories without *clear* proposals other than putting pressure on the labour and trade union leaderships. Instead, mobilising is more at the stage of internal wranglings in the Labour Party.

Secondly, the call for the demonstration doesn't confront the question of what we do *now* about unemployment. The People's March and Right to Work March recently did show that women can be involved in those fights—as did various disputes like Laurence Scotts and Lee Jeans.

Those issues are ones which can be organised round in the here and now, because they involve people taking action to fight for jobs *now*. The danger

with the campaign for a demonstration is that it can talk a lot about women's right to a job without actually committing people to doing very much—which can be exactly the sort of let-out the bureaucrats like the ones who sold out Laurence Scotts are looking for.

Let's hope it doesn't become that, because every initiative to fight unemployment can help to

build the fight and the confidence of the unemployed and link them with the employed. Of course TUC and Labour support is to be welcomed. Many people will support a call from them. But if we had waited for them to organise the Right to Work or People's Marches, they wouldn't have happened.

Many women are angry about unemployment—increasing numbers are challenging their traditional roles to fight it. We should start to build among them—not wait for the call from national executives.

Lindsey German

## Make up kit manufacturers let off the hook

TWENTY YEARS after the drug Thalidomide was withdrawn from the market there is still no control over the sale of harmful products.

Tracey Allen has lost two stone in weight, suffers from bouts of depression, has pockmarks on her face and her bottom lip is paralysed.

The cause? A make-up kit she was given for her birthday. Unknown to her it contained high levels of lead, cadmium and chromium.

These make-up kits are on sale on the market at between 99p and £1.80. With Christmas coming up they make ideal gifts. But cadmium and chromium are known to be damaging to the kidneys and lead can make your skin blotchy. The DHSS have said that the effect of the kits on adults should be temporary. However they admit they could be dangerous if a child were to digest them.

The problem is that while the sale of cosmetics containing heavy metals is prohibited in

this country, there are no controls over the manufacturer. All that can be done is that the retailer can be prosecuted. If you are harmed by the make-up it's up to you to try and get compensation. And even then the people responsible—the manufacturers—are left off the hook. You have to go through the costly business of suing the supplier.

While the effect of this make-up will reach nowhere near the dramatic levels of the Thalidomide tragedy, the fact that manufacturers can still get away with producing harmful products is still one which should cause concern.

These are the brand names to look out for:

- *Aroma*
- *Rohn*
- *Rohm*
- *Prince*
- *Meyssa*
- *Boudoir*

or a combination of these names.

Claire Harris.



Thousands of women greeted the People's March last year.

## 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!**

# LEAD CAUSES LEARNING PROBLEMS

Low marks at school may be caused by lead poisoning. The air in our inner cities is so polluted, mostly by the lead in petrol fumes, that it is causing brain damage in children and unborn babies. Lead-free petrol would bring a dramatic improvement in the atmosphere, it is easy to introduce and economical. But the Tory government is not going to do very much about it.

A new report, based on a study of 166 London school-children, says that there is a significant link between blood lead levels and school achievement: children with higher than normal blood lead levels showed an average 7 points less in IQ tests. Studies in America and other countries have already shown similar results.

Many researchers now believe that the lead in a city atmosphere is enough to cause learning problems, disturbed behaviour and general malaise in children, and even worse damage to the developing foetus. It probably also causes 'spontaneous' miscarriages.

The children who suffer most live in the inner city slums. A

poor diet worsens the effects of lead poisoning, because a good balanced diet helps prevent lead absorption. There is also some evidence that black children may be particularly sensitive to lead poisoning.

In the London study, 51 per cent of the children were said to be suffering the effects of above-normal blood lead levels. And the main villain is lead in petrol. Although we absorb lead from canned food, lead water pipes and the old paint still peeling from the walls (paint used to contain up to 40 per cent lead), it is estimated that 90 per cent of the lead in city air comes from petrol. And 90 per cent of the lead in vegetables comes from the air in the first place.

## Food companies take the biscuit

The Tories tell us that in order to put the country back on its feet we must all meekly accept rising unemployment and lower wages. But there is at least one industry that seems to be well on its feet already—and yet jobs are still disappearing and wages falling.

The food industry's profit margin for the second quarter of 1981 was higher than in any other second quarter since 1973. In the first half of 1981 Rowntree Mackintosh's pre-tax profits more than doubled from £4.3 million to £8.7 million. United Biscuits profits increased by half to £24.1 million, and Cadbury Schweppes raised their profits by 31 per cent to a staggering £27.5 million. In the industry as a whole profits increased by 26 per cent in the first half of 1981 compared to the same period the year before.

The Food and Drink Industries Council explain the rise in profits like this: 'The key to improved profitability has been careful management of costs'. What they mean is closures, redundancies and low wage settlements.

Employment in food manufacturing fell from July 1981 to July 1982 by 26,000 (*Department of Employment statistics*). United Biscuits have closed a factory at Osterly—1,200 jobs lost; Rank Hovis McDougall closed

two bakeries—600 jobs lost; Tate and Lyle closed its Liverpool sugar refinery—1,600 jobs lost; and Unigate closed two Scot Meat Products factories—1,500 jobs lost. And these are only some of them.

As well as closures, redundancies in food factories have been pushed through, and plants are operating with smaller workforces. Yet production is not being cut—workers are being made to work faster and harder, often using dangerous machinery.

Most wage settlements in the food industry have been well below 10 per cent in the last eighteen months—figures which mean a cut in real terms, as they fail to match inflation.

Food prices have increased dramatically since the Tories took over running the country in May 1979. Unemployment has gone up and up—and wages have gone down. As far as the food industry is concerned, the Tories' and the bosses' lies about 'sacrifice is necessary ...'

Low-lead petrol is available in Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and Germany. Lead-free petrol has to be available by law in all American petrol stations. Australia aims to be on lead-free petrol by 1985. Japan introduced two-star lead-free petrol within three years of discovering the health hazards, in 1972. Leaded petrol has been banned from Russian cities since 1959.

The British government is more modest in its aims. It will drop the permitted maximum of lead in petrol (from 0.40 grammes a litre to 0.15 grammes a litre) in 1985. But it has no plans for lead-free petrol—though the 1981 Labour Party Conference did commit itself to lead-free petrol.

The Tory policy owes quite a lot to the Lawther report, published in March 1980, which did at least prod the Government into lowering the permitted lead levels. But the report decided that it



couldn't come to any decision about the link between brain damage and current levels of lead in the air. It also suggested that the food chain was a more dangerous source of lead than petrol exhaust in the air, which is a bit of a red herring as the air pollution is a link in the polluted food chain.

In other words, the Lawther report introduced enough 'doubt' about the dangers of lead in petrol to allow the Government and the oil companies to do nothing very much about controlling it, and children will continue to suffer unless this new report shakes the Government out of its apathy.

Janet Vaux



don't convince anyone. There is no crisis in the food industry—the reason why workers are being asked to make 'sacrifices' is so that the company directors

and major shareholders can make fatter profits.

Harriet Sherwood  
(Information from Labour Research, December 1981)

# Racism is a daily experience

Nasreen Akhtar and her three daughters, from Rochdale, won their two year campaign against deportation. At her final appeal on October 23rd the Home Office refused to withdraw their case, but admitted that they were unable to support it with legal arguments!

Nasreen's case shows what a racist Immigration Law means for people. She was insulted by the Home Office who refused to accept her telephone marriage as valid, although she held a valid Pakistani marriage certificate. When her marriage broke down, Nasreen was receiving social security for herself and her three daughters, as a separated woman. The DHSS heard that she was under threat of deportation and promptly stopped her benefit. (It was eventually restored.) Nasreen and her family have been subjected to two years of intimidation by the Home Office, who then admitted that they had *no evidence whatever* to support their view that her marriage was invalid and that she therefore had no right to be here.

Nasreen won her case with the support of the campaign (Friends of Nasreen Akhtar), but there are hundreds of others who have been deported this year, or who are now under threat. **Momtaz Kiani Begum** from Bradford, has two small British-born children. She was given permanent leave to stay here by the Home Office four years ago following her marriage to a man settled here. In February 1981 her husband was deported; he was said to be a seaman deserter and not entitled to the amnesty for illegal entrants which he had received—from the Home Office—several years before. He does not wish his wife to join him in Pakistan and she does not want to go. But the Home Office is now saying that *her* 'permanent leave' has been 'vitiated' by the discovery that her *husband* jumped ship 10 years ago.

**Shirley Graham**, a Jamaican woman in London, was given 'permanent settlement' by the Home Office on the basis of her marriage in 1978.

She was divorced last year. She has been in and out of the country several times without any trouble, until this summer. She was stopped at Heathrow, put in Harmondsworth detention centre for interrogation for six days, was kept short of the drugs she desperately needed as a diabetic. But Shirley has now been told to leave the country *without any explanation*. She does not know whether she will have a right of appeal. While she was abroad, her house was burgled; the police are refusing to take any action because her immigration status is in question.

The point of the Immigration Act is to keep out black people. The only ones allowed in are under very specific categories—children, students, wives. Their limited entitlement to civil rights depends on them remaining in those categories. If they step outside these categories—whether on purpose or not—they are defined as criminals who have to justify why they should not be banished.

Under the Immigration Act, some people have a 'right' of appeal against Home Office decisions. This gives a false impression of justice to an act which is itself basically racist. Immigration judges ('Adjudicators') in the special immigration appeal courts are appointed by the *Home Secretary* to hear cases *against* the Home Office. They are accountable to no one.

The appeal system is not and cannot be an impartial administrator of justice. It is bound to operate within the confines of a law which is thoroughly racist. In a letter

to Nasreen's MP on October 7th 1980, the Minister for Immigration, Timothy Raison, stated:

'I entirely reject the suggestion that this decision has any racial overtones; Ms Akhtar's case was considered, as in all cases, on its merits under the Immigration Rules approved by Parliament.'

The adjudicator, of course, upheld the Minister's decision.

In a legal and social structure which is thoroughly racist, cases can only be won through strong political campaigns outside the legal channels. Anwar Ditta lost her case to bring her children here at every single stage of the administrative and legal process. She would never have won without a political campaign. Jaswinder Kaur, Cynthia Gordon, Nasira Begum, Abdul Azad and many others have fought for their right to stay here with public support in the face of repeated refusals by Home Office officials and adjudicators.

Through campaigns around individual cases, awareness is growing about the way the immigration law operates. These campaigns are succeeding in putting pressure on the Home Office to reverse its decisions. They also show that public support and demonstrations can have effect; that the state can be challenged successfully. But already there has been a backlash. Twelve members of the United Black Youth League are facing a conspiracy charge in connection with the riots in Bradford on July 11th.

