

Womens VOICE

MARCH '78

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ISSUE 15



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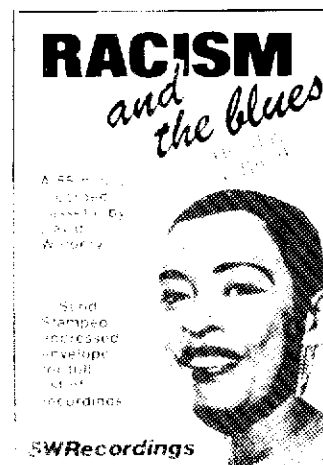
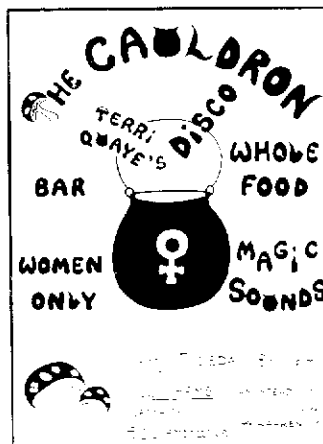


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Back cover

Letters, ads, news and
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Womens Voice rights for women is
the only magazine in the
country that is
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and for women.

**Womens
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1978**

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OUR POINT OF VIEW

something worth fighting for

ALMOST HALF the local education authorities in England have not bothered to claim Government funds for building nurseries in the coming year. It's unbelievable, but it's true.

Do you remember how, when the Government cut public expenditure, local authorities had to look at their own services and say they closed them even if they were really good? A simple attack on the Government in some boroughs like Haringey, Islington and Surrey *all* the nurseries were closed. In Islington 40 out of 90 nurseries were cut.

Now, when they are starting to go again they don't bother. Hampshire, the largest borough outside London hasn't taken up a single penny of the allocation that is available.

No nurseries means children left with baby minders, friends or relatives. It means women losing their jobs. Those are years of education which are lost to a child forever.

It's every woman's right, and every child's right, to have the chance of a nursery place. There is no law to compel local authorities to provide them, but they can be made to. Nurseries for all children are just one of the things that Womens Voice groups should be campaigning for.

ON 21 FEBRUARY Bernard Braine, a particularly revolting Tory MP from South East

Essex, successfully introduced a new anti-abortion bill into Parliament. Mr Braine is well qualified to speak and legislate on the matter: he is, or has been, director of companies too numerous to mention. He is a consultant for the Police Superintendants' Association of England and Wales. He has never had an abortion.

However, he does have opinions on the matter, and being a Member of Parliament feels that his opinions count for more than those of the thousands of women who have benefited since abortion became legal in 1967, or those who suffered so much before then.

It is his view that abortion should be restricted to the first 20 weeks of pregnancy, and that the charitable clinics that provide cheap abortions, and prevent the profit making he is so concerned about, should be closed down.

He only scraped through with a majority of six when he moved this new bill in Parliament, and he may well find it difficult to find the parliamentary time to pursue it any further. But the anti-abortion lobby are relentless. They will come back again and again to argue their case against abortion.

We have to be prepared to do the same: with women who work in factories and offices, who live on the housing estates; to girls at school. We believe that women should have the right to decide for themselves if they want an abortion. It's not up to MPs, or anyone else for that matter, to dictate to us.



Picture: Rebecca Kilbride

NEWS



AMANDALA!

HUNDREDS of black South Africans pass through the courts each day, most of them charged with some minor offence against the apartheid laws. Most of them go unprotected except of course in the South African police files.

But when Nomzamo (Winnie) Mandela appeared in Bloemfontein court on 9th February it was different. All eyes were turned towards this tall, beautiful, brave woman, a symbol of the fight for black political rights and a reminder of police persecution of her and of her husband, Nelson Mandela, a great African freedom fighter who is serving out a sentence of life imprisonment on Robben Island, South Africa's notorious political prison.

As she heard yet another prison sentence—twelve months suspended for four years, for allegedly breaking her banning and house arrest orders—she raised her hand high in the black power salute and her voice in a triumphant cry: **'Amandala! ('Power')**.

Outside the court she was surrounded by supporters, mostly black women, immediately breaking her banning orders again. Under these orders she must not attend a 'social gathering'. In South African law, a social gathering is any meeting of more than two people.

But whenever she goes on trial her supporters flock to her.

'The struggle in this country, I believe, will be won by the women... They have emerged as an outstan-

ding group in fighting for the cause of black people in this country,' she told a reporter in 1976 on a rare occasion when she was allowed to be quoted in the press.

Winnie Mandela has been an active member of the African National Congress Women's League, the Federation of Black Women and the Black Parents' Association, *all* now banned organisations. Talking to the same reporter about the Federation of Black Women she said: 'We have formed this organisation to ... develop a sense of self realisation and respect, of self dignity. To pick up the strings where they were left off by some of our great women leaders like Lilian Ngoyi, and Albertina Sisulu—women who have contributed a great deal to the cause of blacks in this country.'

Soon after that interview Winnie Mandela was arrested during the Soweto riots in August 1976. As a leading member of the Black Parents' Association she supported and backed the children and students in Soweto. She was detained until she was released in December but was immediately placed under house arrest. Then in May 1977 the Minister of Justice, Mr Jimmy Kruger, amended her banning orders and removed her, and her younger daughter, from their home in Soweto to a remote African township outside Brandfort in the Orange Free State. The township has no name, but local blacks have nicknamed it

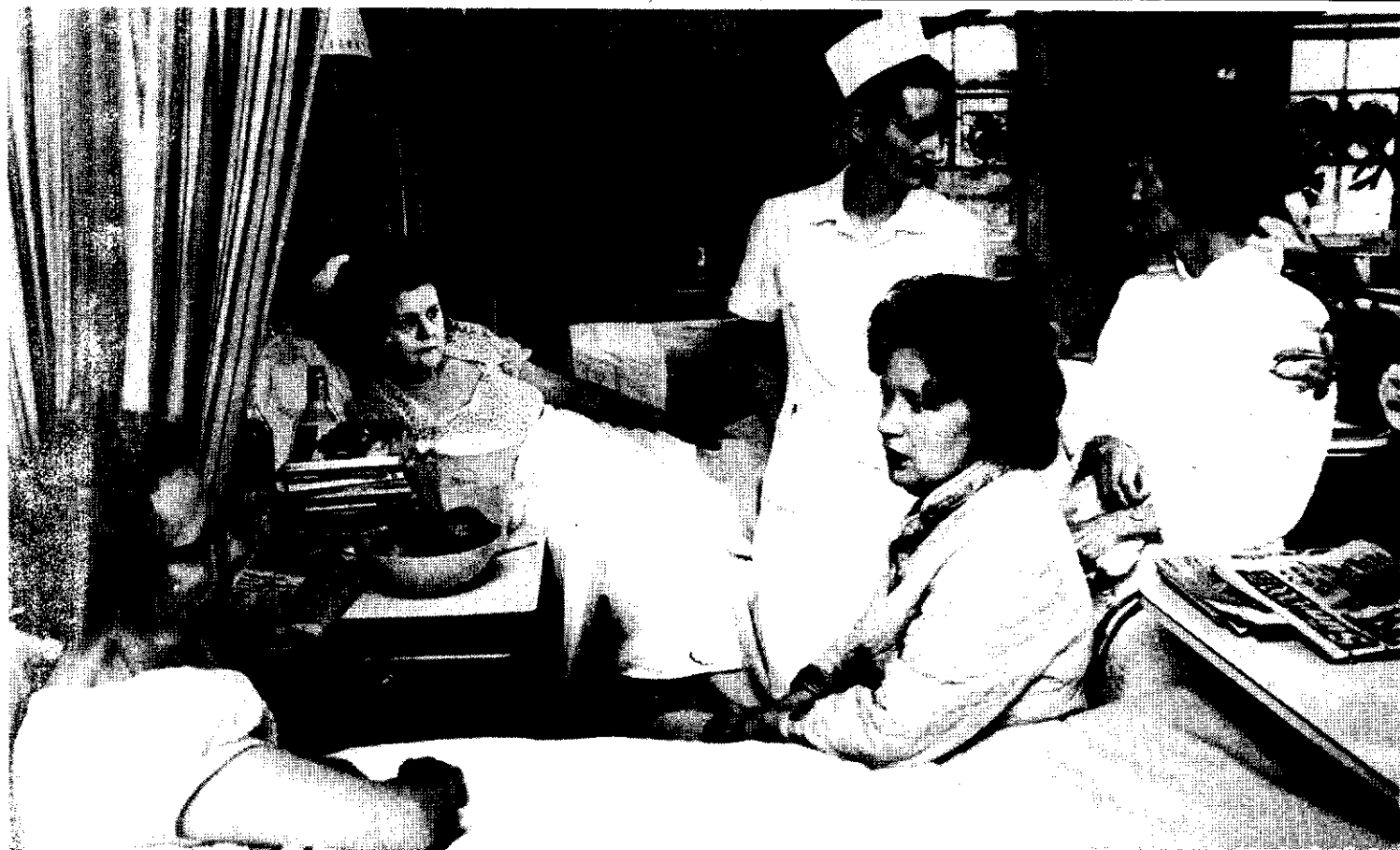
'Phatakahl' (Handle with Care). Winnie Mandela and her daughter were dumped in one of 824 identical breeze-block houses which have no running water, no electricity and no inside sanitation.

She was given a state subsidy of R100 a month and was told not to leave the house at night or weekends and not to leave the magisterial district during the day except on the few occasions that she can visit her husband on Robben Island. She is allowed to see him once a month but it's expensive. She tries to see him every three months. The visit lasts for thirty minutes and they are only allowed to talk about 'family matters'.

Winnie Mandela probably cannot remember how many times she has been in prison. She was just placed under restriction in 1962 and was arrested soon afterwards for allegedly breaking the order. She was again arrested in 1967, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, and 1976. In 1969 she was detained under the Terrorism Act and held in solitary confinement for 491 days, almost 17 months.

'I can tell you from my own personal experience over the past 15 years when I was confined and restricted that I got my inspiration from the very knowledge that one is not alone. The knowledge that the struggle is an international struggle for the dignity of man and that you are part of this family of man—this alone sustains you.'

Rosanna Harvey



Picture: Angela Phillips (IFL)

EGA STAYS OK!

THERE IS nowhere in the area to move the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital. The Camden and Islington Area Health Authority were forced to admit that at a packed meeting in Camden Town Hall—specially hired to accommodate the large number of demonstrators.

The reason? Popular pressure against the move! So there's no chance of the EGA being moved to the Whittington Hospital or any other hospital in Camden and Islington.

Is this the long-awaited victory? Well, not quite! The Area Health Authority was forced to recommend that the hospital be funded direct from the DHSS as a national institution, in recognition of the importance of the service it provides.

The EGA treats 22,000 women out-patients every year. That's about 450 a week! It has a unique fertility counselling service where women are not necessarily given the latest drugs, but are encouraged to talk to the doctors, to relax and learn that some problems causing infertility can be solved by the woman and her partner themselves.

At their menopausal clinics, you may well find yourself talking to a consultant doctor who has had to go through it herself, and is far more likely to listen to you seriously.

But there is no guarantee that Ennals will come up with the cash.

So what's next? Another pressure campaign to ensure funding for a new upgraded EGA on site. We are completely against any suggestion that the broken lift or any other repairs be funded by private subscriptions.

A women's campaign would assure that an expanded, upgraded EGA would be the centre of a new concept in women's health care. We still need your support. The campaign meets every second Tuesday (next meeting 14 March). Contact Candy Udwin, 155 Drummond Street, London NW1. **Lynne MacRitchie, EGA Campaign Committee.**

ANOTHER VICTORY

FOR NEARLY a year the people of Launceston, North East Cornwall, have been fighting for maternity services. At the moment, women have to travel 60 miles to Plymouth for deliveries. After a public meeting in April last year an Action Group of local Trades Unionists and women started the campaign for a local GP maternity unit. They started with a flyposting campaign setting off from one of the laybys in which many Cornwall babies are born.

They were told that the nearby Oldtree Maternity Home was being closed and could not be used for

deliveries as nation-wide advertising had failed to attract midwives.

The women refused to accept this excuse—and there are now seven midwives at Oldtree; more than there were in the days when deliveries took place there. The fight to keep Oldtree open for post-natal care has been won.

The Community Health Council has agreed to start consultant screening at Oldtree, so the women won't have to go to Plymouth for ante-natal care. But there will still not be any deliveries, even in the planned new unit.

The CHC has now said that the local doctors' practice is refusing to take responsibility for maternity care, so the service can't be provided. Doctors aren't obliged to do deliveries, and there's only one local practice so women have no choice of doctors. The Action Group is going to continue the campaign by publicity and a public meeting, to get senior doctors to agree to take on deliveries. **Joan Shanks, Launceston, Cornwall.**

FIGHT
TOGETHER
OR
LOSE TOGETHER



SO DAVID Ennals, Minister for Health, is 'appalled' at the length of the waiting lists is he? He doesn't have far to look for the reason. How long can the health service survive

in the face of the cuts proposed?

Does he think that we will be dazzled by his generosity in 'saving' one hospital (St Nicks) that we won't notice the closing of five others? Does he really believe we will be so grateful we will gladly nurse our sick at home?

Let's get our message over to him loud and clear — **No Cuts!** We are pleased to announce the unexpected pregnancy of Dr Barnard, but due to the threatened closure of the British Home for Mothers and Babies, he has had to book himself into one of the corridors of the GDH where he will give birth on 9 June at 9.45 and twenty two seconds precisely pip pip pip. Next please.

Come on Medical and Nursing staff at the BHMB who always claim that they 'think of the patients' when they say 'no action'. Are you thinking of the future pregnant women who want to have their choice of a homely and secure local hospital or a hospital where they will be given production line deliveries because of overcrowding. It's about time you practised what you preached.

Promises of no redundancies and that alternative work will be given (that's the message from the AHA). Well that promise was given to workers from Bexley Hospital and 25 of them are still waiting for alternative work.

The women ancillary workers at the BHMB know how to fight. Get together and start the campaign again. If we don't fight together, we'll lose together. **Womens Voice Hospital Bulletin, South East London**

LEYLAND WE FIND YOU GUILTY

IN THE case of Mrs Beryl Finn against British Leyland UK Ltd this Industrial Tribunal has decided that: 'We find the applicants complaint of victimisation completely unacceptable.'

Womens Voice investigated the case of the victimisation of Beryl Finn and finds the opposite; the management and the union, the GMWU guilty.

Beryl Finn, member of the GMWU, was finally sacked from the British Leyland body plant at Castle Bromwich in August 1977. The excuse for her sacking was 'disruption'.

The story started in 1976, the year of Equal Pay. It was a bad year for the women in the British Leyland press shop. It was the year that British Leyland decided to make the

women pay for their own Equal Pay. They removed the labourers in the press shop. This meant that the women suddenly had to do all the lifting and moving of the heavy metal components as well as work the presses.

