

womens voice

MONTHLY WOMEN'S PAPER OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS

WE DEMAND THE RIGHT TO WORK

‘It’s as if someone was trying to rush these orders out. It’s ‘finish the order quick’, and that’s all that matters. And now it looks as though we’ve worked ourselves out of a job.’

‘I don’t know who they think we are, but we’re not going to sit on our backsides and let them close Plesseys.’

‘Over the last eight weeks they’ve been getting more and more productivity out of us at Speke. The conveyor starts at the bottom, and moves on and on. You can’t go to the toilet unless you’re relieved. You’re not allowed to laugh or talk. The workers go home on their hands and knees—and these are married women.’

These comments were made by Olive Uren and Maureen Bold, electricians’ shop stewards at Plesseys Speke, after mass redundancies were announced a few weeks ago.

1975 WAS SUPPOSED TO BE WOMEN’S YEAR. AND WHAT HAVE WE GOT?

James White attacks out right to safe legal abortion.

The Law Lords decide that rape isn’t rape if the man ‘thought the women consented’.

Unemployment hits 1½ million, with women the first to go.

Prices rise 26 per cent and we have to make ends meet.

Equal pay—not a murmur.

House building—slashed.

Schools—bigger classes, fewer facilities.

Wherever we look, it’s the same story. We women are being hardest hit by this crisis. It’s all very well for Michael Foot, our famous ‘lefty’ unemployment minister. He can wax lyrical at the

Labour Party Conference about how workers have to face the problems of the crisis head on and back the Labour government. It’s all very well, but he’s not got to feed a family off dole money when your husband’s just lost his job. Nor does he face bringing up kids as a single parent without nursery facilities, or a job. He

doesn’t have to make housekeeping money go round. In fact the white haired old man just doesn’t have a clue.

There’s one thing we can learn from it all. You can’t trust the Labour Party, nor the MPs. Their promises haven’t done us the slightest bit of good. The only thing which gets you any-

where is when you fight. In 1968 the Fords girls fought for Equal Pay and started the ball rolling. In Sheffield now, 30 women are occupying to save their jobs. It’s action that counts.

That’s why we’re calling this rally in the Autumn. To look at our rights, how far we’ve got in International Women’s Year, how

far we’ve got to go. Womens Voice is the only womens socialist monthly newspaper around. We’ve got to make it into a real campaigner for women’s struggles, an organiser for the battles ahead.

The rally will be a chance for all of those sisters who feel the need to take the struggle for women’s liberation into the working class movement to discuss the crisis, how it affects working class women and the fight back. If we’re serious about fighting for our freedom, we’ve got to build the organisation to fight with. We can’t leave it to anyone else.

We can only build unity with our brothers and fellow workers if we learn how to stand on our own feet and fight. What we need is unity—a unity born of common struggle against the problems which affect the whole of the class.

come to the womens voice rally



Place: Belle Vue, Manchester

Time: 29 November 11am.

Sessions: The struggle for our rights

The fight back

The need for revolutionary feminism

To get to the rally, fill in the form below and return it to Womens Voice, 8 Cottons Gardens, London, E2 8DN

Name

Address



The glamour job? That's what they want us to believe. But there's more backache than anything else for this typist.

YEARS OF BOREDOM AND BACKACHE

by Glynis Cousin

SECONDARY schools are basically for churning out factory fodder. But if you're a girl, there's one other alternative. Every year, more than 40 out of 100 female school-leavers go into office work, mostly as typists.

At 15, I was led to take a shorthand/typing course and it turned out to be my passport for eight years of boredom and back-ache.

My first job was in the typing pool of a small family-owned bank. They made vast profits juggling with inherited money. For me, it was like school all over again. Ten of us were sat in orderly rows, with a supervisor who forbade chatting, rubbing-out, and spending too long in the loo. The owner used to come to work—when he wasn't at his Bahama holiday home—in a Bentley. We got to speak to him only at Christmas time, when he handed us a bonus too small to tickle anyone's pocket.

Next I went on the temporary roundabout, working for countless different firms. Sometimes in enormous noisy pools, sometimes in poky, ill-lit offices. Wherever it was, though, I was never unshackled from the typewriter. There is next to no chance for women to get out of this rut in office work.

Yet typists are essential. Without typists all these firms would grind to a halt. Managers would be all at sea, and share-

holders would be without their profits.

We are well placed. We could exploit our power. But we do so all too rarely.

Few office workers are in the union. And so many work in offices where they only see a handful of other workers. Then, the typists are women, and the bosses are men. The boss expects to be waited on, and the women all too often kow-tow to him for favours. They change his calendar, fetch his tea, clean his desk, and make him feel five times more important than he really is. By its nature, this is a situation where the male boss is upgraded, and the women typist is downgraded... even though she may be the one with the brains who keeps the office running, and even though she may be the one who does all the REAL WORK.

It could be different. We could demand better pay and conditions if we got ourselves organised. We could link up with shop floor workers, and in return for their support we could give them the information they need in their struggles... about investment, profits, planned redundancies, orders. And we could fight for an end to temping and private secretarial agencies.

There is no doubt that the bosses see our organising as a threat to their cosy life. If we really got on the move, then perhaps being a typist wouldn't be all boredom and backache any longer!

SEVENTY FIVE YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT...

THAT is the heading that this year's Labour Party Conference used. That's the message that ran through all the big speeches. But don't worry, we've no intention of quoting them all. You can read them at your leisure in the national press or you can listen to them on the TV, or you can even pick up a newspaper from the beginning of last year and read the same things in that. The same rousing speeches about how Britain will be saved from economic chaos by a strong socialist Labour government. Different words, different names, but the same old speeches. That's one of their achievements—consistent rousing speeches, and consistently no action.

Another achievement is the unemployment figures. For a government which insists on calling itself socialist, to have almost two million people (including those not on official figures, such as housewives, self-employed etc), out of work is an achievement that not even the Tories could match.

The employment debate on the Monday was a farce. Harold and his pals on the National Executive sat looking sympathetic and grave, while delegates from local parties and affiliated trade unions emotionally moved resolutions, or furiously opposed them. Then they sat and voted for their bloody resolutions. And everyone went back to their hotels for tea.

That is what was so futile about it all. The way in which those people could sit and debate so furiously all afternoon—and then go home and forget about it. They don't have to rush off and draw their dole money. They don't face eviction because they

can't pay the rent.

They don't have to worry about how to feed the kids for the rest of the week. They only have to talk about it and then get back to their hotels.

The delegates have done their bit. They stood up and trotted out some good old socialist clichés. Some didn't even bother to do that. They sat back and listened and some even went to sleep.

And the Executive have done their bit. They sat in the hall, then off they all went, some back to their hotels, some out for slap-up meals, some of them even went to speak at still more meetings.

Judith Hart and Audrey Wise—MPs both—spoke at a meeting on Portugal. It was funny. J. Hart told us in a posh voice that the Portuguese Socialist Party had the most left-wing programme in Portugal. And what a marvellous bloke Mario Soares was. Rubbish! What we listened to was a middle-class woman showing just how little she knew about real working class politics—or Portuguese workers.

Jo-Richardson spoke at a NAC meeting. She urged us all to write to our MPs, picket our MPs, and send delegations to our MPs.

She didn't urge us to take to the streets in tens of thousands—as we did in June—to demonstrate not only to protect the meagre rights we already have but to fight for even more. Though it was pointed out from the floor that the fight for abortion must be seen as involving the whole of the labour movement. We must fight for the support of trade unionists much more than is being done at present.

