

womens voice

MONTHLY WOMENS PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

LONDON 40,000
GLASGOW 700
DUNDEE 100

Thousands marched in support of the National Abortion Campaign on the 21st June. There were local NAC Groups, banners from every left organisation and large numbers of trade unions.

AMONG trade union banners on the march were: Hull Dockers' Shop Stewards' Committee, **Jacksons Boilers AUEW shop stewards' committee**, ACTS Greater London, **NALGO Islington**, NALGO Greater London Branch, **NALGO Tower Hamlets**, NALGO Camden, **NALGO Hackney**, NALGO East London, **NALGO Harlow**, AUEW TASS No 25 Division, **AUEW TASS National Women's Committee**, AUEW Leicester 16, **UPW Overseas Telephones branch no 1**, TGWU London Book Shop branch, **TGWU Dillions**, NATSOPA Observer Clerical chapel, **NUJ/SOGAT Time Out joint chapel**, NUJ Magazine Branch, **NUJ Book Branch**, NUJ London Freelance branch, **APEX Trafford Park**, APEX Newcastle Central Branch, **APEX British Airways West London**, CPSA British Museum, **CPSA British Library**, COHSE Prestwick Hospital, **National Union Public Employers**, NUPE North Camden, **NUPE Leicester-shire**, NUT Brighton, **NUT Wandsworth**, NUT Lambeth, **NUT Westminster**, NUT Nottingham, **NUT Hackney**, NUT East London, **ASTMS Paddington**, ASTMS University College London, **ASTMS West London Medical**, ASTMS North East London, **ATTI Bristol Poly**, ATTI Ealing, **ATTI North London Poly**, ATTI Woolwich, **ATTI Outer London division**, ATTI Kingsway, **ATTI Loughton College**.

TRADES COUNCILS: Bath, Brent, Bristol, Brighton and Hove, Battersea and Wandsworth, Camden, Croydon, Coventry, Greenwich, Hackney, Hammersmith and Kensington, Hillingdon, Islington, Lewisham and Deptford, Manchester, Nottingham and District, Southwark, Rodmorden, Westminster.

There were three trade union banners on the demonstration in Glasgow, **Edinburgh NALGO**, **AUEW/TASS Scottish region**, **Boilermakers Society Glasgow district**.

BETH STONE

This is a wonderful turnout contradicting everything that has been said about women being too stupid, too apathetic... The other side of it isn't so wonderful. There is little official backing from the trade unions. We've got to do what we can to change the situation. This issue is a class issue. There have always been people who can get abortions, like Princess Margaret in the 1950s slipping off to Switzerland for a 'minor abdominal operation'. We must oppose careerist politicians like James White.

Why has this issue come up? There was little opposition in 1966, it is part of a concentrated attack on working people, the cuts are part of a general attack. They are wanting to create an atmosphere of support from the nastiest elements in society, but from today's march we've seen who's strongest—who's best organised. We must fight for support from people like miners and dockers. We must organise where we've got the strength.

JUNE 21st TRIUMPH

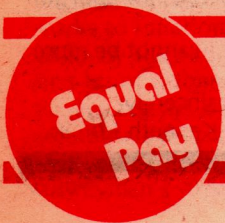
WOMEN ON THE MOVE

We've got the will, we've got the power, now let's organise to win



Womens Voice banner on the 40,000 strong NAC demonstration. Insert shows Beth Stone speaking in Hyde Park.

Photo: Angela Phillips (IFL)



THE FIGHT SO FAR: PAGE FOUR

WHO WILL CONTROL OUR LIVES?

THIS MONTH a Lisbon daily newspaper printed a letter sent to them by 50 women workers in a knitwear company in Ribatejo, south Portugal. The firm, Pereira dos Santos & Sons, Ltd, was in serious financial trouble—said the letter—the trouble resulted from incompetent and greedy management, but it was the workers who were paying the price. 'As the weeks and months go by we are beginning to realise that our workplace will cease to exist unless something is done. We want to win back the three hundred jobs, that there used to be here—we want to reinstate our comrades who have been thrown out of work.' But 'Considering that this firm is financed by banks and insurance companies that have been nationalised, we don't understand why we haven't had any help from the government, especially since we have fully supported the government.'

Thousands of Portuguese workers must be asking the same questions. Over the last fourteen months massive struggles have been fought by the workers. Twice they have smashed right-wing attempts to seize back power. They fought for better living conditions and for control over their own lives—a struggle which has spilled out over the factory walls uniting whole neighbourhoods and towns. The people in Ferno Ferro, for example, last month occupied a bread factory which had not functioned since the day it was built. Up until this there was no other bakery in the area. Now the workers are running the factory as a 'peoples' Co-op' which provides enough bread for everyone in the village.

Workers in Corroios occupied a luxury hotel on 7th March. A member of the occupation committee explained: 'The working people will devote their time in transforming this complex into a place for the workers, not for the rich—into a peoples canteen, a child care centre and an old peoples centre. The workers want to show their exploiters and prove to themselves that they are capable of solving their own problems.' All over the country workers have fought to transform their lives by taking over local services, clinics and hospitals, luxury buildings and running them for the needs of the community.

The hardest struggles are being fought in the factory. Hundreds



Photo: Red Saunders (Red Studios)

have been occupied and many are being run under workers' control. The banks, insurance companies and most of the major Portuguese firms have been nationalised by the Movement of Armed Forces, the army officials who are trying to run the country.

In many factories the workers demanded nationalisation with no

compensation for the bosses. Doubtless many believed that nationalisation would solve their problems. Others like the workers in the Nefil furniture, saw its limitations.

'We do not have any illusions about workers' management under capitalism. We are using it as a weapon, as an emergency solution. We started to run the factory because

we had to in order to survive after the management abandoned it. We are thinking about demanding that the government nationalise the firm—under workers' control. We do not want a phoney nationalisation which only helps the bosses.'

The Armed Forces Movement AFM haven't taken over state control of these firms in order to

destroy the capitalist system—but to run it more efficiently—at the expense of workers of course.

Massive wages and redundancy struggles are being fought. With rocketing inflation and 15 per cent unemployment the Portuguese economy is close to collapsing. The MFA are trying to prop up the teetering capitalist system through wage restraint and exhortations for increased productivity. Daily, workers are bombarded with propaganda about the need to produce, to put more sweat and toil into what is officially known as 'the battle for production'. The productivity campaign is pushed through the mass media—every night the Intersyndical, (the Portuguese TUC) has a two hour full of news on 'voluntary days of work', which the workers have given up for the campaign.

In spite of this hundreds of workers are still prepared to put their trust in the military—in 'the alliance of the people and AFM' which the officers claim is the road to socialism in Portugal.

But a growing number of workers are realising that they cannot rely on a group of officers.

They are involved in building revolutionary councils of workers and soldiers to unite the rank and file in factories and barracks. These councils can smash the power of the officers, can unite Portuguese workers, not in a 'battle for production' but in a battle against the capitalist system itself, a struggle for workers' power.

JOANNA ROLLO

AN ISSUE OF CONSCIENCE

Brother Steve Ludlam, Secretary of the City and East London Health Authority Stewards Committee, has acted on the idea from last month's Womens Voice which printed the full list of TU sponsored MPs which voted for the amendment. He raised the fact that the NUPE-sponsored MPs, Ted Leadbitter and Tom Pendry (well-known for his support for a return to hanging) had voted from James White. The committee agreed to write to the pair of them and we print the reply from Kenneth Lomas. It's clear we need to build the campaign in the unions and make them accountable.



Dear Mr Ludlam,
Thank you for your letter of 12 June concerning Mr James White's Bill.

I note that you have conveyed your Committee's views to Mr Leadbitter but it would be quite improper for me to raise the matter with Mr Leadbitter and Mr Pendry as it has long been the view of Parties and Parliament that issues of this nature should be left to the individual consciences of MPs.

You will be aware, no doubt, that Mr White's Bill has been referred to a Select Committee which is studying the whole question of abortion. We must now await the outcome of the Committee's deliberations but I would just like to say that I believe James White's Bill, despite a number of imperfections, was a well-meaning attempt to curb the abuses taking place under the present Abortion Act. It is clear too from the support which this Bill received that it was not the intention of Parliament, when the original Act was passed, to make available facilities for abortion on demand.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful.

