

WOMENS VOICE

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PAPER OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS WOMEN

Fascist appeal to housewives

FASCIST GROUPS have always found eager listeners amongst worried women housewives—and the National Front is no exception. It's not that women are naturally brutal, or racist—but being stuck at home they bear the brunt of the worries about rising prices, housing problems, the kids' education—and they're alone, so can't share the problems. Workers have experience of fighting together, but the housewife doesn't—so she is easier game for the slick arguments of the National Front.

In the last election the National Front used an ordinary housewife in their election programme. She expressed the fears and problems of millions in her position.

Hope

"With rocketing prices, I can hardly make ends meet. What's worse neither government seems able to do anything about it—it'll go on, and our families will suffer. It's only since I joined the National Front that I've had hope for the future—hope for a really STRONG leadership that'll put Britain back on her feet again. A government that'll put Britain first, and British people first..."

Pauline Penn is a member of the International Socialists, living in Newham, a depressed area of East London where the National Front stood a candidate in the last by-election, and beat the Tories into 2nd place. Pauline talked to Women's Voice about their election campaign.

"They really aimed themselves at women in our area. You see we've got a big problem with schools here—over-crowding, teacher shortage, terrible buildings, and they quickly latched on to that.

Racist

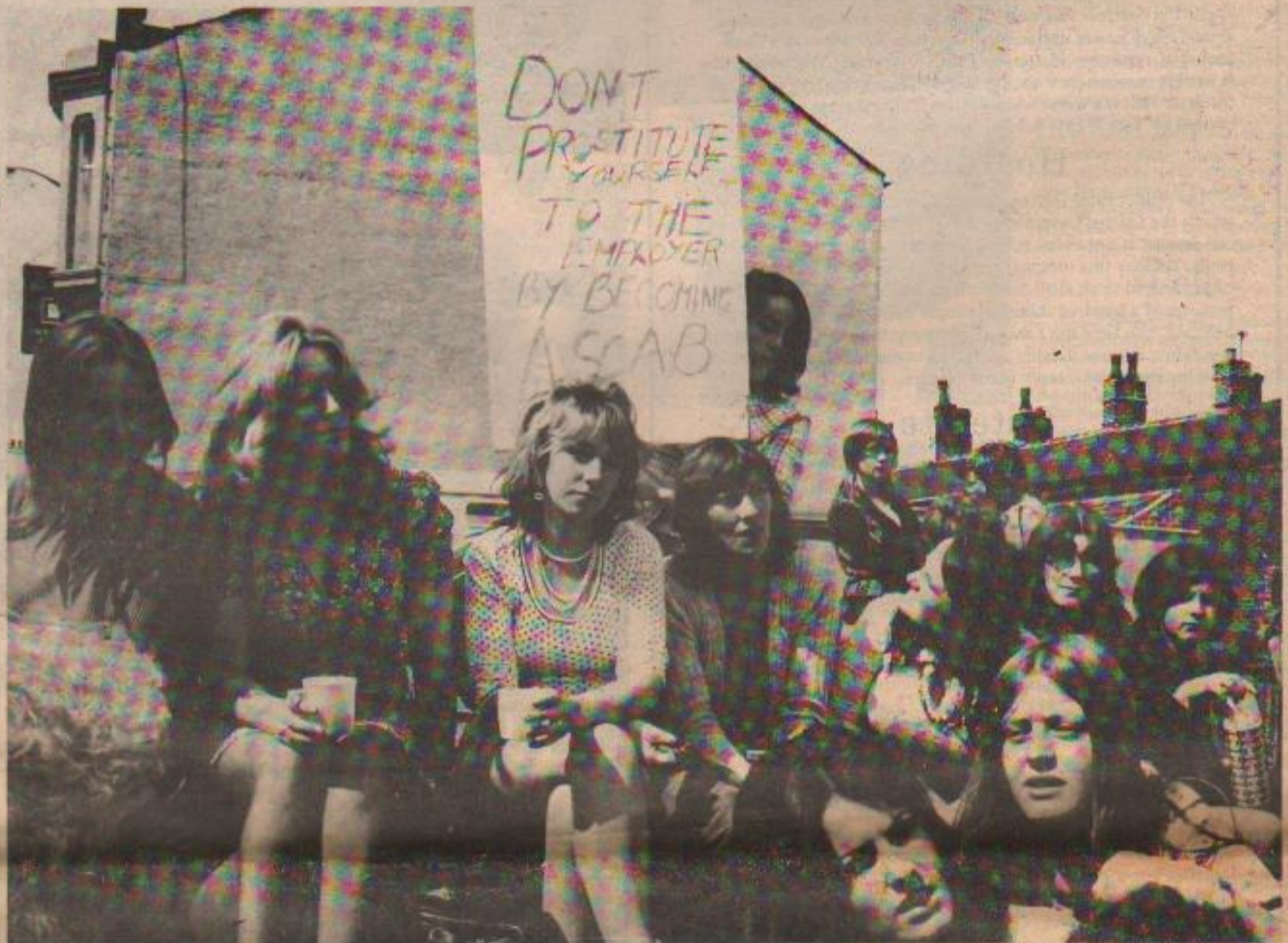
"They said the problems were all caused by the black kids, and if we get rid of them, our kids will get a decent education. Well so many women round here are really worried about their kid's education, that kind of argument appeals to them—it's an easy answer. But I was involved in a campaign of mothers and teachers to get more money for teachers, and a better education for all the kids in Newham. This was working against what they were saying, and they really had it in for me and my husband because we were socialists and fighting against them. They sank so low as to pay a kid to watch our house. They turned up at all the meetings we went to, and even told my husband obscene stories about me."

Drudgery

But although the National Front are eager to use women as voting fodder by playing on their fears, they don't explain in quite so much detail what role women will play in their new strong Britain.

"We will put an end to attempts to undermine the family and morality," they say. Basically they believe that a woman's place is firmly at home, in lowing drudgery for their husbands. They want all abortion laws repealed, and they are against all moves towards equality of the sexes, both at work and in society generally. It's not only the blacks they think are inferior, they think we are too! But they shout louder about the blacks, because it gets them more popularity—quite often from women!

Where the National Front is appealing to women voters in your area, make sure their views on women are equally loudly



Strikers at Salford Electrical Instruments

EQUAL PAY

THIS YEAR NEXT YEAR SOME TIME NEVER!

£15,000 is being spent by the Labour Party on an advertising campaign to win women's votes for October's election. They're spending this money to convince us that Labour's done great things for women! Don't waste time trying to work out what they've done, because by the end of the year I'm sure we'll be saying that the only thing Labour did for women in 1974 was to dream up an expensive vote catching campaign! It's certainly let us down on the one most important single issue—Equal Pay for women by 1975.

Publicity

In June, Michael Foot told trade union leaders that the government would not be using

its powers to compel employers to implement the Equal Pay Act. Instead the government are to embark on a publicity campaign telling employers about their obligations under the Act. They also plan to set up an Industrial Arbitration Board to which you can refer agreements that discriminate between men and women workers. BIG DEAL! That should really have Arnold Weinstock, head of the multi-million pound GEC combine shaking in his boots. He's the man who said, "I'm all in favour of Equal Pay, so long as the men's pay is brought down to the level of the women's."

A publicity campaign is not going to change his mind, and the Labour government knows it. The truth is that the government has effectively washed its hands of the Equal Pay Act, and is allowing employers to continue their discrimination unchecked. The government's decision means there will be no such thing as Equal Pay in 1975... but they won't be telling us that in their advertising campaign for women's votes.

Hollow

It all makes Barbara Castle's statements about Equal Pay sound pretty hollow. 'My Act', she said in 1971, 'represents the best possible formula for Equal Pay anywhere in the World. It combines statutory protection with the opportunity for strong collective bargaining.'

If what we have now is the best in the world—then God help the rest of the world.

And the trade unions aren't doing all they

could to help women get a decent living wage either. One union, the UPW openly discriminates against women. It has a recruiting BAN on full-time female labour. At the other end of the scale, even unions who tack equal pay claims onto wage demands, like the AUEW make little attempt to win them.

Hopeful

However the most encouraging event on the equal pay front this year has in fact come from the unions—the battle by SOGAT, the print workers union, to abolish the lowest grade, Class 4, points the way for women workers to obtain meaningful equal pay. Abolition of low paid grades avoids all the pitfalls of job evaluation and the strings that employers attack to equal pay. Abolition of low grades ensures that all wages are living wages. In fact the strike that started the whole Equal Pay battle in 1968 was over the same issue. Women sewing machinists at Dagenham struck—not just for higher pay—but also in protest against low grading.

