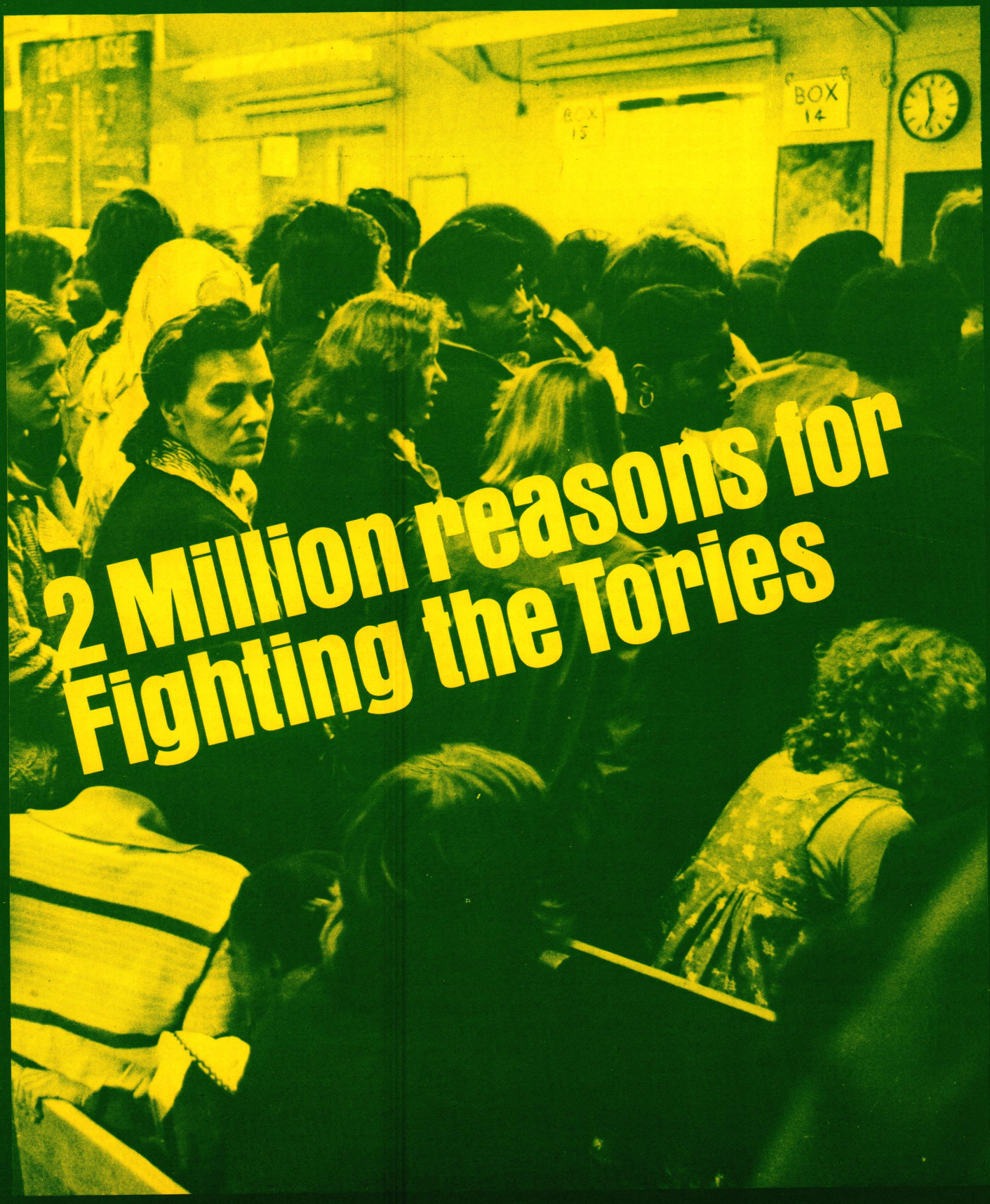


# womens VOICE

September '80

Issue 44

25p



**2 Million reasons for  
Fighting the Tories**

# BOOKMARXCLUB Summer Quarter 1980

This is the list for the third quarter of 1980. You may join for the quarter simply by selecting books to the value of £6.50 or more at book club prices (heavy type)—the normal retail price is in brackets. Books may be collected from Bookmarks or will be sent by post.

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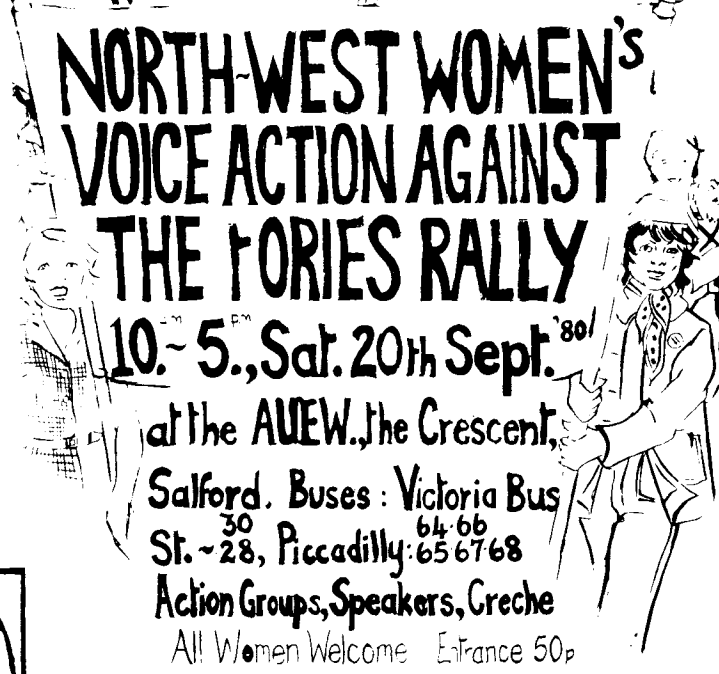
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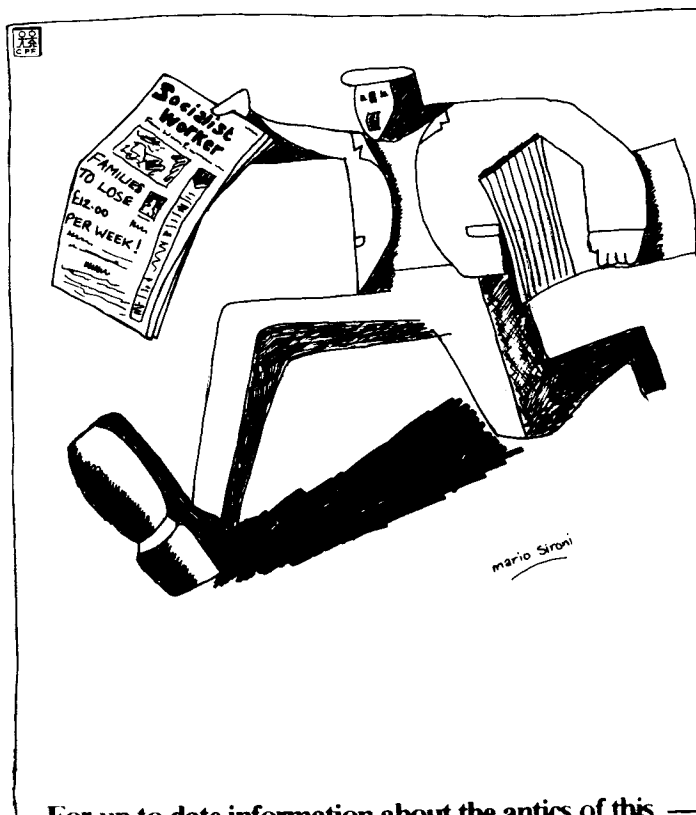
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For up to date information about the antics of this vicious Tory government read Socialist Worker.

Send just £1 for eight issues to Socialist Worker, Box 82, London, E2

# Walking backwards to equality

We believe women should be equal to men, with the same rights and the same responsibilities. But we don't want equality at any cost.

The government's White Paper on British Nationality Law makes a number of proposals about marriage and the rights of children and husbands to adopt the nationality of the women concerned.

Predictably enough, the Tory proposals are a step backwards for women. Extra 'rights' to nationality are cancelled out by limiting the number of people who are eligible. Under present nationality rules, women have no *right* to pass on their nationality to their children, or to their husband and no *right* to live in the UK with a foreign husband.

The White paper will equalise the position of men and women, at the cost of reducing the number of people able to get British citizenship. This is heralded by the Equal Opportunities Commission as a 'tremendous breakthrough in women achieving equality before the law'.

It is nothing of the sort. It is a step backwards because overall it will give fewer people the right to become British nationals. It does nothing to advance women because it reduces the rights of whole sections of the population,

including many women.

The Equal Opportunities Commission is blinded by its own self interest and by its limited views of equality from seeing this. It believes any formal equality is better than nothing.

The white paper contains thoroughly reactionary proposals which should be opposed. If implemented, they will harm far more women than they will help.

## Inflation

INFLATION is something we regularly rage against in Womens Voice. With good reason. It is running at over 20% and is made worse by Tory policies. Unfortunately we are not exempt from its effects. Our bills for printing, typesetting, postage, phones and everything else have all risen by more than 25%, so from this month WV will cost 25p. We know its difficult to find the extra, but we have left it until the last possible minute. We apologise to our readers and hope you understand it is beyond our control until we get rid of this rotten society.

### FEATURES

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Perinatal mortality *pages 14 & 15*

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On the buses on the cheap *page 19*

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Our next editorial meeting is on Wednesday September 24. If you would like to come or would like a speaker for your WV group please ring us on 01 986 6222.

The next WV steering committee is in September. Please contact us if you would like to attend.

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John Sturrock Report

## Brixton pickets defy Prior's law

PRIOR'S NEW Employment Act, which restricts the number of pickets, was defied by 300 people in London last month. They flooded onto the picket line at Brixton.

The majority of dole office workers at Brixton have been on strike for six weeks now in support of two of their union reps, Phil Corddell and Richard Cleverley, who have been sacked for union activity. One of the main complaints against them is that they attended the lobby against the Corrie Bill in February. They have been sacked for building up union organisation in one of the worst dole offices in the country.

The police have restricted the picket more and more as it has become effective. They tried to stop the use of the word 'scab', which they describe as offensive, and have restricted pickets

to two on each gate—even less than Prior recommends.

Joyce Phillips works for the Department of Employment in Poplar, another part of London. She supported the strike because: 'the sacking is a clear attack on trade union rights in the civil service. Many other CPSA members have taken part in the same activities as Phil and Richard, but these two are being made an example of. If we don't win this campaign it will open the way for other militants to be victimised.'

One of the strikers, Liz Seaton, said: 'What we need at the moment is more support from other branches and more money. Many of us with families are finding it difficult to manage but it is important we stay out. The union executive's attitude is disgusting in not making the strike official.'

Terry Stuart from Brixton Right to Work Campaign is supporting the pickets. 'The conditions at Brixton dole are appalling and if people get sacked for trying to improve them, it can only get worse.'

The sackings at Brixton are part of an attempt to smash organisation in the civil service and impose cuts and job losses. Nearly three-quarters of civil servants are women. Phil and Richard were sacked for defending the right to abortion. Help us to fight the sackings. Sally Bild, CPSA

Invite a speaker to your union branch. Send donations and messages of support to: Brixton UBO Campaign for Trade Union Rights, 16 Knowlton House, Cowley Estate, Cowley Road, London, SW9. Phone 01 582 1645.

## ONE PICKET TO MANY!

**THE STRIKE** against sackings at Adwest Engineering Reading is rapidly becoming a test case for effective picketing. One of the strikers, Jean Dhoot, explained to us what has been happening. The convenor of the Transport and General Workers Union, Danny Broderick, was arrested for standing on the picket line on his own.

The strikers decided the only way to fight such police harassment was to build up sufficient numbers on the

picket to defy the police. Jean says: 'We wanted the mass pickets because they give us as much publicity as possible and they put the bosses and the unions on the spot.' The strike is not yet official and the other union in the factory, which makes gearboxes for cars, the AUEW, is not supporting the strike either.

The first mass picket after Danny's arrest saw 26 arrests. 'I was charged with obstruction and the trials are still going on. The police feel they can get away with more because it's a

small factory. Everything has been against us. The police have harassed us from the start. The high court granted an injunction to stop us standing on the factory forecourt.

But Jean has learnt a lot from the strike. 'We've got support everywhere. The strikes made me much more angry because when you're on strike you see how things happen. But it's made me more confident as well.'

# KING HENRY CAN KEEP HIS PIES

32 WORKERS at the King Henry's Meat Products factory in Manchester are on strike for union recognition. Two of the strikers, **Debbie** and **Sally**, told **Pauline Hanson** from Womens Voice why they took action.

Sally has had food poisoning from a King Henry's meat pie, and no wonder. 'One day I was working on the belt and six inch sausage rolls were coming down. I turned several over and they were green mouldy underneath,' said Sally. 'When I reported it to the supervisor, she took them away, came back and said 'pack them'.

There have been four serious accidents at King Henry's in the last twelve months. Debbie described how a woman who started work at the factory was put straight onto a machine.

'We had to change over the machine because the supervisor wasn't there. The girl put her hand in to put a lid on and it just clamped down on her hand. She's lost three fingers,' said Debbie. 'She had to have 132 stitches up her arm because she had gangrene'.

The pies are produced in filthy conditions. 'In the summer there are pigeons flying in and out and their droppings are all over the meat,' said Sally. 'If the paste and dough goes on the floor it gets scooped up and put into the hoppers.'