All the women were exhausted with the extra strain. There were complaints about the timing of the jobs. Even worse, women suffered cracked ribs, damaged spines, bruised breasts and strains to the groin and uterus.

After a few months the women had had enough. They organised a petition to get the labourers back. Everyone signed it, except the two GMWU stewards and one AUEW steward. Feeling they were getting nowhere they decided to take their case to the local press. One dinner-time in April 1976 all the women walked out, streamed up to the main gate to meet the Birmingham Mail, and told their story.

The GMWU and AUEW officials reacted promptly. They organised a joint meeting, where Mr Bull, the

GMWU convenor, gave vent to his feelings: 'I'm the union. You'll do as you're told'. 'We're the union' retaliated the women in the AUEW, and walked out, taking Beryl and her sister, both in the GMWU with them.

The AUEW members elected themselves two stewards and prepared for a fight.

Beryl Finn and her sister Carol were left isolated in the GMWU. They tried to transfer to the AUEW, but Mr Bull, refused to allow it. From that point on Beryl Finn was systematically victimised and bullied by management and the GMWU shop stewards and convenor. Neither she nor the women were getting anywhere in their fight over the labourers. Finally the AUEW called a one-day strike, and on that day Beryl Finn was ill. Management refused to accept her doctor's certificate, and used the excuse to suspend her. She carried on the fight, trying to persuade new women in the section not to accept the deteriorating and

dangerous conditions in August the management sacked her for 'disruption'.

50 of the 70 women were supporting the fight. Many were afraid to speak up in meetings, especially after Mr Bull had punched one woman. An AUEW woman steward said 'Beryl Finn always got on with people. I don't think she's disrupted anything. I don't think she caused bother.'

The Tribunal's response was: 'In 1976, events occurred which brought about a drastic change for the worse (in the smooth running of the press shop). This can be directly attributed to the implementation of the Equal Pay Act... This ultimately created a sharp division among the women leading to conflicts of a very unpleasant kind and involving considerable emotional upset.'

The Tribunal then came to its amazing conclusion: that Beryl Finn had no case.

The intention of the Equal Pay Act was to improve women's wages, not to worsen their working conditions. The role of trade unions is to improve conditions, not collude with management to worsen them and jump on any trade union members who fights for her rights. **Sheila McGregor.**

WE ARE NOT AGAINST THE MEN

BRENDA GREEN works at Dunlops in Liverpool. Her husband Dave works for Leylands—at the Triumph Standard No 2 plant in Speke. That's the plant Leyland intend to close down.

Leyland announced the closure

after a 16-week strike, of all production workers, caused by the managements sudden bullying in the factory.

The strike was deliberately provoked by management, who intended to humiliate the workers

before announcing the closure. The strike was run entirely by the senior stewards. There were no mass meetings, no bulletins and no publicity.

Later on in the strike, five Leyland wives went to London to demand that something should be done about the strike. Brenda Green was one of the women.

'We were fed up' she said. 'Nothing was happening. It looked as though the silence would go on for ever unless someone did something. Maureen Crook called round. She said that we ought to get a petition going. We had a man round from Radio Merseyside. He wasn't interested when he realised we didn't want to attack the strike. But the programme still went out, and lots of women responded.'

'We were *not* against the strike, not against the men. Definitely not. I'd never have gone if I thought that. I supported the decision to go on strike, and Leyland were to blame. But we wanted something done about it.'

'We went to London, all five of us in one car. We went to Downing Street to see Callaghan. He wasn't there. So we saw this man, Tom McNally (Callaghan's political secretary).

'He mumbled something about the Speke plant being plagued by strikes. I told him this was the first all-out strike since the plant opened, and he looked confused.'

'We put round a petition calling for some action over the strike. Some of the men hinted that they wouldn't let their wives go to London. I wonder what world they think we're living in.'

'I think some of the newspapers may have used our trip and our petition against the strike. But that wasn't what I felt. I really feel strongly about this. *We weren't against the strike.*

'Now they say they're going to close the plant. I'm even more against Leylands. It costs us £100 a month to live here, and I like living here. I want to go on living here. But we can't live here unless Dave has a job. And there's no other decent jobs here.'

'If there's a fight for the plant, and Dave joins it, I'll be with him all the way.'



John Starrock (Report)

□ A WOMAN computer engineer at Standard Telephone Cables, North London, has won equal pay—and £2000 back pay.

Mrs Dianne Gardner told the Industrial Tribunal, 'I was the only woman of the team of 13, but I was doing the same job as the men and just as competently. We commission new computers and train staff to use them.'

She got nowhere with the works grievance procedure. Then she approached the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service which negotiated with management—but with no results. She then went to the Industrial Tribunal, with her husband representing her. While that was going on, STC made an out of court settlement.

'I am pleased at the settlement, but I didn't get it without a good deal of fighting.'

WOMENS LIBERATION

THE 1978 National Women's Liberation Conference will be held in Birmingham on April 8th and 9th. The three main areas of discussion will be:

- How do we oppress each other within the Womens Movement? What divisions are there between mothers and non-mothers, lesbians and non-lesbians, black and white, old and young, socialists and non-socialists, working class and middle class etc? What role does guilt, fear, lack of confidence, competitive tendencies, misunderstandings, the mass media etc. play in the way we view and approach each other? How can feminism break down barriers and unite women?

- Existing campaigns, their effectiveness and alternative forms of

organisation and activity: How do we make our presence felt within society? Do we need new demands on women, health and violence? Subjects that seem most pressing are abortion, fascism and rape.

- How do we come together to organise and achieve these aims? How efficient are we at campaigning? What is the role of National and Regional Conferences? What is the function of consciousness-raising groups? How do we organise our finances?

Is fund-raising a political act? What do we do with any profit from National Conferences? What are the aims of demonstrations and how effective are they? It is hoped that women will stay in the same group throughout the conference, discussing all these areas. Cost approx £3. Creche. Please try to register in advance: Birmingham Women's Centre, 76 Brighton Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham 12 (021-449-2931).

UNDER FIVE AND NOWHERETO GO

CANTERBURY *Womens Voice* is fighting for more nurseries. There are 3,000 under-fives in the Canterbury area. The local authorities provide only *one* day nursery with 40 places and one nursery school with 26 places. And they are trying to close one of them!

We started last summer with door-to-door leafletting, but the response wasn't good.

We got more people writing and telephoning us when we wrote a letter to the Kent Gazette. So now everything we do, we get the local paper to report it. We found that is really effective.

First we did the basic groundwork—finding out what the facilities are, talking to the Trades Council. We went to speak to some unions, and left petitions. The

NUPE healthworkers branch pledged support, took petitions and got them filled in. The shopworkers' union USDAW took a questionnaire and tried to get it in their union journal.

We decided to hold a public meeting, but we couldn't get a room before Christmas, so we had extra time. We didn't want to just sit around and waste it, so we did extra things. A lot of letter writing—to play groups, to the press. We talked to different groups.

We put petitions on big *Womens Voice* posters and put them in laundrettes, in the hospital, and in the clinics. We spent a whole day taking them round. Clinics seemed to be the best bet.

Street meetings—they were fantastic. We hadn't done one at all before. And we did three in the weeks before our public meeting. People were queuing up to sign the petition! And we had a lot of people come up and talk to us and give us verbal support.

Thirty people came to the meeting, including delegates from the trades council and the ASTMS union. Everyone who came was in a union, and they are all going to talk to their members to get support.

Now the council want to close the Sturgeon Home, a nursery and day centre. Given the conditions down there, it's absolutely appalling that they are going to try and close it.

The Action Committee set up at the meeting is going to fight that closure. Lynne Sedgmore.

MANY LESBIAN
of UR 2
JOIN US!
BERATION



Picture: Andrew Ward (Report)

NOT SUCH A CRUMBY FACTORY

ONE OF our *Womens Voice* group's members works in a local biscuit factory. As one of the main aims of *Womens Voice* is to encourage women to fight for their rights we thought we should try there.

She began by writing an article for *Womens Voice*, in the January edition. We were able to sell 35 copies at the factory, covering all the shifts.

Of course, an initial success has to be followed up, and we had no idea what it would be like when we went back the next month. The women were still keen, we sold 24 in February.

Now we organised a bulletin to go into the factory which explains some of the things that are going on there, and what we think about them. Often the women only hear management's point of view. There is a trade union there too, but the women aren't very struck with it, so we're trying to encourage more involvement with it.

With a little consistent effort it's very easy to use *Womens Voice* to contact women at work—we've just proved it! Glasgow *Womens Voice* Group.

CLAP YOUR HANDS

IF YOU hate Mary Whitehouse **Clap Your Hands!** we sang, and the reply came resoundingly from ten thousand hands.

We were marching to save Gay News and its editor Denis Lemon from their conviction for blasphemous libel. It was a bitterly cold Saturday afternoon in London, but still we mounted the biggest gay demonstration this country has ever seen!

The mood was good-natured, jubilant even, but the anger came through loud and clear. The police

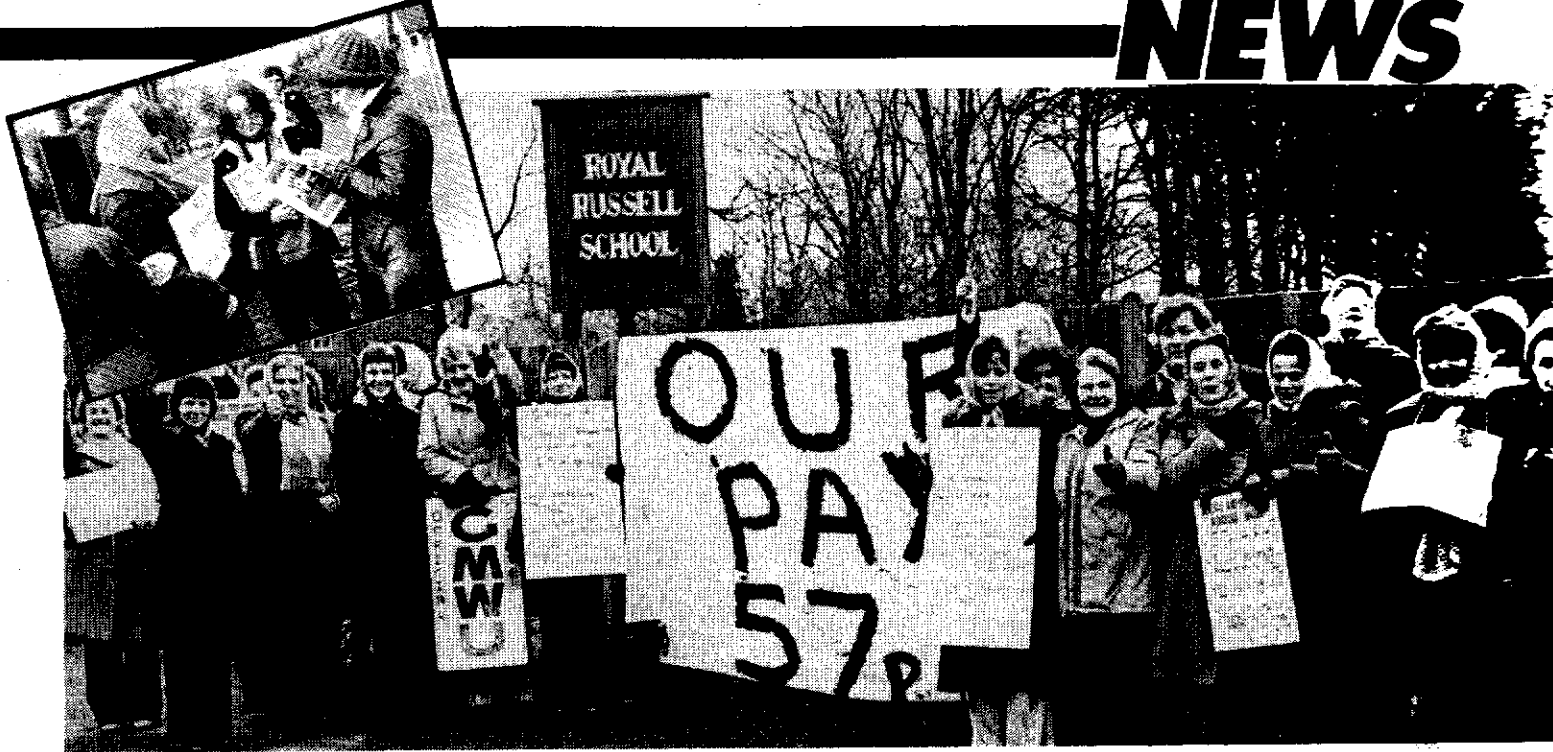
kept a low profile, there was no arrests, no fascists, no violence, and very few of the taunts and jeers from passers-by that we have come to expect on gay demos. This time there were too many of us—they had to take us seriously.

But the best thing of all was the massive support from the left and the labour movement. The National Gay News Defence Committee did its homework very thoroughly during the weeks leading up to the march. They supplied up to date information about the campaign to gay and political groups throughout

the country, co-ordinated fund-raising activities and encouraged people to argue for support in their union branches and organisations. Their efforts paid off handsomely.

The Gay News appeal hearing began on Monday 13th February and at the time of writing the result was not known. But whatever the outcome, gays have the last laugh, because this campaign has united us, not only amongst ourselves, but with non-gay, socialist sisters and brothers, as nothing has ever united us before. Sue Spicer, Brighton *Womens Voice*.

NEWS



A POSHER SORT OF STRIKE

THE POSHER parts of South London saw a scandal at the end of February. There were all these frightfully nice children in their frightfully nice public school, having to do their own cleaning! The women who normally do it for them are on strike.

The school is the Royal Russell School in Addington, near Croydon. The women are all members of the General and Municipal Workers Union, who have been told that they will only get a rise above their 57p an hour if they tear up their union cards.

The women wouldn't have any of it, stopped work and picketed the school to stop essential supplies. In one day they stopped 400 pints of milk going in, and the TGWU agreed to stop their drivers delivering fuel.

Gill Noakes, one of the kitchen ladies told Womens Voice 'the women in the kitchen got the 10 per cent rise, because most of them don't belong to the union. We were blackmailed to tear up our union cards, but it isn't on is it?'

Most of the 30 women on strike are young housewives who live in the enormous New Addington

Estate. 'People ask me why I do it' said Mrs Snow. 'Well, I have four kids and there aren't many jobs where you can get the summer holidays off. I have to clean 13 classroom, two laboratories, a long corridor and toilets. I was really shocked when I realised how much work I would have to do.'

Before they go on the long summer break the women have to clean the school from top to bottom. 'Last year there was a summer school' remembered Valerie Cropp. 'When we returned we found human excrement on the floors, filth all over the walls. We worked bloody hard to get it clean for the start of the September term. We never got so much as a thank-

you. That's the sort of treatment you get here.'