And now, in the autumn of 1975 the battle hots up again. Already we've seen women in various parts of the country taking up the fight—over threshold payments at Wingrove Rogers in Merseyside and for Equal Pay at GEC in Heywood, are two recent examples. Women workers everywhere must fight for Equal Pay now, if we are to get it at all.

FULL EQUAL PAY NOW WITH NO STRINGS!
ABOLISH ALL LOW GRADES!

THIN SUGAR ON LABOUR

PILL by Barbara Kerr

I'VE JUST come in from searching the shops in the town centre for sugar! I'm footsore and weary, have *no* sugar and have witnessed several angry scenes, including two women fighting over a small packet of expensive Sucron low calory sweetener: The whole thing is terrible—women have enough to do without combing the shops for sugar—but it's worse when we know the shortage is artificial, created by Tate & Lyle holding back supplies.

Hoarding

The result? Panic buying, hoarding, inevitable price increases. And what's the Labour Government done? Nothing, there's nothing it can do—but it's not even honest enough to expose the sugar companies because that means it must admit that it can't do anything to put an end to an artificial shortage. We've also had the sour experience of a hundred thousand people done out of hard earned holidays—this time the Labour Government could have stepped in but didn't. It's not the rich who go on cheap package holidays, it's working people who really need holidays.

Illiterate

Inflation's getting worse, housing shortages more acute—and as for doing something positive for schools and hospitals (two things which really affect all our lives) what have we seen? Teachers and nurses have told us loud and clear—'Raise the wages or people won't do the jobs and schools and hospitals'll grind to a halt'—the government's reply, not so loud and clear, but definite—'No'. Already youngsters are leaving school who can't read or write—there'll be more and more of them as things get worse. And if that's not enough, the Labour Government has ducked out of giving us Equal Pay and nursery education—both very important for women's lives. So it's reasonable to ask:—

Why should I vote Labour?

Well, I'm going to. We mustn't forget that some steps have been made—we've seen food subsidies (my weekly milk bill is *smaller* than this time last year), frozen rents and the Industrial Relations Act shelved. Certainly these only happened because the working class people demanded it—we can put pressure on a Labour Government because they claim to represent us and so have to do some of the things they've promised. They're there partly on trade union money so the unions have *some* power over them.

The Tories represent our bosses and all the rich in Britain. We must put our vote *against* them to show we see through their lies. We know a 'Fair, firm Britain' means wage freeze for us and continuing wealth for the rich. They'll try to solve the increasing economic crisis by cutting our standards of living—making us poorer and attacking the strength of the trade unions so we can't fight back. At least under Labour we'll be able to fight back. They can't openly smash the unions that give them so much support.

Socialist Party

It is a gloomy picture—not much hope with any parliamentary party. It's becoming clearer and clearer that while we sit back and let 'leaders' sort things out, our lives will get worse. Voting Labour is only one small act. We must go on to fight at work and in our neighbourhoods to protect our living standards. The International Socialist Group is building a *real* socialist party that involves all its members in the struggle for a better society that removes Mr Tate and Mr Lyle and all like them. All our members will be voting Labour, but we'll also be building our own party—a party of working people who will take over society and run it fairly, without artificial shortages—and without massive profits for the rich.

**I would like to know more about
the International Socialists**

Name _____

Address _____

Please post to: Womens Voice,



Hackney Parents Action demonstrate Linda Peffer (above right) Annie Spike (below right)

Hackney Parents Action

by Linda Peffer and Annie Spike

WE ARE members of the Hackney Parent Teacher Action Group which has been fighting for better pay for teachers, and better conditions in schools. We've had demonstrations, petitions, meetings, you name it, and have really built the movement up in our area. We gave full support to the teachers' strike a couple of months ago—its really important for the parents and teachers to fight together.

Cockney

We've discovered that Reg Prentice couldn't care less about the kids of the working class, but later they want them for their factories. Do you know, the Authorities really hate it when we 'horrible' little working class people come marching along, shouting in our 'horrible' little Cockney accents, but I'm afraid they're going to have to start listening. We went to the Department of Education and Science to see Reg Prentice—he wouldn't see us. I think he was 'dead scared' of us. We went to 10 Downing Street, and marched to Divisional Office, and the kids had their little banners and said they wanted schooling. And the man sat behind his shiny desk, and he couldn't have given two hoots about us.

Patronising

When we went to see the Chairman of ILEA, do you know what he said to us, adult women? 'Don't worry, I'm not angry with you', just like we were all school children. He was so patronising. What is more annoying than anything is the way they treat you, as if you're a bit silly, 'now you've got to go home, and be good little girls, and wash your frillies out . . . ' you know? This is how it comes home to me. We've got to really fight these people.

When we went round with our petition it was really surprising, considering this is supposed to be a free country, how many people were really frightened to put their name on it. One woman we spoke to was very disturbed about what had happened in her school, but was terrified of the headmistress getting to know she was protesting. And it made us think, if she was afraid of the teachers and headmistress, what must it be like for her child? Even from school you're taught to be frightened of authority, so it's easier for people to thumb you down when you get to a grown up stage.

Press

The press hadn't time for us really. They said that the workingclass isn't interested in their children's education. (Annie) said that working class parents both have to go out to work to put food on the table, and I'm here (because I work in the evening as an office cleaner) to represent the parents of Hackney and we do care.

It seemed the press were only interested if we were going to run the teachers down. The 'Sun' asked me (Linda) weren't we upset about the teachers going on strike? I said we were in full support of the teachers because we realised that they had to strike. The next thing they seemed interested in was this racial thing, and was there violence in the school? We said, no, there was no racial trouble, and no violence . . . and we heard nothing more from the 'Sun' . . .

Penalised

If you're a woman you're penalised. If you're a mother its ten times worse. Where I work (Linda), when the teachers were on strike, there was a woman in tears because she couldn't pay her

rent. She was cursing the teachers instead of saying, 'Why can't I pay my rent in this day and age?' Its this 'them and us'. It still goes on between teachers and parents. And those teachers who think they are better than us—they are being conned as well. Its like the black and white, we fight each other instead of the government. Disturb a load of ants and watch how they go on—its like us, everyone in a mad panic. If only we could stop and control ourselves we could overthrow the government and everything.