Lots of women's groups have responded to the par-

ticular situation of black women under immigration law. This is good, but I think we have to be clear why we're doing it and what we say. It is easy to get angry about the vulnerable situation of an Asian woman who has to choose between an unhappy marriage and leaving the country because she is only allowed to remain as a dependant. But Immigration Law is primarily concerned with keeping out black people. It is of no concern whatever to the Home Office who is to blame for the breakdown of marriage. They are merely using marital breakdown as an excuse to deport another black person. Campaigns have to be fought on this basis.

Sexism does run right through the Immigration Act and immigration procedures. The form of the attack on women is often sexist, but they would not be facing the attack at all if they were not black.

If the campaign focuses on the sexism experienced by women then it runs the danger of distracting attention from, or worse still excusing, the essentially racist nature of Home Office behaviour, legitimised by a racist law. We have to recognise and fight the racism which is a daily experience for many in this country, and which finds an extreme expression in the attempt to deport black people. Women under threat of deportation are the target primarily of racism; campaigns of support must be fought on an anti-racist platform. **Caroline Beatty**

**CAMPAIGN CONTACTS**  
Mumtaz Kiani Defence Committee, c/o 285, Romford Road, London E7. Tel: 01-555-3331 c/o 4th Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate, Bradford 1. Tel: Bradford 661352  
Shirley Graham Defence Committee, c/o 285, Romford Road, London E7. Tel: 01-555-3331  
Friends of Aziz Malik, c/o 104, Commercial St, Batley, W. Yorks. Tel: Batley 477500  
Migrants Action Group & Resident Domestic Campaign (support for Filipino women) c/o 68, Chalton St., London NW1. Tel: 01-388-0241





# A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE



Nobody wants a handicapped child', 'A handicapped Child is a Handicapped Family'. Are these headlines beloved by the media really true?

Many women believe that pre-natal screening should be widely available for women over thirty. At the same time they do not necessarily think that abortion is the automatic answer once it is known that the foetus is damaged.

Yet if parents who are lucky enough to have the expensive and skilled omniscient offered to them refuse a termination, they run into many problems. It is widely assumed by the medical profession that a termination must be carried out if the test is positive—regardless of the feelings of the prospective parents. Some hospitals go so far as to insist that termination papers are signed before the amniocentesis is given.

It is outrageous. Some families will decide against termination after having thought the matter out carefully and responsibly. Some

may decide to proceed with the pregnancy on religious grounds. Alternatively they may be a couple who have attempted to have a child for some years and who after careful consideration of the problems have decided that they are prepared to care for a handicapped child. If that is so, then it is obviously best that a family which makes such a decision should have six months in which to gather information and support in order to cater for the child's future in the best manner possible.

It is a dangerous philosophy to believe that we should terminate all pregnancies which will produce less than perfect children. It has strong overtones of the fascist philosophy which determined to exterminate all handicapped people in the interests of the purity of the race. Or to bring it nearer to home—such ideas are similar to those of our own Eugenics society led by Francis Galton in the nineteenth century.

This powerful body believed that all handicaps were hereditary and that IQ was fixed from birth. They therefore saw the handicapped as a threat to British society and advocated a policy of isolation, segregation, and sterilization to prevent the rot spreading through British society. So called 'degenerate behaviour' was also seen as a cause of handicap

and led to admissions to subnormality hospitals for life for women who, for example, had illegitimate children.

It is only recently that we have begun to demand a humane deal for the handicapped based on integration, independence and civil rights. And we should not let the abortion issue allow us to regress in a field where it has taken us so long to achieve so little.

Abortion should not be used as a means to rid us of all handicapped children. Terminations should mean that every child is a wanted child, and that parents should be allowed to exercise choices as to whether to bring up a child—be it 'normal' or handicapped.

**Anna Patterson**



*What can be done to prevent the birth of handicapped babies? Womens Voice spoke to **Sharon Aylmer**, a doctor.*

There's no doubt that a higher standard of living, less stress, less work and better medical care would

all help, but they won't solve all the problems.

The baby that Dr Arthur allows to die suffered from Down's syndrome. These babies look different—they have slanty eyes, flat bridges to their noses and short necks. They are retarded and, being more likely to catch infections than normal children, often die young. Although they can learn to dress, feed and clean themselves, and are usually happy and sweet-natured, they require someone to look after them all their days.

This is the major abnormality of the foetus that increases with the mother's age. Older women, exhausted by the real burden of doing two jobs, have a higher rate of problems in pregnancy anyway. For mothers over the age of 45, as many as one in six foetuses suffer from Down's syndrome. The reason seems to be degeneration of both the mother's egg cell and the natural selection mechanism that would otherwise reject the abnormal foetus at an early stage.

But women can have Down's syndrome babies at any age. A few women 'carry' an extra chromosome in their cells—there is a one in four chance that they will have a baby with this

handicap. I've had a 17 year old patient who had one. *But Down's syndrome can be detected. Isn't the answer wider access to tests?*

The test that detects Down's syndrome—amniocentesis—carries its own risks and problems. It involves pushing a hollow needle through the stomach wall, through the uterus (womb) and into the fluid around the foetus, and then removing some. Ultrasound scanning equipment, which is painless, is used to locate the position of the placenta and the foetus and the test is safest if done under continuous scanning. But no matter how carefully it's done, there is still a significant risk that this test will cause a miscarriage. Removing the fluid in itself seems to disturb the uterus, and at least one in a hundred women having the test will miscarry as a result. Most of their babies would have been normal.

The test can't be done until the uterus has risen above the pubic bone, that is until about 16 weeks. If you have a retroverted womb, it can be as late as 18 weeks. The results then take two weeks to come through, and being a delicate and highly skilled procedure, there's no guarantee that it will work. In any event, it means that women who are five months pregnant, and can already feel the baby moving around within them, are living with the knowledge that they may still have to face having an abortion—in terms of sorting out their commitment to the pregnancy and the child to come this can be deeply disturbing, in most cases unnecessarily. Amniocentesis is a physically unpleasant and upsetting test to undergo, and like all such high technology medicine, places the power firmly in the hands of the 'experts'. With more and more high-powered safety-checks, many women have felt that the pregnancy was the obstetrician's rather than their own.

On a statistical basis routine amniocentesis for all pregnant women would reduce the number of Down's syndrome babies born, but the cost would be a large number of avoidable

miscarriages, extra problems for women already struggling to come to terms with the emotions of pregnancy, particularly for those women who have become pregnant early in their sexual lives, and another step towards making women feel that it is doctors, not themselves, who are responsible for their pregnancies and their bodies.

Of course we want amniocentesis to be available for all women that want it—and above the age of about 37 the risks of an abnormal baby outweigh, for most of us, the risks of a miscarriage. The test is largely available in urban areas, but not in all parts of the country, and this is a disgrace. But amniocentesis for all women is not the answer—and so not all Down's syndrome births can be predicted. The question of what we do with handicapped babies remains.



**WHEN I was pregnant I often had fears that I'd have a handicapped child. All women do and like many other women I was frequently advised by those for whom it wasn't a problem that I'd cope: 'people do when it happens' .....I knew I wouldn't and I know most people don't.**

**Most families with a handicapped child suffer monstrously. The strain and guilt often breaks the family, and the child concerned—if capable of understanding what is going on—suffers doubly from the consequences of the handicap and from the guilt.**

**You can't make absolutes to deal with such situations. 'The rights of the unborn' is a meaningless term when applied to them. I believe the people concerned have the right to decide what they want to do. All medical information should be made available to them. Most of us know nothing about the handicapped, hidden away as they are from general**

**view. The degree of handicap can vary enormously from, for example, slight spasticity to severe brain damage. Because of the huge variation in possible handicap so the possibilities of living a normal life vary.**

**It is accentuated by the fact that in our hypocritical society the sanctity of life is pontificated upon by church and state, but the quality of life is not guaranteed by either. Therefore the stress involved for those concerned is not only affected by the degree of handicap but also by the facilities available to them locally. In some areas of Britain families are given no help. They have to cope 24 hours each day, 365 days each year unaided and alone. In other areas, like my own, the local authority provides schools, clubs, transport, equipment and holidays. It helps but it can't remove all the strain—nothing can.**

**How do you relieve the strain for a woman who knows she has two sons dying of muscular dystrophy, and daughters who could be carriers of the disease? Or how would you feel about the doctors who refused you a termination as you watch your five year old slowly wasting away?**

**I am a socialist. I believe we all have the right to control our lives. Control means making informed, rational and caring choices. No choices like the ones above can be easy, but to force people to conceive, carry, give birth to and bring up handicapped children is as wrong as it is to force them not to.**

**Most parents I have talked to feel that if they had the choice, if they knew then what they know now, they would never have had a handicapped child. In a society geared to caring, fewer parents would have to make such choices and fewer pressures would occur on those who had made the choice.**

**I love the children I teach. We try to give them as normal a life as possible given the kind of shit world they're born into. They are here and we try to love and cherish them all we can.**  
**Nikki Mellor**



IN TOWNS where abortions are difficult to obtain more children are in the care of the local authority than in towns which have day care abortion facilities.

I've spoken to many women who have very little knowledge of where to obtain abortion advice. They are frustrated by the unreliability of contraception and the side-effects of oral contraceptives. These women complain of the hardships they have suffered because the role of childraiser was thrust on them as the result of being turned away by reactionary, anti-abortion doctors.

Our rights under the 1967 Abortion Act are being threatened by groups such as LIFE and SPUC and by the cuts in the NHS. Private medicine will find this music to the ears—but those who cannot pay need our support and campaigning.

One of the members of my COHSE branch, nursing assistant Isobel Evans, said: 'It must be the women and not doctors or the state who have the final decision about whether to continue a pregnancy. We must fight for free abortion on request which is the policy of the TUC and the Labour Party.'

COHSE's national executive has overturned the conference decision to affiliate to the National Abortion Campaign—they have deferred it until the next conference. A meeting of COHSE members is planned for mid-January to discuss this, and also the way LIFE and SPUC, although small unrepresentative groups, are gaining increasing power within COHSE branches. We hope that the meeting will point the way to fighting back against the right-to-lifers, and also force COHSE to honour the conference decision.

**Sue Rigby**

*COHSE meeting: Saturday 16 January, midday, Prince Albert, Wharfedale Road, London N1. Representatives of NAC will be there. More details from Sue Rigby, Melcombe, Gloucester Road, Ross-on-Wye. 0989 64067.*

# Hats off to Mrs T

TORY LADIES—all blue rinses and silly hats? The average woman attending the Tory women's conference may fit the media image, but those that aspire to the top are much deadlier breed.

