

womens voice

WOMENS PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

Abortion Campaign on the move

Glasgow NAC public meeting with 300 held on May 18th. Picket planned of James White's surgery.

Edinburgh NAC public meeting well attended on May 26th. Lobbying of MPs and petitions to continue. Also mobilising for Scottish demo on June 21st.

Manchester Day of Action, June 7th, Demonstrations: Assemble 2.30pm at Albert Square. 4pm Public meeting in Houldsworth Hall with West London Theatre Workshop doing their play on abortion. The morning will be spent in outskirts of Manchester gathering petitions.

Midlands Petitioning and leafletting, letters to MPs and evidence to Select Committee. Trade union leaflet produced with model resolutions being distributed in factories and union branches. Demonstration and Public Meeting June 7th. Assemble 1pm New Speakers' Corner, Rally 3pm Digbeth Civic Hall. Creche and accommodation provided.

Brighton Public meeting at Brighton General Hospital June 16th. Meeting at university June 6th. West London Theatre Workshop is doing its 5 minute street theatre piece outside factories and hospitals and in shopping areas where we petition every Saturday. We are already selling tickets (subsidised by Sussex students union) at union branches and public meetings, in and around work places and estates for the coaches to the June 21st demo in London. We're using local radio, making a film and organising a creche for the day of the demo.

Newham NAC public meeting, June 9th. Motorcade and mass leafletting organised for May 31st and June 7th in preparation.

Sheffield: NAC Public Meeting, City Memorial Hall, June 12th, 7.00pm.

Leicester Public Meeting, June 7th, backed by trades council. Leafletting, flyposting, collections and petitions, being done. All the estates are being covered. Very good response from Asian Women. Union branches voting on model resolution from April issue of Women's Voice. Having heard a rumour that SPUC were intending to book every coach in Leicester for the day of the demo. We've already booked ours.

**DEFEAT THE JAMES WHITE ABORTION
(AMENDMENT) BILL**

ALL OUT 21 JUNE

LONDON 2pm CHARING CROSS EMBANKMENT. RALLY 4 pm IN HYDE PARK

GLASGOW 2 pm LEAVING BLYTHESWOOD SQUARE. March THROUGH CITY CENTRE TO CLYDESIDE AMPHITHEATRE

ABORTION: OUR RIGHT TO CHOOSE

**'If the James White Abortion
(amendment) Bill goes through,
80,000 women will lose their
legal right to abortion.'**

NO RETURN TO BACKSTREET ABORTION

**'Since 1967 when the abortion law
was changed, illegal backstreet
abortions have decreased by
three quarters.'**

THE FOLLOWING Labour MPs voted FOR the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. The majority of them are sponsored by the trade unions; the ones with the name of the union in brackets are members of that union but not sponsored.

Pressure must be put on them to change their vote. Members of those unions should raise the matter at branch and district meetings, instructing the union Executive to take some action to ensure they vote against when the bill is discussed again.

Ronald Atkins	Preston North	(NUT)
Kenneth Marks	Manchester, Gorton	(NUT)
H Boardman	Leigh	USDAW
Frank McElhone	Glasgow, Queens Park	(USDAW)
Walter Padley	Ogmore	USDAW
Richard Buchanan	Glasgow, Springburn	NUR
Tom McMillan	Glasgow, Central	NUR
Leslie Spriggs	St Helens	NUR
Ian Campbell	Dunbartonshire, West	(TGWU)
Lewis Carter-Jones	Eccles	TGWU
Peter Doig	Dundee West	TGWU
James Dunn	Liverpool, Kirkdale	TGWU
John Horam	Gateshead	TGWU
Frank Hatton	Manchester, Moss Side	(TGWU)
Roy Hughes	Newport	TGWU
Eddie Loydon	Liverpool, Garston	(TGWU)
Kevin McNamara	Kingston-upon-Hull	TGWU
Simon Mahon	Bootle	(TGWU)
Bob Mellish	Southwark	TGWU
Gordon Oakes	Widnes	TGWU
Michael O'Halloran	Islington, North	TGWU
Terry Walker	Kingswood	TGWU
Ivor Clemiston	Luton, East	(NGA)
Michael Cocks	Bristol, South	GMWU
A Duffy	Sheffield, Attercliffe	GMWU
Michael English	Nottingham, West	GMWU
James Johnson	Hull, West	GMWU
Fred Peart	Workington	GMWU
Neville Sanderson	Hillingdon & Hayes	(GMWU)
John Smith	Lanarkshire, North	(GMWU)
Stanley Cohen	Leeds, South East	TSSA
Thomas Cox	Wandsworth and Tooting	EEPTU
Walter Harrison	Wakefield	EEPTU
David Stoddart	Swindon	EEPTU
Alex Eadie	Midlothian	NUM
Alan Fitch	Wigan	NUM
Adam Hunter	Dunfermline	NUM
Michael McGuire	Ince	NUM
Roy Mason	Barnsley	NUM
Edwin Wainwright	Dearne Valley	NUM
Alexander Wilson	Hamilton	NUM
Alec Woodall	Hemsworth	(NUM)
Robert Woof	Blaydon	NUM
John Evans	Newton	(AUEW)
Dan Jones	Burnley	AUEW
John Robertson	Paisley	AUEW
George Rodgers	Chorley	(AUEW)
William Small	Glasgow, Garscadden	AUEW
David Watkins	Consett	AUEW
James Hamilton	Bothwell	AUEW,
James Lamond	Oldham, East	Construction Section
Harry Ewing	Stirling	(UPW)
Charles Morris	Openshaw	UPW
Roy Hattersly	Birmingham, Sparkbrook	(ASTMS)
Fred Willey	Sunderland, North	ASTMS
Colin Jackson	Brighouse	(NUJ)
Ted Leadbitter	Hartlepool	NUPE
Tom Pendry	Stalybridge & Hyde	NUPE
Bruce Millan	Glasgow, Craigton	APEX
James Tinn	Teesside, Redcar	NUB
T Urwin	Houghton-le-Spring	(Blastfurnacemen)
Leo Abse	Pontypool	AUBTW
Ernest Armstrong	Durham NW	
Joel Barnett	Heywood and Royton	
Alfred Broughton	Batley and Morley	
Jim Callaghan	Neath	
Donald Coleman	Glasgow, Maryhill	
J M Craigen	West Lothian	
Tam Dalyell	Thurrock	
Hugh Delargy	Coatbridge and Airdrie	
James Dempsey	Rother Valley	
Peter Hardy	Durham	
Mark Hughes	Liverpool, Edge Hill	
A Irvine	Dartford	
S Irving	Rutherglen	
Gregor Mackenzie	Greenock and Port Glasgow	
J Dickson Mabon	East Kilbride	
Dr M S Millar	Rugby	
William Price	Manchester, Blackley	
Paul Rose	Merthyr Tydfil	
Ted Rowlands	Ayrshire South	
James Sillars	Westhoughton	
Roger Stott	Glasgow, Pollock	
James White	Teesside, Thornaby	
Ian Wigglesworth	Bolton, East	
David Young		

Photo Angela Phillips (IFL)

DON'T LET THEM GET AWAY WITH IT!



TUC International Women's Year demonstration. Several thousand trade unionists marched through London on May 25th and faced a rally addressed by some of the greatest sell-out merchants the TUC has to offer.

Back street abortion

I AM FIRMLY in agreement with any termination of pregnancy if the woman's circumstances are such that the child would be unwelcome. I am a woman who was married to a compulsive gambler. I had to work to keep myself and my children and husband and pay his debts. I was 30 years of age before I was married. After I was married I discovered my husband was a compulsive gambler and I didn't intend to have any children anyway. I was afraid they would turn out the same as my husband. How was I going to cope with children and a husband constantly in debt?

At the age of 36 I suddenly found myself pregnant. It was a terrible blow. I tried everything I could to get rid of it but couldn't. Four years later I had another one. Two years later another. I was 43. I just felt that I could not face up to having another child.

