

Womens VOICE

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SWP



INSIDE: CYPRIOT WOMEN

Κυπριες Γυναίκες
Αγωνίζονται Έναντι
Στις Απελαβείς.

**EVELYN
REED**

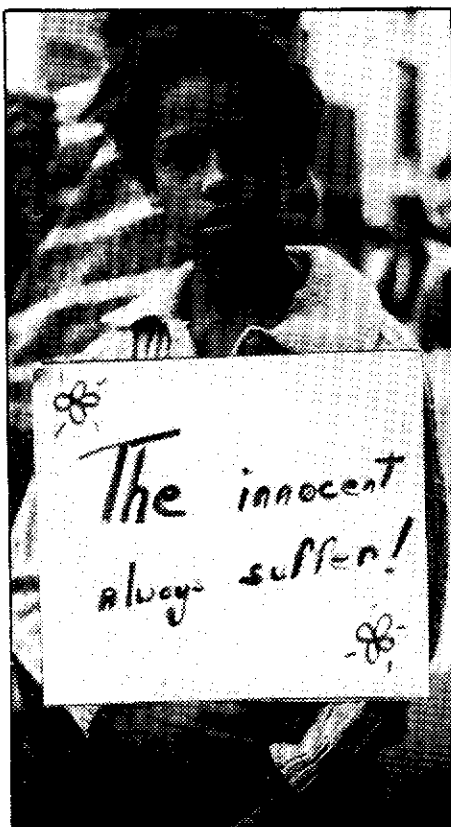
**ORGANISING
AT WORK**



In 1974 women demonstrated to get a change in the law so that foreign husbands had the same right to stay in this country as foreign wives. The law was changed. Now it is gradually being reversed . . .



Marriage: a quiet change in the small print



Before 1974 women were discriminated against because they had no right to bring their foreign husbands or families to this country. Men did have the right to bring their wives.

Then the ruling was changed. It was such an obvious case of discrimination. Roy Jenkins was forced to change the rule after a campaign by women's organisations to have the rights of men extended to them.

Then, in March of this year, with very little publicity, Merlyn Rees, Home Secretary, has changed the ruling again.

From now on women living in Britain can only have their foreign husbands and fiances join them for a trial period of 12 months. Then the Home Office will decide whether or not it was 'a proper marriage'.

Their decision will be arrived at by making 'selective' checks. Immigration officials and policemen will have the right to make the most detailed and intimate enquiries about a couples personal and sexual life.

Their justification is that there is abuse of the immigration rules by means of convenience marriages. They say couples are coming out of registry offices and walking off in opposite directions. But they don't have any facts or figures. They just say the 'abuse is on a significant scale'.

So with an easy change in the rule they

have extended their power to investigate every single marriage where the husband is a foreigner. Your marriage certificate will be like an identity pass. But that won't be enough. There will be questions about your sleeping arrangements, checks at all hours of the night, and secret surveillance, just as there is now to catch social security claimants who are suspected of cohabiting.

Can you imagine such checks being made on well-placed white immigrants living in St Johns Wood, and Regents Park, the better parts of London? Of course not. Harrassment is always against asian and black men and women. It will specially be used against communities who still arrange marriages between women in this country and men in their country of origin.

The real motive is to further restrict immigration. The unsubstantiated claims about convenience marriages are just a cover. This way they don't have to make a public change in the British Nationalities Act; they are able to slip through, unnoticed. a change in the small print.

This is just one more way of dividing the immigrant community from the rest of us, and the immigrant community within itself. • No home for you here—the families that will be deported back to Cyprus, see pages 5, 6 and 7.

Womens

Voice

magazine of the Socialist
Workers Party

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All articles, letters news for the next issue
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Wednesday 20 April.

Phone us with ideas, or to let us know
what you are sending in on 01-739 1878.

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Picture: Chris Davis (REPORT)



Picture: Chris Davis (REPORT)



Womens World

by Judith Condon

Phew! What a close one!

We were just twenty-two days off having our first woman prime-minister. After Grocer Heath, the Grantham Grocer's daughter. Grosser and still grosser.

Scholarship girl and games captain. Always came top in everything. Her father bought her elocution lessons just to make sure.

Yet who can doubt that even Margaret Thatcher has suffered prejudice and an extra burden, because she's a woman.

When she was at Oxford, women weren't even allowed to join the Union. When she was called to the bar, having switched from a career in chemistry, she was one of the few. And she'd just four months previously had twins. Later on she became only the second ever woman to be a Tory Cabinet Minister.

She can take on the best of them, she's tough and she's even a tiny bit of a feminist. 'In politics,' she once said, 'if you want anything said, ask a man; if you want anything done, ask a woman.' So shouldn't we be pleased now, at the prospect of having her in charge?

Even to ask is to know the answer. What an out-and-out disaster it would be.

Because Margaret Thatcher represents right-wing Tory politics. *Because* her philosophy is that every individual should stand on her own feet, own her own house and engage in unfettered private enterprise.

It's the games-captain view of the world. The fit are already in the first team, and those who never get a chance to play must be unfit anyway.

Margaret Thatcher will do nothing to benefit most women. Her well-turned femininity is a commodity she has been able to turn to the advantage of her overweening personal ambition.

'Of course', will say separatist feminists. 'Since she's made it in a man's world really she's not a woman at all, she's a man.' But they won't then allow men who fight for women's emancipation to be called 'women'. So the words are made a nonsense.

'But still', will say the reformist feminists, 'there are women MPs in other parties we can put our faith in.' Just as millions of people still cling to the hope



Ruling class woman, working class man. Whose side are you on?

Would you want this woman...

that if we elect enough working class MPs they'll legislate socialism for us though they can see it just doesn't work.

I don't know a single feminist who would support Margaret Thatcher. But why not draw the obvious conclusions? Margaret Thacher is bad news because of her *politics*, because she is on the side of the exploiters—because no matter how op-

pressed she may or may not be, she is also, herself, an exploiter.

The name for what separates her interest from that of most women is class. Class interest, class law, class wealth, class power.

There is no way that all women can band together across exploiting and exploited classes to affect fundamental changes, least of all when the system is in crisis.

Even though they may be personally oppressed, when the chips are down ruling class women will fight for their privilege. And the middle class feminists have shown time and again that they go as far as legal and political reform, but no further.

That's why we have to make extra bloody sure that working class women and men are fighting equally, together side by side to grasp their own destiny.

It's not an easy thing to face up to. It may be much more appealing to meet only with other women in small cosy meetings. But outside the door there's another kind of line up taking place. *Women's Voice* is on the working class team against the games captain. How about you?

to call you sister?



"No home for you here"

What it means to be a Cypriot
refugee in Britain:

Collected by Di Watts

Photos:
Angela Phillips

Ἡ μετανάστευση εἶναι κάτι πού βρίσκεται μαζί μας γιά πολλά χρόνια τώρα.

Ἀπό τόν 18ον αἰῶνα ξένοι ἐργάτες καί ἐργάτριες ἄρχισαν νά ἐρχονται στή χώρα αὐτή. Ἡ ἱμπεριαλιστική κυριαρχία στίς χώρες τους δέν τούς ἄφηνε ἄλλη ἐκλογή.

Ἀπό τόν καιρό πού ὑπάρχει μετανάστευση, ἡ ἀρχουσα τάξη χρησιμοποίησε τόν ρατσισμό--"φταῖνε οἱ ξένοι"--, σάν τό πιό δυνατό, ἰδεολογικό ὄπλο πού διαθέτει ἐναντία στήν ἐργατική τάξη.

Εἰδικά σέ περίοδο οἰκονομικῆς κρίσης καί κοινωνικῆς διαταραχῆς, οἱ ρατσιστές (πολιτικοί, ἐφημερίδες, τηλεόραση) βγαίνουν ἀδιάντροπα καί κατευθύνουν τίς ρατσιστικές τους ὑβρισίες καί δηλητήριο ἐναντίον ὄλων ἀνεξαίρετα τῶν ξένων ἐργαζομένων.

Σέ ἐπόμενες ἐκδόσεις ἡ "Φωνή τῆς Γυναίκας" (WOMENS VOICE) θά παρουσιάσει ἀναλυτικά τό πρόβλημα τῆς μετανάστευσης καί εἰδικά πῶς ἐπηρεάζει τίς ξένες γυναῖκες στήν καθημερινή τους ζωή.

Τόν τρόπο πού ζοῦν, πῶς δουλεύουν, τά προβλήματα καί πιέσεις πού ἀντιμετωπίζουν σάν ἀποτέλεσμα τοῦ κοινωνικοῦ περιβάλλοντος πού μεγάλωσαν.

Στήν ἐκδοση αὐτή παρουσιάζουμε διάφορα ἄρθρα γιά τίς Κύπριες γυναῖκες, πού ἀποτελοῦν σήμερα ἕνα μεγάλο μέρος τῆς Κυπριακῆς παροικίας.

Ἡ Κυπριακή παράδοση ἔχει καταστήσει τίς Κύπριες γυναῖκες ἀντικείμενα καταπίεσης, ἐξευτελισμοῦ καί ταπεινώσης.

Μέχρι σήμερα ἀκόμα τά "προξένια" εἶναι ὁ τρόπος πού πολλές Κύπριες κοπέλλες παντρεύονται, καί ἀφοῦ παντρευτοῦν ἡ ὑπόλοιπη ζωή τους ἀφιερώνεται στό σπῆτι καί στήν οἰκογένεια.