Not everyone who works in the school is so poor. Mrs Mansfield the school bursar, runs three cars, and lives in a very desirable part of Addington. With school fees running at £1,800 a year and 500 pupils, there must be some money with which to pay the cleaners a decent wage.

Until their case is won, and the union is recognised, the women are picketing from 5 o'clock in the morning. They need all the help they can get from trades unionists in the area and school workers everywhere.

Mavreen Williams

THE EVIL CREATURES OF RACISM

I FEEL I must write and tell you how much I support your campaign against the National Front. It is vital, I feel that people in this country must be made aware of what the NF actually stands for. They must be told that the NF stands for exactly the same creed of racial hatred that this country fought against thirty years ago.

Hitler himself admitted that had people understood the true principle of the Nazi creed and smashed him off the streets right at the beginning of his evil career he would have been defeated and stopped altogether.

Unfortunately the NF has gained quite a hold of the minds of some people in this country, particularly the younger ones, so it is vital that a campaign against them is waged ceaselessly until they are rejected totally for the evil creatures they are. Ruth Jellings.

OUT MEETING the people recently Mrs Thatcher said: 'I didn't see any immigrants. I was looking for some to stop and have a word with, but there only seemed to be some Socialist Worker people with whom I have absolutely nothing in common.'

Too true Mrs Thatcher. Had you met any immigrants on your tour of Halifax would your word have been to tell them to go home? In *Socialist Worker* we say: 'They're welcome here' No we have absolutely nothing in common!

FROM THE National Front youth paper Bulldog:

'I'd like to talk, at the moment, mainly to girls. (Well in these days of equality why not?) Lets see a bit more glamour at our meetings and booze ups ... alright! I know you're thinking that politics is made up of stuffy meetings and speeches. Well

its not. We usually have a bit of a giggle and we always have a lot of social events such as discos and dances. Then of course there's always lots of guys to chat you up in the bar afterwards. There are lots of things that we females can really get into. Who knows? There may be a

future Maggie Thatcher among you. (God help us! Well you know what I mean. Lets see more of you about. Come along and find out what the National Front is like.

You never know if you come to our socials you might meet your future hubby. Lay Sue

'IT IS only recently that the idea has been accepted that a woman can confer right of domicile upon a man by marrying him, and I personally have never made a secret of my opinion that such an idea is fundamentally absurd.'

'THE RIGHT of permanent residence, even without possession of acquisition of citizenship, involves a degree of allegiance to the State concerned. ... Now I happen to believe that primary allegiance can only be owed by a man, because ultimately allegiance is about whom ones fights for and fighting is the specialised function of the male, so that the old rule, that a woman takes her husband's nationality, not a man his wife's, is the right rule.'

'THE CHATTER about prohibiting fiancées entering for the purpose of marriage to residents is mere chatter; the difference between a fiancée and a wife is no more than a cut-price return air ticket for the man, and any nubile female admitted on whatever grounds is a potential fiancée.'

Enoch Powell, speaking to a Conservative meeting on 18 February 1978.

Just one of the many letters sent to the Anti Nazi League and *Womens Voice* in the past weeks.

If you want copies of this leaflet write now to Women Against the Nazis, 12 Little Newport Street, London, WC2.

An International Womens Day demonstration that sparked a revolution: February 1917, Petrograd, Russia.



our history / our future

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day, 8 March, is a tribute to our history and a celebration of our future.

On 8 March 1908, in New York, 15,000 women garment workers marched the streets. They were young, mostly under 21, foreign born and speaking many languages. They were united and militant. Many were revolutionary socialists. And they were women.

For ten or twelve hours a day they worked in tiny, dirty, suffocating factories. The doors and windows were locked from the outside. There were no toilets or teabreaks and talking was forbidden. Many would be blind by the age of 25—sewing tiny beads onto the finery of the wealthy.

But they knew hope as well as drudgery. In their thousands they responded to the Socialist Party

call, and marched through New York demanding equal pay, nurseries for working mothers, an end to sweatshop conditions and the right to organise into trade unions.

Their militancy inspired the declaration of 'Working Women's Day' on 8 March. Two years later, Clara Zetkin, revolutionary leader of the German women's movement, called on all socialists to celebrate that day as International Women's Day.

The New York garment workers went on to lead the 'Uprising of the 40,000'—a general strike in the clothing industry in 1912. Their action paved the way for the founding of one of the first industrial unions in the United States.

Seventy years on from that first march, women round the world are still fighting for freedom and a decent life. Here is one more chapter in that history:

GEORGIA Ellis lives in Elwood, Indiana, a bleak factory town of about 12,000 people just north of Indianapolis. She has worked at Essex Wire for over 10 years. Last April, the 220 workers there, members of the United Automobile Workers Union, (UAW) decided to strike. They wanted more money, better sick pay and a pension. It was a long and bitter strike. In the nine months they were out the strikers, mostly women, were beaten up, shot at, and hosed down in some of the bloodiest battles in recent American labor history. In January, just a few weeks after the settlement, we sat around the wood stove in Georgia's kitchen and listened to her talk about the strike.

The problem was, we didn't know how to run a strike. Older people, we've led a pretty sheltered life in a small town, most of us. We just went to work and took our pay and came home.

Most of the union branches that supported us heard about it or read about it in the paper and called and volunteered. But the UAW Regional Office asked them not to get involved, not to send men in, that would cause trouble.

In Elwood, you got people on both sides. To some people the word strike is dirty. A lot of our shopkeepers were very much behind us. They gave us food, they gave us leftovers at the end of the day.

But there was also terrible violence, terrible brutality against us. When the scabs started coming in they would have tyre tools, ball bats and even guns. At first they just hit a lot of us and if we'd get anywhere near they'd go out of their way to bump us with their cars. We had one man hit by a lorry. He was hurt pretty badly.

My picket team was four older women and two men. Once there were just we four women sitting around a fire and suddenly—I thought it was fire crackers—and I started to laugh about it and my friend said, 'That's not fire crackers, that's a gun!' and shot thudded into the log.

The courts and the police were very much biased against us. Very much. Most of our laws, of course, are with the corporations. We didn't have any idea of that before. We thought the policeman's your friend. If somebody's up there roughing up a 60-year-old woman, you call a policeman. But when the policeman does it you don't know quite what to do.

Early in July we decided that was the end of it, we just determined they were not going to have scab labour. So we got about 250 people down there, UAW people, townspeople, our people, and when one of the cars came out—it was a foreman's car—we bombarded it. And then they took all of the scab labour out of the plant and they left 11 people in.

One night there were about seven people on the picket line and about 2 o'clock in the morning they heard a disturbance down at the gate. When they went down to see what was going on the guards turned fire hoses on them and knocked them down. Then about 30 guys came out of the plant and they had great huge shields made of plexi-glass and big clubs and they fell on these people and just beat the livin' daylights out of them. One man had a heart attack and had to be put in intensive care. One of our women got hit in the face with a rock.

So we called all of our people out on 8 hour picket, as many as possible out there to protect our people. During the next two days, they shot at us almost constantly. At night they fired rockets up like a battlefield and they would light up the whole area and then shoot at you. Most of us tried to wear dark clothing and stay back in dark corners so they couldn't

see us.

That night they shot at us and the next day their supply helicopter came in and we ran down to the corner of the fence to take a picture of it. As I aimed the camera, the plant door opened and a guard fired a shotgun directly at us. We just ran. Three of our girls were on the railroad and the foreman shot directly at them. They had to fall down on the track to keep from getting hit.

The next night was when Carol Fry got shot. She had her back turned toward the factory and they heard two shots in rapid succession. And Carol screamed she'd been shot and there was blood from the back of her hair clear down over her hips. There were bullets hitting the bus and her husband crawled under a hail of bullets to call an ambulance. She was taken to the hospital with a bullet lodged next to her spine, and it's still there. Of course, the union hasn't done much for her. As it is, she could turn the wrong way and that bullet could sever her spine. She could be paralyzed. The rest of us—we'll manage, but it could have been any one of us. Last Friday night a bunch of our members who are back to work contributed a dollar a piece, those of us that had it, to Carol.

I was pretty vocal during the strike and they sent a man out to my home. He broke in and beat me pretty badly. As it turned out I had a cracked jaw, a cracked jawbone, and a little nerve damage and I was all black and blue, but I come through pretty good. When the policeman came he said I was hysterical and he would come back the next day when I got out of the hospital and talk to me. But he never came back, they never questioned the neighbours and they never took finger prints. The county police put out a report that their "investigation" showed it couldn't have been strike related.

The Union kept trying to get us to accept the company's offer. We had several votes and every time we turned it down. In fact, when the Regional Director came and told us we had to buy it our people just locked arms and sang 'Solidarity Forever'. He finally shut up and we just booed him clear off the stage. It was the only time we actually met him, he never even came down to see about our strike.

The union finally sent seven people down from the headquarters in Detroit. They simply told us that they had done all they could, they said there was no point wanted to discuss it, and they said there was no point in discussing it. Well, everybody was crying, we didn't know what to do. We were scared and we knew that if we didn't go back, they were just going to have enough scabs in there that none of us would have a job. So we went back.

The greatest thing we got out of this is being together and helping each other, something we never had in the plant. We had little cliques, little groups that picked at each other.

But yet when we were all out there with the same problem, facing the same enemy with the same finances we were all ready to help each other. And we worked together and it was a beautiful thing. They brought things from their gardens and shared and they brought clothes for each other's kids and they were really tremendous, it was great.

The Union's going to find out it isn't over, because I don't intend to let it be over and a number of other people don't. Nothing was ever given to the labour movement. It all had to be bought and it was paid for damn dearly, and I think it's going to have to be paid for even more. We're just going to have to prove we have enough courage to do it.

By Celia Petty

production line in the offices

OVER THREE million women work in offices. The wages may be lower than in the local factory, but the work's pleasanter. It's cleaner, more interesting, you get to chat to different people, and it's safer.

Or that's how it used to be. Today, office workers are threatened by new money saving machinery that not only means a drastic cut in the number of jobs available to women, but also makes the jobs that are left very much more unpleasant.

In May 1977, 9 new word processing machines were installed

In June 1976 the plans were published. Instead of 38 typists and 4 supervisors, there would be just 11 operators, 2 seniors, a supervisor and a manager. At this point the NALGO branch told the typists that NALGO's national policy was *not* to oppose new machinery. Despite a great deal of pressure from management and union officials the typists decided to oppose the scheme, and to strike if it was introduced. They got other office workers to promise support, and at last NALGO was forced to back them.

desks and personal belongings had been moved to another floor. Nine machines had been installed in a special anti-static room. The room was hot and noisy, without air conditioning, the windows couldn't be opened and dozens of electric cables snaked dangerously about the floor.

The typists were divided into two groups—the A list who weren't willing to work on the new machines, and the B list who were. The A list typists were supposed to be offered new jobs elsewhere—but in fact

even typists, the women became little more than machine minders. No doubt it won't be long before the grading for word processors is lowered, and the pay reduced, as management decide that operators don't need shorthand, or to know about running an office.

The word processing operators sit in a sealed anti-static room and no-one else is allowed in. The work comes in through a special glass box, and the machines run continuously. They get one ten minute break in the morning and afternoon, and the rest of the time are tied to the machines. No more chance for a quick chat on the way to the filing cabinet, or nipping out to the shops—the social contract that makes office work a bit more pleasant than other types has been totally abolished.

The new machines are not only boring, monotonous, noisy and demanding. They also threaten the health of those who work them. The hazards are not yet fully understood, though headaches and eyestrain are already occurring. And, least acknowledged but most distressing, the mental stress that affects all people tied to machines all day is beginning to undermine these office workers.

The union's rule in all this is not a happy one. The policy of protecting individual workers, but not staffing levels, just makes it more difficult for other workers to find jobs. And in this case, they didn't do much to protect the workers at all. Many of the women involved wanted to resign from NALGO. So management have succeeded in reducing jobs, cutting out the social side of office life, lowering wage levels and giving union organisa-

tion a hammering.

But it's not just Bradford. The head office of the Halifax Building Society is more highly computerised than the Pentagon. So computerised that you never get to leave your desk (except to go the toilet—and they're working on it). You just tap on the computer terminal by your desk, and along comes the file or letter you asked for. The computer knows who you are and how much work you've got through every minute of the day. All telephone calls are recorded, and memos, letters and other written stuff goes on to microfilm. The Halifax doesn't even allow a union.

Lots of offices now have counters attached to the typewriters to record how many times you depress the keys each day. So in order to have the occasional chat with your neighbour, you have to sit there tapping away at the space bar to keep your count up!

Workers in industry have a long experience of labour-saving machinery and speed-ups. They have found again and again that the only defence is strong union organisation, and a solid network of shop stewards to represent the interests of particular groups. **Elena Dallas**

• Much of the information in this article came from Hazel Downing, who is doing research into office workers, and particularly secretaries' work experience. Any women who have worked as secretaries or typists, and would be ready to discuss please contact Hazel Downing, c/o Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, Edgbaston, Birmingham 12



by Bradford Council in their offices. The effects were devastating. Dozens of jobs were lost, conditions were dramatically worsened and union organisation was undermined. The story of what happened in Bradford highlights many of the dangers.

It was April 1976 when the typists in Jacob's Well—part of the council offices—heard of the possibility of word processing machinery being introduced. They only learnt about it by chance, but before they even met to discuss it their union rep announced that he wasn't prepared to represent them. All the women were in NALGO, the local government union, so they elected one of their own number to argue their case.

A working party was set up, supposedly for a year, to look at 'all aspects of the situation'. But after only three months, the NALGO official on the working party offered the typists a deal. The machines would be introduced only one at a time, whenever four women left the typing pool of their own accord. Anyone who didn't want to work on the new machines wouldn't have to.

Following intense pressure from the union, the women finally agreed to the system being installed. They felt isolated, inexperienced, unsure of themselves and tired of endless toing and froing.

One Monday in April, when the typists came to work, they found that they had all been moved without warning. Their

they were offered the worst jobs going. One qualified shorthand typist was ordered to apply for a job as a temporary junior messenger. Not only that, but the typists had been promised that they could stay on without losing their jobs indefinitely, and without working the machines. That guarantee was soon sabotaged by the council—they only had six months. Within a fortnight it became clear that the women who had refused to work the new machines were being offered only the most degrading jobs.