If I had another child that meant probably another five years off work. My husband was still gambling—he just could not help it. My sister knew how to get in touch with a state registered nurse through a doctor's wife. I never knew the woman's name. I was just given her address. I went there one Thursday and she performed a slight operation. I think all she did was force the womb open. She told me to go home and drink as much gin as I could. (I think this gin business is all my eye—an old wives tale). It would probably happen during the night. Which as a matter of fact it did.

My husband refused to have anything to do with me. He was

against it, so I went to my sisters. Afterwards I went to my mother's house and my sister looked after me. In the middle of the night I felt something. My sister got a pail and said 'here sis, you sit over that and see what you can do.' I felt something coming away and she looked—I couldn't—and she said 'I think that's the afterbirth.' The doctor's wife gave me some M&B tablets so I didn't have any fever. It cost me £30, 28 years ago. Don't you think I had every right?

When we were first married, my husband always withdrew. He strongly objected to that and said there was no satisfaction in it. He bought sheaths. He also maintained there was no satisfaction in that. Then we tried pessaries and the last thing I tried was a cap. This must have been when I slipped. I thought women didn't have babies at 43. A man's only got to put his trousers on the end of the bed and I get pregnant. I am that sort of woman.

I don't think unwanted children should be brought into the world. There's a high rate of women left by their husbands and girls struggling to make ends meet. I am definitely in favour of women having pregnancies terminated in any kind of circumstances if they don't want a baby. I think that they should be given every help possible.

I don't agree with all those religious maniacs who would say 'Oh, you're destroying life'. I'm 71 and I still think the same way—*even more so*. Age hasn't mellowed me, only made me see it more clearly.

DOCTERS OCCUPY

by Ron Singer
THE FIGHT against the Back-street Abortion Bill was given a boost last week by the action of militant doctors.

Twenty of us, mostly ASTMS members, confronted the Secretary of the British Medical Association and demanded a written assurance that he would make a public statement of opposition to the Bill at a press conference. He refused, so we occupied the BMA House.

The occupation lasted all night—and eventually the Secretary made a statement... at a press conference we had called.

He outlined the BMA's opposition to the Bill and undertook to publicise further this opposition after the next BMA Council meeting in June.

Meanwhile, our action will continue with a joint picket with the National Abortion Campaign of that meeting and by organising support for the 21 June national demonstration. Further information from 01-732 9016.

The Law Lords ruling...

MANY PEOPLE are seething over the Law Lords' ruling on rape. Lord Hailsham and his friends have said, in effect, that what matters is not what women want, but what men think they should want.

There have been societies in which rape was virtually unknown. Yet in Britain today, it is increasing. This is not surprising.

Look at the photos in *The Sun* or the ads on TV. They deliberately use women's bodies to sell things. The overwhelming impression they give is that women are not human beings equal to men, but objects designed to provide pleasure for those with the money to get them.

The same papers that preach sanctimoniously about the 'misdeeds' of some woman who has had her private life dragged through the law courts, will also paint these 'misdeeds' in the most lurid colours so as to titillate the readers.

Such hypocrisy is not accidental. It is a typical expression of the double-edged attitude to women of those who control society.

On one hand, they practise the virtues of conventional marriage. They paint an idyllic picture of a worthy husband, his devoted wife and their bonny children all living together in perfect bliss.

Never mind that they may be cramped together in two rooms, without a bath or indoor toilet, the children screaming; the parents forced to work on different shifts so that they hardly see each other.

For the image of the family suits the needs of big business perfectly. The woman, by waiting upon

RAPE

A man's right to choose

the man and the children, ensures he is fit and healthy to work and they grow up to join the labour force.

None of this costs the employer a penny. And, because of the difficulty of making ends meet at home, the woman may well be prepared to work for a pittance if the employer decides he wants to expand his labour force.

Right-wing political movements always lay great stress upon the

family. By doing so, they can get support from many women for a situation that subordinates women's lives to the profit system.

That is why, in periods of crisis such as at present, we see a strengthening of those forces with reactionary views on subjects such as abortion. Politicians who support the status quo need all the political support they can get—and one sure source of it is from the 'defend the family' anti-abortion lobby headed

by the leaders of the Catholic Church.

Alongside this mythical picture of the role of the present day family, capitalism presents another, rather different view of women.

Those who own wealth under the present system take it for granted that they can buy or sell anything they wish. They can even buy human beings—forcing any worker who wants to stay alive to labour for them to produce profits. Naturally, they expect to be able to buy and sell women's bodies as well.

Members of the ruling class have rarely kept to the rigid chastity which they have preached to everyone else. They have taken it for granted that, if they personally find the conventional form of marriage unbearable, they should be able to indulge in sexual delights outside it, buying the bodies of prostitutes.

Businessmen see there is money to be made from the frustration of the masses. Through advertising and seamy stories in the gutter Press, they stimulate and exploit the frustrations, produced by the very structure they so ardently defend.

So people's sexual appetites are stimulated while they are forced to live cramped and narrow lives, which often prevent them from even beginning to satisfy those appetites. Their entire psychological make-up can be dangerously twisted as a result.

Most people just about manage to survive. They make do as best they can—although at enormous cost in terms of personal happiness.

But some can't bear the strain and end up in mental hospitals or as alcoholics or even as pitiful cases in the courts.

And a few men take to its logical

conclusion what they are taught about women being sub-human commodities. Why not 'steal' one, inflict yourself on the women in the same way you would on a thing.

The Law Lords believe women are not capable of making up their minds on sexual matters and that therefore, every indulgence must be given to alleged rapists.

To tackle the problem of rape, you have to tackle the society that propagates such views, and replace it with one in which women and men can relate to one another as human beings, not as objects to be bought, sold and despoiled.

That means a fight to recast the economic organisation of society, so that the wealth at present hogged by the ruling class is used to provide every individual with the prerequisites of a decent existence.

Only then will be people be able to establish relationships that are mutually satisfying, without being compelled by ideology and material necessity to live unhappy and frustrating lives.

The fight against the present reactionary attitudes to women—attitudes embodied in the rape ruling or the anti-abortion bill now before Parliament—are an essential part of the struggle for this revolutionising of society.

But a fight to change attitudes—or even laws—alone, will not be ultimately successful unless it is integrated into the physical fight to seize power from the ruling class.

CHRIS HARMAN

Editor's note

The family and human relationships are much talked about by socialists. People have very different views about how we should write about such matters. In *Women's Voice* we would like to run a column over the next few months about your views on the matter. So please write in and let us have your ideas. Send to: The Editor, *Women's Voice*, 8 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN.

IN 1974 I stood on Glasgow Green and watched carloads of men, women and children fresh from Sunday school congregate in carnival atmosphere for a demonstration called by SPUC against the Abortion Bill. They were accompanied by their moral shepherds, contingents of nuns, and those politicians whose faces we never see in the demonstrations of their working class constituents for better housing, lower prices or the right to work.

They marched with fervour through the streets of Glasgow. At the heads of the children and nuns were revolting pictures in living colour of bloodied foetuses which they brandished at those who had lined the route to proclaim a woman's right to choose, her right to control—however minimally—her own body. It was reminiscent of those evangelicals of an earlier century whose harangues from the pulpit against the sins of the flesh were full of colourful, pornographic descriptions to incite their flocks to a pitch of religious excitement.

SPUC's latest leaflet, with its typical foetal trademark of an aborted baby in a hospital bucket is entitled 'Four ways to kill an Unborn Child'. In vivid detail the text of the leaflet is violently wrung from it. It is designed to sicken the most hardened among us.

All of their arguments imply that those of us who are forced to take the step of aborting a child actually revel in the experience itself. In fact the decision to have an abortion is rarely, if ever, taken lightly and is based on the economic and social realities of the home and society into which that child will be born.

The anti-abortionists are only concerned with the right to life, they are not concerned with the right of living. Their interest stops with childbirth itself, whereas the mother's hardly begins there. The majority of abortions are either young girls who were never taught to protect themselves by proper contraception or married women with one or two children who would not be able to properly care for another child.

