

womens voice

MONTHLY WOMENS PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

Prices up 25% Schools, hospitals slashed Unemployment over 1,000,000

THEIR PRICE:

PRICES ARE rising at the rate of 25 per cent. Unemployment is well over the 1,000,000 mark. Denis Healey has told us all that despite raging inflation we are only allowed up to £6 a week wage rise for the next 12 months. Unless you happen to be an MP, when you're entitled to another £24 a week. If some of them had their way they would get an increase of £60 a week, bringing it up to £160 a week! And that doesn't include all the special allowances, nor the income from their jobs as 'advisors'.

Sir Monty Finniston, Chairman of British Steel Corporation, is already getting £540 a week. He belongs to the ruling class. He argues on the one hand that thousands of steelworkers, all with families and young children must lose their jobs. Those that are left are only entitled to a £6 rise. And then he has the cheek to demand a £10,000 a year increase for himself. More than the rest of us get in three years!

The people who get hundreds of pounds a week and who take all the decisions about our lives, from whether we are allowed to carry on working, to the kind of

schools our kids will go to, are telling the rest of us who earn peanuts in comparison that we can't have any more. The miners' problem is that they belong to the wrong class.

- We make all the wealth and they decide what to do with it. There are only 7 per cent of them and between them they own 84 per cent of all the wealth.

Not content with freezing our wages, they are taking the money we pay in taxes to pay for the care of the young, the old and the sick, and handing it over on a plate to the Ferranti brothers, the shareholders of British Leyland, and all the other leeches who need bailing out.

This rotten system will only survive if we are prepared to sacrifice. The bosses are crossing their fingers that we will tighten our belts. If we don't they will have no alternative but to try and make us. We know this spells disaster for working class families. The only way for us is to fight. To fight for the kind of wage rises that keep up with inflation. To fight against closures of schools, hospitals, old people's homes. For us there is an alternative—a socialist society. We must organise in the factories and offices, on the estates and in the streets for the kind of society we want to live in, one in which workers control

we won't pay!



Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

FINER'S FINE -ACTION'S BETTER

shouted thousands of one-parent families who marched through London to Westminster on 2 July. It was organised by Gingerbread, the one-parent family association, to mark the anniversary of the publication of the *Finer Report* on One Parent Families, and to demand government action on its recommendations.

The slogan expressed the anger and frustration felt by 650,000 women and men in this country who are bringing up children alone. They waited four and a half years for the *Finer Committee*, set up by a Labour government, to tell them what they already know; that their average income is half that of a two-parent family, that they live in worse housing conditions, that half of them have to live on supplementary benefit—the official poverty line—simply because they cannot find day-care for their children. Now, a year later, another Labour government has not even said when it is going to debate the Report, let alone implement it.

The press and TV concentrated on the festive air of the occasion, showing pictures of well-looking-after children eating ice cream. They managed to completely gloss over its tremendous political significance. This is the first time since the thirties that the poor and the un-



5000 people all over the country, half of them children took part in the demonstration

employed have taken to the streets to demand better conditions. Gingerbread is a self-help organisation. It was started so that single parents could meet to offer each other advice and practical help. But now the deepening economic crisis, and the Labour government's refusal to lift a finger to help those who are

hardest hit, has forced them into direct political action.

The parents themselves are aware that they cannot win on their own—they have no economic power. So they are busy building links with those who have. Staff of Gingerbread, the National Council for One Parent Families, CPAG, BASW, and other

organisations concerned with single parents, left their offices to join the demonstration. The campaign is also being taken into the trade unions. The branch of ACTSS to which staff of Gingerbread and One Parent Families belong, passed a resolution supporting the demonstration.

This sets an important precedent. As the crisis deepens, those who are hit first, and worst, will be those in the weakest position to fight back. Building links with the trade unions is the only way that one-parent families, and similar groups, will be able to fight for a better future.
LAURA OLENS

Dreams of a 'blushing' bride

WOMEN HAVE for centuries been used as a cheap form of labour. But if one is to believe the capitalist press, women now have: equal pay, equal opportunities and if we're not bloody careful, a woman prime minister. This must be of great comfort to Maggie Thatcher as she sweats over a hot calculator working out how many cans of beans she can cram into the loft, but it gives me sod all joy.

Every woman knows it is not just a pair of balls and a cock which make a man different from her. We're taught almost from birth that it's more important to develop our physical attributes rather than our brain. No tits, and warts on your face is bound to lower your value on the marital market. You are conditioned to dream of thick piled carpets, log fires and soft lights, where the man of your life, when he's not too busy leaping off trains and out of aeroplanes to bring you chocolates, will whisper sweet nothings in your ear. Then when you become pregnant your adoring male will sit at your feet whilst you rock in your rocking chair dreaming of a baby and Mothercare nappy liners.

Have you noticed that in these dreams the blokes' feet don't smell, nor does he snore all night when he's been out potting; the kid never has a snotty nose or shits on your knees or throws up all over your carpet. Of course, before you can have any of this, you walk down the aisle, a radiant bride, and preferably a virgin. I know I was, blushing that is, but who wouldn't, having been bungled in through the vestry door nine months pregnant.

It wasn't until I'd had three kids in as many years that the full impact of the oppressive dual role the system forces on us, hit me. There

Pauline Lumb

was never enough money so that I could sleep soundly at night. I'd lie awake mentally juggling with what money we had. I'd get up in the morning feeling tired out before I'd started. My husband, who at the time was a salesman, and under a great deal of pressure from his bosses to sell more and more, was always tired and ratty. Consequently we argued. Each resenting the other. When we argued, the kids became upset and developed behaviour problems which of course made me worry even more. We found ourselves caught up in a vicious circle which we simply could not break.

I was eventually forced out to work, when it became apparent, no matter how we juggled the cash it would not stretch to pay £25 for the electricity bill. I got a job in the market on a pet-stall during school hours; which meant I had to rush like mad in the mornings to be there on time, and rush twice as hard in the afternoon to get home in time for the kids coming out of school.

The first thing that struck me was the cold. Even the most poorly organised shop floor would have

walked out. Not so the hardy ladies in the market who, instead, donned boots, coats, scarves, gloves and very red noses. I asked around to see why people put up with it. I was told it was not the fault of the stallholders, but that of the corporation who would not turn the heating up. I pointed out to the few who would listen, that the only reason the heating was not turned up was because of the stallholders' reluctance to pay more rates. Yes, they were aware of this, but what could they do with their boss forever standing at their side. Pay and benefits varied drastically from stall to stall. My fellow workers were amongst the lowest paid in the market.

We were overworked because of understaffing. Part-timers were used at peak times and school kids used on Saturdays and during holidays. This meant that part timers could stay at home during holidays with their kids. This meant it worked out much cheaper for the bosses with no sickness benefit or insurance to pay. We watched prices rise without reason other than the bosses' greed. Old stock was sold at the new higher prices. The floor sweepings containing poison were out back in the bins to be sold as rabbit food. Sick animals were sold even though it was a pretty sure thing they'd be dead in under a week.

I found in the time I worked there that there was little hope of ever getting the women organised to fight. A few agreed to join the union and had paid their subs. But that was all. Their argument was that they knew the pay and conditions were lousy and that they were doing the work of 2/3 people. But it was the only work they could find that fitted in with school hours. Besides, by the time they'd

got home, got tea ready, done the housework and got the kids to bed, there was no energy left to think, never mind act.