What about the women who did agree to work the new machines? For a start, the work became much more boring. Instead of being shorthand typists, or

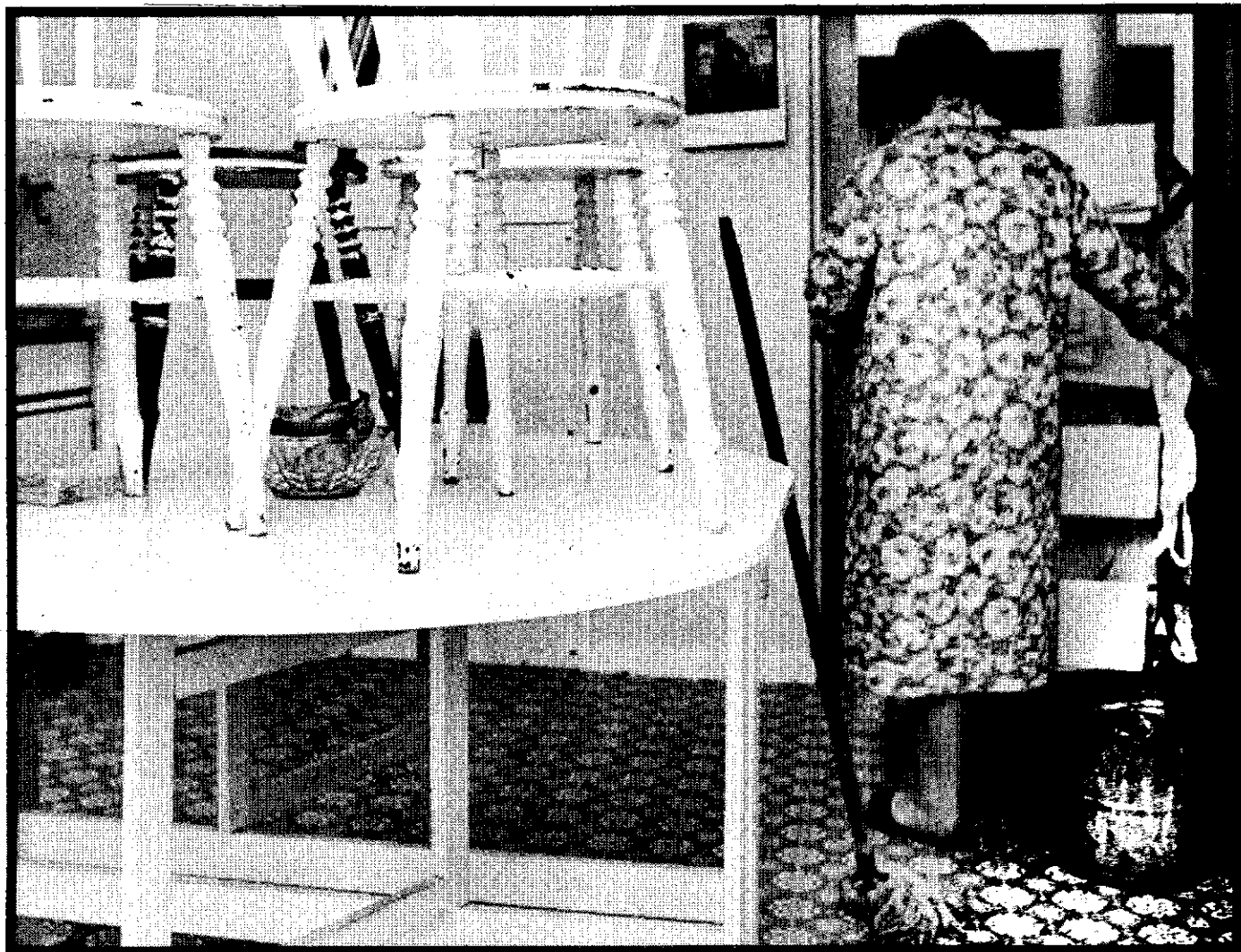


MY DAY, well . . . my husband gets the kids their breakfast, and brings me a cup of tea in bed. I'm alright then, and I come down and have breakfast with them. He takes them off to school. Raymond, the youngest one, is the only one who gets school dinners, the other two, Stephen and Susan, have to take packed lunches, we just can't afford all those 25p's.

Once they're off I get on with housework, Hoovering, washing, cleaning, and do my shopping. I have to work to a routine. By 2 o'clock I have my dinner, then I get the children's dinner ready for them at 4. At 5 I

go off to work at Lesney's making those little Matchbox toys. I see the children for half an hour in the morning, and an hour in the afternoon, that's an hour and a half five days of the week. And I'm not the only mother like that, everyone's in the same boat. My husband sits up with them till they go to bed, so he gets a couple more hours. I always find time to ask the kids how they got on at school, you have to, you have to show on interest in what they do, otherwise they think you don't care. If I see a sad face amongst them I always ask them what went wrong.

A day in the life of Annie



THE WEEKEND we spend together. On Sunday we all eat together, wash up together, tidy up together. Even little Raymond has his jobs; he puts away the salt and clears the table. Then we sing together. From 6 to 6.30 on a Sunday afternoon I wouldn't care if it was the Queen or the Pope knocking on the door, that day is for the children. I can't play the guitar for toffee but I get it out, and we sing all the school songs, listen to top of the pops, have a dance.

In summer we go out for picnics, blackberrying, and then when

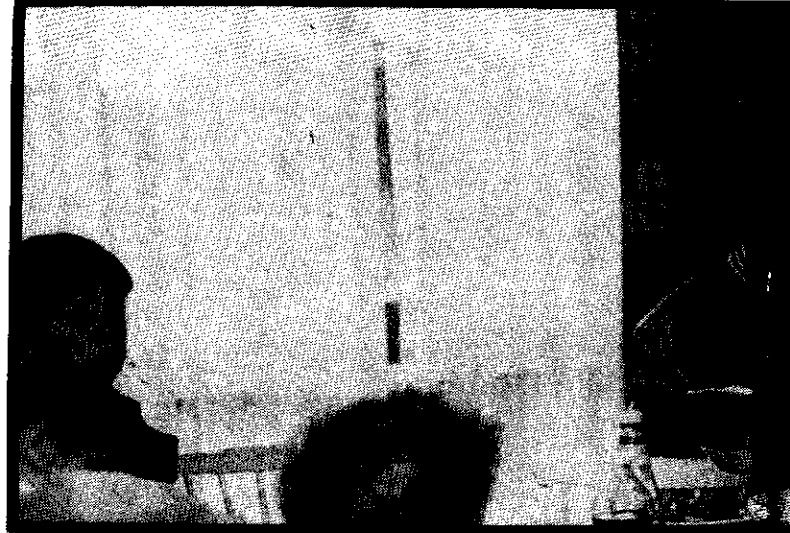
we get back, no matter how tired I am, I have to make cakes. The children will be in before me, getting the things out of the cupboard.

It's the sign of a great day being worn out at the end of it, not worn out for our sakes, so we have some peace, but worn out because they enjoyed it. They deserve a day for themselves one day.

I only go out to work for one thing, to give the kids something. They didn't ask to be borne, it was our choice, and we have to show them we care.



ONCE A month we go to Sainsburys. My husband gets monthly paid. I spend about £50 there, buying all the bargains, all the things that will keep. I spend £25 at the butchers, and put it all in my friend Sheila's freezer. That's it really, the other bits I buy in the 'robbing' shops on the estate!



YOU SEE, there's this little patch out the back where we could have a community centre; all we need from Hackney council is the building. Then we could have days for the kids, nights when women could meet and just chat, with a sewing machine, a spare cooker, and someone could show someone else how to do something special. Just to pass an hour together. It would be out of this world round here. We'd get to know the teenage girls, someone could organise the babysitting, we could collect money a little at a time for a big night out.

There were women living round here on New Year's Eve bursting at the sides to go out. They sat in on their own with no one to bring in the New Year, and went to bed at 10 o'clock instead. When you're on your own that's when you let yourself go. So your husband goes out for a drink by himself, you lose interest, and that's the end. That's why we need a place to go *here*, not over on the next estate, but right *here* where we are.

WE'RE ALL friends along this row of houses now. I was first in and got chatting to them all. We all live for each other now. The door is always open. When one

person goes down to the flower market we share out all the plants. Someone lends you their shears. My husband takes two other lots of children to school.

We've all got kids, we all sit out in the front in the summer. When we were in our old rooms and flats we all dreamt of a garden. Now we've each got one the kids want to play out front with their friends.

We need a railing put up to protect them from the cars. We'll get it. Just before Christmas there was no heating in this row (it's all provided centrally and paid for in the rent), so four of us went to the estate office, kicked up a fuss, and everyone got a £5 rebate. A lot of people don't realise that if you don't ask you're not going to get it. If I didn't have to go to work and had more time I'd get up a residents' association.



IF SUSAN wants to go on the pill she can. If she wants to live with a bloke she can. Children have to know that we trust them. If she came home pregnant I would explain to her it's a life she's getting rid of, but that it's her life too and it's her decision. Others may criticise me for it, but I care about my daughter's life. Everyone's entitled to a chance.



THERE'S times when I have problems too, when I've cried, and I've got no one to talk to. I got very depressed once. I was afraid I would hit my kids even though they'd done me no wrong. I got over it, but understand. The child is the innocent victim, how would a woman like if it someone hit her. But someone has got to get to her, to the mother.

Women have to learn to talk, and need to have someone to talk to. Half the problem is talking out loud. It's in that split second when

you've got no one to talk to that things go wrong.

Everyone has to have the chance to make something of their life. We have to give our children the chance. In this house we're all together, that's the way it's got to be.

● Annie Spike was talking to Margaret Renn. The photos were taken by Michael Anne Mullen for Centreprise, as they prepared their book, *Working Lives*.

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DO YOU ever get confused by the things your doctor says to you? Or even had that horrible experience of being in hospital, lying in bed helplessly while a bunch of white coated people mutter funny words across you as if you were not there, or dead?

The excuse for this special language is of course that every science needs a set of shorthand terms to make it easier and quicker for fellow-scientists to communicate.

And it's true that motor car mechanics, engineering workers, print workers, musicians all have their own language. Somehow, that used by doctors seems more mysterious and grand than most.

In fact, doctors started to use long words (mostly in a mixture of Greek and Latin) long before they knew much about the way the body worked. They were trying to establish themselves as a special 'professional' group who had the only right to treat people's illnesses, and get paid for it. And the most successful way they did this was to translate ordinary everyday words into Latin and Greek.

Calling a pain in the foot something like 'pains footius' made it seem as if the doctor knew something about the pain that the patient didn't.

Things have not changed much either. If you go to the doctor and say that one of your breasts is swollen and feels lumpy, he may ask you whether you have a temperature and if the breast feels hot. If you say no, he may tell you it is 'adenosis'. Breast in greek is 'adenos' and 'osis' simply means swelling without heat. 'Itis', on the other hand, as in appendicitis, means swelling with heat, or fever. So in fact that rather frightening word 'adenosis' doesn't tell you any more than you knew already. It doesn't say what caused the swelling or what will cure it, or what you could do to avoid it. You may take your child to

WOMEN'S HEALTH

ever had whats-its-name

the doctor with a high fever and be told he is Pyrexia. Children with high fever sometimes get strange fits, very alarming to the mother and father, which are described as 'pyrexia fits'. Well, you've heard of Pyrex dishes haven't you—it's just the Latin word for 'heat'.

A bad skin rash is called 'dermatitis'. This is the Latin word for skin 'dermis', and 'itis' you know about already. Other words used to mystify women in particular include 'vaginitis' (heat and pain in the vagina), cystitis (same thing in the bladder, cyst is Latin for bladder), and dysmenorrhoea where dys means painful, mens means monthly, and orrhoea mean any kind of flow.

Hysteria is greek for womb. It used to be thought that women were dominated by their womb, that the womb formed their character, and therefore anything wrong with them was

something stemming from the womb. Hysteria became an all embracing illness of women, which no man has ever had the fate to suffer. In America they even sought a cure for hysteria by cutting out the ovaries! And that was only 100 years ago.

It is comforting in a way to have your symptoms re-labelled by some word you have never heard before. It might make you think everything was under control, the treatment was the right one and would cure you.

It is only when the pain is not cured, or when it keeps on coming back, that you might start to wonder what good all these long words were. They are not magic, after all. For one thing, being mystified in this way might discourage you from trying to figure out for yourself what was wrong, and try to help yourself.

This is a particularly bad result in the case of many

common women's illnesses. It is being admitted more and more by doctors that not only depression (there's no long word for that) but also many causes of vaginal infection and cystitis, for example, may have a lot to do with the way we live. To avoid these problems, measures such as hygiene and careful, thoughtful love-making may be just as important and effective as any medicine.

If doctors had more time and the right kind of training, they would be able and willing to explain the way our bodies work and what is making us ill in language that increased rather than decreased our control of our bodies. But they could also be faced with having to admit that often they do not know what causes a lot of health problems.

Rutherford, the first scientist to split the atom, told his students that they should be able to explain their experiments to anyone who was curious, no matter if they were another scientist or not. If the students could not make themselves understood in ordinary language, then they had not properly understood the scientific things they were doing themselves. The same goes for medicine. But the pressures on doctors are of two kinds: the private doctors want their private patients to go on shelling out money. These highly placed doctors, the consultants, also hold powerful positions in the schools that train all doctors. They prevent most people who want to study medicine from doing so, to keep medicine scarce and dear. Even the family doctor, who may quite likely, have every wish to do the best for his or her patients, is forced to get through as many patients as possible in the day. In this way, even these doctors, who have no financial interest in confusing us, are often forced to do so. To explain everything properly would just take too long.

Mel Bartley

WRITING FOR WV.

THIS MONTH. Do It Yourself turns to the subject of writing for Women's Voice. Here are some general guidelines and hints about writing your first article.

Next month we will look at the more specific details, such as reporting on a picket line, interviewing someone, how to track down a report, and what your article should look like when you send it in.

When we like someone, and what they say and what they stand for, we say, 'She speaks my language.'

In *Women's Voice* we try to speak the language of ordinary women who are not happy with aspects of the society they live in. We try to show that together we can change that society and make it better for all of us.

Many of the things we have to say are based on quite complicated ideas, but it is still crucial to say them simply. You can be absolutely right about an issue, but that doesn't help much if no-one else can understand what you're on about.

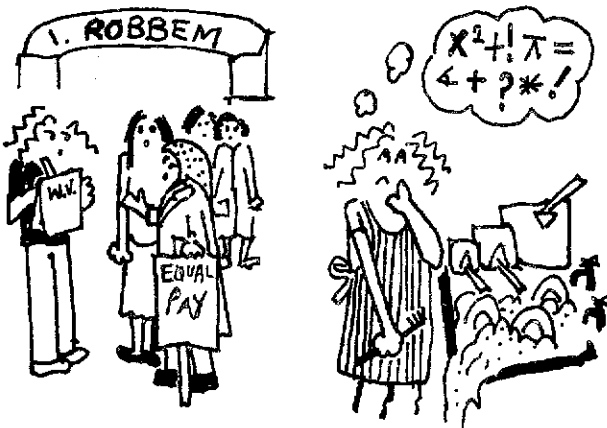
Unfortunately we're all surrounded by bad language. No, not swearing, but language used to distort and deceive. Look at any advert, and work out the tricks used—'at least 10 per cent savings,' or 'medically approved' or 'from 99 pence.' Look at how they discriminate in their picture of women by saying things like 'housewives will have to pay more in the shops' or 'trade unionists and their wives'.