SPUC's answer to the possibility of having a deformed baby is that the mother should carry the baby the full nine months, deliver it, and 'then kill it'—despite the fact they

ABORTED BABY DISCARDED IN HOSPITAL BUCKET



say they are against euthanasia. In other words the mother should go through nine months of worry and hoping the child will outwit statistics and be normal, form an

emotional attachment, go through labour and then have the child killed at the end. Perhaps the SPUC leaders have never seen or experienced the pain of losing a wanted child. There

is no other explanation for this inhuman solution.

It is therefore difficult to take seriously their statement: 'Abortion

MORE MUCK FROM SPUC

is a Human Issue—Not just a Religious One'. They are not concerned with preventing conception, they are not concerned with cuts in the social services, the lack of day-care centres, millions unemployed, decent housing, playground facilities, high rise flats, divorce, redundancies, hitting particularly hard at part-time women workers, price rises, school dinners—the list is endless. In other words they are not concerned with the right to life at all, only the right to be born.

One can only conclude that their arguments are totally religious—you have sinned and you shall be punished and ultimately your child will be punished too. That is their argument and it must be fought.

JANE LIEVAL
SOGAT

They claim to be independent but listen to this:

SPUC national organiser, Phyllis Bowman 'found' a sum of more than £100 to start *Women for Life*.

Melanie Dickinson, one of the WFL founder members, now works full-time for SPUC.

Susan Kentish, co-author of the book 'Babies for Burning', is a member of WFL.

WFL are using and distributing SPUC's latest petition against abortion.

SO WHO SAID WOMEN FOR LIFE WAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SPUC?

FOR THE PORTUGUESE WORKING CLASS fascism was indeed a nightmare. Repression was everywhere. Spies, paid and unpaid, watched your every move at work and outside work. Deprived of independent organisation, like trade unions and political organisations, we were unable to resist the massive exploitation by the bosses.

Women in Portugal naturally got a double helping of the misery and oppression under fascism. For women, their allotted place was at the bottom of the heap.

The whole of society was overlaid with a revolting morality, praised most in public by the rich and broken only by the rich in private. Gestures of affection in public were frowned upon. Sex was for procreation, not for enjoyment. Those seen to offend against this revolting code were brutally treated. Women who bore 'illegitimate' children were scorned and sometimes outcast.

Although the fascist state had no law against contraception, those working class women who tried to obtain it through the pitiful state assisted medical system, were humiliated and mucked around.

And aside from all these grievances, there was another equally brutal side to life. For Portuguese workers the reality was—and still is—High food prices, little or no social security or health care, high unemployment, chronic housing shortages. It is not uncommon for families to live in shanty towns, although the man is a construction worker.

In the first year since the fall of fascism, the situation for Portuguese women has changed greatly. Women living in unhappiness and torture because there was no legal right to divorce for church marriages, are now free to go their own way. 200,000 women joined the queue as soon as the law was changed.

The hypocritical morality of fascism which might have been constructed with ingredients which would win unconditional support from the Festival of Light operators in this country has been thrust aside.

As soon as the workers glimpsed the light of day, they organised themselves everywhere into workers' committees, residents' committees where people can develop their ideas and test them in struggle.

They have good reason to. While fascism has been swept away, the rich still remain and workers are not yet in control of their own lives. Maria Regina Livramento, a worker at the occupied Corame plant in Sacavem just outside Lisbon stressed this point strongly in an interview she gave to Women's Voice.



Maria Regina Livramento

'Don't think that before 25 April we didn't have ideas. We did. But we couldn't express them or discuss them. Often those of our friends who worked abroad in Italy or Britain would come home and whisper to us about how conditions were better there. That made us

'IN THE STRUGGLE WE ARE BECOMING EQUAL'

think that change was possible.

It was absolutely desperate under fascism. Women were just slaves, without opinion. We had no freedom.

Things have changed a great deal. But the right to divorce isn't everything. There are still the questions of poverty and exploitation of who is to rule this country, whether we go forward or back. In our struggle here in the factory we have changed our relationships. Women are involved in the occupation of the head office in Lisbon. Here in the factory itself, we help to direct the plant. This is very important. In the struggle we are becoming equal, though many, many women are not as involved as us. We are all learning to take our lives into our own hands.

We haven't solved all our problems. But it's much better since 25 April. Now our job is to finish the revolution off.'



Manuela Santos



Marcia Macedo

Marcia Macedo and Manuela Santos, two young women workers at the Unilever company Fima Lever in Portugal also stressed that Portuguese workers either had to move forward or go back.

For women in Portugal, the ability to obtain contraceptives, to get an abortion on demand is crucial. But in these areas the reactionary doctor class stands in the way of all progress. You can get rid of them through the ballot.

They are opposed to any real social form of medicine and are determined to hang on to the hugely profitable private medicine system. Even if a reforming government were to attempt to socialise medicine, the doctors would attempt to sabotage it from within.

Women are not machines for child-bearing. They must have access to abortion on demand. But does anyone think that is going to be possible just by the enactment of a piece of legislation? Not at all.

These things require a major change in social relationships.

Marcia explained that the many other terrible problems that face the working class—housing shortages, lack of medical care, hospital facilities could only be solved by the full resources of Portuguese workers being set to work.

She also pointed to the fact that the exploitation of women which manifested itself in Portugal under fascism was but part of an international operation, which still continues after 25 April 1974.

'The big international companies came to Portugal under fascism: Plesseys brought their computer matrix plant. Timex came here to do watch assembly. Applied Magnetics came with their electronics.

They take on women workers to do these intricate jobs. They pay us lousy wages and they tell us that our work is unskilled. But in truth our work is far from unskilled. The employers draw directly on the skills that women have learned over many years in the home, skills like embroidery, sewing and weaving. If we did not have these skills, they couldn't get their matrixes put together. We came ready trained and were described as unskilled when in fact we were highly skilled.

They after they've got some years of intensive work out of you, when they've used up your nimbleness or ruined your eyesight as in the case of the Plessey women, what happens to you then? Out you go onto the scrapheap—without a penny.'

Workers throughout Portugal have still many struggles ahead. The employers are so fearful of their power that they are engaged in systematic economic sabotage.

And while the forces of repression have been smashed, rank and file soldiers everywhere fraternise with workers and support their cause, the right wing is waiting, watching and trying to regroup. In this situation the working class movement either moves forward or goes back.

Workers in Portugal are about to be caught in a really grave economic crisis which can only be solved by revolutionary methods. To get to grips with it and reconstruct society they need to extend their own organisation, to draw it together, involve the soldiers and take power into their own hands. They haven't done this so far. Let's hope they build the revolutionary party soon. ITT is waiting. Plesseys is waiting. The British bankers and profiteers are waiting. The British army generals and NATO are waiting.

We must do everything in our power to ensure that the cannot move, so our Portuguese brothers and sisters can.



Portugal In revol

FOR 40 YEARS, Portuguese workers have lived under the kind of regime most of us dread. People lived in constant fear unable to protest, unable to strike, afraid to express themselves freely to their friends and workmates.

Then on 25 April 1974 after a massive wave of strikes, the army moved. Exhausted by a brutal war against the African people of Angola and Mozambique, many young officers were prepared to lead a movement to change their situation. That movement turned against the wars and against the Portuguese fascist regime itself.

BELOW: A shanty town in Benfica. This is the reality for thousands of Portuguese workers. Only a socialist reorganisation of society will put an end to this and the many other social problems.