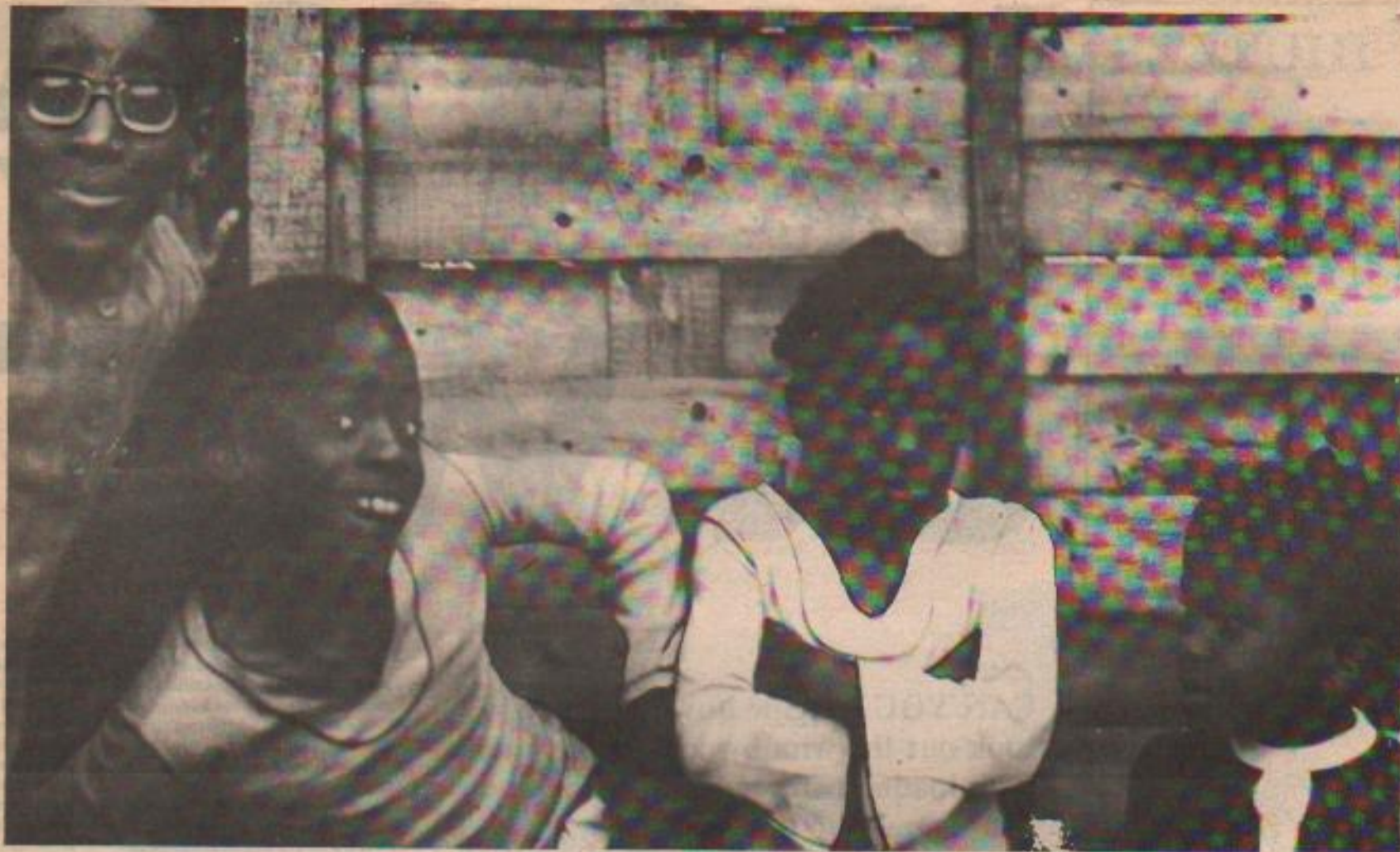
Example

It opens your eyes to things, getting up petitions and doing things together. Many like me (Linda) started getting involved in the campaign, and ended up getting involved with socialism. You go on believing in Labour till you go to them for something. I never thought of any government as a knight in shining armour, but I did believe Labour cared a bit for us.

We hope when people read this Womens Voice, they don't just put it down and forget it, because what we're doing is a lot of hard work and we have had good response. We hope they get up and start forming action groups not just for education, for everything.

Drastic

Don't let people tell you we won't achieve anything. We will if we have a strong fight. We have to do something drastic, not be quiet anymore because we've been very good girls. You've got to be able to stand up, and if you don't know the proper words, or speak with a Cockney accent, it doesn't really matter as long as you get up there and get people together.



Sorry Mum blacks are not invited

Martha Osamor
Hornsey London

EVERYBODY WOULD agree that growing up and going to school is one of the biggest ordeals in life, because of what is expected of you, and the parents usually share the burden. It becomes a bit too much when parents are also facing problems with jobs, housing, prices—you name it! And black parents have to also be prepared to answer such questions as, can blacks do such and such a job? Why do blacks always lose battles in films and on t.v.? Why is it that only blacks starve in this world? These same black parents have during the day, one way or another, come across discrimination at work or in housing—then have to face their kids' problems in the evening.

Tele

I have three children at school and they come home with different stories that spell the same thing—discrimination. This I am sure is what all the other black kids go through in schools all over Britain. My three each have their own way of approaching this degrading situation. The girl, who is five, just feels sorry for those children who call her names, for they show, as she puts it, that they only do what others, or their parents do. I mean she said, "This boy called me 'Wog' so I ignored him as I don't want any fights—he followed me round the playground calling me names. When I organised a game with some other friends this same boy wanted to join us. I said that he must first tell me why he called me names. He said that his friends down the street call blacks names, anyway it was on the t.v. too. On another occasion, one of the boys came home with a yellow slip inviting parents to Beer and Barbeque Disco. He put the slip in my hand, and said, 'These whites think that everything is only for them.' When I wanted to know more he explained that he had had a long argument with a bigger boy who saw him with the slip in his hand and said, 'What are you doing with that? Blacks aren't invited, only whites can go.'

We're only two

When we first moved from Tottenham to Hornsey my kids had to change school. My big boy came home and said, 'Mum, I don't think I'm going to like my new school. They even call me names.' I said to him that it must be because he is new and they'll stop when they get to know him. 'You don't understand Mum, this school is swarming with them—we are only two in my class.' Meaning swarming with white kids, and only two black kids in his class. A week later it was his birthday. He came home with three boys, I wasn't expecting them, we'd just moved and I couldn't afford any party. Nevertheless, we had a little tea party. Two weeks later he came storming in after school saying loudly, 'After all I've done for them, they still call me names.' He went on to say, 'I'm sorry, Mum, I never warned you I was bringing them home for tea—I thought that if I brought them home, they'd be my friends. This friendship only lasted for a week, now they've started all over again.'

The worst part is when a child is convinced that a teacher does not like him or her because they're black. As in most cases, teachers refuse to understand what these children are going through, the result can be that the child is wrongly classified as Educationally sub-normal by the teacher. It is hard to tell when the pressures of discrimination are having an effect on the child. Some can cope on their own, others need lots of help and understanding from adults (who are already hard-pressed as it is by the whole set-up). A few withdraw within themselves and never talk about it, not even to their parents. This is the beginning of real problems, and these children will need treatment in the end.

Fear

At the back of every black parent's mind, there is always the fear that there might not be a good future for their kids. At the same time these kids, as they are getting older, keep saying they will never do the kind of jobs that their parents do now. Like my son who refused to kiss a white friend of ours, and said to me later, 'It's alright for them to discriminate, but not us, WUV?'

WHY DOES YOUR HUSBAND IGNORE YOU?

Jenny Hawke

WHEN HE disappears behind the paper after work, is he just tired and thinking, 'I wish she'd shut up and get my dinner,' or has it ever struck you he might be going deaf?

I'd never thought it possible till I read 'Hazards at Work' by Pat Kinnersly. It really opened my eyes to the dangers people face at work—without realising we are in danger.

Noise

Noise is a good example. It not only makes you irritable and more liable to have accidents, it can also make you go deaf, and deafness comes gradually. Pat Kinnersly explains:

'He has trouble understanding what his wife is saying, especially if he's reading the paper, and his wife is talking while she's making noise in the kitchen. The wife accuses the husband of inattention, which he denies, while he complains she mumbles. Actually he eventually becomes inattentive when he realises how frustrating and fatiguing it is to strain to hear, when he tries to attend meetings, or visit friends and finds he cannot hear what is going on, and is laughed at for giving an answer unrelated to the subject under discussion. He soon, but very reluctantly, realises that something is wrong with him. He stops going out. Little by little his whole family life may be undermined.' Pg. 51-52. Sound familiar?

Well, there are lots of factories operating with noise levels above the safe 80dBA level. So you or your husband could well be on the way to deafness. The union should measure the noise level, and make sure effective action is taken—whether it be protective ear-muffs, reduced time working on a noisy job, or getting the machine fixed so they run more quietly. This can be done! Even though management may argue it's too expensive. Your hearing is worth more—and you've got to make that clear to them.

A friend of mine read the parts that apply to her husband's job, particularly the effect of vibration. Nick has been operating a vibrator that shakes down concrete in moulds to get the bubbles out. After a 4-hour Saturday morning shift, he had come home (30 miles) still shaking. She then mentioned another case she knew of. Her brother-in-law left Dow Chemicals after three years because he was turning yellow. His mates didn't leave because the company had encouraged them to take mortgages, and they couldn't match the wages elsewhere. Then there was a man who worked four years in a lime pit, and was laid up at the age of 43 with his lungs full of dust. He'll never work again.

Impotence

Two men in their 50s were given the job of spreading fertiliser that was known to cause impotence. One regained his ability to have sex after six weeks. The other felt he was past it forever, and started accusing his wife of unfaithfulness. In the end they both spent 223 months in a mental hospital.

I'm sure you can think of more cases. A picture begins to build up. In every case the risks could have been reduced, or even eliminated. But that cuts into profits, and employers always choose profits.

Pollution

If you live near a factory, you and your family may be exposed to dangerous fumes or dust. There is an enquiry going on in Birmingham now into the high lead content in the air. It affects children more than adults. Some children have been showing 'anti-social' behaviour like killing pets, etc., which doctors think may be linked to the high lead levels.

We've got to fight to eliminate these hazards from the factories and the neighbourhoods. Get the book. It costs 90p, but it's worth it. It gives details of all possible hazards, plus a list of the industries that use toxic substances, symptoms and treatment.

HAZARDS AT WORK: How to Fight Them, by Pat Kinnersly, is available from Pluto Press, Unit 10, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road, London NW1. 8LH. (90p + 7p postage).