## Baroness Young

'At a time of change the family stands at the centre of our society for four great principles: for stability, for continuity, for individual responsibility and for self-help.'

She's a great believer in self-help and the sort of people who have obviously helped themselves: Michael Edwardes (British Leyland), Lord Sieff (Marks and Spencer), Lord Weinstock (GEC). Teenagers should idolise industrial tycoons like them instead of all those pop stars, she says, and they'd get a much clearer idea about how to succeed in life!

It is possible to describe Baroness Young as the Tory Party women's organiser—in a very loose way. She became vice-chairman of the Party in 1975, with special responsibility for women's organisation. And promptly set about changing the image of Tory women. She came up with a slogan which sums up her political thinking: 'Hats off for Mrs T.'

## Mrs Thatcher

Margaret Thatcher herself is a firm believer in images: 'If you look good', she says, 'people warm to you. Hence the hair-dos, neat suits and earrings—which of course blinds us all to the monetarism, the unemployment statistics and the rate of inflation!'

This double-think goes on all the time. In 1972, when she was Education Minister in Ted Heath's government, she made a great fuss about her plans to extend nursery education. Now, in the interests of good husbandry (a favourite word of hers—it means housekeeping/book-keeping, not exactly the best way to describe the running of the British economy) all the nurseries are to be closed down.

Which will help to confirm another belief of hers—that some women are just made to stay at home, it's only natural. While others—herself included—are just made 'to take on extra responsibility'.

'Many women have a much more interesting life in running a home. It's a managerial job. You're making your own decisions all the time. You're budgeting. You're deciding what to do—and when and how to do it most efficiently. You therefore have an outlet for energies which many men don't have in their daily work. It is really *creative* work, running a home, bringing up children.'

## Sally Oppenheim

'It is about time that we removed the scales from our eyes, abandoned the humbug and admitted openly that the pursuit of self-interest is not only what each of us practises, but is also beneficial to the rest of us.'

No humbug there—Sally Oppenheim is a very rich woman. She is a living example of how to apply the principles of self-interest: she sold a house in Hampstead, London, for £600,000 a few years back, and then paid close to a million pounds for a farm in Gloucestershire. She and her family recouped £454,000 of this when she sold off some of

the farm land on the estate (a mere 900 acres) leaving herself with the house and its kitchen garden—all 265 acres of it.

Her job in the Tory Government is as Minister for Consumer Affairs, which is appropriate and at which she has been a resounding success. She began her term of office by scrapping the Price Commission—and the price of basic commodities like bread, gas, electricity and petrol all went up.

Her real understanding of the effect inflation is having on our lives is summed up in a blistering attack on the last Labour Government in 1978: the £10 pensioner's bonus is pathetically little. It is but a ghost of Christmas past. It is worth less than £5 compared with the Christmas bonus handed out by a Conservative Government in 1973. If the purchasing power of that Christmas bonus is to be maintained, this year's bonus would have to be over £20.'

By 1980 the £10 Conservative Government bonus was worth £3.61 at 1973 levels. This year it will be worth £3.32. If you think she might not have been able to work this out for herself why not drop her a line *c/o* the House of Commons.

## Jill Knight

Jill Knight is a woman who does not mince her words or her opinions: she hates the Irish most of all, then she hates the blacks. After that she hates teenage sex, and then she hates abortion.

What does she love? Capital punishment—'I'm not interested in vengeance. I just believe in protecting the lives of innocent people'—and getting her name in the newspapers, particularly on the Irish question.

Her campaign on the IRA has been vocal and costly: she told Edward Kennedy not to meddle when he called for the punishment of Ulster security officials responsible for brutality against Republican prisoners in 1979. And had the same to say to Hugh Carey, the Governor of New York State, when he called for economic sanctions against Britain to get the troops out of Northern Ireland.

She then slammed the Home Office for allowing an Irish prisoner's wife and children visit him in Parkhurst jail—an outrageous misuse of public money.

This concern for taxpayer's money doesn't stop her spending it! In 1979 she and the Reverend Ian Paisley claimed that British taxpayer's money was being used to support the IRA, via the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. An enquiry showed that £800,000 had been overspent, but that not a penny had gone to the IRA. The cost of the inquiry? £250,000. Well done, Mrs Knight.

Her campaigning spirit takes her all over the world—particularly to South Africa, which she believes gets a prejudiced press over here. Prejudiced against the whites, that is, a subject about which she cares passionately. As the newspapers have carried more and more reports of racial attacks against blacks and Asians in recent months she's demanding inquiries too—into racial attacks on white people. She is such a caring bastion of Tory thinking. **Margaret Renn**

# WOM POW



Margaret Thatcher



Jill Knight

# Men in Power

## A token of class

'TAKE the toys from the boys,' says the feminist CND poster. At first sight, perhaps, an attractive slogan for women, bringing together many oppressions in a single symbol of male aggression, the nuclear missile.

In fact, a very dangerous slogan, as it places the blame for the nuclear threat on a sex instead of a class, the capitalist ruling class.

But there is something very peculiar about the slogan itself. Has no one noticed (surely they must have!) that one of the fingers on our very own trigger is the elegantly manicured one of Margaret Thatcher.

And Thatcher is not the only powerful woman with dangerous toys. In our own lifetime, some of the rulers who have wielded the most violence have been women. Mrs Bandaranaike, the rich widow who took over her husband's post in Sri Lanka, was responsible for the massacre of thousands of socialist youth who took to the hills in rebellion against her brutal regime. Indira Gandhi, the well-born Indian lady, turned the pretence of democracy into openly violent tyranny, with the imprisonment of hundreds of thousands of trade unionists and the slaughter of thousands by trigger-happy police. Golda Meir, the chubby grandmother, headed an Israeli state armed to the teeth, defending territories stolen from surrounding Arabs.

Insignificant facts, some feminists will answer. 'The trouble with Thatcher,' said a recent article in *Guardian Women*, 'is that she is a token woman.'

But the Tory Party women's conference is a forum for some of the most reactionary and violent views in that reactionary and violent party. The traditional 'Hang 'em and flog 'em' brigade has been joined in recent years by the Forcible Repatriation set. Under the flowery hats and blue rinses, the eyes glisten with hatred of workers, blacks and scroungers whatever their sex, and the lipstick is pressed into a thin red line of intolerance. Heaven help us if *they* carried enough weight in the Tory Party to pack the cabinet with Jill Knights and Sally Oppenheims!

Deluded women? I don't think so. Such women are parasites who recognise where their interests lie—in maintaining the system that provides them with fur coats, large cars, executive-style houses and au pairs (or discreet daily servants) to look after them—and, yes, the occasional company directorship or cabinet post. They don't care whether the wealth and power comes to them through their fathers or husbands or as individuals, so long as they get and keep the goodies that make them free of a significant amount of the oppression that other women suffer.

The birch-loving, black-hating Tory women are not alone in history, either. From the ancient Roman noblewomen who drooled over the blood of slaves and Christians in the arena, to the fashionable ladies of Paris who toured the prison camp at Pere Lachaise cemetery in 1871 to gloat over the women of the defeated Commune as they were lined up for execution, ruling class women have been hooked on violence—the

violence of their own class against its victims.

Women in power truly do represent the women of their class, whose material interests are identical to the maintenance of the society they live in.

Of course, some ruling class women have managed to recognise that they are oppressed in a society that keeps them economically dependent and legally handicapped. They may even fight it—in one of two ways.

The first way is for women to demand equal rights *within* the ruling class—higher education, professional jobs, separate property, cabinet posts, and so on. A large dose of ruling class women's emancipation was necessary to get Margaret Thatcher—university educated, a wealthy lawyer, and the legal wife of a divorced man—where she is now. A hundred and fifty years ago she would probably have been a posh kept woman running a political salon. *That* kind of emancipation is about sharing class power, not giving it up.

Any of the women who struggled for autonomy in the nineteenth century did not think of working class women's needs as being in the same category as their own at all. Florence Nightingale once wrote that women's minds were stunted because so much of their time was spent in the company of 'servants and children'. Presumably parlour maids and skivvies just did not count as women!

The philanthropic women who broke away from the deadliness of drawing-room lives to do charitable work visiting the homes of the poor exercised their talents in persuading working class women by bribes (outdoor relief) and threats (the workhouse) to adopt the standards of homemaking which were taken care of by servants in their own homes. They trained 'biblewomen' who told the married market women of London's Soho when they complained of their husbands that a wife who 'sits about dirty and idle, and never has a clean hearth or a nice cup of tea for him when he comes in from his work, need not wonder if he goes to the public-house, and spends there in one night what would keep the family for a week.'

Of course, it is always possible for individual ruling class women to link their own oppression to the specific oppression of their classes of women, and see women's interests in general as concerned with all of these. Josephine Butler's work with prostitutes, and the founding of organisations for all working women, were also part of the movement in the nineteenth century. But even from there it is a very large step for a ruling class woman to realise that to get real liberation for all women it is necessary to overthrow the capitalist system and abolish the privileges of class altogether.

If Margaret Thatcher is a token or symbol of anything, it is of the emancipation of the ruling class woman, who has proved that she is equal to the task of threatening the whole world with destruction in the interests of maintaining the capitalist system.

Norah Carlin.



Indira Gandhi



Golda Meir

# Pre-school education is there a future?

In early December 1981, Renee Short, MP, asked a question in the House of Commons about the future of nursery education. Cuts are already taking place and Michael Heseltine's plans to cut central Government

funding will mean even further cut backs in the services provided by local boroughs. Yet the service is already far from adequate—  
as Anna Paczuska explains.

Statistics for the past few years show that there has been an amazing expansion in pre-school education. The proportion of three-year-olds receiving nursery education in England doubled between 1974 and 1978 and continues to grow. The proportion of three- and four-year-olds in school increased from less than one in ten, ten years ago, to one in five today. In 1980, for the first time ever, the number of pupils in nursery classes exceeded the number of children under five in infant classes.

It would be easy to conclude from all this that the past decade has seen an enthusiastic implementation of the Plowden Report, which in 1967 argued for a major expansion of nur-

sery education sufficient to provide for all children whose parents wanted places for them. Yet while modern educational arguments about the needs of the pre-school child to acquire basic skills in the company of other children have undoubtedly affected educationalists, parents and politicians alike, they did not take place in a vacuum. Another powerful pressure for pre-school provision has been coming from mothers themselves..