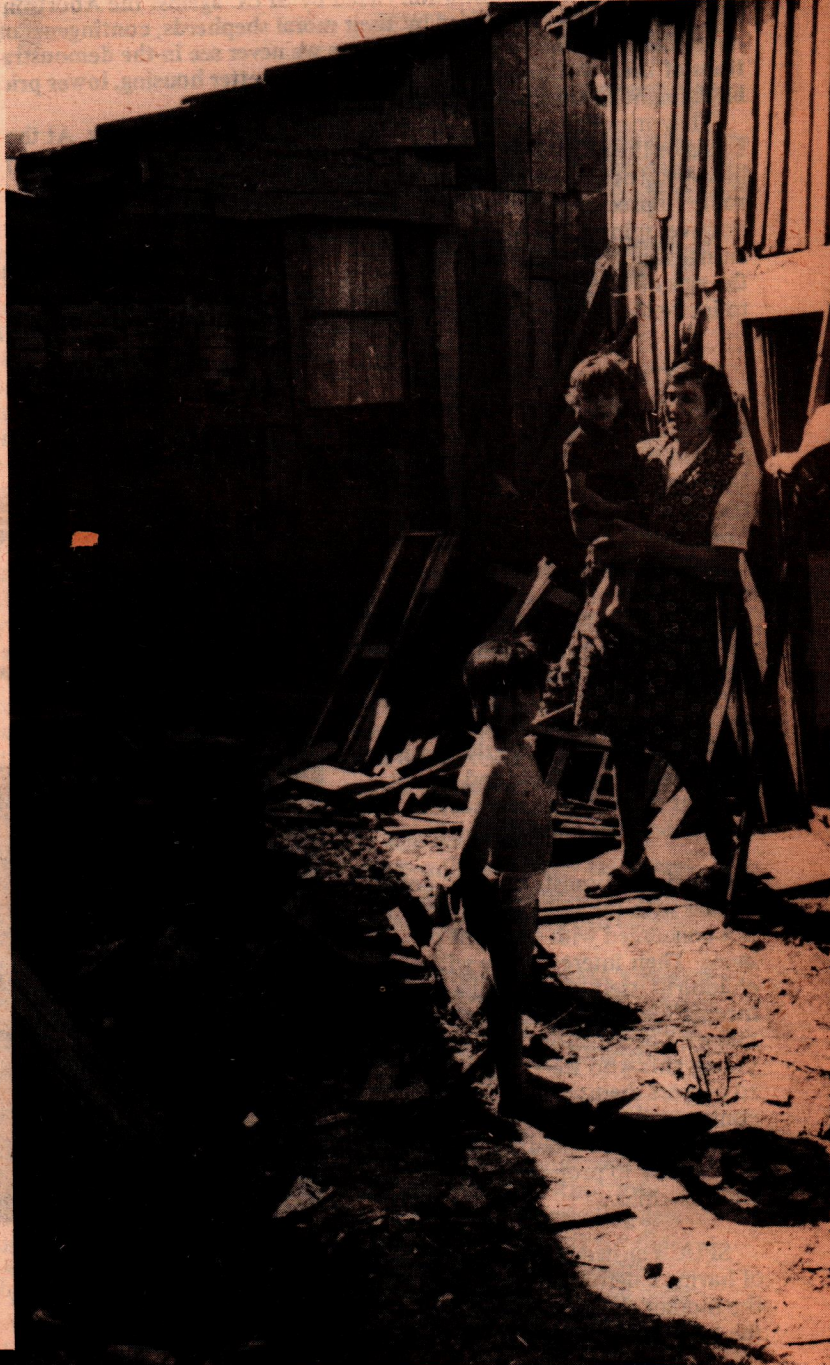




Photo Red Saunders

ABOVE: Soldiers and workers fraternising in a Lisbon cafe, their fists raised in the revolutionary socialist salute.

ution

As soon as the Armed Forces Movement staged their coup, the working class moved to the centre of the stage. Everywhere workers organised, determined not to see reaction and big business restore their control.

In the year since April 25 the lives of literally millions of people have been completely changed. Everywhere people are involved, arguing and experimenting.

Red Saunders and Laurie Flynn went to Portugal to capture some of what is happening and some of the new problems that working people now face.



Photo Red Saunders

'IT'S ONLY JUST BEGUN'

JUDITH CONDON interviews *Fernanda Fortunato (19, worker from Plesseys) and Isabel Brito (27, worker from TAP, Lisbon Airport).*

FERNANDA

It may be hard for you to really understand what it was like living under fascism. In Plesseys we had very low wages and long hours. The so-called unions were all for separate crafts, so the workers could never unite; the government used to appoint the officials. They never allowed elections because they thought the workers were too scared to vote for good candidates. But the workers did vote; so the government said it was illegal after all.

ISABEL

Yes, and in 1973 the TAP workers held a mass meeting about a claim for higher wages. The secret police were ordered to stop the meeting. They beat up the workers, fired tear gas and set dogs loose on us, and then they began shooting. Several were injured and one killed. But the workers threatened to blow up a train after they had taken refuge. So that time we won our demands.

FERNANDA

You can tell how bad conditions were by looking at some figures. Four and a half deaths out of a hundred for babies under a year because of poverty and lack of welfare aid. It was very expensive to get a doctor. Nearly half of all births took place outside any hospitals, and nearly a quarter of all births took place without even a mid-wife present. Poor women in Portugal have big families. The Catholic church was fully tied up with the fascist dictators, so you could not get contraception. They made sure of that. Only some middle class women (and who were able to afford it) knew about it.

ISABEL

Can you imagine what it was like after the coup on April 25th? Suddenly everything changed, everything was possible.

FERNANDA

People came out into the streets; they felt happy. There was new life.

ISABEL

For the first few days no one went to work. They just stood on the pavement, talking and talking. People went to the cafes and talked again. Now no one had an excuse not to participate. There was so much to be done. Take my father. He's fifty. Forty eight years of his life he lived under fascism. He had given up hope. He thought he would just work a few more years and then die. He never dared hope for a new life. *People were overcome with emotion, young and old alike. Suddenly they were free.*

FERNANDA

The journalists and workers took over the papers right away and threw out the old editors. Then

they published many editions each day, with all the news of the revolution. I remember clearly buying one such paper. I got onto a bus, and before I could read a page, other people had taken different pages from me. They were all talking and reading. No one ever talked to anyone before.

ISABEL

And the word 'politics' was on everyone's lips. Before, that word was forbidden.

FERNANDA

But there was a darkness in people's minds. They needed to find out what had to be done. Some who could see more clearly ahead had to give a lead. There would be meetings in every work-place. We had to learn how to have meetings. We didn't know. The agenda would have so many points on it, that we would never get past the first few points. So the meeting would go on next day. More and more meet-

ings, more and more deep discussions with everyone joining in. At bus stops, instead of talking about football or fashion, people have real things to talk about; about how the buses should be run, who should be in charge of transport... a thousand things like that.

ISABEL

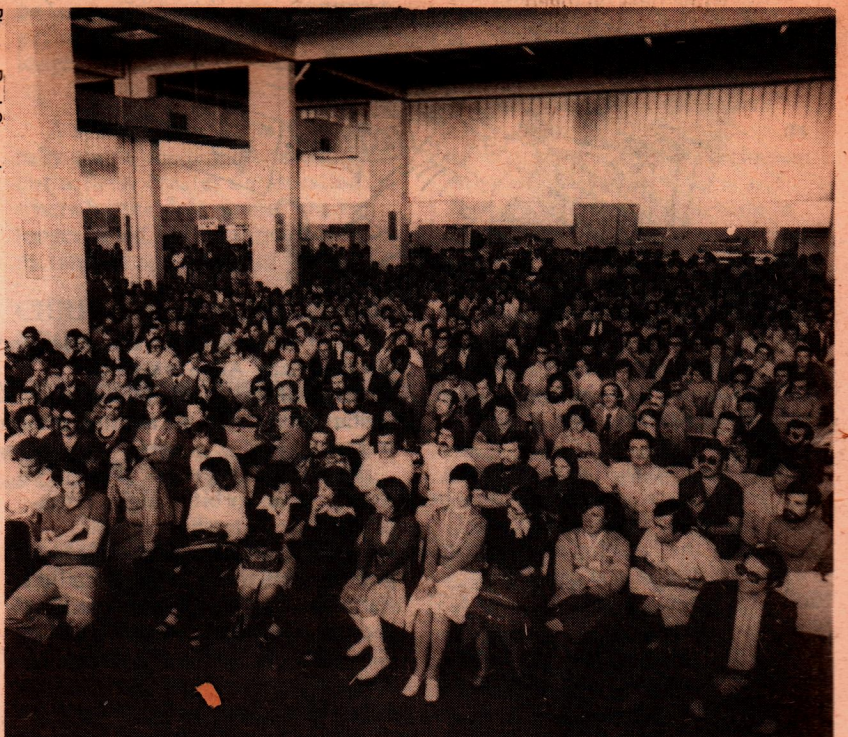
There was an explosion of people's self confidence. People came out on the streets and demanded an end to the colonial wars, an end to the secret police.