Sally works in the despatch

department, where the floors are flooded every time it rains. 'There's a power box about a foot away from where the rain comes in, and if the rain were to hit that, everything would blow,' she said.

The women eat their lunch in the toilets because there are only 15 chairs in the canteen for 70 workers. They had to fight for a year to get a sanitary machine installed.

The women eventually called a meeting to discuss their working conditions and an unfair pay bonus scheme introduced by the management. They were also protesting about management employing kids under a government scheme for unemployed, who were being paid £23.50 a week.

Their sweatshop manager retaliated by posting up a list of 17 people who had been complaining about pay and conditions who were going to be dismissed. 'He said he didn't want the union in there, so we needn't bother starting anything,' said Debbie.

The strike has been going for five weeks, and the women are determined not to go back until the union is recognised. 'We're going to fight until the end. He'll have to give in and let the union in or he'll have to close the place down', said Sally. 'We don't mind, we've still won'.

## UNION SPARKS AT TANDY

**33 WOMEN** working at Tandy, near Wolverhampton, are on strike for union recognition. They have been out for 11 weeks.

The women got sick of the company's attitude to the horrific pay and conditions and joined the TGWU.

The American-owned electronic and hi-fi equipment distributors immediately balloted the workforce—only to find nearly 100% support for trade union recognition.

The shop steward at Tandy, **Kathy Dukes**, said: 'I'm just fed up of Thatcher. There were two lads in the warehouse on 70p an hour—pricing ourselves out of a job—what a joke!'

In spite of police and management harassment, the women have stood firm. The strike committee have now issued an appeal for other

workers everywhere to come to their aid. Like in any other dispute it will be the solidarity they receive from others that will determine their success. Every WV group in the country should do everything they can to support them.

Produce WV leaflets about the dispute and take them to workplaces in your area where women work, seeking messages

of support and donations.

Put pickets outside the Tandy shop in the High Street and ask people to boycott their goods.

At the same time raise support for the October 10 Women Against the Tories rally in Brighton.

Messages of support and donations to. **Margaret Spooner**, 23 Chestnut Street, Wednesbury, Wolverhampton.



*Margaret Mark, one of the sacked women at Quakers.*

## Oats to you

'I WAS very nervous about the strike, but now I feel very strong, we can do anything', said Charanjit Kaur Gill. Mrs Gill is one of the eight women who were sacked by Quakers in Southall for supposedly being asleep on the night shift. All 500 workers at the factory voted immediately to strike until the women were reinstated.

The eight women have all worked at Quakers for more than four years. 'Of course we weren't asleep', said Margaret Mark, 'But I know why they are saying this. They are trying to break the union, because if they sack us they have to employ people to do our work, or nothing in the factory would be packed'.

The TGWU have a closed shop at Quakers, but there are no shop stewards on the night shift, and no women union representatives at all. Margaret believes the management picked on the eight women because they thought there would be no resistance. Two mass meetings of the workforce thought differently, and Margaret says 'I know nobody will go through the gates without us.'



*Jane Munro*

# FIGHTING THE TORIES

ANGER AGAINST the Tories is growing. Thousands demonstrated against Thatcher in Swansea last month

Every strike since the Tories came into office have involved women. During the engineers strike last year there were over 100,000 women involved, we've seen Chix and now Tandy. It is clear that women have not lost their ability to organise.

Women do not simply suffer as workers in public services when these are cut, but also as the main users of these services. A lack of nurseries will both affect women employed to work in nurseries, and women who use nurseries in order to work.

Numbers of children taking school meals in Warwickshire have fallen by half in the last year, since the price rose from 30p to 50p. Now the county council are bringing in a public relations firm to sell the meals. At least kids in Warwickshire are still getting hot midday meals. In Dorset all school meals are being stopped.

The Tories are putting the states' responsibility for the sick, for the elderly, for our children, onto women.

The next focus for the fight against the Tory madness, and especially the 2 million on the dole, is the demonstration at the Tory conference, organised by Defend Our Unions and the Liaison committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, on October 10th in Brighton.

It has to unite all the different strands fighting back against the Tories: blacks hit by immigration laws and police harassment; women whose rights are under attack; the unemployed—some of whom will have marched from South Wales to meet Thatcher and her gang and trade unionists hit by Priors anti-union law.

With 2 million on the dole the need for the right to work becomes increasingly clear. As the recession bites deeper and being thrown on the dole is no longer a temporary 'setback'—

the answer we have is to march for the right to work, throw Thatcher on the dole.

More than 100 unemployed people have signed already for the Right to Work march, starting on September 23 in Wales and arriving in Brighton for a mass lobby on October 10.

A letter, signed by women trade unionists—including Mrs Brar of Chix and Mrs Desai of Grunwicks, calls for a mobilisation of women for October 10. The show of anger against the Tories, and the whole rotten system which they represent, will have to be massive—this will only happen if we organise.

## What You Can Do

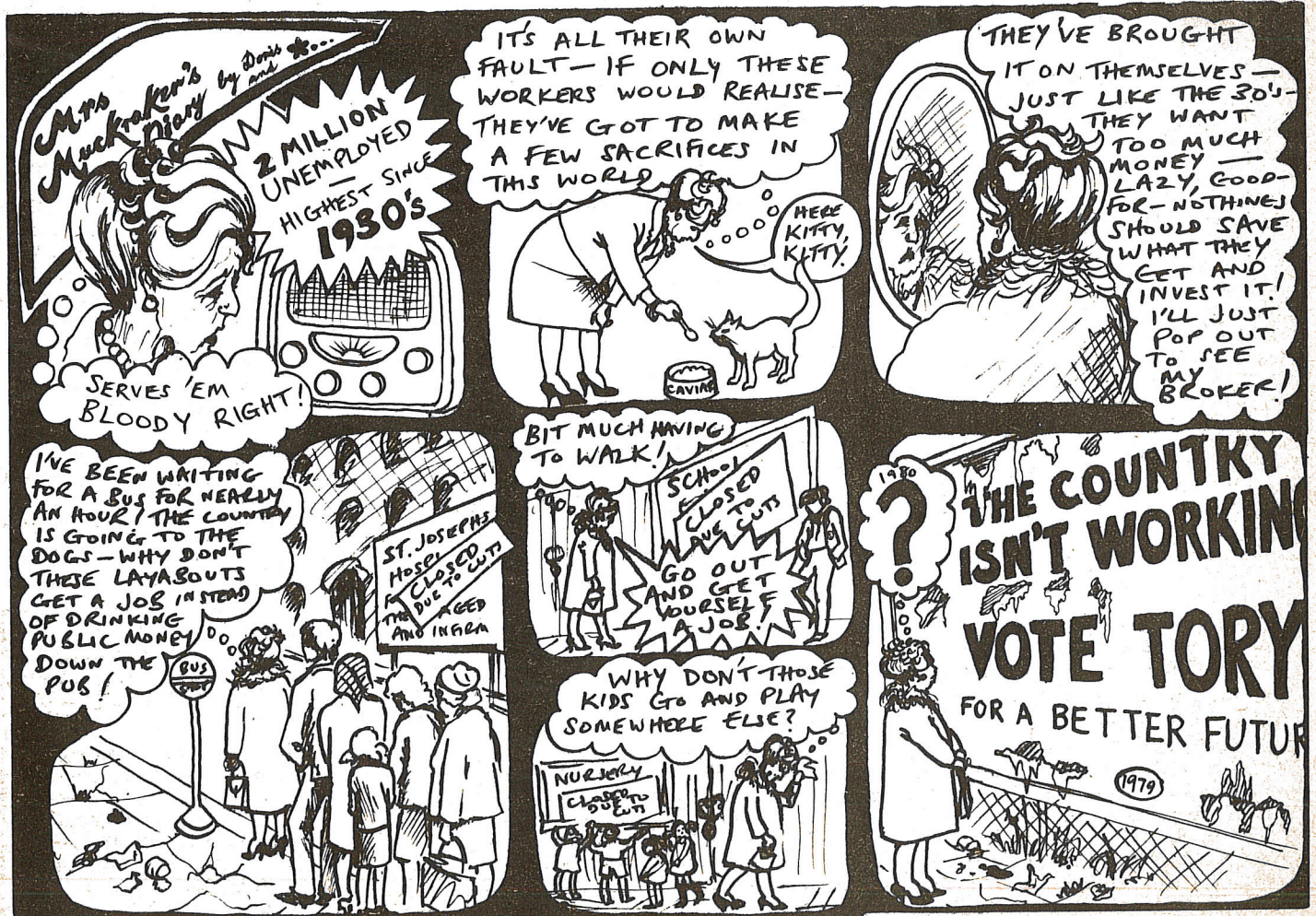
1. Organise Women Against the Tories and RTW dole leaflets, with the aim of getting people mobilised for October 10.
2. Have fund raising events, to sponsor buses to Brighton.
3. Raise the RTW campaign and the WATT letter in your trade union branch/trades council/shop stewards' committee. Ask for an official donation and a shopfloor collection.
4. Get Trades Councils to circulate all affiliated trade union branches with the RTW and WATT letter appealing for support.
5. Ask the trade union organisation in your area to send a delegation down to Brighton.

**OCTOBER 10**

**DEMONSTRATE!**



**FIGHT THE TORIES!**





Sinn Fein march in Fall Road, Belfast to mark the anniversary of internment. The Andersonstown RUC barracks is in the background.

A YOUNG girl of 14, Anne McMullen, lies in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast on a life support machine. On the evening of 8 August Anne was out on the streets of Lenadoon, West Belfast where she lives. Bonfires were lit in the Catholic areas that night to commemorate the anniversary of internment, nine years ago.

Anne McMullen was shot in the back of the head with a plastic bullet. On the way to hospital an army patrol stopped the car, but let it go through when they saw how serious the injury was. Immediately another patrol opened fire. They strafed the car with live ammunition and the window against which Anne was leaning

was shattered by bullets.

At four the next morning, the hour when nine years ago the army arrested hundreds, people attacked the army fort that dominates the Turf Lodge estate. The crowd hurled stones, bottles, bricks at the fences, venting the frustration and rage of ten years. They were attacked by a riot squad firing

## London typists hit a key

TYPING GRADE staff who work for Hackney Council have been taking action over the Council's refusal to improve conditions and pay.

The typists have been taking dictation, literally, down to the last umm, cough, and 'sorry, start again', and a number of embarrassing letters have been sent out. The typists were also sending all illegible copy back, typing at 35 words per minute and refusing to photocopy, duplicate or answer telephones.

Despite intimidation by the Council, typing staff have voted to walk out if anyone is disciplined or suspended.

Typists for Southwark Council are discussing similar action. Vera Flynn

OVER 40 Greenwich typists walked out on 12 August in support of a typist who was suspended by management for refusing to do blacked work.

The typists have been on a work-to-rule since February, and the day before the walk out the management offered each typist £50—as long as they accepted the immediate introduction of new technology and a productivity deal!

Their strike has been made official and a branch meeting of over 300 members have called for all-out action.

Rush messages of support and money to: Jim McManus, Branch Secretary, Peggy Middleton House, Woolwich New Road, London, SE18.

## DEPO PROVERA AWARD

A WOMAN has been given £3750 by Kings College Hospital and three area health authorities after being prescribed Depo Provera without warnings about its possible side effects.

The Campaign Against Depo Provera hopes that hospitals may think twice about giving the drug if they face legal action over it.

A picket of the Committee on the Safety of Medicine, who will decide if the drug should be licensed for use, is taking place on Thursday 25 September at Finsbury Square House, London, EC2A 1PP.

## Abortion appeal

AN APPEAL fund has been launched to pay the legal fees of two women who were arrested at the Demonstration Against Corrie on 8 February. Please send all donations to NAC (Defence Fund) 374, Grays Inn Road, London, WC1.

• Women with a few hours to spare who would like to help organising the International Contraception, Abortion and Sterilising Campaign please contact NAC at the above address.

## TORIES NURSERY SQUABBLE

PARENTS AND workers at a Portsmouth nursery have formed an action group to fight the closure of Gurney Road Day Nursery. Councillor Marshall, leader of the Tory city council is backing the Group against Hampshire County Council, who are trying to lop £683,000 off their social services budget.

The campaign has collected 8,000 signatures against the closure and is staging an open day on 9 September to publicise the demand. The Council is expected to make a decision on 17 September, when the Group will be putting their case most vociferously!

Maureen Hopkins  
Portsmouth WV

plastic bullets in the air.

At the end of it all two people were dead and Anne McMullen in intensive care. The following Sunday, several thousand people marched in support of the women in Armagh and the men in H Block including a delegation from the Troops Out Movement. Every year the bitterness at the British presence in Ireland grows. The fighting will continue until the troops leave.

Derek Speirs IFL

## Battle for St Bens

THE STAFF at St Benedict's, Tooting, who have been working in since last October to save their hospital have now received letters saying that it will officially close on 30 September and they should start their new jobs on 1 October.

There are over 90 patients left in the Hospital. Management's plans to move them out will be delayed because an old people's home which was to take patients has been found to be a severe fire risk and old people from there have had to be moved to St Ben's instead of the other way round! Staff at Bollingbroke Hospital are supporting the occupation and refusing to accept transfers.

Union leaders from both COHSE and NUPE pledged to do all in their power to back up the workers. We are expecting them to pull out the stops for a mass picket planned for 1 October when we want people to be at the Hospital from 7am to welcome the first workers. Delegations from other Hospitals and workplaces will arrive throughout the day.

If you can't come or send a delegation on 1 October, please send messages of support to Occupation Committee, St Benedict's Hospital, Church Lane, SW17.