The economic crisis, the demands of the labour market, increasing numbers of single parent families, and the legacy of the women's liberation movement, which gave us a more tolerant attitude to working mothers, have all combined

to create a situation in which large numbers of women with young children now go out to work. Many reports have shown the increase in the numbers of women going out to work over the past decade—both full time and part time. The majority of these have been women with young children. The proportion is biggest in the inner cities where it is estimated that half of all mothers with children under five go out to work.

So at the same time as educationalists were arguing that more under fives should be at schools, parents of under fives were themselves seeking care for their children during working hours.

But the two forces did not act in unison. The state's conception of pre-school education was evolved in the context of a society where few mothers went out to work. Education for the under-fives was developed as a way of introducing children to school on a part-time basis, using fulltime mums as a back up service. The emphasis was firmly on part-time education. Local boroughs which pioneered nursery education often stressed their reluctance to provide full time education for under fives for fear that mothers would then use nursery schools as 'dumping grounds' for their children while they went out to work. In that way nursery education was based on an unreal estimation of the needs, aspirations and possibilities of mothers of young children.

Today many nursery classes start children on a part-time basis and they may go full time after one term. Young children nevertheless fill all the available places. But increasingly many children are both delivered and collected, not by their mothers, but by childminders. The number of childminders has increased from some 32,000 in 1977 to over 43,000 in 1980. It is thought that there has been a decline in unregistered minders, but for obvious reasons, it is difficult to be sure.

Most childminders belong to

an association which fixes wage levels, determines conditions and may provide cover when a childminder is sick. That does not mean, however, that they cater for all who need them. Associations mean high wages, which not all mums can afford. Some local boroughs have stepped in with 'subventions'—systems for subsidising childminder's fees for low income mothers. But that service is rare and still not widespread enough. More disturbing still are the findings of a recent small survey in some London boroughs which showed that while most mothers of young children who wanted to go out to work were black or Asian, over a third of childminders would not take black or Asian children.

This leaves us with the grim reality that while better off white mums can afford stable childminders to see their offspring safely through playgroups and nursery school, for many children the pre-school years are a hotch potch of harassed relatives and frequent changes of childminders and playgroups.

All this is compounded by divisions between the under-fives workers themselves. Professionally there is a distinction between 'care' as provided by minders and day care nurseries, and 'education' as provided by nursery classes and playgroups. The activities that go on inside any one area all appear similar—but they are distinguishable to the onlooker (anxious mum) by the fact that some are full time, some are part time, some want you there all the time and some don't.

That's bewildering enough. But then find out that the nursery assistant (NNEB trained for two years) earns half of what the nursery teacher does (teacher trained for three or four years) and ponder on it. Only capitalism can make the hazy distinction between 'care' and 'education' worth £3,000 per year. Meanwhile the children and the mothers await a comprehensive scheme based on providing for a need, not abstract definitions.

## 'Children learn through play'

Traditionally women have been wary of making demands for workplace nurseries. The reason was obvious: if the boss controls your nursery he also controls you.

But one area where workplace nurseries have grown is in colleges and universities. They aim to care for the children of students but usually include the children of lecturers and of the local community as well.

The playgroup at North London College was set up three years ago. I spoke to two of the workers:

'The students we provide for are mainly working class and single parents. We have 24 children on the books at the moment.

'Children vary in how long they take to settle in. Some do it easily. Some take days or even weeks. But its not just the children that have to be ready for coming. We had a child whose mother took him away after a few weeks saying 'It's not what I wanted'. In that case the mother wasn't ready to be separated

from the child. She said she could provide facilities at home. But we provide facilities that few can provide at home. Sand play, water play, and finger painting and mixing with other children—all important activities. They all help to get children ready for school.

'We don't teach numbers or letters here. Playschool is about play. Children learn through play and playschool is a creative place.

'Not all the parents understand this at first, but they find out as we go along. It is difficult sometimes trying to listen to children all talking at once.

'We differ from a nursery school or a nursery class. We earn less money for a start. Schools tend to be more formal and are often geared directly to the schools to which they are attached.

'We're also better than day centres because we have a better staff ratio, although we're open shorter hours.'



## NURSERY EDUCATION

Pupils under five in  
state nursery schools and  
nursery classes:

1950	146,000
1960	179,000
1970	261,000
1980	429,000

## LOCAL AUTHORITY PROVISION

Pupils under five in state nursery  
education:

Birmingham	6,376
Liverpool	4,539
Manchester	5,423
Kent	1,508
Somerset	153
Nottinghamshire	8,967
Dorset	601
Inner London	18,495
Outer London	22,047
Newcastle	2,197
Trafford	528



# The singer the Nazis hated

THE DEATH of the singer Lotte Lenya at the age of 81 last month marked the end of the last link with the songs and music of Berlin of the twenties and early thirties.

Lenya was the central pivot of several of the musical plays of her husband, the composer Kurt Weill and the communist writer Bertolt Brecht. The plays with which she was identified—*The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, *Happy End*, and especially the *Threepenny Opera*, where she played the part of the prostitute Jenny—were not simply

entertainments. They told stories of the poverty of people's lives, the corruption of the police, the power of the large companies and trusts.

Set in real or imagined fantasy worlds—among gangsters in Chicago, or the Victorian East End underworld, or the city of Mahagonny—they were immensely popular. They showed the

hypocrisy of religion, and how the misery of life led to brutalisation whether that took the form of drinking into oblivion, gangland crime or prostitution. Those 'low' forms of life were merely a reflection of the lowness of capitalism itself.

That meant that the productions themselves, and the individuals involved in them, made many enemies. The theatrical establishment attacked some of the works as too dogmatic politically, or obscure. More seriously, the severe depression of the late 20s and 30s saw increasing polarisation in Germany. Although many workers and unemployed were looking to socialist solutions, the fascists were also growing.

Lenya described how the fascists attacked them: 'There were disturbances of course. In "*The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*" there were endless riots with Nazis picketing the theatre'. That was in 1930. The rise of Hitler in early 1933 drove them out of Germany altogether. 'We left Berlin in 1933. The whole avant-garde of Berlin was on the black-list of the Nazis, and so the exit was a very rapid one, because we got the warning that the next day they were coming round to collect the 'Kultur Bolshevists' as the Nazis called us; so we left in the middle of the night.'

Lenya, Brecht and Weill were all exiled, which meant the end of their work together. Lenya and Weill settled in New York while Brecht stayed in Europe and eventually returned to Berlin in 1945. Lenya's career flourished again after Weill's death when she recorded many of the old songs, and appeared in some stage revivals.

Her role in politics in Germany was not direct. Many years later she said: 'Even if you live in a time like the twenties, which was a wild and unruly time, if you are a young actress you are hardly aware of these things; you are so anxious to make a career and to do what you want to do most of your life'. But the role of the theatre in which she was involved was highly political and Lenya was identified with it. Her distinctive voice and the songs she sang became familiar to thousands of socialists.

Especially interesting to socialists today are the songs Lenya sang about women. Her role of Jenny in the *Threepenny Opera* is one that she played even quite late on in life, because she was so successful in it. The abuse that women suffer under capitalism comes through in many of the songs.

Although Lenya was never a committed socialist, the songs that she sang explained the role of women and the need for socialism to thousands of people.

**Cathy Miller**



# WOMENS HEALTH

## It's a bit frightening...

*THE brain operation, lobotomy, has been controversial for a long time now. Many people believe it is used as a form of control to get rid of 'difficult' social problems. Margaret is a Yorkshire woman, brought up in an orphanage, who has been a single parent since her marriage to a sadistic husband broke up. She had the operation in 1975 and has since suffered severe side effects. Mandy Farrar told us her story*

Before long she became entrenched in all the problems a woman alone, pregnant, with three young children faces. In desperation she turned to her doctor who prescribed large quantities of 'purple heart' tablets. Margaret became addicted and soon was undergoing 'aversion therapy' in a mental hospital—a brutal form of treatment which was followed by more of the same tablets.

As a means of escape, she would commit herself to a mental hospital for four weeks of the year, but even as a voluntary patient she could not refuse the treatment given to her—seven types of drug and electro shock-treatment (ECT).

She became angry and aggressive towards anyone who made life difficult for her or her children—the national assistance who refused clothing grants, the gas board who regularly cut off the gas, the TV rental firm who'd take away the TV. She said 'People have told me life is what you make it. I agree every bit for those who have had a good start in life, but without soil you cannot grow grass'.

In her twenty years as a single parent, Margaret received three convictions for common assault and was finally recommended for a brain operation. No-one questioned whether it was overly surprising for a woman bringing up five children alone, beset by money problems, to lash out. No-one asked might it be better to relieve her of financial and social pressure before choosing such drastic surgery.

Instead, two holes were bored into her skull and then two nylon balls were implanted with cement. She was strapped down and reduced to a woman broken by fear while long probes were guided down deep into the base of her brain. One set of electrode tipped needles probe the brain to tell the surgeon he is in the right place and a second set is inserted to burn away millions of cells in an area about two to four millimetres across.

As far as much of the medical profession is concerned, this operation is a remarkable surgical breakthrough creating an instant new personality. The question here is, who decides who is to have their personality

changed?

There are on average 400 operations of this nature carried out every year in Britain. Walter Freeman, an American neurosurgeon said, 'Lobotomy has proved to be the ideal operation in crowded state mental hospitals with a shortage of everything except patients'.

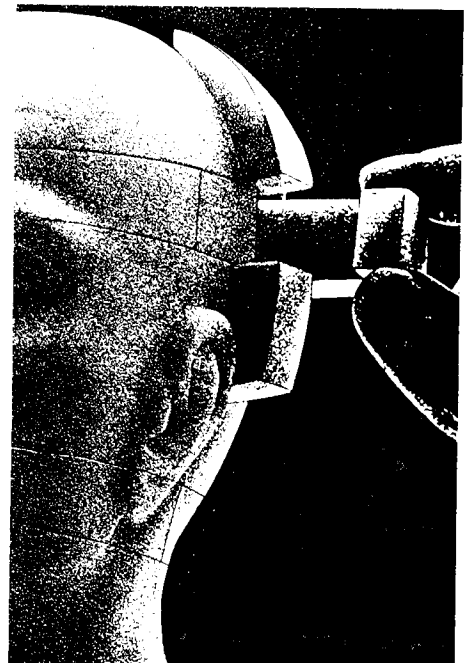
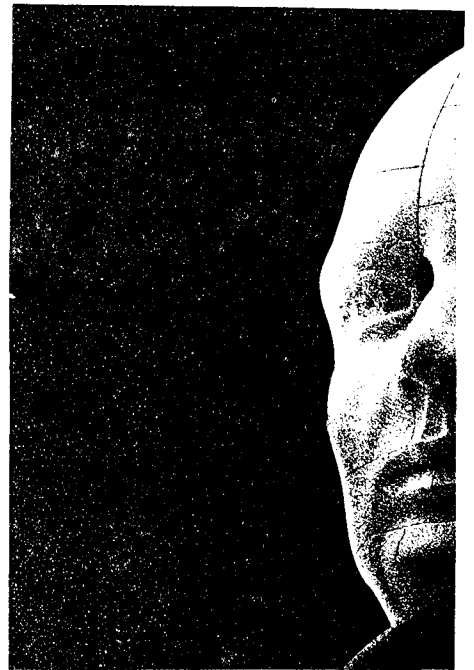
Patients who receive lobotomies are, as often as not working class women and black, who are considered chronic and difficult to manage. Freeman wrote: 'lobotomised people seldom come into conflict with the law, precisely because they lack the imagination to think up crimes and the energy to perpetuate them' shortly after the Detroit riots in 1967. As for women, the operation is more successful for them because it is much easier for them to assume their role as housewives.