And then on May 1st, within that same week, thousands of people marched to celebrate. We were spontaneously shouting and singing, everyone was embracing and shaking hands. It was as if everyone knew each other. I can't begin to describe to you how beautiful, how exciting it was on that day.

So much has happened. Yet there is still so much to do. The most important thing is that the working class must be completely re-organised; because the revolution is not over yet. It has only just begun. We cannot sit back and let others control everything. And we must be ready to defend ourselves against the fascists and big business who have already tried twice in the last year to snatch back power with counter-revolution. We may also have to defend ourselves against American and NATO intervention.

And women will have to take an active part in this process of trying to build a new socialist society. It will be a hard struggle and women still have kids to look after. That's why we have creches at our meetings. Children shouldn't be an obstacle. We will have to take up arms when the time comes.

Photo Red Saunders



Workers' democracy at one of TAP's weekly mass meetings - half a day long at least. But people are ready to stay longer to argue the issues out. Who can say this isn't superior to one cross in a ballot box every few years.

I would like to know more about the International Socialists

Name _____

Address _____

Please post to:
Womens Voice
 8 Cottons Gardens
 London E2 8DN

LETTERS

ABOUT THREE YEARS AGO I was refused supplementary benefit through the co-habitation clause. Never having been in a position to claim before, I hadn't even heard of it. In my ignorance and anger I wrote a letter pointing out why I thought it unfair to the head of the local SS office. I was invited for an interview where I was told they weren't trying to make any moral judgement—that was just the law.

It is extremely difficult for women to regain their benefit when hit by this clause—and many of them have kids. The whole clause is now being looked into, but when Marjorie Proops wrote about the move to abolish it even she talked about women being dishonest and accepting both money from a man and the state.

Women are forced by this clause to accept money by trying to force men to support us for our sexual services. Married women are supported by their husbands, it seems, on the basis of this service, so single women should be forced to be paid for it too.

The attacks of this clause are twofold. I cannot see this law being used against an unemployed lesbian who lives with, or is visited by, her lover. I cannot see neighbours spying on which women enter a house, even if she were a known lesbian. It forces our financial dependence on men, and states that to receive money, you must either live alone or get married and be legally supported as a wife.

But more important, it denies women our right as workers to receive state subsidies when unemployed. It reduces us to a status

based on sexual relationships, and the state only recognises this under marriage.

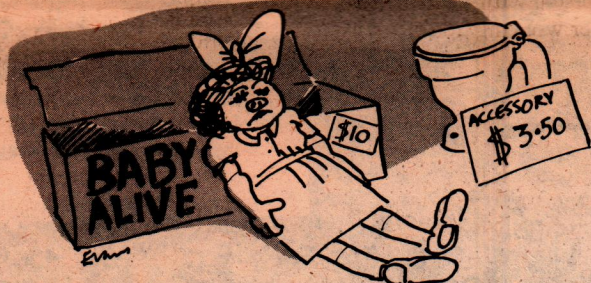
My experience made me look at the whole position of women in this society and made me realise that the system is one which is so debased that laws are made to perpetuate an ideology which even puts a price, financial and moral, on sexual relationships between men and women.

Liz Balfour

TO AMALGAMATE Womens Voice with the Socialist Worker is a middle class assumption that a working class woman will even pick up a SW and actually read it. After all isn't Womens Voice a means of overcoming her attitude to politics, through appealing to her with a paper that gives a start on her own sex's problems? I don't believe you can change these attitudes created by society in five minutes, namely, that tendency to personalise issues, for as we have pointed out, women can in fact be more militant than men when an issue, be it political or otherwise, affects them: ie level crossings for children, supporting husbands on strike etc.

It seems some base their argument on the assumption that there is no need for a separate paper, as women are indeed equal. If so, why the hell talk about women's oppression, but as this is not reality yet, I vote for the Womens Voice to help it become fact!

Shirley White, Woking, Surrey



Well, folks, only in America, as they say.

Last Christmas, one of the biggest selling gimmick dolls in America was Baby Alive. She eats. She drinks. She shits.

She shits? No shit, or rather, yes, shit. The cartoon crowd turned from their TV sets to their parents and the reps of the Fat Man to ask for it.

In Scandinavia you can get a boy doll with a penis, and now in the US you can get shit.

It blew my mind. But I thought maybe it was a good idea. Facts of life and all.

Well, Baby Alive sold out in our area long before Christmas, so I promised it for a birthday gift. The other day I came through on the promise, and the saga of Baby Alive began.

First of all, she only comes as a blond, blue-eyed WASPy girl. Then the lady says, you'll need batteries. What? To energise her so she can eat. It sets me back twenty-one bucks. Me and my promises.

We put the batteries in her back and open the kit. We find 9 small packets of food, three diapers, a dish, bib, spoon, and bottle. The instruction booklet says to mix the food powder with water.

It really looks like baby food. 'Cheery, Cherry,' 'Bitey Banana.' Press down on her mouth to get her to chew, then watch her eat.

And she eats. She honest to god chews and swallows. After a while the food is pumped on through and comes out in a mess on her diapers.

Now here's the catch. Baby Alive eats only her own food and you can buy it at the rate of 9 three-gram packets for \$1.25, which is over

twenty dollars a pound.

Then we look in the fine print and see that Baby Alive is sold by General Mills. I get it! Those bastards have sold me another mouth to feed!

The food label reads: 'Banana, cherry, lime, sorbitol, algin, imitation flavor, potassium sorbate, fumed silica, US certified color.' If you are a label-reader, you see that Baby Alive's food doesn't sound too different from a lot of food General Mills sells to the rest of us. Not different enough, that is; they sell us all phony food.

A strange feeling comes over me as I watch this plastic blond American eating machines chewing away while people all over the world are starving. A fake baby that can eat while millions of real babies cannot eat.

It's grotesque in a peculiarly American way. Consuming society's consuming robot. Now, ain't that some shit?

Yvonne
Berkeley, Ca.

We want to produce a paper that you can use. That you can use to get revolutionary socialist ideas across to your friends and fellow workers. We can't do this unless you send us your comments and criticisms in the form of letters and articles.

We're waiting to hear from you.

Write to:
The Editor,
Womens Voice,
8 Cottons Gardens,
London E2 8DN.

WHY I AM A REVOLUTIONARY

TERESA WEBSTER



'It's for my kids and all the kids all the world over that I'm a revolutionary.'

I SUPPOSE right from being born I've always been what you'd call an 'awkward bugger'. According to my mam, when other babies were asleep at night, I used to stand up in my cot singing.

But seriously, the biggest influence on my was my dad. (He's a carpenter and hosiery worker). He always taught me to fight for what I thought was right. He always said 'Remember, you're as good as anybody'. Even as a kid, I never saw the queen as being better than me. Although I'm the oldest of three girls, we were never told 'girls don't fight' and things like that. Also my dad's always been proud of being working class, so I've never seen middle class or upper class people as being anything superior.

As I went through school, I always had a keen sense of justice. A typical instance was when I was 12. I sat chatting during class to a friend. All of a sudden, the teacher said to my friend 'Come here, Brenda, you're not to talk in class. Go and stand outside.' I put my hand up and said 'Excuse me Miss Lambert, it wasn't Brenda talking, it was me'. I just got told to 'shut up'. I thought 'Christ, she thinks I'm an idiot'.