One of the biggest jokes of the conference was hearing H Wilson spend half his speech defending

the government's record. This included 10 minutes on how marvellous the Equal Pay Act was, and how it contains the most radical proposals in advance of anything in the whole world. He didn't mention the loopholes in the act—big enough for an elephant to lumber through, never mind the boss.

And he forgot to say that with the number of women being laid off work, by the time the Act comes in, there won't be many left in work to apply it to.

The conference was fixed, fiddled and manoeuvred by the arrangements committee. One of their achievements was the handling of the many abortion resolutions. After they'd gone to work, there were two main ones left. One was specifically on abortion. The other covered the whole of the National Health Service—pay beds, prescription charges, and loads of other things. There was only *one line* on abortion.

So the committee dropped the abortion resolution. Any chance of a serious debate on the issue went with it. In the event there was one speech for, one against. The vote was carried by a tiny majority. But so what? Most MPs will ignore it anyway. So what's it all achieved?

Neither socialism or abortion on demand are any nearer being achieved. The struggle in the factories, offices and on the estates goes on. And all the Labour conference has achieved really is to underline what we already knew.

If we want abortion on demand; if we want to control our own bodies, lives and destinies; in short, if we want socialism, we'll have to organise ourselves to fight for it.

AILEEN KNOWLES and SALLY JONES

...JUST LOOK AT THE DOLE QUEUES

THE LABOUR government talks of its years of achievements.

Let's just consider what they mean.

Perhaps they mean the wage limit of £6—a wage-cut when inflation is running at 25 per cent.

Or perhaps they mean the official figures of 1 million on the dole.

This is what they mean by achievements. But they forget to point out that these are achievements in keeping workers' living standards down.

So far the government has been fairly successful in getting workers to accept wage cuts.

Now they are trying to get us to accept massive dole queues as well.

They argue that if we make sacrifices, then somehow later on things will get better.

This is a load of old rubbish. Taking a wage cut doesn't create

jobs. Quite the reverse. If we have less money to spend, we buy less. Less is sold, order-books stay empty and more jobs are lost. It's a vicious circle.

Unemployment hits women particularly hard. Part-time work, especially the twilight shifts, are often the first to go. Women aren't helped by the attitude of male trade unionists, who often argue women out first, hoping that will save them from fighting for their own jobs.

They're living in a fools' paradise. The job situation is going to get worse. Chancellor Healey is talking about two million on the dole by next year. We're not going to protect jobs by sacrificing the women's. We can only do that by uniting to fight all unemployment.

Women at Balfour Darwin in Sheffield are showing how this can be done. The firm announced 30 redundancies—mostly women.

The 360 strong workforce immediately went on strike. 60 of them occupied the office and warehouse of the firm. Already the Engineering Union has made the strike official. And the workers have sent out to neighbouring factories for support.

This is the sort of response that we need. We have to learn the lessons of past occupations like Imperials at Hull. There they tried to have an occupation contained in one factory. They didn't try to spread the occupation by sending delegations to other factories. Instead they relied on the promises of union officials, and were gradually isolated and defeated.

Unemployment can be fought. It can be beaten by building strong union organisation the at work. It won't be beaten if we rely on the promises of the trade union leaders or the 'achievements' of the Labour Party.

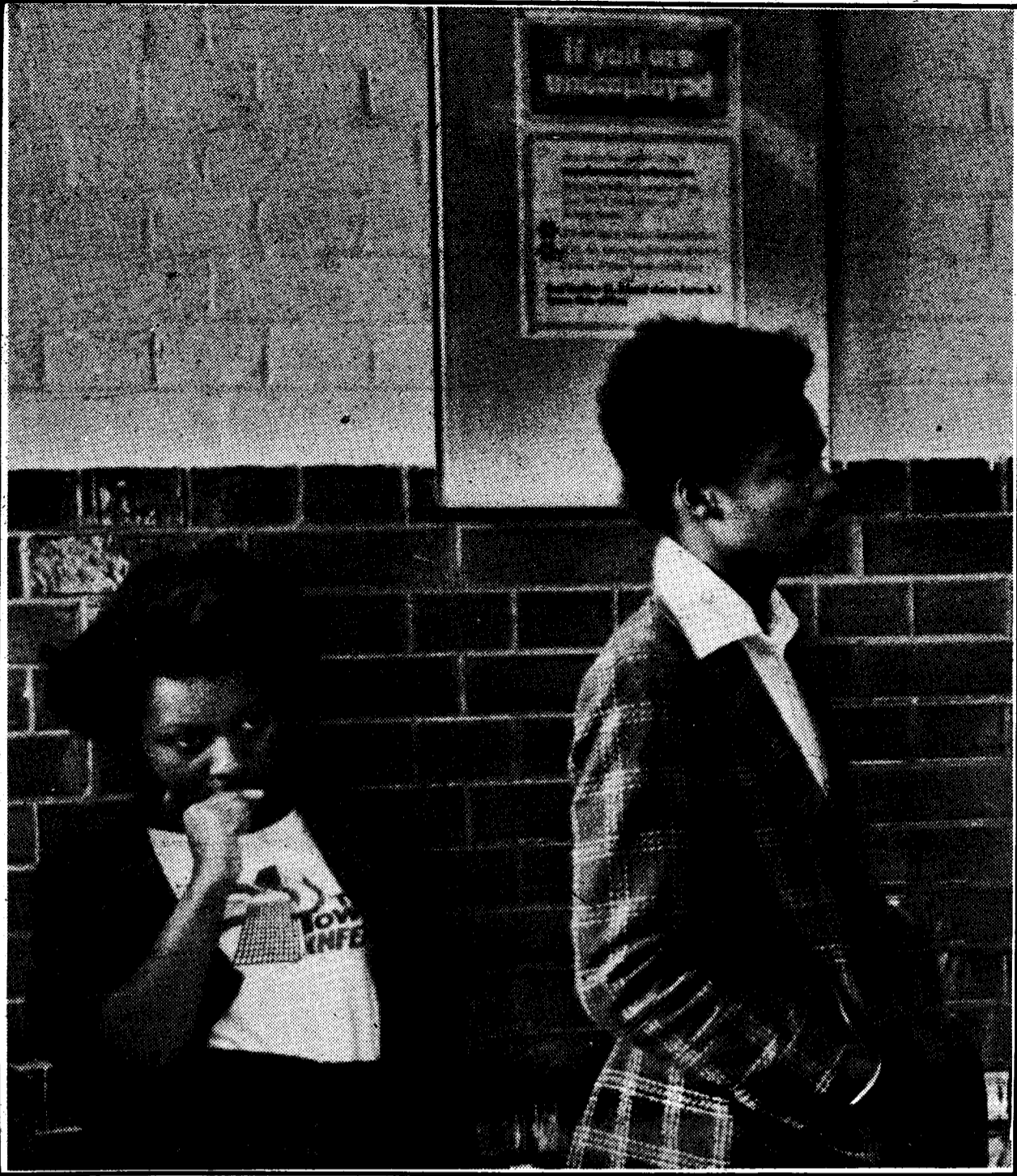
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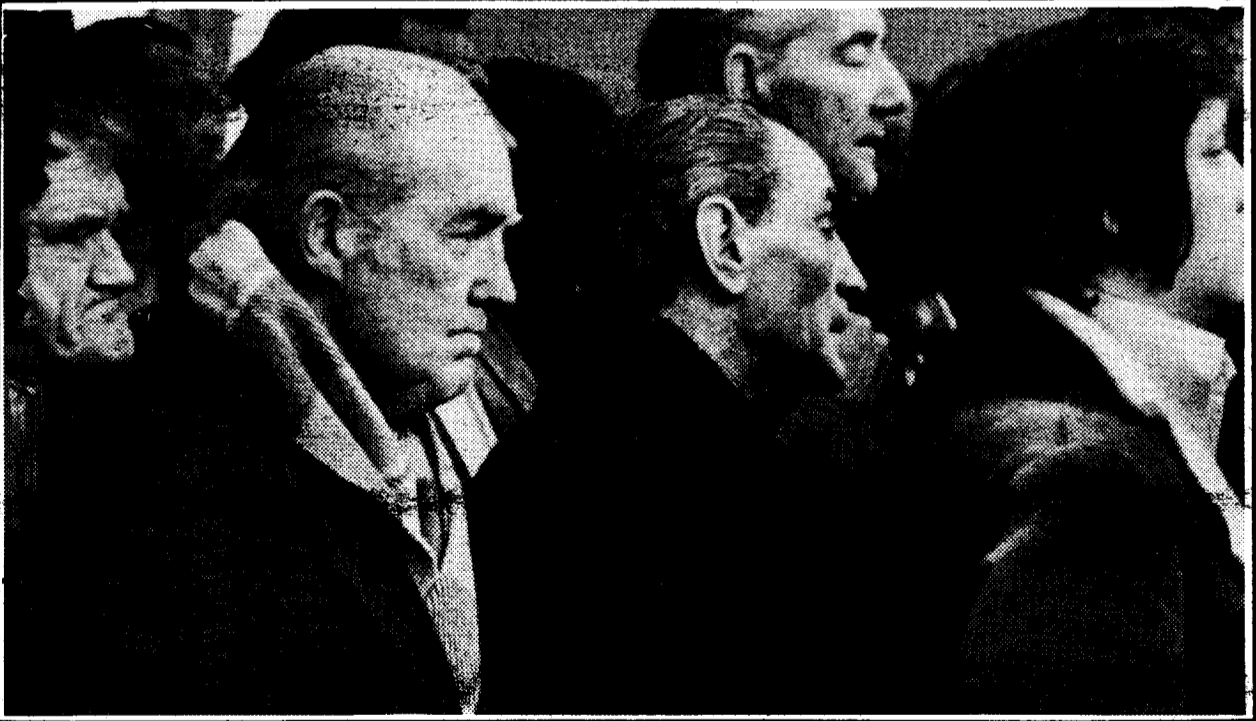
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Picture: John Sturrock (Report)