In Britain, one woman in six will spend some time in a mental hospital. 'Mental illness is a reductive smear that obscures and defiles the despairing cries of the downtrodden and exploited against an alienating and dehumanised society' (A Clare 'Psychiatry in dissent').

So now five years later, Margaret is having to come to terms with her 'new' personality. She is partly paralysed down one side. She finds conversation difficult and cannot concentrate for any length of time. Her mouth drops open involuntarily. She has muscular trouble which makes writing difficult. She loses her balance and has aged ten years. She has also attempted suicide twice in five years.

Margaret at 45 will never work again—even without the side effects, ex-mental patients are written off the employment list. She is now living on a meagre non-contributory allowance. As she said at a recent conference in Bradford 'If they'd have cut off my arm or my leg, people would be to see what has happened. As it is .....

*Margaret is taking legal action over the operation. She is also writing a book about her experiences. Donations are welcome to: Mandy Farrar, 6 The Grove, Idle, Bradford 10, West Yorkshire. Tel 611963. She also has an hour long video film about Margaret and the operation which she is willing to show at meetings to raise money.*



# REVIEWS

## The life and times of Rosie the Riveter

The title of the film *Rosie the Riveter* comes from an American World War II propaganda song intended to encourage Rosie to leave the kitchen and enter the world of war production. Rosie could be an engineer, ship-builder, welder, fitter, lathe worker, foundry worker or work in any of the heavy industries normally reserved for men.

And over three million Rosie's did leave the kitchen sink to train for skilled industrial jobs. We see them on wartime newsreel with full safety gear—shoes, helmets, gloves and vizors welding the ships destined to carry men and arms to the war across the Atlantic. We see employment agencies canvassing door to door to convince women that the steel cutting which makes the parts of an aeroplane is no different to the fabric cutting which makes a dress.

For all these women work took on a meaning far beyond the low-paid drudgery their sex usually destined them to. One woman described the pleasure she got seeing a ship, which she had helped build, stand the test of launching. Another describes the pride in her work: 'Work makes life sweet.'

The war allowed women to escape from their secondary economic role, but they did not escape housework and childcare. Many found themselves fulfilling their traditional role after a day (or night) shift in the foundry.

But the war though did not last for ever—neither did women's elevated status. The war had offered women a chance to participate in a part of life normally denied them, and their contracts made sure that it lasted no longer. Most women were laid off without a murmur of resistance when the victorious troops returned home. The propaganda machine went into reverse and told women that their duty was to their men, their homes and families. The veteran soldier was given 'super superiority' in the pecking order for jobs. Workers no longer comrades



in arms, but competitors for jobs. Women retreated to the hearth and low-paid domestic labour. 'I worked longer hours, did heavier work and was worse paid doing dish-washing than I was when I did skilled welding,' says one of the women. The wheel had turned full circle: women were given equality because

it suited the economy.

Today, it has no suggestions about how 'Rosie the Riveter' could keep her job. *Rosie the Riveter* is a very lively film, lovely to watch with newsreel from the period and interviews with those very same women but it is a bit disappointing because it is satisfied with

reporting history and misses the lessons for workers fighting to make their own.

It is now showing at some independent cinemas, and is available for hire for colleges or socials from: The Other Cinema, 79 Wardour Street, London W1V 3TH, 01-734 8508, price £35. *Mary Willaims*

## Margaret: Princess Without A Cause

Willi Frischauer

Sphere, 95p

As a habitual royals-watcher, I was delighted to get hold of this book. The feeling didn't last. After all, the main enjoyments of royals-watching are: a) turning up new scandal or

b) grasping hard fact to be used in future anti-royal propaganda.

This book has very little of either. Willi Frischauer, writing like an up-market Nigel Dempster, manages to convey an impression of honest and real inside knowledge of royal affairs.

But he never squeals. So, as well as being difficult to read, the book is frustratingly unquotable. There is nothing 'from the horse's

mouth'. ('Actually, Princess Anne figures very little in it.') What's more, the author is regrettably sympathetic to poor little arty Maggie, who really wanted to be Queen herself.

So for me it's back to Private Eye's Silvie Krin (of Born to be Queen fame). Wait a minute, Nigel Dempster himself has just produced *Margaret: an Unfulfilled Life ... Where there's life, there's hope!*

**Scars upon my heart**  
**Selected by Catherine**  
**Reilly**  
**Virago, £3.75**

Few people read poetry. That's mostly because of the way they were taught it in school—a boring rhyme of words that had to be learned by heart, and stumbled over out loud in class. And that's the end of it—for life.

But there is some beautiful poetry. It's been used, and still is, as a powerful, evocative political weapon. It can convey emotion more sharply in a few lines than a thousand lines of prose.

This collection of poems takes its name from one written by Vera Brittain (the author of Testament of Youth) to her brother, who was away fighting in the first world war. All the poems come from that time. That, and the fact they are written by women, is the basis for the selection.

So there are extremes of political opinion. There's the patriotism of Jessie Pope who, in the spirit of the women who gave white feathers of cowardice to men who would not fight, chides such a man:

**THE CALL**

*Who's for the trench—  
 Are you, my laddie?  
 Who'll follow French—  
 Will you, my laddie?  
 Who's fretting to begin,  
 Who's going out to win?  
 And who wants to save his skin—  
 Do you, my laddie?*

*Who's for the khaki suit—  
 Are you my laddie?  
 Who longs to change and  
 and shoot—  
 Do you, my laddie?  
 Who's keen on getting fit,  
 Who means to show his  
 grit,  
 And who'd rather wait a  
 bit—  
 Would you, my laddie?*

*Who'll earn the Empire's  
 thanks—*

*Will you, my laddie?  
 Who'll swell the victor's  
 ranks—*

*Will you, my laddie?  
 When that procession  
 comes,  
 Banners and rolling drums—  
 Who'll stand and bite his  
 thumbs—*

*Will you, my laddie?*

And there's Helen Hamilton, who turns the attack on women like Jessie Pope:

**THE JINGO WOMAN**

*Jingo-woman  
 (How I dislike you!)  
 Dealer in white feathers,  
 Insulter, self-appointed,  
 Of all the men you meet,  
 Not dressed in uniform,  
 When to your mind,  
 (A sorry mind),  
 They should be,  
 The test?*

*The judgement of your eye,  
 That wild, infuriate eye,  
 Whose glance, so you  
 declare,*

*Reveals unerringly,  
 Who's good for military  
 service.*

*Oh! exasperating woman,  
 I'd like to wring your neck,  
 I really would!  
 You make all women  
 seem such duffers!*

The short introduction helps to explain some of this political background, which it is important to know because it is such a mixture. The poems themselves tell the best history about life in those times:

**NOTHING TO REPORT**

*One minute we was  
 laughin', me an' Ted,  
 The next, he lay beside me  
 grinnin'—dead.  
 'There's nothin' to report,'  
 the papers said.*

Margaret Renn

**Women's work: women's ill-health**

**Workers' Educational Association Studies for Trade Unionists**  
**70p from WEA, 9 Upper Berkeley Street, London W1**

This pamphlet sets out what health hazards women face at work by going through the sorts of jobs women do. Good for information, but not on what to do about health and safety at work.

**Workplace Nurseries**

**NALGO (Research Department, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1)**

The booklet includes arguments for workplace nurseries, how to negotiate for one, the standards that are needed and a guide to costing. There is also a short history of how one workplace nursery came into being.

**Rights of Working Parents**

**NALGO (Research Department, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1)**

Details of maternity agreements in both the public and private sector, and also in Europe. It explains the law regarding maternity rights, and comments on how the cuts are affecting working mothers in particular.

**Organising a Creche**

**NALGO (Research Department, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1)**

A guide to organising a creche for trade union meetings or conference. The pamphlet says why you should do it, what you need, and includes a model registration form.

**DEPO-PROVERA: a report by the campaign against Depo-provera**  
**£1.50, Campaign against DP, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1**

What it is—and how to fight it. The price is high to subsidise sales of the pamphlet overseas, and Professor Peter Huntingford is supporting the campaign's call for a complete ban on the use of DP.

**Squatters Handbook**  
**Advisory Service for squatters**  
**40p from ASS, 2 St Pauls Road, London N1**

An updated guide on squatting rights—as of August 1981.

**What about the gay workers? Campaign for Homosexual Equality**

**£1 from CHE, BM CHE, London WC1**

Includes both case histories of discrimination against gay workers and a survey of trade union policies on gays. The booklet emphasises that 'your union is by far the best weapon you have against discrimination: it is vital that you are a member of it *before* discrimination occurs'.