It is difficult to get across to women that by militant action within the unions, they can win

things like: maternity leave, paternity leave during school holidays and whilst children are ill; sick pay and decent conditions, coffee breaks, and a real living wage—as a basic human right, not as a favour bestowed by our so-called betters.

The Family

LEO ABSE, Labour MP for Pontypool, supports the James Whie anti-abortion bill. The argument he used in a recent television interview goes like this. In the present situation any government can use abortion as a social policy. They can offer women abortions instead of decent housing and good social security payments which will make it possible for them to keep their children.

It sounds like a fair argument at first. But what Leo Abse doesn't say is why he's started by attacking abortions. Why hasn't he introduced a radical housing bill, or a measure to increase social welfare benefits, or a guaranteed minimum wage and equal pay and equal pensions for women?

Leo Abse pretends to be concerned for ordinary women. He finishes up supporting the right of the state, the government, and the church to make our decisions for us.

This whole upside down argument is a weird and wonderful echo of arch-Tory Sir Keith Joseph, in October last year. Sir Keith, you will recall, believes that his society is being undermined by left-wing permissiveness. He wants people to fend for themselves and stand on their own two feet. He wants the family to take more respon-

sibility for 'education, health, upbringing, morality, advice and guidance, saving for old age and housing.'

The problem is, said Sir Keith, (quite wrongly, as a matter of fact) that the lower classes breed faster than the self-reliant middle and upper classes. Sir Keith believes that 'our human stock' is being ruined by bad blood seeping up from the people on the bottom. So he wants more birth control provided by the government for most working-class women (politely called classes four and five), so that their 'low intelligence' and 'lax discipline' will not be handed on. Incidentally, this 'birth-control' will probably have to take the form of compulsory sterilisation, as such women cannot be relied on to use contraceptives efficiently. Sir Keith claims to want to stop the exploitation of women in the 'permissive society'.

Of course he didn't explain how less welfare, less council housing, less spending on the National Health Service would help women.

Neither did he explain how more state control over women and their right to have children would help stop exploitation.

Needless to say, Lady Joseph is not a member of 'social classes four and five'.

The Crisis
Social Contract or Socialism
by Tony Cliff
75p + 10p
IS Books, 265 Seven Sisters Road,
London, N4.

'Johnny go home' —but to what?

THERE ARE an estimated 25,000 young people homeless in London. A recent TV programme, 'Johnny Go Home', highlighted what this means.

Children, some as young as 11 or 12, flock down to London to find jobs. They come mainly from areas like Scotland, where unemployment is high. Some are running away from home, others have no chance of work in their home town.

Many kids have no chance of getting jobs or homes. The film shows what being homeless is like. Young people sleep in cardboard boxes to keep warm. Or they sit in sleazy clubs all night. Or they sleep on the Underground. Most of them don't have much choice about getting money, either. They can beg, sell drugs or sell themselves for sex.

Some will choose the latter. As one young male prostitute put it, he didn't like the idea until he realised it was an easy way of making money.

Some of these kids end up in

hostels. The programme showed one of these. It was run by a man called Roger Gleaves, a fake bishop.

Gleaves has now been sent to prison for buggery and assault. He has a past history of previous convictions. He was also an extreme right-winger, being associated with the League of Empire Loyalists (now part of the National Front). This organisation has a record of being in favour of more spending on arms.

The hostel was ruled by Gleaves, in a vicious manner. While he preached about Christian morality, he was forcing boys to have sex with him, often in exchange for small gifts. There was a pile of money to be made. Gleaves got £9 for every boy at the hostel—straight from the Social Security. Although they're usually very nosy, no-one seems to have bothered about the goings-on in the hostels.

If anyone disagreed with Gleaves, they were likely to get beaten up. Three of his henchmen are now serving life for murdering one of the hostel kids. The blood from 40 different people was found splattered on the walls.

Most people, like me, were probably shocked by the programme. Newspapers, councillors and MPs have expressed horror at the events shown in the film. Norman Fowler, Tory spokesman for social services, has bemoaned 'the lack of communication' which allows such things to happen.

It's not lack of communication—it's lack of jobs and houses. Such a comment only shows up the complete hypocrisy of such people.

These are the same people who support cuts in public spending. This means less housing, so more homelessness. It also means less social services, so less help for the homeless. These are the same people who support high unemployment, which means that young people have to move around and find jobs.

These are the same people who condemn squatters as law breakers. They would rather leave thousands of houses empty, than give homes to those in need.

Whatever the reasons for these youngsters leaving home, society takes no care and makes no provision.

Of course socialists should be horrified that such conditions exist. But they should not be surprised.

In a society where human happiness is subordinated to profit there will always be those with nowhere to live. Young workers will always be thrown out of work when it suits the bosses. They will always be forced to move around to find work. And some will always be forced into selling their bodies.

Because under capitalism, everything can be bought and sold, including sex, it's no wonder that if it's a choice of no food and nowhere to live or getting food and shelter in exchange for sex, that many kids choose the latter.

LINSEY GERMAN

HOUSING: THE FACTS

There are 40,000 homeless in London alone. 30,000 hotel rooms lie empty in London.

Nationally there are:

1.2 million homes unfit for human habitation.

2.1 million homes lack the basic amenities (indoor toilets, hot water etc).

1,350,000 people live in overcrowded conditions. (more than 1½ people per room).

In 1973 over 7000 children were admitted into care as a result of inadequate housing.

At the same time in Britain

150,000 building workers are unemployed

857,000,000 surplus bricks

800,000 empty houses.

Fewer houses were built last year than at any time in any year since 1948.

A FORM OF STATE CONTROL

Leo Abse and Keith Joseph agree on the one essential. They want the government and the state to interfere with a woman's right to say when she will or will not have children. The state needs children to be born and raised, and for that it needs the services of the family. The family depends on the role of the woman, who has few rights, but all the duties. As women begin to demand greater freedom, and the right to control their own lives, they challenge this power of the state exercised through the family.

In his book 'The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State', Frederick Engels takes this argument right back to primitive times.

Any society has two main tasks. First, to organise production, turning raw materials into usable goods, producing food and shelter, designing and making new commodities. Second, to organise reproduction, whereby the society renews itself by rearing successive generations of children.

In the earliest human societies, Engels claims, people could only provide for their most simple and basic needs, hunting and growing crops year by year, producing only enough to keep going, and sometimes not even that. What there was, was owned communally,

and shared by all.

Slowly, as they developed new tools and methods, these early societies began to build up extra supplies, over and above people's immediate needs. This surplus was appropriated by one small group within society, and they developed into a ruling class. In order to hang on to their privileged position, of having more than everyone else, this class had to develop powerful means to overcome any challenge to their authority. The instrument they developed was the state, a system of government and law to endorse their right to private wealth and property, backed up with the physical might of army and police force.

Engels argues that in any such 'class society', where a minority exploits the majority, the government has to control the birth and upbringing of each new generation, through the family.

At the same time as property became privately owned, so reproduction came to be privately organised. Those who owned property wanted to hand it on to their own off-spring.