Yours sincerely,
Kenneth Lomas

BUT WE ONLY DID IT TO WIN THE ELECTION

JAMES White and Leo Abse, moralists extraordinary, totally exposed before your very eyes. Together they appeared on the Dimbleby Talk-in programme, the night before the demonstration.

They wriggled, they squirmed, and they lost their tempers. But they couldn't put up one good argument against the women who confronted them, speaking from experience

about what the Abortion Amendment Bill would mean to the lives of ordinary women. Why did they fumble? . . . Because they are opportunists, who begin to realise they've bitten off more than they can chew. Why did they mumble?

. . . Because they based their ideas on a book called 'Babies for Burning', which has now been exposed as a bundle of lies and exaggerations,

written by an imposter.

All they could say was that motherhood is a blessing . . . even if you live a whole family to one room, with no job and little hope. Many people live in such conditions, and not just in Glasgow. 'Don't tell me about Glasgow', said James White, MP, 'That's my town.' Or, as he might have said, 'Don't tell me about the pain of bearing unwanted children, that's your problem.'



Quote from James White, Labour MP for Glasgow Pollock

'I'd never thought about abortion until the 1970 election. But on polling day, a Glasgow paper showed a picture of my Tory opponent with a group of nuns, calling the Labour government immoral for wanting the Abortion Act. How would you like that if you were fighting a marginal seat (with a strong Catholic vote) and it happened to you?'



Quote from Mary Lerner, confronting James White on the Dimbleby Talk-in.

For eight years I've brought up a child on my own on eighteen pounds a week, and I've had to struggle like you've never had to struggle in your whole life.'



Quote from Leo Abse—who believes that pregnancy is a judgment sent from heaven.

'And if a woman commits adultery, well . . . ' (he was interrupted at this by the jeers of the women, so we were spared the disgusting climax of his train of thought.)

On another famous occasion in 1971, however, he expressed his views more clearly:

'Men should not be deceived. Women who demand unduly prolonged fore-pleasure as a pre-condition to sexual penetration, are to be avoided. Their demands are motivated by an attempt to disparage, as pleasure-giving, the male organ itself.'

PORTUGUESE SOLIDARITY FUND

This fund has been set up to send money to the PRP (Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat), to help finance the Portuguese Workers Coordinating Committee in Britain, and to help pay towards the cost of IS's work on Portugal organising speaking tours for Portuguese revolutionaries and publicising our pamphlets in Portuguese.

Get your workmates to make a donation big or small. Use this slip to send to:

Socialist Worker Portuguese Solidarity Fund, 8 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN

International Socialism 80



Abortion: The pioneers
Spain: The gathering storm
The view of a PRP leader
Oil and the crisis
Pictures from Portugal

Available, price 28p (inc postage) from 8 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN

ABORTION: WE MUST ORGANISE

ON Saturday, 21 June, 40,000 demonstrators showed the way. More and more people are joining the protest against this attack on women's rights. We have to argue that the James White Bill is an anti-working class law which will drive thousands of working class women to the backstreets. The Ascot women will not suffer. They will still have their private clinics and Harley Street specialists. It is the workers of this country who will be hardest hit. We need to mobilise the working class movement in the campaign to defeat the Bill.

But the James White Bill isn't dead yet. He may try to water it down or withdraw it in favour of a Bill put forward by the Select Committee. Either way, we need to keep the pressure up until the end of the Parliamentary session in October. We should aim for another bigger demonstration in October with a massive turnout from the Labour movement. That was one element missing on Saturday.

The Bank of England and Dennis Healey are telling us we need to take massive cuts in public spending and wages to overcome the crisis. We know what that means. Working class women will be the first to suffer the effects. Take cuts in public spending. It means fewer nursery places. In Leicester there are two-thirds fewer nursery places now available than immediately after the war.

So if you want or need to go out to work, you've got to hunt around for childminders.

Then there's the hospital closures, maternity wards going—they don't want us to have the right to abortion, but they don't mind if we miscarry through lack of pre-natal care.

Fewer teachers and bigger classes. Our kids won't learn to read and write properly.

Hardly any houses being built and rocketing rents. Having to survive in lousy conditions with kids and husbands on shifts.

You'd think they could cut spending on some of the useless stuff like Concorde and armaments which workers never use. Use our taxes for our needs.

And if the cuts aren't enough of an attack on our standard of living, they're after our wages and jobs as well. Every woman knows that she's

Photos: Angela Phillips (IFL)



got to buy the same amount of food every week to feed the family. And if prices go up, you need more money to buy the same amount. If we don't get the money, it's the kids who suffer. We NEED big enough wage increases to be able to buy

what we need. That's why we've got to get Equal Pay. And we'll have to fight for it.

It's the same reason why we've got to fight for our jobs. If you've got rent or a mortgage to pay you can't afford to lose a wage. And every job

lost is a job lost for our kids. We've got to fight for our jobs and get the men to fight with us. Women have the same right to a job as anyone else. We've got to safeguard all jobs for the working class.

So we women get the roughest

JUDITH CONDON

deal. We're expected to bring up our families in conditions the Queen wouldn't look at, on food the Royal Family probably feed to their dogs and horses. We're the first to be thrown out of work and onto the scrapheap.

And then James White and Leo Abse tell us we haven't got the right to decide whether we want to have kids or not; that we only want to have abortion to be able to commit adultery.

It's time we showed them what it's all about. WE WANT the right to decide about whether we want kids or not. Not only that. We also want the kind of standard of living which gives a real choice—decent housing, schooling, social services, enough money, job security. It's time we got stuck in and fought for the lot: jobs, equal pay and free abortion on demand. That's why it is so important to fight James White's Bill.

pickets of local hospitals and gynaecologists who refuse abortions.

pickets of Labour MPs who voted for James White's Bill.

approach shop stewards' committees for support.

organise factory gate meetings.

raise the issue with the unions in hospitals and social services.

organise local demonstrations with trade union support.

Take Womens Voice onto your estate or into work and organise meetings of the readers to organise the campaign at work. Get Womens Voice readers writing leaflets for their workmates, taking petitions round. Discuss going to your trade union branch to get a resolution through in support of the campaign. Condemn your trade union-sponsored MP if he voted for James White. Approach your shop stewards about getting support from the stewards' committee.

● Let's build a massive movement for the demonstration in October. Fight for free abortion on demand and for equal pay.

SHEILA MCGREGOR

SPUC: Front line against life

The following is an extract from a SPUC press release, dated 18th June 1975.

'Who would have believed this after our having saved civilisation in Western Europe, and offered homes and protection to refugees from Nazi Germany and to the homeless after the war? Who would have envisaged that in this International Women's Year, Englishwomen would be clamouring for the right to continue the killing of more than 400 helpless little ones every day?'

By Ossie Lewis

THE counter-demonstration in Trafalgar Square on June 21st was organised by The Festival of Light, The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) and the Salvation Army.

Some Women's Voice readers may have seen a large advertisement in the Guardian the previous Thursday, under the heading 'Time to Stand up to the Unions'. This announced the formation of a new strike-breaking organisation 'by businessmen, bankers, members of the accountancy and legal professions, politicians and other men and women active in public life.' It was claimed that the organisation had acquired a printing works to function in the event of a strike by the national press. For its first bit of scabbing they were compiling a register of car-owning commuters preparing to carry passengers during the projected railwaymen's strike.

The signature on this disgusting piece was that of Ross McWhirter, mate of Jonathan Guinness of right-wing Monday-Club fame, with whom he produces The Guinness Book of Records.

Another pal of McWhirter's is none other than Mary Whitehouse, co-founder of the 'Festival of Light', general boss, organiser and sole mouthpiece of the National Viewers and Listeners Federation. McWhirter and Whitehouse sometimes work together to purify our minds for us—as when they jointly attempted to prosecute London cinemas screening 'Last Tango in Paris'.

Such a close connection between the opponents of trade union militancy and 'sexual permissiveness' is not at all incidental. Mary Whitehouse expressed this point ably in a recent address from the pulpit of St Mary Woolnoth Church. She warned that the main danger facing us is 'growing sexual, industrial and cultural anarchy'. By which she means you and I fighting for a decent wage, and having the freedom to express ourselves sexually and in every other way.

