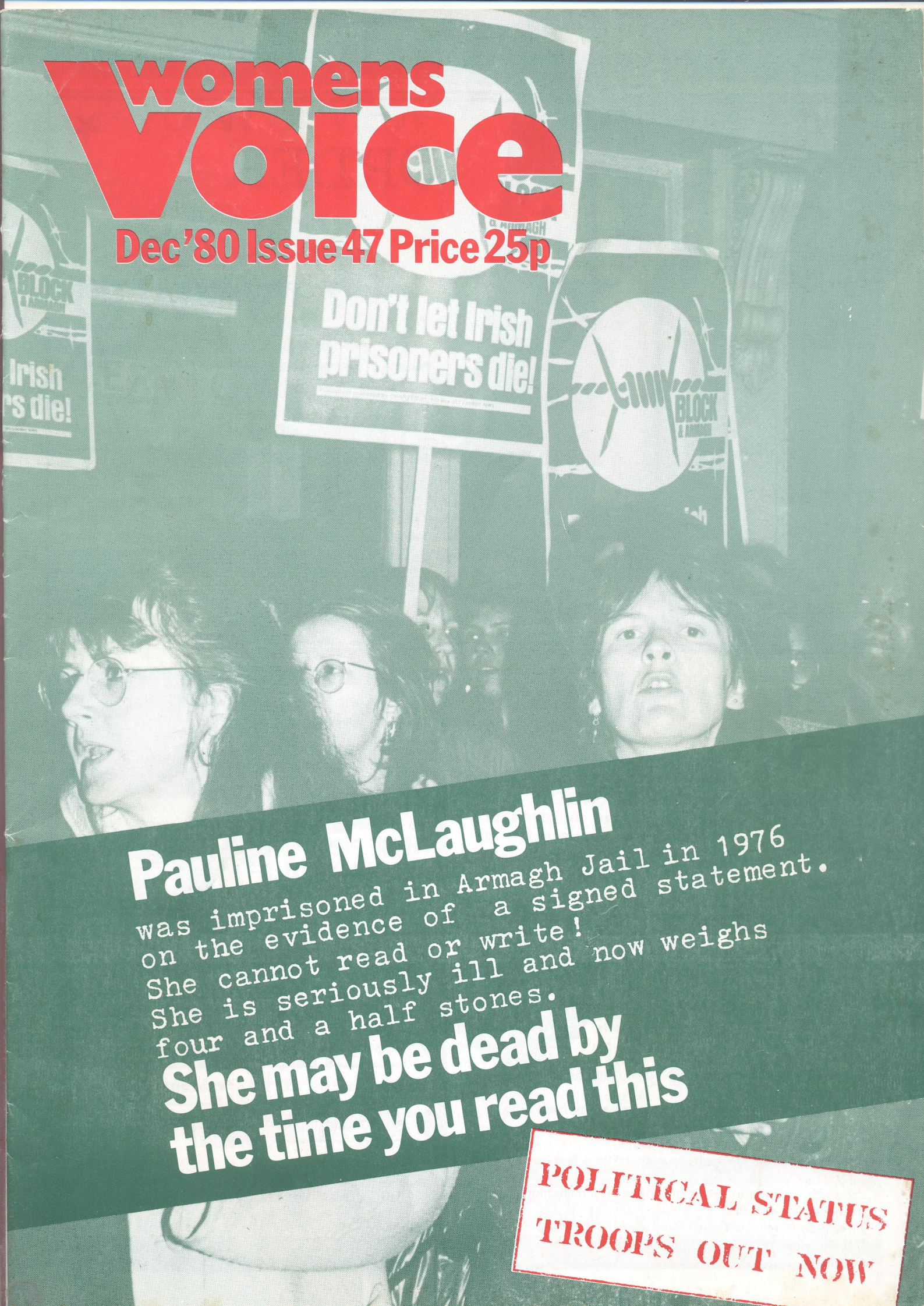


# Womens Voice

Dec '80 Issue 47 Price 25p



## Pauline McLaughlin

was imprisoned in Armagh Jail in 1976 on the evidence of a signed statement. She cannot read or write! She is seriously ill and now weighs four and a half stones.

**She may be dead by the time you read this**

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(WVI)

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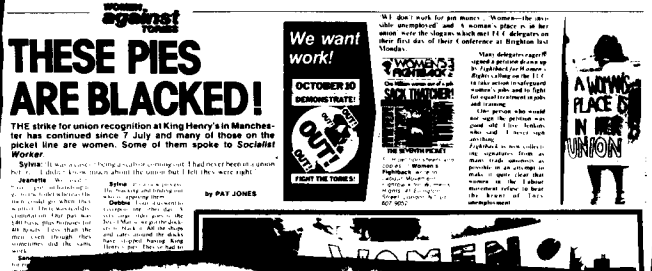
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## The Threat of War

TENS OF thousands of women were among demonstrators against Cruise missiles last month. Since the Russian invasion of Afghanistan a year ago, the cold war has been stepped up. For the first time in many of our lives nuclear devastation seems a serious threat. The two superpowers are arming to the teeth and bringing us all closer to the edge of war.