Οἰκογενειακές οἰκονομικές δυσχέρειες τίς ἀναγκάζουν νά δουλέψουν. Στό Βόρειο Λονδῖνο αὐτό σημαίνει μηχανή στό σπῆτι

ἢ στά "σκλαβοπάζαρα" τῶν φουστανάδικων. Πολλές μηχανικοῦδες δουλεύουν χωρίς ἄδεια ἐργασίας. Αὐτό σημαίνει ἀνοικτό ἐκβιασμό ἀπό τούς μάστρους, χαμηλούς μισθοῦς καί ἀνθυγιεινές συνθήκες δουλειᾶς.

Τό πρόβλημα τῶν ἀδειῶν ἐργασίας-WORK PERMITS- ἐγινε πιό καυτό ὕστερα ἀπό τόν πόλεμο τοῦ 1974, διότι τό HOME OFFICE δέν ἀναγνωρίζει χιλιάδες πρόσφυγες σάν πρόσφυγες καί δέν τούς παραχωρεῖ τό δικαίωμα νά δουλέψουν.

Ἡ ἀπειλή τῶν ἀπελάσεων δημιουργεῖ εὐνοϊκές συνθήκες γιά ἐκβιασμό ἀπό τούς μάστρους, τήν ἴδια στιγμή δέ εἶναι πιό δύσκολο γιά τίς ἐργάτριες ν'ἀγωνιστοῦν γιά τά δικαιώματά τους.

Ἔτσι ἐκτός ἀπό τά καθημερινά προβλήματα, οἱ Κύπριες γυναῖκες ἀντιμετωπίζουν τόν φόβο καί τήν ἀβεβαιότητα πού δουλεύουν παράνομα καί χωρίς ἄδεια ἐργασίας.

Πρόσφατα τό HOME OFFICE ἔδωξε πρόσφυγες πού ἤρθαν ἐδῶ ὕστερα ἀπό τά τραγικά γεγονότα τοῦ 1974 στήν Κύπρο.



'Not having the right sort of work permits makes it easier for the bosses to exploit them'

Britain has always been a country of immigration. In the last two hundred-years first the Irish, then Jews and most recently black people have come to Britain. And each in their turn has been subjected to the most vicious racialism at the hands of our rulers.

Especially in times of economic crisis and social upheaval the racialists thrust themselves to the fore, and pour out all their poisonous slander

about the immigrant communities in this country.

Immigrant women suffer particular hardships. In the way they live, how they work, and through the special pressures brought to bear upon them by their different cultural backgrounds.

In North London the Cypriot community has over 100,000 people.

Cypriot women are kept in a subservient position by tradi-



tion. Even today their marriages are arranged for them and once married they are expected to devote their time to the home and family. Economic pressures force them to work and in North London this means homeworking or factory work for the numerous clothes factories in the area.

One of the most worrying problems is that, since the 1974 war in Cyprus, many of the women are working illegally in this country because the Home Office refuses to give them refugee status. The threat of deportation and not having the right sort of work permit makes it easier for bosses to exploit them and more difficult for them to fight back.

Not only do they have the day to day worries that all women

have of generally running a home and looking after kids. They also have the fear of working at home illegally, of not having the proper work permits. On top of this the Home Office has been using the racist immigration laws to deport a number of Cypriot refugees. And it is not only refugees, but other Cypriot workers who are being kicked out of this country, put in jail and threatened with deportation. Immigration controls are increasingly being used to turn away Cypriot refugees who want to take refuge here.

The drama and agony of the Cypriot community is revealed in these articles.
Di Watts



'Cramped space, piece work, bad heating, the threat of the sack—no union . . .'

Maria Demetriou is a young married Cypriot woman. She told Womens Voice:

'I work in a dress factory in North London. It is a small family firm employing about 15 people in the factory itself, and the same number of home workers.

'Most of the workers are women; only the cutter and the two pressers are men. Apart from one woman presser, the women are all machinists, but the woman presser takes home less than the men pressers, even though they all do the same work.

'I myself work as an overlocker. I work a 40-hour week and take home £35. When I first began work there, the boss was fairly considerate so I said I'd do overtime, but there was no special rate of pay for that. But the longer I stayed the less friendly and polite he became, and I no longer felt I wanted to do him a favour by working overtime. I always refuse now.

'We often grumble amongst ourselves about things like the cramped space, the bad heating, the poor toilet facilities. There is no union and the boss is able to sack anyone of us if we complain, so it's difficult. Also, as a group of workers we are not united. We have different attitudes to the boss, for example, and divisions like this are a major obstacle in forming a united front.

'We women workers don't really get on very well together, and in a workplace as small as

ours that's a problem. We are divided by age—the older women remember the hardships of peasant life in the Cypriot villages, where most of them spent their lives. Many of them came to Britain as refugees after the 1974 war. The hardships of their former lives has made them very stoical—they put up with things.

'They are very religious. They see everything, including North London sweatshops as God given. Their attitude is that God will change things—not them. It's not their concern.'

Maria is dismayed to find a



similar religious feeling in young girls in the factory. As might be expected, the older women are conservative in their views and they curse the hordes of 'idle scroungers' who are

I start work at 9.30 and machine on and off until 5.30 at night. I have to cook and clean as well and look after my youngest child, do a bit of shopping, pick up my older children from the school.

I learnt machining in Cyprus. I started being taught when I was 12 years old. I used to go to the shop in my school holidays to be taught. I have always done machining, making my friends, relatives and neighbours clothes as well.

There are several reasons why I do home machining. I want to stay at home with my children until they are all at school, and I have to help supplement the family budget. But I would much prefer to work in a shop, because of the company, friends, they have music as well and there is much laughing and joking.

When I am making blouses, I can make 15 in one day. I get 35p per blouse, and if I want one of the blouses I have made, I can buy one back from the boss for £2.

I only work five days a week, never at the weekend and take my public and annual holidays, so it's not so bad.

I will be happier when I can go back to the shop, because it gets lonely at home with only my mother and my youngest child.

united and strong, the boss had to give way.'

Maria has tried to get pay rises, but in vain. Under the Social Contract, union members are entitled to an annual rise of 4½%, which is little enough. But as Maria says, 'Here our chance of a rise depends on the mood of the boss. And as hopes of forming a union are pretty small, I think I would be sacked if I tried to get a union going. Besides, the women workers seem to hold contradictory views and we are divided by petty rivalries.

'The men workers have a more militant attitude but they're only concerned with bettering themselves. And that includes protecting their pay differentials.

'They would be unlikely to fight for better rates of pay for us women. Really, they believe our place is in the home, looking after the housekeeping and the children.'

destroying life as we know it.

There are some victories. A friend of Maria's organised the women piece workers at another local factory to demand better rates. 'Because the women were

Marriage market

“She was good looking, owned a house, was a model cook and housekeeper and most important she was a virgin”

In Cypriot communities marriages are commonly arranged by a go-between a mediator between the prospective husband and the parents of the girl. Andreas Manolis, a member of the SWP, was tricked into ‘viewing’ a prospective wife.

‘My go-between was a middle-aged middle class Cypriot, a crook called Panayis, living in North East London. A woman friend of his had a daughter who had reached the marrying age. He decided I might be a suitable suitor and one day gave me a detailed description of this girl’s market value. That’s really what it is.

‘She was 18, good looking, she owned a house and would be a

model cook and housekeeper, and importantly she was a virgin. Her one disadvantage was that she had been engaged to a man for nine months, but regrettably he turned out to be a schizophrenic and was no longer a suitable candidate.

Apart from this one unfortunate incident she had perfect qualifications. He had to make certain that I was worthy. ‘What did my father in Cyprus do? Did he own property? When would I finish my training as an architect?’

The momentous day of our meeting arrived. He tricked me into coming along to have a look at some plans for a house extension. After a brief look at the plans he ushered me into the

house where he intended I would have a much longer look at the daughter. After a short interrogation they then paraded the girl.

As is the usual custom, she demonstrated her docility and submissiveness by serving us with refreshments. She remained in the room long enough for me to view her from all angles. Although she did not say much, she smiled demurely and was then sent away.

This degrading and humiliating experience is one that the majority of Cypriot girls still go through, both in Cyprus and in this country. The parents in my case did not mention the one aspect of arranged marriages that is of

prime importance, the dowry. Before the 1974 war in Cyprus the Greek Orthodox Church had made it compulsory for a contract to be drawn up between the two families stating the dowry. The dowry could take the form of money, land, a house and so on. After the war dowries became a luxury which few could afford.

The expectations of most young women are therefore confined to being a good wife and mother. Defiance is severely dealt with by parents who can, for example, lock up daughters who insist on forming their own relationships. The inferior position of women in marriage necessarily degrades the relationship. The man and the woman are far from enjoying equal status, since the woman is traded from her own family to the husband like a commodity complete with a financial contract.

Girls in Cypriot communities are fed with these traditional ideas and find themselves in a dilemma most of the time at work, at school and with their friends.

Deportations threat

‘Sleepless nights and nightmares’

Dora Anastasi and her newly-born baby are facing deportation. A tent in a refugee camp is waiting for them in a divided Cyprus. Dora’s husband, her three brothers and her widowed mother will also be the victims of the British Government’s deliberate policy of deporting immigrant workers.

Deportations for these people, whenever it comes, will be the culmination of 3 years of horrifying experiences, misery, frustration and insult. Especially for Caterina, the 52 year old mother of the family, and her daughter Dora Anastasi. The war in Cyprus destroyed everything they had, and it left them, like so many other Cypriots, bitter and frightened of the future.

Caterina’s husband died during the fascist coup of July 1974. As a result of the invasion of foreign troops, that followed, she lost their house. Dora was planning to get married in August 1974 but after the coup her fiancé was recruited to the army and with the invasion they lost their small, newly-built house and all their personal belongings.

While bombs were dropping

over their heads and bullets were flying around they had to flee their village. They are not likely to see it again. Today it is still under the control of the occupying Turkish troops.

