

Socialist Woman

| Interview
with

Mme. Binh

of the

National

Liberation

Front of Vietnam

|
Donovan Report on Women.

6d

A NEW JOURNAL FOR AN OLD BATTLE

The immediate past period has brought forward a number of demonstrations on issues involving women; the Ford strike over Equal Pay, the nurses at the House of Commons, the AEF negotiations, the 800 women in Manchester and Coventry over equal bonuses, the Irish sewing machinists on civil rights.

A national campaign has started involving important sectors of the union movement & political organisations on Equal Rights for Women. (see next page) We feel that it is necessary to take advantage of the increased interest and activity around women's demands in industry and in the home, to establish a journal on the question. This journal will, we hope, bring socialist demands to this movement. We want to encourage women to use their power to further themselves and the cause of the working class as a whole.

Further we intend this journal to educate the left. This sounds like a rather specious claim but is not so. Countless are the papers, journals and documents put out by the left which either ignore the demands of women or use women as a selling device a la Playboy. Women are one-third of the labour force and one-half of the population, at the same time women have many of the characteristics of an exploited minority. Women have specific problems and require special attention in formulating a programme, industrially, politically and socially that will advance their consciousness and stimulate them to take action.

And finally, we are not anti-male, a charge often thrown at those concerned with the woman question. We are opposed to private property, the alienation of labour under capitalism, the exploitation of the entire working class. We are opposed to those men who do the "gaffer's" job and assist him to do the dirty on women workers - whether in the home or in industry. And we will not hesitate to take these men on. Those men who refused to hear the bus conductresses give their case at the bus drivers' conference; those men who refused to allow a woman to drive a taxi; those legions of men who measure their masculinity by the few shillings more they make an hour than their female counterparts - they're no better than blacklegs and we'll tell them!

We hope you will find this first issue worthwhile and whether male or female contribute to it - literarily or financially. For the next issue we will pay special attention to the status of women in education and immigrant women. Book reviews would be greatly appreciated. The Socialist Women's Committee which produces this journal has contacts in major cities and universities in Britain and hopes that women will join and build these committees. The SWC draft programme will be reproduced in the next issue. For further information write to Socialist Woman, address below.

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Pro-tem editorial board: Jo O'Brian, Ann Torode, Antonia Gorton
Signed articles do not necessarily reflect editorial opinion.

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ACTION FOR EQUAL RIGHTS - NEW CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

A national action campaign to achieve equal rights for women was launched Oct. 22, 1968. Officers of the campaign are: Honorary President, Baroness Summerskill, Co-chairmen; Christopher Norwood, M.P. and Audrey Hunt, Women's Advisory Council of the TUC; Sec/Treas. F. Blake, NUVB, and others including Rose Boland.

This campaign grew out of the strike of the Ford Sewing Machinists and through the initiative of their union, the National Union of Vehicle Builders. The October meeting at the House of Commons saw almost 300 men and women, executives rank-and-file, and shop stewards of the T.U. movement, political organisations such as Labour Party branches, the Communist Party and the International Marxist Group; and women's organisations such as the Open Door Council, Mothers in Action, Civil Rights for women coming together for the first time to make a definitive contribution to the struggle for women's equality.

The programme of the campaign has a three-fold thrust: a) industrial action, support for actions on equal pay, equal opportunity, equal training. b) parliamentary action, through the private members bill on equal pay. c) general propaganda work with a mass demonstration in Trafalgar Square.

All organisations and individuals have been asked to join and affiliate to the campaign. Among those who have done so are: AEF, ASWCM, CAWU, DATA, GLCC Depots/Staff Assoc., Morris Motors Joint S/S Cmttee., N.S. Metal Mechanics, N.U. Agric. & Allied Workers, NUFTO, NUTGW, POEU, T&GWU, USDAW.