We've lived under the shadow of the bomb for 30 years. But Cruise missiles represent a new threat. They are meant to be used in a limited theatre of war, which would be a nuclear war wiping out most of Europe, but leaving the USA and Russia east of the Urals intact.

The whole point of Cruise missiles is that they are 'first strike' weapons. In other words their effectiveness is in being used first to 'take out' the missiles on the 'enemy side'. The argument that Britain needs nuclear weapons as a deterrent to attacks from other countries is completely hollow when applied to a weapon which has to be used first.

Yet the Tory government is committed to siting missiles in Britain. Labour defence spokesmen are also in favour. Michael Foot wants missiles to be in the hands of NATO. All rely on NATO to protect the interests of British big business. Thatcher has escalated the arms race at a rate which we haven't seen since the second world war.

Forty per cent of people in Britain are in favour of unilateral disarmament. Many know what a nuclear war would be like, and don't want it under any circumstances.

The threat of war is always present in a world where profits are valued higher than the lives of workers. That threat will only disappear completely when we control every aspect of our lives and all the resources we produce.

By building a movement which opposes the missiles we can bring that world a bit nearer. Once thing is certain. If we don't get involved in the campaign against the missiles, and if that campaign doesn't succeed, nuclear war will be that much more likely.

## ...and the Threat of Law

Lord Denning's decision that nurses are acting illegally by taking part in abortions using the prostaglandin (drip) method will result in seven thousand less abortions a year.

The method is used for the middle to late abortions of four to six months, where surgery would be more dangerous. The way it works is for prostaglandin to be pumped into the womb. The legal argument is over who performs the abortion. The doctor introduces a catheter into the womb, and the nurse controls the pump which regulates the amount of prostaglandin.

Denning accepted in his Appeal Court judgement that it was the nurse who performed the abortion, by turning the pump on and off. Since it is illegal for nurses to perform abortions, this method now has to be either performed by doctors, or abandoned altogether.

It is obvious that doctors are not going to supervise an abortion which takes between 18 and 30 hours. In most places this method will simply not happen. Yet the women who need abortions at between four and six months are often the most desperate. Women with deformed foetuses, young girls who didn't realise or dare admit they were pregnant, women nearing menopause who thought the risk of pregnancy was past.

The forces ranged against abortion have failed in Parliament for the time being. Instead they are trying to erode abortion facilities by the back door. They are being helped by the cuts in health spending.

We defeated the Corrie bill by mobilising in our tens of thousands. We have to be prepared to move again to stop further attacks on our rights.

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Cover photo by Jill Posner

## The horror of Armagh



Photo Joanna O'Brien

BY THE time you read this the four women in Armagh will have started their hunger strike for the demand for political status. The first coffins may be leaving the H-Blocks. Pauline McLaughlin will almost certainly be dead.

The women republican prisoners in Armagh have been on the 'dirty protest' since 7 February this year. Before then the women were on a 'no work' protest, to differentiate themselves from the criminal prisoners. Because of this they lost all their 'privileges' and remission.

On that day the women in Armagh were brutally attacked by 40 male warders who remain in Armagh 24 hours a day, intimidating the women. They were confined to their cells for 23 hours a day and weren't allowed access to toilets or wash-basins. They had to dispose of their urine and excreta the only way they could. Soon a full scale 'dirty protest' was under way.

These women, like the men in H-Block, are continuously harassed. Their lights are kept on 24 hours a day, their spy holes and windows are boarded up and their only view is their walls of excreta. Warders have thrown their bedding onto the floor and emptied chamber pots onto them. Often they are hosed down in their cells leaving them and their bedding soaking wet.

One problem the men in H-Block don't have to cope with is menstruation. The women in

Armagh lie surrounded by used sanitary towels. They are not allowed to dispose of them.

Inevitably the women are not in good health. They receive no medical attention, which has led to the tragic case of Pauline McLaughlin. Pauline was convicted of political offences on the basis of a confession forced under interrogation. In Court it was claimed that she had read her statement three times before signing. But Pauline can't read or write! The court in which Pauline was convicted was one without a jury.

During custody on remand she developed a stomach complaint which means she can't keep food down. In early 1978 she was sentenced to indefinite detention and refused political status. She joined her sisters on protest. Her weight dropped from 9½ stone to under 7 stone. By July last year Pauline couldn't even keep fluids down.