*Most homosexuals still remain 'hidden' today.*

**Gay workers: Trade unions and the law**

**NCCL**  
**£1.—/ FROM NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Road, London WC1**

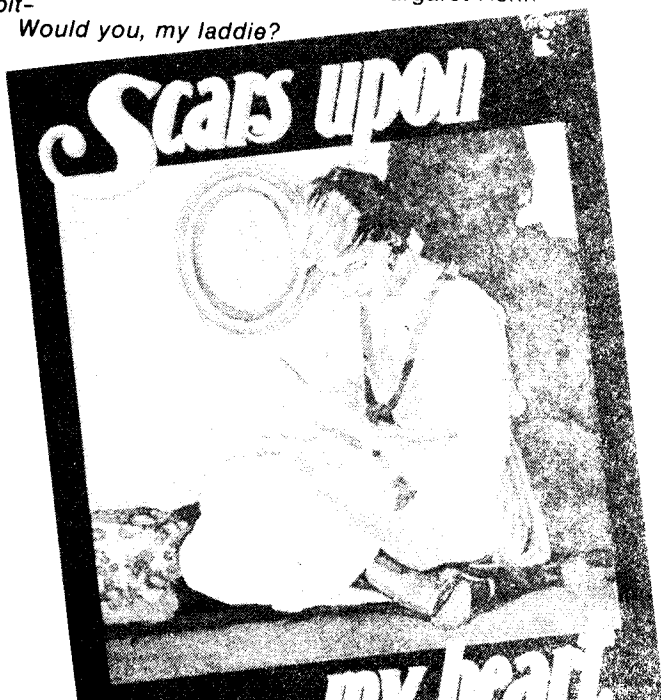
Mostly the experience of fighting discrimination against gays through Industrial Tribunals hasn't been very happy. It includes some interesting facts—such as, two-thirds of unions with policies on gay rights at work have adopted them in the face of opposition from national executives. Not much on how to fight to win, more about legal precedents.

**Disabled gays guide**

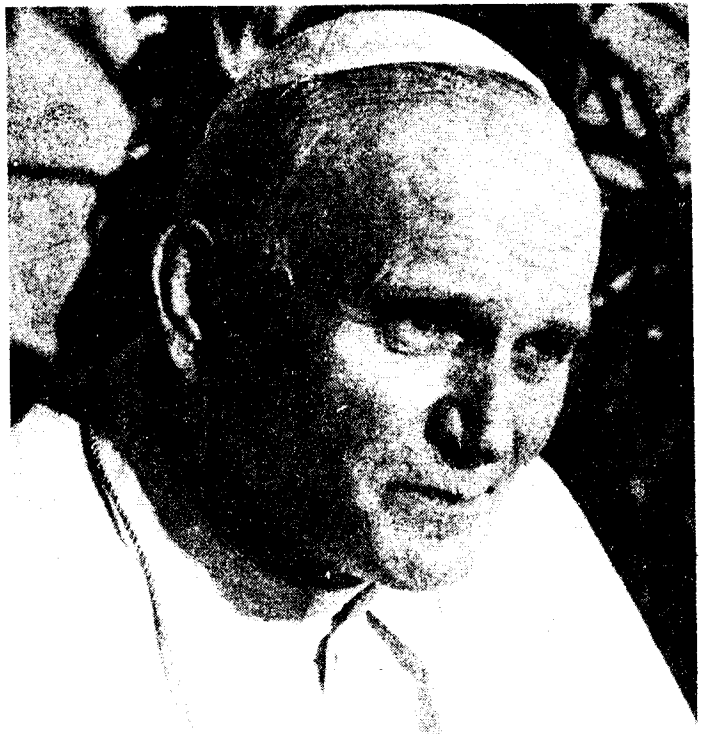
**GEMMA**  
**35p from Gemma, BM Box 5700, London WC 1N 3XX**

Some useful addresses, telephone numbers and access information for physically handicapped gay women and men.

New pamphlets are published every month, by all sorts of organisations, which contain a good deal of helpful information. If you're fighting over an issue at work and need the facts at your fingertips here's where to find them. You can write direct for copies (with money), but why not get your union branch to order some—then other members will get the chance to see them too.



# LETTERS



## Sexism at sea

*Dear Womens Voice,*

The following is an extract from 'Your Navy' which I thought WV readers might find amusing:

'Members of the WRNS are regarded very much as 'women' both by the Navy generally and Service in particular. The Navy's women are not expected to become 'he-women', even when carrying out maintenance duties on a helicopter on a windswept runway at Culdrose in Cornwall! The WRNS like to retain a certain degree of sophistication in the face of male bravado and they have no role as combatants and do not, therefore, go to sea in warships

'It has been proved on a number of occasions that, generally speaking, men are better at living in confined restricted areas than women, and are also more gregarious. It is not easy on a warship to shut oneself away from one's comrades—and often women like to have time on their own.

'Make-up is allowed, and even welcomed but must not be too ostentatious—Punk Rockers would not really be acceptable! The golden rule is a girl should look smart, attractive and be well made-up. In other words she must look feminine!'

**Clare Wilson  
Bristol**

## No sex in heaven—official!

*Dear Womens Voice,*

Did you see the Pope's statement about sex in the after-life? According to the Pope there will be men and women but no procreation and therefore no sex.

How does the Pope know? But since the Pope is infallible, or so we're told by the Catholic

Church, presumably this latest statement is now an article of faith.

What else will be banned in Heaven? So far as we know there's no sex. Will there be drinking?

**Jennifer Haig  
Hartlepool**

## DIRTY DISHES

*Dear Womens Voice,*

1 December 1981 saw the first edition of a new, monthly,

alternative newspaper for women in Haringey, North London. We aim to cover a wide area and range of issues, news and information (including the area of fiction, poetry, short stories etc).

Our idea is for material to come from women themselves, and to include articles on unemployment, lesbianism, work, health etc.

We do not want to restrict ourselves to local boundaries, and our first issue included articles from surrounding boroughs. We aim to go further afield.

The deadlines are the 20th of each month, and the next issue will be out by mid-January, costing 20p. The subscription rates are £1 for four issues.

Donations are more than welcome—we need them to survive. Offers of equipment are also needed. Please support us.

**Carolle Bery  
Valida Reed  
Dirty Dishes, 40 Turnpike Lane,  
London N8.**

## The new right in disguise

*Dear Womens Voice,*

I think it's about time Women's Voice began to take the question of the SDP seriously. I'm sure your readers will all agree that in many ways it's just the Tories under a new name. But there's much more to it than that.

First of all, it's beginning to look as though the SDP will win the next election with a real majority or at least with enough support to form a coalition with the Tory wets. Now what will that mean for women's rights?

Roy Jenkins has a reputation as the Home Secretary who helped through the 1967 Abortion Act and the Sexual Offences Act which legalised gay activity for the over 21s. But Shirley Williams supports all the anti-abortion groups.

She's just what you'd expect an ex-right wing careerist leader Roman Catholic to be. But of course David Steel, the other leader breaking the mould, drew up the 1967 Act and pushed it through. Which attitude will be the SDP's? I think the answer is quite clear. Whatever radicalism some members of the SDP might once have represented, it's now gone. Anyone who thinks the SDP leadership is frightening should look at the membership. We're constantly being told that the SDP membership, the supporters of the Alliance, are new to politics. They're people who haven't been in parties before. They're people who are fed up with the way things have gone on for years etc etc. and of course all you have to do is look at them to see that they're

mainly middle class, have mortgages, drive big cars etc.

They sound like something else we heard a lot about 10 years ago in America. Then Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew appealed to what they called the 'silent majority' of people who were fed up with the old politics, fed up with the old ideas of the Democratic Party and the sort of politics which had dominated America since the New Deal.

Of course the silent majority was of course a way of disguising a vicious right-wing backlash which is still going on in Reagan's America.

The SDP are just the new right in disguise. And that is bad news for women and for womens rights.

**Barbara Reynolds  
Southampton**

# MORE BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

*Dear Womens Voice,*

You asked for more information on good children's books. Here are some which I think are good. The first two are Picture Puffins.

Michael Foreman has published two I know of. They are 'The Dinosaurs' and 'War and Peas' —both cheap paperbacks. Both could also be termed 'socialist'. The first tells the tale of a man (a capitalist?—he 'orders' people to make him a rocket to visit a star) who is responsible for the terrible state of the world—this is portrayed in illustrations as dirty factories pouring forth smoke. He goes off in his rocket and returns to find that the dinosaurs have made the place beautiful again and this time he is not allowed to own any of it ('not even a flower'), because the earth is for everyone to share.

'War and Peas' has a similar theme. It tells the story of King Lian and his people who are trying to persuade the Fat King of another country to give them food but are forced to flee. The Fat Army is defeated by its own greed (it is weighed down with supplies visually portrayed as giant cream cakes and so on). And King Lian's people will get food after all because the tanks ploughed the soil while the birds dropped seeds.

'The Ten Women Bicycle' by Tricia Vira could be interpreted as radical feminist but it does emphasise the importance of womens work. It starts with no women in a factory and ends up with a workers co-operative. It is suitable for older children and can be obtained through Sheba for £1.25.

'The Breadtime Story' by Adela Turin and Margheria Saccara (IS BN 0904613015) also shows the development of the women in the story from sandwich makers for their husbands to working together with the men in the co-operatives. It is available from the Writers and Readers Co-operative, although it's a bit expensive—hardback, £3.95

Alvis Scott  
Stirling

# DIRTY LINEN

While the Duke narrowly missed causing a full jumbo jet to crash near Heathrow, down on the ground the Queen lost a few hundred pounds in a crash at the Savoy.

This year she is not only Queen of England, but also Lady Owner of the Year (of racehorses).

As a reward, she was to be given an engraved cut-glass rose bowl, worth £700.

Unfortunately when her racing manager went along to the Savoy to pick up the bowl, the master of ceremonies dropped it and smashed it into a thousand pieces.

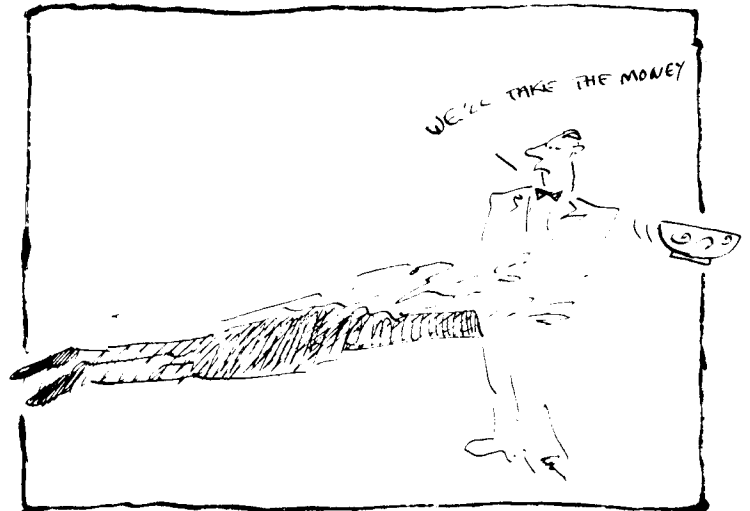
Somebody had had the foresight to prepare two of the costly bowls, just in case of a disaster like this. But the other one had already been broken while it was being polished.



If you had any doubt about the 'neutrality' of psychiatrists, you may like to know about a report just published in the journal of the International Association of Social Psychiatry.