I'm 'Mrs' or 'Mum' but never myself

Gillian Auciano
Ilford

A LOT has been written about the jobs that women are forced to choose in this society as a result of conditioning and lack of opportunity. But one of the most important points that's often missed is that women normally have to choose a job near home—with hours to fit in with the children's needs. So there's little chance of career prospects for us! Our priorities usually lie at home, our job is secondary.

We're taught to be uninterested in political or union matters, our minds are filled with the never ending problems of running a home, and time is always looking over our shoulders. Even to go to a union, or any kind of meeting, we've got to think about a meal the day before, or spend extra money in preparing a quick meal—even more pressures on our time, energy and money.

Depressing

Many women live in inadequate, depressing conditions. I work at a school and am not paid a good wage, but it's better paid than many other women, for example the assistants and the kitchen staff that also work at school. The work is hard, but more interesting than an assembly or packing line, and more fulfilling than most office jobs. Yet we still have to work extra hours and give of

ourselves at the end of a day's work. But the knowledge that there are some worse off than yourself does not make an individual's burden less. It should give us the determination to fight even more to change society that forces these burdens on us.

Satisfied

There are some who argue that they manage well and are happy running a home. There is a certain satisfaction in many aspects of housewifery. To manage to cook a nourishing meal for the family for 50p, you feel you've struck a blow against inflation, or should it be against the huge profits of the large grocery stores?

There is a great satisfaction seeing your children reach maturity. But have they ever questioned their mother's role, and the hours of work taken up caring for them? For when there is no time, energy or money left for a woman to enjoy life, or to develop herself outside her home and the narrow boundaries of housework, or when she loses her identity and is 'Mrs' or 'Mum' and never herself—it is time to question the woman's role and the society that created it and imposed it on half the population.

Pep pills

Women are being exploited, and if you aren't aware of this it is time you asked yourself a few questions. Ask why the majority of tranquillisers, pep-pills, sleeping tablets and anti-depressants are taken by women, why the majority of the mentally ill are women. This society makes a huge profit on the drugs that enable many women to face drudgery, overwork and the lack of opportunity to develop.

The men do not question these facts, the women will have to.



SCOTTISH REFUGE FOR BATTERED WIVES

"DIANE IS now 28. She went out with her husband for 15 months and they were happily engaged for a year. Shortly after their marriage he became very possessive with her and tried to break up all her relationships with other people including her own family. He also began to drink whenever he had the money to do so, and to beat her whenever he was drunk. The situation became intolerable and she left him to go and live with her father. After three months, a reconciliation took place, but shortly after the birth of their third child (now three) he assaulted her so badly that she had to go to hospital and he was given a thirty-day prison sentence. It was around this time that she made a suicide attempt, which temporarily brought her husband to his senses and alleviated the situation. Their fourth child (now two and the only one unplanned) arrived and things became as bad as ever. In desperation Diane moved to her sister's in Edinburgh where the Social Work Department drew her attention to the EWA house. She moved there immediately with the two younger-children, leaving the older ones with her sister so that they could continue to attend school regularly.



I HEAR YOU'RE PLANNING TO PROSECUTE ME FOR ASSAULT

She saw them almost daily and they came to the house at weekends. She applied to the Housing Department for a Corporation House and after four months was allotted one near the EWA House. It was a long wait and with the overcrowding and lack of fuel and cooking facilities (the latter problems are now overcome) she was often tempted to return home. She is about to get divorced and is prepared to let her husband see the children. She is now well-installed in her new house and an active member of the tenants association. Equally important (from our point of view) she regularly visits the Women's Aid House and tries to offer comfort and assistance to newcomers. She reflects sadly that the only happy days of her marriage were the seven weeks when her husband was unemployed and forced to stay at home due to lack of resources to buy drink. It would be foolish to pretend that her problems are solved. She is a very conscientious mother trying to bring up four children on her own with £19 per week and all the frustrations and loneliness that this involves, but at least she has been given a chance to make some kind of a new start.

Self Help

This is one case study from a report by 'Edinburgh Women's Aid'. This group was set up by members of Edinburgh women's liberation, and succeeded in getting two houses to rent from the corporation, and an initial grant of £500 from the Social Work Department. The houses are open to any women who are desperate to escape violence, but have nowhere to go. The houses are organised on a self-help basis, so that they are run only by the women living in them at the time. Some of the women only stay a couple of nights—others for many months until they can be re-housed with their kids. Edinburgh Women's Aid wants to see small self-help units in all areas, and is keen to offer advice to any women willing to start putting pressure on their local authorities. Already they have made links with groups in Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen, and hopes that the idea will spread through England too.

Men

It is important that battered women have somewhere safe to go by right. In most towns and cities there's no such provision, and if you go to the police they'll probably tell you to go home—they won't deal with 'domestic problems'. If they do agree to prosecute your husband, they can't offer you anywhere to go to get away from him. So most women keep their mouths shut, suffer the beatings, and accept that it's all part of our 'civilised' male-dominated society.

Unnatural

But the truth is—men aren't naturally women beaters. Men can be as kind, gentle and loving as women. What kind of society is this, that turns people to violence? What kind of jobs, and housing conditions, and burdens distort human beings and lead them to harm the people they love?

Battered wives must be protected, but Women's Aid centres will only become more crowded in this violent society. Remember most battered wives and their husbands were once happy young couples before the hardships and frustrations of married life in slums—unemployment—bad work conditions etc took their toll. Remember Diane? 'She went out with her husband for 15 months and they were happily engaged for a year...'

Anyone wanting to contact Scottish Women's Aid should write or phone Women's Voice for information.

women at war

CAN YOU imagine how it feels to look out the window and see six men with loaded rifles moving slowly and deliberately up both sides of your street, whirling to aim their guns at each sudden noise or quick movement—including your children at play, and your neighbours clipping the hedge? How would you feel when you saw the children, who gathered to stare at these men, lined up in their rifle sights as a result? What if you noticed these men were quite nervous, and that some behaved aggressively towards the people on your street—shouting abuse at them, threatening them with their guns? How safe would you feel if this parade of riflemen took place regularly, not only in daylight, but in the uncertain dimness at twilight and on pitch-black nights as well?

At the very least, you'd probably think this was an unsafe situation for a residential area, and your first reaction might be to ring the authorities to have these men taken from the streets at once. But if you live in my town—where this scene takes place daily—you wouldn't be able to ring anyone to have these men removed. Because this is Northern Ireland and the riflemen in this situation are 'The Security Forces', and they ARE the authorities.

But how do you explain this to a child who has just seen his five-month-old puppy, who ran out to bark at these strange men, exploded into a bloody pulp by a soldier who put his rifle to the dog's stomach, pulled the trigger and laughed? How do you tell this child's older brothers and sisters (just getting to the age where they feel protective and responsible towards their families) that they mustn't hate the soldiers who did this? But then, how do you convince yourself that you are doing the right thing by telling yourself and the children not to be angry? Can you only put this incident into perspective by remembering the innocent people who were shot by the army? Then the dead put seems so trivial.

Slumped

I think of a man who lived down my street. One night, after stopping his car at an army checkpoint, he was told to go on, and drove towards his home.

For reasons best known to the British Army, soldiers fired into the boot of his car, hitting him in the base of the spine. He slumped over the wheel. His three passengers thought

he had had a saw all the holes in the particular trap worked on a civilian, and work when he think of a friend burst into a husband taken given time to literally kicked and taken away nation. Later he underwent polite term for for ten days. (held without for release) fo

N I could fill W accounts of e which happen make it easier women's lives the war here, must be pulled might dismiss 'propaganda'. I don't wa ordinary pers who happens the reports of in the British my own expe I don't feel th between Catin a war between the Provisional ties involve in casualties, in British Army life so frustrat who say that a would result i remember tha



dramatically since the troops' arrival. No possible 'bloodbath' could be much worse than what we've experienced with the British Army presence.

Old story

I realise, whenever I think of 'the troubles' of the past six years here, that there has *always* been trouble in Derry. Not that Derry was a 'rough' city. It was poor and its narrow streets were crammed with wee overcrowded houses, but until the present 'troubles' began, it enjoyed one of the lowest crime rates in these islands.

'The troubles aren't new; there was always trouble here since I remember,' says one woman I know. She's sixty years old, and although not very big or tall, she impresses you as a strong person. She's had to be—since she was 13 she's worked in the shirt factories. That's hardly unusual, because here in Derry, it's always been the women who've kept bread on the table. Shirt factories were for years the only industry, and they wouldn't hire men because they could pay women far less. So women were (and in many ways still are) the force around which Derry was built.