Jenny Weinstein

### WOMEN AGAINST THE TORIES

For copies of the Women against the Tories letter and details of the Right to Work Campaign and 10 October, contact the WV office or the RTWC at 265a Seven Sisters Road, London N4

# Answering back

## BREAD AND CIRCUSES

ROYALTY WATCHERS have had a ball in the last couple of years. Key questions, such as Prince Charles' choice of bride, the improvement in Princess Anne's looks since her marriage and the birth of her child, Princess Margaret's love life, and how many mansions the Queen can afford to buy for her children in these difficult times, have been asked, answered and speculated over with a wealth of technicolour detail in every national newspaper or magazine.

In Roman times, the masses were prevented from revolting against the miserable conditions of their lives by a device known as 'bread and circuses'. Enough bread was allowed to keep them from starving, so that they were able to work, and plenty of feast days, gladiator displays and public spectacles distracted their thoughts from politics and possible revolt.

Exactly the same device is employed today, and one of its most objectionable forms is the obsession of the media with the royal family.

In times of crisis, such as war or world recessions, huge public relations exercises are carried out to present the royal family as a figurehead of stability in an otherwise shaky world. In fact, there are only two things of any importance we need to know about them. One, they are the richest family in the country, by virtue of rents, landowning and the civil list paid from our income tax: two, all the pageantry, homage and 'human interest' is a carefully staged circus designed to keep the modern 'masses' in their place.

While working women and men are dreaming of the splendour of palaces and the luxury life of the royals, they are unlikely to be planning how to fight redundancies, let alone plotting to overthrow the state.

Royalty-watching is like one big soap-opera, closer than *Crossroads* because we know the people are real, and more dangerous because we start to believe all the trivial issues surrounding the monarchy are centrally important to our own lives.

So—will the Queen Mother's smile reach 81? Will Prince Charles capture a beautiful aristocrat of the right religion? Is Princess Anne really human? What is important is our awareness that all such drivel is for us an illusion of escape from our real problems and an attempt to prevent us ever really escaping. Make no mistake—this is the modern day circus. We must refuse to be taken in.

RELEASE  
DOROTHY  
NYEMBE  
AND ALL  
WOMEN  
PRISONERS



Tessa Howland IFL

Womens Committee of Anti-Apartheid picketing South Africa House on South African Womens Day.

## POLISH BOSSES IN A JAM

The industrial action which has swept Poland recently would have been remarkable in any western country. It is unprecedented in the 'communist' world.

The strikes and sit-ins were originally a reaction to government attempts to increase food prices. Workers demanded better food supplies, higher wages, and increased family allowances.

At the most militant workplace, the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, workers are calling for free trade unions, the release of political prisoners and the end of censorship.

Film from Poland shows determined male workers in denim overalls standing by their factory gates. But in a country where over 90% of women go out to work, women have been involved on a massive scale as the strike spreads from city to city, affecting every industry.

A woman is at the centre of the dispute at the Lenin shipyard. The strike there was provoked by the attempts to sack crane driver Anna Walentynowich. Anna is a member of the Founding Committee for Free Trade Unions of the Baltic Sea Board.

Last January shipyard management ordered her removal to work outside the shipyard. They could not sack her under Polish law because she was within one year of retirement. Workers in her department immediately went on strike to prevent her being moved. The next day they arrived to continue their action but were met by 80 Communist Party members who had been appointed to individually supervise the work of each striker that day.

Other women have also acted in leading roles during the strike but all women have been deeply affected by the crisis which gave rise to the strikes. The chronic shortage of food in Poland means that most women have to spend over 2 hours every day queuing for food.

So far the government has negotiated with strikers and has not used police or troops against them. But whether they use force or not the support of workers in the west is vital to the Polish workers.

Messages and letters of support to be sent to: Anna Walentynowich, Gdansk-Wrzeszcz, Grunwaldzka 49-9, Poland.

Anna Paczuska



## MUMS ARE ON OUR SIDE

DAY NURSERIES. Play Group and Day Care Centre workers in the London Borough of Ealing put in a claim for regrading 18 months ago, which would give them higher pay and improved conditions. At the time they felt fairly confident that they would get a favourable hearing. After all they did have a very good case. It's a responsible job with low pay and exhaustingly long hours. So they put in their claim and waited ..... and waited ..... and waited. And then decided that as far as women in a capitalist society are concerned, having a good case doesn't get you very far.

So they took industrial action. The first steps were to ban all work with agency staff, to stop all new admissions and to stop all administrative work.

The dispute involves 115 workers mostly women at 16 different workplaces. We talked to some of the Nursery Nurses. 'The Council says our action is hurting the kids, but it'll be worse for the kids if the service is run down. At the moment we can't do a good job because we're too tired. Teachers and other people who work with children get longer holidays and work shorter hours than us. Working with young kids is exhausting. We're responsible for eight, sometimes 10, kids each for eight hours a day.

The pay is terrible. A Nursery Nurse who has trained for two years gets only just over £3,000 a year before tax. It's not possible to live on that. I suppose you're meant to have a husband to support you. Lots of people leave to go into private nannying—it's better paid when you take board and lodging into account—but I wouldn't want to look after spoilt brats all day'.

The Director of Social Services has reacted to the dispute by threatening to ban all annual leave. He made a feeble attempt to divide the workforce by calling a meeting of senior day care staff and refusing to allow the NALGO rep to attend. This failed when the staff walked

out.

The next step in the employer's offensive was to hastily recruit former agency staff without going through the normal procedure of an interview and a medical. In protest, workers at the Acton Adult Training Centre where the staff were employed, walked out and immediately set up a picket line.

The workers are getting more and more militant. There is a one-day strike and a mass meeting outside Ealing Town Hall planned. 'We've got a lot of support over this action. The Town Hall staff have said they'll walk out if any of us are victimised. And all the mums are on our side. It's the first time we've done anything like this and we're all really enthusiastic.'

Jane Hewitt  
Ealing WV.

## TELEX MONITORS TEST CASE

TELEX MONITORS is typical of many small offices in Central London. It employs mainly young people, many of them women, at low rates of pay. Recently the workers there have fought and won the right to join ASTMS.

Management had refused to negotiate with the union official over recognition. So the workers staged a one day lightning strike and warned management that if they did not agree to discussions the strike would become indefinite. Under this threat the management agreed to the meeting, and eventually recognised the union.

The workers were forced to organise for themselves, as the work-

place was too small to attract much interest from the full-time official. None of the workers had experience of organising at work, but they quickly learned the value of keeping the whole workforce actively involved. Thus they were able to resist the managements attempts to intimidate the youngest and lowest paid workers.

Management are determined to smash the union. They have tried to intimidate new workers to stop them taking an active part in the union. But the workers have already won a substantial wage increase, and are negotiating for a further rise.

Ann Rogers

## Stop this train

THREE MEMBERS of Women Against Nuclear Power were amongst eight anti-nuclear demonstrators who have been fined £2,560 for stopping a train carrying nuclear waste.

The demonstrators held up the train for four hours near

Sharpness Docks by erecting scaffolding on the railway line.

A defence fund has been set up. Any offers of help, financial or otherwise, should be directed to Lynn, The Gables, Butterrow Hill, Stroud Glos.



Tessa Howland IFL

## WOMEN THE WORLD OVER

AS THE United Nations womens conference got underway in Copenhagen, an alternative womens conference set up shop nearby. The latter tried to relate to women *in struggle*, particularly those fighting against dictatorship and for national liberation. Among them was Domitila, leader of the Bolivian minerworkers. Women involved in liberation struggles saw the importance of being part of the womens movement.

Unfortunately the conference

was not a feminist conference. No creche had been organised and the daily conference newspaper was edited by a man. Its purpose was never clarified. Some saw it as influencing the UN conference. Others wanted to gain publicity for their cause. In the case of the Bolivian women and the Armagh solidarity committee, this was very successful.

A protest was held against the coup in Bolivia, which was brutally attacked by the Danish police.

A weakness of the alternative conference stemmed from the fact that it was as diverse as the womens movement. Being open to all women it became all things to everyone. Given the small number of revolutionary women and the dispersed way the conference was organised, it was difficult to provide an alternative view to many of the moderate perspectives.

Molly O'Duffy



## NEWHAM WV FIGHTING RACISM

AN ASIAN was stabbed by racists in East Ham, East London recently. He was standing in the High Street just as a nearby school was finishing for the day. A gang of racist teenagers have been making a lot of trouble for black kids and teachers. They started by shouting abuse at Ali Beig and they ended by stabbing him to death.

It wasn't the first racist murder in East Ham, but this time the community hit back. Within 24 hrs, local Asians had formed themselves into the Newham Youth Movement and organised a demonstration of over 1500. Even a heavy rainstorm couldn't cool the anger. 29 arrests were made as the police waded in. As a response, the Youth Movement called another march two weeks later.

Womens Voice members joined the first march. We were saddened to see how few Asian sisters were confident enough to join in, so we produced a WV leaflet in Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi, as well as English which we gave out during the second march. It persuaded several of the women watching to join the march.

We're holding a meeting about women fighting racism, which we advertised on the leaflet, and hope that some Asian sisters will come along. Meanwhile even more people were arrested on the second march so if your group or union branch can make a donation to the costs, please send it to: NYM Defence Campaign c/o Newham Rights Centre, Barkings Road, London E6.  
**Barbara Horsler**  
Newham WV

## WE DON'T HAVE TO GO...

700 WOMEN who work for Cadburys in Birmingham have been made redundant. WV in Birmingham put a bulletin into the factory explaining why the sackings should be opposed. Here is part of it:

'Sales are down... so someone has to go... or do they? Well, that's what management say. Sounds fair enough BUT... Why are sales down? Mainly because production

costs and taxes like VAT have risen sharply. Bank lending rates are high, so its expensive for firms like Cadburys to borrow capital. Oil and electric costs are going up, so are raw materials like cocoa... all things beyond our control. The main causes of these price rises certainly aren't the fantastic pay rises workers in Cadburys have been getting.'



Newham Youth Movement Demonstration

## CAMBRIDGE DINNER LADIES TO STAY!

SOME TIME ago the newly formed Cambridge WV organised a public meeting on education cuts. The regional organiser of NUPE told us about the pay cuts affecting his members. At this meeting we decided to produce a leaflet about redundancies aimed at dinner ladies, including the NUPE/Rank and File Code of Practice against cuts.

20,000 copies of the leaflet, written by WV members and

illustrated with cartoons, have now been printed by NUPE and are going to be distributed through schools in East Anglia next term.

We are planning to use the leaflet as a way of introducing ourselves into schools with the October 10 letter to raise the issue of fighting the Tories and the Right to Work. Any other groups who think they can use it, please contact me at Cambridge 68226.  
Tricia Gibbons

## CHARTER 80

## Rose McAllister WOMEN BEHIND BARS

IRISH WOMAN Rose McAllister spoke at a packed meeting in Central London. Over 60 people heard her describe life in Northern Ireland, the struggle against the British troops and the defiance of women like the Armagh 11. WV is planning an autumn tour of meetings on Ireland. If you want a speaker please contact the office.

## RALLY AGAINST THE TORIES

EVERY DAY it becomes clearer that the Tories are out to attack women. Unemployment is used to question a woman's right to work. Cuts in education, social services and health care force women to look after the young, elderly and sick. The Employment Bill seeks to stop effective picketing and will reduce maternity rights. We know all this but what do we do?

WV groups in the North West have been organising a rally to get women in the region together. There will be work shops to discuss what action is already under way, like the Right to Work Campaign, Anti Cruise Missiles, Against Immigration Controls and others. We will be looking at womens struggles at home, at work and in the unions over the last ten years.

It won't be just another talking shop. Its for women who want to find out whats going on and join the fight against the Tories.

If you want to come to the rally get in touch with us for details of transport from your area at the address below.

**Helen Mayall**  
Salford and Eccles WV  
NW Womens Voice Action against the Tories 122 Blackfriars Court, Salford 3. Registration fee 50p (cheques payable to Eccles and Salford WV). Please notify in advance if you want places in the creche.



Laurie Spitham IFL

## CHILEAN WOMEN STRIKE BACK

ON SEPTEMBER 11 1973, Allende's government was brutally overthrown by the right wing junta of Pinochet. The coup was a massive defeat for the working class of Chile. Their hopes of achieving socialism by reform were proved to be futile. They paid heavily for not being prepared for the ruling class backlash and they have only just begun to organise a strong resistance to the junta.

It has been met with the sort of repression that the junta used at the beginning of their regime when

thousands were killed or had to leave Chile as refugees. More than 2,000 people have been arrested this year and the number of people who have been killed for 'resisting arrest' has increased alarmingly. Demonstrations are regularly broken up and banned as were the International Women's Day march and the May Day Rally held by the Textile Workers this year.

Unemployment is running at 80% in some areas and there is a vicious anti-union 'labour plan' which

threatens workers with the loss of their jobs after 60 days on strike. The inflation and interest rates are soaring.

In response, there has been increased strike action. One of the most significant was the strike by 10,000 miners at the El Teniente Copper Mine.

Some of the most militant and organised forms of resistance have come from the emerging women's movement. The 'labour plan' allows for the dismissal of pregnant women.

Unemployment and

malnutrition have forced women back to the home or into the homes of the rich where they become domestic servants for pitifully small wages. Women in the shanty towns have begun to organise. Last November the Women's section of the Trade Union Co-ordinating Committee organised a congress to discuss national activity.