In November 1975, Caterina came to this country to join her two young sons, Andreas and Loucas, who had come here soon after fighting stopped on the island. Although she was allowed to enter the country she was never granted the status of the refugee by the Home Office. Dora and her husband Andreas had to undergo questioning and they were cross-examined by the officials in the British High Commission in Nicosia before they were granted a visa to ‘enter the U.K. as visitors’.

Today the Home Office is telling them, and the rest of the family to get out

Here is part of the letter Caterina received on the 10th March 1977:

‘I am directed to inform you that the Secretary of State has no reason to alter his decision as conveyed to you on 16th October 1976. I would accordingly inform you that you are in breach of your conditions and should make arrangements to



Picture: Red Saunders

leave the UK immediately.’

This letter and the Home Office’s racist attitude has inflicted gloom, unhappiness and misery in Caterina’s home. This distressing situation has been going on for the last six months since the original ‘decision’ of the Home Office was ‘conveyed’ to her.

I visited her and her family at their home on behalf of the Cypriot Defence Campaign, the campaign fighting against the policy of the Home Office, Caterina told me:

‘Since last October, I have had sleepless nights and nightmares.

I am scared that the police will come knocking at my door to take me away from my family. I don’t want to go back to Cyprus. I have no home to return to, no relatives or friends. They are all here. I only want to return if I can go to our village and house.’

Dora and Andreas have received the same sort of communication by the immigration authorities. It is now a matter of time before they are forcibly deported. For the time being, they just reflect on what life might have been like here in Britain with their young baby.

Bambos Stylianor

SOUTH LONDON

SECRET PLANS REVEAL LOSS OF 50 JOBS

The South West London Save our Hospitals Campaign organised a picket of the Wandsworth Sutton and East Merton Area Health Authority meeting on March 2, when they were meeting to discuss the implementation of the cuts in the local health service.

Fifty people attended—hospital workers, trade unionists, mums, kids, and old age pensioners. We made our presence felt by demanding information about the future of local hospitals threatened with closure, and disrupting the proceedings.

Picture: Phil McCowen



WOMENS AID

In March last year the Chiswick Women's Aid Centre was taken to court by Houslow Borough Council in a bid to close the centre as its open door policy led to 'overcrowded conditions'. Hounslow Council lost the case but on a High Court Appeal the decision was reversed. The centre was to be closed.

Following the High Court's decision the DHSS announced that the centre's grant was to be phased out. Already the staff at the centre are working on a voluntary basis but by July the DHSS grant will have completely run out.

Michael Dunne, a spokesman for the centre, told *Women's Voice* 'We will have to carry on with the open door policy regardless. We get referrals from the social workers, health workers and sometimes probation officers and even the police. We get letters of support from people setting up centres all over the world. The government seems to think that the existing 40 odd refuges in England are 'quite satisfactory' but our situation proves that the demand is much greater.'

The Womens Aid Centre has appealed to the House of Lords against the closure.

Messages of support should be sent to: 369 Chiswick High Road, W4.

We were given ten minutes to voice our protests, but were not given any direct answers to questions about specific hospitals.

One mother asked about the Weir Maternity Hospital, which, when it closes will mean more than fifty redundancies and the loss of a very important GP unit which is the only facility in the area affording women the opportunity to have their babies at home if they wish.

We were told that the matter was still in an 'early consultative stage'. But the very next day the campaign obtained a confidential document giving detailed plans of the conversion of Weir to offices and recommending the AHA to implement these plans as soon as possible!

The health cuts is a very important issue for all women—not only because so many women work in hospitals but because the fewer facilities the Health Service provides, the more women will be pushed back into the home to nurse the sick.

Our Womens Voice group has taken the issue onto the streets with street meetings and petitions and we have also petitioned outside hospitals at visiting times.

Anyone wishing to be involved in these activities should contact Jenny Weinstein at 01-767 2039.

DARLINGTON

HOSPITAL CUTS CARE

In August 1976 I went to my local hospital Family Planning Clinic for my yearly cervical smear.

I first had a smear in 1969 when I was advised by the Doctor to have a smear done yearly. Then of course the health service was still expanding.

Anyway, there I was demanding my yearly smear and being told by a locum doctor that since the cuts 'we only give smears every two or three years'. 'You only had a smear a year ago Mrs Sharples, and it was clear.'

So I did, and so it was, but I insisted on another one. Just as well too, the smear was positive. I had a second smear which was also positive and was admitted to hospital in January.

Once in hospital I was able to see first hand what the cuts are doing to the health service locally. As I turned out to be one of those that got all the complications involved I ended up in hospital for 3½ weeks.

I saw third year student nurses in charge of a 31 bed ward on a night when three emergencies came in (I was one). No staff nurse or sister being available for duty. Our gynaecological ward had operations every week day except Wednesday, and admissions at weekends and Wednesdays. Most of the time overworked and un-

derstaffed so that those of us confined to bed rest felt guilty every time we had to ring for a bed pan.

To me the most awful thing was that if those third year students did not pass their exams, that was it. There was no second chance, they were out, and three years training was gone. However, if they passed, they were no better off for no local hospitals are recruiting staff.

Since the hospital was reorganised, I was told, there had been a distinct increase in administrative posts and cut backs in nursing staff, including staff nurses and sisters.

Being one of those that needed the full treatment, including three separate operations, two as emergencies, showed me at first hand how important our health service is, and that we must fight, fight, fight to retain it.

Eunice Sharples.

MANCHESTER

WHO'S DOING YOUR TEETH?

It seems to have escaped everyone's notice as yet, but as my Tory dentist informed me with a great deal of relish, the dental service has been removed from the Health Service without even a 'mock' vote in Parliament.

I had two crowns renewed and a filling. After April 1st, that would

have cost me £25 as compared to £3.50 previously. Crowns will be £10 each, dentures £20 and all other treatment, £5.

Apparently research has shown that women have more trouble with their teeth than men *because* they attend the dentist more regularly. I always wondered why my husband, who goes to the dentist when he has a tooth ache, only has 2 fillings!

Dentists actually damage teeth—so creating more business, e.g. high-speed drills enable more teeth to be filled in a day but also damage adjacent teeth. As usual, the patient suffers. My dentist's is like a production line; each patient is timed to the second.

Of course this may change soon. After April 1st, none of us will be able to afford to go!

Sandy Rose.

On 18 April the Area Health Authority is going to stop the flow of money to the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital and start moving patients.

Over Easter in particular they will need help on the picket line. If you can help phone Pam Jones at the Hospital, 387 2501, or Linda Clark on 278 8387.

PYE AIRDRIE

MILITANTS— IF THE CAP FITS

I work in a factory in Airdrie called Pye TMC Ltd where the majority of employees are women. These are just some of problems which face us. First the Equal Pay Act. In Pye they came up with a cracker—a fictional male who supposedly works in Pye's Dulwich factory, which incidentally is now closed due to the present cuts which are wide-spread throughout the Telecommunication Industry. This was what the women in our factory had their equal pay based on. Only one section received equal pay with men and that was in the Stores Department and the only reason they received this was because Storemen said that they would accept the increase only if women received the same rate, this was in 1973.

The Stores are classed as militants. This is another point I would like to make. In our Factory if anyone takes a stand against the Management and voices their views then they are classed as militant. If sticking up for your rights means being a trouble maker then I am a trouble maker. When I address meetings, I tell the Members I do not just want a Shop Stewards' Committee of twenty; every individual should be prepared to speak out against the schemes which are detrimental to the working class. A union can only be as strong as its members allow.

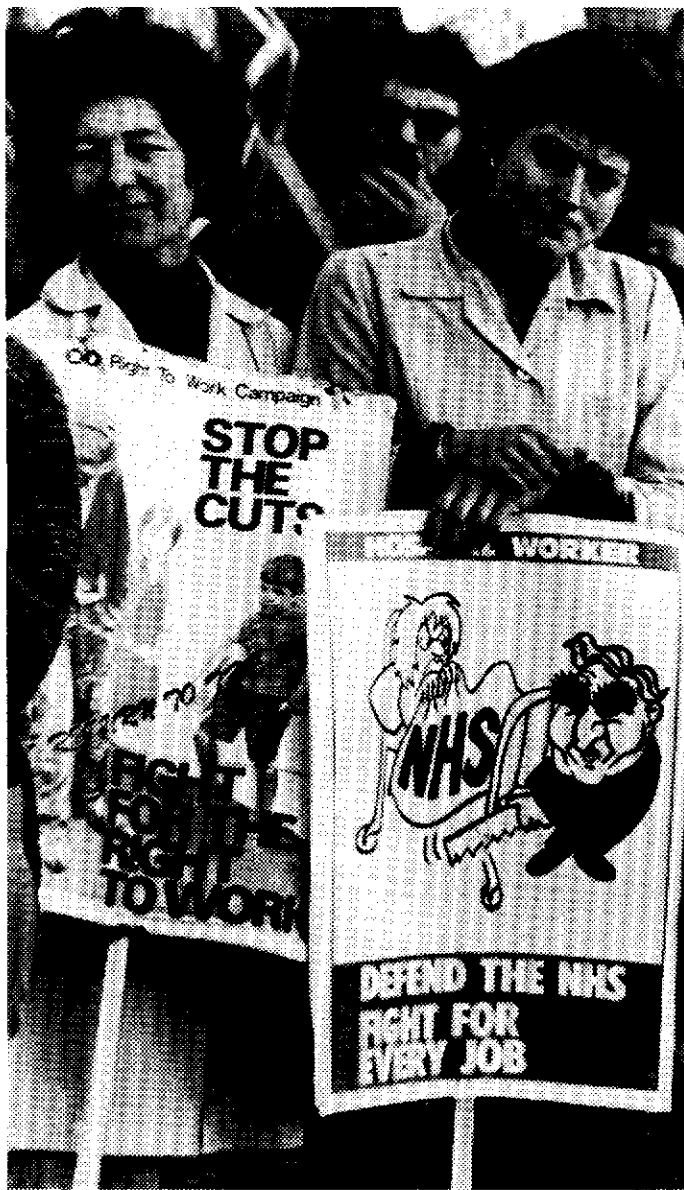
Even now we are on the ball so to speak. We have a system where

semi-skilled testers who work on Fault Finding Test can after a period of time sit an examination and if they pass can lead to an increase of £9.00 in their pay. This system was only for men but we now have a woman on this job and we will be making sure she receives the same opportunity as her male predecessors. The reason for this system being introduced is to protect the skilled jobs and for the Management to pay the rate for the job.