Young, female and black . . . no chance of a job

Picture: Peter Harrap (Report)



Back to the thirties . . . dole queues in Hackney, East London

Picture: Chris Davies (Report)



Women textile workers demonstrate against unemployment at the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool.

'The only way the oppressed can free themselves is through the Socialist Revolution'

by Edna Richardson
Independent Socialists Canada

I'VE ALWAYS considered myself a socialist. I was brought up by a widow with eight kids. It was obvious to me as a kid that my mother was really oppressed. She didn't have a life of her own. I could see that something was wrong with the system. We were brought up in separate Catholic schools. I've always been what you call a gut socialist. I grew up during the depression. The uneven distribution was always apparent within society. Like as kids some of us could never get work.

Until the war, then things started booming. Here we were fighting an Imperialist war and they could find the money for weapons and ammunition but not for the people who had been unemployed for ten years previously.

I started reading Marx when I was 14. I couldn't discuss it with anyone, but later I met some men who had just come back from the Spanish Civil War and one man in particular who was bitterly opposed to the way Stalin had dumped Spain started to guide my reading.

After the war the New Democratic Party (similar to the Labour Party here) started. We thought this would be the solution. I helped build the party. I spent hours on door-steps canvassing for them. But in no time at all I could see that the NDP did nothing. It was just a reformist party. They call themselves socialists but they just want to get power through the parliamentary system. They believe in socialism from the top down. They just want to help people, like the Welfare state and give support for the Old Age Pensioners.

Socialism to me means the self-emancipation of the working class, the old marxist concept. It's only if workers overthrow the system themselves, that oppressed groups like women and black workers can get their freedom. Even after the revolution, blacks and women will have to fight for their rights.

I'm now the leader of the

women's caucus in the IS in Canada. I've always been particularly interested in the oppression of women. I never thought men were the enemy. I always knew we had to overthrow the system, that the only way oppressed groups can free themselves is through the socialist revolution. That's always been plain to me. Men are the victims of women's oppression as well. My marriage split up over the political question. Although my husband was a radical when he was younger, as he got older, he rose up in the firm, got successful and became very autocratic. He never let me work. He said to me: 'Ok we're married. You stay at home. I'm the breadwinner'. He knew he couldn't tolerate me competing with him in the workplace. He knew I would have become a strident feminist. So I just kept up with the women's movement by reading. For a quarter of a century I was completely isolated. I was married very young, so when we split up I had to start from scratch. At 45 I had to renew my entrance exams.

I did a year at university which got me a job. And the reason I got into the Civil Service is because they have to take all the rubbish refused by the private sector. The latter wouldn't take me because I was middle aged and a woman although they never said that. I intend to devote all my life to revolutionary socialism. So what I'm doing now is trying to build a rank and file group round me. To get people interested in democracy. It is a new concept to so many people that the union belongs to us, that we pay the bureaucrats.

Eventually I hope to recruit people to IS. My biggest problem is confidence. Although I think IS has the right strategy and I'm at the heart of it, I have a real difficult time speaking in public. I find it much easier to talk to women than men. That's because my husband was an autocrat. I'll just have to change that with time.

U.S. PAPER OF BLACK WOMEN IN STRUGGLE

FLAME

IN BRITAIN'S PRISONS

DISCONTENT AND ANGER ARE AT BOILING POINT

Cecil Sampson
flashback:

UNEMPLOYMENT is growing. Black unemployment is growing faster. Flame is concerned with this, with police harassment, and with a number of other issues which blacks in this country face. It is a paper of black workers in struggle and hopes to act as a focus for the fight-back taking place against racialism.

It is written by people involved in that fight, like Cecil Sampson, who has recently finished a prison sentence for assaulting a policeman who forced his way into his house, and Ann Cumberbatch, who describes conditions in her unorganised factory. Black workers suffer for the same reason as white. Flame believes in class unity, but we believe that we must take the initiatives ourselves. A united struggle is only possible if black workers are seen to be fighting alongside their white brothers and sisters.

NO NURSERIES—SO I'M ON THE DOLE

I'm 23, single, and I have a little boy who is eight months old. My story is not a happy one, but it is not unusual. There are all too many women in my situation.

When my baby was born, I lived at my mother's in East Kilbride. This put a lot of strain on all of us, because there just wasn't enough room. It's a hard enough time in any woman's life, even in the best of circumstances.

I had to spend long hours waiting in the housing office, trying to get my name on the housing list. I also went to see my MP, who was said to be sympathetic.

He wrote to the corporation—and after eight weeks I had a letter saying that my name hadn't been put on the housing list. I

suppose I owe him a doubtful, thanks for uncovering that. I had told them all the stress and tension that came from living at my mother's house. They had just ignored me.

Then another letter came, addressed to my mother. Yes, you've guessed it. They told her the house was overcrowded, and I had to be out, with my baby, within fourteen days. So nothing was solved. Only the strain on my nerves was doubled.