**NATIONAL JOINT ACTION CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN'S EQUAL RIGHTS
1969 WORKING CHARTER**

1. To demand the removal of sex discrimination against women in employment, education, social and public life.
2. To demand the inclusion of equal pay for work of equal value in all agreements between Employers and Trade Unions.
3. To demand that Members of Parliament enforce equal legal rights for women through Parliament in 1969.
4. To demand that the TUC leads and co-ordinates a national action campaign for equal pay and opportunities in industry, in accordance with their decision at their 1968 Conference.
5. To demand the immediate Government ratification of the I.L.O. Convention 100.

Meeting, Red Lion Sq 7.00 pm Sat.

MASS DEMONSTRATION ON EQUAL RIGHTS - MAY 18

Trafalgar Square

Speakers: Hugh Scanlon, Baroness Summerskill, Rose Boland, Audrey Wise, Clive Jenkins, Jack Jones, Daisy Nolan, Christopher Norwood

Poster parade to be held in London during the preceding week and local demonstrations urged. Buttons saying "Equal Pay Now" available at 6d.

Information regarding activities, projects, corresponding secretaries and buttons write to: F. Blake, 76 Rainham Road, Rainham, Essex. RML3 7RL

INTERVIEW WITH MADAME NGUYEN THI BINH, ACTING CHIEF OF
THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT DELEGATION AT THE VIETNAMESE PEACE CONFERENCE.

(This interview, slightly abridged, is from The Times, 27/1/69/)

In November, this woman was unknown to the outside world. Then she appeared in Paris and the picture of a grave rather beautiful Asian face appeared in newspapers everywhere. Her name, we were told, was Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, and she was acting chief of the National Liberation Front delegation at the Vietnamese Peace Conference. Madame Binh's arrival was news and sensational. The NLF had been recognized as a power and this unknown woman was equal in rank to the American negotiator, Mr. Cyrus Vance, a far from unknown figure.

She wears the long Vietnamese tunic and trousers with a European woollen jacket for warmth. She uses neither make-up nor a hairdresser. She is small, very thin, pitifully and heroically tired, undaunted, probably shy and certainly modest. She has great dignity, her eyes are sad. Yet she laughed in the delicious way of her people, like a child crumpling into giggles, when I said with wonder that she had no lines on her face, not a single one, after such a life. Madame Binh does not think her life is special: it is how Vietnamese "patriots" live.

When Madame Binh was a girl of 18, the Second World War ended and the Japanese were defeated and expelled from her country. Since older "patriots", led by Ho Chi Minh, had been largely responsible for this result... the Vietnamese expected to be free and independent, rulers in their own land. But the French returned; the "patriots" were cheated of their nationhood, again to become second-class citizens in a colony. So the "patriots" took up arms a second time in September 1945, and Madame Binh's father joined them: Vietnam for the Vietnamese. "From 1945, we had no money. After he was arrested two or three times by the French, my father had to escape to the maquis. I stayed: there were five children to look after." She was in Saigon alone at 18, teaching "little classes of children" to earn money, taking courses to qualify for a proper lycee post, and "participating". "I could not have done it without help from friends." First she worked with students, then with women's organizations, then with "the intellectuals". "The great majority of intellectuals in our country have always been patriots." How did she know what to do? "Me, I never received any political education" - again that brief smile. "I learned from experience. We organised protest marches against the arrests of patriots, we distributed leaflets, we met and discussed." For six years she kept her family of brothers and sisters together and "participated". Then, at the age of 24, she was arrested by the French. She spent four years in prison. "And I was tortured too, you know, to make me confess to subversive activities and to say I was a communist. I did not speak, but they wrote anything they liked in anyone's dossier."

I asked who tortured her. "Vietnamese, with the French directing. Just as now it is Vietnamese who torture, with Americans directing. There are people like that in every country. Mercenaries, who torture their own for money." She says the word mercenaries with loathing. But she would not speak of what had been done to her; she dislikes talking about herself as if the subject was without importance. Her memory is full of the endurance of others. "When I was in prison", Madame Binh went on, "there were hundreds and hundreds of women with me who did not even know why they were there. They asked, what have we done? They did not know when they came but when they left, they knew. They left as patriots."