One of our tasks in *Women's Voice* is to undermine these lies and distortions: to speak our own truth, and to speak it with conviction. We want our message to reach thousands more women. That's why writing well matters.

Perhaps the first thing to do if you want to write well, is to read well. Become a critical reader.

Decide what kind of articles and books you like reading. Try to take them apart and see how they were put together.

George Orwell was a very good socialist writer. Ask at your library for his collected essays from 1946, and read the one entitled 'Politics and the English Language.'



AT SCHOOL, most of us are given a very funny picture of what a writer is. It's probably the last thing we think we could be. Don't you have to live in a garrett, and have inspiration, like steam, coming out of the top of your head?

How do you get over the inhibiting feeling, 'I could never write anything.'

The first way is by caring. The most important thing is that you have something to tell, and you want to tell it. It doesn't matter whether it's a simple news report of a meeting or a strike, or the most elaborate poem,—caring is what matters.

All sorts of things will help you to get your piece written.

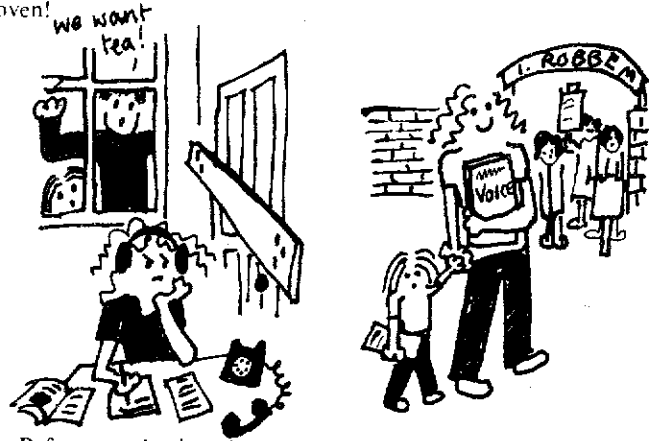
First of all, gather together the facts. Read other articles or books. Use your library services. Ask for help if you need it. Go and talk to people who will know. Keep files of newspaper cuttings on the things you are interested in.

Secondly, make your own notes. Most of us have ideas at the oddest times. Things suddenly come to you when you're about to fall asleep, or when you're standing at the sink in the middle of washing up. Get into the habit of always keeping a small notebook and a pen handy. Otherwise a good idea can go right out of your mind, never to be recovered.

It's often worth carrying a thing about in your head for a week or so.

On the other hand, until you put pen to paper, many of your ideas will not really shape themselves.

When you *do* sit down to write, give yourself a chance! If you can, try to make it the time of day which suits you best, when you're most alert. Give yourself enough time. Remove as many distractions as you can. Go to a room where you can concentrate. Get someone else to keep the kids occupied, and don't have a delicate cake in the oven!



Before you begin ask yourself what it is that makes this thing worth writing about. What is really important and interesting about it. This will often save you from losing the important things in a mass of detail.

Ask yourself what are the main three or four points you want to get over. Remember, the reader may be tired, or busy. She may be glancing for just a short time at your article. So the main points must be clear, and you won't be able to make too many of them. Keep in mind who you expect to be reading your article.

And then comes the question, how can I express this? Is there a piece of experience I can relate, to make it come alive? Can I think of a good image? Is there a quotation that says it more directly or in a more lively way? Is the beginning interesting enough to make someone want to read on?

Try to write it as you would say it. Most of us can express ourselves better when speaking than when writing, because we're much more used to speaking. Keep your sentences short.

If possible, write your first draft quickly and then go back over it. Even if you're not happy with it, it gives you something to work from. You may find it of great benefit to write one day, and then go over it again the next. That way you bring a fresh eye to what you've written, and what seemed like an impossible problem suddenly seems very easy to solve.

No matter what kind of article you have written there are certain useful questions to ask yourself as you read it through.

Have I clearly explained all the relevant facts? Or are there too many facts and too much unimportant detail? Is the article threadbare? Or (more commonly) is it padded or repetitive? Have I said anything avoidably ugly or ambiguous?

When you write for *Women's Voice* it is especially important that you keep a picture of the magazine in your mind's eye. Look at a single page and how many words can fit onto it. Think about how much space your article can expect to occupy, and keep it to size. This way you will avoid the painful experience of finding that someone else has had to cut it, and has cut out the bits you liked best.

Most articles need illustrations. Try to organise your own illustration. Send in a photograph or two (black and white prints) with your article. This is of paramount importance if you have interviewed someone, or quoted her remarks. It is often the photograph that makes someone start reading an article in the first place.

One last thing remains to be said. All the good advice in the world can't replace practice. The only way anyone learns to write is by **actually doing it.** Why not have a try—and Good Luck!

Judith Condon

D.I.Y.D.I.Y.D.I.Y.D.I.Y.D.I.Y.D.I.Y.

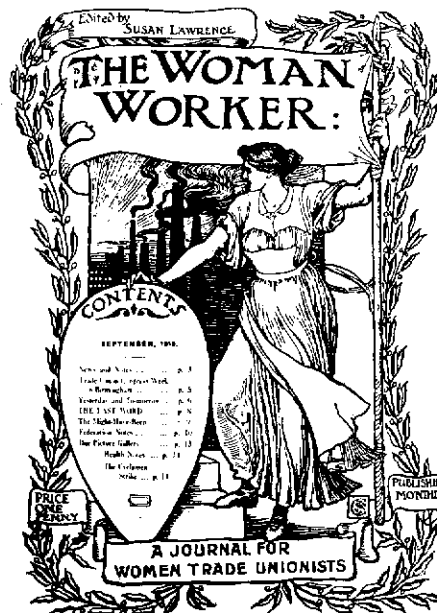
Over our shoulders

THE WOMAN WORKER GRANDMOTHER OF WOMENS VOICE

WOMENS Voice is exciting because it's going where no woman has gone before, trying to chart out a working relationship between feminism and socialism, taking our politics into new areas of our everyday lives. Because of the silence that surrounds our past, it's very easy to fall into one of two mistakes. One is to ignore the past completely; the other is to give a quick glance over our shoulders into history, see vaguely familiar outlines and decide that it's all been done before after all, overlooking the completely new challenges that we face today.

There are some very familiar outlines: This is Sarah Dickenson, joint secretary of Manchester and Salford Trades Council, talking to the Fair Wages Committee in 1908; she described how the local tailoresses began to organise around a demand for a minimum wage. Their union was formed through a strike, but then: 'The men came out, and the women left work in sympathy; in making arrangements with the employers, they forget about the women, although the women had some grievances, and the women seemed worse off than before when they went back.' As a result of this experience 'we go in for organising the women separately having their own committee, and their own officials, and looking after their own business'; this was necessary, she argued, in order to protect their interests. 'In the cotton trade, where the majority of the workers are women, the officials and all the people at the top are men, they do not really like women on the committees at all . . . They would say that was not women's work, that was men's work.'

There were other approaches to the big problem: the National Union of Women Workers encouraged its members to join their trade union, and at the same time tried to build up a national network of women workers, providing advice and solidarity, making sure that women were not ignored at the TUC, invisible in their different unions. This approach was useful, especially since many women worked in small unorganised trades; often it was a question, not of joining the union, but of starting one. There were many such small local unions, reflecting the attempts of women and



immigrants to organise. Though they were usually weak and shortlived, they indicate a tremendous will to fight.

This will to fight, and an idea of the overwhelming odds they were fighting against, comes over very clearly in the early issues of The Woman Worker, the magazine produced by the National Union of Women Workers. It was clearly intended first and foremost as an organiser; it carried adverts for local meetings all over the country, and the answers in its advice column usually started 'why don't you join your union . . .', going on to give a contact address. They were no second-class militants; they criticised the powerful union of railway workers for accepting a 'moderate' pay offer, arguing that such a sell-out would weaken the struggles of the lower paid.

So far, so familiar; but the readers of the 'Woman Worker' all did two jobs—one at home, one at work—and whereas today we're finding ways of challenging this, then even socialist women largely accepted it. There are lots of household hints, interesting things to do with boiled mutton and suet, which are fascinating because they remind us how things have changed. It's bad enough having to drag bags of dirty washing down to

the launderette: they had to boil it up in coppers and live with dripping clothes for a couple of days. They were a bit rebellious, supporting 'dress reform'; loose waisted clothes which hung from the shoulders, against the tyranny of fashion, which encouraged poor women to tight-lace their corsets, to imitate results which rich women achieved by having their lower ribs removed.

There's a lot of stress laid on the miseries of large families, invalid mothers, neglected kids, but not much positive advice on how to avoid them, except vague hints that no decent working man would inflict such suffering on his wife. The magazine carried romantic serials, not very different from *Woman's Own* today, except that the heroes as well as being tall, dark and handsome, tended to be trade union organisers or Labour MPs too (what more could a girl want?) Later, when a problem page was started which printed readers' letters, on the previous issues' problem, a woman who'd written in saying that she wanted to leave her husband was universally abused—a selfish, fast hussy who obviously didn't know the meaning of the word 'love'. Love meant suffering, love meant patience. Happiness didn't come into it.

The other side comes through in the terribly high drop-out rate of the organisers, nationally and in the provinces, through 'nervous collapse', and in some of the news stories. They mounted a campaign around a domestic servant imprisoned for murder after smothering her illegitimate baby at birth: they pointed out that such tragedies were caused by ignorance and the hypocrisy of society. It was an ignorance they could do little to relieve; contraception was still largely a matter of Vatican roulette, abortion hideously dangerous. The initial enthusiasm and energy was eventually drowned in a rising tide of cheap 'n cheerful recipes and dress sense hints; the dynamic young Labour MP's of the romantic serials sold out their blushing brides; the odds were, after all, overwhelming. In looking back at the record of their struggles, we realise exactly how new our weapons are in the old struggle to control our bodies and our lives.

Lin James

JULIA

film review by Jenny Jackson



JULIA IS a true story of two friends—Julia (played by Vanessa Redgrave) and Lillian (played by Jane Fonda).

Julia and Lillian were best friends as teenagers. Julia was always a bit more mature, a bit more daring, and confident than Lillian. Even as a girl she seemed to know where she was going, what she wanted to do in life.

Lillian let life wash over her, and tried to figure it out as it happened.

You see these two teenage girls out in the country. And it is Julia who boldly walks on a log to cross a stream. Lillian tries, panics, and is helped by Julia to get across in the end. Julia isn't cross or impatient. She just says, 'You'll be able to do it next time.' Just hearing her say that would give you confidence to try again.

They go their separate ways as they get older. Julia goes to

Oxford, and then on to Vienna, to study. Her gut socialism takes shape.

They get in touch again when Lillian comes to Europe in the late 20s. By that time, the Nazis are beginning their horrible rise to power in Germany and Austria. And, although Lillian is not really interested in politics, she comes face to face with it.

The film doesn't bombard you with facts or with the 'Six million die in gas ovens' horror stories, which are really too horrible to absorb. Instead, you see glimpses of life under terror, through the camera, without comment.

As Lillian travels through Germany, out of her train compartment window you see three Nazi soldiers, young lads, chatting. As an officer goes by, they freeze to attention. Sieg Heil.

You see a group of

thirty Nazis break down the door to the anatomy building at the University in Vienna. (No doubt the scientists there were producing results which showed the Nazi 'Master Race' idea to be rubbish).

When the Nazis come across a young student upstairs, they grab him by his arms and legs and—ein, zwei, drei—they fling him over the balcony. With a sickening thud he lands on the marble floor. They laugh at the joke.

Then—and this is one of my favourite parts of the film—you see Julia with three or four other running down the corridor towards this group of thirty thugs. Armed with a chair leg and screaming at them, she charges right at them.

In the next scene, she is lying in a hospital bed, with every bit of her wrapped in bandages, except for one eye. But the courage and the anger!

The lovely, bouncy

Julia who always took the lead in the country walks with Lillian is crippled by the Nazis. To top it all off, her second-hand wooden leg doesn't even fit, and you see her struggling to walk fifteen feet.

This is the Nazi destruction — how many million times over? But, besides this, the film shows the personal relationship between Lillian and her companion Dashiell Hammett.

When Lillian is having trouble writing her first play, she moans to Dash that she can't do it, why did he ever tell her she could be a good writer, the play just won't come out. And Dash replies, 'Well, maybe you're right. Why don't you get another job? Be a waitress. Or a fireman. You'd get a nice helmet'.

Their relationship was not a possessive one. They stayed together because they wanted to, and when Lillian wanted to go, she went.

In the film, you can see Lillian struggling, gaining strength through her friends, Julia and Dash. She is a very likeable person, with a certain inner integrity and determination.



I felt close to her as she made the journey to Berlin to carry 50,000 dollars, which would be used to bribe out of prisons and concentration camps five hundred, or maybe one thousand socialists and Jews.

Lillian was doing everything wrong. She kept patting the hat which had some of the money sewn inside, drawing attention to it. She jerked round nervously when anyone talked to her.

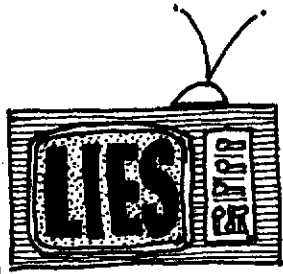
But two women (also in the anti-fascist group) gently protect her, and herd her through the obstacles—the border crossing, in particular. Their heroism, the risks they take, is not underlined, but Lillian might have been caught without them.

The director, Fred Zinneman, is said to be more pleased with this film than with any other he has made. (And he has made some very good films—A Man For All Seasons, about Thomas More who is killed because he refuses to compromise his beliefs, and High Noon, which is an allegory of the Communists persecuted in America by the MacCarthy Committee on Un-American Activities. Incidentally,

Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett had to appear before that committee, and Hammett was sentenced to six months' imprisonment because he refused to testify against friends).

Zinneman should be pleased. Julia is a propaganda film—not the ranting, raving, 'I told you so' type of propaganda. It is a most human film showing the inhumanity of fascism. I will remember Julia next time I am afraid.

You might be interested to read Lillian Hellman's autobiography, An Unfinished Woman, and Pentimento which includes the story, Julia. Don't expect hard politics. But they do cover her visits to republican Spain while the fascists were attacking, and visits to Stalinist Russia. Pentimento, 95p, Quartet. An Unfinished Woman, £1.50, Quartet



MOTHER JONES
AND SON

MAGGIE AND HER

'LIBERATED ladies' seem to make very popular situation comedy these days. There's Miss Jones — unmarried mum, not ashamed, indeed proud her son was born out of wedlock.