Finally I would like to touch on juniors whom most firms exploit. In Pye TMC the juniors are well below the adult rate which we have managed to reduce from 21 years to 18 years. The outrageous part is that although they are not paid the full rate, they are expected to achieve the same targets as the person who does receive the full rate. How can Employers and Unions justify this? To sum up. We must press the Officials of Unions to fight for equal rights/pay for women and juniors and the way to do this is for us to build a strong rank and file movement within our Union. Also for the grass roots to have more say in such things as the electing of their officials and to achieve this all members should attend Branch Meetings and play a bigger role in the running of our Union.

G Lennox
Convener
PyeTMC, Airdrie Scotland

If you're applying for a job in a hospital or you are a member of NALGO watch out. The health authority in Bury, Lancashire, recently suggested that all women applying for jobs should be given pregnancy tests first. The excuse given by the Bury nursing executive was that applicants have to have a medical including an X-ray which could harm an unborn child. But the administrator for the area, did say, when pushed, that if a woman was pregnant it could affect her chance of a job!



Picture: Phil McCowen



WOMENS TUC

'Len Murray's sitting there smiling. Well, I want to wipe the smile off his face and make the TUC *do* something for women. Yesterday we passed a motion on racialism, but those poor buggars from Grunwicks are still outside fighting for recognition. If Len Murray and the rest got outside Grunwicks, *that* would make a difference.'

That was the response of one delegate to Len Murray's short appearance at the annual 2 day Women's Conference of the TUC.

The Grunwicks women were left outside.

Len Murray's main contribution to the debate was to try to dissuade the women from voting for more representation on the General Council of the TUC.

Although it has no teeth, the Conference decided it was important still to keep itself intact. They also voted to overturn last year's resolution to restrict the women's TUC to 'women's issues' only and decided that the social contract, unemployment and the cuts affected women as much, if not more, than men.

Yet only once was the capitalist system of production called into question in the entire two days, when one delegate spoke against the call for import controls. The conference voted overwhelmingly in favour of controls.

On the specific women's issues voting is better. They condemned the William Benyon anti-abortion bill, and supported the unionisation of home-workers.

Nina Gosling

EQUAL PAY

A BATTLE FOUGHT AND LOST

British American Tobacco is the third largest company in this country. Last year they made £305 million profit, out of making and selling cigarettes and tobacco, and cosmetics.

Just one of their cosmetic companies is Yardleys. But in spite of the huge profits the women who work for Yardleys don't get equal pay.

Frustrated by promises and arbitration procedures the women decided to take the management at their word. At the Industrial Tribunal hearing the managers had said that the women only did 20 per cent of the mens work—so the women did 20 per cent, and the remainder of the boxes they were packing fell on the floor!

The management turned off the machines and for two weeks the women sat in the factory. They then came out on strike to try and force managements hand.

Outside the gate they then found themselves having to fight one of the biggest unions in the country, besides the Yardleys company.

For four weeks they shouted at the scabs, turned back lorries and did their best to win support for the strike. But the union was no help at all. So in the last week of the strike the women spent hours up at the union head office and the regional

office trying to get some of the officials to take some notice of their strike.

Valerie Miller was at Transport House with a delegation of women when the dockers were also there trying to see Jack Jones. 'If it weren't for the dockers the three of us wouldn't have got in. All day we sat at Transport House. There were groups of workers turning up to see officials all through the day. I don't believe any of them got to see who they'd come to see. Not even the ones with appointments. One man had come all the way from the oil rigs off Scotland for a manual. They made 6 phone calls but didn't find him one. So he went away again.'

Two days later the women were back again. Jack Jones wasn't there. But not easily put off they said they would wait—and waited all night. It's a long way from Basildon to Central London!

But to no avail. The union wouldn't make the strike official and eventually the women were persuaded to go back to work and go to arbitration. They have been to arbitration before, and they lost.

It's a tragedy when an equal pay strike is lost. It makes it much harder for other women to take on the fight. If an equal pay strike starts where you work, or where you live support needs to be organised from the very first day.

Elizabeth Smith and three of her work-mates who work for the British Bata Shoe Company went to an equal pay tribunal last year. They lost their case, but that was by no means the end of the matter.

Mrs Smith is now back before the tribunal in Glasgow, claiming victimisation under the Sex Discrimination Act.

Having lost their equal pay claim Mrs Smith said the manager told her 'You've been in Glasgow. Your days are numbered here.' She was then subjected to so much pressure at work that she collapsed and had to take three weeks sick leave.

When she returned to work she found herself out of her sewing job sticking labels on boxes.



Picture: Angela Phillips (ff-L)

SPEEDY WORK KILLS

Mrs Vera Banks was 'shot' to death at work. She worked as a bullet-examiner at the Royal Ordnance Factory in Cheshire. Occasionally, the Company said, the machines which check the gauge and weight of the live bullets jams up. The machines should then be switched off before they can be unstuck, and a skilled machine setter called in.

But the women in the factory removed safety traps themselves. That's how Mrs Banks got shot.

It happens in factories and work shops everywhere. If you work on piecework speed counts. You don't have time to take care. And if you're Mrs Banks you pay with your life.



Picture: Phil McCowen

ABORTION NEWS

A NIGHT OF VIOLENCE OR PEACEFUL PICKET?

"BABIES FOR BURNING"

Two despicable journalists, Michael Litchfield and Susan Kentish wrote a book called *Babies for Burning* two years ago. It provided anti-abortion MPs like James White and Leo Abse with a lot of very dubious 'evidence' to back up their attempts to change the Abortion Act. The Sunday Times showed it up to be nothing but lies.

One of the doctors mentioned in the book, and named in an article in the News of the World prior to publication of the book, was Dr Maurice Bloom. Trying to set the record straight he brought a libel action against the authors.

And he won. Only justice in our legal courts can cost you a lot of money. Justice Melford Stevenson (who heard the libel case against Socialist Worker) awarded Dr Bloom 1/3p in damages. He then had to pay £15,000 as his share of the costs.

If the court had awarded him damages of £5 or more, the News of the World and the authors would have had to pay all the costs. As they should since they were guilty.

On Friday March 11 about 70 people turned up to picket Michael O'Halloran at the North Islington Labour Party Headquarters. Mr O'Halloran, labour MP for North Islington, has consistently supported all attempts of Parliament to restrict a woman's right to abortion. At the moment he is flying the flag for the anti-abortion Benyon crusade.

The proposed Benyon Bill if passed, will seriously affect the availability of abortion to working class women. In supporting Benyon O'Halloran and MPs like him can be held responsible for the death of women at the bloody hands of backstreet abortionists. This is what we went to tell O'Halloran. That's why the North London Women's Voice group organised the picket.

Mr O'Halloran was determined to make it as difficult as possible for us to speak to him. So we did what

many of his other constituents do week in, week out—sat and waited our turn. When we eventually got in to see Mr O'Halloran he virtually laughed in our faces and refused to answer any of our questions. Between puffs of his fat Havana cigar he eventually condescended to inform us that *his* opinions about the fate of *our* lives was entirely a matter for *his* personal conscience. He then shut his folder, mouth and mind to any further discussion.

Both the national and local press totally distorted what happened, sopping up every word that O'Halloran uttered and ignoring why we were there. According to the Islington Gazette (who declined our invitation to attend the picket) O'Halloran was 'punched and kicked' during 'the night of violence.' As a matter of fact it isn't true that any member or supporter of the Women's Voice Group laid 'a violent hand' on O'Halloran's impeccable person. Most of us wouldn't touch him with a bargepole! It just goes to show though, who the press will believe. The word of one MP obviously carries more weight than those of 70 of his constituents.

The idea of the picket came out of a Women's Voice meeting where we had a discussion on the Benyon Bill and how we could best organise against it. Slowly throughout the discussion the enormity of the effects that the bill would have on the lives of working class women dawned on us. It was the James White Bill all over again! We felt that same surge of anger that helped mobilise some 40,000 women to demonstrate against that attack on our abortion rights.

It's no use just sitting about day dreaming over the possibility of all the anti-abortion MP's breaking both arms on the eve of the voting on the Benyon Bill. We have to do everything in our power to mobilise working class women. That means organising pickets of MP's, street meetings, factory gate leafletting and getting support from T. U. branches. We have less than six weeks to organise for the NAC demonstration on the 14th of May.

Gail Cartmail

Pitmans, the shorthand and typing people, publish two magazines—Memo and 2000—aimed at the thousands of women secretaries and office workers.

They have just decided to ban any advertisements which have anything to do with abortion. They have written to BPAS rejecting their ad, even though it does no more than list the phone numbers of the BPAS regional clinics.

The rejection letter says: that 'since the largest percentage of the readers are females in the 15 to 18 age group, we should avoid subjects which might be construed by some as "encouraging or supporting certain behaviour or points of view."

Abortion news continued on p.14.