When it was time to leave school the teacher asked us what work we wanted to do. I said I wanted to be a dress designer. She just laughed and said girls from secondary modern schools don't become dress designers. I got back home, told my dad and he said 'Look, if you think you can do it, do it. Don't ever let anybody stop you'. So off I went, down to the Youth Employment Bureau and told them what I wanted to do. Well, the bloke there nearly fell off his chair. I mean, here I was, all 4ft 11 ins of me demanding this kind of job. He tried to palm me off with factory jobs, but I didn't want to know. I thought, 'sod this for a lark', got out my push-bike and started to tour round the factories in Leicester. Eventually I dropped into a knitwear firm and demanded to see the managing director. I told him what I wanted

and I was confident that I could do the job. He laughed like crazy and said 'just for your cheek, I'll set you on at £2.50 per week on condition that you go to the Polytechnic on day release—if they'll have you.'

So, off I went again. The Poly was a bit funny, but agreed to take me. Nobody believed me; I mean, here I was, with not a very good education, on the way to being a knitwear designer. After that I really started to think about how working class people are 'kept in their place'.

After two and a half years, doing very well, I eventually 'had to get married', as they say. At 17½ years of age.

Five kids and many many ups and downs later we were living in a council house like every average family. We grow our own veg and have a holiday every year, simply because we go camping; otherwise we would never be able to afford it.

Five years ago, a friend of ours joined the International Socialists, I at first thought he was off his head. After 18 months arguing with him whenever we met, it dawned on me that everything he was saying was right. My husband and I had just watched my mother-in-law take two years to die, riddled with cancer, it was heartbreaking. Then you hear that Cancer Research is having to appeal for money to carry on with their research. And the Queen thinks nothing of spending a couple of million pounds. I then started looking at things in a different light. It doesn't take much effort you know.

I used to hate blacks until I looked after a little two year old black kid. He was the same age as one of my own. The first night I had him, I put him to bed and thought—'blimey, I've got to kiss him goodnight'. I felt ashamed of myself. He lay there looking up at me with his big brown eyes, looking to me for love and security, just like my own kids do. I thought 'he's no different at all from my kids, just darker skinned, that's all.' After being prejudiced all my life, it didn't take books to change me.

It took just two minutes and a two-year old kid. Other things hit home as well. Like, why do people still starve when there's enough food to go round? Why do so few people have so much control over so many?

You see, no matter how much you argue individually to change the system we live under, you're very limited in what you can do on your own. That's why we need to gather together under one banner. Eventually after many rows, I decided that I was going to help try and change this system. So I joined IS. Sounds like an advert, for IS don't it? It is really. You see, women, it's no good talking and moaning among ourselves. It doesn't get us very far up the road. We have to get up and do something.

My husband joined after me, but we've had some right rows in pubs in the past three years. He wasn't at all keen about me going out to meetings and shouting the odds. But like my dad says 'If you want something in this life, you have to go and get it'.

The working class run this country. And don't let anyone tell you any different. Just think what would happen if the power workers, doctors, miners and everyone stopped work. Why, the whole bloody country would stop running.

Women have got to achieve equality. We're far too pushed into 'roles' by this system. You know, a lot of people say to me 'What about your kids? If there's a revolution, they'll get hurt.' My reply to this is, that to live under this system with all its pressures, is for some, like a slow death. I want my kids to be free and happy individuals. If all I can leave my kids when I'm pushing up the daisies is this world as it is, then I don't want to know.

It's the future kids that would benefit from a fairer, juster, equal society, not us adults. And if I can just be a small cog in that wheel to turn it round for change, then I think I'm leaving them something far better than any amount of cash. It's for my kids and all the kids the world over that I'm a revolutionary socialist.

woman says

ACTIONWOMAN SPECIAL
Compiled by JENNY GLEW

Redundancy

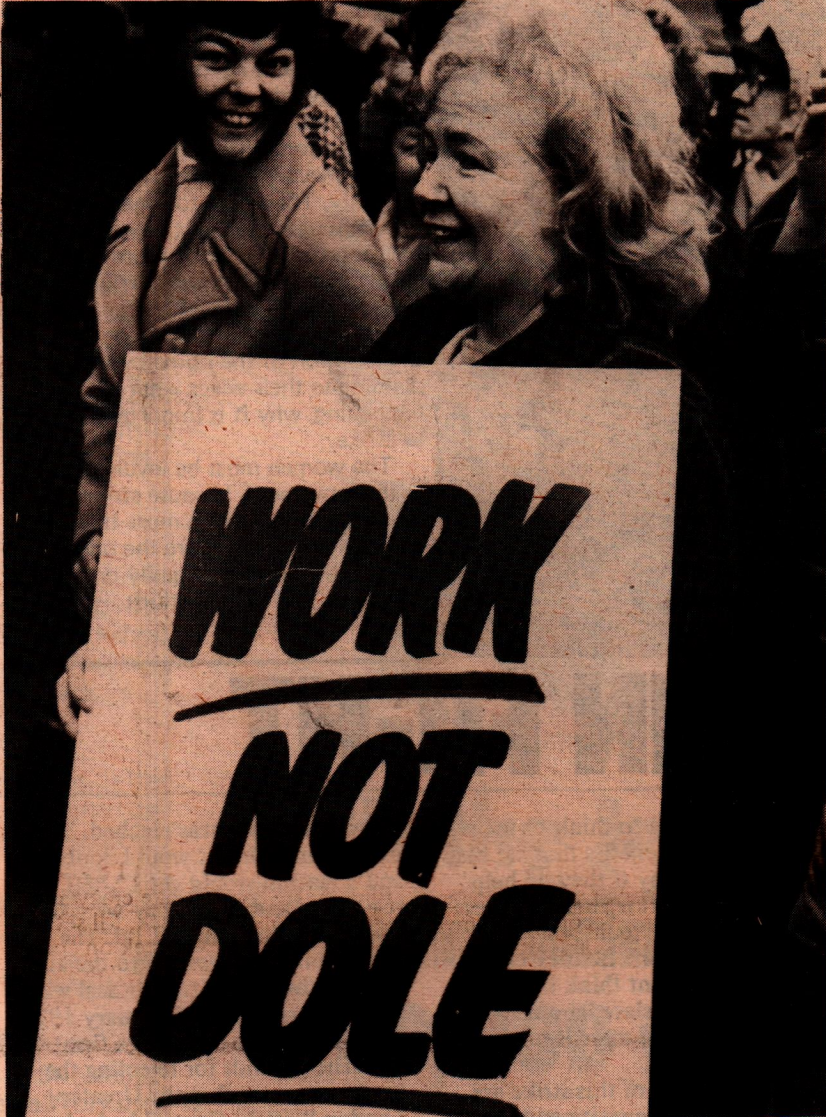
IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD

MOST working class women read 'Women's Magazines', and these days, apart from the usual quota of 'nice heart-rending stories', fashion pieces and recipes etc, it's not unusual to come across articles about some of the 'real' problems women face, offering 'practical' advice to enable women to 'cope' with the situations they have to deal with. It's not surprising that even the safe, comfortable world of 'Woman' in these days of crisis, must attempt to address itself in some way, to the repercussions of the crisis.

Photo John Sturrock (Report)

Unfortunately anyone looking for some everyday examples of how ordinary people have managed in redundancy situations, would have found little help in the 'Action Woman' Special. The four examples given were about as common as the 'rags to riches' stories elsewhere in the magazine. The only couple mentioned who faintly reflected the problems over a million working class families face was Eddie and Jill. Eddie, a driver, made redundant at 46, was able to get a place in a Government re-training centre. The engineering course Eddie took lasted 6 months, and he was promised 'a good chance' of getting a job at the end of it, provided he made the grade. He would get a grant of £21.90 on which to keep his home going—he had two children. The article goes on to quote Jill—'Though we've had to take a cut in our living standards, while training, it's worth it, at least at the end of it we shouldn't have to worry again—Eddie will have a proper skill to bargain with.'