Every time the economic system changed and developed, the family system had to change with it and adapt to its new tasks. With the growth of the factory system the

family had to change again. Because survival depended on people selling their labour to the factory owners, factories were concentrated in towns, people were uprooted from their old way of life and forced to take up quarters in rotten, scarce housing. The pressure of having to move where the jobs were, of cramped quarters, and the long regulated hours of factory work, streamlined the family to fit.

It reduced the family to two generations, parents and children. The prime responsibility of the family became the reproduction of the next generation of workers according to the needs of capitalism.

In a socialist society working people will plan production and distribution according to what we all need. There will be no ruling class, no state forcing us to live in a particular way. One person will no longer be economically dependant on another. It will be possible for women and men to develop free, loving relationships, without economic, moral, or legal pressures. And women will be free to choose whether or not they bear children, knowing that children will be no longer their sole responsibility or burden, but the responsibility of everyone.

JOAN SMITH

JOANN
LITTLE



HER FIGHT IS OUR FIGHT

THIS MONTH a black American woman goes on trial for her life. Joann Little is charged with murder.

Her crime?

Defending herself against a prison guard who entered her cell armed with an ice-pick, and tried to rape her.

Joann is only one of countless black women who suffer racial discrimination and sexual assault in American prisons.

She was convicted of robbery on flimsy evidence. Her sentence began in a jail in the Deep South of the US—a place where blacks are still treated like slaves. This country jail had no female warders. In these places, sexual assaults on women prisoners by their jailers are common.

So Clarence Alligood, her guard, thought he would be able to treat Joann as he wanted. But he was wrong. Unlike many women who are forced to submit to their attackers because they know no one will believe their story, Joann fought back.

She grabbed the ice-pick Alligood was carrying to attack her, and turned it on him. In the struggle that followed, he was stabbed and died.

Knowing what sort of 'justice' a black girl can expect from Southern whites, Joann fled, but

gave herself up a week later.

That is the story of her 'crime'. That is what she may go to the gas-chamber for.

So far, she and her lawyers have fought hard. They have shown that Alligood had been sexually active just before his death—proving that Joann didn't just make up the rape story. They have also got the trial moved to another part of the state, and ensured that there are several blacks on the jury. All this will mean that she has more chance of a sympathetic trial. But she'll still have an uphill fight. The odds are stacked against any young black woman in the southern states.

Already Joann has been harassed while awaiting trial.

But she is fighting back. A national campaign has been launched in her defence. Joann herself is speaking at support rallies.

She links her case with the sexual and racial oppression which runs through this society like a cancer. It is not merely an isolated incident, but a symptom of the way black women are treated as sexual objects to satisfy men's need.

Socialists in Britain should support her campaign. Joann Little is a political prisoner. She is the victim of everything that is rotten about our society. Her fight is our fight.

Joann with supporters outside the courtroom





LAST YEAR when Labour won two elections by the skin of their teeth we were glad. We were glad because we hated the Tories and we wanted them out. But last summer even as Labour was freezing rents, increasing pensions, dismantling the industrial relations act, we said, 'No, the honeymoon won't last long'.

Now here we are in the second summer of the Labour Government. Only it begins to feel very draughty indeed, more like winter.

Just like the winter of 1973/74, in fact when Labour was blaming it on the Tories.

Food costs a quarter as much again as it did last year, wages are being held down so they can't keep pace, public spending is cut, and we have over a million people out of work, before the real winter even begins.

Why can't Labour sort it out? Why don't they do the things they promised to help working class people?

Why don't they build more houses, wipe out speculation, give a fair deal to the pensioners?

We believe that even if they really wanted to, they wouldn't stand a chance!

Let's look at what happens in an election. The two major parties put up a candidate, chosen by their small constituency committee, and approved by central office. There's the first snag. They put up the candidate they think will win most votes. He doesn't have to be local, he doesn't have to know much about the people. He does have to be a smooth talker.

Have you ever counted up, for example, how many Labour MPs are working class? You won't have to count for long.

And yet to believe all the hula-bloo and downright propaganda whipped up by the press over the case of Reg Prentice, you'd think something was amiss. In his constituency the local Labour party decided they didn't want him as their candidate in the next election.

They don't like the right wing ideas he puts forward and they don't like his record so far. Suddenly the press declared that the process is undemocratic. Even the Tories came out in defence of Reg Prentice, saying he could have their votes in the next election instead. It looks like a case of 'democracy is when I win, manipulation is when I lose.'

So there you are with your Labour candidate, a nice enough

THEY CALL IT DEMOCRACY

chap, or maybe even a woman, duly elected to Westminster. What happens next? Well now he is a member of parliament. Note the title. Not a people's representative, not a delegate. But a member; a member is a high salaried person with privileges and prestige. Look carefully as you wave him goodbye, up to London, You may never see him again.

Or alternatively, you may come to wish he'd just disappear off a beach somewhere. Yes, what about John Stonehouse? It will soon be a year gone since he ran off with the proceeds. All that time he has still been getting his MP's salary. Yet there is nothing his constituents can do about him. Once elected, your MP has got it made. He needn't ever step foot in the House. He can sit it out happily for five years.

We as revolutionary socialists believe that one of the most basic principles of a democratic process is the right to recall. You elect someone to represent you in a responsible way. If he turns out to be a cheat or a liar, or if he just doesn't do the job very well, you should be able to un-elect him and try someone better.

Next, of course, your member may reach the heights of power. Now he is in the cabinet, surely he can do some good?

Sorry, these proceedings are secret. No, sorry, we can't tell you how we take decisions—that's a matter of government.

This is the argument currently going on about Richard Crossman's diaries. All the while Crossman was in the cabinet, he wrote a record of what went on, a very mild record, showing up the pettiness of the ministers as much as anything else. But even that is enough to make them wriggle and slap down injunctions. For they believe in secret government. They don't want us to know about the army of high civil servants who write their speeches, Labour and Tory alike.

They don't want us to know about the bankers and the capitalists who twist their arm, the NATO chiefs, and the faceless elite in Brussels.

On the other hand demand that government be out in the open, not wheeling and dealing behind

It didn't take the broadcasting of parliament to convince us that the gentlemanly brawling that takes place there is nothing but a charade. We could work that out

from the record of every Labour government so far.

The real decisions are taken by those with real power, and parliament simply tidies up after them.

An MP doesn't represent all his constituents. How could he? How could he represent the interests of the local bosses and landlords, the tenants, men and women workers, the old people and the unemployed equally? Society is grossly unequal.

An MP has to take sides, and the system chooses for him.

Parliaments and governments come and go, but the system goes on. After every election, the same seven per cent of the population own eight-four per cent of the wealth. The same bosses run the same businesses. The same bankers control the money.

From the point of view of the system, the changing of names, from Tory Government to Labour, is more of a device than anything else. It helps give us the delusion that we have a choice. It helps keep us excited at election times. Sometimes, when the system is in serious crisis like it is now, it suits the capitalists to have a Labour government because Labour can push through Tory policies and keep the union leaders quiet at the same time.

That's why it's no good being equal in the ballot box—because we're not all equal in society where it counts. What's the good of me having one vote and Mr Sainsbury having one vote when he owns a vast chain of shops and I don't own my back yard. Look at the boss of Chrysler. He doesn't even vote because he lives in America. But under the law of the system he has more power than 28,000 Chrysler workers in Britain.