Chile may be thousands of miles away, but Thatcher's economic policies are very similar to those that Pinochet imposed on Chile. As Chile's finance minister said 'Margaret Thatcher is moving in exactly the same direction as we are. It certainly shows'. Thatcher showed her approval of the Pinochet Regime by restarting the sale of arms and by sending back an ambassador to Chile. She is certainly taking note of Pinochet's methods. We must ensure that we have learnt the lessons as well. The ruling classes will not sit back and allow us to win socialism by parliamentary reform. The experience of Chile and more recently that of El Salvador and Bolivia show to what extremes the ruling classes will go to impose their system on the rest of us.

CAROL MACHELL

## I came to you because I needed help

LOLITA RIMANDO came to England from Manila in April 1973. She had a job as a resident domestic in Cheshire and was paid £10 weekly. In June 1977 Lolita was granted permanent residence. She received a deportation order from Immigration Authorities in July this year, telling her to report to Heathrow Airport and take the 4.00pm flight to Manila on 21 August.

Like thousands of Filipino women who came to England to find work as domestics, Lolita

faces deportation because she failed to reveal that she had a son ... because she was never asked.

'I'm strong enough to work', said Lolita, 'All I want is a few years pardon so I can save enough money to have somewhere to live when I go home.'

Lolita is now earning £250 a month as a linen room assistant at an exclusive private London hospital. She keeps a few pounds to pay for her tiny bed-sit, for food and fares to work, and she sends the rest to her

sister who is looking after Lolita's son in Manila.

Lolita is immensely proud of ten year old Rodrigo. She has never been secretive about him, even claiming tax relief for him as a dependent. She applied to the Home Office last year for a visa for Rodrigo, because her ex-husband had threatened to kidnap him from her sister.

The Home Office told Lolita that there would be no problems in bringing her son over, because she could prove that she could support him. 'When I heard Mrs Thatcher making a speech about immigrants,' said Lolita, 'I cancelled the application because I thought he would get into trouble'.

Six months later Lolita was visited by two immigration officers, who told her that she was an illegal immigrant and that she would be deported.

'I came to you because I need help' said Lolita. The Joint Council for the Welfare of

Immigrants is fighting her case, and the deadline has been deferred while Lolita's MP is asking Timothy Raison to reconsider her case. 'Please ask everybody to write to the Home Office', said Lolita. Messages of support can be sent to Lolita at 19, Pembroke Gardens, London, Vanessa Bridge

**NASIRA BEGUM, who won a four-year battle with the Home Office to stay in this country, is still under threat of deportation.**

The Home Office have refused to accept the decision of Manchester Immigration Appeals Court, that her marriage was valid, and are going to appeal in a last ditch attempt to have Nasira deported.

Nasira said that she was sick to hear that she may not have won her fight, but that she will continue her battle against the racist immigration laws until she has won.

# UNEMPLOYMENT

## Women going on the dole...

TORY LORD Spens graciously explained to the House of Lords recently that it wasn't that he thought 'married women should not be occupied, just that they shouldn't compete in the market for paid jobs.'

In large parts of Britain one man in five will soon be unemployed as basic industries like steel and heavy engineering are dismantled. Small wonder that Tories are coming out with the simple 'solution' of sending women back into the home.

There are, of course, some advantages for the Tories in having women unemployed rather than men: it doesn't look as bad and it costs rather less. It doesn't look as bad in that about half of all unemployed women don't show up in the official figures. If they were to be included, unemployment in July 1980 would have been 2.4 million rather than the 1.9 million announced. Many married women are not registered as unemployed because they don't get any unemployment pay. Nor are they entitled to supplementary benefit. So it is cheaper in a direct sense if the unemployed are married women; in addition, there are the savings on nurseries, school meals, playschemes and so on if the unemployed are mothers.

However, it would be wrong to take the Tory philosophy at face value. The Tories in general aren't interested in solutions to unemployment; for them it is a strategy, not a problem to be overcome, and they aren't directly concerned to pick on women rather than men.

The danger in the first instance, ironic as it may seem, comes from the trade union response to the general Tory offensive. Even though the unions deplore the threat to women's jobs which arise from public expenditure cuts and from the new technology, the trade union movement still tends to see unemployment among women as a lesser evil and men's jobs as the priority. In the thirties the TUC was anxious to see unemployed women pushed into 'domestic service' to prevent them competing with men for

decent jobs. Today the process is much less explicitly sexist, but the results are much the same. Part-time jobs are sold off to 'protect' full-time workers; in white collar employment 'natural wastage' is accepted to 'protect' existing workers. In both cases it is jobs done by women that get lost in the trade offs.

The result can be seen clearly in engineering and was already apparent under the last Labour government: it was women — particularly part-timers — who first bore the brunt of the crisis. Almost half the part-time jobs in electrical engineering which existed in 1974 had been lost three years later, while men held onto their jobs.

Though not for long. Having let over half the part-time women go and many of the full-time women, men's jobs in electrical engineering are now disappearing fast as well.

The idea that men need their jobs more than women is still strongly held,

even, unfortunately amongst militant women trade unionists. When a group of women at W.D. & H.O. Wills' cigarette factory in Glasgow were recently asked, 'If the factory had to pay off workers, should women go first?' over half said yes. Even though many were the main earners in their families, they still thought that men *ought* to be the 'breadwinners'. They reckoned unemployment was worse for men because they would get more depressed than women by being forced to stay at home all day with children! May be that is true, but it isn't surprising since men are constantly told they ought not to want to stay at home with their children and women are constantly told that they ought not to want anything else.

The myth — and it is a myth — that children suffer enormous damage if they are not looked after by their *own* mothers 24 hours a day from birth to the age of 3 or 4 is widely publicised at present. Studies which show what we all suspect —



Jane Munro

that children benefit from good quality nurseries from a young age and that millions of working class housewives stuck at home along with their children are clinically depressed as a result — are much less highlighted by the media. No wonder then, that jobs for men and boys are seen to be the priority.

Allowing women to be made unemployed will not save jobs for men. In Nazi Germany there was a massive drive to throw women out of paid work; but it was rearmament, not the mass of housebound women, that eventually reduced unemployment amongst men. Getting rid of women can't provide men with jobs at a living wage, for the average full-time manual woman's wage is only £55 before tax, a bare £6 a week more than the short-term social security benefit for a family with two children.

Yet, even though women's earnings are so low their wages are crucial to maintaining the living standard of every second working class family.

A quarter of the total income of these families comes from married women's work; without it, one family in three with children would be in poverty. And still there would not be more jobs for men.

The Tories are attacking everybody's right to paid work, they don't necessarily want women out of work and men in. Rather they want to undermine women's confidence in themselves as workers to ensure that women remain a cheap and flexible labour force, grateful for any work they can get.

But the strategy is much the same for men; by increasing men's unemployment, the Tories want to reduce workers to a disorganised, subservient and immensely exploitable labour force. That task will be all the easier, the more men are forced through savage cuts in unemployment benefit and through the lack of work for married women, to accept large-scale wage cuts in order to get any work at all.

In asserting the right of women to paid work, we are not arguing for equal rights to unemployment but attacking the Tory solution to the economic crisis — unemployment. Women's unemployment is no more acceptable than men's.

The Tories task will all be easier the more they succeed in keeping women as an available second class cheap labour force, the more indeed they can set men against women.

Irene Bruegel



THATCHER's government has abandoned any commitment to full employment—it's the first government since the war that doesn't even pay lip service to the idea that all those who wish to work should be able to.

Their sole concern is to bring down inflation, and never mind how many jobs are destroyed in the process. They care about what happens to company profits, eaten away by inflation, not about what happens to workers' lives, disrupted and poisoned by redundancy and unemployment.

They mean to bring price rises down by deflating the economy, by making it shrink. Less production, less money in people's pockets, less buying and selling, less money circulating will slow inflation down. It will also mean fewer jobs. Millions fewer. Deflation is the heart of Tory economic policy, no matter what fancy names—like monetarism—they call it.

One method of deflation that the Tories have adopted is keeping interest rates at record high levels. This doesn't just mean higher council rents, rates, HP payments, mortgages and bank profits. It also means that companies can't afford to borrow money to invest, and that those who borrowed in the past have to pay out huge sums to the banks. The result is closures, redundancies, and bankruptcies. The piles of unsold goods people can't afford to buy mount up, and yet more workers face short-time or the sack.

Another effect of the high interest rates is that the City is a very attractive place for international investors to deposit their money. As a result of all the money flowing in, the value of the pound sterling is high compared to other currencies. While the strong pound is good news for those on holiday abroad, for industries exporting goods it creates severe problems. Goods manufactured in the UK become more expensive abroad as the value of the pound increases; and once again, when exporting companies feel the pinch, it's the workers who

have to pay with their livelihoods.

The other major plank of the Tories' strategy is to cut public spending. Housing, education, the health service, social security benefits, local authority services, all are being cut. They want to lop £9 billion over the next four years, at a time when their own policies are making the need for social security and social services greater than ever. Only 'law and order' and the military are immune. The nationalised industries, like electricity, steel, and the Post Office are being forced to raise prices and shed jobs by being set financial targets that can be met in no other way.

The Tories want the prospect of unemployment to frighten people into taking cuts in real wages, by accepting wage rises that are less than the rise in prices. And to a large extent they are succeeding. Many workers are settling for eight, ten or twelve per cent, and seeing their standard of living fall as a result. Employers are using the threat of redundancy to win changes in work practices which mean worse working conditions and the loss of hard-won trade union rights.

Provided there is no 'social unrest' the Tories don't care how many unemployed there are. With the North Sea Oil bonanza to prop up the economy multinational companies and banks are profiting from the Tories' determination to wear down workers' resistance. As long as the Tories are allowed to get away with it, unemployment will continue to rise.

Elana Dallas

Every year the Right to Work Campaign organises a march against unemployment. This year's march is from South Wales to London to Brighton, ending up with a day at the Tory conference. If you are interested in going on the march or lobbying the Tory conference, details can be had from the Right to Work Campaign, 265a Seven Sisters Road, London N4. 01 986 5717.

## won't save jobs for men

THE FUTURE of Britain's maternity services is certain to be influenced by the recommendations contained in a new official report.

*Perinatal and Neonatal Mortality*, produced by the House of Commons' Social Services Committee and chaired by Labour MP Renee Short, is a response to growing fears about the high rates of death and permanent handicap among young babies.

Perinatal mortality (the deaths of babies between 28 weeks of pregnancy and one week after birth) and neonatal mortality (deaths occurring in the first four weeks after birth) are often seen as sensitive indicators of poverty and poor health services. Britain's mortality rates, although they have fallen in the last three years, are still 50 per cent higher than those of Sweden with the lowest rates.

The Short Report sees medical intervention as the most immediately effective and accessible means of preventing the 'unnecessary' deaths of 5,000 babies, and the 'avoidable' handicaps suffered by another 5,000 each year.

It wants the Government to provide £25 million to implement its recommendations, which include employing more specialist doctors, using more technological methods to help detect and solve problems and centralising facilities in large hospitals.

The report's main preoccupation is with the safety of the child, rather than with its quality of life, or with the mother's attitude to the maternity services. It says deliveries at home should be phased out altogether.

The emphasis on the role played in childbirth by doctors, backed up by the latest technology, reinforces a trend started centuries ago, when male doctors began to compete with female midwives for the care of women in labour. The report lies firmly within a tradition which has attempted to take the control of childbirth out of women's hands.



# Childbirth: ho

Written by Jane Sal  
Photos by Angela Ph

CHILDBIRTH has always been regarded as the province of women, and still is in many cultures. Yet only three per cent of all babies are now born at home in Britain, and even those are not all planned home deliveries.

Childbirth is not a disease and mothers are not patients, but most women accept that, for safety's sake, their babies should be born in hospital, under the care of doctors. Most of the consultants in charge of them will be men, whose training is geared not to promoting health but to curing sickness.

The history of childbirth is one of growing intervention by the 'professionals'. Attempts to make it into a medical speciality, rather than an event where women help other women using skills passed on from one generation to the next, began in the 17th century, and were strengthened by the invention of obstetric forceps. Forceps were legally classed as a surgical instrument and women, legally, could not be surgeons.

In the doctors' struggle to gain a monopoly of knowledge, and therefore of prestige and

money, they had to undermine the position of midwives and other women without formal training. They succeeded in doing this in the 19th century by allying with their own sex and, largely, their own class (though other male practitioners such as barber surgeons suffered the same fate as many women healers). Childbirth, like gynaecology today, was a profitable field.

Midwifery managed to survive with 'independent practitioner' status granted, or more accurately, recognised in 1902. As the Short Report describes it, 'this was necessary because much of what midwives did in the care of the pregnant woman was unsupervised'. But by 1902, a combination of superior scientific knowledge, jealously preserved, and political manoeuvring, made the medical establishment masters of childbirth. The midwives hung on, as they do today, in uneasy rivalry.

Government policy throughout this century has emphasised medical knowledge as the most important factor in childbirth; the control which can be exer-

ted through possession of scientific expertise has been reinforced by the use of technology, machines which back up the doctors' skills but which often frighten and mystify the patient. Technology in childbirth—advances which help doctors to diagnose problems early—is playing a bigger part than ever and is often accepted uncritically, without full consideration of risks.

As technology has advanced, home deliveries have declined. The Peel Report (1970) confirmed this by saying that the NHS should provide facilities for all babies to be born in hospital, thus providing an excuse to close many of the smaller, and friendlier, maternity units.

Now Short is saying that home delivery should be phased out further, so it will not be available as an option even for those women articulate and determined enough to demand it. Once in hospital, subjected to its rules, routines and hierarchies, women who try to maintain some control over what is



# Home is still best

## Wage Phillips

happening to them are labelled as 'difficult'—and therefore are even less likely to get what they want.