And there's Maggie, go-ahead, capable divorcee who lives on her own and battles with Her across the landing.

They have one thing in common which forms the basis for each series. Neither has a man and both are constantly on the look-out for one. Any old man, however won't do, he must be the *Right Man*.

He must be tall, dark, handsome, kind, firm, capable, understanding, free—and willing to be attached. The perfect partner. It's really quite bizarre the way that every man they meet is weighed up in these terms of desirability and availability.

Even Maggie's window cleaner becomes the object of an encounter. I nearly said 'sexual encounter' but that's not quite it. Both have a remarkably moralistic attitude towards sex.

When Liz and Roly go away to a country cottage with David and daughter Penny, it is taken for granted that they sleep apart. Of course comedy is made out of David's inept attempts to manoeuvre the situation otherwise, but on Liz's part there is

all innocence. One wonders indeed, where on earth Roly can have come from!

Nice girls just don't do that sort of thing and after all, the moral of the story is that Liz, unmarried mum though she may be, is a *Nice Girl*.

Maggie is similarly easily outraged. When the man of the episode—a mere acquaintance—comes to dinner and admits quite frankly that he lives with another woman, it is more than Maggie can bear and she throws him out on his ear and collapses sobbing on the kitchen table. She has been deceived! The brute! The man was not really available after all.

And *that* is the crux of the matter. Availability, possession.

Both are in the game of man-hunting. It's almost primitive in its crudity but it more or less sums up the way women are taught to regard men, and the prestige to be gained by capturing and parading the right one.

The importance of catching a man is pushed at us right from birth, and even women like Maggie who have a profession like teaching to follow, have something vital missing from their lives. Liz is a little more fortunate in having a baby which is, after all, woman's natural role, but even she is not quite complete.

When David's daughter, holding baby Roly says 'It's just like a family this weekend', Liz agrees and the picture is one of such idyllic warmth and completeness that that is what we are obviously supposed to wish upon them for a suitable happy ending. It doesn't of course happen, because the series must go on.

A happy family would be the end of Miss Jones and Son, and Maggie and Her, so the quest goes on, undaunted and relentless. **Mary Ann Stuart**

TAKING OUR TIME

TAKING Our Time is a new play written and performed by The Red Ladder Theatre Company. If you get a chance to see it on one of their tours don't miss it.

THE PLAY, like Red Ladder, is based in West Yorkshire. In the towns and valleys of the area, huge numbers of jobs have been lost in the textile industry over the last few years. Unemployment, low wages and weak union organisation are widespread. Into this depressed area Red

Ladder have brought imagination and inspiration with their performances in clubs, pubs and community halls.

This new play, *Taking Our Time*, highlights the problems of the present through the history of the valleys. Set in 1842 it charts the struggles of the handloom weavers thrown into unemployment and destitution by the growth of industry and the introduction of new technology. The climax is the general strike of 1842.

Interwoven in the story are the emotions of the workers—the mill girls, the weavers, the families. Many of these are women, and the play does not hide them: women's emancipation was as central then as it is now.

Alastair Hatchett

To contact Red Ladder: The Red Ladder Theatre Company New Blackpool Centre, Cobden Avenue, Cow Close Road, Leeds LS12 5PB.

FEMININITY AS ALIENATION

by Ann Foreman
Pluto Press £2.40

ANN FOREMAN's book actually covers much more than the title suggests. She tries to show the various strands of theory on women's oppression, and how they have developed over the years: the liberal 'equal rights' approach of Mary Wollstonecraft and John Stuart Mill; Freud's contribution to ideas on sexuality; the theories of Marx and Engels.

A much discussed question among socialist feminists is how far the theories of Marx and Freud can be fused in a new analysis of women's oppression that can deal with sexuality as well as oppression and exploitation. Ann Foreman summarises several of the main proponents of such ideas, and comes down firmly against them.

To accept Freud's theory of the unconscious and the instincts would in effect require abandoning the Marxist theory of revolutionary change. For Marxism's central premise is that a development in consciousness is possible

not just at an individual level, but at the level of a whole class, the working class; and the concept of socialism takes its meaning from the idea of collective and conscious control. In short, to synthesise Marxism and psychoanalysis is an impossibility.

Having rejected such a fusion, the book tries to explain how the concept of alienation can be applied to women. 'Men's objectification within industry, through the expropriation of the product of their labour, takes the form of alienation. But the effect of alienation on the lives and consciousness of women takes an even more oppressive form. Men seek relief from their alienation through their relations with women; for women there is no relief. For those intimate relations are the essential structures of her oppression.'

'Femininity, then, is defined by the intimate relations of the family — the woman's relationship with her husband, and also with her children. Whereas men reproduce themselves through their industry, women

reproduce themselves almost entirely through their interpersonal relations. Thus, women experience themselves as a response to other people's needs — most importantly, their emotional needs.'

For Ann Foreman, femininity is alienation. It seems to me that this is right as far as it goes, but that we have to view it with regard to women's changing position in society, and more important, women's changing consciousness of having a role to play outside the home.

In many ways women no longer define themselves totally in terms of home and family. They define themselves both as workers and as lynchpins of the family, in a way that men do not. This whole area needs much more study.

But it would be unfair to criticise Ann Foreman too severely for not dealing with this, when she has raised many new and important ideas.

Ann Foreman's book is an important contribution to revolutionary feminist theory.

Lindsey German.

Vogue Body and Beauty Book by Bronwen Meredith Allen Lane £6.95

'THIS sumptuous yet eminently practical handbook gives the facts and possibilities about health and beauty honestly and without feeding women's dreams and illusion.'

Well, look at any photograph in this book and see what it does to feed any dreams or illusions you may have left, or simply to diminish you. Are you the leisured, pampered, sporty, lithe, energetic, glossily sexy woman flashing a fast and brilliant smile in her own special Vogue liberation? How many cases of anorexia nervosa, savage inferiority complexes and crippling debt have been caused by the image of beauty foisted onto us by sexism, by capitalism, by fashion?

This book claims to be for all women. Some of it is relevant to all women, but if you reckon on being that elongated elite beauty, forget it unless you have access to some of the basic beauty aids like: 'spermaceti; 1 cup full of ground lily roots, 4 cups dried red rose petals, balsam of peru and ethyl alcohol'. The truth is, this book is for rich, middle class, leisured, white women who are either childless or employ nannies.

Who doesn't want glowing vitality, marvellous looks and a superb body? Never mind kids, housework, factories, offices, bus queues, absurd prices and lousy wages. Just go home, have a fresh herbal bath, and bung some mangoes on your eyelids. If Daddy is sliding you a cool tax-free ten thousand then by all means follow the advice this book gives you. Spend your time basting blackheads with obscure potions and lying back with cucumbers on your eyes, twisting your long glossy hair into coils of unbelievable intricacy

Picture: Barry Lategan 1989

and sipping that dry white wine one diet recommends. (Preferably Chablis—good diet this, 3 hard boiled eggs, a 5 ounce steak and a bottle of white wine. Just the thing.)

There is some useful information in this book, explanations about various ailments, sound advice on diet, nutrition and exercise. It is 'liberated' enough to say abortion will probably cause less

mental stress than unwanted pregnancy. But really it's just another sickening look at the image of that streamlined 'individual' beauty that is beyond most women's pockets, time or energy. Worse, it's part of the continuing pressure on women to conform to fashion's dictates.

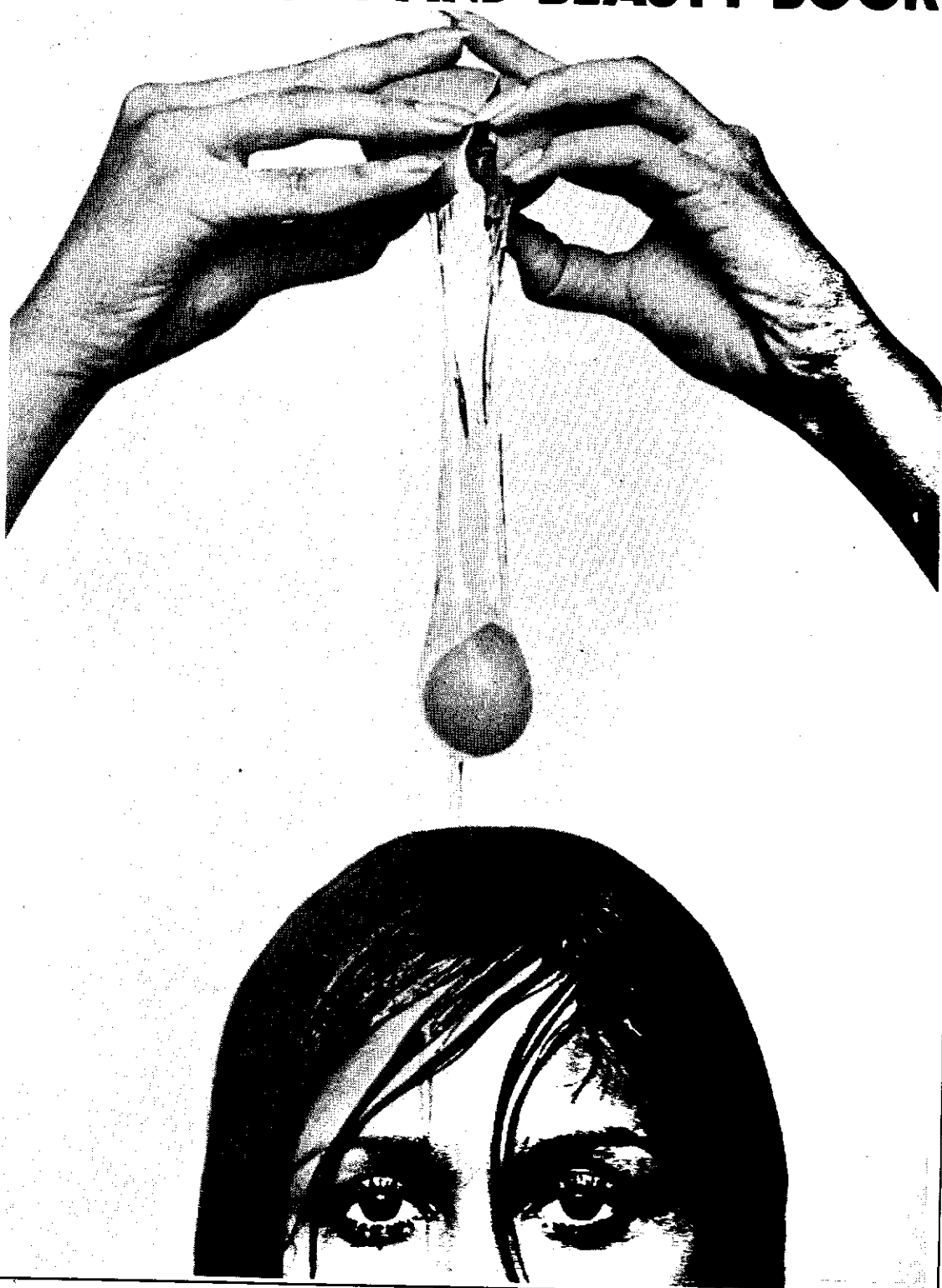
What this book wants us all never to forget is that 'Beauty is within the grasp of every woman...'

What about the 'grasp'? I see two hands—one is doing helplessly down greasy green glass the other raised in clenched fist of V sign expressing the refusal to be oppressed by the dominant image of beauty. If beauty is a matter of individuality, as this book stresses so heavily, then how come we all have to be as thin as hatracks, drawing coolly on emperor sized cigarettes, barely held into tiny strapped

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Melanie MacFarlane
Alternative Reading
Our Bodies Ourselves
Boston Women's
Health Collective
£3.95
The New Women's
Health Handbook ed
Nancy MacKeith £7.95

VOGUE BODY AND BEAUTY BOOK



YOUR VOICE

An unhealthy obsession

Dear Womens Voice, There might be a bit of confusion over the article in January's issue on slimming. This article dealt with slimming as a multi-million pound industry and as an obsession shared by many young women. As such it is a waste of money and possibly a danger to health.

Obesity (excessive fatness) is another question. To be 10 per cent or more over the normal weight for your height (roughly, weighing 10½ stone when you should be 9½) is as dangerous as moderate smoking.

If you have a problem of obesity, your doctor will warn you about this.

Many women just need to look up what they should eat to re-gain a normal weight, eat this food, and the problem disappears.

Other women have become addicted to eating. This is just the same sort of problem as any other addiction (drink, drugs etc). It may be caused by some basic frustration: eating has

Is there honey still for tea?

Dear Womens Voice, In response to Linda Hendy, I too felt that perhaps a more positive approach by *Womens Voice* to diet might be a better approach to the 'slimming thing'. Let's face it, manufacturers make millions out of diets and so-called slimmers' aids like 'Lim-mits' and 'Slender' which make you feel full but do your body no good at all. The old adage being that people will spend hundreds of pounds a year keeping a car in running order but neglect their bodies, which are machines that must last all their lives. So here goes with some info on healthy eating which will keep you the correct weight and if you are overweight you will certainly lose any extra.

First, eat wholemeal bread which you can either buy from a health-food shop, or, even cheaper, make yourself. The advantage of wholemeal bread is that it is far more nourishing. I find that a slice of my own bread is sufficient where half a dozen slices of shop bread don't

become a substitute for something seriously lacking in the woman's life. As such, the solution is no easier than stopping drinking, smoking etc, and to be honest there seems no simple answer to be had.

If you have been told to reduce weight for the good of your health, and you find that you are simply unable to stop eating the things that are bad for you, try to sit down and very honestly think what is making you so miserable, bored or frustrated. Then find a trusted friend, maybe a sympathetic person from your WV group. Don't talk to them about eating or slimming. Talk as honestly as you can about being fed up and why. Then try to figure out together, what to do about it. Involve other friends too, if you feel like it.

I got rid of both weight and migraine by doing this! It's not a medical prescription, but it just might work, it's free, and can do you no harm. **Mel Bartley, London.**

fill one up at all and certainly provide no nourishment. Even if you can still afford butter, switch to a good vegetable margarine. This cuts cholesterol intake. Cider vinegar instead of malt vinegar helps to break down cholesterol too. If Muesli is too expensive, the best cereal is Weetabix. Only use brown sugar (even the cheapest is better than white) or honey. Of course it depends on local prices, but I find I can usually get a pure honey fairly cheaply somewhere (50-60p). *Not* Gales as this is made by feeding the bees white sugar. A jar of honey a week will keep you free of colds and pure honey is not fattening. It is far healthier than brown sugar. Cut down on potatoes and eat more of whatever vegetables are cheap. **In sisterhood, Eunice Sharples**

Dear Womens Voice, Regarding your article on slimming, I think you should put the emphasis on slimming for health. 11lbs overweight is equivalent to smoking 25 cigarettes a day and is bad for anyone suffering from rheumatism, veins, heart disease, etc. Women should try to

Dear Womens Voice, I am an avid reader of *Womens Voice*. I find the paper easy to read but the politics do not suffer.