As revolutionary socialists we believe that real politics is not what happens in Westminster. But about who owns what, how much you earn, what you can buy with it, whether you have somewhere decent to live. That's where we begin our political fight, and our fight is with the system itself.

JUDITH CONDON

PRICES ARE going up by 25 per cent a year. Unemployment is on its way to the million and a half mark. 700,000 parents go without meals to feed their children. We are eating less meat than at any time since 1952, when rationing was still on. Fewer houses were built last year than ever since 1948. We are headed straight for a slump, a depression, call it what you will—what it means is millions out of work, millions hungry and homeless.

Does this have to happen? With the system run the way it is now, yes. In this society all the decisions about production and employment are made by a tiny group of people who control all the wealth. And these decisions are made with only one thing in mind—how much profit they can make. They are not at all concerned with the usefulness of what they make, only with how much profit they can get out of it. That's why we see empty office blocks instead of houses for people to live in, why millions are spent on advertising while pensioners starve.

Individual companies are locked in ruthless competition, each making as much profit as they can. And they're all trying to sell as much as possible, at as high a price as possible, regardless of the effects their actions have on us, or even on the whole economy.

Remember when you couldn't get any toilet paper? It wasn't because the trees had stopped growing, because the lumberjacks had stopped cutting them down, because the boats had stopped carrying the logs to the mills.

It was because the paper companies had been busy selling their produce to the advertisers and hoarding paper to push up prices. So the short-sightedness of profit-hunger created a quite unnecessary shortage. As long as profits, not need, are the basis for decisions, there are going to be bottlenecks and shortages. And as long as there are bottlenecks and shortages prices will go up. Because if you produce paper, and there's a shortage of paper, and your only concern is to make as much money as possible, you'll put your prices up as fast as you can.

Add in the speculators buying up contracts for paper, and then selling them three months later at a higher price. Add in the banks taking their pound of flesh on the money you borrowed to build your latest mill. No wonder Socialist Worker has had to double its price.

Inflation is not a new thing. Whenever capitalism has been in a boom—whenever selling has been easy, prices have gone up. It's not a natural disaster, it's part of the way the system works. And we won't get rid of it, or the unemployment that's the other side of the same coin, until we change the whole system from the bottom to the very top.

Most of us grew up in the days of 'you've never had it so good', when we were told that crises were a thing of the past. And now that it is happening all over again.

Head-tail we lose

Daisy is 91, a widow and lives alone one room in a privately-owned house of bed-sitters.

She worked all her life in domestic service. She started out as a scullery maid earning £8 a year. She worked until she was 73 earning 2s 6d an hour cleaning in St John's Wood.

About a year ago her pension was £14 and in October of last year it went up to £14 and in April it sent up to £14.6 Her rent is £2 a week.

Gas and electricity £1.50 per week TV rental £2 a month

Winter fuel £2 a week on paraffin The remainder goes on food

Daisy never goes out as she is a semi-invalid. She says she manages on her money because she never buys clothes and never goes out anywhere, never spends money on newspapers or non-essentials. She has enough money to food and keep herself. Nothing left for anything else.

many believe that if we just tighten our belts, hold our breath, and pull together, it'll go away and not come back. But the whole sordid history of capitalism is one of disaster.

Every few years since 1850, thousands have been thrown out of work, millions have gone hungry. This is what capitalism looks like—a few years of boom when prices go up, followed by years of slump when workers are thrown on the scrap heap. What was exceptional was the twenty years of stability and relative security after the war. But the conditions that allowed the 'long boom' have gone, and can never be repeated. We are back to the old cycle of booms and slumps, of insecurity and poverty. Only this time things are even

Taken together, the top 20 British companies account for annual sales of over £18,440 millions, over 20 per cent of the sales of all UK companies. They control assets of £10,600 millions in the UK and they employ 1,450,000 of the 20.5 million workers employed in private industry and commerce. This colossal concentration of economic power is controlled by some 297 men of great wealth and power.

25 per cent of all admirals, generals and air chief marshalls went to school at Charterhouse, Eton, Winchester, Harrow or Marlborough. 33 per cent went to other public schools. 15 per cent went to direct grant schools.

Who runs Great Britain?



ds they win



Photos Peter Harrop (Report)

worse. We've got a slump and inflation at the same time. Companies are now so powerful they don't have to respond to worsening conditions by cutting their prices, like they used to. No, when their sales go down, they put their prices up even further to protect their profits. And when they go bankrupt, they have the power to force the Government to step in and hand over our taxes to keep their pockets lined. And they don't use the money to invest in new factories. They use it, as always, where it's most profitable—in property speculation or fringe banks. The ruling class is in a mess. All the remedies for inflation make the slump worse. If Healey gets away with his wage cuts, we'll see two

million unemployed, factories lying idle while men and women are desperate for work. They've done it in America—while inflation runs at under 10 per cent, eight million people are unemployed.

And all the remedies for the slump make inflation worse. Expanding production to provide jobs leads to a scramble on the market for resources, which the powerful monopolies use to push up prices even further.

For the employing class there is only one way to solve the problems they have created for themselves. That is for the workers to buy them out of the mess. Wage rises are not the cause of inflation. Inflation is rooted in the chaos

of the system, in the power of the giant monopolies, in the corruption of the ruling class. In 1973, if wages had stood stock still, inflation would have been 7.4 per cent. We did keep up with inflation and price rises only went up 2.5 per cent faster.

Cutting our wages, cutting our schools and hospitals will not stop inflation. What it will do is swell the profits of the few who run our lives, at the cost of millions on the dole queue. There is only one way to end inflation and unemployment. That is for the working class who make the goods to plan both production and distribution. We are the only class which can change society. We are the only class which can run it sanely. ELANA DALLAS

DEATHTRAPS IN THE HOME

THE first scandalous thing about most modern furniture is that it is shoddy and grossly over-priced. It looks nice, it may be just what you need to brighten up your house. But you can end up forking out hundreds of pounds for items that cost the manufacturer very little to make. What looks like wood carving on bedroom suites turns out to be plastic moulding that falls off. Expensive 'leather-look' material dries out and splits. Ply wood and melamine corners chip and break off. Add to the price of the furniture the extra charge that goes with Hire Purchase and you have a first-class piece of daylight robbery.

But there is a second, deadly, fault with modern furniture. It is made of materials which when they catch fire give off terrible fumes. If you breathe in these fumes, even for a matter of seconds, they can kill you.

It has now been established that when a house fire breaks out, more people will die of these poisonous fumes than are burned to death. Firemen have taken to wearing breathing apparatus at nearly every house fire they are called to. Several firemen have died from breathing in fumes, even at rubbish tip fires, where plastic foam furniture has been dumped.

Other firemen who have got smaller doses of the fumes suffer increasingly from serious chest complaints, just like the workers who have to make the plastics in the first place.

The Fire Research Station has proved that many fires actually begin in furniture made with plastic foam, since it smoulders, then bursts into flame, at comparatively low temperatures. Even the kind of heat produced by the sun shining through a window on a hot day can start the process off.

If you drop a lighted cigarette onto a chair filled with polyurethane foam, especially if the outer material is also a synthetic, it will quickly begin to smoulder.