Her brothers and sisters were dispersed among friends, it was really the end

of the family. Four locked-up years, and finally the "patriots" won and the French were defeated. The prison doors opened. The agreement reached at Geneva looked forward to elections that would eventually unify the country. "We were so happy, so happy to have peace at last and to be free. My father came back, and the children." In that short spell of hope, she married "someone I had known for a long time. For a few months, we were all together". This is the best memory; her eyes shone. For a few months in 1954 is the only time they have been "all together". Madame Binh is now 41 years old and the mother of two and she has never had a home with her husband and children.

When the people poured into the streets of Saigon to celebrate the Geneva Agreement and their freedom, Diem's police fired into the crowd, Madame Binh was there that day, when rejoicing instantly changed to fear and a girl friend of hers was killed by a bullet in the stomach. The "intellectuals" understood quickly that the Geneva Agreement would not be respected and Diem's "repression" grew. "There would be a police raid, closing both ends of the street, and the police would look at identity cards and collect the young men and take them away to the army; it happened like that even in cinemas. And patriots were arrested and shot. Later even whole villages would be decimated with machine guns. They pulled the guillotine through the streets of towns and villages to intimidate the people. They executed people openly in market squares and made their families watch.

"And that division of our country, it was to last only two years until we could vote, and instead it lasted for always. Children do not remember ever seeing their fathers who went north with our army as the treaty planned. We have a profound tradition of the family in Vietnam: men and women remain faithful, all these years, without ever knowing happiness."

In 1957 Madame Binh left Saigon to hide in the country, "moving from one place to another, always moving. Sometimes we would arrive and be told no, you must go on at once. We lived underground often, never coming out in the air except at night. 1957 through 1959; these were the black years. By 1960 the people could not bear it any longer. They demanded the right to fight and protect themselves. We organized village by village. Those who knew how to fight taught the others. It was the third time we fought you know. The Geneva Agreement was torn up by Diem; we knew we would never have the vote to decide how our country should live. And then the Americans came. I think the whole world knows that our patriots are brave." During her first year of hiding and flight Madame Binh bore a son, and four years later a daughter. These children, now aged 12 and 8, have always lived with friends in what has so far remained a safe place. "I can count the days - not weeks, not months - in all these years that I have seen my husband. My children count the time they have seen me or their father in days. People say we are accustomed to this life. But we have the same desires and wants as everyone else. The same. It is difficult to live as we do."

Obviously, Madame Binh will not give details about this difficult life: in how many places does she live; in what sort of places - a village house with thatched roof, a concrete-lined underground shelter; how does she travel; does she ever rest; is there any amusement in her days? She says of her husband only that he is a patriot too and constantly occupied; they are never able to visit their children to ether. Nor can one know her exact position in the NLF - but clearly she must have risen to this great responsibility through intelligence, work and courage. All one can tell, for sure by her voice and eyes, is that she loves and misses her husband and her children. A "difficult"

life: she seemed little and lonely and not even very well.

...They cared a great deal about songs and music, as also about schools and hospitals. Sometimes the schools were underground, sometimes above ground, depending. Education was a hunger with the people; the schools continued despite bombing. Their medical teams were at least devoted in their care of the wounded and had learned more skill, improving their traditional medicine. They could do nothing for those burned by napalm or white phosphorus unless the burns were slight. Otherwise the people died. Which led us to the bombing. How did her children survive the rain of fire and steel?

The little girl is more sensitive," Madame Binh said, and smiled as if to excuse the child. "When she hears planes she runs quickly to the shelter. The boy is harder; he waits a minute and looks at the sky before he goes. But we tell our children that the bombs cannot kill everyone; they must not be afraid." Her head was bowed, her voice very low.