I am bi-sexual, male, 21 years of age, married with a young daughter. The reason I am writing is the advert for 'The Cauldron'. I have only been involved in the SWP Gay Group for a short time but I have been involved in the gay scene for longer. Here in Dundee we have an SMG (Scottish Minorities Group) with discos and meetings which are open for all. When there are discos, we don't stipulate that you must be male to attend nor do we say you have to be gay. SMG has done great work here and although membership is mainly male, nobody has ever

It's called Positive Discrimination

refused entry to a woman. We do not take part in any form of sexual discrimination, so can you tell me why you allowed this advert which openly discriminates against males? We are not all bad, you know. We have enough barriers to break down and labels to remove. Gay, straight, male, female, none are better, none are worse; so why can't we forget the labels and just get together to remove barriers and change the system? Come on sisters, let's get together. **Fraternally, W. Man-zie**

Surely, it was a joke

Dear Womens Voice, According to your quiz in the January issue I'm one of the most liberated women around. But I'm not, am I? I do a shitty job for low wages and can't find a place to live.

You misuse the word liberation. It isn't a question of having the right attitudes. Women's

Dear Womens Voice, I'd like to congratulate you on January's *Womens Voice*. It was the best one so far. I especially liked the article on contraception advertisements, the quiz and the centre pages from 'The World'. Two small criticisms, however. The first is that I wasn't too sure whether the quiz was meant to be wholly serious, wholly jokey or a combination of both. The questions and answers on abortion were obviously serious, but really the last one on footballs, dancing lessons and Cindy dolls had me totally confused. The other point was on the advertisement reprinted from 'The World'. Lotion to lighten your skin! I think *Womens Voice*

oppression is an objective reality, not a state of mind. Liberation means overthrowing oppression, which has to be achieved by collective struggle, not by reading the right books (though that can be helpful!)

A lot of women are stronger than we used to be. But none of us are liberated yet. **Sue Spicer**

should have given some space to explaining the ad, and why in South Africa so much pressure is placed on black women to change their skin colour.

Finally, a suggestion: on the last national abortion demonstration in Birmingham: several *Womens Voice* groups came up with various songs which were sung in place of the various slogans. It was certainly a pleasant change. Could we not find space in *Womens Voice* to print one or two of these songs each month and to ask *Womens Voice* groups to send in their own if they have any? By the time the next demo comes along, each local *Womens Voice* group could do a duplicated song-sheet to hand out to its members and supporters, and instead of marching along shouting 'Not the Church, not the State, women must decide their Fate', we could all have a sing-song and get our message across just as well - or even better. Keep up the good work, **Aileen Knowles, North London**

stick to the weight they feel healthiest at and forget the sex-appeal part.

I hope you will give us plenty of information regarding fascism with the rise of the NF. We need the information to argue it out at our local Women's Action Group. **Monica Williams.**

ABORTION - An end in itself?

Dear Womens Voice The article on spina bifida and abortion in the February issue contains some questionable assumptions.

Abortion means we don't have to give birth to a 'rape' baby or a child we cannot afford. It means we have another alternative to the contraceptives our bodies have rejected or the sterilizations or vasectomies our husbands have refused. It means we don't have to be fifteen and a mother. Abortion, then, is one means to our liberation because it gives us a control over our bodies and our function as child bearers. However, is abortion an end in itself?

A fellow socialist said to me the other day, 'Every socialist is in favour of abortion.' I consider myself a socialist and yet, my concept of a socialist society encompasses a stage of development in human relationships and social child care where abortions will not be more frequent but less frequent than today—because they will be less necessary.

It is with this problem in mind that we must examine our attitude towards spina bifida screening and abortion. The WV article confuses the issue. It stresses repeatedly a women's right to choose. Presumably this refers to her choice to have a handicapped child—even a

Is karate the only answer?

Dear Womens Voice. I recently attended an evening in solidarity with Iranian students and as part of the evening, along with film and speakers, there was a small theatre group. The group was lively and I enjoyed most of their sketches, except for one. In this sketch they presented the problems of three working married women. They were badly treated at work and at home and the play was effective enough to make me wince at the obvious pain in their lives.

Unfortunately I winced more at the solution they resorted to. They all went to learn karate so that when their respective

severely handicapped child—or not. However, the whole tone of the article is heavily weighted in favour of the abortion of spina bifida babies.

Dr. Spridgeon is, in effect, telling every woman that she would be 'mad' to want to have a handicapped child if she had the choice of abortion. Even in a socialist society?

We need to make a distinction between our goal—liberation—and one particular means towards the realization of that goal—abortion. The handicapped, whether physical or mental, are also oppressed in capitalist society.

The range of possible handicaps is enormous. The spina bifida issue only centres around very severe abnormalities. But our underlying principle needs clarification. Today the mother of a spina bifida child has a very limited 'choice' to make—abortion or the strong likelihood of having to bring up a handicapped child without the necessary moral, social, medical and financial support.

In the socialist society, child care would not be restricted to the mother. The extra burden of a handicapped child would be a social responsibility rather than an individual one as it is now. The possibilities for medical treatment and the child's development would not be dependent on boom or slump or the present level of profit. The choice of whether to have a handicapped child would no longer be a question of *either* having a handicapped child to drain one's energies *or* an abortion. The choice for women would be from a much wider range of alternatives. **Manuela Bete Brighton, Womens Voice.**

husbands tried to brutalise them they fought back by knocking them out. But what sort of solution is that. Will it stop one of the men taking drugs and the other getting drunk? Will it stop their harassment at work?

I could sympathise with their action, and the audience, it is fair to say, cheered enthusiastically. But nothing was said about a struggle beyond hitting out at the person next to you. Nothing about struggling towards winning a life where you don't have to fight for self-respect. If I learned something from the play, beyond understanding a little better how hard it is being a woman, it's how hard it is going to be to win people to the belief that despite their feelings about each other we need to fight together against a system that makes all our lives intolerable. **Peter Court, New York.**

YOUR VOICE

Ready to start again

Dear Womens Voice, Here I am again sitting alone in this house with a dog, and the radio—turned down low enough so that I can concentrate on writing but loud enough so I can hear a voice, music, something to stop me feeling so alone. I've got a glass of cheap wine at my side, the stuff that I drink to numb my anger, frustration and fear of life.

In the pit of my stomach I want to scream out why the hell did I have to be born a woman? We pay for the crime of being women every day of our lives—for having breasts, a vagina. For this we are made to feel inferior.

Who has indoctrinated people to believe women are inferior? Not 'our' husbands, not 'our' parents but this whole shitty system.

Who is going to help me? I have no friends to speak of, only my husband and my little girl. And they are not here all day. I cling to them so hard because at the moment my situation makes me solely dependent on them. I should be strong enough to depend on myself, but I'm not.

And I'll tell you why I'm not. I was brought up as all little girls are—to think that only my 'looks' and body counted and I wasn't supposed to have a brain that could think.

It was only when, three years ago, my first marriage broke up that I began to have to try and think. My emotional life went into two years of turmoil, rows over the children, jealousy, freak-outs, having to go to court over the custody of the kids.

Finally things began to settle down, my son went to live with my ex-husband and my little girl stayed with me. I got a part time job, which made me independent for the first time. I really loved it, I had some money of my own and I was not stuck indoors all the time.

Then my husband got eye trouble and had to go into hospital for an operation. I had to take some time off work to go and visit him. I took two mornings off and they sacked me.

The morning I brought him home from hospital there was a letter waiting on our doorstep, saying I had got the sack. It was too much to bear. I went to bed and cried for two

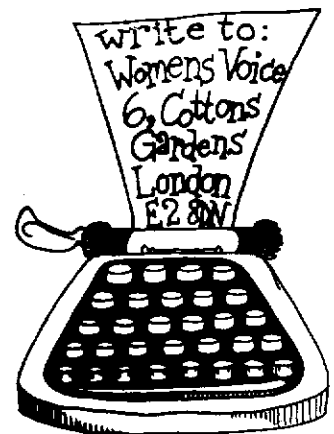
whole weeks. I thought, why can't we be happy just for a while? Why can we never have a break from these endless problems?

Then I got up and went out looking for another job. But of course I am just 'a woman with a child that finishes school at 3.30pm' so people didn't want to know. It seems that they will use women's bodies to sell products and make profits, or for cheap labour when it suits them. When they don't need you you can just lie on the floor in the darkness and cry for all they care.

Is it surprising that, shoved from pillar to post this way, many of us have 'phobias', are afraid to get up and go out and face the world outside, live on Valium etc. These problems don't stop us from wanting to fight back. I feel better just writing this letter. I'm hoping that some *Womens Voice* readers will understand and answer this letter by writing their experiences. I hope someone can learn from mine. Just having a paper like *Womens Voice* can help us feel we are not so alone.

We need each other badly. We need to see through all the myths. Whoever thought of the ideas on how to use women and exploit them must have been very clever because it's working very well.

I want to fight the pigs back. Have you heard the saying 'United we stand, divided we fall'? I have fallen for a while but I intend to get up and fight again. **Jean Clark, Clapton, East London**



YOUR VOICE

Dear *Womens Voice*, In Issue 14 Judith Condon was discussing the closure of a small G.P. maternity hospital which she described as 'smashing'. If it is, then I deplore its closure. But small is not necessarily beautiful.

G.P. Maternity 'Homes' are indisputably 'small' but that does not mean that mothers feel automatically 'at home' in them. Often, these places are run by matrons with outdated ideas or power complexes.

I gave birth to our first child in our local maternity home (which has since closed). I spent a very long ten days there. My labour lasted over 24 hours—14 of which I was in extreme pain. My G.P. had omitted to tick the box on my form which gave permission for me to be injected

with pethidine, and because he was out for the day I had to suffer.

Mothers were expected to leave their dignity at the door when they arrived and collect it on the way out. Every move was governed by some regulation or other. Stitches were taken out in full view of the rest of the women. I was propped up in full glory on a bedpan alongside a window.

Husbands were tolerated for an hour a day. They could not be present at the birth.

Each bottle-fed baby got the same amount of milk, irrespective of need; and at the same time. Our big, hungry lad screamed for a good half-hour before each feed and when it arrived he used to nearly choke himself with excitement.

Please leave your dignity at the door

A window in the nursery was jammed open, despite the snow. The bathroom was so dirty that instructions on how to wash the tiles could be written on them. Miraculously we survived.

I do not think that all GP Maternity Homes should be closed. But what benefits can they give, and what are their limitations? We must be clear that they are not hospitals as we usually mean. They cannot treat abnormal cases.

We do need more well-equipped hospitals which can cope with any complication, but in a human way—which doesn't always happen.

All maternity hospitals should have a GP unit built into them, so that women can have their own doctor and midwife attending them. Women who

want to should be allowed to have their babies at home. I had my next 2 children at home and the difference was fantastic.

What I would like to see is *Womens Voice* looking at the whole area of childbirth and trying to locate the hospitals which do not wear human faces and trying to change them, and at the same time building a positive campaign for increased home confinements and G.P. units as well as demonstrating against closures. Then we will be campaigning for real choice for mothers. Too often we have to choose between the best of two evils... If it is a woman's right to choose *if* and *when* she has a baby, it certainly is also her right to choose *how* and *where* she has that baby. **Sheila Telfer. Pontefract**

YOUR QUESTIONS...

I AM a married woman, I'm 35 with 2 children. I work for 35 hours a week for which I get £40 a week, before deductions. At the moment I'm not paying the full stamp, but the married woman's option. A friend of mine at work who is paying the full stamp has told me that I would be entitled to a fuller range of benefits if I changed to paying the full stamp too. Can you advise me if she is correct, as at the moment the children are expensive and we find it hard to make ends meet? If I decide to change to the full contribution, what do I have to do?

THE SOCIAL Security Pensions Act of 1975 was claimed by the government to mark the end of discrimination against women. The new pensions scheme comes into operation in April this year, although it will be 20 years before people retiring reap the full benefits.

A major factor behind the legislation is the fact that over 70 per cent of those living below the poverty line in old age are women. Also the position of women has changed considerably since National Insurance legislation in 1948. More married women are now in employment and their wages very often form an essential part of the family's standard of living. Also the divorce rate has

risen, so that today 1 in 4 marriages end in divorce.

The significance of these facts is that firstly, in a period of high unemployment, women are more likely to need unemployment benefits (the number of registered unemployed women has increased 5 times since 1974), and secondly, that a married woman who has not paid contributions is not entitled to a pension in her own right, but as a dependent of her husband. As many marriages end in divorce after 15-20 years the divorced woman is left without a pension entitlement.

The new scheme offers an earnings-related pension based on the best 20 year's earnings. This gives the woman the opportunity to get a full earnings-related pension.

Any woman in employment who marries after 5th April 1977 is now required to pay the full stamp.

A woman already married and in employment before May 1977 still retains the choice, unless her marriage ends by divorce or separation or she drops out of employment for 2 or more consecutive tax years.

In the case of a woman nearing retiring age it might be worthwhile maintaining the reduced contribution. But in the case of a woman your age it would be advisable to change to full contributions.

The full contribution entitles you to maternity allowance for 18 weeks (totalling £12.90), earnings-related unemployment benefits, sickness benefit (£15.30), the full retirement pension in your own right if single or divorced, or an earnings-related addition to your husband's pension.

Women continue to be discriminated against under the Social Security Act of 1975. Married women cannot claim for dependents, nor do they get a full independent pension if married at the time of retirement. However the legislation does increase the security of younger working women.

To change stamp you should consult the local Social Security Office. If you are in any doubt whether you will be able to satisfy the contribution conditions, it may be necessary for the local office to get your individual contribution record before you can be given advice about this. This particularly applies if you are over 40. Once you have chosen to pay the full contribution you cannot change your mind.

To change to full liability get leaflet N11 (National Insurance Guidance for Married Women)

and fill in form CS9. Return them to the Social Security Office with your certificate of reduced liability which you should get back from your employer. This should be done by April, which is the beginning of the contribution year. **Marion Charlton**

I AM working on a project on battered wives and single-parent families with particular reference to housing, in connection with my social work course I hope you can be of some help to me as I am researching into rape in England. I would be grateful if you could forward to me any information, details of publications or places to whom I could apply for information... I am investigating the possibility of research on women factory workers in my locality during World War 2...

I am writing a thesis on abortion...

All these letters have been sent to us during the last month. We will answer them all and letters from anyone else who wants help or information, but it will take us time. We have to find out all the answers ourselves first!

We will print replies to letters on this page if we think a lot of women would be interested; more specialist issues we will answer direct. If we can help write to us now. **Alison Kirton**

ANSWERED

WOMENS WORLD

by Judith Condon

Is this fair? Should this really happen to a human being?