Then ghastly dense black toxic smoke will begin to rise, obscuring your way out. The fumes are lighter than air and so rise to head height. Your only chance of escape is to stay close to the floor where the fumes are less dense, and find fresh air as quickly as you can.

Imagine the situation where a room contains several items made of such materials. Polystyrene tiles on the ceiling, applied with flammable glue, which in a fire will float down on you as hot molten plastic, just like napalm. Synthetic carpet, vinyl wall papers.

If the room gets hot enough there may be such a concentration of fumes that you have a flash-over, a small scale version of what happened in the Flixborough Chemical plant disaster.

The same sequence of events has already killed hundreds of people, not least of all people who cannot move fast enough away from the fire. You may remember the fire last

year at Fairfields Old People's Home in Nottingham where 19 old people were killed. The reason why the fire spread so fast was that the building was constructed using a hazardous prefabricated system called Clasp. The fire was able simply to leap through undivided roof space from one end of the building to the other. But evidence showed that many of the old people had struggled out of their beds, only to be instantly overcome by toxic fumes at head height.

Then again, recently, a nineteen-month-old child, Teresa O'Donnell died when her teddy bear fell from her cot and smouldered against an electric fire.



The teddy bear's fur was made of acrylic fur, and it was stuffed with the same material. As the teddy smouldered it gave off deadly cyanide fumes. The child had absolutely no chance. The same could happen even with an acrylic jumper hung before the fire to dry if it got hot enough. Or with quilted bedspreads, housecoats and dressing gowns, all of which are stuffed with the same material, none of which even carry a warning that there is a risk.

The firemen's union and the furniture trade unions have campaigned for years about the use of dangerous synthetics. Their members have good reason to know all about them. So why have their voices never been heard?

The answer is simple—because they have no power compared with the international oil and chemical companies. Because the bosses of these companies make millions of pounds of profit from plastic foams and because they have the power to compel the government not to interfere with the operation of the system—not even with the mildest form of safety regulations which the industry has long and successfully resisted.

What we think

ONE thing our rulers are constantly telling us is that their system of society offers us freedom. They say it gives us freedom of choice. If, that is, you've got the money in the first place—that's where the first fraud comes in.

This article on furniture shows that, even when you've got the money, you don't have any real choice.

The industrialists say that demand dictates to supply. In truth, they make the choice, they control supply, and they dictate to us. They have a monopoly of supply and they have a monopoly of control

I would like to know more about the International Socialists

Name _____

Address _____

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

LETTERS

I WAS interested to read Melanie McFaddyen's fine article in July's Woman's Voice, on why I am a revolutionary.

I disagree with her for thinking that she feels a middle-class imposter amongst working class people. Many working class people are suspicious of the Oxford type accent, as we encountered it in upper class people. These are generally in management circles for example, MPs, ranking police, clergy and trade unions. They are forever sacking us, making us redundant, etc.

I am sure that if I had her higher educational qualities. I would feel very confident in myself. Not as the majority of workers feel now, struck dumb when confronted with intellectual management, with their accents etc.

However the main thing is, the common and genuine belief in socialism, irrespective of our backgrounds and for us all to realise what the exploited have to put up with. IS consists of many middle-class, and higher educational revolutionaries. In my opinion, this organisation would never have gotten off the ground without their support in workers struggles against capitalism.

WITH all the talk of cutting spending in the health service, you might be surprised to find that some public hospitals are still paying very high rates for private agency nurses.

Knightsbridge Nursing Agency is offering £66 per week to SRNs for 40 hours spread over four nights, in a public ward at Chelsea Women's Hospital. This does not include the fee the agency receives for its 'services'. While the NHS disintegrates, public hospitals continue to pay our tax money to such parasitic firms. In addition the agency does not advise its nurses to pay taxes or national insurance unless they care to do so privately.

More expectedly, nursing of private patients, both in private wards and full private hospitals, is also very lucrative for the agencies. The bill is footed by the 'poor' private patient. The Knightsbridge pay £13.50 per night to look after one private patient. Well-Beck, also in London, pay the same for 12 hours every night. But they have their priorities right—an agency nurse in a public ward only gets £9.50 nightly with them. They also place nurses in Chelsea's Women's Hospital. All these rates do not include the agency percentage already deducted.

Such agencies exist and make profits because the NHS has never paid decent wages to regular sisters. In this society people's health plays second fiddle to private profits. Besides nurses are only women who can be got cheap, and their devotion to their work exploited. No wonder there aren't enough nurses for ordinary patients. PRIVATE NURSE London

I'VE written this for two reasons. Firstly to let you know what we've been doing and with what results. Secondly to invite suggestions from anyone as to what we might do next.

Over the past few months, the

Whether they work with their hands, or with their privileged educational knowledge, doesn't matter, as long as it's in a common fight against capitalism. Then it makes the under-privileged more powerful, and confident that socialism will come about.

Many workers like myself need their educational knowledge to help us to fight verbally within our trade unions, as the middle class need the workers knowledge, of what it's like being a worker. United, capitalism is near enough wiped out.

There is no class distinction when a person is unfairly sacked or made redundant by corrupt bosses, and sanctioned by ambitionist trade union representatives, as Melanie soon found out.

However I often wonder if fascism ever came about, would our middle-class revolutionaries, return to their secure middle-class environments? I know the workers have no option but to stay in theirs.

It's understandable that many workers think this way as our learned friends whom we have elected into positions of trust have continually let us down.

That is why I believe many workers retract into their shells and think of No 1 first attitudes, not bothering to vote at elections or supporting their trade unionists in disputes etc. Making it easier for capitalism to work after time. Simply because they have lost confidence in the people who preach policies in favour of workers, then forget them when elected.

That is why I need as a worker the confidence of speaking publicly, writing, and the many other things that the privileged few seem to get from their upper-class backgrounds. I would like to learn from them, as they could from workers.

IS Branch has become increasingly aware of the need for us to undertake serious work around the Women's Question. Two months ago we took the first steps in this work.

Starting with a local issue—the closure of a factory in Brandon—which was reported in Women's Voice, we sold the paper in the Brandon area. Of the first issue (17) we sold a total of 150—in door to door and street sales (in Durham and Bishop Auckland). This month, we went around to previous buyers in Brandon, and sold 70. Including street sales, and door to door sales in Crook, we have sold a total of 192 copies of the last issue (18).

With the next issue, we hope to set up readers' groups for discussions—and activity—in both Brandon and Crook, and to extend sales in the area.

YOU HAVE asked for readers' views on how you should write about the family and relationships, and I think you are taking the correct Marxist line, namely that the family is a tyrannical institution that must be broken in the process of social revolution. I urge you to stick to this line. A great deal of harm was done, in my opinion, some time ago, when the Socialist Worker and the Morning Star screamed in unison: 'Capitalism breaks up families'. Marxists know that the family unit (the Women's Liberation Movement nuclear family) of father (first, of course) mother and children is a necessary part of capitalism, which exploits the working class through this system. It regards father as responsible for keeping the whole family, makes mother work two or more shifts a day, only to be paid for one, and makes the children, the future work-force, almost entirely dependent upon their parents' resources. When capitalism fails to hold the family together it is losing its grip, because it is decadent.

Propaganda on any immediate issue

The best thing that ever came out of a strike that I was involved in apart from winning it, was the fact that I met many revolutionaries from many classes within society with a common cause, the workers.