Father

She's aware that she's been exploited; she's aware of a wide range of exploitation; she has reason to be aware of things. Besides facing the ordinary difficulties—housing problems, serious accident and illness in her family—she's experienced trouble which is less common, thank God. Her father was interned during earlier 'troubles'.

'I was nine years old before my father came home. He'd been in goal in the 20s, from before I could remember him. I knew something was wrong, but I didn't know what I was missing until he came home.'

Ghettos

When I hear her talk about the trouble she remembers in Derry over the years, I hear what many others have told me: wild discrimination in jobs and housing, a gerrymandered electoral system which kept a Tory government consistently in power here for 50 years, a bitterly sectarian police force which from time to time would go mad and invade Catholic ghetto areas, beating people, smashing windows, sometimes burning houses. But she was the first woman I'd know who had a father interned during her childhood—and she's a grandmother now.

Interned

Internment, perhaps more than anything else, ensures the continuation of the war between the Provisional IRA and the British Army. To speak of it and how it affects women's lives would require an article in itself: The heartbreak of someone you love being arrested, taken for 'depth interrogation' (reports of what they've undergone quickly get circulated to you), finally being held without charge, trial or release date in what can only be described as a concentration camp. Three times a fortnight, a half-hour visit is allowed.

No-one knows when someone they care about may be arrested and interned. The 'Security Forces' need merely believe you are a terrorist (whatever that means); no proof is required. Because of this, a horrible uncertainty invades all areas of your life if you happen to live in a Catholic area. 'Future' is a word with all meaning torn from it by internment and martial law. Your family, your job, your education and career plans can be changed utterly and literally overnight by internment.

Daddy?

One of the saddest things is to be visiting a mother whose husband is interned, when her three year old asks, 'When will Daddy be coming home? Why did the soldiers take him away? Why does he have to stay in goal?' his mother honestly didn't know the deeper answers to these questions, but just tried to explain that, 'Daddy never did anything that wasn't right, so soon they've got to let him come home again.' I wondered how long the child would accept this explanation, and how long his mother could

Martha Sutto writes from Derry of the bitter struggle and suffering of the women of Northern Ireland



Beating out a warning against approaching soldiers

live on in these hopes—and how each of them would cope when this explanation no longer worked.

Unemployment

Did I mention that there are other pressing issues here outside of Army harassment?—probably not, because the military situation overshadows everything else. But workers are exploited here, as everywhere else. New industries representing the world's biggest business interests are attracted here not only because of generous government subsidies and tax relief, but also because of the docile reputation of workers in this chronically depressed area. Workers feel lucky to work an 8-shift week for £30—at least (they don't complain loudly enough to worry their bosses).

Workers' control of industry and retaining the wealth of the country for its people are risky things to talk about, much less do anything about, in a society under martial law. Men who have gotten the first job any man in their family has held for a generation aren't likely to rock the boat—especially when they first feel the pride of being able to provide for their wife and family. Many women, who enjoy feeling 'provided for' by their men, perhaps for the first time in Derry history, don't want to do anything quite as 'unfeminine' as organising their shirt factory.

Other social concerns encounter difficulties as well. Reasonable demands for child-care centres and recreation facilities adequate for Derry's large number of children are dealt with at a snail's pace by bureaucratic authorities. 'These things take time, dear, and the troubles do slow things up so,' comes the patronising reply to exasperated parents' persistent enquiries.

Childcare

People from the community have tried to establish parents co-operative childcare centres, but none have survived long. Like so many other needs in Derry, these issues will probably only progress slowly until the shooting war is over, the troops have gone home and the internees been released. The necessity of daily dealings with an immediate aggressor roaming your streets with a gun leaves little energy to deal with less obvious forms of exploitation.

Letter from one Human being to another by Eiblin - Derry August 74

You're just a lad.
Standing nervously on our street corner
fingering the trigger of that gun
they issued to you,
telling you we are terrorists
to be destroyed like vermin.
Can't you see,
it's not like that at all?
Why should we want to kill?
We who know the anguish
Our past nought but a long, drab procession
of funerals, martyrs . . .
Could we ever wish this upon your folk too?
Just leave us be—
Let our destiny be ours to decide
Come what may.
Human beings cannot live inside barbed wire.
And what is the use of merely existing?
God knows we don't want to hate
anyone, least of all, you.
Go back to your folks, lad.
Surely they must be wondering
Where you've got to.

(Eiblin has asked that her full name should not be published, as she is an active Republican)

Milk

WOOPS, WOOPS. Bridlington in LANC'S? Even the new government re-organisation can't shift a Yorkshire seaside town to Lancashire...

To be more serious, however, I would like to add to Edith Khan's article about women in South Africa who are conned into buying milk products by women dressed up in nurses' uniforms. A doctor recently told me the dreadful story that goes with this. Apparently babies' feeding bottles are being laid on young children's graves in South Africa. The reason for this is the high death rate that has resulted from bottle feeding. In an extremely hot climate using powdered milk presents difficulties. If you make it up with boiling water so it is sterilised you have the choice of waiting hours before it cools, or scalding the baby's mouth. The alternative is to use tepid water which is not sterile and as a result there is a very high risk of disease.

The obvious answer is that mothers should be encouraged to use the very fine natural milk food that costs nothing. Anyone with any pretensions at all to being an expert in medicine can see that. The only trouble is that if mothers stop buying powdered milk, the milk companies don't make any profits. So the tragedies continue. Profits are apparently more important than children's lives.
Anna Poczuzko-Wigan



Pay for house work

I WAS interested in Mrs Pat Hughes' letter comparing work at home favourably with a 40-hour week in a factory. If women take note of this, I think they will be less likely to fall into the trap of shouldering a double burden of work outside the home and work (unpaid) inside

the home, and calling it 'liberation'. But a woman should have her own income, and not be dependent upon her husband for her livelihood. Therefore I advocate that women should demand (a) payment for motherhood (a necessary job); (b) payment for the keep of each child (a separate payment) and (c) payment for housework (a totally different job from looking after children). Home-helpers, employed by the local authority, should be available for women who are more suitable for work outside the home, whether they are mothers or not.

Some men do all they can to help their wives in the house, because they are decent chaps. Unfortunately not all men are decent chaps and there is no law to compel them to be. At the bottom of the scale there are brutal husbands and battered wives. In between there are large numbers of men who do a bit of housework grudgingly and badly, or won't do it at all, because they regard it as 'women's work'.

It is essential for a revolutionary movement to have a strong women's section which voices women's special demands. Of course we should unite with men against the common enemy, capitalism, and not descend to scabbing like the Cowley wives. But we also have our own fight, which must not be relinquished at any time.
Kathleen Jones, Shrewsbury

Anti Abortion

I'm writing about Gerry Byrnes article on abortion.

Whilst disagreeing with SPUC's radical ideas on outlawing abortion, the general trend towards abortion sickness and saddens me. I have two children and do not at this present stage want any more, so I am taking a contraceptive pill. If in say, five years time, when I will be 33 years old, I have made a definite decision not to increase my family by having more children. I will have a sterilisation. If I should become pregnant in that five years I am quite prepared to continue with my pregnancy. What all this is leading up to is my right to decide what I want. Sadly this is not the case with many other people, namely pregnant women. Those who find themselves in the socially undesirable position of having an inconvenient pregnancy are pressurised into abortions—in other words, why go through with a pregnancy, facing the uncertainty of the future, when all you need to do is sign the operation consent form and afterwards everything is neat and tidy again. BUT IT ISN'T! And won't be until the grass roots of the problem are tackled.

One type of girl who becomes pregnant is the one in her early teens, she has emotional problems, give her an abortion and she'll come back a year later for another, because the emotional problem has not been resolved.

Another female is the one in her late twenties, usually very intelligent and having gained an advantageous position for herself in society. She has a succession of sophisticated affairs, leaping in and out of bed with men, who emotionally can only do her harm. What never ceases to amaze me is that these girls rarely use any form of contraception. So she becomes pregnant. This time it's through the private door we go, so private that not even your GP will know! This will probably cost somewhere in the region of £150. Afterwards she won't be happy because consciously or subconsciously she wanted that baby—but most of all she wanted a man to marry her. She won't feel good either and still continues to play with human life.

Now then, what about the woman at the start of the menopause—she takes risks she wouldn't normally, thinking she's stopped ovulating and impatient to end this troublesome contraception business. She may have sons and daughters in their twenties, she's embarrassed and appalled at the years stretching ahead when she'll be too old to look after a child. Quite often these women need psychiatric treatment after an abortion, their feelings of guilt and remorse are so great.