It is obvious that no one who had anything to do with putting this piece of stylish nonsense together has any real conception of feeding, clothing and housing four people even for six months on £21.90. The article mentions that there are 600 courses available. The fact is that there is a waiting period of at least a year for most of them—what do you do in the meantime? In many of the practical courses, eg bricklaying,



there is practically no chance of a job at the end since the building industry is facing massive cut-backs and because there's more profits to

be made in land speculation than house building.

At best government re-training is a cheap way for the employers to

acquire semi-skilled labour, at worst it is a cruel and despicable con imposed on desperate men.

My father was made redundant at 46, having worked for the same firm of Electrical Engineers since he left school at 14. He was a skilled man and an active trade unionist, mindful of the need, despite the management's efforts, to ensure that the young lads he trained were armed with skills they would need in a developing industry. He was out of work for roughly two years, at a time when a lot of the engineering and electrical industry was 're-organising', 'merging' etc. Because of this age he found it very difficult to get work at similar wages. In most cases he faced a substantial loss. He applied for Government Re-training which came through over a year after he had applied. On completion of the course he received a 'diploma' and a job in a tiny factory with no union organisation and low rates of pay. Our family's experience was not of 'a minor domestic re-arrangement'. My father is not the person he was.

The employers wish us to accept redundancy passively—as a fact of life. Our reaction must be totally the opposite. For women specially, who are always the first to be put on the scrap heap, the issue of redundancy must become an offensive not a defensive struggle. We must decide that working men and women will not be the ones who pay with their suffering for the contradictions and problems capitalism makes. Our demand must be for work sharing with no loss of pay—for shorter working hours and longer holidays.

A system which talks hypocritically about 'scroungers on the dole' but actively creates the situation where by the dole queues become longer, must not be allowed to dictate the conditions of our lives.

**CHRISTINE SMITH
SOGAT**

'These sort of people just don't know'

POPLAR Hospital was originally founded for the docks. It lies on East India Dock Road, a main road with a high accident rate. It is also a much loved community hospital for East Enders in London.

Poplar hospital has now been threatened with closure for the last four years. Rose Deeming and Emy Deeming who work in the X Ray department and are members of NALGO, and Mell Watson, a former patient, talked to me about the hospital and the campaign to stop the closure.

'Nobody knows how much this hospital is really needed. The sort of people who are closing it just don't know. And when they closed Accident and Casualty they did it illegally without the consent of any of the ministers. They chose their time to close it as well. Over New Year.

Some of us immediately got on to our local MPs and finally we got an interview with Sir Keith Joseph who told us he had 'no intentions of closing Poplar as he was in favour of small community hospitals as opposed to larger district hospitals.' But they never reopened Casualty. The reason Poplar is so important to the community round here is that people would come in, whether there was something wrong with them or not and got reassurance from the doctors. With the stress of life today people get really worried about their health. They need to find assurance somewhere that they're alright. Poplar used to give that to the community. And that's fantastically important when you're living in a concrete jungle like down here.'

The reason Mrs Mel Watson, an ex-patient objected to the closure, was because of the distance and discomfort involved in getting to St Andrews the next hospital down the road. 'It takes a bus ride, followed by a long walk down to get to St Andrews and if you're crippled like me it's not easy. Anyway, no one round here has any faith in St Andrews. No one wants to go there.'

The people from Poplar have been campaigning for four years now to save their local hospital. They have tried talking to everyone, Sir Keith Joseph under the Tories; they never got through to Barbara Castle under Labour. They've collected 30,000 signatures, proved that 'medical allegations' are untrue. And all to no avail. Casualty and Accident remain closed despite the accidents in the area. 'I live along the main road here, and you'd be surprised how many ambulances fly by. There's so many accidents round here,' Mrs Watson told us.

The unions have only recently taken up the issue. As Emy Deeming put it: 'The unions have come in rather late. The first thing they organised was that NUPE conference on May 10 which set up an Action Committee and then that demonstration on May 19th. They should have been in the first place. But NALGO wouldn't consider doing anything until some of us actually got sacked. If you wait until you've actually got the sack it's far too late. NUPE realised about the jobs and fought for them. But it's not just a question of jobs. It's a public service. People are now doctoring themselves at home. The GPs are overworked. The unions should have come in properly at the beginning and got things sorted out. This whole thing should never have been left to the staff. Anyway, if they do open the departments now, we'll probably be the first to go because we've caused all the trouble. We certainly won't get any medals.'

PRINT Women first to go

**CAROL DOURAS
SOGAT Mother of Chapel
DRG CUPS**

AS USUAL the people who are suffering the brunt of big businesses' attempt to sort out its problems are women. The stories that women only work for pin money are now really being proved a fallacy, with thousands of families losing the extra income that paid for mortgages and rates. This is bringing increased pressures on the wage packets of the male population.

In the place where I work we have just had an attempt to make a hundred women redundant. The reason behind it was not really the lack of work for women to do but an attempt by management to down man the machines. Their tactics were to firstly threaten redundancies, then through the lack of trade union fight let about 50 go through natural wastage. Then they offered not to make the other fifty redundant if they accepted the down manning,

What does this mean in working conditions for the women in the factory where the machines are extremely noisy? Instead of having a ten minute break every half hour they will only have the normal ten minutes break morning and afternoon, and the extra stress put on the workforce as well as having to bear the noise levels will soon prove a real health hazard in the factory.

One of the other weapons used by management was the threat that if they did not accept this that they would have to accept a two shift system, thus doing away with 150 part time workers.

None of this was fought with any great vigour by any of the trade union officials. But this being only the first round in the battle the scars we have received will serve to remind us and help us to organise the rank and file women on the shop floor so as not to be overridden by the male-dominated trade union officials.

WHO SAYS IT DOESN'T WORK

LESLEY KLEIN

THERE I sat watching the tele, waiting for the ads, which are always a welcome relief between tedious programmes, when suddenly an amazing 1930's damsel in distress was whisked to safety by a Rudolph Valentino Superman. Our hero was on his way to save a continent but noticed that the previously unattractive woman had glossed her lips with a handy new product 'Lip Protein'. Suddenly he stopped and leaned slowly towards her. A new romance had begun.

I thought it was pretty stupid and forgot about it. The next day however I went out to buy the lipstick. So apparently had the entire female population of Sheffield. By lunch time every make up shop had sold out. Now,

I've always considered myself to be very sensible and unbrainwashable as far as advertising goes. In fact one of the first things that made me start thinking about how rotten this system is was the way advertising unashamedly manipulated people.

In fact more money is spent each year on convincing women that they would be better mothers if they bought a biological powder rather than an ordinary one (most brands incidentally are made by the same companies), than is spent on new housing for example. Nevertheless, I returned to Boots a few days later and spent 45 pence on melted lard which couldn't have cost Max Factor more than 5 pence to produce. I didn't even need a lip gloss—Vaseline works fine.

**WOMEN'S VOICE PUBLIC MEETING
JUNE 19th. 8pm.**

Speakers:

Gillian Anciano, NUT
Tony Cliff, IS Executive
Hospital Worker

Place

Friends' Meeting House Euston Rd.

Maureen Enever told Gay:

'Inflation has hit us hard. We first moved into this house August last year. I know every sort of working class woman's dream of a home is fantastic. I thought great, we'll build a wardrobe in the bedroom, we'll do this, we'll do that and we'll do the other. Not one thing I've ever planned has come to light because I just can't afford it. Every week we work our bills out and I set aside an amount for food. Each month, the amount for food slowly goes down because of the rising cost of electricity and gas. I have two children. My husband makes £41. If we don't get the £8 pay rise I can see myself soon telling my children that they can't have two slices of bread for breakfast because I can't afford it. We need the pay claim now.

That's why we went to the meeting to show the men that we support the claim. The papers were saying the women would be demonstrating to get the men back to work. We went to show that some of the wives support the strike. We brought a letter of support to be read out at the shop stewards meeting. Ed McClusky, Secretary of the joint shop stewards committee, said that he was pleased that some women had the guts to stand up and defend what the men were out for.