Since then, I've left East Kilbride, and now I'm living in Glasgow. I get £17.30 a week from the Social Security, for my baby and myself. It costs over £3 to feed the baby, which leaves £14 to feed myself, pay the rent, electricity and gas—and meet all other expenses.

As time goes by I am becoming more and more aware of how a single parent becomes totally dependent on the state. They take away all your self-respect.

And the longer you wait to try and win it back, the harder it gets for you.

I have been trying for three months now to find my son a nursery place. Even when I was offered my old job back, it was no use. In Glasgow there is a waiting list of 80 for the nursery places offered to children of single parents. And that was the figure after a big batch of children had just been taken into infant school. For a true picture of how hopeless it is, imagine all those who never even bother to apply because the list is so long.

The only other help the social

BY LINDA JONES

workers could give me was a completely outdated list of 12 registered child minders—last revised in 1972.

On top of it all, the Labour Government has the cheek to introduce cuts—fewer teachers, even less nursery places than we have now.

This situation really oppresses women, and children too. One in five mothers with children under five years old go out to work. The shortage of nursery places means they are forced into working nights and twilight shifts, or else they depend on illegal child-minders. Or else they stay at home and try to manage.

The worst hit are single parents, unmarried or divorced, who are forced into severe poverty, dependence, and degradation.

'BECAUSE OF THE CUTS...'

PAULINE FENN

EVERY TIME you pick up a local paper any article about local authority spending begins 'because of the cuts.'

Because its been in the papers so much, women have been brainwashed into accepting 'Well, the council can't build this, that or the other because of the cuts'. But we mustn't just accept this.

In Newham, which is one of the most educationally deprived areas in the country, the school building plans have been cut to shreds.

The Nursery building scheme (very ambitious on paper, this) has all but gone. Mind you, we do have 255 full time day nursery places for 20,000 under five's, so not to worry. We did last year have part time schooling because of a lack of teachers. This year we have a waiting list of teachers for jobs.

Will the kids benefit? No—

'because of the cuts'. The council is actually cutting down the number of teachers it employs by putting more children into each class.

The quality and quantity of school dinners is another area where money is to be saved. In some schools the kids will only get fish once a month instead of once a week.

Absolutely disgusting—in a so-called 'Labour' working-class borough, where to so many kids a school dinner is the main, if not the only, meal of the day.

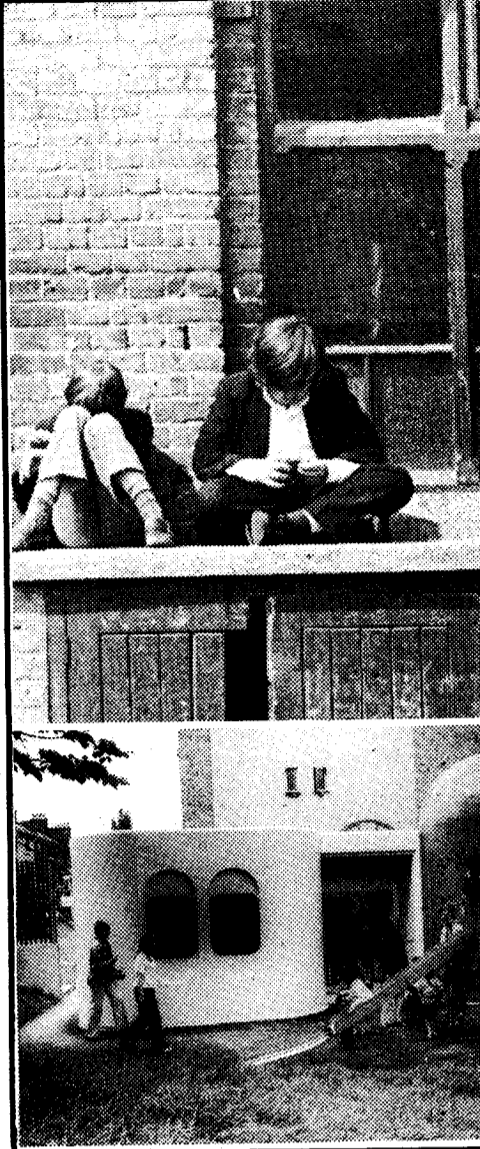
Last year, with part time schooling, many parents were very worried about their kids only being at school for 3 or 4 days a week. That must now seem good to the many, many kids who left school in July and are now not able to work for even one day a week. Youth unemployment is very bad in Newham,

but the chairman of the Education Committee reckons that money for the Careers' Office is not at all high on the council's list of priorities.

One good word for the Wilson government, though—they certainly can't be accused of favouritism. Reg Prentice, one of our local MPs much beloved by the press for his union-bashing views, did nothing for the local kids before he was Education Minister, and did even less when he was. And this even though Newham is by government standards, the most educationally deprived area in the country.

What with one thing and another, it won't be too good for our children if we do just accept what is handed down from the Town Hall. For our kids' sakes, we must not be taken in by 'because of the cuts'.

Picture: Chris Davies (Report)



Sitting around waiting to go on the dole. The school

The official figures for unemployment are inaccurate. There are far more people out of work than they show. That's because not everyone registers. Lots of people hope they can manage on their husband's money till they get another job. So the government can pretend there's fewer jobless than there really are. We shouldn't let them get away with it. If you're out of work—SIGN ON. You may get some money. And even if you don't at least we'll get accurate figures.

THE CUTS in public spending are really beginning to hit home. Working class education will be one of the first areas to suffer.

In Strathclyde, a large industrial district in the West of Scotland including Glasgow, the Director of Education has just issued a report on what the cuts will mean.

Its contents are horrifying. It shows that Strathclyde is the most deprived area educationally in Scotland.

In the schools there is an official shortage of 1025 secondary and 400 primary teachers.

Accommodation is also chronically short.

Shortages are worst in Glasgow, Lanark and Renfrew, and in what the report calls 'areas of deprivation'. This is a posh way of saying working-class districts. They have always got the raw end of the deal when it comes to hand-outs.

The report stresses the need to improve the education service, to 'surpass national standards'. But this means more money. The Education Authority wants £40 million for next year. It has been offered £11 million. Even this year the grant was £13 million and last year £27 million. With inflation at 26 per cent, this represents a cut of four-fifths in real terms.

Even if the education grant kept up with inflation it still wouldn't be enough, because schools needed more money spent on them even before the cuts.

Because of the appalling conditions in Strathclyde schools, the region finds it very difficult to recruit teachers. It has tried the US and Canada, but found teachers over there weren't interested.

It also tried to get teachers in England, because there were rumours of overstaffing in English schools. This will no doubt come as a surprise to parents with kids at overcrowded schools in England who often don't get taught because there are no teachers.

UNION SELLS OUT NEW-YORK TEACHERS

LAST week, New York City teachers voted by a close margin to return to work and accept the new contract—this, despite the solid militant strike of 80,000 New York teachers since 9 September. The strike was over deteriorating conditions of work created by the massive lay-offs of teachers. 14,000 had been sacked—almost 20 per cent of those employed by the city. Teachers returning to work after the summer holidays found their class sizes at 40 and over. Also, although wage rises of 3.5–8 per cent had been negotiated, under the city's wage freeze the first 6 per cent is frozen, so that many teachers will receive nothing.