"We know that our sacrifice is necessary. If the bombs do not fall on you, they fall on friends. We accept fate. We are calm. It is useless to be a pessimist. One day, we will win a beautiful life, if not for ourselves then for our children. But there will be a whole army of children in Vietnam who will never have a beautiful life: the amputees, the blind, the mutilated, the orphans, the tuberculous, the small ones who have gone insane."

Madame Binh continued, "They bomb even our work animals, the oxen. As they spray poison on the fields so the people will starve or become refugees in the cities. To ravage the countryside is another form of pacification."

I asked, would not her people hate Americans for ever?

"No!" Madame Binh said. "No you must not believe that. My people are touched by all the acts - the small as well as the large - that the American people make against this war. We are really moved. We do distinguish between people of goodwill everywhere and governments. We feel that the public opinion of the world has understood us. You see, I was imprisoned by a French government and yet I have French friends, best friends and my people keep a good relationship with the French people to this day. We do not want hate and war. We want only peace and the right to be independent in our own land."

RALLY TO HEAR NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT SPEAKERS
TRAFALGAR SQUARE, 3 P.M., MARCH 16

While the negotiations go on in Paris the Pentagon continues to bomb and kill in Vietnam. The bombing pause in the north has not brought peace, but only intensified the fighting in the south, the continued violation of Vietnam's right to self-determination. The reactionary role of the United States in Vietnam is clear for all to see, but the question of British complicity in the war has, up till now, been blurred over. The importance of British political and material assistance to the Pentagon is not well understood. The Americans are now negotiating with the NLF-DRV, yet the Wilson government proceeds as if Hanoi and the NLF just don't exist. As far as the present government is concerned, the Ky regime can receive diplomatic recognition from Whitehall (including Embassy facilities) but NLF and DRV representatives can't put a foot on British soil. Welcome the NLF at London Airport! Enquiries/Donations to March Mobilisation Cmtee. 120 Commercial Rd. London E.1

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO SKILLED WORK

The following table shows the distribution of apprenticeships among young men and women in various occupations in May 1966:

Apprenticeships for:	Males	Females
Scientists and technologists	9,630	110
Draughtsmen	17,450	350
Other technicians	12,150	160
Clerical and office staff	3,150	1,410
Other administrative staff	3,300	620
Skilled craft workers	271,650	5,430

source: Ministry of Labour Gazette, January 1967

The table shows how extraordinarily limited is the access to apprenticeships accorded to girls in the occupations covered. At school, girls have as good a performance at "O" level standards as boys. And yet when they come to leave school only some 7 per cent of girls enter apprenticeships (hairdressing predominantly) compared with 43 per cent of boys. Some 49 per cent of male manual workers in industry are classified as skilled, but only 29 per cent of females - 19 per cent if the clothing and textile industries are excluded. In Engineering and electrical goods manufacture nearly 580,000 skilled men are employed but only 13,200 skilled women (out of a female labour force of nearly 340,000): and yet during the last war women were without difficulty trained to do many kinds of work traditionally performed by men.

Women have limited opportunities where other types of training are concerned. In 1966 some 538,000 men in employment were released by their employers during working hours to take part-time day courses at grant-aided establishments, but the corresponding figure for women was only 87,000. Not surprisingly, therefore, women's access to the better-paid jobs is restricted. The Ministry of Labour's occupational analysis for retail distribution in May 1967 covered a labour force of over a quarter of a million; women out-numbered men by 3 to 1, but male managers outnumbered women managers by nearly 2 to 1. Only one of the 319 works managers interviewed in our workshop relations survey was a woman, and only 10 of the 121 personnel officers. Of the 183 full-time trade union officers interviewed from six trade unions, only one was a woman. In industry generally, women comprise only 5 per cent of managers and 2.5 per cent of scientists and technologists. In some fields there are much better opportunities for women, notably teaching, the non-industrial civil service and some professions, including of course nursing; but these do not compensate for the comparative lack of opportunity over much of the employment field.

There are some obvious practical reasons why opportunities for women are restricted. Managements are reluctant to give expensive training to women when the likelihood is so high that they will shortly marry and leave their service.