She and her husband Ernest in their younger days were very active in the right wing 'Oxford Group', founded by Dr Frank Buchman, a well known admirer of Hitler in the thirties. 'I thank heaven for Adolf Hitler,' he wrote, 'who built a front line of defence against the Anti-Christ of Communism.'

Mary and Ernest have emerged fast

from the ranks into that front line. But their Christian principles don't stop them profiting from unmitigated usury. Mr Whitehouse makes his money as a mortgage broker, procuring private loans—at a substantial fee—for people turned down by building societies. SPUC itself has some obnoxious connections. A lot of its marchers come from lower-middle and working-class families, mostly church-goers and young people recruited at church youth clubs and schools. A lot of the organising work is done by clergymen. But the executive committee that controls SPUC activities is made up largely of upper-class men, with Viscount Harrington, a bachelor, in the chair.

Of course SPUC's ideas draw heavily on church attitudes to women and motherhood, as do the ideas of its all-Catholic counterpart, similarly hierarchical in nature, called 'Life'.

The Salvation Army's most ascendant militant-basher is tuba playing John Boyd, right-wing AUEW general secretary, currently sulking because his union has failed to appoint him to serve on the TUC, where he had his heart set on reaching the top, from where to bash harder.

Not that the Sally Anny band is fussy about who it marches with. On Remembrance Sunday they can be seen leading a private party of National Front members to the Cenotaph to lay a wreath on behalf of Ian Smith's racist government in Rhodesia.

Why not James White?

1 A woman would have to prove that to continue with her pregnancy would be a grave risk to her life, her health, or her children's health, and not merely a 'risk', as at present. This would reduce the numbers of women entitled to an abortion by thousands.

2 Instead of two doctors from the same medical practice being able to agree to an abortion, the doctors would have to be from different medical practices, and one would have to have been practising for at least five years.

3 Anyone other than a doctor or a person approved by the Secretary of State would be barred from giving advice on abortion. At present, women can get advice from various charitable organisations, such as the Pregnancy Advisory Service, for a nominal sum. Charitable agencies, which provide about two-thirds of private abortions, for fixed prices, to women who can't get an abortion on the NHS, would be outlawed.

4 It would be illegal for anyone to publish any information about someone who had had an abortion. Women's Voice wouldn't, for example, be able to name anyone who had had or received any advice about abortion.

5 The 28-week limit, outside which an abortion cannot be carried out, would be reduced to 20 weeks. The number of late abortions is constantly decreasing. There were only 142 abortions carried out after 24 weeks in 1973. Delays in agreeing to abortions, would increase the number of late abortions.

6 A 20 weeks residential clause in the Bill would make it impossible for any foreign women to come to Britain for an abortion. 54,000 women came here last year for abortions, because laws in their own countries make them impossible. Most came from French and other Catholic countries.

The Bill would, if made law, make it virtually impossible for thousands of women to get legal abortions. But not all women. The rich would be free to continue with their private clinics. As long as there has been pregnancy, there has been abortion. To make it difficult to get a legal abortion, would not do away with abortion, it would merely make it a thousand times more dangerous.

We want greater control over our lives, whether at work or at home. The right for women to decide whether or not they want to have children is part of that control. Women must be able to decide that it means not only having access to safe contraception and family planning, but abortion when necessary.

THAT IS WHY WE CALL FOR ABORTION ON DEMAND, FREE, LEGAL AND SAFE.

AT LAST EQUALITY?

Equal Pay

How far

SIX MONTHS GONE

WOMEN have been oppressed as long as there has been a class society. In this society, women have always been used as a source of cheap labour in the factories. In the 19th century employers used women who were willing to work for low pay, and who were less organised than men to try and smash the new union organisation and split the work force. At the same time, women have been expected to work in the home, doing housework, cooking, and caring for their husbands and their children. Despite marginal reforms in favour of women, such as the Factories Act, the basis of this oppression has not changed, and is the source of discrimination against women. Women are discriminated against at work because of their other role in the home. Employers use the excuse that they have to take time off to have children and care for sick ones, to keep wages down and put women in worse jobs.

Suddenly the Labour government tells us that all this is going to change. They are introducing a law to stop discrimination against women. This is a joke. The idea that something so fundamental to society can be swept away by one law is typical of the way that the ruling class throws a few sops at women and hopes to keep them quiet.

This new law will be little use in ending discrimination against women. Like the Equal Pay Act it doesn't attempt to get to the root of discrimination in society. Even so, these laws can be used. They will not achieve anything in themselves, but will be a lever for women to use. A lever for us to begin to fight for equal pay, equal opportunities and the right to control their own lives.

We must begin to fight now. We have the power to win equal rights for women. Women have shown in equal pay strikes like in Wingrove and Rogers in Liverpool and Nettles in Stockport that we can win. But we will only win if we know how to organise. We must learn that we cannot rely on laws to change society. We can only rely on our own strength and organisation, on the support of our fellow workers, and on our ability to fight and win.

LINDSEY GERMAN

What the new law will mean

ALREADY WE have found out the inadequacies of the Equal Pay Act. Many employers have been scheming their way round it through regrading of jobs, long service payments, pay-

The Act: Why we can't rely on it

ments for willingness to work overtime, stricter attitudes to absenteeism and time off for domestic reasons, etc. The new Bill is supposed to plug the gaps in this Act—but will it?

It covers discrimination in employment, education and training, the provision of goods, housing, facilities and services, as well as discriminatory advertising in any of these fields; also discrimination in trade unions and professional associations. It does not cover social security, taxation, nationality or immigration, matrimonial or family law.

The new law will cover recruitment for jobs, promotion, transfer, training or other benefits of a job (eg cheap mortgages) and disadvantages like selection for redundancy and dismissal. In addition, positive discrimination in favour of women is to be allowed—training and/or recruitment by employers or unions where no or few women were previously in certain jobs. But because this is optional, only real pressure by women will secure it in most cases.

There are exceptions to equal rights in employment—the most dangerous is the 'genuine occupational qualification' clause, which employers may use to exclude women if they don't have 'authentic male characteristics' (whatever those are) required by the 'essential nature of the job'.

An Equal Opportunities Commission will be set up to promote equal opportunities and generally to enforce the law—for example, investigate a company and issue an injunction against discriminatory practices. How effective this will be we shall have to see, but no doubt companies with good lawyers will get round it.

Neither the Discrimination Bill nor the Equal Pay act cover pensions, state or private. And the new Pensions regulations which started in April this year only help women who do identical or 'like' jobs to men. So the majority of women will just have to fight for better company pension schemes and we shall all have to agitate for a more flexible retiring age, 60 onwards for men and women.

There are many other inadequacies which should be taken up in the Labour Movement, but for further details, get hold of the NCCL material.

HESTER BLEWITT

KATH ENNIS

AS THE deadline for implementing the Equal Pay Act draws nearer more and more women are discovering that the employers can quite legally diddle them out of real equal pay.

Three strikes in the Midlands in recent weeks show just how easily this can be done.

Rolls Royce, Coventry

Like hundreds of thousands of other women workers the women canteen workers here have no men to compare their jobs with. According to the equal pay act, however, the lowest women's wage in any factory agreement must not be less than the lowest man's.

The problem at Rolls Royce was that the canteen women were not included in the factory grading structure. Because of this the management were able to get away with paying them £17.20 less than the male labourers in Grade F—the lowest grade.

According to the company the women were to be receiving equal pay in July with the last of three increments of £1.33. Equal to whom? Nobody knew.

The women demanded to be included in Grade F and given the same wage and benefits as the male labourers. After a strike in September they went back with only £2.

In May they came out again—this time with more support and tougher picketing. They went back after four weeks with a £9.50 wage increase and a promise of negotiations on grading them into the factory pay structure. This is a real victory. But will the Rolls women now get parity with the male labourers or will management simply give them a lower Grade G all of their own?

Dunlop, Coventry

A few weeks ago women at Dunlop were sold out in just this way. After a four week strike by men and women clerical workers part of the deal on return to work was a new five grade 'unisex' wage structure. This will replace the existing four male grades and four female grades.