SOMETIMES I feel really sorry for the Royal Family.

Please don't think I've gone bananas. I've heard other people say the same.

They say 'I wouldn't do their job if you paid me.' Maybe if we stopped to think about the hourly rate we might reconsider. Or maybe it's just a way of consoling ourselves over all the things the Royals do and have which we could never dream of.

But sometimes I have to admit I look at pictures of Princess Ann in one of her hats and I think, Is this fair? I think, Should this really happen to a human being? — And she's one of the more 'liberated' Royals.

Just look at the story of Princess Margaret's life. You'd be hard put to have missed it lately.

Peter Townsend has just published his autobiography entitled 'Time and Place'. And then Roddy Lewellyn went and cut his first disc.

Certain things are obvious. Whichever way you look at it, she was in love with Townsend, and what stopped her marrying him was the Establishment, as it was known at the time.

There she was, a young, lively woman. She used to be frowned on for smoking in public, definitely not something royal women were supposed to do. She couldn't move without some photographer recording her every step.

Then she fell for someone who'd been married and divorced. And unfortunately for her, her sister had just come to the throne.

One of the things it may be hard to remember in the wake of jubilee year, is that the monarchy is not entirely sure of its own position.

After the war, especially, things were a bit shaky. There had earlier been the abdication. And then the popular mood of the country had lately turned most decidedly towards socialism.

That's fundamentally why Princess Margaret couldn't marry the man she wanted to. The establishment was running scared. They couldn't risk

another upset. The young queen was sympathetic to her sister. But the establishment persuaded her out of it.

Their excuse was that the Church of England forbids remarriage in church. It doesn't accept divorce. And the royals, all luckily blessed from birth with belief in the English God, can't break the rules.

It's quite ironic to think the Church of England was actually founded on a divorce. Henry VIII wanted to ditch his first wife, Katherine of Aragon, who had been previously married to his late brother Arthur. So he asked the Pope for an annulment on the grounds he shouldn't have married her in the first place. When the Pope said no, Henry broke with Rome and set up his own Church. On that occasion he called it annulment. A rose by any other name.

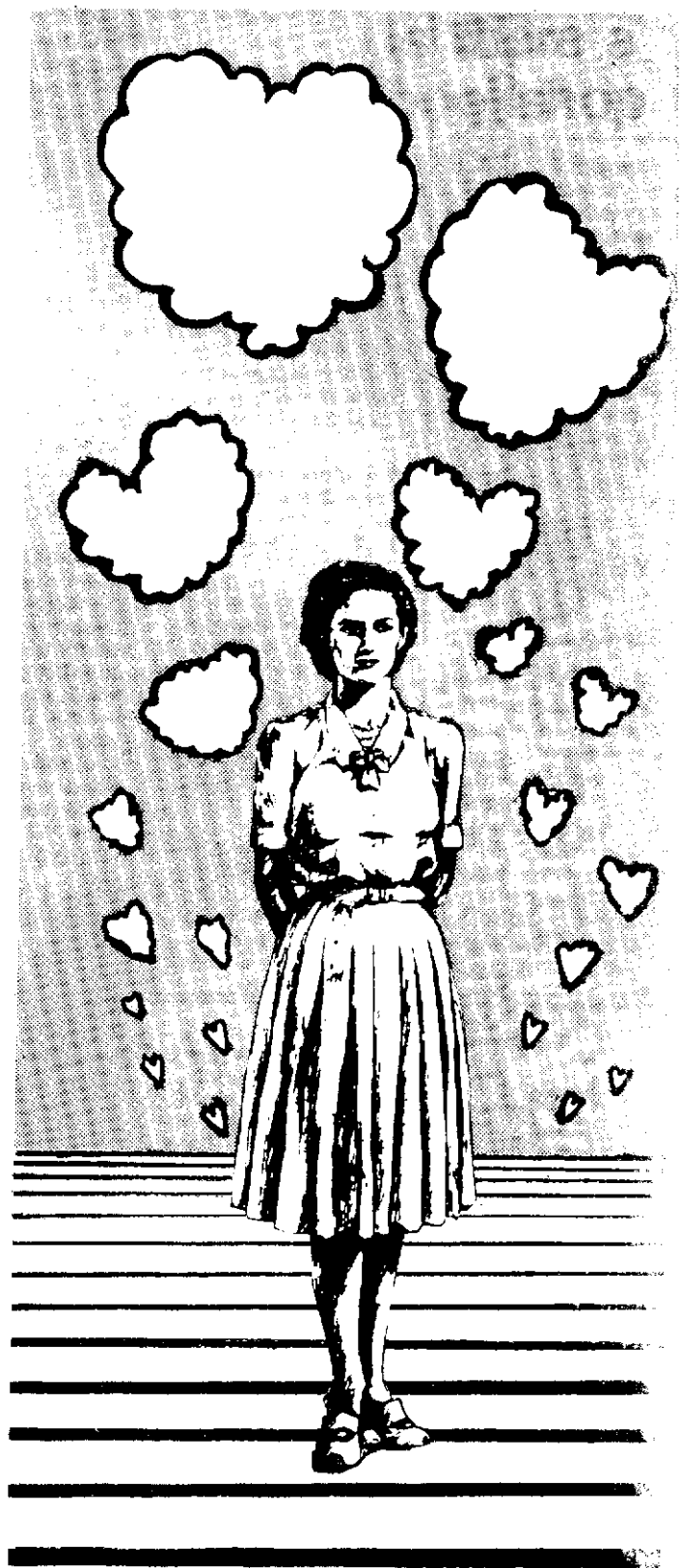
Since then, all English monarchs have been head of the Church of England. The church is happy to lend it's authority to the monarchy, to give its comings and goings the stamp of Godly approval. And the monarch is supposed to do the same for the church. A case of you scratch my back . . .

Princess Margaret just couldn't win. They gave her a choice. Marry Townsend, live abroad, lose all your royal income. Or give him up and keep on being a princess.

Of course there were plenty of Royalists who condemned her from that moment on. Church or establishment be damned they said—well almost—a woman should be prepared to give up everything and follow the man she loves.

Perhaps there's something noble in that thought. But Margaret hadn't been allowed out even to the choicest of public schools. She'd been privately tutored all her life within the walls of the palace, just like her sister. All her training was to be waited on in luxury.

What hope in hell was there that she would be able to face the life they offered her? That's what they were banking on.



They hadn't exactly brought her up to be independent or to think for herself. It's a miracle she got as far along the road into the real world as she did.

But here's an extraordinary thing. Margaret has actually benefited from the struggles of ordinary people to free themselves from double standards and oppression. Not so long ago she would have had to sit it out with her unhappy husband keeping up

appearances to the very end.

Probably she doesn't identify with any such struggles. She probably fears socialism just like the rest of them. But one thing is certain. For all the wealth and privilege these royals have to lose, they have a world of freedom and honesty to gain. Look at them in their fancy dress. Watch how they are ogled and pandered to. Is this fair, I ask. Should this really happen to a human being?

WHAT IS GOING ON?! meetings, plays, discos, badges, pamphlets, campaigns, concerts

WV Meetings

● **Aberystwyth WV discussion groups.** Every other Tuesday. Farmers Side Bar.

● **Black Country Womens Voice** meets fortnightly Sunday afternoons 2.30 at 27 Glen Court, Compton Road, Wolverhampton. Children very welcome. Phone Wolverhampton 23233 for information.

● **Brighton Womens Voice Group** meets every Tuesday phone Sue 21060 or Gill 667648.

● **Canterbury Womens Voice** future meetings 7th March - abortion 21st March - open meeting sexism in children's literature. For more information or babysitter contact: Lynne Sedgmore (Whitstable 263051)

● **Cardiff Womens Voice Group** meets Thursday every fortnight 7.30pm at Union Books, 58 Bridge Street. If you need a babysitter phone Bronwen at Cardiff 43470.

● **Edinburgh WV.** For information about WV work contact Susie at Book Mart, 130 Morrison Street, Edinburgh. Open Weds. Sun evenings and most evenings.

● **Hammersmith Womens Voice Group** is now meeting every second and last Monday in the month. Contact Gillian 748 5656, Laura 802 5923.

● **Lampeter Womens Voice** meet Tuesday evenings in collage. Details from Womens Voice seller or write c/o SDUC, Lampeter, Dyfed, Wales.

● **Lea Valley Womens Voice:** Women and Health, speaker Mel Bartley. Very little medical research is done into illnesses which only affect women. Why is this, when scientists can put men on the moon? 8pm, Monday 20 March, Beehive pub, Stoneleigh Road, Tottenham, N17. Nearest tube station Seven Sisters.

● **Lea Valley Womens Voice workshop** meetings 8pm Monday 13 March, 47 Nelson Road, N17. Angela and the Family Team Monday 10 April, same address. Coaches versus feminism. More information and for babysitters ring Mary, 802 9563, or Di, 348 2041.

● **Reading Womens Voice Group** meets the first Wednesday of every month. For further information and details of other activities, phone Reading 62150.

● **South London Womens Voice meetings:** Tuesdays 7.45 at the Tate Central Library Brixton. March 7th: Lesbian Mums. March 21: Women & Fascism speaker Gill Brown. April 4: Biology V Environment. For further details contact Nucky 737 1791.

Gay Groups

● **London SWP Gay Group** meets on alternate Tuesdays at the Prince Albert pub, Whitehall Road, N1. For further information contact Paul 340 8881.

● **Leeds SWP Gay Group** meets once a fortnight in Leeds. For details ring Rob, Leeds 700343.

School

● **Want to produce a factory bulletin?** School for writing and producing workplace bulletins Saturday 18 March, Birmingham. Discussion and practical sessions. Ring 01 739 1878 for venue, and transport arrangements of travelling from London.

Jumble

● **Lea Valley Womens Voice Jumble Sale.** New Date. Tuesday 7 March 7.30pm, Tottenham Community Project, 628 Tottenham High Road, N17. Refreshments available. 5p Admission. Helpers needed (by 6.30 please). Ring Mary 802 9563 with offers of Jumble and help.

Films

● **Dr. Adnan Rahman** United Film Society, Union House, Tuesday 2 April, 7.30. Meeting Point, Watsons Way, off the London Road.

Save our Hospitals

● **Keep Bethnal Green Hospital.** Picket the Area Health authority. Addison House, Chart Street, London, N.1. (near Old Street tube) Thursday 9 March, 2.30pm.

● **Keep Bethnal Green Hospital Public Meeting.** York Hall, Cambridge Heath Road, London E.2. Thursday 16 March, 6.30pm.

● **East London Health Service in Crisis.** March from Plaistow Maternity Hospital to Plashet Park and hear Alan Fisher

(NUPE) and Barbara Castle MP. Saturday 18 March, 12.30pm.

Plays

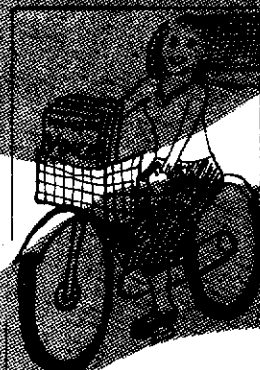
● **Cardiff Womens Voice** presents Contact in the Arena for a play about rape, followed by discussion Thursday 16 March, 7.30pm, Roath Park, Cardiff. Party 7.45am Road, Top of Alfred Street. All welcome.

● **Reading Womens Voice** group presents She Asked For It, a play by Counterblast Friday 17 March. For more details phone Reading 62150.

● **She Asked For It** If you are interested in booking the play please contact Debbie or Dave at Counterblast 27 Chesham Road, London E2. Tel: 01-251 6077.

● **Womens Voice needs your help.** Can you help with design draw write Do you have a few spare hours a week to help us? Please, we need you. Ring us or write.

● **Womens Voice Posters.** Post printing: Womens Voice, with blank space for your own meetings etc. £2.00 for 100, £1.50 for 50, including carriage or postage. Money with orders.



Womens Voice

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Bookmarks

265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4
tel: 01 802 6145

Some selections for Womens Voice readers in March:

Alexandra Kollontai: **Selected Writings** £3.20 (2.95)

C L R James: **Black Jacobins** £1.70 (1.50)

Dubovsky: **We Shall be All**, a history of the IWW £4 (3.50)

Kate Chopin: **The Awakening** £1.20 (1.00)

Frank Hardy: **But the Dead Are Many** 95p (75p)

August Bebel: **Women Under Socialism** £3.20 (2.95)

Olive Schreiner: **Women and Labour** £2 (1.75)

Ray Strachey: **The Cause, A Short History of the Womens Movement in Britain** £3.20 (2.95)

Llewellyn Davies: **Maternity, Letters from Working Women** £1.95 (1.75)

Special offer

Benewick: **The Fascist Movement in Britain**, price £2.50 our price £1 (75p)

Cole and Postgate: **The Common People 1746-1946** published price in paperback £4.95 our price hardback £2.50 (2.25)

Prices include postage (shop price in brackets). Send for free booklist.

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CARDIFF: SWP Books, 58 Bridge Street (open afternoons on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and all day Saturday)

COVENTRY: TU Books, 65 Queen Victoria Road.

EDINBURGH: Bookmarx, 130 Morrison Street (two minutes walk from Haymarket Station).

GLASGOW: SW Books, top floor, 64 Queen Street, C1.

HULL: Socialist Books, 238 Springbank (open 10am-5.30pm, Monday-Saturday)

MANCHESTER: TU books, basement, 260 Deansgate, Manchester 3.

SOUTHAMPTON: October Books, 4 Onslow Road.

Is there a bookshop

Key Books, 25 Essex Street, Birmingham, 5. 021 692 1765 9.30am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday. Wide range of socialist books.

Mushroom 10 Heathcote Street, Nottingham. 0602 58206 10.30 am to 6 pm. Closed Thursdays and Sundays. Free notice board, sale or return homemade crafts sold at no commission.

Dillons University Bookshop 21a Silver Street, Cambridge. 0223 55589 9.30am to 5pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. 10am to 5pm Wednesday. Pamphlets and books on feminism, radical politics, sociology, philosophy etc.

The Public House Bookshop 21 Little Preston Street, Brighton. Tel: 28357. 10.15 am to 5.30 every day except Sunday. Small tea bar and room for use as a reading room, workshops, meeting room, or performing area.



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Old Theatre, London School of Economics, Houghton Street, WC2 7pm, 8 March.
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Centre If you have been raped or sexually assaulted and want someone to talk to or need legal or medical advice the Rape Crisis Centre runs a 24 hour telephone line. Contact us anytime day or

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Lesbian Line is a new phone service for women operated entirely by women and offering help, advice and information. 2-10pm, 01 794 2942.

If you want to advertise on these pages write to Womens Voice 6 Cottons Gardens London E2

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