What this long-winded article boils down to is that pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to the pressures of society, to come into the accepted standard of the norm. One of the rules of this society being: Don't have an inconvenient child. The reasoning being that it would disrupt the safe patterns of living one feels one should slot into.

My argument is, why should any one of these three examples feel obliged to abort for the sake of face in an apathetic society like ours? In many other societies other than western there is no such thing as 'illegitimate'. A middle-aged woman would probably feel quite proud to become pregnant at such a late date.

This abortion business, apart from strictly medical reasons concerning the mother or baby, is a product of our materialistic society. Wake up women! Don't let the blood of your unborn children be the oil that keeps the materialistic machine running smoothly.
Patricia Phillips—Stockport

LETTERS

B Kerr
61 Tylney Croft
Harlow Essex

Half wit?

I WAS amazed to read Christine Ayley's smugly complacent 'article' about 'a woman's place' (Women's Voice No. 11) in which she states that 'an awareness of society' is the crux of woman's lot. It is unfortunate that her own awareness of society seems to be along sadly limited lines, and I should like to take the opportunity to enlighten her on a few of society's drawbacks which she seems not to have noticed in her determination to 'get up off (her) backside and do something now'.

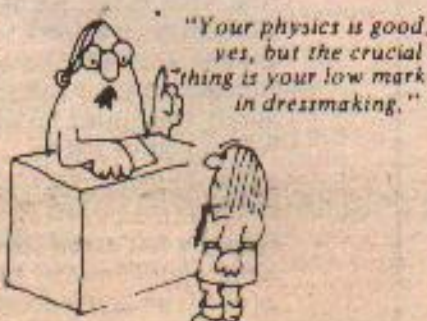
I am a well qualified woman in a highly paid job, and should therefore (if we assume her premise to be right) be as smug as she is about my position in society. On the contrary, however, I am totally dissatisfied with it. I spend a great deal of my time at work being patronised and patted on the head by my male colleagues; my ideas and suggestions, though given a hearing, are rarely taken seriously; and, because I have the added misfortune of being young and reasonably attractive, I am more often ogled and leered at than treated as an intelligent human being.

Outside of my place of work, the treatment is worse. Middle-class men are patronisingly 'courteous' to me, addressing me as if I were a half-wit, while working-class men whistle, jeer, catcall and tell me to 'get your knickers off', implying that I am capable of little else. In my job, with my salary, at my age, a man would be respected as 'someone who will go far'. I seem to be thought of as a cross between a mental deficient and a monkey.

These, Mrs Ayley, are the problems of a very privileged woman. I do not have to worry about pay, since my salary is better than that of many men I know. I have a job which I enjoy. I have no children and I am financially dependent only on myself. The vast majority of women in our society are subjected to the treatment which I undergo, but this attitude towards them is carried through into their jobs, their homes, in fact into everything they do or try to do.

'Wallowing in self pity' is not the cause but the effect of the way women are exploited and abused, and 'determination and perseverance' will get you nowhere if you are forever battling against a belief that your sex somehow makes you sub-human.

Maggi Hunt, Altrincham, Cheshire



Womans place

HAVING JUST read Christine Ayley's letter in Women's Voice No. 11, I was so enraged I had to write and bring up a few of the points she made.

It seems quite obvious to me that this woman has no inkling of an idea what life is really like for the majority of working-class girls and women. What she says probably holds true for the privileged 'few' who do get so far as being able to choose their career and who can afford to look upon themselves as a 'liberated person'.

She suggests that the main reason so many girls end up in second-rate jobs with second-rate pay is laziness and apathy—what a slander!

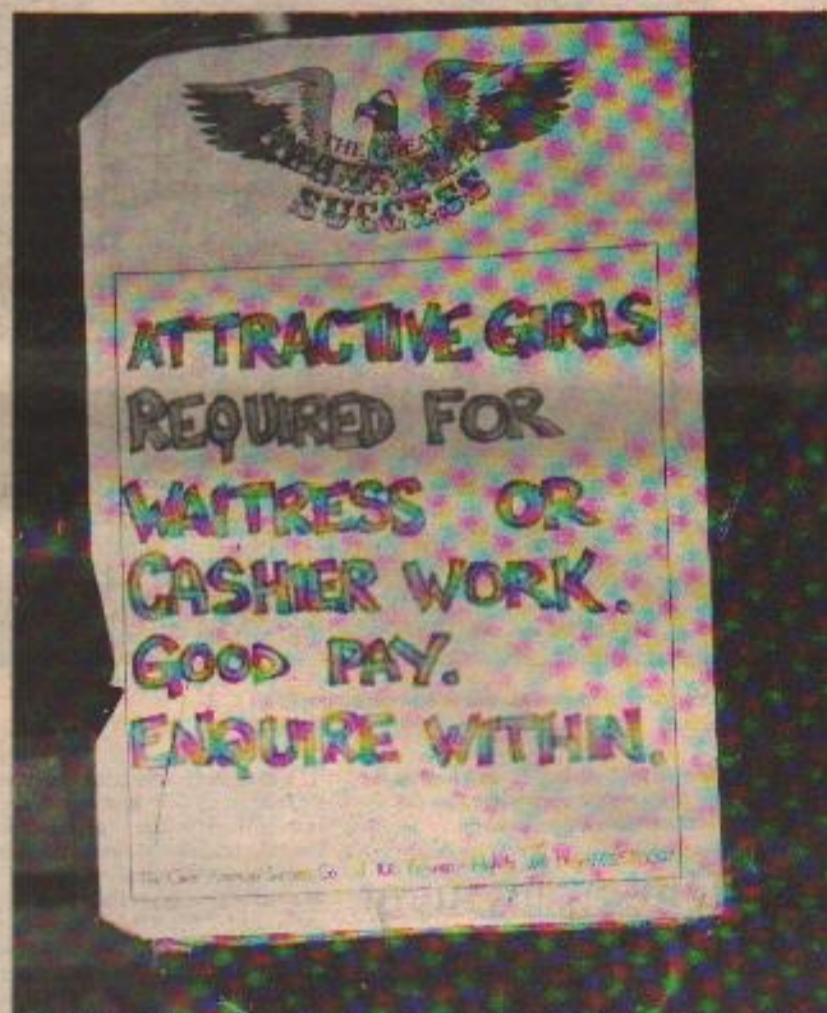
I suggest most girls end up working in factories etc because a 'good education' is simply not available to them; (if you go to a private school or the like, that is quite different; your parents can see you through further education). Girls are not encouraged to do 'academic' subjects—yes, they are encouraged to do typing and shorthand because that is what girls 'should do'. The whole educational structure is based on the knowledge that for most people (boys and girls) very few are chosen to be successful careerists. For most children, going to school is simply a preparation for them becoming workers in our society; it would not be profitable if all the women who run the factories etc decided they all wanted to become career women in commerce or something.

So don't tell me or any of the young girls I know who have just left school (now working in various factories in Teesside), that the reason they are not on their way to some sparkling career is due to laziness.

I would like to know where you get your information about 'few barriers occupation-wise'. How many girls go straight into an apprenticeship? I'll tell you, the only ones I know are hairdressers (and they are becoming less as the pay is so lousy). What nonsense to say that training facilities are there if only we used a little bit of 'intelligence'.

The plain truth is this, Ms Ayley, for the majority of us, these things are just not there to be got, these are some of the things we are fighting to achieve, so don't patronisingly tell us to 'get off our backsides and do something'. We can and will smash this rotten system that exploits all working people, we'll smash it at the core and then through socialism we will achieve the things (including the two points I have mentioned) that enable us to live our lives how we want to.

Sue Catchpole, Teesside



No Comment

Breast feeding

THE QUESTION of breast feeding, like that of having children at all, is not something which socialists should be 'for' or 'against'. It is not simply a question of nutritional value or commodity consumption, but of women's role and her right to make decisions based on her own needs.