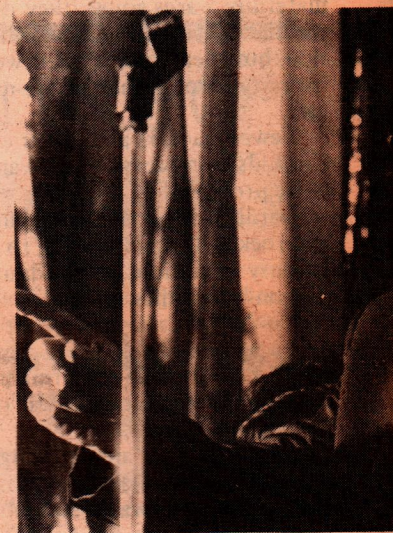
The point of having five grades instead of four is to give the women a low grade all of their own—Grade A. These women will receive an equal pay increase of £2.51—£1 less than the gap which exists at present between their wages and the lowest paid male workers.

The few token men in Grade A will be receiving £2.15 more than the women—£1 because their wage is already £1 higher than the wage for Grade A and another £1.15 'assimilation' increase. This will mean that their wage is the same as workers in Grade B.

Almost all the women who are not put in Grade A will be in the next two



Above: Strikers at Tetley Tea Bags, Bletchley



bottom grades—B and C. Most of the D and E.

Tetley Tea Bags, Bletchley

After a two week occupation by an even more ingenious way of giving production workers were given £1 more

Success breeds success

IN MARCH approximately 150 workers, mostly women, came out on strike for equal pay at Nettle Accessories Ltd, Stockport, an engineering factory. They were on strike for about eight days during which time only nine trade unionists went into work. At the time there were several temporary workers employed by Nettles all of whom came out in support and joined the union (AUEW).

The picket line was well attended each day and they were supported by trade unionists from local factories. The photograph shows the only violence that occurred on the picket line. That being when a scab tried to attack our photographer to prevent him from taking her picture—she failed as you can see. The convenor Ruth Woodward, member of the AUEW Stockport District Committee said that, 'she was fed up with the press etc always making out that trouble on the picket line is always caused by the pickets—because as the photo shows it's just not true.' Also Ruth has made sure that Nettle's management, her union members and the AUEW district committee have seen this photograph. The women went back to work



Woman who will not fight, but will except pay rise (scab)

having won their claim which it was agreed would not affect their right to negotiate over the May national AUEW agreement. Since returning to work the workers have also successfully negotiated a closed shop agreement.

The success of the Nettle's strike for equal pay was very important for women workers in the local area.

Shortly after the workers from another small factory in Stockport, Bowbros Ltd, came out 100 per cent on strike for equal pay and won their claim too.

In the middle of June the women at Friedlands, Reddich, Stockport, got an agreement for the same rate as the semi-skilled men.

VAL BUTROYD

have we got?

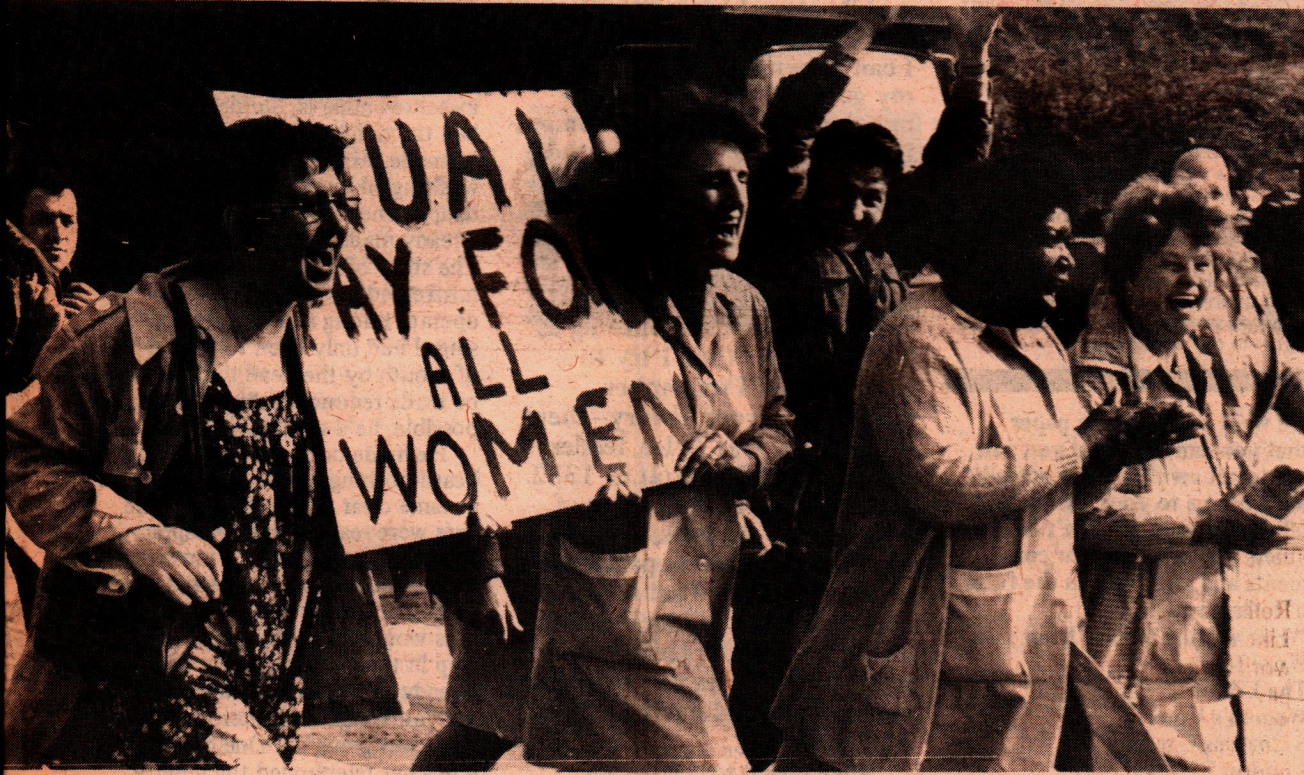


Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

Below: Ray Edwards, APEX Assistant General Secretary selling out at final mass meeting, Dunlops Coventry



men will be in the top three grades—C,

they might occasionally have to drive a fork lift truck—something which they in fact never do.

men and women here, management found their women equal pay. The male pro- than the women on the grounds that

Why the employers are able to get away with such blatant discrimination against women? Over the past five years employers' organisations have been planning ways of making equal pay as cheap as possible. In dispute after dis-

pute union officials have let them get away with it. Workers have not been prepared for this.

The Employers' Tactics

The strikes at Rolls Royce, Dunlop and Tetley Tea Bags show two of the most important ways in which women all over the country are currently being robbed of equal pay.

1. Straight forward fiddles
Dunlop—The £1.15 assimilation increase
Tetley—the £1 extra for driving
2. Grading structures

Rolls—the attempt to keep the canteen women outside the factory grading structure

Dunlop—inventing a new grade with a wage below the lowest man's.

Grading is not easy to fight over. At Dunlop, for example, the bottom Grade A will be mainly women because a factory job evaluation exercise puts them there. Almost no women will be in the top two grades for the same reason.

Managements all over the country can get away with this trick because men and women are segregated into different jobs. Consequently, the factors involved in a man's job eg dealing with outside suppliers, can always be given a higher value than the factors involved in a woman's job eg manual dexterity for typing.

Grading is, however, the most important part of equal pay. As Rolls and Dunlop show, it is the main way in which the employers ensure that they keep their women as a cheap labour force even after they have fulfilled the requirements of the Equal Pay Act.

The strike at Rolls shows that management can be beaten over this. Having won the right to be graded the women now have to ensure that job evaluation doesn't give them a low grade all of their own.

At Dunlop the next stage in the fight has to be the elimination of the bottom Grade A—something which SOGAT members achieved last year.

The Unions

At both Dunlop and Tetley union officials recommended acceptance of the deals. At Dunlop this included Ray Edwards, assistant general secretary of APEX—the union which is building its reputation on fighting for equal pay.