Militants in the city's schools were aware of the obstacles to a successful fight over the claim. Their union, the UFT, had accepted the job cuts and had refused to identify the struggle

of the city's teachers with that of other city employees. Albert Shanker, president of the UFT, rejected joint action by all the public sector employees last June.

The teachers now find themselves isolated, and the resulting sell-out is the price they have paid for the go-it-alone tactics of their leadership. The fact is that the financial crisis of the city is a strong argument against militancy.

What may have been achieved by the strike is a realisation by a large majority of the militants who rejected the contract that the system will attempt to resolve its crises at their expense. That the only answer is an all-out fight against their offensive—no lay-offs, no deteriorating working conditions, defence of union organisation, no arbitration, democratic control of union leaderships.

JANNIE LIEVAU

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CHOCOLATE FIRM NOT SO SWEET

'We have paid, and always will pay a good wage, for a business has no right to live as a parasite sucking the life blood of the state sweating its employees.'

Edward Cadbury

SINCE THE Industrial revolution, factory bosses have had to wrestle with the same thorny problem:—'How do we handle the people who made us rich?' Those men of initiative and action were faced with an unpleasant reality—that wages were an essential part of production costs. So infuriating when profits were their sole concern!

Two courses of action presented themselves. They could crush any dissenters, assuming that workers would continue to knuckle under. Or, a few paltry concessions could be made coupled with the building up of a benign fatherly image. Employees could then be led to believe that the factory only existed to provide them with jobs. Cadbury's in Birmingham have successfully followed the latter policy.

As far back as 1903, the firm introduced a scheme where workers were paid for suggestions on how to improve efficiency (and increase their burden).

Cadbury's also had one of the first works councils in the country. It became clear that getting workers to collaborate with the bosses in the works' council reduced militancy. Other industrialists adopted the idea throughout the country.

Today, it is difficult to achieve unity in Cadbury's because there are 16 different unions. The works' council has therefore taken over many functions normally carried out by the unions. As a result, union organisation is very weak, the attitude of union officials often being worse than management.

One morning, the women who operate the Rank Xerox machines arrived at work after a bad rain storm and found the floor mats literally floating.

Under normal circumstances, the women get electric shocks from these machines. Clearly working under these conditions would have endangered their lives. The APEX union secretary eventually arrived. He poked his head round the door and remarked: 'Never mind girls, we do supply wellies!'

Not satisfied with works' councils alone, in 1973 in came 'workers' participation'. 'Long standing' workers were invited to discuss the firm's profits with

the directors. Those fortunate few soon realised the futility of this 'experiment' and saw that they had just as little control over their own interests as ever. Nine months ago they pulled out.

Women workers in Cadbury's rejoice in the knowledge that they earn 94 per cent of male rates—but then not one single woman is above a grade 4. So the highest paid woman time worker doesn't get more than £34 basic for a 40 hour week. A male worker on Grade 6, the top grade, only gets £40 a week basic. If he is 'greedy' enough to want more, he can only make up a decent living wage by working long hours. So much for Edward Cadbury and his 'we have paid, and always will pay a good wage...'

Cadbury Schweppes emerged from a merger in 1970. It cost 1200 workers at the Pascall factory in Mitcham their jobs, but handed over £1,000,000 into the ever open Cadbury bank balance. Next for the chop was Moreton, and then... 'Fundamental rationalisation', at the 12,000, strong Bournville plant. Psychological warfare played an important part in this. First a brand new office block was shut.

Second, to show just how serious they were, the directors took a ten per cent reduction in salary for six months, and promised to spend less of the firm's time and money in restaurants.

Faced with all this sudden self-sacrifice, the 800 made redundant could hardly grumble.

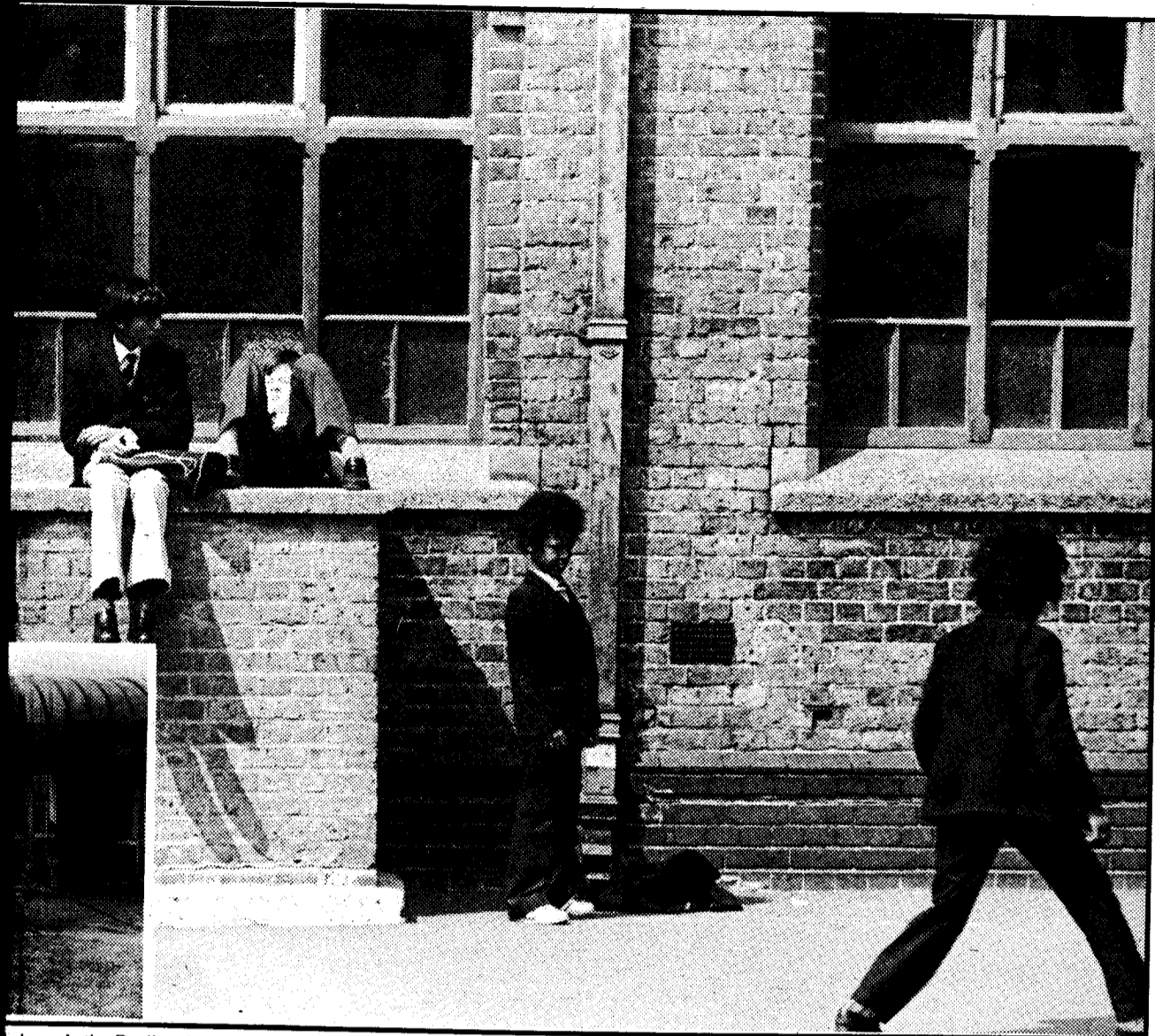
After all, Cadbury had to find £20 million a year to pay for advertising, so economies had to be made somewhere.