***What a joke equal pay year
turned out to be.***

***For every £1 we get,
he gets £1.67.***

***And price rises make
both our wages
laughable!***



CAMPAIGN NOW TO BEAT THE BENYON BILL

At the North London Womens Voice Group meeting on the Benyon Bill, we wanted to do something locally to draw attention to the abortion issue. So we decided to picket our local MP (Michael O'Halloran) who voted for the second reading of the Benyon Bill. We decided to hold it on the weekend following Womens Day and that gave us about 2 weeks to organise.

We telephoned the local Labour Party and found out when and where he held his weekly 'surgery' (where constituents can go along and complain to their MPs). One woman took responsibility for the writing a press statement to the national and local press, Thames TV, and our local radio station

(addresses in the phone book) stating who we were, why we had decided to hold a picket, and the time and place, and invited them to come along.

Another woman in our group took responsibility for wording a very simple leaflet, which we then duplicated and sent or gave out to anyone we thought might be interested, including the local NAC group. We also asked another local Womens Voice group, who were not in our MP's constituency, to raise it at their meeting. Their own MP had actually voted against Benyon. They too agreed to support it.

Two other women in the group took responsibility for making the

placards, and we worded some of the slogans so they related locally to O'Halloran. We also made 'sandwich boards' from some old Womens Voice posters on abortion.

On the actual evening of the picket, we were really amazed to see all these people, about 70 of them, turn up. We then marched to his surgery with our placards and sandwich boards, and we had also got hold of a megaphone through which some of the braver of us led the slogan-shouting and explained to passers-by why we were there.

When it was all over, some of us immediately got together and wrote a press statement about what had happened. We then phoned this through to the national Press Association (who are open day and night) and this automatically then goes out to all the national newspapers. Needless to say, O'Halloran had also done the same (slightly different version!) and this was the one they decided to print!

The following Monday we typed out another press statement in answer to the distortions they had printed over the weekend and sent it to all the national papers and our own local paper (who had not even bothered to turn up for the

picket).★ We also arranged an interview with the local paper that week to put our point of view across.

★ Note: The local press may *not* turn up, so you want to make sure that you have someone along who is handy with a camera!

Gerry Norris

The vote in Parliament on the Benyon bill was only won by 38 votes. Some of those MPs might just change their vote if they think they will be tipped out of their seats at the next election. But it needs numbers to convince them.

We need to do everything we can think of to bring thousands of women on the National Abortion Campaign demonstration in May.

- Raise it in your trade union branch. Invite a speaker along to a special meeting. Get the union branch to actively support the demo. Make sure they have a banner to bring on the demonstration.

- Organise locally, with street meetings, factory gate meetings, leaflets, posters, letters and articles in the local papers. Militant activity is the key!



Picture: John Sturrock (REPORT)

Voting at the National Abortion Campaign conference last month. 130 people at the conference agreed to the call for a national demonstration in May.

BUDGET

LOW PAID LOSE OUT... AGAIN!

No one, unless you are a well paid manager, will get much from the last budget. But women will do worst of all—either because they're badly paid to start with and get less tax relief. Or they are the ones who are stuck in the lowest income families, which rely on one, low, wage.

A single woman, earning the national average woman's wage for last year, about £40 a week, will benefit by the grand sum of 96p a week. A single parent out at work

will get the princely sum of £1.40.

More than half of one-parent families are on supplementary benefit—they get precisely *nothing* out of the budget. 40,000 other one parent families are on Family Income Supplement. The gain for these poverty-stricken families will be less than 12p a day.

Chancellor Healey has done nothing for children. Child allowances have been frozen and child benefits have not been increased. Healey said, 'I'm proposing a substantially larger increase in the married allowance so as to provide

the family man with special help during the transition to the child benefit scheme.'

The National Council for One Parent Families explained this pompous statement to Womens Voice. The child benefit scheme means that men will be taxed on the child benefits their wives receive. Now Healey has decided to give the money back in the married man's allowances. But half of the men receiving the married man's allowance do not have dependent children. Healey has given £80m to 6½ million childless couples. If the money had been put on child allowances each child would have got an extra 50p a week.

It may seem a small amount of money, but it matters when you are struggling against ever higher prices.

Denis Healey's budget is a desperate attempt to pave the way for the next round of the social contract. In simple language that means lower wages and higher prices.

Judith Hamilton

**NO RETURN TO
BACK-STREET
ABORTION**

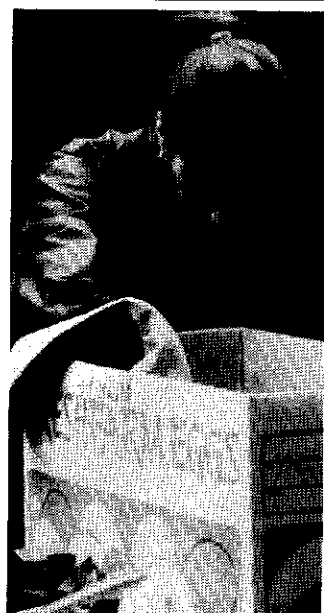
BEAT THE BENYON BILL

Demonstrate Saturday 14 May

**Assemble: 1.30pm Belvedere Road
Waterloo Bridge (Waterloo Stations)**

March to 4.30pm rally Hyde Park

Bring banners and children



Picture: Phil McCowen

Working class mums rummaging through second hand clothes for the kids will be a more common sight if Healey has his way.



... see next month's strange instalment...

YOUR MATERNITY RIGHTS: 5 forms made easier

Judith Hamilton

Exercise is good for you when you're pregnant. That may be why you have to play 'hunt the form' to get maternity allowance. When you've tried the post office and the DHSS, go to the Citizens' Advice Bureau—but make sure you get leaflets NI, 1; NI 17A; NI 196; NI 155A and the Employment Protection Act number 4 leaflet. You will also need BM4 if you actually want to claim.

Now you're off on the mental marathon!

There are three parts to the claim—maternity grant, allowance and earnings related benefit. You may also qualify for increased child benefits during the time of the allowance.

The current maximum rates of benefit are:

- Maternity Grant (lump sum) £25
- Maternity Allowance (weekly for a maximum of 18 weeks) £12.90
- Earnings Related Supplement (for a maximum of 15 weeks)
- Child Allowances (first child) £4.05 (each other) £2.55

How to qualify

- If you are married and pay Reduced Rate National Insurance contributions you may qualify for the grant on your husband's contributions. You will not get the allowance or earnings-related benefit. The qualification conditions for your husband are the same as a woman's (see below).
- If you pay Full Rate NI con-

tributions, you may qualify for all the benefits.

Qualification Conditions

• MATERNITY ALLOWANCE

You must have paid at least 26 flat-rate Class 1 (employed) or Class 2 (self-employed) contributions in the relevant tax-year (usually the last complete tax year before the benefit-year in which the allowance period starts.) So: for a baby due between April 1977 and mid-March 1978 the relevant tax-year is April 1975 to April 1976.

To get the full rate of benefit you must have paid, or been credited with, at least 50 contributions.

If you do not qualify on your contribution record, for example if you have just started work, contributions may be made up or assessed over a different period so that you qualify. Leaflet NI17A explains this.

If you qualify for maternity allowance, you also qualify for the grant and the dependants' allowances (if the DHSS accepts that they are genuinely dependants). If you have earned enough you also qualify for the earnings related supplement. See leaflet NI 155A.

The maternity allowance is paid for a maximum of 18 weeks. You should claim it on form MAT B1 (from your doctor or midwife) 14 weeks before the baby is due. You will receive the benefit for 11 weeks

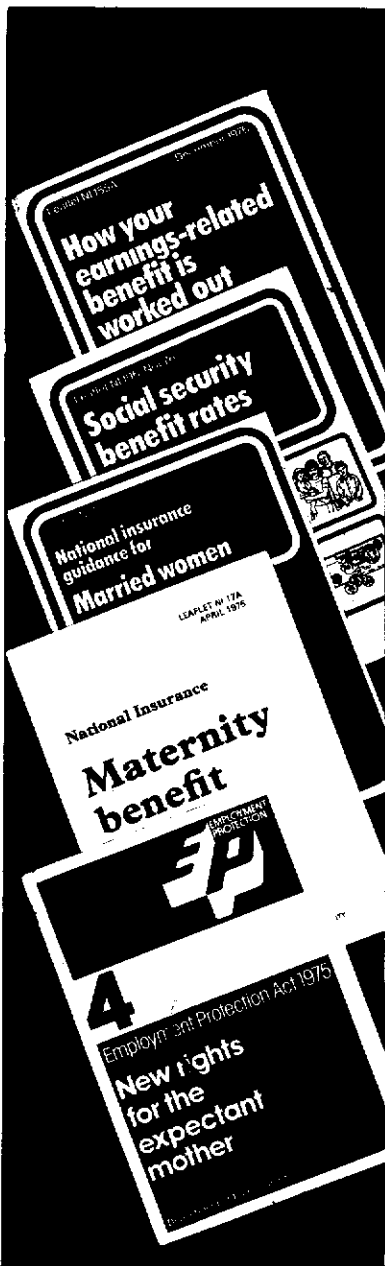
before the birth and 7 after. You cannot choose to defer benefit—so if you start to get it at less than 11 weeks, you lose those weeks. Earnings related supplement starts in the third week of your maternity allowance and continues for the rest of the period.

You may want to claim late, or even after the birth (when you use form MAT B2). This may enable you to qualify. If the birth is earlier than expected, and this is stated on the confinement certificate, you can receive the full 18 weeks benefit.

• MATERNITY GRANT

If you don't qualify for the allowance you may still qualify for the grant if you or your husband have at least 26 contributions before the confinement or date it is expected AND you or your husband have at least 26 contributions in the appropriate contribution year. Contributions may be awarded to help you make up the second condition. Claim on form BM4 between 14 weeks before and 3 months after the birth.