That is why I believe if we are fighting for socialism, class is irrelevant.

So far as Melanie's dispute is concerned, the best thing that has come out of it is that another socialist has joined IS. The only other alternative for middle class people is fascism and we wouldn't fancy that.

JEFF ALI, Burnley.

I WISH to correct three inaccuracies that somehow crept into my article in last month's Women's Voice and make a plea for greater editorial care. The first is the four words that were added to the end of the last sentence which then read 'fighting for a better life for you, your kids and you, too—workers'. I think the whole article shows that I would not dream of wagging an upstart finger and lecturing 'and you, too—workers'. The other two concern the mention of my 'leading a strike'—which should have been simply 'we have been on strike' and the description of the deputy head as 'a very rich man' when firstly, I don't know anything about the wealth involved, and secondly the person involved is a woman.

These last two unfortunately meant that this issue of Women's Voice could not be sold in East London schools at all as it could damage the fight for my job. This is a pity as we are developing a good sale in just this area.

MELANIE McFADDYEN

We also hope, in the fairly near future to have a public meeting on the whole question of abortion/nurseries/maternity grants/rape, etc.

Socialists have for too long ignored the issues of women's emancipation, saying that it was a diversion from their real political activity. We owe the Women's Liberation Movement an enormous debt for raising the issue, and making us aware of its importance. Now that the socialist movement is aware of it, I hope we'll be seeing many more reports of this kind: offering encouragement to those who are just starting, showing them that it can be done, and asking advice from those who have done it before.

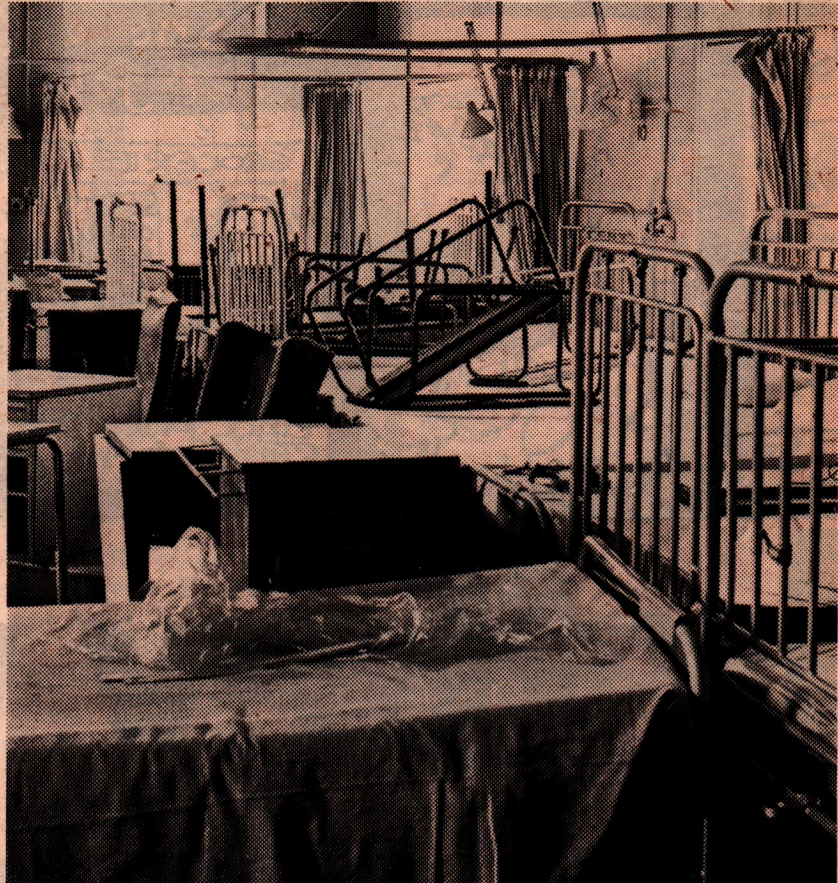
Any comments or suggestions should be sent to:

Sue Jones,
3 Allergate Terrace,
Durham City.

should never be the exact opposite of political theory. This is dishonest and shortsighted, misleading many people. I was therefore very pleased to read Chris Harman's attack on the family in both Socialist Worker and Womens Voice, and also your very good article on the same theme in a recent issue of Womens Voice.

Of course, this subject has to be approached carefully because members of a family who live on affectionate terms with each other may be alarmed at the bald statement that the family must be broken up in order to achieve socialism. The point is that the family must cease to be an economic unit, compelling people to live together for economic reasons. Socialism would not force people apart, which is as bad as (not worse than) forcing them together.

But if women achieve economic independence and equal citizenship with men, then the individual family will no longer be regarded as either the natural or the compulsory way of living together, any more than the tribe or clan is now. KATHLEEN JONES.



Hospital ward closed due to staff shortages

MANCHESTER CUTS BEGIN TO HURT

WE'VE ALL heard with amazement of the national £24 a week rise for MPs and £6 maximum wage freeze for the rest of us. Well, something just as ridiculous has happened locally. Last week, in the Salford group of hospitals, Princess Margaret came to open a new tower admin block. This meant new white gloves and uniforms for the student nurses on block release there, it meant a slap up buffet, half a new repainted building, all fire exits blocked open, lifts carpeted—in other words, a lot of fuss, pandemonium and expense.

Meanwhile in the same Salford group of hospitals there is a children's hospital that has had up to five of its 9 wards closed due to staff shortages. No fuss, no publicity, just closed down. This is a picture of public spending cuts in action—this is a picture of the gross mismanagement of our public services and this is a picture of what the papers say 'the national interest' is compared to our own interest.

True, there has been a recruitment campaign, a show of stalls at the local technical college of hospital workers in action when half the schools in the area were in their first week of holidays and a poster campaign inside the hospital, crying 'come BACK TO NURSING'. As the girls in my path, lab said 'who's going to go back to hospital work when there's no nurseries in the Salford group' and when one nurse had to leave the children's hospital because she had a kid and couldn't work the hours they demanded. Although the cuts have been creeping up on us very insidiously it's

obvious now that times have changed. Look at the cuts in the hospital building programme, the lack of teachers' jobs, bigger classes, the higher rate of unemployment among school leavers etc. The situation is out in the open now.

We are told that there is a crisis and, in the 'national interest' the budget's answer to hit the domestic consumers, is at home with increases in electricity, telephone, prices, food, fares, fuel and now at work the £6 limit.

HOSPITAL WORKER here is taking up the issues of the children's hospital as the first in a big campaign to save the NHS in Manchester. We are beginning with petitions and a protest demo outside the hospital for everybody, whether as trade unionists and/or parents to help us hospital workers fight the cuts. We hope this will develop into a General Campaign, trade union sponsored against the cuts, for all workers, parents and tenants to get involved in. Let alone defending standards of living, we've got to stand up and fight back at the profits the big companies are making out of us. Roche the drugs firm makes Valium the tranquiliser for £100 per kilo and sells it to the NHS for £1962 per kilo. How many of you are taking it or know a friend who is? The answer to depression, tiredness, being run-down and overworked is not to take drugs so that it all doesn't matter, but to try and change and better our lives.

We must fight back and we must organise ourselves.