At the end of the meeting I was just standing there. I heard Mrs Willis' voice. I was sort of thrown into a ring by all the pressmen. All their cameras and microphones converged on me. She was shouting and bawling and all that. We wanted the press to know why we were there. We didn't want a confrontation so I walked away from her.

The press is really supporting Mrs Willis. We stood for three hours giving interviews and none of it came out in the press. They provoked the confrontation. Her name and address were published but not mine. I've learned an awful lot about the press in the past weeks. The papers are absolutely and totally biased.

The first thing that struck me was that when you do open your mouth and say something they don't want you to say, you're branded a communist. I am approached with 'What political organisation do you

CHRYSLER

Photo John Sturrock (Report)



WOMEN JOIN FIGHT

CHRYSLER Interview by Gay Semel from Workers' Power with Maureen Enever, whose husband is on strike at Chrysler for an interim pay award of £8.

Last year during the strike of Cowley carworkers, the national press made great play of wives who demonstrated against their husbands. This year they have tried to do the same thing at Chrysler. As the struggle to keep up with inflation gets sharper, the role of wives in strikes cannot be overlooked.

Strike committees must take the involvement of wives in strikes seriously. They have to organise meetings with creches to explain why the strike is taking place, get women to address mass meetings, help with the picketing. Strikers must learn to overcome the isolation of the home by explaining to their wives what is happening, why it is important to strike.

The women must be involved in the movement, because strikes affect their lives much more than the men's. The wives are the ones who have to feed the family on strike pay and keep the kids going.

belong to?'

Or they ask me if my husband put me up to it. Of course, you know, they think women can't think for themselves. They think their intelligence only goes as far as washing dishes and doing the shopping. I don't need my husband to tell me that prices are going up all the time. I see that for myself. And if I'm not making ends meet and I might get a bit more by fighting it, I'll fight all the way.

If the women don't have experience of industrial struggles of their own, and the press doesn't report on the wives that support the strike, and the husbands don't talk to the wives—and let's face it a lot of lads don't—then you can understand how some wives will support the likes of Mrs Willis. That's how some wives end up doing the bosses' work, urging the men to go back to work. The bosses love it and the bosses' papers love it. That's why wives who support the claim have an important job in explaining why we need the money. We've got to turn up at mass meetings to show the men and the other wives we are still around supporting the claim.

We now have seven or eight wives who are prepared to be active. Today we handed out a leaflet to let ourselves be known amongst people. To say we are the Chrysler Wives Support Group and we'd like to hear from anybody else who feels the same about the claim as we do.

WE'RE NOT OUT FOR PIN MONEY

LAST JANUARY, the APEX members at the Pegsons, Coalville, were the first to put in for an increase. But they were the last to get an offer. And when it came, it was roughly half what other workers had already received. AUEW and TASS members at the factory were given a rise of between £6.50 and £8.50 a week and at first the clerical workers were offered £3, which was later increased to £4.

Traditionally, clerical workers (those at Pegsons are all members of APEX) have always had a rough deal. They have always been paid very low wages and Pegson's is no exception. Men are paid more than women for the same work, but even the men's wages are very poor. For a 40 hour week, a man on the lowest grade gets £23.80 a week plus thresholds, while a woman gets £21.00 plus threshold. Most of the women are, of course, on the lower grades. There is only one woman on the top grade, and she can expect to be paid the princely sum of £34 a week plus threshold.

Now they consider they have reached the stage where they cannot possibly be expected to live a decent life on the sort of wages the company is offering and they are demanding an equal rise with the other workers.

They have the official backing of the union and have recently had their strike pay doubled to £11 a week. They have also managed to win the support of clerical workers in other Bentley Group factories in Leicester who are imposing sanctions. And they have stopped nearly 400 delivery vehicles from crossing their picket line. They have issued a leaflet to drivers setting out their earnings and pointing out that they are not militants—just ordinary working people prepared to fight for a living wage. Despite the fact that so far they have had no support from the workers

within the factory, their tenacity is the one element which makes it highly likely that they will win this strike.

They have had an assortment of dirty tricks from the management to contend with—first the managing director told the local newspaper that the average weekly wage for women, if they accepted the offer, would be £35.23 and the average for men £41.17. This is clearly not true. And then, a couple of weeks ago, the management telephoned delivery companies to tell them the strike was over, when this was not true either.

In the past they have been treated badly too. A regrading scheme, so called, at the end of last year, meant in effect a rise of 7p a week for one woman, 20p a week for another who has worked there five years, and for someone who might take a job someone else has vacated—a loss of £3 a week. On the wages they have been earning, they can't have much in the bank to support their families during this strike. Although the majority of the strikers are women (35 out of 60), not one would tell you she was working for pin-money. They all need decent wages to keep a reasonable standard of living. With all that to worry about, it is pretty demoralising to hear tales of engineers inside the factory doing the clerical work. It is not known for certain whether this is true or not, but recently, a group of engineers have produced a leaflet for the Pegsons AUEW members appealing to them to help the clerical workers.

It points out that there is strength in unity and it could be their turn to suffer next, if the management can get away with paying such low wages.

It adds that AUEW workers, if they want to help, should refuse to touch lorries crossing the picket line or collect goods usually delivered.

And it asks them to think to the future and the benefits that are likely to come their way if they do help those on strike. It is vital that these clerical workers should win. There are a lot of them in the Bentley Group and if management think they can go on extracting slave labour from them indefinitely, there is no doubt that they will try.

So the lessons of this strike are clear—unity and tenacity and the necessity to get as much support from other factories and other unions as possible. Let's hope that the engineers at Pegsons, who might think they are well off now and not see the point in helping their fellow trade unionists, get the message.

Nursery nurses on the move

HACKNEY ASSOCIATION of nursery nurses was formed in October 1973 to help co-ordinate the unions NUPE and NALGO. There are 80 nursery nurses in seven day nurseries. 50 in NALGO and 12 in NUPE. Forming the association, amongst other things helped increase union membership enormously. In March 1974 Hackney Council invited the nurses to negotiate for better pay and conditions. A nursery nurse's assistant was receiving £14.50 take home and a matron in charge of 60 children and 17 staff earned £1,999, take home pay £34.

Between March and August job evaluation took place and in August

a new agreement was reached. The pay for an assistant would double and a matron would get £2,880. The regradings and higher pay were to be backdated from August 1st. The agreement was passed onto the administrative committee to deal with. They deferred it until January 1975 when they came out with a firm NO. The grounds for rejecting the agreement were that the Greater London Whitely Council had advised them to refuse it on the grounds that it broke a national agreement.

The nurses were particularly angry because the council had initiated the negotiations for more pay, therefore intending to break the national agreement. The other sign of encouragement was that the Islington nursery nurses had been up-graded in November 1973 in the middle of Phase 2.

In March 1975, the Hackney nursery nurses threatened industrial action—taking no fees, doing no administrative work, working a 36 hour week. Immediately the council responded with a meeting with Mr Jinkinson London District Officer from NALGO. At that meeting, the council asked the nurses to postpone their action for two weeks. In that

time nothing happened. So since April 1st, the nurses have been taking action, as outlined above.

On April 7th, the council came up with an offer—seen as an insult by the nurses. It was for only half the original agreement and would therefore have been swallowed up in the Local Government pay increases later this year. It also broke the National Agreement!

On May 1st, the nurses came out on strike. The council are refusing to talk either directly to the nurses or to the union. The nursery nurses are being supported by the Local NALGO executive on every move they have made so far. On June 3rd, Hackney Trades Council, Hackney NALGO and the Hackney Under 5s Committee sponsored a public meeting. As one of the nurses said: 'We are no longer prepared to be exploited or blackmailed. If the children are to suffer, it's the council who are to blame. We're not going to weep any more tears.'

EDITOR: SHEILA MCGREGOR
CO-EDITOR: ELANA DALLAS
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