Most National Insurance benefits depend on a stated number of 'flat-rate' contributions based on a 'lower earnings limit'. In 1975/76 the lower earnings limit was £11. People earning £11 a week would have to work 50 weeks to be credited with 50 contributions, whereas people earning £77 a week would get 50 flat-rate contributions after only 8 weeks' work.



FOR DP READ 'DEPRIVED'

A contraceptive drug banned in America is being injected into women in deprived areas of Glasgow.

For more than two years, hundreds of women in the City's housing schemes have been unwittingly used as guinea pigs in the medical world's bid to test Depo-Provera (DP).

The patients are women who can't or won't use the pill effectively and who come from families with problems like unemployment and poor housing conditions.

In other words, they are deprived.

And that fact alone has led doctors and bureaucrats to regard them as fair game in the *advance* of medical technology.

Depo-Provera is injected into a woman every three months and is as effective as oral contraception in preventing fertilisation. But it has a distinctly nasty effect on the patient. DP brings heavy bleeding, irregular bleeding and no bleeding at all. DP gave cancer to dogs when they were used to test it and there is a risk of breast and cervical cancer as far as women are concerned. **So why is it being used? And why particularly in Glasgow?**

First, the drug's history. It began life ten years ago in the States as a treatment for threatened abortion and for a disease of the womb called endometriosis, and was quite widely used until the '70s.

The manufacturers, Upjohn Company, sold over 11 million doses world wide in five years. Then, in 1974, the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ruled it ineffective and stated that its new use as a contraceptive was not

on either. Three years earlier beagles injected with DP developed breast cancer.

It was not banned right away—supporters pointed out that monkeys injected had suffered no ill effects!

The 1974 decision not to approve the drug's widespread use seems to have been taken reluctantly—in October the previous year the FDA said 'it was OK in certain circumstances', but a US Congressional sub-committee eventually decreed that 'many women may be irreparably injured.' Since then America has suspended the approval of DP.

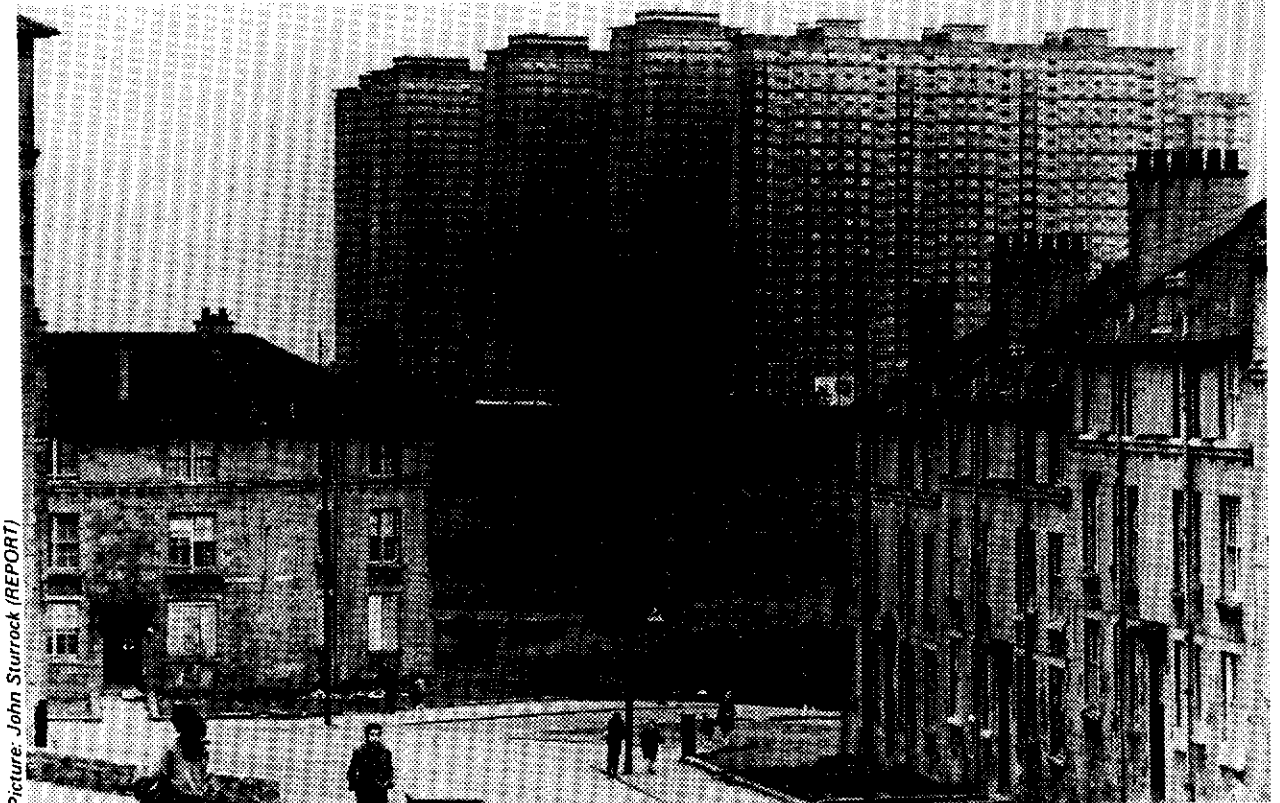
But Upjohn were not too disappointed. The drug was shipped to Thailand, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Kenya, Malaysia, Costa Rica and dozens of other countries.

The International Planned Parenthood Federation may have noticed that side effects ranged from mood changes and headaches to rectal bleeding and chest lumps, but they were not prepared to take the American view that it should be banned.

In Britain, the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) refused to license DP as a contraceptive, but that does not mean it is not on the market and apparently readily available. In fact, Mimms, a monthly pamphlet of drugs sent free to doctors, recommends it. DP is listed as a 'short term contraceptive' to be used in two cases: where a couple are awaiting sterilisation or where a woman is being immunised against German measles.

These utterances and restrictions from the CSM and Mimms are a sick joke . . . for there is

Hundreds of women living in a deprived area of Glasgow are being used as guinea pigs for a new contraceptive banned in America.



Picture: John Sturrock (REPORT)

Blackhill. In the background, the Red Road flats: highest flats in Europe at the time they were built.

absolutely nothing to prevent doctors prescribing it in any way they choose.

Eighteen months ago the General Practitioner quoted a Dr David Devlin saying that the CSM guidelines are widely abused and that hundreds of women are injected regularly with DP. Some doctors are using it on a long term basis.

The domiciliary family planning service in Glasgow was started seven years ago. It was much needed and is much appreciated. Led by doctor Elizabeth Wilson it pioneered new frontiers in helping working class families. Then DP arrived on the scene.

Dr Wilson was also much needed, and is much appreciated. Yet she is one of the 'jags' strongest supporters and is supervising the experiment in Blackhill and other areas of the city.

In an interview in the Glasgow Herald in January of this year, she said 'I would be prepared to let my daughter use this contraceptive.'

She has been testing DP in Glasgow since March 1973 and found that a study of 162 patients showed only 12 had stopped using it.

But were the risks and the high statistical frequency of side effects ever explained to *any* of these 162 women? Did anyone tell them they were taking part in what could be a dangerous experiment?

DP is widely used in the city hospital. Patients at the Queen Mother and the Rotten Row maternity units have been injected—then followed to their homes when they leave with their babies.

Even if DP risks were fully explained should deprived women be used in this way?

The liberal arguments can be attractive. There are families in Blackhill where 25 year old girls are awaiting their sixth, seventh or eighth child, whose husband will have no truck with contraception. There are men who will knock their women silly if they discover contraceptives in the house. There *are* women who are too lazy or careless to use the pill effectively although that is not a problem restricted to the working class. And there are women too scared of other forms of contraception.

But DP does not tackle any of these women's basic problems.

Where is the necessary meaningful sex education in schools? **What would happen to the Blackhills if we injected millions of pounds into their communities instead of thousands of milligrams of drugs into their women?**

Nursery education, youth centres, health units, extensive programmes of sex and contraceptive education in the streets and houses, not just cursory lessons in school . . . Would DP be so attractive if the well-being of the people in the housing schemes was our priority?

These questions will only find socialist answers. Meanwhile Blackhill's use to society will be limited to that of a laboratory.

by Christina Potrykus

I bleed all the time

Yvonne Fernand was 24 when she went into Glasgow's Rotten Row maternity unit in October to have her second child.

She gave birth to a little girl, Pauline, on the 13th and a couple of days later heard from the woman in the next bed that there was a new drug you could get that saved all the bother of taking the pill.

Yvonne, whose husband John agreed with her that Pauline and their little boy, Stephen, were all the family they wanted in the foreseeable future, asked the hospital doctor about the new drug.

The doctor was very responsive. Yvonne was injected with Depo-Provera on the 19th, only six days after the birth. He was not so responsive on answering her questions about DP.

'You might get a little dizziness and your periods might not be as regular as usual' was all that he would tell her.

But he was much more adamant about another aspect of DP . . . The aspect of Yvonne as a guinea pig.

When he discovered that Yvonne lived in the Drumchapel housing scheme, he was even more insistent. 'Get another injection on January 19, or else the Family Planning will be up at your door to make sure.'

Yvonne found the side effects of DP highly disturbing. She bled for a full ten weeks. 'It doesn't last three months,' she said, 'but I waited three months and then went to the clinic. They didn't have it and they wouldn't tell me where to get it. I phoned up my own doctor and he was horrified. He said he would never suggest giving this drug to one of his patients.'

'He warned me of all sorts of side effects that the hospital had not mentioned and quoted examples of women losing their period altogether for five years. It was obvious that the hospital had given me this drug without even checking my medical records, or else my doctor would have known about it. But I still wanted it, because, by this time I had stopped bleeding and thought it was just the newness of the drug on my system that had caused trouble.'