Dunlop workers were crippling the car industry all over the Midlands. There is no doubt that they could have forced a better deal. Why didn't they?

Originally the main demand of the strike was for a £15 across the board increase. Workers later said they would accept £10 but no less. Towards the end of the strike management drew up an offer pulling equal pay out of the bag to try to buy off the demand for £10. The officials recommended rejection.

A few days later they were back with an almost identical offer—this time recommending acceptance. The document explaining the new offer was complicated. No one had time to study it properly. In fact no one had much idea of how managements operate over equal pay.

It was generally assumed that the officials knew best so it must be OK. The deal gave the men increases of between £7.35 and £8.51. The women stood to gain between £9.12 and £12.72.

On the surface it looked attractive. But if you took away the equal pay increase, the across the board increase for the women was £7—only £1.75 more than what they were offered before they came out.

Action over equal pay would have had to have been taken before December anyway—regardless of the strike.

Union officials cannot be trusted over equal pay. For this reason it is essential that workers themselves are prepared for management tactics. Above all this means exchanging experiences with other workers in the same combine and in the same town.

CLASS NOT SEX

THE CAPITALIST press hailed Mrs Thatcher's victory in the fight for the leadership of the Tory Party, as a sign-post in International Women's Year. Now the conviction of Mrs Gandhi on corruption charges is seen as a black mark for Women's Year.

Apart from the fact that neither Mrs Thatcher nor Mrs Gandhi are representatives of working women, here or in India, it is important to stress that our yardstick for the success of the women's movement has little to do with the fortunes of these 'first ladies'. For socialist women, International Women's Year is the year when working women step up the fight for equal pay, refuse to be automatic redundancy fodder, and win greater control of their lives.

It is also important to destroy the sexist myths about women leaders: that they would be more humane,

less brutal in dealing with opposition, and certainly averse to warmongering. Such a view makes it difficult to explain Golda Meir's bombing of Palestinian refugee camps. Indira Gandhi's brutal treatment of the families of striking railwaymen, or the 35,000 political prisoners rotting in her jails without trial. It is false to put women politicians into a special category. Like all politicians they represent particular class-interests, and their politics are shaped accordingly.

Mrs Thatcher represents a more right-wing section of the Tory Party, which stands for even greater cuts in public expenditure, higher unemployment, etc. Similarly, Mrs Gandhi is no more corrupt than the grasping landlords and businessmen who support her.

SOUNU ENGINEER

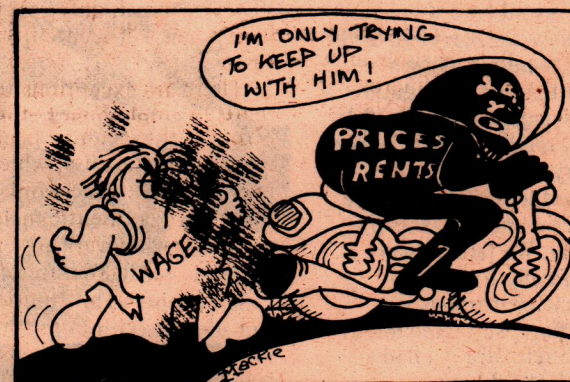
PEGSONS: APEX SUPPORT BRINGS VICTORY

CLERICAL WORKERS at Pegsons, Coalville, have ended their strike for more pay after winning a £6 increase. The strikers the majority of whom were women had been on very low rates, £23.80 plus thresholds for men, and £21.00 plus thresholds for women in the lowest grade.

The strike was made official, but the crucial factor was the action of APEX (clerical) members working at other factories in the Bentley Group, in Leicester, who imposed effective sanctions.

Despite the lack of support from workers inside the factory, the women were determined to fight and to try and impress on the shop-floor workers that their fight was one and the same. If they helped to defeat the APEX strikers now, the management would be soon turning on them.

The victory of the women at Pegsons is extremely important for the many other clerical workers in the Bentley Group. It shows the necessity for winning support from workers in other factories.



I would like to know more about the International Socialists

Name _____

Address _____

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

LETTERS

IN Germany, abortion is a crime. Women can be sent to prison for five years just for attempting to have an abortion.

The only grounds for legal abortion is if the mother has a serious heart or kidney disease. For serious women have fought the law, but without success. Rich women have always been able to get abortions in Holland or Yugoslavia, but working class women have always had to resort to backstreet abortions.

Last year the government party, the Social Democratic Party, introduced a law which would make abortion legal during the first three months of pregnancy. This law was passed, but then the opposition party, (supported by the Catholic Church) took the law to the constitutional court. There it was declared to be against the constitution and so did not apply. *One Judge* was able to stop the law even though the German Parliament had voted it through. One man was able to stop women in Germany from getting this very basic right to decide if they want to have children or not.

ON May 12th they confirmed I was pregnant, and I was in a right state. I'd always believed in a woman's right to choose but it was something which would never happen to me.

After my first baby I found the pill made me giddy, so I agreed to be fitted with an inter-uterine device—the Gravigard. Right from the start I had problems. But, after an x-ray and several very thorough internal examinations I was assured the Gravigard was in place.

Anyway, there I was pregnant. First of all my feelings were mixed—some basic maternal urge thought, 'Wouldn't it be great, company for my other baby.' But in real terms I realised what it would mean: me giving up work, so money would be very tight; living-space much more cramped; problems with my mother living 60 miles away by herself.

As well as my 20-month-old baby I have two step children, girls aged 11 and 12½. I have lived with them for 8 years and love them very much—to me they are *my* kids. Still I'd be the first to admit being a step-mother in this society has its problems. How would they react? Being pregnant means changes in the family for everyone.

So to us, another child would be a real strain, economically, socially, and emotionally. We felt we were a happy settled family unit—why should we all suffer through a mistake? The more we talked about it, the more we felt sure if I had to go through with it I'd have a breakdown. At the beginning of June I was given an abortion on the National Health.

The point of my writing this is that I was given an abortion under the 1967 Abortion Act. If Mr James White's Private Members Bill is allowed to go through, anyone else in my position would definitely not be able to obtain a legal abortion.

Instead of that option I would have had to choose between an unwanted baby, an illegal, back street abortion, and, of course, borrowing money for a private clinic.

MANDY HURFORD

PS: After the abortion I was told I became pregnant because the Gravigard had become dislodged. I am now waiting to be admitted to hospital as they cannot trace it. After more x-rays I will probably have to have surgery in order to remove it.

I WOULD like to agree with the criticisms of Womens Voice in your last issue. If women are to play a real part in any revolutionary struggle, it is important that the interests of women who do housework and look after children should not be ignored. This does not mean only full time housewives: most women do house work for men, and we ought to realise how important the existence of housewives is for the state and for capitalism.

In all it's legislation the state tries to push women—both married and unmarried—into dependence on men. You only have to look at something like social security or national insurance to see this. This dependence is compounded by unequal pay, by lack of nursery facilities so that women are forced to stay at home and look after children... the list could go on indefinitely. The state props up the family in this way, but housework and the existence of dependent housewives is also important economically. If there is someone who transforms food into meals, washes, cleans, looks after children 24 hours a day etc, it comes a lot cheaper than if you had to pay for all these services. The existence of housework therefore helps to keep the level of wages down.

So—housewives are not irrelevant; they play a very important part. It is up to papers like Womens Voice to show them that this is so—that cooking people's meals and doing their washing, and all the other aspects of women's inferior status at

work and home which the existence of the housewife implies, is very definitely 'women's role' under capitalism and an important part of women's oppression. Yours in sisterhood, LUCY ROBINSON

Editor says:

Womens Voice has never said that housewives are irrelevant; on the contrary, we realise the dangers of the 'Cowley Wives' situation arising where housewives feel isolated and turn against strikers. It is true that the family is used by capitalism to reproduce the next generation of workers, and care for the present generation, much more cheaply than could be done by the state. But women's role in this society is not just as a housewife, but also, for the large majority, as a worker. So women have a double burden—they have to work, in factories, shops and offices, for wages, and they also have to work in the home. The question for us is how women can be organised to fight against their exploitation and oppression. We feel that we must begin where women have some collective strength—in the workplace.

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.