Midwives have an invaluable function as mediators between mothers and doctors. Described in the report as 'the cornerstone of British obstetric practice', they usually have a closer relationship with pregnant women, with more continuity of care and opportunities to discuss what is happening in a simple but well-informed way. Yet midwifery may disappear completely. Nearly all midwives must first do general nursing training, rather than direct entry, which diverts a number of them into other fields; there is a shortage of staff; morale is low.

The report recommends that there should be more midwives, with better pay and conditions and recognition of their status. But there seems to be little more than a sop to midwifery, when seen alongside the proposals to increase medical technological intervention: midwives will be

reduced to the status of obstetric nurses, clearing up the mess and minding machines.

The whole problem of 'the machines' is glossed over in the Short Report. It suggests that people's fear and mistrust are due entirely to inadequate preparation—but investigation of many technological procedures, even the familiar X-ray, shows that they have risks attached. The information which would enable women to make some judgement about the procedures is often withheld.

The absolute belief in the benefits of technology has given strong support to the arguments for phasing out home delivery. We are told that it is 'safer' to have a baby in hospital, although other experiences (in Holland, for instance) show that this is not necessarily so; and with the tiny proportion of home births, it is hard to see where the evidence comes from.

The argument about 'safety' can be used as a threat to make women do what health professionals want. In hospital it is used to make patients put up with things which are designed more for the convenience of

health workers than for the good of the patients.

Considerations other than medical ones should be involved in any decision about the use of technology and sometimes these may outweigh the medical advantages. Fetal monitoring, which the report says should be used more widely than it is now, is a good example. It is used to detect signs of distress in the baby—but can be a very unpleasant experience for the mother.

A woman in labour, whose baby is being monitored, has two belts strapped round her waist and an electrode planted in her vagina, attached to the baby's head. The membrane surrounding the placenta has to be ruptured to attach the lead. However clearly they understand the benefits of the procedure, a woman can still find it frightening and inhibiting. She must stay in bed, in a particular position—which is not the position she would choose to help labour.

Some doctors say there is no need to monitor every baby. With skill, they say, signs of distress can be detected early and

essential monitoring is unnecessary for many babies. In addition, the 'high-tech' machinery tends to alienate the nurses' and mothers' attention away from the mother. There is also evidence that 'distressing' mothers under stress can be 'risky', not just psychologically but by depressing the supply of oxygen to the baby.

Amniocentesis, the insertion of a needle into the uterus to draw off fluid for tests, and induction, a technique for starting or accelerating labour, are also used increasingly often, but many women are not warned about the risks involved.

Nevertheless, safety is important; many of these techniques undoubtedly save lives and cannot be rejected. What we must do is make sure that the control of technology does not lie solely in medical hands: we must make it work for us as our servant, and not as a weapon of subjugation. If delivery at home is 'unsafe', we have the means to make it safe. The argument is the same for professional skills, which are invaluable but can also be used to mystify. We must ensure that knowledge is shared and used to everyone's advantage.

The Short Report's concentration on medical intervention and the use of technology is a problem we have to face, but it diverts discussion away from the questions of social inequality—which ultimately have more bearing on perinatal mortality and handicap rates. The report pays some attention to poverty and class inequality as contributory causes; but tinkering with the maternity services, for all their importance, may be too late for many babies.

Babies born to working class mothers are born disadvantaged. They are smaller and weaker and twice as likely to die as babies born in social classes one and two. Throughout their lives they will be more likely to be handicapped, to be injured at work and to die younger.

There have been real improvements in health which have affected all classes. But although standards in general are higher, the class inequalities are as great as ever. This suggests that good health may have a lot more to do with nutrition, environment, housing, safety at work and accessibility to health care than with the medical intervention itself.

The right of women to control childbirth is an important one, but we must not forget the wider struggle for the right to be healthy.

# Women's Aid opens doors

## Councils shut them

**BATTERED WOMEN** have become more of a public issue in the last ten years. They have always existed, but before that they were very much behind closed doors.

We know now that many women are battered by the men they live with. We know it through the number of women whose cases come to court accused of defending themselves from the brutality they have had to suffer for years, the number of women seeking help through the social services and the number of women who are entering refuges.

But the real difference between ten years ago and now is the existence of refuges and the work of Womens Aid in campaigning for the rights of battered women.

Refuges have become a sanctuary for many women. The National Womens Aid Federation report describes them as a breathing space. Often they are the only place a woman can go to escape the violence and misery of her home.

**'Reports from groups generally indicate that though new refuges are opening, the numbers of battered women seeking help are constantly increasing. In 1979 the North West Region alone provided accommodation for over a thousand battered women and their families. In Yorkshire and Humberside two new refuges have recently opened, yet there are only 59 refuge places in the area which is no greater number than two years ago. As unemployment rises and social pressures increase, especially in small steel towns like Corby and Scunthorpe, more women are seeking refuge.'** — from the annual report of the National Womens Aid Federation 1979-80.

Womens Aid have only one refuge per 60,000 of the population, yet it was proven four years ago that they needed at least one per 10,000 of the population. Overcrowding, bad conditions, inadequate facilities, are suffered by every refuge. Four-fifths of the houses used as refuges are rented from Local Authorities. Many of these are sub-standard. Women and their children have to share beds and families share rooms.

In 1979 it was taking on average six months to obtain permanent

accommodation from Local Authorities. As one woman said: 'After six months you get so fed up with refuge life you think you'll go back to your husband because you can't stand it any longer.'

Over 9,758 women and 17,032 children passed through Womens Aid refuges in 1977-8.

As it becomes clear that what we need are more refuges, not less, the opposite is the reality. This year alone six refuges have been forced to close and five more are under the threat of closure.

**'Houses used as refuges are often unsuitable—many are old (half were built before 1919) and are in poor condition with leaking roofs, faulty wiring and dampness. A quarter of the houses opened as refuges have since been closed down for health reasons or for demolition.'**—from the annual report of the National Womens Aid Federation 1979-80.

In Hillingdon, Middlesex, the Local Authority changed from Labour to Tory and the refuge was taken over on 'health grounds'. The council completely closed the refuge in February this year, giving the women who lived there only a few weeks notice. Newham, in East London, was closed two months ago by the fire department. Due to lack of money to maintain refuges, and the difficulty in keeping to the environmental health standards, this puts every refuge permanently under the threat of closure.

The cuts are biting deep—one-third of all refuges have no paid workers at all, and those who do are having their funds cut.

In April, Manchester Local Authority cut the Manchester Womens Aid refuge's grant. They fought it and won. Now Manchester council have announced a 15% cut in social services and voluntary organisations, Womens Aid fear they will suffer because of these cuts. Two refuges in East Anglia have been forced to close because of lack of funding, and Basildon and Chelmsford are seriously considering following suit. Edinburgh and Lothian Region refuge have, in one year, been reduced from 15 workers to five and are having serious financial problems. The list is endless, and so are the effects of the cuts.

Only 16% of the women who lived in refuges in 1979 obtained Local Authority



rehousing. Local Authorities are taking longer to rehouse women which means they have to stay in refuges longer, the result being that women are having to be turned away.

**'The recent restrictions on Local Authority spending and threats to Urban Aid funding serve only to increase our fears that women and children will be forced to remain in violent homes.'**

—from a letter to Margaret Thatcher from Womens Aid, July 1980.

Refuges are closing down the same time as hospitals, schools, nurseries .... The Tories see women's problems as 'private' and not social. The Tory image of 'perfect motherhood' forces women to take the responsibility not only of their children, sick, elderly, but also of their personal relationships.

Fighting for refuges fits into the fight for control over our own lives, and the fight against these vicious Tory cuts.

**Julie Waterson**





# Singing Loud and Clear

DEBBY BISHOP has just finished a season singing in 'The Last Benefit' at the Albany Theatre in Deptford. Now the show is over, but Debby is just beginning.

Hear her husking her way through Aretha Franklin's song 'Do Right Woman' and then belting out the last few syllables and you know why. Her voice is clear, direct and just right for the female blues that she sings. Her stage presence is unforgettable, exciting. She has an easy sophistication which is amazing.

And her achievement is most impressive for someone who is just twenty one. She has performed at the Royal Court, sung at the Albany and toured with the feminist show 'The Sadista Sisters'. This month she landed a part in the stage version of 'The Wiz' — a black version of the Wizard of Oz.



Her achievement is all the more impressive because Debby is not the product of a posh drama school or of a smart music academy. Debby is black, working class and comes from Lewisham.

She did try to get into drama school but failed: 'They gave me Shakespeare to read. I'd never done it before. After the twentieth prompt they gave up on me.' Debby was disappointed but she is philosophical about her failure. 'I've got my Equity card now anyway. The people at the Albany thought I had something and took me on. I was able to spend two years working out with good actresses, actors and directors. I was learning everyday. Drama school can bring things out but they also take things away. You go into a school like a cabbage and you come out cole slaw vinaigrette. The trouble is the cole slaw vinaigrette all tastes the same.'

There's no danger Debby will come out performing the same way as all the rest. She has thought carefully about what she is doing and how she wants to do it.

'I love singing and I decided that I wanted to sing. But you have to be strong in the music business especially if you are a woman. You have to fight what people want you to be. Punk and New Wave music have helped us a lot because they showed you don't have to be slim and pretty to sing. Of course the record companies will still try and form you. One bloke offered me a single but he said I would have to lose weight if I wanted to be successful. But that's not necessary. You can be what you want. Joan Armatrading showed that.'

Debby is a convinced feminist, but she has firm ideas about how feminists should put their ideas across.

'You don't need to preach. There are many women who know nothing about feminism. But you can't just tell women they have to be hard core feminists. Women have different ways of handling ideas.'

I did a tour with the Sadistas. It was very enjoyable. But I think that you can't shove feminism down people's throats in slabs.



I had heard of women's liberation, but I was naive about it. I thought vaguely that if you were women's lib then men didn't buy you drinks.

You won't get all the women in the world interested in women's liberation whatever you do. There are still many women who think that their place is in the home. Educated women have realised more about their situation. Working class women especially those over thirty often have husbands who won't swear in front of them, give them gold and jewellery and lock them up in the home. I think we have to get away from preaching and get into the schools chatting about our ideas with ordinary people.'



Debby has decided to write songs: 'I write love songs. But there are two kinds of love songs — those that make you cry and those that make you cringe. I'm not good enough to write the first kind yet.'

But you can be sure she will be good enough soon. We will hear of Debby Bishop again because she is good. Her singing is reminiscent of the singers who inspired her — Aretha Franklin and Billie Holiday.

I'm not the only one who believes that. The graffiti writer in the ladies loo agrees. *Debby B is great.* And she is great. She is a new woman. She has confidence and a lot of talent. It is great to meet a woman performer who has such clear ideas and who will not simply allow herself to be marketed like a doll.

Interview: Anna Paczuska  
Pictures: Greg Hackel

# KATE LOSINSKA

## Saving civil servants from the red peril



THE LARGEST civil service union and the one whose members are the lowest paid is the Civil and Public Services Assoc. (CPSA). It has 234,000 members, most of whom are women: typists, secretaries and clerks. The union president is a woman, Kate Losinska, and like our Prime Minister, she's no sister.

Losinska is chairman (*sic*) of the National Moderate Action Group. Despite its name the Moderate Group is politically right wing, but loath to admit it. Losinska herself is a member of the Labour Party, although far to its right. In her election address she said that her biggest conviction was a 'fundamental objection to extremism of any description. I am opposed to *political* groups using this union for *political* purposes.' In an interview in the Guardian, Losinska made it clear that she is not opposed to *all* extremism—she 'blessed Margaret Thatcher several times for saving us from the Red Peril.'

Losinska is anti-communist and is often portrayed by Fleet Street as a loner, a brave woman holding back the red hordes. People have questioned whether her Labour Party membership is not just a flag of convenience expected of a trade union leader. But Losinska is kept in power by a machine which draws its strength from the same brand of social democratic politics.

Publicity for the Moderates is partly provided by the pens of Woodrow Wyatt and Bernard Levin, courtesy of the columns of the Sunday Mirror and the Times. Levin went as far as publishing the list of right wing candidates for the National Executive Council before the elections. The Moderate machine is kept running by full time CPSA officials, who in their youth were active lay members of the union.

'I am opposed to *political* groups using this union for *political* purposes.'

Losinska is no different from other right wing trade union officials, pulling together with management to uphold social democracy and stamp on the malcontents. But her sex makes her unusual even in a union where most of the members are women. Nearly half of the 26-strong NEC are women, and all but two (both men) are Moderates.

Losinska supports affiliation to the Women's TUC, yet her policies—opposition to abortion, support for some job cuts, automation of jobs, closure of workplace nurseries, concentration on fighting the reds instead of the cuts—all make life tougher for her members—in particular the women.

Her noble calls for democracy in society against the threat of communism are not borne out by her opposition to democratise the CPSA. The Moderates oppose election and recall of full-time officials; in their election address they say it is 'an attack on our full time officials and their job security'.

Her policies make  
life tougher for  
her members  
— in particular  
the women.

Two CPSA members in Brixton who were sacked for being militant trade unionists won support for their strike action at the union conference. Apart from three days in June, the two-month old strike has not been made official. Losinska and her cronies have been seen on the picket line once. Now Losinska is doing her best to force Brixton members back to work and to go through the official appeal procedure which she knows is stacked against Phil Cordell and Richard Cleverley, the victimised workers.

Losinska's anti-red scares and her crude portrayal of union members who fight for rank and file demands as potential Stalins are clearly in line with Thatcher's cold war scares. We cannot afford Thatcher and, as the long inventory of struggles she has sold out bear witness, we cannot afford Losinska.