Eventually I rang the hospital and on 20 February I was given another injection. I've been bleeding ever since. The really frightening thing is that I can do nothing about it until the three months is up. I suppose it will stop then. I hope so. But whatever happens, I'll never let them inject me again.'



How do you start to organise a big office, with some 350 workers, half of them women in clerical and secretarial jobs? That was the problem that I faced, working in Leeds in the head office of a company that manufactured all sorts. All the factories were covered by union agreements but not us.

When we first started organising quite a few men joined, but none of the women would come to the recruiting meetings. They didn't seem to be interested. And not surprisingly. Most of the women are between 17 and 22, and 18 seems to be the average marrying age! So work didn't seem so important to them, and anyway, the union was seen as very much a male thing—if you're a secretary and your boss is in the union the last thing you want to do is join.

The idea of a separate meeting for women was quite easy. Too often women think their problems are trivial, and the replacement of a typewriter compared to a new promotion scale does seem like that. But replacing typewriters is precisely the sort of problem the women faced.

We decided to have the meeting in a hotel with sandwiches and drinks, as so many women feel uncomfort-

Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs

10/26a Jamestown Road, London NW1 7DT
01 267 4422

	men	women
Membership	326,498	69,502
Executive members	26	1
Officials	90	6
TUC delegates	20	3

table going to a pub. With flexitime and all the women rushing said. It was taking the piss out of the comics really. In fact I off at 4pm to cook their husbands' tea we had to have it at lunch time. Then we needed speakers who could relate to these women. We had one woman from the womens Advisory Committee of ASTMS, and a secretary in NALGO.

That was the meeting decided on, now how to get the women there.

Duplicated sheets don't get read, but comics do, especially among young women. That's how I got the idea. I got the branch, with some complaints, to agree to pay for the meeting and literature. Then all I had to do was produce the comic.

I went and read all those love comics. And simply copied the style. I had to draw it myself! I made the cover look inviting, a

bit 'right saucy' as one woman couldn't get everything into it, and it reads a bit as if joining the union will make your marriage work. But it couldn't be too specific to our firm. It needed to show that these things are happening to lots of women.

We were able to give it out at work because some of us are already in the union and have an ad-hoc union committee which the management know about. So there wasn't any danger. But some managers still caused a lot of aggravation.

When the meeting eventually took place, 50 came from our firm, and another 20 from other places. People had passed it around. The success of the meeting speaks for itself.

A new ASTMS member



“Wife and mother—the sacred cow of capitalism”

Evelyn Reed

In the 19th century the anthropologist L.H. Morgan, working among the Iroquois Indians, developed a new theory.

He claimed that in primitive pastoral societies the family as we know it did not exist. Instead it was women who had communal responsibility for food production and the care of children. These functions were so vital that they gave women the most important place and the power in the community. He called it a matriarchy.

Fredrick Engels relied heavily on Morgan's work in his writing in "Origins of Private Property, the Family and the State"—to show how the development of private property and the state had given rise to the oppressive patriarchal family system we know today.

Apart from Engels' work, any theory which did not assume an inferior, subordinate role for women had been ignored until the anthropologist Evelyn Reed published her work 'Women's Evolution'

She produced masses of evidence (collected by anthropologists, archaeologists and palaeontologists) to show that our kind of society did not always exist; that women were not always passive, inferior and dominated by men. Her evidence is in direct conflict with the views of the popularisers of anthropology—Desmond Morris, who wrote 'The Naked Ape'; Jacob Bronowski, who wrote 'The Ascent of Man' and Robert Ardrey, who wrote 'African Genesis'—all of whom would have us believe in a 'naturally' inferior role for women.

Her work is an important contribution to the debate among socialists about the possibility of overturning oppression and the need for new social and economic structures in which human relationships are neither constrained nor destroyed by a system which exists solely to provide wealth for a few individuals.

Nina Gosling interviewed Evelyn Reed, and asked her to explain her discoveries:

During the period of pre-history, there was no rich class ruling over the poor, no race dominating another race, no sex oppression. And the reason for it was that there was no private property system—it was communal and classless.

Pre-history was the time of the development of social labour, which is the prime feature distinguishing humans from animals. In the beginning this was largely in the hands of women. They were the first farmers and 'industrialists'; the first

scientists, doctors, nurses, architects and engineers; the first teachers, artists, linguists and historians. Far from being drudgery women's work was supremely creative; it created nothing less than the human species.

And within this system the maternal clan developed. This was an economic association of men and women who called themselves sisters and brothers. It was the direct opposite of the father-family (patriarchy). The clan was not divided into units based on sexual relationships as the family is, but was united in the need to survive through communal production.

According to Engels the system was so successful that enough surplus goods were produced to enable a group of people to survive without working—and this surplus of material wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few men. To maintain this and accumulate more wealth the idea of inheritance was established. Fathers could pass on wealth to their sons.



How did the fathers know which son was their's?

It became necessary to establish the sexual repression of women in the family, outside of which she could have no sexual relations.

The elevation of man over woman was ideologically completed by the invention of patriarchal religions. Magic had existed in matriarchal society, and the fathers introduced their gods to take credit for events and justify the downfall of women.

When private property arose how did it pass into the hands of men, not women?

It's a very complex question. In the communal, collective society the men exchanged gifts to maintain the fraternal relationships. When the system started to produce a surplus the system

of gift interchange became a system of property transactions, which some men used to accumulate wealth. It happened very subtly, behind their backs, beyond their will. But the transition was completed in a couple of thousand years.

Modern anthropologists claim that in the pre-industrial societies which exist today women are oppressed. Does this disprove your theory?

They use it to say that women have always been dominated by men. But these primitive societies are only little massacred relics of the matriarchal period, in the uneven development of society. They use these desecrated, degraded groups to say that women were always just as degraded. But



Capitalism is a world system—it has degraded everything it has touched.....

Your book makes it clear that when women were playing a leading role in production the care of children and the old was a collective responsibility rather than a private one for the wife and mother in the family. What do you see as the future of the family under capitalism and under socialism?

From being social leaders, women were dispersed into family life under class society. Instead of working for the whole society, they were now working for a husband, a home and children.

The family under capitalism is considered the most sacred obligation of the working man: all the members are dependent on the wage earner. He is supposed to provide for his wife and children.

But who gives him the guarantees to carry out his obligations? If he's disabled or unemployed or if he's dead he can't carry out these obligations.

The economic and social burdens are beaking up the family, the growth of single-parent families shows that even the little nuclear families are being chopped in half. The capitalist system itself is destroying its sacred family.

Under Socialism people will want to live in different intimate relations and that will be their affair. What we are concerned with is getting rid of the imposition on the family and the great economic and social burdens placed upon it, which it cannot fulfil.

How can working people organise social responsibilities in a society where it's organised for us by the big monopolists, multi-nationalists, the Capitalists? When the workers take power then they can organise their social responsibility according to their needs, and not according to the profits of the masters.

'Woman's Evolution' by Evelyn Reed, Pathfinder Press. Price £2.65

'Origins of Private Property, The Family and the State' by Frederick Engels, Pathfinder Press, £1.45

'Problems of Women's Liberation' by Evelyn Reed, Pathfinder Press, 90p

All these books are available from 'Bookmarks' 265 Seven Sisters Road London N4

the mother



Mother. 'She was tall and somewhat stooped. Her body broken by hard work and the beatings of her husband, moved noiselessly and a bit sidewise, as though she were afraid of knocking into something. Her wide oval face, puffy and wrinkled, was lighted by dark eyes filled with fear and grief, like the eyes of most of the women in the settlement. Above her right eyebrow was a deep scar.'

Her drunken husband dies. Her son joins a study circle, a group of people who read and talk about how they can change their miserable lives in Russia in 1902.

At first she is afraid to meet his friends. But when she does, she likes them. And she begins to help them.

Her son is arrested for leading a protest in his factory against a pay deduction. There is no one to take leaflets into the factory. No one but her. So she does it, tricking the spies who are desperate to find out who is spreading the truth.

'Little by little there grew within her a calm consciousness that she herself was important to this new life. Formerly she had never felt that anyone needed her, but now she clearly saw that many people needed her, and this was a new and pleasant realisation, one that made her hold her head high.'

She was also given the job of taking illegal newspapers to the towns and villages all over. Several times a month she disguised herself as a nun or a peddler of laces and homespun, a well-to-do townswoman or a pious pilgrim, and wandered through the province with a bag over her shoulder or a suitcase in her hand!

'Before her unrolled the panorama of human life with its restless, anxious struggle for the daily bread. On every hand she saw brazenly-frank, shockingly-open efforts to cheat people, to do them out of something, to drink their blood and squeeze the last drop of profit out of them.

'She saw that there was an abundance of everything on the earth, yet the masses lived in dire need, half-starved in the midst of plenty.

'The churches in the towns were filled with silver and gold for which God has no use, while at the gates beggars stood shivering, waiting in vain for a few coppers to be dropped into their outstretched hands.

'She had seen all this before. But then she had accepted it as a natural state of affairs, while now she found it intolerable and an insult to the poor.'

On one trip to deliver illegal newspapers, she sees the man who is supposed to take them from her being dragged off by the police. She risks going up to another man who shouted at the police to stop beating the prisoner. This second man agrees to take all the newspapers. She talks to him and his wife about what she is doing.

About her son, in jail again, 'There are lots of others like him, and more and more are being born, and to the end of their days they'll go on fighting for truth and freedom . . .'

'All those who have a hard life, all those who are worn out by need, all those who have been lawlessly ground down by the rich and the servants of the rich—all those must join the ones who die in jail and are tortured for the sake of their brothers.