Photo: John Surrcock (Report)

MEN AND WOMEN TOGETHER BRING VICTORY

WOMEN at Thompson and Capper have voted unanimously to continue their strike for higher wages and against the management's threat to close the factory. At first the women did not play a leading role in the strike, partly because their kids have been turned away from the local council nursery since the strike began. But now there are women on the strike committee and a woman steward organised a picket rota and stewarded pickets to other factories to get support.

The women take home £20.00, the men £24.00—the strike is over a £4 pay claim. The strike has not been made official by the TGWU, so the strikers are relying totally on support

from other workers. Solidarity has already been shown by a mass picket of 200 outside the factory, including delegates from other Liverpool factories and links have been made with stewards from the parent company London Rubber. Flying pickets have been sent out to London Rubber companies in London.

● After five weeks management offered an increase of 23 per cent across the board. This was accepted and the strike ended with a victory demonstration.

WHY I AM A REVOLUTIONARY

MELANIE McFADDYEN
I WAS born and brought up middle class. I was generally over-privileged. As far back as I can remember somewhere in my guts I've rebelled against my class. For example, I remember practically nothing of the history that I was taught—it was all kings and queens in lists. I only liked the ones who were syphilitic or mad. I hated Alfred the Great and never thought of his cake burning as being funny. When I try to extract what I remember specifically from history—there he is in me, Wat Tyler, leader of the peasants' revolt of 1382. The other early indication of socialism in the guts, was at a school fancy dress party when, at the age of 11, I sat in grim silence dressed in black holding a Ban the Bomb placard while sugar plum fairies and princesses careered around having a hell of a time.

When I went to college, and thought at all of politics, it meant either a dirty game played by Conservative, Labour and Liberal Parties, or freezing stone-faced revolutionaries selling papers in half-deserted streets; I thought they must be mad. When my women friends at college started talking about women's liberation, it seemed irrelevant to me: their complaints about male chauvinism and oppression left me cold.

I loved male chauvinism. I was aware of politics, revolution and the women's movement, but they didn't seem to have anything to do with me. One day a couple of years ago, a woman friend announced that she was going to a meeting of our local Trades Council Women's sub-committee and not wanting to appear ignorant, I went along. I soon began to realise that the women's movement that I'd considered, wrongly, to be just an organised excuse for having hairy legs and complaining about boy-friends, was about me and the desperate inequality of women. Especially at work. And that meant politics.

Shortly after my new involvement with the women's movement, I started teaching in a comprehensive. As a result of my new work in the women's movement, my eyes were open to the immense inequalities between classes in society. My latest socialism was out of the guts and onto the street. Very fast I saw that the educational system is corrupt; the people who run the schools and the classroom teachers are as divided as the managing director and the shop floor workers. I felt a strong need for a base, to be working for a better system with other teachers who felt the same way I did. I was sickened by the senior teacher who run the schools and care more about their careers than about the kids.

I started going to IS meetings and after a few months I joined. I feel now that I have a firm base backing from which to work in IS teachers and in Rank and File. However, I still felt like a middle class imposter. I still felt distanced from the working class, the people for whom we were working. Then I was made redundant in my school. For political

reasons. I have been in the NUT for a year and have been very active, led a strike and lots of stirring meetings. I am very unpopular with the 3-4 senior staff who run the school. Teachers' contracts can be very insecure—mine is. Suddenly the head had the right to fire me. Cuts had to be made. Five teachers had to go. I was singled out for the only redundancy. The rest are filled by gaps already made by teachers leaving. The story of how the bosses have mistreated me and failed to co-operate is long and acutely depressing: I had only been told by word of mouth by the head that I would be made redundant; but that if at all possible, he'd save my job.

He made out he really cared. I heard nothing for weeks. It suddenly became clear to the staff that the cuts were really going to happen, that they would mean a lower standard of education for the kids and an extra burden for the teachers. The cuts would be another backward step in the manning down of an already impoverished educational system. We got together to find out what was going on. One break time a teacher telephoned the deputy head, a very rich man, who was acting head in the absence of the other. This person, a sacred cow enshrined in a distant office and rarely seen, informed the teacher that I was 'definitely going', the cuts were happening.

When this information was relayed to me, all the horrible things that had happened to me over the year, burst to a climax. I felt a white hot fury inside me, the strongest political experience I've ever had. My own victimisation and redundancy made clear to me in a flash what the enormous rise in unemployment in the working class was all about. Our lives are nothing. We can be put out of work by one quick lash of a boss's tongue, hired one day, fired the next.

The other staff in the room reacted instantly, the place was hissing with anger. Three days later we had a meeting to which the entire staff voluntarily came, and voted almost unanimously for a resolution demanding a guarantee that no cuts should be made and that my job should be secured. We gave the management a week to produce the goods. We've yet to see what will happen. Whatever does happen, the socialism I'd felt in my guts right back to Wat Tyler and CND fancy dress all solidified in a burning determination to do all I could to make life better; to live more happily and equally because after all, fundamentally there's the common cause. Those freezing loonies I'd seen selling newspapers weren't crazed idealists; revolution isn't a romantic game played by a few cranks, it's a realistic aim of dedicated hard-working socialists; revolutionaries aren't some idiot fringe on the edge of society, they are inside it, working for a better life for everybody.

Even if you're born and brought up in a swanky part of London and privately educated, when you turn your back on all that and start working, and the ruling class kicks you in the teeth, where does that leave you? It leaves you in the working class, no longer an imposter, but fighting for a better life for you, your kids and you too—workers.

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In next months issue we want to try and take up the causes of inflation and the arguments about the crisis, wage controls. So if you want any particular questions answered, write and let us know.

Third in our series on the family

MOST people had heard of arranged marriages long time before the Asian immigrants arrived in England. It was always thought a thing of the past. But, we still meet people who are actually going through with them.

The tradition of the arranged marriage has been carried out in India, and other countries for years. It is kept alive with strict social norms and taboos.

The preparation of becoming a future marriage partner starts early for the girl. Since childhood she is guarded from the boys and is even forbidden from seeing other girls who play or go out with boys. She is labelled as 'cheap' if she so much as talks to boys even while she is young. Courting or any other relationship with the opposite sex is therefore out of the question.

Throughout childhood the girl is taught to cook, sew, clean etc, and bear any hardship that she might have to bear in her future husband's home. Some of the Hindu festivals make the young girl fast for about a week so that the Gods might be pleased with her and grant her a decent husband.

While she watches her brothers play, the girl has to sit at home where any streak of independence, interest or ideas are nipped in the bud and totally crushed.

From the beginning she is trained to realise a future role, that of a submissive wife, there to be dominated by her husband and to look after his welfare.

While it is not considered bad for the boys to 'have fun', the girl has to remain a virgin or, of course, no one will marry her. These double standards will be forced on her throughout her life. Unmarried

The Family

pregnant girls have no place in society and not even their parents will speak to them.

As the girl learns to be submissive the boy is included in all the major family decisions and is learning the role of carrying on the family system. Arranged marriages, therefore, work perfectly as each partner carries out their accepted roles without any questions.

After puberty, the girl is finally prepared for marriage. She is constantly humiliated as she is reminded of what she is costing her parents.

She is regarded as a burden to be

passed onto other hands as soon as possible. She thus loses any dignity she might have left. The parents of each partner approach one another offering the best 'goods'. The girl is weighed according to her dowry and looks, in that order. While the boy it is his family, job, money and education. The girl is then dressed up and if after seeing her, like at a slave bazaar, the man approves of his goods and her dowry, the marriage is settled. If not, she is further humiliated.

Not ever having had any sexual contact or knowledge before, the

girl is expected to give herself fully to her husband on the first night of their wedding. She then begins to fulfil her role. She cooks, and bears children. She has no say in any family, political or other matters.

To western ears this might sound cruel, but when compared with the western marriage system, the similarities are astonishing.

To the Asian, for example, marriage is a contract where each partner trades one thing for another in order to keep the 'balance' of society. Just as this system makes

sure of a progression of family inheritance, wealth etc, the western marriage does the same only in a different way.

This system is surrounded by an aura of romanticism. The Queen and her husband, Princess Anne etc are fantasies girls in the west are made to believe in.