Gerry Matthews Carolyn Conway



# ON THE CHEAP ON THE BUSES

Austria looking for obscure borders, the drivers falling asleep at the wheel while we passengers took it in turns to sing to them and belt them as they nodded off. We could communicate as we had a classics teacher on board who translated. Not every trip has this. We finally reached Ostend. Relief. Home was just a short, safe boat trip away.

Then the real fun started. The company had booked places on the ferry for 35 passengers, not 55, so our drivers demanded £3 from everybody to cover the difference. We travellers organised a strike, and refused to go on. Another bus pulled in. We then had two bus-loads on strike. Another pulled in. Same story. By this time the quay-side was littered with baggage, tourists and buses.

The ferry-crew said that all the drivers do this, and usually people pay the extra. After all, home is so close, it's all been terrible, and what's £3 just to get it over

with? It's £165 a trip, tax-free, that's what it is. A sort of enforced whip-round. I'm happy to report that after several hours the drivers found that they had enough money after all. Too right.

There is considerable concern throughout Europe about these buses. None of them are safe. None provide proper facilities. A lot of the drivers are not licensed. The drivers are on the road continuously from May to October, with no regard to physical wear and tear. Why has there been no proper investigation in Britain till now? Perhaps with three people dead safety standards will be enforced. Until that time anyone thinking of using these long-distance cheapo buses will find alternative means of travel.

These cowboy outfits should be blacked, boycotted, call it what you will, but don't use them. A holiday should be fun, not an extended version of Russian roulette. *Jill Brownbill*

**THIS SUMMER** three British tourists died in a coach crash in Yugoslavia. Lots of buses ply the route to Greece offering unbelievably cheap fares. None of them operates with any regard to safety. The road through Yugoslavia is single-lane, the sides littered with burnt out wrecks, crashed lorries and mangled heaps of metal. There are shrines every few yards, erected in memory of motorists and locals who were foolish enough to attempt to cross.

The holiday buses operate to a tight schedule. Board in London on Saturday afternoon, down to Dover, across the channel, then aim for Germany, about Sunday mid-morning. At this point the drivers are usually late already so a hurried toilet break might be fitted in if you're lucky. If not, tough. By Monday, you're in Austria. By this time you've been through several border crossings, invariably slow and tortuous, as for some inexplicable reason the drivers never have the right papers.

So, into Yugoslavia. Twenty-four hours of death-defying macho overtaRring awaits you. Any tourist who survives this bit deserves a medal. Surprisingly, most have done, until the recent tragedy. Greece eventually looms out of the horrors, but even now it's not all over. It takes 12-15 hours more to get to Athens. So you get there, exhausted after three or four days.

But think of this. If the tourist is tired, how about the drivers? They don't have bunks to sleep in, that space is better occupied by fare-paying passengers, so they sleep in the aisle. There are no toilets. You can fit two seats in the space it takes to instal a loo. Meal breaks are virtually non-existent, and are always taken in places where the drivers get a rake-off.

So, happy tourist, it's all over till the return journey. For you, but not for the drivers. They start the return trip Wednesday afternoon, it's not uncommon for them to arrive Wednesday morning. The whole thing is repeated back to London, arriving Saturday morning, so set off back to Athens the same afternoon.

This isn't the whole story. Apart from the journey, the luckless traveller who can't afford the air-fare is subjected to abuse, lack of communication, hours busting a gut praying for a toilet, starving if you're not one of those prepared people who take three days supply of sandwiches, and fiddles operated by the drivers.

A favourite fiddle is to overload the bus. Last August, on the return trip, 55 passengers boarded the bus in Athens. There were seats for 50, so five had to stand. Nice. We'd all paid the full fare, and were entitled to seats. Luckily everybody shared the seats.

The trip was bad, speeding fines, incorrect papers, lost in



# REVIEWS

## THE WOBBLIES THE OTHER CINEMA

ONE BIG union was the aim of the International Workers of the World, the 'Wobblies'. Formed in Chicago in 1905, they organised the masses of new usually unskilled workers, many of them immigrants who had flooded from the oppressive regimes of Europe into a country they thought would be full of opportunities.

They were sadly disillusioned. The United States needed immigrant labour to develop its new industries. But the workers found that the mills and factories in the land of plenty were no different from those in Europe. Hours were just as long, wages just as low, housing just as bad. Many turned to the revolutionary aims of the Wobblies – the overthrow of the capitalist system – as a solution to the misery of their lives.

It wasn't easy to organise in America at the time. The employers encouraged divisions between different groups of immigrants. Problems of language were immense. Striking millgirls at Lawrence, Massachusetts in 1910 came from over 20 different nationalities.

This film is an exciting and unique tribute to the organising successes of the Wobblies. It is a mixture of old film and photo clips and present day interviews with former members, all now in their 80s or even older. Hearing a woman silk weaver talking about her strike in 1912 brings it more to life than any number of books.

It also tells of their decline. Firstly, the very militant but unclear politics which meant that when America joined the carnage of the First World War, some Wobblies went to fight while others opposed it. They had no clear position.



Striking mill workers and militia Lawrence, Mass. 1912

### *The Wobblies*

produced and directed by  
Stewart Bird and Deborah Shaffer

Then how after the war, the American ruling class launched a counter attack, deporting many and driving others underground. By the mid-twenties, the Wobblies had been destroyed.

Luckily this film has recorded as much of their work as is possible 60 years later. The film makers should be proud of their achievement.

If you get a chance to see the film, don't hesitate. You'll come out inspired by our tradition and wanting to fight the same bosses the Wobblies fought all those years ago.

*Lindsey German*

The Wobblies can be booked from the Other Cinema, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London W1, 01-734 8508. It costs £35 + VAT and carriage if outside London and would be ideal for a WV social.

THE FERTILE YEARS  
BY WENDY COOPER,  
ARROW BOOKS, 95p.

THIS BOOK, although it contains some interesting material, is part of the 'health' band-wagon. The market is being flooded with books about health, women's health in particular. This is one of the cheaper books and is intended for the casual reader, so does not offer the comprehensive information that 'Our Bodies Ourselves' does.

Yet it does have its good points. There are clear and detailed chapters on hormones and premenstrual tension in particular. Unfortunately there is only a superficial explanation of the methods of birth control. The author does not scrutinise the pros and cons of

contraception in the same depth as pre-menstrual tension.

One thing that spoils the book is when Wendy Cooper attempts to talk about the social and political aspects of women's health. Here are some pearls:

– 'there is a basic and universal male response to female curves'

– 'biological liberation does not involve, as some of the extremist women's lib credo seems to do, any denial of womanhood or the feminine role'

– 'the best aphrodisiac for a woman is to be desired' By a man of course!

Despite all this rubbish, it is an interesting book to browse through, but there are better, more comprehensive books available for just a little more.

*Jane Foster*

## HELP! APPRENTICESHIPS FOR GIRLS

FEW WOMEN work in manual trades. We are not brought up to think of ourselves manipulating tools and machinery, our families and schools knock any such ideas out of us, we are channelled into 'women's jobs'.

The problem with this booklet is that it maintains that this situation hasn't been changed because women don't want to change it. It places faith in the Equal Opportunities Act, and underestimates the amount of difficulty and discouragement facing women entering manual trades. It is a myth that lack of motivation, shortage of skills and oversensitivity to men's sexism has 'kept us in the low-paid, deskilled sections of the labour market.'

HELP does offer some useful information for young women who wish to enter apprenticeships. It includes brief job descriptions; lots of lists of training agencies; age limits and other qualifications; and some idea of hours and rates of pay. Not least, there are women's own accounts of the day-to-day difficulties of working with men: 'I'm their little sister and they're my big brothers half the time.' 'It's the way men relate to one another: they find things funny that I find offensive.'

The booklet is available free from Thames TV.

Karen Wells

Thames Television's  
**HELP!**  
APPRENTICESHIPS FOR GIRLS



It's a girl to be a man's helper, but not a man's helper, just England!

**THAMES**  
LONDON'S WEEKDAY TV

Thames Television, 149 Tottenham Court Road, London, W1P 9LJ  
Telephone 01 388 5199

## Flannery O'Connor A Good Man is Hard to Find & Other Stories Introduced by Lisa Alther



### MY KINGA — WOMEN'S THEATRE GROUP

A MORE POWERFUL, politically dynamic play I have yet to see. So many provocative issues are touched on about the corrupt sale of contraceptive pills to the Third World, that the script writer deserves mention for her sheer guts alone.

This sale of dangerously high-dosage pills to the Third World is known as 'dumping'. The white resident doctor in the play buys these pills for 'her women' in a cheap deal. She believes that she's 'doing right', as the money saved is used to help provide other village necessities like effective latrines.

There is a high infant mortality rate in the village. Whilst three white women from a nearby conference on international family planning are in the village, another baby dies. Her mother had been taking the prescribed contraceptive pill and the baby overdoses on her mother's milk. Other village women, taking the same pill, are complaining of depression, headaches, lethargy etc. (Does it sound familiar?)

The dilemma facing the

three women is whether or not to expose the outrageous deal to the rest of the conference. On a moral level they have no problem, but on a political level they do: by exposing the trade they risk closure of the Health Centre altogether. The problem is eased temporarily by the suicide of the resident doctor after she realises her contribution to the illnesses and deaths of 'her women'.

For me, this play highlighted not only the exploitation of the Third World in terms of economy and 'voluntary genocide', but also the problems of prescribing an effective, safe contraceptive pill for women.

If you get a chance to see the play, then don't think twice.

Pat Arrowsmith  
Walthamstow WV

The Women's Theatre Group,  
01-251 0202 or 01-250 0775.

FOR THOSE interested in the article on women and fascism in the last issue, two recent pamphlets look closely at fascism and sexual politics: *Sexuality and Fascism* by Big Flame and *Breeders for Race and Nation* by the Birmingham Women and Fascism Study Group.

'A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND AND OTHER STORIES'  
BY FLANNERY O'CONNOR  
WOMEN'S PRESS, £2.50.

THERE IS something nightmarish about these stories. They are full of violence and many of the characters are physically or mentally abnormal. In *A Circle of Fire* Mrs Pritchard is obsessed with death and disease: 'You know that woman that had that baby in that iron lung... she had her arm around it in the coffin...' In *Good Country People* a woman's wooden leg and PhD in philosophy single her out from others. She has changed her name from Joy to Hulga, the ugliest name she could think of. And her handicap is relished: 'Mrs Freeman had a special fondness for the details of secret infections, hidden deformities, assaults upon children.'

Flannery O'Connor was born in the heart of the poor, rural American South, in Georgia in 1925. She died there in 1964 and her stories reflect the racism and the fanatical religion that is so wide-spread there. It is the same society which she explored in her novel *Wise Blood*, recently made into a film by John Huston. The people who inhabit this world seem doomed; they don't make choices but are the victims of their society and its evils.

The stories are written in a sparse style which is a pleasure to read. There is also a bleak humour which gives an extra cutting edge. When the old lady in the title story is pleading for her life, offering money to save herself being killed, she's told 'Lady, there never was a body that give the undertaker a tip!' And when Joy-Hulga kisses someone for the first time she finds it an 'unexceptional experience, and all a matter of the mind's control. Some people might enjoy drain-water if they were told it was vodka.'

Jan Elson

# LETTERS



## Socialism within our sight

### No Sexism Please

*Dear Womens Voice*

Re Thatcher's not our Sister, 'to call someone a bitch or a cow is such an accepted part of the language that few people would think twice about it'. Accepted by whom? By men certainly, by so-called socialist men even, but NOT by many women, and certainly not used by many women who DO think twice about it.

It's no excuse for 'many men, socialists included,' to 'say but I don't mean all women when I say that, I don't even think about it, it's just a word.' It's not just a word and we must make them think about it.

Of course it's not easy to make men think and I hope other sisters don't share my experience when challenging the use of these words. I was told that I was being extreme. As if this wasn't enough of an insult, to rub salt in the wound they carried on using the word right in front of me.

I don't see the need for sensitive and careful arguments -- we're not going to be called bitches, cows, cunts and we're not going to use those words to describe other women -- that's all, and the sooner we make that clear the better.

**Chrissie Howarth  
Sidcup**

### PINNING DOWN ACUPUNCTURE

*Dear Womens Voice*

I can understand Jeffer Clement's criticisms of 'alternative' medicine. There's a lot of ignorance about, and acceptance of, medicine and health as we in the west know it -- allopathic medicine.

We as socialists should be able to widen our knowledge and expectations of what health and healing are all about and incorporate this into our health care.

I'm concerned about people as 'wholes' not just as 'sick bodies' to be treated with pills at 70p a go -- palliatives mostly, the prescription handed to you by a doctor who just about glances at you -- if you're lucky -- and I remember the

days they actually examined you!

If we are to do this we must open our eyes and not just be aware of the short-term battles crucial as they are -- we should not scoff at those who choose to practise outside the narrow confines of the hospital, GP establishment -- or aren't allowed in. These institutions aren't run by people who care about people -- least of all health it seems.

I'm not advocating 'acupuncture' for the privileged but the opportunity for everyone to be healthy and happy and that's some task sisters.

**Maggie Bonner  
Oldham**

*WIEN*

When will we live the Socialist Way?  
Not my brothers until the brave day.  
When the workers will rise like the phoenix from the ashes.  
And no longer the ruling classes can crush us.  
For quickly will follow our equality,  
When from our oppressors we set ourselves free.  
When the profit motive's made redundant,  
Then all the workers will be resplendent,  
Reaping their true rewards at last,  
When the curs of capitalism are crushed,  
When black and white at last unite,  
Then the masses may show their might.  
When racists concede that the colour of the skin  
Shows not the calibre of the man within.  
For the old ruse of divide and rule,  
Proves racism is a capitalist tool.  
When woman is mistress of her own life,  
Not just thought of as mother and wife.  
When she stops being a pawn in the parasites game,  
She'll see though she's different to man their dreams are the same.