'With no thought for themselves, they point the way to happiness for all people; with no attempt to deceive, they say—"hard is the path"—and they force no one to take it. But if a person has once taken his stand beside them, he will never leave them, for he can see that this is right—this is the road, and no other!'

'You can safely follow such people. They won't be satisfied with some little gain. They won't stop till they do away with all deception, all greed and evil. They won't fold their hands until all people join together and cry with one voice, 'I'm the master! I myself will make laws that will be the same for all!'

The book is based on true events—the May Day demonstration of workers in Sormovo in 1902.

Lenin said of the book *Mother*: 'It is a book of the utmost importance; many workers who have joined the revolutionary movement impulsively, without properly understanding why, will begin to comprehend after reading *Mother*.'

It is worth squeezing the time out of somewhere to read. You won't forget it.

by Jenny Jackson

Mother, by Maxim Gorky, published by Lawrence & Wishart. (Paperback 60p—if you can find any left. Hardback £2. Your local library may have a copy already.)



Picture: Mark Rusher (IFL)

womens theatre group

A scene from *Out! On the Costa del Trico*

If you ever hear that the *Womens Theatre Group* is playing near you, don't pass up the chance to see them.

In East Kilbride the *Socialist Worker Party* and *Womens Voice* put on their play '*Out—on the Costa del Trico*' at an equal pay meeting we organised.

The play is about the successful equal pay strike at the Trico factory in Brentford. The actors went down to the picket line at the factory while the strike was still on, so they knew what it meant to the women to be on strike.

The trouble of looking after the house and the children at the same time as taking turns at guarding the factory (even during the night). Some women had husbands who objected to them going on strike and one woman even had a husband who was going to work in the Trico factory everyday! The problems of no money coming in and all the other strains and tensions were well put over. As well as the way in which the women had to learn to speak in public in order to win support from other workers.

The play explains very well how the Industrial Tribunals are biased to the managements side and the weakness of the Equal Pay Act. There is one lovely sketch where the Trico women pretend to be the Tribunal lawyers and sing a song about the bosses using the tribunal to keep people quiet.

The final scene, when the women have won is excellent. They talk of the way they have got to know each other, and how they will stand strong together in future, especially in supporting other people in dispute. They decide to take a 10p weekly levy to be prepared.

The play is professional, funny and you get the message. You won't be ashamed to take your friends. Sheila Arthur, Eastkilbride SWP.

monstrous regiment

The Monstrous Regiment Theatre company came together out of dissatisfaction with the opportunities for theatre work and poor acting material for women. *Vinegar Tom* by Caryl Churchill gives some talented men and women a chance to act and sing in a very good play.

The oppression of women comes through this account of the persecution of three women for witchcraft in the seventeenth century. One of them is warm and loving, and becomes a target for the economic and sexual frustrations of the others.

The parallel for our times are obvious. There are still scapegoats in our society—the poor still turn on other poor for some explanation of their suffering. The teachings of the church are still repressive, and the hypocrisy surrounding sexuality, reproduction and abortion still exist.

But the people are sometimes funny—often cruel and stupid, and the accused women are tragic and moving figures. The frustration, rage and defiance of the condemned Alice is shouted loud by the whole company and must be taken up by anyone seeing this play.

Jan Brown

Watch out for *Vinegar Tom* and *The Monstrous Regiment Theatre Company* in your area. If you want to book them contact Sue Beardon, 108A Essex Road, London N1. 01-359 7027

plays

'PIRATE JENNY' theatre group is now taking bookings for a new show against the Benyon Bill, called 'Bouncing Back with Benyon'.

It is a 20 minute play showing how ordinary women will be affected by the new anti-abortion bill if it goes through Parliament.

It is designed for use at a trade union, Women's Voice or NAC meeting—anywhere you can use it to benefit the campaign against the Benyon Bill. Available from April 14—May 14.

It can be used in the following way: ask your branch at the next meeting to make special arrangements to have half an hour on the subject of the Benyon Bill and the campaign against it.

We would do the show and then you can give a swift run down on the bill and what you expect the branch to do about it, eg getting a big delegation behind your banner on the May 14 demo.

Contact us NOW for all bookings, however provisional, particularly if you would like to arrange performances outside London. Fees negotiable.

To: Pirate Jenny, 76 Oxford Gdns, London W10. Tel: 01-960 5875.

COUNTERACT is going on tour with their play on nursery provision and the cutbacks, 'The Double Shift'.

It lasts 80 minutes, and a shorter (40 minute version) is available for lunchtime bookings.

Their first tour will be in the following areas:

April 18-24: North East and Yorkshire

April 25-May 1: Scotland: Edinburgh and Aberdeen

May 2-8: Scotland: Dundee and Glasgow

Contact them at: Counteract Federation, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London, EC1, 01-251 4977

conference

ABORTION and Feminism. May 8. A conference to be held in East London for all women interested in discussing how and why we struggle for abortion.

details from Hackney NAC.



meetings

ABERDEEN Womens Voice group is holding a series of meetings on the politics of Womens Voice/Socialist Worker, at 163 King St (first floor), a 7.30pm.

Tuesday 12 April: **Contraception, rape and abortion.**

Tuesday 10 May: **Violence**

Tuesday 14 June: **Equal pay and sex discrimination.**

Tuesday 16 August: **Racism.**

Tuesday 13 September: **The family under capitalism and under socialism.**

Tuesday 11 October: **Radical feminism v. revolutionary feminism.**

For further information contact Angela Maxfield, Aberdeen 26951.

BRIXTON Womens Voice Meeting 'The Politics of Housework'. Tuesday 12 April. For further details contact Linda 01-737 0914

NORTH LONDON WOMENS VOICE GROUP: Our Health Service under Attack. Film: EGA Stays OK! Speaker: Mel Bartley Monday 18 April, 8pm, The Beehive pub, Stoneleigh Road, N17. (Just off High Road near Woolworths). All welcome.

OXFORD Womens Voice group public meeting 9th May, time and place to be arranged. Details from Christine Hazlewood, Oxford 43305.

know your rights

REPRESENTATION in Industrial Tribunals.

April 6 and May 12. Courses at Friends House, Euston Rd, London NW1, organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties.

Details from Ann Sedley, NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1 (01-278 4575).

The March edition of International Socialism Journal has three articles which readers of *Womens Voice* will be specially interested in. A review of 'Women and Socialism, experiences from Eastern Europe' by Hilda Scott; 'Organising Working Women', Clara Zetkin's speech to the Communist International in 1922; NUPE, what is happening inside the union with the largest women's membership. 30p. Individual copies can be ordered from IS Journal, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2, 40p including postage.

WHAT'S ON

EDINBURGH SWP/Womens Voice is holding a series of discussion groups on women's politics. Saturday mornings, 11.30 at Room 6, Trades Council (Picardy Place, top of Leith Walk)

April 9 **Keep it in the family—the family under capitalism.**

April 16: **Superwife!—Domestic Labour**

April 23: **Mum's the Word!—Women and Education**

April 30: **Single parent Families—Women and revolution**

May 7: **Hidden from History—the split in the suffragette movement**

May 14: **Breaking the chains—the rent and housing struggles**

May 21: **Raising the Roof!—Rent and housing struggles**

May 28: **Food prices—Climbing the Butter mountain**

June 4: **Women: Raw deal on the NHS?**

PUBLIC MEETING: Our Abortion Rights under Attack. Defeat the Benyon Bill. + Pirate Jenny Theatre Group with their new play 'Bouncing Backwards with Benyon' Wednesday 11 May Clapham Manor Baths Clapham Manor Rd. Clapham.

Sponsored by Womens Voice and Brixton NAC.

NORTH LONDON WOMENS VOICE GROUP (Southern): Our Health Service Under Attack. Film: EGA Stays OK! Speaker: Wendy Plimley. Monday 25 April, 8pm, The Florence Pub, Florence Street, N1. All welcome.

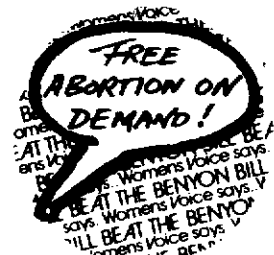
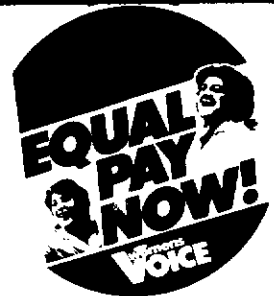
demo

NATIONAL Abortion Campaign Demonstration. May 14 Beat the Benyon Bill!

workshop

SEXUAL Self Determination and the Right to Control our own bodies. April 24, Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19.

Second in a series of regional workshops, exploring the relationship between socialism and feminism. Details from the planning group, c/o 13 Malfort Rd, London SE5.



Sticky badges, 3 dozen for 50p, including postage.



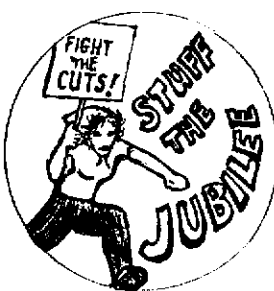
Metal badge: 10 for £1 post free. Single badges 17p including postage. Money with orders to Womens Voice, 6 Cottons Gardens, London E2

badges

badges

badges

'Scream for a nursery' badges in green, white and black available from 153 Huntingdon Rd, Cambridge. £4 for 50 post free



Stuff the Jubilee, fight the cuts! Badge in red, white and black, 20p post inclusive, 10 for £1.50, 100 for £13.50. Money goes to Save Socialist Worker Printshop. Cash with orders please. To Sherril Yanowitz, 116 Fortune Green Rd, London NW6. A fundraising project by Camden SWP.

Womens Voice abortion posters available. 50p for 20 including postage from Womens Voice, 6 Cottons Gardens, London, E2.

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