The report's authors, two professors and a researcher, claim to have found a 'cure' for 'fanatical women's libbers'. According to the *Daily Mirror*, which seems thoroughly to approve of the report, psychiatrists have 'treated several women from extremist groups' and 'helped them to live alongside men again'.

The reason for man-hating, according to the report, is a dominant mother and a placid father whom



Every party has its misfits. Sylvia Guard, the barmaid at Wimbledon Conservative Club, quite put everyone off their food and drink when she and some mates got boozed at a Tory ladies outing to the Isle of Wight.

A display of red knickers

and blue language by Sylvia's friends made one lady complain of indigestion. Others wouldn't drink the wine after Sylvia had stuck flowers in it, explaining, in the press version: 'F... your wine. My f..... flowers need a drink.'

But it's the ingratitude of it all that seems really to have upset the Tory ladies. As they told the industrial tribunal where Sylvia was appealing against her sacking, she had only been let on the trip as a 'privilege'.

Rochester Conservative Club, on the other hand, would probably have never let women out on their own in the first place. They recently refused membership to Jeanne Brinton, a Tory county councillor, on the grounds that she is a woman.

they blame for not protecting them. One woman apparently had it so bad that she 'could not even talk to men who seemed authoritative'.

Maybe she just *wouldn't* talk to them. And why should a child want Daddy to be dominant?—isn't that a social value? And what about the experience of women's oppression as a cause of 'man-hating'?

If you feel like throwing copies of this report at its authors' heads, they'll just count that as a symptom too. Clearly, they've retreated into an enclosed fantasy world, and developed extreme cunning in bolstering a sense of their own academic authority.

The Football Association does not allow mixed-sex football. It bans girls from the youth league. And it doesn't even allow mixed games to be played on its pitches, as the London radio station, LBC, discovered recently when it tried to field a mixed game for a charity match.

Prince Charles has been making some smutty little jokes recently about the Royal Morning Sickness, claiming it as 'all his own work'. But he doesn't say if Di has to give the Queen a sick note when she misses out on the various jamborees that the Royal Family count as work.

# SANDRA



## JANUARY 1972 Gill Brown looks back

January 1972: unemployment stood at around 1 million. 800 workers at Fisher Bendix near Liverpool voted to occupy their factory after threat of closure. Manchester engineering workers were to occupy their factories—one of their demands was speedier introduction of equal pay legislation. Women in Fakenham, Norfolk occupied their factory. In January Socialist Worker wrote:

*1972 will be a decisive year. The Tories are determined to pursue their anti working class policies and will be further aided by the injustices of the Industrial Relations Act. Only a fight can defeat them.*

Over the next 12 months I shall be looking at some of the struggles that took place not

just in Britain but around the world.



The Fair Rents Act was a major attack on tenants' rights. Among other things its aim was to force up rents for council tenants. I remember a packed meeting in Harlow Town Hall, where Clay Cross councillor David Skinner urged Harlow's Labour Councillors and tenants to ignore the act and to build a massive campaign of opposition. A standing room only meeting enthusiastically welcomed him. Labour councillors made magnificent speeches about how they were going to take on the Tories. They promised to show the way.

In early January Harlow became the first Labour Council to give in and erase the act. Rents in Harlow have since gone through the roof. Sadly the experience of Harlow was to be repeated around the country but not before some places had fought and some had won important concessions. Finally the Clay Cross councillors were left alone to fight, barred from office and surcharged, deserted

by the Labour Party who promised to change the law when they came into government in 1974.



Friday afternoon January 28 Labour MP Willie Hamilton introduced a private member's bill in parliament to improve the status of women. Neanderthal types such as Tory MP Ronald Bell who talked out the bill said *'Of course women are inferior. They are second class citizens and ought to be treated as such.'*

The bill was a modest one which had support from all parties and organisations ranging from Women's Institutes to Women's Liberation Groups. Sally Oppenheim recently better

known for her women's place is in the home views spoke in support of Hamilton's bill.



Ten years ago as the workers began to fight the Tory government so we saw the spectacular rise of the Women's and Gay Liberation Movements. The Gay Liberation Movement was to publish its first manifesto in May. In March Angela Davis was to go on trial in the US. On January 29 British troops in Northern Ireland opened fire on demonstrators leaving 13 of them dead. 1972 started as it meant to carry on. Groups of workers were beginning to flex their muscles and that confidence spread to groups throughout society.





# why I became a socialist



Wyn Turley has lived and worked in Cambridge all her life. Married with two kids, she is a senior shop steward at Pyes Telecommunications. Many experiences brought Wyn towards socialist politics, but it was her involvement in her union at work that cemented her ideas.

My parents are both middle class Tories. There's no doubt about it, they were very peculiar when I was young. They didn't like the Council estate up the road, we lived in our own house, and they wanted me to stick with 'nice people'. It wasn't the done thing to mix with the kids from the council estate. Well my parents were fairly strict, but I was a bit of a rebel, I always was.

I didn't like school and I didn't get on very well there. I thought their authority was a load of rubbish. I've always fought against 'tradition'.

Me and my mum used to have terrible rows. She had me put in care when I was 15, she just couldn't control me. It was a horrible experience. I went to a convent place which was run by nuns. When you think of nuns you think of them praying and doing nice things for the poor unfortunates. Not these nuns, they were vicious bastards. They used to lock us up, stick needles in us—the lot. We weren't allowed out at night—we weren't allowed to do anything at all.

I was coming up for 17 when I got out of there. I went to work at Shire Hall (local government). The way things were run there was terrible. I don't like any form of authority, and I didn't like working in amongst it either. I left there because I wanted to get married and they wouldn't let me have time off for my honeymoon!

I really quietened down when I had the kids, you have to really. I didn't want to have kids. It was a complete accident. I was on the pill, then the doctors found out that I was the one per cent that can't take the pill!

I didn't mind the sex part—but the kids! Being at home with screaming kids and dirty nappies all day is a killer. That's what broke my marriage up eventually—being at home, literally tied there. I couldn't stand it. Although I remarried 18 months ago.

Then I got a job at Pyes. I really needed the money, I was desperate. With two young kids the demands are so pressing, food and clothes ... I just couldn't keep up with it. Every penny that came in was counted for.

I got involved with lots of other women, mostly single parents. We used to talk about doing things, about social security mostly, but nothing was done. We didn't know where to start.

When I started at Pyes I was told by my immediate boss that there was a union there but I didn't need to join it and if anyone forced me to go and see him about it. After two months there I joined the union, the Transport and General Workers Union.

It was nearly all women in my department and in the whole factory, they don't employ many men. Pyes had a 'family firm' image which they like to keep up. They have a terrible bonus system there—a group one—what it does is sets the women against each other. I used to know women who used to go into the office and report other women for not working hard enough. It was awful, I couldn't believe it.

*'People say 'but what can we do'. I say to them look at Lee Jeans and Gardners. We have to fight all the time ... We have to be solid.'*

It was a brand new factory. It had good toilets, a nursery, and ran a good bus service for workers. They used to give their employees a Christmas dinner every year. A real 'family firm'.

I got quite interested in the union when I joined. It was something to get my teeth into. At that time the union was very bad. There was only one section, the stores, where the union was 100 per cent and everything centred around that. At that time the union wasn't even recognised.

Really there was no activity on the shop-floor. The shop stewards did nothing and apart from the stores the union never got people involved.

It was at this point that I was made shop steward. The other steward left and I was

voted in. I had to find out everything myself.

I went on a shop stewards course and the bloke that was running it got me interested in general politics. He was the person to introduce me to the Socialist Workers Party. I started getting the paper and going to meetings and I went on a couple of demos. I found that I related to what they were saying, and I agreed.

The union started to grow. When I joined there were only six members in my section, now there's 30. We started having members meetings during working hours, that had never happened before. We gave out leaflets and made sure that people knew exactly what was going on. I think that's really important.

The management wouldn't give us recognition, but when Phillips bought over Pyes they recognised us. That's when things changed—they lost their 'family image'. You can't have that with redundancies. We don't get our Christmas dinner anymore and the nursery has gone.

On the brighter side the side the union's figures have trebled in three years. I think it's basically because people are informed and spoken to individually. People realise that the only way they can find anything out, or change things, is to join the union.

But morale is really low. Everyone has redundancies on their minds. It's the same everywhere and we've just voted to accept the company's five per cent wage offer. The thing is everybody hates Thatcher, I never meet anybody who'll admit to voting for her now!

There's one thing on my mind. If we have redundancies we'd have to organise against them. People say 'but what can we do'. I say to them look at Lee Jeans and Gardners. We have to fight all the time, everyone or you don't win. We have to be solid.

Becoming a socialist is a gradual process. You don't suddenly wake up one morning and say you're a socialist. It's everything together. I think it's when I was on social security with the kids, the way they treated me was awful. And the union changed me. When I saw the state of the trade union movement! The leadership is a joke. We have to build rank and file leadership—that's the way it should be.

**WHERE  
WE  
STAND**

**INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION**

The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

**REVOLUTION NOT REFORM**

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

**THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD**

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers. The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based on councils of workers delegates and a workers' militia. At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system. Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

**INTERNATIONALISM**

The struggle for socialism is part of a world-wide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries.

We oppose racialism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls.

We support the fight of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence.

We support all genuine national liberation movements.

The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. Russia, China and Eastern Europe are not socialist but state capitalist. We support the struggles of workers in these countries against the bureaucratic ruling class.

We are for real social, economic and political equality of women.

We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against homosexuals.

**THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY**

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class.

We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests.

We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions.

We urge all those who agree with our policies to join with us in the struggle to build the revolutionary party.

**Small ads**

**FILM SHOW** to raise funds for the work of the **Anti-Apartheid Movement Women's Committee**, Sunday 31 January. Two films about women under apartheid and their role in the liberation struggle: **'South Africa belongs to us'** and **'You have struck a rock'**. **Ritz Cinema, Coldharbour Lane, London SW2. Admission £1.50, unwaged £1.**

**A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO WORK National Organising Conference.** 20 February, 10am—5pm, **University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1.** The conference will discuss different aspects of a woman's right to work, and organise for the proposed national demonstration in June to be called by the Labour Party. Workshops, creche, men and women welcome. Registration forms from: **Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work, 181 Richmond Road, London E8. Details: Judy 806 1243; Ely 733 5353; Ali 691 7865.**

**RED SPOKE Socialist Cycling Club** organises rides around London, weekends away youth hostelling, and using our bikes for fundraising for workers in struggle. **Contacts throughout England. Details from: Owen Gallagher, 62 Hanger Lane London W5.**

**And another thing ....**

by Susan Pearce



Funny people, the police. Take 'Community Policing'. They say they want to show us they're friendly human beings, here to help. Lots of people, with good reason, suspect that 'community policing' is another way of collecting so much information for when they want you—for pro-Irish activity, anti-government sympathy, or just plain villainy.