The western girl might appear to have the same freedom as the man but her chances are limited in education and job opportunity. She is always the one who tries to trap her man while he tries to escape. Society always 'approves' or 'disapproves' according to whether he is the 'secure' type or not. The western girl usually ends up the same way as the Indian girl, cleaning and bearing children.

The state thus avoids all responsibility for the children which is passed on to the family by means of social pressure. The man, who otherwise has no authority, almost reduced to the status of the machine he works on in his factory, does have a say in his house. The family provides an excellent diversion. There the man is king of his castle.

Marriage systems, therefore are nothing to do with morals. A western girl is equally a social outcast for being an unmarried mother for example. It is important to realise how in fact marriage supports the present system we live in. Unless we begin to oppose this, the oppression of women especially will carry on.

DINA ABBOTT



At Christmas, all the shiftworkers, asians and whites, came out on strike over the reinstatement of one white worker. Only the day workers—all women—didn't come out.

Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

THE RAPISTS CHARTER

ANNE BRITTEN NUT

EVEN before the recent Lords' Ruling that a man could not be convicted of rape if he honestly believed that the woman consented, rape victims were very reluctant to come forward. Justifiably so, considering that there were 1000 reported cases in 1973 but only 317 convictions. (Guardian 5.6.75). The increase in the number of acquittals since this ruling will, without doubt, have increased this reluctance.

Not only are women to be subjected to rigorous and intimate cross-examination about previous sexual experience and then have this reported in lurid, titillating detail in the press. They must also endure all of this in the knowledge that their assailant is more likely than not to be acquitted. How many women will be prepared to bear the fruitless humiliation and strain of all this on top of what they have already suffered?

At present there are two private members' bills before parliament concerning the question of rape. Jack Ashley's bill merely calls for a

reversal of the recent ruling by amending the Act to read: 'A man who has sexual intercourse with a woman without reasonable belief in her consent is guilty of rape.'

Although we should support this Bill for its very minimal demands, we must recognise that it will do little to encourage rape victims to come forward.

A second Bill from Peter Crowder asks for anonymity for rape victims in criminal cases. This would be a great step forward.

Neither this bill nor Jack Ashley's seeks to prohibit lawyers from asking all sorts of supposedly 'relevant' questions about victims' past sex lives. Jack Ashley asked merely that this should be looked into by the Criminal Law Revision Committee. This practice of delving into a woman's past sexual experience blatantly illustrates woman's position in our present society:—A woman, as sexual *object* is not allowed to *choose* with whom she wishes to sleep. In America, where rape has greatly increased, New York State has recently passed a law which will prevent defence

lawyers from questioning victims about their sex lives. But it is also true that women in America have been actively challenging the existing rape laws.

Of course we must also fight for legislation which extends women's right to control their own bodies. But, we must also recognise that sexual perversions, such as rape, will not be wiped out merely by making it easier for rapists to be convicted.

This is only attacking the symptom, and ultimately we are interested in a cure. As Chris Harman wrote last month, in a society where both men and women are treated as commodities, and women as commodities to be owned by men, then it is a logical step for some men who do not own this commodity to try and steal it. As long as the relationship between man and woman is that of owner and owned; as long as the potential for human sexual gratification is repressed by these constraints, then rape will continue to flourish.

NALGO: Time the whistle stopped

NALGO, with over 500,000 members, is the fourth biggest union in the country. About 40 per cent of that membership is women. Yet, at the Annual Conference in Blackpool this year, there were less than 200 women among the 1800 delegates.

The women who do get to NALGO Conference are patronised, and subjected to whistles and catcalls if they get up to speak. Small wonder that very few women do speak at Conferences!

This year's Conference wasn't as bad on this sort of intimidation as other have been, but the prospects for women members are pretty bleak if we leave things to the official union machine and the people who are running things at the moment.

Conference discussed the report of the Equal Rights Working Party set up by 1974 Conference—this report and its recommendations provide a good basis for action, but the attitude of some conference delegates to women at work guarantees that nothing will be done about it unless women themselves force their local branches into taking action.

Women in the Poole branch in particular need to look out—their delegate to Conference thinks that women should give up their jobs in times of recession, so that men can continue to work. The applause that he got for this idea shows us that we cannot afford to be complacent even on issues as basic as women's right to work!

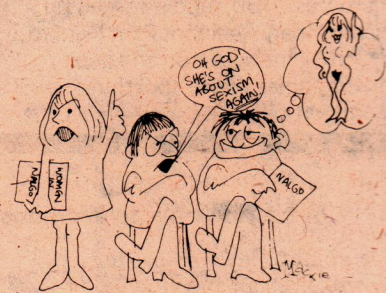
The Conference overwhelmingly passed a motion calling for action to secure real equality for women, and then refused to allow on to the agenda an emergency motion on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill, reflecting a lack of willingness to tackle concrete problems facing women. The general attitude was 'Let's get it over with; agree to anything here; we don't have to do anything about it'. The inconsistency of the delegates was shown by the fact that some of them attended a 'Stag Night' including stripper acts, that same night, despite a very successful picket of the club where it was held.

Clearly, women have got to act. Basic things we should all do are:

1 Use the Working Party report—it's not ideal, but it's a start. You should try to get branches to get enough copies for at least one to every ten members. It costs 20p and is available from NALGO House, 8 Harewood Row, London NW1 (tel: 01-262 8030).

2 Call branch meetings to get the report discussed, and to instruct your local negotiators to take up the recommendations of the report regarding things like nurseries, meetings during working hours etc.

3 Prepare branch members to take action over the recommendations—no employer is going to give anything away without a fight at the moment, particularly in the public services that NALGO organises. We must be prepared to fight on things like training nurseries, pensions. NALGO's claim that women have had equal pay since 1955 collapses in the light of statistics produced by the Working Party.



DON'T LEAVE IT TO THE PEOPLE YOU SENT TO CONFERENCE!!!! ONLY RANK AND FILE ACTION WILL WIN NURSERIES, JOB SECURITY, EQUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING, PENSIONS ETC.
Pam Peers
NEWHAM NALGO

If people are interested in fighting for women's rights in NALGO, they can contact the Nalگو Action Group, an organisation of rank and file militants in the union. The address of NAG is 13 Bennett's Avenue, Croydon, Surrey.

WORKERS at Henry Boot building site in York have been occupying it for the past few weeks because the site is unsafe to work on. They have now been sacked and so are also fighting for their jobs.

Josie Goulding is one of the wives who are occupying the site, along with their husbands. Womens Voice asked Josie why she occupied:

'We wanted live husbands, not dead ones. The men went in and we were prepared to sit it out with them. There was a problem with the children, because they've been on holiday from school, and I work two days a week, but the York workers and IS members have helped out with them.'

'The other day, the security bloke came down with some guard dogs. He said he'd give us time to clear the building and that he'd be back at 8 o'clock. I was at home at the time, so my husband told me. I phoned a few people and by 7.30 we had over 150 people at the occupation. It was amazing. They came along at 8 o'clock to throw us out and they had to go away again.'

'We think we're going to win this. We've made up our minds that we're going to win—we've got so many people behind us now.'

SEX SPLITS AGAIN

FOR THE last four years, workers at Stewart Plastics, a small plastics firm in Croydon, have been struggling to get a trade union going in their sweatshop. Between 1971 and 1975 they work a 55-hour week with no overtime paid. They've never got sick pay or heard of compensation for industrial injury.

Last time, they were defeated by management breaking its agreement to recognise the union, once they'd gone back to work. This time, in May, when the 250 workers—mainly Asians—struck in support of their victimised TASS steward, Len Pratt, management used agency labour and 120 part-time women workers to break the strike.

When part-time women were first taken on at the factory, the convenor Mr Gromayo, insisted that they get the same rate as the men. This was essential for maintaining unity on the shop-floor. The women were initially prepared to put up a fight, but gave in when the bosses offered a small increase.

The same tactic was repeated last month. The men demanded recognition of the AUEW, re-instatement of their steward, and a 30 per cent increase in wages. Just when the women had agreed to come out in support the bosses came up with a 5p rise for the men and they called off their strike action.

Women's Voice Public meeting, June 19th.