Recently workers who'd accepted the company's offer of a holiday in Pakistan found when they got back their 'holidays' had been extended indefinitely.

Workers' participation has not prevented redundancies. In the last five years the work force has shrunk from 12,560 to 7,000. It has put last year's sales up to a record £555 million. It has put even higher profits into the pockets of shareholders and directors, but not saved workers their jobs. As one steward put it 'we've been fighting for hiring for years, we're not fighting for firing.'

The only way Cadbury workers can keep their jobs, or fight for a decent living wage is through the self activity of union members. Relying on union officials who have been appointed and corrupted, or on members of works councils is the shortest way to disaster and the dole queue.

TINA ROE



Above is the Reality. Inset: the Ideal

'The kids either have to buy their own pencils or not write anything'

JENNIFER ROSS,
Educational Institute of Scotland

School, also in Glasgow, there's an incredible allocation of two pencils per teacher per year.

Jimmy Ross, an English teacher at the school told us:

'Even small cuts like these make teaching (not easy at the best of times) impossible. The kids either have to buy their own or not write anything. We're told if they don't bring them in, Belt them.'

At Craigbank Secondary there are no attendance cards. Only 60-70 per cent of kids are bothering to come in.

The situation is hardly any better anywhere else. Colleges of Education are being closed—so fewer teachers are being trained.

Auxiliaries leaving schools aren't being replaced.

No primary schools in Glasgow are being painted this year.

The school building programme is being cut—new classrooms and huts are being axed.

Glasgow primary schoolkids are only allowed three jotters a term—about half what they used to get.

Things were bad before, they're worse now, and they're going to be disastrous, very soon. A report from the director of social work shows the cuts aren't just hitting education.

The region has 287 social workers. Its official target is 1030.

It has 15 social workers per 10,000 population.

The government target is 40 for the same population.

40 new children's homes are needed. The provision is half what's needed.

Eleven new centres for pre-school children are needed.

500 places in old peoples' homes are short.

WHAT TO DO

TEACHERS must organise in their own schools to monitor exactly what's going on, and link up with other schools in the area to form local action committees within the union. They must refuse to tolerate any worsening of conditions: no cover for missing teachers, no taking of classes over 30, no cutting of preparation periods.

ANCILLARY STAFF must join the union, and get together with the teaching union within the school.

PARENTS have to get in touch with teachers to find out how the cuts are affecting their kids—there's no other way they'll find out. Joint action committees of teachers, ancillary staff and parents are the only way to fight the deteriorating education of our children.

The Strathclyde district of the Scottish teachers union the EIS, led the Labour controlled union to a challenge to the problem of understaffing. If there is a shortage, one solution is to go over teachers from Chile, who are at the moment imprisoned in labour camps. So far, no action has been taken up.

Particular schools are being hit by the cuts. In the Primary, Glasgow, there are no pencils for the kids to use. In the Secondary, they only get three days schooling a week. At Wood Secondary

FASCIST FRANCO BUTCHERS AGAIN



Dictator Franco surrounded by his murderous henchmen

LAST month five of our brothers and comrades were brutally murdered in Spain. All of them were socialist militants, opposed to the repressive Franco regime. They were killed for the 'crime' of trying to organise against that regime.

Despite the international outcry that followed the murders, it seems likely that Franco is planning to execute even more militants in the near future. Sections of the Spanish ruling class are unhappy about such open brutality. They know that it may release protest movements that it can't control. They also know that Franco's determination to execute his opponents is the last vicious act of a life-long fascist grimly hanging onto power until his own long-expected death.

The ruling classes of Spain and the rest of Europe don't want Spain to go the same way as Portugal. They are terrified of even the beginnings of workers' power. That is why they want to get rid of Franco—because he forces the workers to acts of still greater defiance.

Getting rid of Franco won't solve many problems for Spanish workers. The same bosses will still be there. The problems will only be overcome by the taking of power by and for the workers.

That requires the beginnings of a solidarity movement now. Opposition to the regime is already growing. Protests against the executions have taken the form of burning Spanish consulates and embassies in many European cities. Dockers in France are blacking Spanish goods.

The Labour Party Conference has called for a Spanish trade boycott. Economic sanctions are what will hit the regime. And they will only be enforced by the power of the international workers' movement.

We must start now to help kick out the old fascist Franco regime and make sure the sort of barbarity common in Spain all these years becomes a thing of the past.

dear women's voice

AMONG recent issues of Women's Voice, only one (July) had a front page headline about anything women have achieved. The rest have put women forward as objects of pity—can't get abortions, earn low wages, can't get children into nurseries etc.

The front page is what potential buyers look at in order to form an opinion of what the paper is about. Surely if its aim is to encourage women to join the struggle for socialism it should be showing them what women *can* do, not just sympathising with their apparent helplessness. This is not a criticism of the overall content of Women's Voice, just of the impression the paper might be making on passing women who are wondering whether to buy.

A separate issue is the use of unexplained abbreviations and jargon which must make new readers feel outsiders. For instance, in the latest issue the article on abortion constantly referred to 'SPUC' without once explaining what it stands for.

It would be a pity if relatively small things like this lost readers for an otherwise very good paper. MARION HUNT, Eccles

THERE'S a need for us women who find themselves oppressed through the system to find a voice...

... for 10 years I suffered the psychopathic behaviour of my husband, and was isolated and living a life of fear and desperation, mental and physical cruelty



as well as being made aware of what my country thinks of white women who choose black husbands.

After my husband broke my jaw, severed my lip, kicked me all over and blacked my eyes, I ran with my sons and a carrier bag to Chiswick Womens Aid. We lived in terror of siege, but at least in safety with 100 other battered wives in an old house.

I did get the use, with four other families of an old house which we decorated ourselves. As soon as I'd finished getting my room decorated it was completely gutted by a fire probably started

by my ex-husband. Once again we found ourselves homeless with no possessions.

After a week sleeping on a church floor, Women's Aid got hold of a badly dilapidated vicarage here in Bristol (at least it is 120 miles away). I got a job after three months. I could not stay at the school as it was secondary teaching and I am junior trained. I was offered a

Youth job, so to keep to the contract I gave in my notice. Education cuts have lost me this job. The Council had granted me a 95 per cent mortgage on my teaching salary—which has now disappeared—having moved in. I now have spent the six week holiday searching for jobs, and have exhausted all possibilities. The Social Security refused to help, telling me to do night work, leaving the kids in bed. My Unemployment benefit has been suspended.

I reckon because I'm divorced and have black kids I'm receiving some of the State's pressure to either give up my home and go back to London or have the boys taken away. Please voice my case—it's not only mine, I know. J.Y. Bristol

ENCLOSED payment for 10 copies of Women's Voice. Congratulations on the greatly improved quality of the paper. It's becoming a worthy counterpart to Socialist Worker. IAN PARKER SHETLAND

Holiday pay—no you can have your cards

EIGHT women have been picketing the Power Development Company, Streetley, Birmingham, for the last two months. They joined the engineering union, the AUEW. Then, when they asked for normal holiday pay, they were threatened with the sack.

When they checked their wage packets before the holiday they found the full-timers had been paid short. They went to ask what was going on. Their boss, Jane Fuller, took back their wage packets and removed all the holiday pay. The women challenged her right to act like this, and were sacked on the spot.

Three of them got their notices in the post the next day. Some of the others were offered their jobs back, but they said they weren't going back unless they all went back together.