But you must agree that a policeman's job is not a happy one. In fact so worried are the Violence (sorry, Force) about their relations with the community that whole squads of young officers are getting a week off the beat to tackle the thorny problems lying in the way of their complete harmony with the community.

Two of them, confidently disguised in Professionals-style leather jackets, went to visit an SWP member the other day.

Plod 1: 'Good morning. I understand you are active in the gay movement.'

Plod 2: 'And you are squatting.'

Friend: (Suspiciously) 'Yes.'

Both Plods (Nervously): 'We're doing this project. Can we talk to you?'

Plod 2: 'Now, about this squatting problem.'

Friend: 'No, no, there's no squatting problem. There's a landlord problem, and indeed a halt-on-council-building problem, but there's no squatting problem.'

Plods: 'Oh.'

Plod 1: 'Well then, about the Gay Problem...'

Friend: 'That's another thing. How many gay police officers do you know?'

Plods: (outraged) 'None!'

Friend: 'Well, you know that 10 per cent of the population is gay. So there're at least 60 gay officers in your division.'

Both plods depart, somewhat confused.

Of course, there *is* a serious problem. For one thing, you must always remember that a copper is never off duty. There you are, enjoying a quiet drink in the company of your local publican and a few close friends, when two young men in uniform come in from the cold. What a dilemma. Torn between friendliness in the line of duty—all good citizens want to do their bit for community relations—and a distinct desire not to be identified as a participant in a bottle-walking contest at 12.30am, you hold back for a while, then loyalty to the publican friend draws you to help the conversation along. Three weeks later, you are still creeping round the back streets with a paper bag over your head, desperately trying to forget the names, addresses and life stories you told them.

And of course you must bear in mind that around 60 per cent of cadets fail their police exams. Otherwise you could be fooled into thinking that they're as bright as anyone else. For instance;

Woman on motorcycle enters a different world when she's knocked off her bike outside Harrods one morning. Lying in agony on the pavement, she answers police questions:

'Where's the driver?' 'I'm the driver' 'Yes, but where's the driver?' (She's in shock) You must tell us miss, who was riding on the front seat of this motorcycle?'

It's a tough life, though. When you stop off in uniform at a friend's house, and they ask you not to call again because the neighbours think you're the one who did the sub-post office.

You can't blame them for sticking together. No, you can't. They were all somebody's baby once. Weren't they?

For details of the Socialist Workers Party, fill in this form and send to: National Secretary, SWP, PO Box 82, London E2.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

TELEPHONE .....

TRADE UNION .....

# 'Better to starve fighting than to starve working'

*In January 1912, 30,000 workers from the textile mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts, struck against a cut in their wages of a few cents. Wages were already at starvation point, and the cut was the equivalent of a loaf of bread. Workers picketed the empty mills, shouting 'Better to starve fighting than to starve working'. The workers eventually won their battle after a long struggle. In this extract from 'The Rebel Girl' Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, one of the leaders of the International Workers of the World, describes some of the events of the strike.*

As the terrible New England winter dragged along the terror and violence increased. On February 19, 200 policemen with drawn clubs routed 100 women pickets. A Boston newspaper described the scene: 'A woman would be seen to shout from the crowd and run into a side street. Instantly two or three police would be after her. Usually a night-stick well aimed brought the woman to the ground like a shot and instantly the police would be on her, pulling her in as many ways as there were police.' U.S. Senator Miles Poindexter made a personal investigation. He talked to a ten-year-old girl who had a black eye and many bruises. He saw women with nursing babies in jail. He made a strong statement to the United Press against the brutality.

Suffering increased among the strikers. They had no financial reserves. They needed fuel and food. Their houses, dilapidated woodframe barracks, were hard to heat. Committees of strikers went to nearby cities to appeal for support. Labor unions, Socialist locals, and workers in Boston, Manchester, Nashua, Haverhill and other places responded generously. Eleven soup kitchens were opened. The workers of Lowell, a nearby textile town, led a cow garlanded with leaves, to the strikers of Lawrence. I felt sorry for her with her festive appearance and her mild eyes. But she had to be slaughtered to feed hungry children. Her head was mounted and hung in the Franco-Belgian Hall.

All the strike leaders made weekend trips to tell the story of Lawrence and solicit funds in other places. I recall a trip I made to Pittsburgh. It took the local committee there hours to count the collection of several thousand dollars in small coins. I went to substitute for Bill Haywood at Wheeling, West Virginia. Fortunately the secretary of the miners' union took the cash and gave me a check for the collection. The train was held up that night near Piedmont, West Virginia, and I lost my purse. But I wired back to the union and they sent another check to Lawrence.

A proposal was made by some of the strikers that we adopt a method used successfully in Europe—to send the children out of Lawrence to be cared for in other cities. The parents accepted the idea and the children were wild to go. On February 17, 1912, the

first group of 150 children were taken to New York City. A small group also left for Barre, Vermont. A New York Committee, headed by Mrs Margaret Sanger, then a trained nurse and chairman of the Women's Committee of the Socialist Party, came to Lawrence to escort them. (She has since become world renowned for her advocacy of birth control.) Five thousand people met them at Grand Central Station. People wept when they saw the poor clothes and thin shoes of these wide-eyed little children. They picked them up and carried them on their shoulders to the 'El' Station. They were taken to the Labor Temple on East 84th Street, where they were fed, and examined by 15 volunteer doctors, then turned over to their eager hosts, all of whom had been carefully checked by the committee. There were not enough children and many New Yorkers left disappointed not to be able to have a Lawrence child. There was a long waiting list, until another group came later. One child was taken to a beautiful studio apartment. She looked it all over wide-eyed and then said: 'I've seen it all now. Hadn't we better go home?'

The New York *Sun* described the children as follows:

The committee had no trouble looking after suitcases and extra parcels for the reason that the travelers wore all the personal belongings they had brought along. There were few overcoats in the crowd.

For the most part the girls wore cotton dresses partly covered with jackets or shawls, and worsted caps. Fancy hair-ribbons and millinery were at a discount. It had been a long time since more than a few of the boys and girls had got a new pair of shoes.

The reporter described how the children looked a few days later, when, the committeeman said, he hardly knew them.

Concetta's dark hair was set off by a scarlet ribbon. Meta's fairer braids were tied with pale blue ribbon; the one wore a dark blue serge school dress brightened with touches of blue; the other a brand new frock of gay plaid finished with a white gimp. Both wore well-fitting, shiny new shoes. For the street, each has a warm coat and for Sunday wear a wide-brimmed hat trimmed with ribbons. Meta's big brother and his friends, the two older boys, each had a substantial new dark gray suit, white collar and four-in-hand tie. One wore a flower in his button hole. Jimmy and Pietro had each been presented with a new top coat, shiny new shoes and warm underwear. Nearly everyone of the 250 visitors, by the way, has got a complete new outfit of underwear.

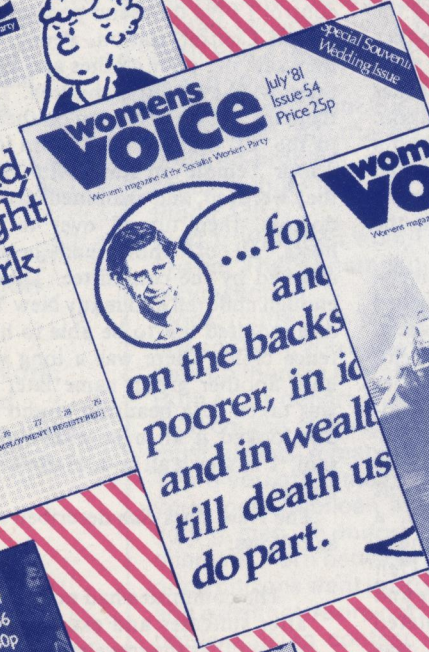
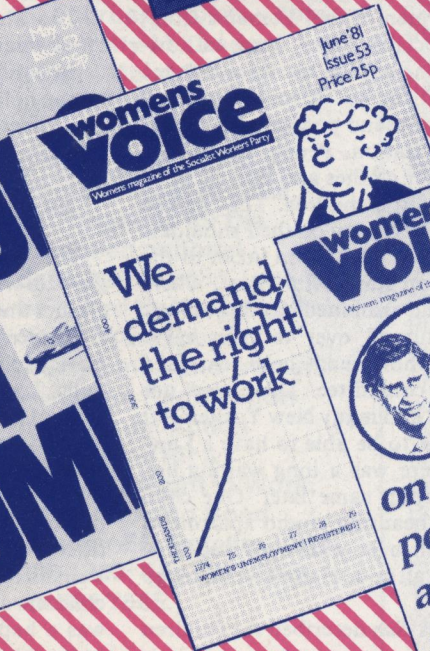
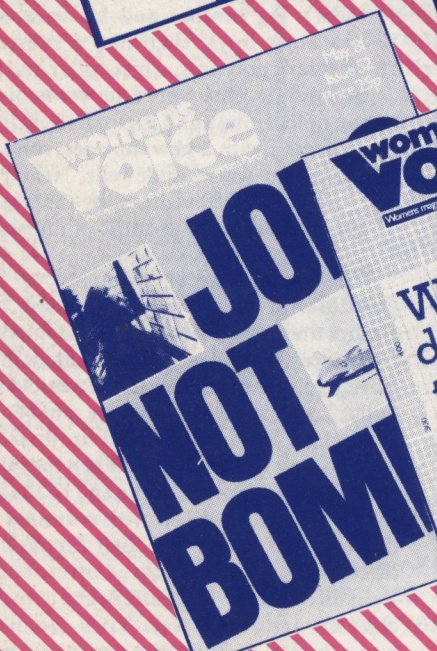
The letters the children wrote home glowed with accounts of their new warm clothes and how well they were treated. The Lawrence children were sent to school in New York, including those who had worked in the mills. Two homesick ones were sent back but most of them wanted to send for their families and stay in New York. When they finally returned to Lawrence at the end of the strike they were loaded down with clothing, toys, presents and clothes for their families from their New York friends. Correspondence went on for many years afterward between the children and 'their New York families.' It was a happy episode in a series of somber, tragic situations in the Lawrence strike of 1912.

*The Rebel Girl*, by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, price £3.25, is available from Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4. Please add 10 per cent for postage.



Elizabeth Gurley Flynn leads a group of the strikers children to New York.

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