THE first all-London Women's Voice public meeting held on June 19th was a big success. 180 people turned up to hear Gillian Anciano, Pam Denard, and Tony Cliff speak on the need to fight the James White abortion amendment bill. The speakers

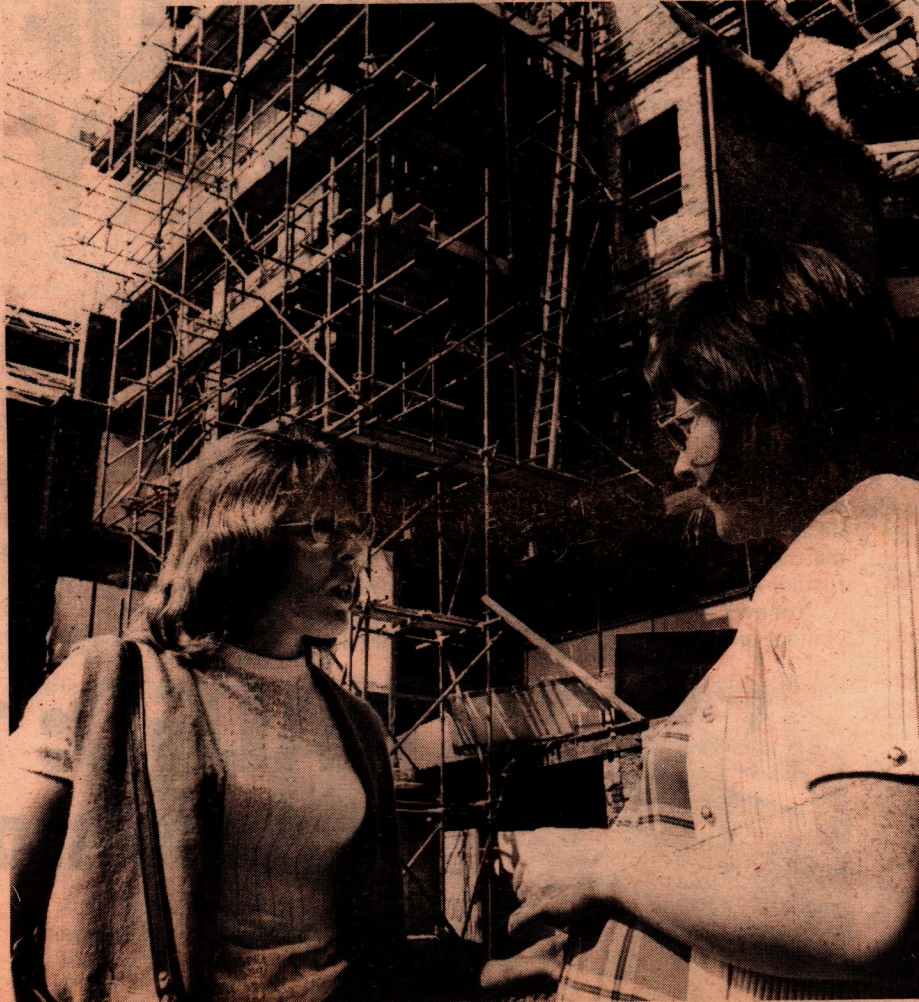


Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

stressed that the bill would hit hardest against working class women, who could not afford private clinics, and would be pushed into the hands of backstreet abortionists. They also argued forcefully that this was one part of a much broader fight... not only to control our own bodies, but to take control of society and run it in the interests of all workers.

We were also fortunate in having a speaker from the Spanish Solidarity Committee, ASTED, who spoke of the struggle for socialism in Spain.

The Women's Theatre group performed their play 'My mother said I never should' which went down extremely well. This play is a humorous yet serious attempt to put over the arguments about the need for contraception and abortion, and is aimed mainly at young audiences in schools and youth-clubs.

If you want to contact the Women's Theatre Group about performing the play at your meeting, or school, write to Sue Eatwell, 28 Norland Square, London W11. tel: 01-727 6677.

CUTS: Another hospital on its way

'THEY SAY the hospital service is for the public, but I reckon it's run just for the management. They think only of themselves. They're just going to shut all the hospitals in the East End and let people get on with it. If they carry on closing hospitals you'll have to go right out of this district if you are ill.' That was the angry reaction of Pauline Holmes. Pauline is a nurse and the NUPE shop steward at the Invalid and Crippled Children's Hospital in London's East End. She and all the other nurses are determined to fight against the latest decision of the Area Health Authority to close their hospital.

The hospital no longer caters for invalid children. It is a 28 bed unit for geriatric patients. For the past year hospital management have been running the place down. A broken lift to the upper floors was never mended. Then it was excused but never replaced. It is one excuse that is being used for closure—the authorities say they can't get equipment upstairs. The other excuse is finance.

But the staff of the hospital aren't going to be fobbed off that easily. They have all been promised jobs if the hospital does close. But as Pauline Holmes told Womens Voice, 'You've got to think of the general public not just jobs. This hospital is a nice friendly atmosphere. The patients all come from nearby. Everyone knows everyone else, and there is real individual treatment.'

The local NUPE Official told Pauline about the Poplar Hospitals Action Committee, a delegate trade

union body formed to try and stop the closure of Poplar Hospital. Pauline went along to their meeting and informed them about the situation. How two successive petitions from the Authority had been ignored. How the local paper had distorted the story and they had insisted on a corrected story. The Action Committee decided to issue a leaflet and try to gain the support of local trade unionists to save the hospital. A march is planned for July.

Said Pauline of the meeting, 'At last we are going to do something. I feel very hopeful after that meeting, that with this committee we have a chance of success. It is important to get the other unions interested. They are the general public and they should know what's going on in the area. Trade unionists like those who came along from Fords Dagenham should be able to get us the support we need for the marches and so on.'

'One of the other things we should do is contact the ambulance drivers. We should ask them to refuse to move these geriatric patients to other hospitals. As long as there are patients there, they can't close the hospital can they?'

Many people didn't know this hospital existed until the fuss in the local paper. After my objections were printed in the local paper I went round the hospital saying what a cheek it was. Everyone was agreed that we must keep the hospital open. 'They're trying to run the East End down. It's ridiculous. ANNA PACZUSKA

WE WANT LIVE HUSBANDS

womens
voice

INCREASE THOSE SALES

A COUPLE of months ago two IS members' wives decided to organise a womens group around Womens Voice. Our main object was to involve working-class women in discussing the problems we all face, with the intention of trying to work around some of these problems.

For our first meeting we had agreed to ask an experienced IS speaker to come along and give us a few pointers on establishing a womens group. This first meeting proved very successful, with about 15 women turning up. Most of them present contributed something to the general discussion, and all agreed the need for a working womens group based on socialist lines.

One of our first priorities was to increase our Womens Voice sales. Before setting up the group our sales averaged 25—we increased this to over 100 with the next edition. Most of our extra sales came from shopping centres, housing estates and individual workplaces.

With the beginning of the National Abortion Campaign we stepped up our paper sales and concentrated our efforts around this issue. Our local Labour MP, Kevin McNamara, is on the Select Committee, set up to consider the Amendment Bill and is also a fervent anti-abortionist. It was decided to hold a picket outside his home and to hand the MP a statement explaining our views. About 30 people turned up at the picket only to be greeted by the MP's wife, who in no uncertain terms, refused to accept our statement, saying, 'that her husband did go to Parliament as a representative or a delegate of his constituents'. She also went on to say 'that if you wanted to slim you stopped eating, therefore if you didn't want babies, you shouldn't have sex.' After picketing his home for three hours, we finally managed to get Mr McNamara out of the house to receive our statement.

Our biggest success so far was when our spokesman approached the Hull Port Shop Stewards Committee to ask for support on the National Abortion demo, they agreed to send six delegates.

Up till now, we have had five meetings of the Womens Voice Group all of which have been very good. We sold nearly 200 of the latest issue outside of factories, shopping centres and at public meetings around the Abortion Campaign. We now feel that we have established a real working womens group in Hull.

LYNDA GORDON
JEENY BALES

NOTICE

Anyone who has copies of issues 7, 9 and 10 of Womens Voice please send to **The Editor, 8 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN.**

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