PENNY SIMMONS

SINCE conference a new Womens Voice Editorial Board has been set up to try and develop Womens Voice into the paper which campaigns around womens issues. We will be getting in touch round the country to try and get new writers and ideas for the paper. So, if you have any

ideas, want to write for us, please get in touch with

Editor: Sheila McGregor

Co-Editors: Judith Condon

Elana Dallas

Lindsay German

Jeanne Woodcock

at 8 Cottons Gardens, London E2 8DN.

HOW TO ORGANISE FACTORY GATE

FIRST, SELECT a group of factories, concentrating especially on those with a large number of women workers. Get together a team of five or six of you, with time to spare in the middle of the day. Remember, over the summer students and teachers are on holiday, and also housewives and women at home with children can get out at this time.

- For equipment you will need:**
- 1 Some National Abortion Campaign petitions, with a piece of hardboard for each of you, and clips to hold them together. Plenty of biros.
 - 2 Copies of Women's Voice, Socialist Worker, and copies of a leaflet outlining the arguments. (We used the national printed leaflet.)
 - 3 Some large placards with suitable slogans. (Abortion, a woman's right to choose. 'No return to back street abortion for working class women')
 - 4 A wooden box to stand on and a megaphone, for your speaker. On the morning of the day, the workers must be leafleted as they go in to work. This leaflet should do three things.
 - a) Outline briefly the case against the James White Bill, stressing that it hits at working class women.
 - b) Announce that you will be collecting signatures on a petition at dinner-time, and there will be a short meeting at the main factory gates.
 - c) Advertise the fact that Women's Voice will be on sale, and indicate what kind of articles are inside the current issue.

(This early morning leafletting can be done by people not part of the dinner-time team if this suits you best).

Your team must arrive at the gates at least ten minutes before the dinner-break starts, complete with placards, so as to be clearly visible. The speaker addresses the workers through the megaphone, saying that they can sign the petition on their way back into work. Remember, not many will stop on their way out, as they will be in a hurry to get their dinner and do their shopping.

The workers will begin to file back in about twenty minutes before the end of the break. Your speaker should begin to address them through the megaphone, and if you are lucky, she will draw an audience round her. The other members of your team approach each worker—man or woman—going in to work and ask them to sign the petition. Most people will sign. When they have signed, give them the printed leaflet so they will have the facts to argue, when they get inside, with those who oppose abortion. When possible, sell Women's Voice, and note who buys.

Even if the workers do not gather round the speaker, they will listen as they walk along. So she needs to make a few simple points, and

repeat them over and over. Something along the following lines:

"A Bill is being moved through parliament that will take away from most women their right to an abortion on the national health service. Rich women will always be able to buy abortions, as they have done in the past; but working class women will be driven to the backstreet abortionist again. We are collecting signatures to stop this. We believe all women should have the right to choose whether or not they have children.

On July 21, 40,000 people marched in London to oppose the bill—not just young girls or students, but also thousands of trade-unionists, hospital workers, shop assistants, teachers, factory workers".

(Add any local information you have collected.)

We have successfully held several meetings on these lines in a small area of North London, and we got better as we went along, doing one a week. Our plan is to re-visit each factory, advertising a public meeting on abortion, and selling Women's Voice. Later we shall leaflet and poster in the area for the second National Abortion Campaign demonstration.

We'd be glad to hear through Women's Voice, any more tips or experience from other parts of the country.

MEETINGS

The factory acts: our rights



Collier girl in the 1870's.

THE MOST common arguments thrown at women who argue for equality at work by male trade unionists are 'Okay—if women go down the mines', or 'Okay—if you start doing shift work and night work'. So you might think it would help to have the restrictive legislation which prevents us from doing these things repealed.

Not a bit of it. We should not be apologetic about being 'protected' against long and unsocial hours. We should fight to have the 'protection' extended to men too!

How did the Factory Acts come into being? What are they all about anyway? and what's all the fuss about keeping them? Only the first question will be dealt with in this issue of Women's Voice.

The last hour makes the profit

The real start of the Industrial Revolution in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries meant a tremendous upheaval in people's working lives. The growth of factory methods of production took people, and especially women and children in the early stages, out of their homes and into large enterprises, working up to 16 hours a day, often in appalling conditions and for pitiful wages.

The textile industry was the first to take advantage of the new technology of machine manufacture and this industry, and the rest of British capitalism, was built on a foundation of cheap sweated female and child labour. For example, in 1838, 77 per cent of the textile industries' workers were women and children, half were under 18.

Five laws were passed to limit the exploitation between 1802 and 1833—without a penny being spent to put them into effect. It was only when the working class began to get organised that any serious attempts were made. The acts outlawing unions were replaced in 1824, and during these years up to the middle of the century agitation, disturbances, riots machine-breaking and strikes were common, and the Chartist movement with its political demands for the working class was very strong. That was not surprising when people could see manufacturers quite blatantly ignoring the laws passed by their own class of people in parliament when they happened to benefit workers. When inspectors were introduced in the 1833 Act (applying to textile mills) to enforce limitations on working hours for children, employers adopted relay systems of working and staggered breaks, so that they could continue to keep their factories working continuously from dawn till late at night and confuse anybody who might try to find out exactly how long the children were working, (reminds us of flexi-time).

Most employers believed that long hours and low wages were the best way of getting high production and profits. One even claimed that

the employers' profit was made in the last hour of work. They wept at the thought of increasing costs of production if they cut the working day and they shouted about losing out in the competition for foreign markets. Familiar arguments can still be heard today. In short they had no real intentions of abiding by the laws if they could help it.

Revolutions or reforms

But the revolutionary mood of dissatisfaction was becoming so strong that the more farsighted members of the ruling class were prepared to concede a few modestly effective laws rather than a revolutionary upsurge. In 1838 the cry went up for a Ten Hours Bill. This was finally achieved in 1848.

Then workers renewed their agitation for the laws to be made effective and an 1850 act tightened up previous legislation and blocked loopholes.

Employers see the light

By the 1860s when other factories besides textiles mills were brought into the regulations, most manufacturers were beginning to see the light. They could get as much if not more by 'intensive' methods of exploitation—shorter hours and payment by results—as they had by long hours and low pay before.

Another important reason for their 'benevolence' was the fact that they were getting through nine generations of workers in the space of three generations. For the working and living conditions were so appalling that workers just did not live very long, or became too ill or disabled to be of any use in a factory. The factory owners began to see that a healthier, more long-lived and better educated workforce was more profitable. So public health and education measures were started around the 1840s too.

Lastly of course, as technology advanced, it took over the more unskilled jobs that women and children performed and made their presence in such large numbers unnecessary.

But whatever advantages the factory acts held for employers, they were an advance for workers. To go from a situation where everybody in the working class from 6 to 60 years old was working seven days a week from early morning to late at night to a situation where at least the women and children and probably the men too had Saturday afternoon and Sunday off, and their evenings to themselves—this in the space of a few years—was a victory.

In the next issue of Women's Voice, we shall look at the present regulations, how they have already been eroded and why we should resist these moves.

HESTER BLEWITT

Warning—the social disease

Is divorce 'catching', like a contagious disease? Marje Proops, the famous woman's columnist with the trademark teeth and glasses, asked this question recently in the Daily Mirror.