Oh workers when will you unite,  
To bring socialism within our sight.  
And boldly build your own birthright,  
Bring down the bosses we owe them a fight.

**Rita Millican  
Newcastle**

*Dear Womens Voice*

Jeffer Clement's letter smacks of imperialism to me. It seems rather arrogant to dismiss a medicine used by millions of people in China and Indo-Asia as 'quackery'.

I for one would not so easily dismiss a medicine that sets about curing people rather than sending them home with dangerous chemicals like valium and assorted painkillers in an attempt to ignore their pain.

**Tessa Weare  
Hackney**

got to change.

So yes, let's fight the cuts, but for Christ's sake recognise the wider implications and fight for socialist health care which embraces *all* types of medical practice -- and please, don't put down women who turn to acupuncture not to queue jump, not to gain better facilities/medical care -- but merely to be free of pain and have more energy to give in fighting for a socialist alternative.

**Lesley Wilde  
South East London**

*Dear Womens Voice*

When I read Jeffer Clement's letter in this month's WV, I felt very angry. Angry at the parochial view of what health care should be about; and angry at the implication that because a woman chooses to receive acupuncture, she has 'sold out'.

Of course, we've got to fight to save what we've got. Isn't that obvious? But that's still a bloody defensive attitude. Shouldn't we also be fighting to *expand* the concept and definition of health and in doing so, also fight for 'alternative' medicine to be free on the NHS?

The NHS is fine as far as it goes but as socialists and feminists we cannot believe it is the only answer. At the moment it is the only alternative -- and that's what we've

### OUR CONCERN ABOUT OUR CARE

*Dear Womens Voice*

I would like to draw everyone's attention to the Marie Stopes Clinic and its policy of 'Your Care, Our Concern'. I feel this is a misleading description of the sort of service they provide.

I recently made the difficult decision of being sterilised. I chose to have this operation at the Marie Stopes Clinic because I felt it would be a place that would have real concern for women. Here however I was proved wrong because four months later I became pregnant. I was

shocked, lost my job and the whole experience had a terrible effect on me and my family. I received no offers of financial or emotional support from the clinic. They arranged a termination and reterilisation as this was part of the agreement I had signed. This was performed by the same doctor and I found this extremely offensive and insensitive. There was no after-care or check up as would be the case after a National Health operation, and all this cost £85 which I earned with great difficulty. 'Your Care, Our Concern' to me equals 'Your Money, Our Concern', as that's what this particular clinic is really all about.

So you lucky liberated ladies you can now put an end to all your contraceptive worries and be sterilised. It seems there are very few facts and figures available about the failure rates after various types of sterilisation. The figures given to me of five failures in two and a half thousand operations, I have already found to be wrong.

Poor Marie Stopes who cared so much to have her name being used and abused by people who care so little.

I would be very pleased to hear from any one regarding their own experiences. Maybe we could collect some facts and figures to help others, as I hope this letter will.

Valerie Willis  
St Albans

## Some Officials weren't so bad

Dear Womens Voice

In your article on the day care strike in Camden (June issue), you certainly gave a good view of the facts from the women's point of view, but we would like to put a different emphasis on some of the points.

First of all, it is not clear in your article who you include as union officials. Shop stewards were certainly very involved along with the strike committee.

We all know that NALGO nationally is a bureaucratic union and that trying to make a local strike official takes time and persuasion. But it is untrue to say that

Camden Branch officers were unsupportive: maybe they never thought that this non militant section of Camden workers would go on strike and therefore were very resistant at first; but once we got a strike call, our Branch officers were right behind us, especially our Branch secretary, offering us his time, energy and skills, hence the warm and long ovation he got from the workers once a return to work had been decided. Of course, if NALGO inside Camden had had a more efficient organisation, our strike could have taken another turn.

The women's group that might come out of the dispute is not seen by us as a tool to keep up the fighting spirit, but rather a way of breaking our isolation and a forum to share problems with women working in other day care centres in Camden.

A few of the interviewees for last month's article.

Camden Council  
R. Duke, Eileen Lanigan,  
Penny McKenna, Angela Joyce



\* indicates letter has been cut for reasons of space. Please try to limit your letters to 200 words (typed double spaced if possible). We like to hear about what infuriates you and hopefully pleases you as well about WV — but please keep it short. Every month we have to leave out letters for reasons of space.

# ORGANISING AT WORK



*LONG BENTON, Newcastle, is one of the largest offices in the country. It's the headquarters of the Department of Health and Social Security and employs 8000 people. Nearly three quarters of them are women. We spoke to Laura Johnstone about the problems of organising there.*

Nearly everybody here is in the union—96% are in the CPSA. You join on your first day. It's just another one of the papers you sign when you start work. Long Benton is divided into blocks and each one has a block agent, which is like a shop steward, and every room within the block should have a room rep. We should be able to have block meetings to discuss issues. The facility is there but they rarely happen.

No wonder the union seems irrelevant to most people, when all they see of it is circulars which come into the office and which most people don't read. Yet women need the union. They are discriminated against throughout the civil service. 84% of clerical assistants (the lowest grade) here are women, 72% of clerical officers, and 45% of executive officers. In the higher grades the percentage is even lower.

Special provision for women workers is almost worse than useless. The CPSA here has a Working Womens Advisory Committee. Six people attended the last meeting, which is disgusting. Its just the same people talking to each other. Some of the meetings have more men than women at them and they have a chairman.

The first one I went to was just discussing things to do with the civil service. I suggested widening it out a bit to talk about things like Chix or the Employment Bill. They just said, that's nothing to do with the civil service. But people

would be interested in those sorts of issues. The meetings aren't advertised widely so it's no wonder most people don't come.

There's no proper childcare provision on site, but the union is reluctant to start a creche campaign. They say that because many parents are bussed in from long distances that they don't want to bring kids in. That's a load of rubbish. Many women would be pleased to have somewhere to take their kids even if it does mean travelling. It's better than nothing. Anyway a workplace creche here could also be used by women on the local estate, which I'm sure they'd welcome.

The union says there's no feeling among the membership but that feeling has to be campaigned for which is what the union should be doing. Instead it blames the women. There was a motion to national conference to reserve a certain amount of seats for women on the NEC. Our branch executive opposed it, on the grounds it would let in the right wing. They blame the women's vote for the recent right wing election victory in CPSA.

The problem for us is to make the union relevant to women, which means constant involvement over all the issues, report backs, block and room meetings, so that people know what is going on and begin to feel part of the union.

There are people willing to fight. The first union meeting I went to there was an overtime ban nationally against the cuts. The branch executive moved that the ban should be lifted since the government weren't going to cut the DHSS yet. About 200 or so people voted against it. I was amazed. I thought the only vote against it would be mine. We have to try to get that minority organised.

# Dear Jane

'WHEN A woman masturbates, she's guaranteed to be in bed with a person she really likes.' Masturbation, once reputed to send you blind, lead to cancer, and cause young children to be mutilated by clitordec-tomy, is finally beginning to be brought out into the open as a subject that can be discussed. Most liberal child development books say that masturbation is a normal and natural part of a child's development, therapists and counsellors say masturbation is important for women to realise their full sexual potential. There is however, a large underlying assumption that masturbation is not an end in itself, it's 'part' of development, or it 'leads' to full and satisfying adult sex lives.

Masturbation has a long way to go before it's really something that can be talked about freely. We talk about sex, sexual response, how we feel about sex with other people, but very rarely about sex with ourselves. It's quite acceptable to admit to other people that you and your lover retired to bed to make love on a lazy Sunday afternoon, it takes a little more nerve to say that you retired to your favourite haunt to masturbate.

Masturbation is still seen as second-best. It's something you may indulge in as a child or adolescent, but later you graduate to the real thing (happy hetero sex).

People talk of masturbation as being empty, unfulfilling but is that really true?

Masturbation is an activity that is good in its own right, it isn't part of development, it doesn't lead on to anything, but is simply OK, and demonstrates to ourselves that sexual feelings and sensations are great, are acceptable with ourselves.

Part of the reservations that many women feel about masturbation is almost unconscious. We are so strongly conditioned to believe that our sexuality is a 'response' usually a response to something that a man has done to us, that to take all the initiative, to be both actor and responder may make us feel there is something amiss.

For women to accept

masturbation as part of their lives is an important and liberating event. Masturbation frees us to make choices about what kind of sex we want, whether with a partner, with ourselves, whether we want intercourse or not. It makes sexuality more diverse, gives us more options to express our sexual feelings.

Being at ease with our own bodies and sexuality through masturbation can give us a sense of self-confidence, and acceptance. Perhaps most importantly when we feel free, without guilt or doubts, about having sex with ourselves, it can be great fun.

JANE FOSTER

## Yours Worried

## National Womens Festival Against The Tories

services and nursery cuts means women are expected to stop work to care for kids, the old and the sick.

\* John Corrie failed to restrict women's abortion rights but abortion facilities continue to be cut back and new restrictions are on the way.

\* William Whitelaw wants to propose that immigrant women not be allowed to bring foreign husbands into the country. Not only is this racist, it is also sexist.

\* James Prior wants to make it harder for a woman to return to work after having a baby and to restrict her trade union rights—over one-third of trades unionists are women.

\* Geoffrey Howe's increase in Child Benefit is insultingly low. Supplementary Benefit will no longer be automatically linked to inflation.

\* Michael Heseltine's Housing Bill will make it even harder for women on their own to find a secure place to live. This, together with cuts in public spending on housing and on

refuges for battered women, forces women to stay in intolerable home conditions.

Women are facing a backlash against their fight for independence and equality! And all this from a government led by a woman! Many people ridicule her because she is a woman rather than attacking the policies which she and her henchmen are carrying out. Women have struggled for their rights for years and will not sit back now. They are fighting for a future in which they can live their lives as they wish.

We want you to join the struggle. On March 7th, as part of the celebrations for International Women's Day, we are organising a National Festival for Women's Rights against Tory attacks.

A planning group has been set up to organise the Festival and we want as many women as possible in women's groups, trade unions and Labour Party branches to come to the Festival. Activities will include a rally, stalls, cabaret, theatre,

and films. Everyone is welcome.

On International Women's Day itself there will be a number of local demonstrations. The planning group for the Festival will be involved in coordinating activities in London and the South East, so contact us if you want to find out more.

### What you can do

1. You can sponsor the Festival either as an individual or through your union/LP branch or women's group (the fee is £5 upwards for individuals and £10 for organisations).
2. You can have a stall for your organisation at the festival.
3. You can help us plan the Festival and come along or send a representative to the planning group meetings. Send us your suggestions for the day anyway!
4. By contacting us you can also find out about any other activities in your area.

• For further details of the festival contact the organisers at 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1



To all Women's Groups,  
Trades Unions, and Labour  
Party Branches

1980 is seeing some of the worst attacks on women's rights ever!

\* Patrick Jenkin wants to see women back in the home, propping up the crumbling social services. Cuts in public sector jobs hit women's jobs hardest, and a general rise in unemployment linked with health, social



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# TALES WE TELL OUR SISTERS

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## It's a woman's life in the Army

by  
Georgina  
Casburn

I WAS very bored with my dead end office job. My two brothers were both doing well in the forces, so I decided to join the army.

Many of the other girls I joined with were in a very similar position – no hope of a job in their home towns. Some even had delusions of grandeur and thought the ultimate high was to become an officer and even if they didn't have the necessary qualifications thought they had only to obey every command and be 'good girls' to work their way into the 'elite'.

I wanted to join as a cook and gain

qualifications which were of some use to me but I was soon put straight about that. Only male cooks received the training necessary to gain these useful qualifications.

As I had been doing clerical work I was 'persuaded' to carry on with the same. So off I went for training. This was three months of misery, we all had to conform and obey all commands given out by our officers. We weren't allowed to think for ourselves – everything had to be done the regulation way. All this and the many petty restrictions on our social life made life pretty unbearable.

I was right back where I started – a boring job but doing it for much less pay, having to wear an archaic uniform and no prospect of any improvement except by promotion. It seemed to me that the main point of promotion was to enable you to lord it over 'lesser beings' doing all the donkey work – they called this responsibility.

Leave was considered a privilege. We were supposed to be on call twenty-four hours a day. So it could be withdrawn.

The class system is not dead in the armed services. There was certainly no intermingling of ranks. Anyone of a lower rank caught socialising with someone of a higher rank was on a discipline charge. The lower ranks were the ones to be charged. If an officer returned late from leave it went unnoticed. A private would be charged with being absent without leave and no matter what the reason, the crime would have to be

punished. A substantial fine and restrictions of 'privileges' were the usual punishments. It seemed to me that anything resembling a normal life was considered a 'privilege' by the army. There was no appeal other than a formal complaint, known as the grievance procedure, to a higher authority, and it doesn't take many guesses to realise whose side he would be on!

The majority of the officers were university educated, had very little knowledge of real life problems and quite obviously despised the lower ranks. They just didn't seem to care about our feelings and needs as individuals – to conform to their way of thinking was all that was required. We were there to obey their orders and we had to comply or else.

I was well and truly taken in by all the false promises. I have realised now just how wrong my brothers are and how conditioned their minds are to service life. My copies of *Socialist Worker* and *Womens Voice* are either ignored or denounced as communist propaganda.