A married woman returning to the employment field after a dozen years' absence will not have the same chance of promotion as other employees who have not been absent at all. Married women with family responsibilities often cannot work the full normal hours of a factory or office. However, these practical obstacles cannot by themselves account for the present state of affairs. They are reinforced by conservatism and prejudice among men, both employers and trade unionists, which foster the unwarranted assumption that nothing can be done. This assumption is sometimes accepted by women themselves. Young women first entering employment are often reluctant to commit themselves to lengthy training when they can get higher pay in undemanding work, because they see employment as a brief period preceding marriage and bringing up a family. However, employment figures show that this short-term view is increasingly unrealistic; employment of women and girls has gone up by some 14 per cent in the last decade (compared with less than 6 per cent for men) and much of it is accounted for by a remarkable increase in the number of married women taking up jobs when their families become less dependent.

The existing situation if prolonged will give rise to increasingly acute social problems. Many more mixed schools are being established. Girls who do as well as boys at school will want the opportunities for training available to boys. More and more able girls are going to universities. Many married women who return to full-time or part-time employment have, through lack of training, to take jobs which are below their capacity.

In economic terms, there is a still more important problem. Lack of skilled labour has constantly applied a brake to our economic expansion since the war, and yet the capacity of women to do skilled work has been neglected. This becomes more serious as the proportion of women in the labour force increases; and the failure to train sufficient girl school-leavers now will continue to have ill effects a long time ahead. Forecasts of the size of the working population indicate that there will be a very limited increase between now and 1981. Women provide the only substantial new source from which extra labour, and especially skilled labour, can be drawn during this period. It is essential that in the development of training over the next few years all those with responsibility in the field - education authorities, the Youth Employment Service, industrial training boards, the Department of Employment and Productivity, employers and trade unions - should grasp the opportunity to bring about a revolution in attitudes and in practical performance so far as the training of women is concerned.

Donovan Report: pp. 90/92

SEVENTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY AND WORKERS' CONTROL

You are invited to attend, and to send delegates from your organisation to, the Seventh Conference on Industrial Democracy, which will be held at Sheffield on Saturday and Sunday 29th and 30th March, 1969. Among those speaking will be Hugh Scanlon of the AEU, Ernie Roberts of the AEU and Lawrence Daly of the NUM. In the chair will be Bill Jones, who is vice-chairman of the TUC and a member of the General Council of the TUC. There will be special seminars on the problems of such industries as mines, docks, aircraft, chemicals, steel, motors, general engineering, public transport, education, and the public services. Registration fee is 10/6 per head. Write to Conference secretary, 91 Goldsmith Street, Nottingham NG1 5LT. Convenors: Bill Jones, Tony Topham, Walter Kendall, Ken Coates, Richard Fletcher, Peter Smith.

The other day I saw a small article in one of the daily papers about Mme. Ky of South Vietnam and Mme. Binh of the National Liberation Front, both of whom are involved in the Paris Peace negotiations. The writer felt that it was a pity that the two were separated by "ideology" and said that the talks would probably go better if they met each other as "mere women" to discuss the issues involved over a cup of tea!

At the time of the Ford's Women's strike, there was a general sigh of relief when it was reported that Mrs. Castle had settled the matter "woman to woman" over a cup of tea. The terrible sight of women organising themselves to fight for their rights had faded - to be replaced by the more familiar picture of women entrapped by their "femininity"; - women in general had been put back in their place - where they could be understood - and patronised.

But why "mere women"? What are these feminine qualities that so handicap women in the "big world"?

Mankind has developed as it has because men and women have the ability to labour and to participate toward the achievement of desired ends. They have thereby changed the world - and their relationships to each other. But, just as in a class society the socially desired ends have been perverted to the needs of the ruling class (in the case of capitalism, social production is geared to the making of profits for the owners of industry) so, in a class society too, many of the qualities possessed by humanity as a whole, have been abrogated by men - they have become "masculine qualities". Women have, to a greater or lesser extent, been driven to a secondary role and excluded from maximum participation in the society.