She quoted a revealing reply from a young, newly divorced woman who says so many of her friends were splitting up that it seemed more than mere coincidence

'You go to a party', she says, 'and you're cornered by someone who tells you she's left her husband because she's fed up. She reels off a list of his faults and failings. 'Someone else joins in with a catalogue of HER husband's villainous deeds, and before you know it you're comparing your husband and finding he doesn't rate too highly either.'

'And when you realise that other couples are breaking up while both parties are young enough to begin again with someone else, it makes you question your own marriage.'

Our Marje comments, 'she may well have a valid point. Misery, like happiness, CAN be infectious'. How True. Think of the untold misery of the family slave-woman. Think of the numberless millions of husbands and children infected by THIS disease.

When women do cut-price work in factories and offices as well as at home, it is 'happiness'. When they lead their men to question and change the set-up, it is 'misery'. The capitalist sewer rats who carry the real plague can laugh all the way to the casinos and high-class knocking shops of the international jet set.

If women want independence at home, what power might they not demand at work? If men can't compensate for powerlessness at work by assuming authority at home, what then?

'Statistically speaking' says Marje, 'one divorce out of every four marriages indicates that parting can, indeed, be as catching as any other undesirable social disease.'

Like what other social disease, Marje? Is there any truth in the rumour that your next page will include features on:

'Unemployment saved our marriage', 'Sex is better than strikes', 'Can wage-freeze melt the ice in bed?' and for the old age pensioners 'Togetherness can keep you warm a little longer this winter?'

PETE GLATTER

WOMEN'S VOICE THINKS

A LOT of publicity has been given in the press this month to Selma James and her 'Wages for Housework' campaign. Women's Voice agrees with some of the arguments put forward. We agree that the work women do in the home—cooking, cleaning and caring for children—is socially useful. We agree that most working class women are forced into the role of housewife, whether or not they work outside the home. We agree that housework is mostly drudgery and ought to be abolished.

Where we do not agree however is when Selma James says: 'All women all round the world do

housework. Ruling class women certainly do not, in any meaningful sense. Neither do most top professional women, who rely on home helps and au-pairs. On the other hand, some men do housework. Some men even bring up children on their own.

The crucial division in society is between the working class and the ruling class. It is not between men and women. Ruling class women may be oppressed in quite subtle ways by their menfolk, but in their relations with workers, ruling class women are the exploiters.

Nor do we agree that it is any good trying to elevate the question

of housework into the key political question of our time. Making out that 'When a woman is wolf-whistled at—that is housework', is simply playing with words. Empty demands for wages for housework from the state doesn't take working class women forward one inch. It is only confusing, and gives us the idea that men are the enemy.

Selma James' only solution is that 'Women must get together'. We say that working class women must unite with working class men to fight the class system that lies at the root of women's oppression.

The National Abortion Campaign organise to win



A SPECIAL report has been produced by the select committee taking evidence on the James White Bill. It makes clear what the intentions of the committee are: to remove the 'abuses' of the present 1967 Act.

Since the James White Bill is likely to fall by the end of the parliamentary session, the select committee wants to ensure that some form of restrictive legislation comes up in the next session of parliament. They can only do this by arguing that the government reappoints a select committee at the beginning of the next session. The government can then use this committee to put forward its own legislation.

Clearly our job is to make sure the James White Bill falls at the end of this session, now the first week in November, and that the government does not reappoint a new select committee.

The Forces on the other side, SPUC, Women for Life and so on, backed by the Catholic Church and Protestant Church, are intent on building up a campaign to ensure a bill that cuts our right to abortion.

In the summer it was the NAC which made the running on the abortion question, with petitions, meetings, a week of action supported in cities throughout the country—all of which culminated in a massive demonstration on 21 June. Through the NAC we got the message across to hundreds of thousands of people exactly what the James White Bill would mean.

In the period of September and October, before the end of the parliamentary session, we need to build another campaign through NAC, to say loud and clear to the MPs and ruling class where we stand. We need to involve the whole of the trade union movement in this basic

Asian women working at London Heathrow Airport's overseas catering division were in the forefront of last month's battle for equal treatment.

Ever since the catering division began employing Asian women in

the preparation of food for airlines they have used every trick to keep them divided and exploited. Jobs were graded down when Asian women took over and benefits like free safety shoes which white workers won years ago were denied

them. The management were helped by the local full-time officer of the TGWU, John Collier who held back every attempt the workers made to set up shop-floor organisation.

Last month discontent with management and full-time union

officials came to a head.

The Canteen workers came out on strike. After a week they returned with significant gains.

They will go into the battles which will come with the confidence born of victory.

struggle for women's rights. We must raise the question in the trade unions, censoring trade union MPs who vote for anti-working class measures. We should organise factory gate meetings, local demonstrations, pickets of hospitals which refuse to do abortions and pickets of newspapers which support James White. Then we should end the campaign against James White with an even more massive demonstration at the beginning of November.

Some people within NAC are unclear about the need to mobilise people round our demands on the streets, are unclear about the need for involving the working class movement.

They want to wait until the conference in October to discuss the way forward. October is too late. SPUC is organising a demonstration for the same day as the conference. We must not allow them to have the

last word on the streets. We must ensure now that our voice will be the last to be heard.

Women's Voice supporters within NAC should argue for another demonstration before the end of the parliamentary session, explain the need to raise the issue in the working class movement, and argue for activities with a week of action leading up to the demonstration. If we campaign and rally our supporters, we can win. If we wait, we hand the initiative to the other side and lose support.

DEFEAT THE JAMES WHITE BILL—NO RESTRICTIVE LEGISLATION—DEMONSTRATE IN NOVEMBER.

PLEASE PAY !

OVER the last few months, sales of Womens Voice have been increasing. The abortion campaign has stirred thousands of women into action already. The effects of the cuts in social services and inflation are bound to push many more into fighting back.

A paper like Womens Voice is vital if we are going to be able to build and campaign successfully around issues which particularly affect women.

Womens Voice only survives if the money comes in to pay for the ever rising cost of printing, postal charges etc.

Some branches are very bad at paying. In these days of inflation, we can no longer afford bad payers.

So if your branch does not have a regular Womens Voice organiser responsible for pushing sales of the paper in new areas and getting the money into us, elect one now.

So, bad branches, please get the money rolling in.

BOSSSES RETREAT

Worker at STC (Standard Telephone and Cables)

A GROUP of young Asian girls in the new STC factory in Southgate have shown their strength. The factory management, which has a long history of racialism, has recently been taking on a large number of East African Asians who live in the Barnet area. One reason given for taking them on was that they were passive and would not fight management. That was true two years ago but it's not true any longer. With the lead given by militant shop stewards they are proving themselves able to win concessions on regrading which workers who have worked at STC a lot longer have been unable to get.

Last month a foreman told a number of Asian girls they weren't allowed to speak in their own language. When the girls called in their shop steward, the foreman backed down and then accused the shop steward of being racially prejudiced against him. When challenged, the foreman had no evidence.

While this was going on, the girls who had only worked at STC a few months went round the factory. They got other Asian workers to pledge support in case of any victimisation of their steward. As it turned out, that wasn't necessary.

Management withdrew the statement and undertook to publish another statement saying workers can speak whatever language they like. This fine example of solidarity shows the way forward in the struggles ahead.

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 Worker's 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.

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