The most shaming thing is that it took me so long to realise how conditioned I had become to the system. The WRAC is an unequal body which seems to exist solely to free the men for more 'useful purposes' such as duty in Northern Ireland and who knows, perhaps even London in the future. Only recently it has been suggested that the WRAC should receive weapon training 'for their own protection'. After my own experiences all I can add is ... I wonder?

# WHAT IS GOING ON?

## WV groups

- **ABERDEEN Womens Voice** for more information telephone Liz 51059
- **ABERYSTWYTH Womens Voice** meets regularly. Contact c/o Students Union, UCW, Aberystwyth. Babysitting available.
- **ACTON WV** Contact Ruth or Jude 740 6660 for venue details.
- **NORTH BIRMINGHAM** Women's Voice meets fortnightly. Phone Maggie 021 449 4793
- **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM** Women's Voice meets fortnightly. Phone Jill 021 459 1718
- **BLACK COUNTRY** Sundays fortnightly. 2.30, 27 Glen Court, Compton Road.  
Children welcome.
- **Bradford Womens Voice** group meets fortnightly. Kids welcome. Contact Janet c/o Textile Hall, Westgate Bradford or phone Trish 306447.
- **BRIGHTON WV** meets fortnightly on Tuesday at 8pm at the Queen's Head. For information phone 696897.
- **BISTOL WV** meets every Wednesday 7.30pm. For details phone Katrina 46875.
- **BURTON ON TRENT WV** meets every week. Details from Kim 33929.
- **CANTERBURY Womens Voice** meets every other Tuesday at Jolly Sailor Northgate. Phone Barbara (Lyminge 862742).
- **CHORLTON WV** meets fortnightly on Tuesdays. Ring Claire 226 1048 for details and babysitters.
- **COVENTRY WV** meets every other Wednesday 8.00pm in the Hertford Tavern off Queens Road (near the Butts) Coventry 361585 (Sue Pinkham).
- **CROYDON Womens Voice** meets alternate Tuesdays. Phone Maureen 660 0989 or Yvonne 664 3768.
- **DUDLEY WV** meets fortnightly every 2nd and 4th Tuesday at the Plough, Church Street, Brierley Hill. 8.00pm contact Brigitte Brierley Hill 78308.
- **EALING/SOUTHALL WV** phone Christine or Jane 571 1838.
- **ECCLES AND SALFORD Womens Voice.** For information ring Jennie 707 2557 or Ann 737 3800
- **EDINBURGH Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on Sunday evenings. Phone Penny 5 0731 for details.

- **ENFIELD WV** meets every other Monday 8pm at Scope Community Centre 232a Ponders End, High Street. Details Nora 807 1741
- **GLASGOW WV** For details ring Clare 357 1157
- **GLOSSOP, Derbyshire** Women's Voice meets second and fourth Tuesday of every month at 110 Victoria Street, Glossop. Phone Glossop 64287 for Carol.
- **HACKNEY WV** Details and babysitters phone Liz/Carol 254 3470 or Jan/Maddie 249 8716
- **HALIFAX Womens Voice** details from WV and SW sellers every Saturday 11am -12.30pm. Co-op arcade on the Precinct.
- **HAMMERSMITH Womens Voice** meets regularly. Contact Kate 748-7336 for details and babysitter.
- **HARLOW Womens Voice** meets fortnightly on Wednesday at 8pm. Ring Pat, Harlow 28022.
- **HIGHBURY WV** Phone Clara 226 7066
- **HORNSEY Womens Voice** meets fortnightly. Ring Jane 348 6712 or Maggie 341 1182 for information and babysitters.
- **ISLINGTON Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Sandy at 802 6145 for details.
- **KENTISH TOWN WV** For details ring Pauline 586 5693
- **LAMPETER Womens Voice** meets Tuesday evenings. Details from WV sellers or write c/o SDUC Lampeter. Dyfed, Wales.
- **LANCASTER Womens Voice** meets regularly—ring 36196 for details.
- **LEEDS Womens Voice** group meets every 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 8pm in the Central Station Hotel, Wellington Street. For more information contact Gilda 622 800 or Bev 457 098.
- **LEICESTER Womens Voice** meets alternative tuesdays. Contact Fiona 0533 62855.
- **LEYTONSTONE WV** group meets fortnightly. Please ring Annie (556 5595) or Pam (558 1509) for details.
- **LIVERPOOL Womens Voice** meets on alternate Tuesdays at 8pm in the County Hotel. For further information phone Jane 727 1182
- **LUTON WV** Details write to Denise 35, Chatsworth Road, Luton.
- **MANCHESTER University Womens Voice** meets each week at 5pm in the students union.
- **MEDWAY Womens Voice** meets regularly. Telephone Lici, Medway 571628
- **NEWCASTLE Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Liz 854 782.
- **NEWHAM Womens Voice.** Ring Pam 534 1417
- **NORWICH Womens Voice** for more information write c/o 56 St Benedicts St. Norwich.

**NOTTINGHAM WV** meets every other Monday at the Womens Centre, Street. Details Chrissie Langley Mill. 62358.

● **OXFORD Womens Voice** meets fortnightly. Phone Oxford 50437 for more details.

● **PIMLICO area Womens Voice**—phone Helen 730 7983 or Leslie 834 0760 for further details.

● **READING Womens Voice** meets fortnightly. For details phone Shirley on 585554

**ST HELENS WV** meets alternate Mondays. Phone Carol, St Helens 28178.

● **SHEFFIELD Womens Voice** meets fortnightly at the Prince of Wales. Division Street. For details ring Sue 613739

● **SOUTHWARK Womens Voice**—anybody interested should contact Kirsten Ross on 732 4604 for further details.

**SOUTH LONDON WV** meets alternate Tuesdays at the Tate Library, Brixton. Ring Sally, 720 5768 for details.

● **SOUTH WEST LONDON Womens Voice.** All welcome. Information and babysitters contact Marion 947 0560.

● **STOCKPORT Womens Voice.** For details phone 061 431 7564.

● **STOKE ON TRENT Womens Voice** meets at Knotty Action, Mollart Street, Hanley. Fortnightly. Ring Sandra 814094

● **TOTTENHAM Womens Voice** meets regularly. Phone Mary for information and babysitters, 802 9563.

● **TOWER HAMLETS WV** meets fortnightly; on Tuesdays. Details from Helen 980 6036

● **WALTHAMSTOW Womens Voice** meets alternative Tuesdays at 8pm. Phone Pauline 521 4768 or Mary Ann 520 3025.

● **Wrexham Womens Voice** Group meets fortnightly from 17 March. Telephone Heather 87293 for more details.

## WV public meetings

**Womens Voice WOMEN IN HISTORY series.** 7pm The Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Road. (Warren Street/Goode Street Tube). Friday nights.  
Sept 5 Eleanor Marx - *Lindsay German.*  
Sept 19 Kathe Kollwitz - *Anna Sullivan.*  
Oct 3 Inessa Armand - *Anna Paczuska.*  
Oct 18 Sarah Dickenson - *Lin James.*  
Oct 31 Clara Zetkin - *Yolanda Bystram*  
Nov 26 Rosa Luxemburg - *Marnie Holborow.*

Dec 12 Catherine Chidley - *Nora Carlin.*

North & East London Womens Voice Day School  
**WOMEN AGAINST THE TORIES**  
Saturday 25 October, 10.30am  
Trade Union Centre,  
2A Brabant Rd, Wood Green,  
London N22  
(nr Wood Green Tube Station)  
**Workshops, film, refreshments, creche, evening disco**  
**ALL W.V. READERS WELCOME**  
Registration 75p. Disco £1 (50p for those attending Day School). Send registration fee plus sae to:  
Pam Williams  
P O Box 82  
London E2 9DS.

**ST ALBANS WV AND GAY VOICE** joint meetings—8.15pm in the Beehive (upstairs bar), Watsons Row, off London Road, St Albans.  
Friday September 5 — Gays and Employment — Richard Thorne.  
Tuesday September 30 — GLF, the politics of confrontation — speaker from East London GLF.

**TOTTENHAM WV** — Monday September 15, 8pm at 40 Turnpike Lane, London N8. — speaker and discussion on Olive Schreiner.

## Small ads

### MATERNITY BENEFITS AND THE EMPLOYMENT ACT.

A factsheet on how the Employment Act will affect maternity benefits, and how to negotiate for a better deal, has been produced by the Defend Our Unions Committee. Send orders to Maternity, PO Box 82 London E2 9DS. Cheques or postal orders should be made out to 'Right to Work Campaign' Cost £1 for 50.

### NATIONAL FESTIVAL FOR WOMENS RIGHTS

— fortnightly planning group meetings — from Monday, September 1st, at 7pm, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. All welcome.  
National Planning Day: October 4th, 2pm, Intensive English School, Star St London, W2.

### IRANIAN WOMENS SOLIDARITY GROUP—next meeting

on Thursday September 4, 8pm in the Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Road.

### COUNTERACT THEATRE COMPANY

are touring with Never Mind the Ballots, a humourous look at the attacks on Womens rights and the Employment Act. For bookings contact Counteract at 27, Clerkenwell close, EC1 0AT Tel 01 251 4977.

# SANDRA



## Your nearest Womens Voice Group meets

Join Womens Voice...

join  
the  
fight

*Womens Voice* is an organisation that fights for women's liberation and socialism.

We fight for:

Equal pay

Free abortion and contraception

Maternity leave and child care provision

The right to work

Against all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex, sexual orientation, or race.

Women's liberation is only possible through women organising and fighting for themselves.

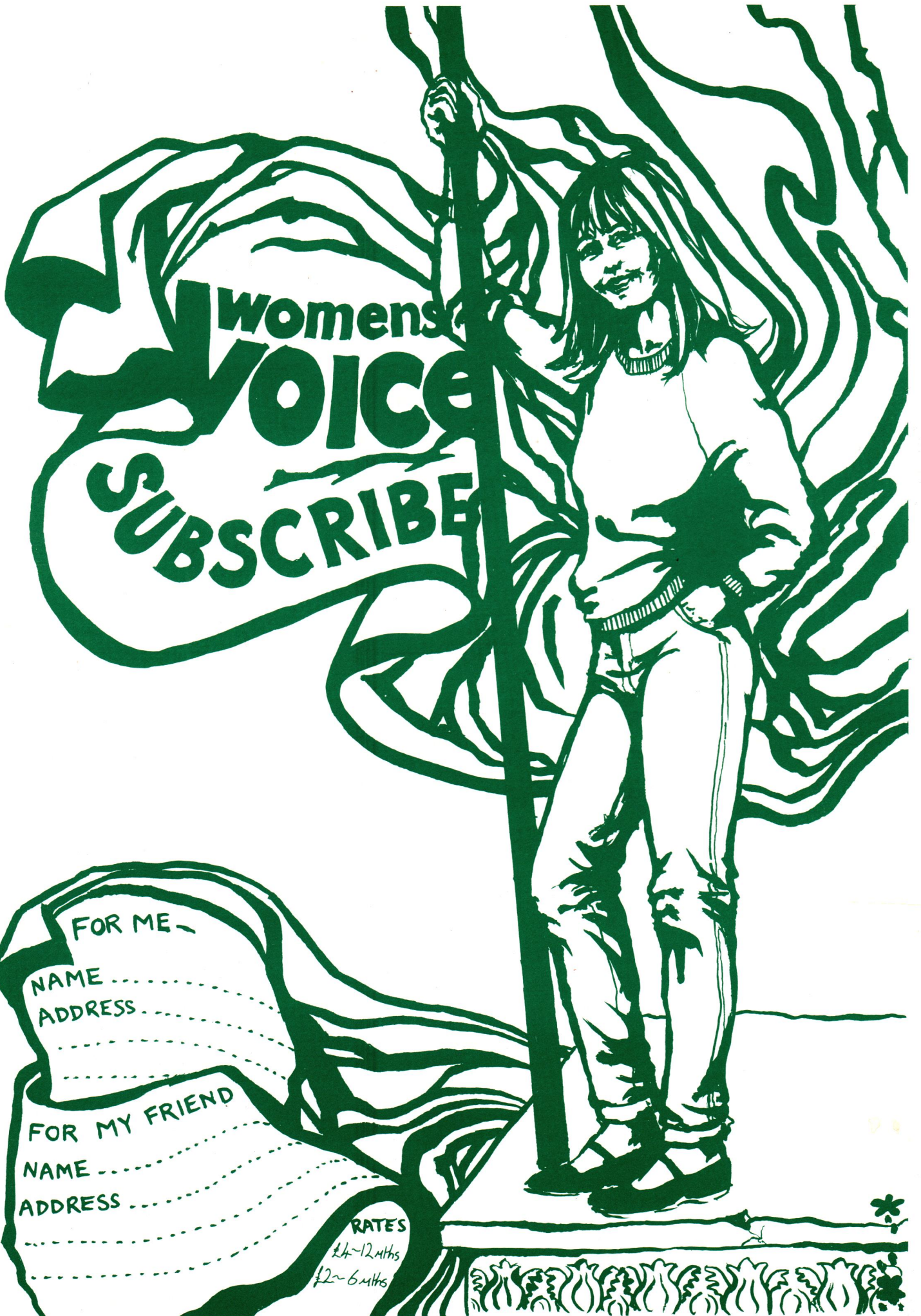
Women's liberation can only be achieved by linking its struggles to those of the working class and overthrowing the capitalist system.

*Womens Voice* supports the aims of the Socialist Workers Party. It is organisationally independent but based on the politics of the SWP.

I want to join the fight...  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Send to Womens Voice  
PO Box 82  
London E2



Womens  
**VOICE**  
SUBSCRIBE

FOR ME -

NAME .....  
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FOR MY FRIEND

NAME .....  
ADDRESS .....

RATES

4-12 mths

2-6 mths