You could perhaps define "masculinity" in this sense, as the ability and desire to engage in the social activity of labour, the ability to make decisions and to assume leadership etc. It does not simply mean the power to attract and be attracted by women. It follows from this then that the concept of "femininity" implies a diminution of humanness - the woman is not thought to possess many of the qualities and drives that have made mankind what it is. Men and women complement each other not only biologically but also it appears, socially (though this social division of ability and function is often seen as a basically biological division; male and female psychology areas genetically determined as any physical sexual characteristic). Men are often seen as aggressive, outgoing, more coldly logical; women are gentler, domesticated, intuitive, more bound up with home, children and "love" - creatures to be protected from the rough and tumble of political life.

But if this concept of "femininity" excludes the drives and abilities that are felt to belong to the male - what about those women who individually seek to participate more fully in the social and economic life of the country as the equals of men? Women like Margaret Hirst, who was asked on Woman's Hour recently how she managed to keep feminine whilst running the world's largest employment bureau. If women organise to fight for their collective rights they upset the general understanding of their role. Surely if these women want to encroach on traditionally male privileges they must really want to be men - perhaps they have too many male hormones (I have even heard it suggested that the leaders of the suffragettes must have had lesbian tendencies!)- militant women can be understood if their "masculine" motivation and ambition can be explained by masculine biology. This understanding of the feminine role is accepted and emphasised by the mass media. Obviously women's magazines discuss

topics in which women are directly interested - baby care, fashion, cookery, face and hair care etc. - but why to the exclusion of political, social and cultural topics? Things that are of specific interest to women are rarely their sole interest. After all men may be interested in women and nylon shirts - but nobody expects them only to be involved in these matters!

The stories in these magazines usually treat of women as creatures whose whole life is dependent on men and romance; who are related to the world through men. The reader is advised to inform herself about the world and current events - not because she might be interested in them in her own right but so that she will be able to talk to a man about things that interest him. She must not only show herself to be beautiful, but intelligent also - though naturally not as intelligent as he (if, in fact she is, she must apply her intelligence to convince him that she isn't - after all, a "brainless" woman is hardly feminine!). Though she works whilst pursuing her Mister Right, she need not get too involved in her job as "love is a woman's whole Existence...". This glossy image world is presented to young teenage girls through the medium of "love comics" especially prepared for them. They capitalize on the insecurity that most young girls feel in their social relationships with boys. Girls learn that they will develop self-awareness through the awareness and appreciation boys have of them. The teenage girl has to involve herself in the hobbies of her latest boyfriend - thus her increasing knowledge of the world is dependent on her boyfriend's activities and interests. Again she is not a person in her own right with her own interests. Boys are not expected to adopt a girl's interests in order to please her. In this dream world of the comic any problems connected with bad conditions either in her home or employment are unimportant. It is implied that romance and an undefined future as a wife should form the major goal in her life and provide her greatest fulfillment.

The picture that these magazines give of the life and aspirations of women just does not square with the reality of life in Britain today (nor anywhere else for that matter). Women make up about one third of the Labour force - though their conditions of work and rates of pay are usually worse than those of men. Women receive higher education and specialized training - although opportunities in this respect are more limited than they are for men. Women, increasingly, tend to work both before and after rearing children - there are fewer permanent housewives now. There is little point in listing the many individual examples of women whose activities and outlook could disprove this myth of femininity.

The socialist women's movement does not argue that by virtue of our special feminine qualities, women can make a useful contribution to the world of rough politics. Rather we must fight against those factors that impose on us our second class status - social and economic factors inseparable from the capitalist organisation of society. By involving large numbers of women in this fight, the "mere woman" image will be forced to crumble.