Breast feeding is 'natural', it helps form immunities against some illnesses, it provides an instant balanced diet for the baby, it is free. These are the main advantages. On the other hand, it means that the mother must be available to feed the baby every four hours every day, or 24 hours every day if you believe in 'feeding on demand'. Now it is not hard to see how this affects the life of the woman, her ability to go to work or even to leave the baby for a few hours with a baby-sitter. The answer to this very practical problem is to look for an

adequate substitute for mother's milk and mother's breast, ie powdered milk and a bottle, but since the profit motive is the incentive for the production of all commodities in our society, it is not surprising to find that baby food is expensive. Neither is it surprising, knowing that profit takes precedence over welfare, that the product is not always of good quality and that the manufacturers would like the baby to consume more than it actually needs. The way to tackle these problems is not, however, to suggest that all women should return to breast feeding in order to thwart the capitalists of their profits, but that women should organise and demand cheap baby food and also demand that the most thorough medical analysis be carried out on the contents of the baby food and on its effects on the child. Such a struggle to provide a really adequate alternative to breast feeding would give women the freedom to reach a decision on feeding which was based on their own social needs and aspirations without the fear of causing physical deprivation or damage to their children.
Siobhan Molloy—Belfast

WOMEN AT WORK IN WALES

Great Hall, U.W.I.S.T. Cathays Park, Cardiff (sponsored by NCCL). Saturday 2nd November 10-5.30pm

Creche facilities included in Conference fee of £1.00 (50p for claimants, OAPs and students). For registration-forms, information and agendas, please contact: Mary Slater, 47 Marlborough Road, Cardiff. Phone: Cardiff (0222) 29908, Mon-Sat 10-6.30pm.

Two for the price of one at Lewis'

Aileen Knowles
HAVING READ Sue Jones' article on shopworkers (Womens Voice No 11) and found it extremely interesting, I would like to extend the subject, seeing as how it is a job that does concern a large amount of working class women. I am a member of the staff in that great capitalist concern, Lewis's Ltd in Manchester.

It's a large store and when fully staffed, employs around 2000 people, mainly women. At present there are about 1500 staff, management policy being, why employ two women, and pay two wage packets, when you can make one woman work herself into the ground all day, and take home only one wage packet? Another reason is the disgustingly low pay. The women workers at my place fall into three groups. Firstly those whose kids have grown up, and who find that with the cost of living what it is today, hubby's wage on its own isn't enough any more. The only qualification they have is that they spent 15 or 16 years bringing up the kids, and as we know, no one considers that to be of any importance when it comes to how much you're to be paid. Then there's the teenage girls who've either opted out of school, or have had to leave due to financial problems at home. Most have no qualifications to get them a decent job. For them shopwork means they can knock off at 6.0'clock with no worries about homework, and they have a couple of quid in their pockets to spend. And of course there's the few with degrees or diplomas in retail and management, who train for managerial positions.

Unions

Luckily we do have a union in the store (I suppose USDAW is better than nothing)

but until recently union strength there has been something like 29 per cent and weren't the management happy about that state of affairs!
However, in the last two months a decided improvement has been made. We formed a recruitment committee, which I was on. By sheer hard work and practically standing over people saying 'Sign here,' the recruitment committee has upped the union membership in the store to 55 per cent. Now this still isn't good enough, but it's a start. True, we had a problem. The management tried buying various of us off. One person was forced to resign, one of our most experienced members was tempted with promotion, and I was offered a marvellous job as a beauty consultant—at Kendal's! But we resisted and got results. The recruitment campaign, as well as boosting morale enormously in our slowly stagnating branch, also proved invaluable when it came to negotiation of this year's wage increase. The negotiating committee could actually state that if we didn't get the maximum possible under Stage 3 then Lewis's, Manchester were going out on strike. They knew we meant it. We got the rise!

Electric

The atmosphere in the store at the time was electric. We even had managers opening doors, and saying 'Good morning' to union branch officials—and as for the food hall, 90 per cent women, it wasn't a case of persuading them to walk out if the need arose, it was damn hard work trying to keep them in! As for the union full-timers, they didn't know what the hell to do—USDAW policy being to avoid strike action at all costs. They certainly didn't want one of their biggest concerns out on the streets. Eventually they graciously agreed to support us if we went out. A superb case of the rank and file membership taking charge.

So take heart all you women working in weak union shops, although its by no means easy, the union can be built and made strong. Get yourself known at branch meetings. Don't be afraid of standing up and telling the so called experienced trade unionists what you think of their out of date ideas. Make sure you know of all the various disputes in the store AND that you have a hand in helping solve them. That way you will find that you can get enormous support from the rank and file members in reshaping your branch and throwing out the ancient ideas that many USDAW branches seem to have today. And you will probably find, like I did, that the women, once aware of the importance of being in the union, will soon become the leaders in the struggles, which we all face in shops whose mottos are always
PROFIT BEFORE PERSONNEL

Slender sexpots or bulging beauties?

JUDITH CONDON writes the second part of her exposure of the slimming 'industry'



SLIMMING FIRMS love fat people. It sounds stupid till you think about it. They also love thin people who think they are fat. The reason is that fat people can be made to worry. And worried people can be persuaded to buy. Every year the slimming industry turns over £50 million in Britain alone. If you've read the adverts, you'll know the extravagant claims they make, but you may not know that many have long ago been exposed as a complete fraud. You may have read the Food Standards' report that proved 'slimming' bread is no less fattening than ordinary bread, it only costs more.

Most notorious are the 'sweat-it-off' brand products, including Stephanie Bowman garments and those ridiculous 'Trimjeans'—inflatable plastic Bermuda shorts, in which you have to perform some strenuous exercises. (But you can also wear them about your garden and home, and kill off your family).

It has been proved that doing the same exercises has the same effect, with or without 'Trimjeans'. If you really work at it, you temporarily lose a very little weight. What Trimjeans claim is to lose you lots of inches. It's a clever con-trick. You may lose them from one part of your body, but if you look a little further you'll find they've just moved on to cling somewhere else. What you lose on the swings you gain on the roundabouts, so to speak.

The only way to slim is to eat less over a long period of time. It is dangerous to cut out one particular kind of food, even carbohydrates. Crash diets are useless. If you become able to lose weight very quickly, then you also become able to put on weight very quickly. Your weight becomes volatile. And that's what keeps the slimming firms ticking over. But there's something worse than fraudulent adverts and over-priced sweat garments. Some slimming products can do serious damage to your health, and slimming can kill you.

Pills

Many slimming aids come in the form of pills. These are made of all kinds of glucose, drugs and laxatives. Taking any of them for a period longer than three months can be dangerous, yet there are no warnings, and the pills are sold freely over the counter, often to very young girls. Some of the pills are amphetamines, which act on your central nervous system. Some are barbiturates. You should avoid both at all costs, because they are addictive.

Some of the pills are anorectic, which means they act to depress your appetite, and this can affect your blood pressure. Many appetite depressants and meal substitute biscuits are made up of methyl cellulose, which swells up inside you to make you feel full, and also

possibly sick and dizzy. The swelling methyl cellulose can irritate the walls of your stomach. There is some debate as to whether it can cause cancer. Other pills activate your thyroid gland, to speed up your body functions in the hope that you will burn up fat. You are more likely to burn up your system and your nerves.

Laxatives

As for laxatives, you can see the crude logic involved. Presumably the food is meant to shoot through you before it can turn to fat. Prolonged use of laxative is very harmful, and there is no proof to show that they have any long-term slimming effect.

All these products come under fancy trade names. The women who take them may also be under medication from their doctors for some illness, and the different pills could act on one another. Or they may be taking pills over a long period without ever knowing what it is in them, or what harm they can do.

One of the spin-offs of the slimming business is a disease called 'anorexia-nervosa'. This particularly affects young girls, who become obsessed with losing weight to such an extent that they enter a nervous state where they just cannot eat. A typical victim of this disease was a school girl who lost a pound a day till she was under five stones, and then she died. The disease was not unknown before the cult of slimming, but it has increased rapidly in the last few years. At the very least, it causes extreme disorientation of your mind and body, and you are liable to end up in hospital.

The slimming bosses don't concern themselves with such problems so long as the money keeps rolling in. No one asks you when you buy these pills whether you are epileptic, whether you are already taking tranquilisers or other pills, or if you really know what you're buying.

Weight watchers

One branch of the industry might be called its psychological warfare wing. Slimming clubs: Weight Watchers, a secretive organisation more like a masonic league, founded by Professor W H Sebrall Junior, and introduced to Britain in 1967. You pay about £1 a session, and 30,000 people have coughed up so far. Then Silhouette Club, with 34,000 members; and Weight Checkers International, launched in 'Woman' magazine, with 35,000 members. The Slimming magazine club, linked with the Daily Mirror Slimming club claims 12,600 members.

At the end of the list come all the small operations throughout the country with their own diet sheets and individual methods of public shame. One club in Great Yarmouth, for instance, publishes a list of all the members who have put on weight each week in the local newspapers window. Often the big firms run on a franchise system. The person who pays to use the name and run the club also pockets the fines imposed on over-fat members.