WOMEN'S VOICE readers will be sad to hear that Jackie Kennedy-Onassis-Any Offers? (millionaires only need apply) ... has had to take a job. We realise that it's a difficult time in any woman's life when she has to go back to work to make ends meet. So our hearts go out to Jackie today. With the

Now they have all had their notices in the post. The owner of this firm, where the women were only getting less than half the official AUEW rate, is Neil Fuller, Tory councillor for Sutton.

It is clear that these eight women can only win this dispute with the support of the local district. The AUEW district committee needs to organise a mass picket of the factory in order to occupy it and drive out the Tory owner.

All AUEW members should support this official dispute. Any readers in the union should try to get resolutions through their branches and districts demanding official support for this sort of mass picket.

Messages of support, donations and further information from Margaret Martin, 183 Bridal Lane, Streetley, Birmingham.

clothes' bill eating up £15,000, the servants costing £40,000 and £3½ million worth of jewellery causing her endless insurance payments ... poor-old Jackie! We're quite sure that all our readers will respond to this heart-rending case. Your messages (remember keep them short) will be forwarded.

'LET THE MOTHER DIE'

That's their line

WE went to a meeting of SPUC—officially the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, but to us The Society for the Propagation of Unwanted Children. They called their meeting in support of the James White Bill, which aims to make abortion almost impossible to obtain. They were well dressed, mostly middle-aged or over, and men ran the entire show. Their heavies stood at the back, ready to eject any of us who dared to disagree.

They showed a film of a woman giving birth—but first of all you had plenty of pictures of fat, healthy toddlers. And then, this woman giving birth through the 'natural childbirth' method. She was smiling, relaxed, and around her bed were about seven doctors and nurses, all gentle and supportive. When the baby was born, the film went into slow motion, as the gynecologist kissed the mother, tears of joy running down his cheeks. The music was from 'Two Thousand and One'. I thought of the women I knew, of how they had mostly been left alone and unattended, and of how they had been lectured like naughty girls if they dared utter any sound of pain. I remembered when I was nursing, and how women—who had actually wanted their babies—had been brought in, miscarrying, and were shoved in a side-room to 'get on with it'. Often without an anaesthetic. The film the anti-abortionists showed had nothing to do with the treatment most women get on the NHS.

And then, having showed us how lovely motherhood apparently

is, they showed slides of aborted foetuses. Most of them were of foetuses aborted at the five month stage—they forget to mention that abortions are only performed that late where the mother is likely to die, or the child going to be born seriously deformed. But let the mother die—that's their line.

Afterwards, they had their middle-class, nicely-accented, male doctors speak on the subject. One assured us that abortion was just one stage away from fascism and selective breeding. I heckled, pointing out that both Hitler and Mussolini were violently anti-abortion; and they hardly had much respect for 'the sanctity of human life'. They didn't listen. Then, because they were pushed, they actually mentioned backstreet abortion. They duly distorted the figures, and dared pretend that the existence of legal abortion has not decreased the amount of backstreet jobs. One, that denies the provable facts, two, that 'deduction' shows the utmost contempt for women—what woman, truly offered the option of a safe, legal, free abortion, would opt for the traumatic, expensive and possibly fatal backstreet version?

Eventually I am allowed to speak; I talk in a language they might just understand.

My mother had an unwanted child; married to a man who treated her like dirt, getting on for forty, and with no chance of escaping—uneducated, with no job training, and with other kids to care for, it was a case of 'having to make do'. The baby was duly born. Mum cracks up, and Dad—a good 'Catholic' now has another excuse to get at her; she no longer goes to Mass. The priest comes round, offers to pray for her, and Mum joins the women who make up 70 per cent of the drug companies customers, tranquilizer after tranquilizer. Later, my elder sister runs away from home, ends up performing a 'do it yourself' abortion at four months. She spends a year in lonely agony and shame, suffering from a chronic pelvic infection.

Afterwards, one of them comes up to me, says what we need is 'social help, not abortion'. Now us, we're all for social help, but we're also for a woman's right not to be torn apart by a child she doesn't want. I ask her where she was when we were picketing the local children's hospital, with half the wards closed, one of Wilson's measures to make us pay for the bosses' crisis. But she didn't even know about the picket—'Anyway we've got a wonderful health service',

she smiles. And I remember working as an auxillary nurse, cheap untrained labour, left with patients half dead and not a clue as to what to do. I ask, if they're so sincere about 'social' help, why do they introduce an anti-abortion bill at the same time as they slash our already inadequate social services. She smiles condescendingly, and says 'What cutbacks? Nonsense—there aren't any'. I think about the LIVING children and old people daily being turned away from our hospitals, about the women again being left on their own to 'get on with it', and realise we're classes apart.

One of SPUC's earliest slogans was that 'abortion is the worst form of apartheid, because it discriminates against the most weak and vulnerable'. Funny, because one of their earlier Executive members was also the Marchioness of Salisbury. She and her husband own 500,000 acres of land in Rhodesia and South Africa, and pay one of the lowest starvation wages going. But the man I'm talking to doesn't want to know, 'that's just a little bit of the world' he says (yeah, just a few million blacks starving to death), 'that's politics' he says. Yes, let's keep it all safety intact, lets talk about the sanctity of life of the unborn, and forget

about those actually living.

You know, it was the Catholics themselves who turned me pro-abortion. I was 14, at a Catholic school, and with dogma falling out of my earholes ('Suffering's good for you'; 'People starve because Man is sinful'). I saw a film on the nuns' missionary work in South America. There's a slide of a wee girl, she's 13, they tell us. Already she has three children, and the baby she's holding has no arms—they have been cut off because that way she can get more in begging, her sole means of survival. And suddenly it clicks—the nuns would tell this kid that contraception is a sin, that abortion's a sin, they'd duly pray for her, but would they actually do anything about the system that creates her poverty—?

No. Just take a look at Chile. The Catholic Church directly co-operated with the CIA and fascists in engendering the coup, and, on its first anniversary they held a special Mass to celebrate the fascists' 'victory'. Meanwhile thousands of militants continue to be tortured to death in concentration camps—all for the 'crime' of demanding a dignified life in the here and now. They forget that the Catholic conception of the 'sanctity of life' extends only to life in the womb, and then to life in the 'afterworld'—the odd fifty years of exploitation and misery in between don't matter.

If we are serious about socialism, then we at least must be serious about the problems women face. So start organising now. EILEEN FAIRWEATHER.

RAPE!

IMAGINE flopping in to bed on a hot summer's evening, stripped as far as you can go because of the heat, lying reading a book before dropping gently asleep. Several hours later you suddenly awake with a start to see a man perched on the end of your bed—clearly both an uninvited and unwanted visitor. He wants something out of you, you really don't want to give. So you try talking to him, persuading him to leave you alone, that you've not got what he wants and anyway you just don't like screwing uninvited strangers. When undeterred, he physically forces you to have sex with him, you struggle, manage to escape through the bathroom and go straight to the police. You tell them you've been raped, physically assaulted against your will.

This might seem to you to be an open and shut case of rape; it did happen with a bar man called Cyril Stapleton. But according to the law, rapists must be protected if they think women like being raped. Stapleton was sentenced to 27 months imprisonment for burgling the flat with intent to rape but was found not guilty of rape since he 'honestly believed' that the woman consented.

Judge Abdela QC said to him:

'I have no doubt in my mind that you instilled terror into this woman . . . had you been convicted of the rape charge I would have had no hesitation in sending you to prison for a long time.'