FEMALE POWER AT OXFORD

(Taken from The Times, Aug. 6, 1968) Somerville College has ended the year that gave Oxford its first women presidents of the Union and University Dramatic Societies with a remarkable show of female academic power. With 21.2 percent of its candidates who obtained degrees taking firsts, and 71.3 percent seconds, the women's college far outshone its rivals in the final honour school examinations of the university... Women are still the best overall performers in final honour schools. In fact they increased their superiority in the firsts and seconds table by 2.3 % on last year, extending the gap to 7.5%.

LIL BILOCCA AND HULL TRAWLERS

or How our society puts profits before people - and victimises those who want to put people before profits.

In an isolated community like that of the Hull fishing industry, where "women's place is in the home", people like Mrs. Bilocca, who have come forward with demands and demonstrations, have to face considerable hostility and ridicule. Mrs. Bilocca has received threatening letters, was shouted down when she addressed a meeting at Grimsby, and has been publicly rebuked by influential figures like Skipper Laurie Oliver, secretary of the Hull Trawler Officers' Guild. "I have been asked," he said, "by the wives of some of my members, to state that the action of Mrs. Bilocca has not enhanced the image the public may have of fishermen's wives. Women who have lost men on the three ships have had the least to say about it, which is what we admire. The idea of forming a women's committee to fight battles for the men, is, to my mind, completely ludicrous."

The short answer to Skipper Oliver is that one of the originators of the campaign lost her brother, the skipper of the Ross Cleveland, a few days later, that one of the leaders of the demonstration at the fish dock was the widow of a member of the crew of the St. Romanus, and that of the two women who went with Mrs. Bilocca in the delegation to London, one had lost her father at sea and the other was the wife of a Grimsby trawler officer.

Millions of people all over the country, and nearly everyone in Hull will remember the splendid fight that Mrs. Bilocca put up last winter for safety and decent conditions on Hull's trawlers.

No doubt most people imagine that she is still famous, respected and a valued member of society, especially as the enquiry into the disasters held early last month in Hull vindicated her actions in many respects, (although as she herself says, they did only the bare minimum to satisfy public opinion). Men who had served on the trawlers on earlier voyages were not called to give evidence about the conditions of the trawlers, and none of them dared to come forward for fear of victimisation. But that just goes to show how well the real nature of our society is disguised from most people.

In fact, because of her actions, Lilian Bilocca has lost her job and cannot get another one - she has in fact "got" other jobs - until they learnt her name... The hard-faced men who rule this country want disciplined servants from whom they can extract easy profits, not workers who care more for the conditions of people's lives than the boss' balance sheet. Our hypocritical society was forced to praise Lilian Bilocca to satisfy public opinion, but once the fuss had died down it quietly proceeded to punish her for helping to expose one of its many injustices.

The necessity for workers to stick together in the battle for a civilised, democratic, socialist society is once more demonstrated. Please send messages of support, etc. to: Mrs. Lilian Bilocca, c/o Humberside Voice, 60 Southcoates Lane, Hull.

* This article and the following one are reprinted with the kind permission of Black Dwarf, from a special issue entitled "1969: The Year of the Militant Woman?" Copies are available at 1/6 pp. 4d from Socialist Women, 16 Ella Rd. West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5GW. Other articles include: Dwarf Profile on Barbara Castle, Women Sex and the Abolition of the Family, Women: the struggle for freedom...

Vast numbers of women got to work for about 70% of men's rates of wages. This is economic exploitation on a grand scale and equal pay is clearly an elementary demand.

But equal pay need not mean equality, and we must ask ourselves in any case, equality with what? Do men have such idyllic lives that we want the same for ourselves? In a world where people are valued as economic units rather than as people, to be an equal economic unit must not be the height of our ambition. What we want is a revaluation of all people, men and women, in human terms not as adjuncts to machines.

Going out to work is not new and is not a sign of growing equality or emancipation. In 1851, 25% of married women (and two out of three widows) had a job additional to housewife. For these working class women, work was an inevitable burden, in and out of the home, as unskilled cheap labour. When you sell your labour-power you are selling part of your life, and if you sell it for a low price, in this society you are announcing that you are a low-value person. Equal pay is therefore a very necessary step towards equality, and will have repercussions on the value placed on women in general.