But then, if you're very rich, you certainly won't want to take such a tedious road to the body beautiful. Womens' Voice readers may not believe this, but you can now buy private cosmetic surgery where you have parts of your superfluous body fat actually carved off. The operation takes four hours or more, and it leaves major scars, but they try to make it so the scars come under your bikini. If you've still got a few hundred pounds to spare after that, you can have a tube put inside you which by-passes the small intestine. It's called a jejuno-ocolic shunt, and it shunts the food you can't stop eating right out of you again. And did you know, in America some rich women are even having taps worms inserted into them, to keep them thin. Enough said!!

Obscene

The biggest obscenity imaginable is that all this takes place in a world where masses of people are starving—some of them in the so-called affluent societies of the West. In Britain we are now down to our 1953 eating standards because of the fantastic rise in food prices. On a world scale, hunger and malnutrition are a gigantic problem. It could be solved. All the wasted technology that goes into making multi-flavoured slimming products could be set to work to solve it. If the people of Bangladesh had had enough money to shore up their river banks there wouldn't be flood and famine and cholera there now.

If you had control of the food industry, would you persuade everyone in Britain to eat 120lb of harmful white sugar a year, and then con them into buying slimming products too? Or would you try to make sure that everyone had a decent nutritious diet? We'd never have the chance to make that decision till we squeeze Mr Cube and his mates out of existence. Till we stop worrying about our own fat, and start planning to take back the fat profit that swells and bulges in the coffers of our rulers.

BIRMINGHAM NURSES SHOW DISGUST S Philips COHSE Shop Steward Highercroft Hospital



THE NURSES' strike at Highercroft Hospital was a result of anger and frustration. We'd been encouraged by the fighting talk of our own union, then it seemed that the government was willing to see reason—but when it was announced that we wouldn't hear the government's report findings until September 10, we saw red. And worse, the COHSE National Executive decided to call off all action pending the result of the enquiry, even though it was 16 days past the deadline they themselves had set. We felt we'd been let down once again—we needed a rise immediately—not promises

of things to come.
At Highercroft we decided to take matters into our own hands, and let the country know of our disgust with our own leaders and indeed the government. The one really great thing about the strike at Highercroft was the fact that two rival unions took part, showing that nurses could organise themselves at rank and file level, and act in unison.
The strike achieved more publicity than anyone expected, and we nurses felt we got the message across to the public, and to our own union—that we were not

content with our situation, and felt a deep distrust of the bureaucracy.
Nurses have been exploited over the years, mainly because we are predominantly women, and as women have been treated as second class citizens throughout society. It was no wonder very little has been done to improve the lot of nurses.
But the nurses are beginning to realise the benefits of belonging to a trade union rather than a so-called professional body like the Royal College of Nurses, who have been representing the nurses for so long, and have done so

little for the working nurse.
The militancy among the nurses has been attributed to the fact that there is an increasing number of males in the nursing profession. This may have something to do with it—but the female nurse has heard the call, and is ready and willing to take up her banner, and fight to improve her rewards and her conditions, and indeed some of us will continue to fight long after this campaign is over, to improve the conditions within this society of every working woman.

WE BAN PRIVATE PATIENTS

who can't afford to pay for the 'privilege' of prompt treatment. The consultants who run the system obviously have an interest in keeping waiting lists long. Waiting lists are not funny. There are over half a million people on hospital waiting lists now, for complaints ranging from tonsillitis to urgent heart surgery. People on waiting lists suffer. Do the advocates of private practice care? Do they hell! Our freedom of choice is more important than your pain, they are telling us.

Fancy meals

What would be the effect of banning private practice? Firstly, private patients who are not in urgent need of treatment could be kicked out to make way for people who do. Private rooms could be allocated to people who need them (for quiet or intensive care). Hospital staff who waste time attending to the petty whims of private patients (setting out silver tea services, cooking fancy meals etc) could spend more time relieving the suffering. Consultants would be prevented from using NHS operation theatres and facilities and staff to line their own pockets.

This would have an immediate effect on waiting lists. It wouldn't wipe them out, but it would help. It would establish the principle that medical treatment should be on the basis of need and not ability to pay.

Subsidy

It would reduce the power of those consultants who use private practice as a weapon to blackmail the NHS. If consultants had to choose between working for the NHS or going into private practice completely separate from the NHS, the vast majority would choose the NHS—private practice simply cannot support many consultants full-time. Without the subsidy from the NHS in terms of equipment, facilities and staff used free of charge, private practice would become much less attractive.

Fight

If we can rid the NHS of this parasitic leech we can start to work seriously to force the rebuilding of it as a free service of well paid staff providing a comprehensive and adequate health service. The fight against private practice is in the programme of the Labour Party and both health service unions. In the end, though, it is only going to be won if all hospital workers get together and ban private patients from our hospitals. This is what we are trying to do in my hospital as part of a fight for higher pay and for a better health service.

by Judith Jones
NUPE
Shop Steward
Salford Royal
Hospital



HOSPITAL WORKERS all over Britain have recently been taking action over the presence of private patients in the National Health Service. Indignant consultants and private patients have had a field day talking of 'freedom of choice' and saying that private practice keeps the NHS going. The truth is very different. The 'freedom of choice' so beloved by our politicians is nothing more, and nothing less, than the freedom to deny treatment to someone who needs it more, but who can't afford to pay for it. Like me . . . like you.

Waiting lists

The effect of private practice is to lengthen waiting lists by adding people



THE NHS IS JUST A WHITE ELEPHANT



WE ARE four International telephonists working in London. 'Keep the world talking' the advertisements say, but if you try and have a word with a colleague next door, the supervisor soon tells you off. The atmosphere in the exchange is very much like school, with the school teachers (the supervisors) trying to instil discipline in the pupils—that's us, the telephonists!

History

We have a union, the UPW, the union of Post Office Workers, however it is very weak at head office, so any changes we've managed to get, we've negotiated within our exchange. We've achieved quite a lot such as longer

Keeping the world Talking

by Lynda, Angie,
Maureen and Lyn

meal reliefs, a much better overtime agreement, and made changing our duties a lot easier.

We've created history within our exchange by holding regular membership meetings enabling everyone to put forward comments, opinions and proposals.

Night

The exchange is staffed by men in the evenings, who seem to work less hours a week than we do. It's much more enjoyable working in the evenings, with a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Their union is far more experienced and stronger than ours, which is why they have better conditions. At

night the policy seems to be that if the staff are kept happy the exchange will run efficiently. During the day the telephonists always come at the bottom of the list in any consideration, which results in a large turn-over of staff, and therefore a great wastage of Post Office revenue.

Control

We are always willing to learn from those who have struggled before us, so that we are better equipped to continue the fight for more participation in the running of the exchange.

After all, we are the ones who do the work and earn the revenue, so surely we should have more say in how the business is run.

FED UP OF WAITING

by Linda Walsh

Report of Equal Pay Strike at Salford Electrical Instruments, (GEC) Heywood

400 WOMEN at Salford Electrical Instruments, Heywood are out on strike for the first time in 18 years. They have been negotiating steps towards equal pay for the past 12 months. The women, all AUEW members, are graded semi-skilled, the same as some men in the factory, but their earnings are approximately 2/3 of the men's earnings. They only get 85 per cent of their bonus, compared to the men's 150 per cent. Bella Fullard, chairman of the branch explained, 'We got fed up of waiting and decided to throw the piecework agreement out. On 29 July, we declared "day work".'

'Last week management gave us the option of working piecework or having no work, we stuck to our guns so they locked us out.'

Strike

The women are expecting a long strike, so they are getting organised. They have formed a strike committee and arrange regular meetings to keep all the women informed. A strong picket is being maintained, and a hall is available for their children with the women taking turns to look after them. Trips to the Social Security have been arranged, to prevent individuals being intimidated.

During the war the premises were a prisoner of war camp. As one of the pickets said, 'Welcome to Colditz, we're not allowed to talk, we have to sit sideways at our benches and just work, work, work.'

Women at the parent factory in Eccles have not yet come out in support. The Heywood women are not too disheartened, and have been down to Eccles recently to give out leaflets explaining the issues and asking for support. If a mass meeting at Eccles decides to support them, the struggle will be won much easier.

Stubborn

Shop steward, Mrs J Brown summed up many of the strikers' feelings, 'This place has got very militant over the last two years because of the stubborn attitude of the management. There are women in other engineering firms in the district who are getting far more than us. After all we're only asking for what we're entitled to. We have never had a dispute like this. The women have woken up, and realised it's time for us to stop being cheap labour.'

Bella Fullard added, 'The pickets are up, and we'll stay out till we win.'

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