The message is clear: property must be protected but not a woman's body. What's more, this case proves how right Womens Voice was with the headline 'Rape a man's right to chose'. We said this in July after the Law Lords ruled that a man could not be convicted of rape if he honestly believed that the woman consented, no matter how unreasonable his belief.

First capitalism screws us all up; the morality preached by the ruling class more often than not makes sex difficult to get and even more difficult to enjoy. Personal relationships are constantly being destroyed by the pressures of living with too little money, not enough room, rotten housing. But at least if you're a man and manage to steal a bit of sex because grabbing it is what really turns you on, the ruling class is prepared to turn a blind eye. After all a woman doesn't have a mind of her own, she's only capable of wanting what the man wants anyway. And if she doesn't she ought to. MARGARET WILLIS



Teachers and parents picket the William Tyndale Primary School in Islington, North London. The teachers are on strike because of harassment by the school management.

From the Sunday Times, 14 September. 'WHEN a super-expensive clothes shop called Columns opened in Bond Street earlier this summer, even people close to the boss were dubious of its chances—"I thought forget it," said one, "I didn't

know people still spent that kind of money.'" But Columns found they could sell silk shirts for £250; they had just one set of de luxe luggage (even they thought that £1000 for some weekend cases was pushing it a bit)—it was gone within hours . . .'

nac
news

womens voice

WOMEN WORKERS MUST TAKE UP THE FIGHT

THE CONFERENCE being organised by the National Abortion Campaign on October 18/19 is important for re-establishing a national drive behind the campaign. In the last three months since the June 21 demonstration, many new local groups of NAC have sprung up round the country, often directly set up by supporters of Womens Voice. These groups are heavily involved in campaigns in the districts, organising public meetings, factory gate meetings, demonstrations and weeks of action. Many women have so far been unaware of the moves by SPUC (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) backed by Tory and Labour MPs to clamp down on our right to abortion. They are joining our ranks, enthusiastic to build the campaign.

The question these women will be asking, and many of us have already been wondering for months now, is where the national campaign is going from here. For

those who have argued for a national demonstration to mobilise our support, for timing the demonstration to coincide with the opening of the next parliamentary session and for ensuring SPUC are not the only people to take to the streets this autumn, the prospects are looking very bleak.

The conference offers us an

opportunity to argue out the running of NAC, that it should be run democratically with an elected leadership accountable to the local groups. It gives us the chance to argue hard for an orientation on working class women who will be affected by restrictions in the existing abortion legislation. The TUC congress decision to campaign for

abortion and contraception on request gives us the opening we need to draw workers, particularly women workers, into the campaign. Women are getting – the rough end of the bosses' crisis and Labour's solution. Women are the first to lose their jobs.

They suffer the effects of inflation with not enough house-

keeping to go round. The abortion campaign is becoming a symbol of our ability to fight back.

Workers have the power to stop all attempts at repressive legislation. The National Abortion Campaign badly lacks that power. At this conference, we have a chance of making clear which way the campaign should go and pushing it firmly in that direction. Womens Voice urges as many NAC supporters in the local groups and in the trade union movement to turn up to the conference to argue out our perspectives. Womens Voice will be moving two resolutions, one arguing for democracy within NAC and the other for building the campaign in the working class movement.

ON SUNDAY 19: Womens Voice is organising a counter-demonstration to SPUC's demonstration.

Womens Voice supporters please turn up with banners and placards. Watch Socialist Worker for details or ring us at 01-739 9772.



Womens Voice supporters at the Hands Off Portugal demonstration in London last month

WHY WE OPPOSE SPUC

by workers from Brent.

SPUC recently held a public meeting in Brent, North-west London. About 100 local people turned up to oppose the speakers, who included Rhodes Boyson – a hanging Tory MP well known for his right-wing views on education.

Womens Voice spoke to some of the people who went to the meeting, and helped to turn it into an embarrassing political defeat for the SPUC platform, including the Labour mayor complete with his gold chain.

'I went to the meeting because I believe SPUC is a reactionary grouping including the Catholic Church and the National Front. They try and impose their whims on working-class people who are forced to live with the consequences. None of the speakers had any social solution to the problems that we working-class women face. We were there to protect the very inadequate rights we have at the moment.

'Tories like Boyson musn't be allowed to dictate our way of life. It is up to women and the working class movement to push for the improvement of social and medical conditions. The right to choose is only a part of this, but without that part the whole

concept of women's freedom could be quickly destroyed.'

Mrs Helen Dunne, housewife and mother of thirteen children.

'I think women should get free abortions. I wanted to hear what SPUC people had to say. They never really answered any of the questions put to them by the audience. There were about 100 people from NAC. After a while people all around were arguing over the issues among themselves and not really listening to the speakers, who were going on about the sanctity of human life – but they don't know or care about working women's lives. Most of the speakers were too old to have children themselves. The opposition in the audience kept shouting 'What about the Health Service cuts?' But it was obvious that the speakers agreed with the cuts.'

Anne, AUEW, General Motors, Colindale.

'About six of us from Heinz went to the meeting to oppose SPUC. I'm a delegate to Brent Trades Council and we support both the Working Womens Charter and the National Abortion Campaign. I was disgusted that a Labour councillor, the mayor, was sitting on the same platform as Boyson,

let alone SPUC – which is a right-wing, anti-working class organisation. I was also amazed to find a Communist Party member, who is also a Trades Council delegate, acting as a SPUC steward. We got very angry at the speakers. The distortions were disgusting. I couldn't help shouting and heckling.

Philip, worker at the Heinz food factory, London, NW10

'I'm unemployed at the moment. I've been looking for a job for three months since I left school. The 1967 Abortion Act doesn't go far enough in making abortion available to those who qualify. My sister, when she was pregnant, was physically and mentally sick. She was living in a one-bedroomed flat with her husband and two kids. The baby wasn't growing in the womb. Yet she was refused an abortion. This example made me feel that we must fight to ensure that those women who want abortions get them. That is why I joined the fight and am helping to organise the demonstration in Cricklewood on October 25th.'

Cecilia, 19 years old, member of Cricklewood NAC

Report compiled by Bernie Dunne, AUEW

Holland: Abortion Campaign

IN HOLLAND there is an organisation like SPUC which is organising against the right to legal abortion. Curiously enough the leader of this organisation is a church man, and the posters they use are the same ones SPUC use over here. One of their main activities was to picket abortion clinics for three or four days. They told the women going in and out that they were murderers.

The petition they used didn't make it clear whether they were for or against abortion.

Abortion in Holland is still illegal. But since 1970 private clinics have sprung up which provide reasonably cheap private abortions. This situation seemed quite rosy until October 1974.

The Minister of Justice, a Catholic tried to close down one of the private clinics where you can get abortions after ten weeks. Fortunately the response of the news media and the women's organisations was enough to prevent him from getting away with it. The campaign in Holland started straight after this. The aims of the campaign are:

- * Abolish all abortion legislation
- * free abortion paid by the state
- * a woman's right to choose

So far there are proposals for legalising abortion before parliament. The campaign needs now to be taken into the labour movement to put some muscle behind the slogans of the campaign.

Women's Voice Public Meeting on Abortion.

NEW MALDEN WV meeting. New Malden Library 8.00pm. Friday October 17th Speaker: Nina Streich.

TWICKENHAM WV meeting. Labour Party Rooms, 77 Waldegrave Road, Twickenham, Middlesex. Wednesday 15 October 15. Speaker: Joy Leman.

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