But the keeping down of women is not just a capitalist phenomenon and it is not just capitalist who do it. Other societies based on property have done it, and men of all classes take part in it. The fact that women are the mothers make them both powerful and vulnerable, and men seek to curb this power and utilise this vulnerability. Children make mothers guardians of the future with a direct and visible immortality, while a man can be dependent on the word of a woman even for his knowledge of fatherhood. This is power indeed. But mothers are vulnerable because their children are also hostages, and by depriving mothers of the guardianship of their children men have made full use of superior physical strength to ensure their dominance.

Now we have an industrial society where physical strength matters less and less, where women have had to be educated (though often inadequately), and where some men see them as more of a danger than ever. These are the men who ally themselves with the capitalist class on this particular issue, against their fellow women workers. These men are their own enemies, because under-valuing women means under-valuing motherhood. If motherhood is under-valued so is family life. Bringing up children is regarded as just washing nappies and other unpleasant or monotonous tasks fit only for cabbages or servents, i.e. women. But surely dealing with the unfolding of new minds is a fascinating and creative thing, if properly shared with a willing partner and not a 24-hour a day burden. Reality has been so turned on its head that "women's work" automatically means the most lowly, menial, unskilled, badly-paid work, instead of the most creative and humane.

In Victorian times, working class women were drudges and richer women were decorations. It cannot be regarded as more than a modest advance that working class women are now permitted to be both! If women are to achieve equal pay they must act as "organised labour". It is very easy to find working women in shops and factories. But they are much scarcer in Trade Union meetings, and they are rare jewels indeed in influential positions in the Unions. There are some signs that the worms are turning, at Fords and a few other places, but women in general are absent from the places where the decisions are being made. Where are the women who should be on the AEF National Committee? Half the members of USDAW are women, yet only an eighth of the Executive. There are

88 Divisional Councillors in USDAW, but only three are women. This sort of statistic can be repeated throughout the Unions. Where are these missing women? They are at home cooking their husbands meals.

As long as most women accept the burden of the "double job", they will not have time or energy to take their places in the community, in political and trade union activities. As long as even many left-wing husbands expect their wives to stay at home with the babies while they go out to be in the vanguard of the struggle, there will be these missing women, absent from a struggle which concerns them at least as much as men. Last year's Workers' Control Conference was a splendid Conference - but it was very similar to the TUC and the Labour Party Conference in one way, in the proportion of women present.

The comment in a Union Journal that it would be a good thing for more women to be delegates to the Trades Union Congress "because we are always short of dancing partners at the Mayor's Reception" is not an isolated example of male patronage within the working class movement itself.

Women will have to assert themselves pretty strenuously to beat down patronage and to overcome all the aspects of discrimination still existing. Equal pay, equal training opportunities, equal guardianship of children (as a general right not just when there is a Court Order), and the removal of all the smaller humiliations. There are hospitals which will not remove a womb without the husband's consent. There are the Insurance Companies which demand the husband's signature for compensation paid to a wife for her own accident at work. And so on.

Even the very language is sex-biased. Perhaps it started with God the father. I believe the pagans did have Goddesses! Do the Irish Civil Rights marchers really mean "one man, one vote"? I hope not. Sex-bias lies very deep, after centuries of conditioning, and to make any further progress against it, including the achievement of equal pay for work of equal value, women will have to challenge the role assigned to them by men.

Domestic as well as financial responsibilities will have to be shared by men and women as partners, so that each lives fully both outside and inside the home and shares also the joys of parenthood. Neither will be superior to the other, and neither sex will abuse its particular powers. The achievement of this kind of equality for women will raise the quality of the lives of men as well as women, and its achievement will be one measure of the success of the struggle against capitalism and other exploiting systems.

* Mrs. Wise is a divisional councillor of USDAW and the mother of two children. Reprinted from Black Dwarf, 10/1/69.

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