During this period the prison doctor kept declaring her unfit for punishment and restoring food parcels until her weight improved, then declaring her fit for punishment until her weight fell. She was moved to a military hospital and then returned to Armagh with her condition

still undiagnosed.

Since the 'dirty protest' began the Northern Ireland Office and the prison authorities have been playing games with her life. She was convinced by her sisters on 'dirty protest' to come off the protest but she still has not received proper medical attention.

Pauline is 24 years old, has grey hair, her teeth are rotting and falling out, *she weighs 4½ stone* and has recently had a heart attack during her stay in Musgrove Park Hospital.

Pauline McLaughlin may be dead by the time you read this, she most certainly is dying. This is the harsh reality of the British presence in Northern Ireland.

The women in Armagh have now decided to go on hunger strike to try and win the right of special category status which includes free association with other political prisoners, educational facilities and visits. Whereas the women in Armagh have the right to wear their own clothes, the men in H-Blocks don't. One of the reasons for the women in Armagh going on hunger strike is in support for the men, and for all five demands. No concessions can be made on individual points, they are five parts of a whole.

In Northern Ireland the announcement of the H-Block hunger strike brought 30,000 of the North's 500,000 population onto the streets in support of the hunger strike. Lily Fitzsimons explained that since the announcement of the hunger strike the RAC's local marches have grown in number, in most cases from 80 to over 3,000. Women who normally didn't bother about the prisoners are asking when the next demo will be, and are always willing to be involved in any kind of activity.

As Lily pointed out no amount of intimidation from the British authorities will stop them now.

Rose McAllister said that the local marches were showing their strength and that the situation in the north has never been as explosive since internment. As was proved then, and will be now, there is nothing the British government fear more than 'Irish feet stamping Irish streets in front of British soldiers.'

These women and men are not masochists, they don't enjoy it. All they have left to demonstrate with are their bodies, their lives.

We can't let them die.  
Julie Waterson.

## HUNGER STRIKE

'... There is always a horrible taste in the mouth, which grows more parched as the days pass, with the tongue dry and hot and thickly coated. The saliva becomes thick and yellow; a bitter tasting phlegm rises constantly, so nasty that one retches violently, but is denied the relief of sickness. The urine, growing thicker, darker, more scanty, is passed with difficulty. There is no action of the bowels during the imprisonment. Each day one's bones seem more prominent, the flesh falling away, the skin shrivelled, the hands and feet a dull purple with bright red streaks. One is always cold... Pain settles in the small of the back and in the chest; occasionally a sharp stinging pain in the right breast.

Gripping pains seize one suddenly in the stomach and abdomen. The pulse becomes swift and irregular. There are palpitations and pain in the region of the heart. If one rises from bed, one grows faint and giddy, and there comes at last a constant ringing in the ears, when one is lying flat, which changes, if one stands up, to a deafening roar, with a sensation of pressure in the ears as one breathes.'

*Sylvia Pankhurst, describing a thirst and hunger strike. The suffragettes often went on thirst and hunger strike to win their demands. These are the same symptoms as a hunger strike. Only the time factor is longer when taking water.*



Photo Joanna O'Brien

OVER 300 women demonstrated outside Downing Street on Saturday 25 October. They were demanding the immediate release of Anne Boyle and Marie O'Hare. Both are members of the Relatives Action Committee and were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act on their way to the Socialist Feminist Conference.

Most of the women on the picket came from the Socialist Feminist conference where Ireland was a major theme. Over 1,000 came to the conference.

The conference was called around the issue of imperialism, but discussion of how we fight imperialism remained at a level far from reality. Activity did materialise with the announcement that the women from Ireland had been arrested. A decision was made to send a delegation to Downing Street immediately, and also to give support to three other women from the Relatives Action Committee who were staging a 48 hour hunger strike outside Downing Street in support of the men in H-Blocks. Eventually the picket moved from Downing Street to Rochester Row police station, where it was believed the women were being held.

**Don't let  
Irish prisoners  
die!**

**CHARTER  
80**

**NATIONAL  
DEMONSTRATION**

**SUNDAY  
7th DECEMBER**

**Assemble:  
1.00pm Speakers Corner**

Charter 80 is a campaign to unite all those who support the prisoners' demands, for all those who believe in human rights. Signatories to Charter 80 include Tony Benn MP, Bill Keyes (TUC General Council) and Jill Tweedie (Guardian Journalist), and many, many more. Our task must be to transform peoples' sympathy and kind words into action.

## Filipinos fight racist laws

NORMA Barnardo and members of her defence campaign came down to London from Edinburgh recently in an attempt to stop the deportation order under which she is due to go on Nov 20.

Her case is typical of the 277 other Filipino women getting similar treatment. She came to Britain four years ago to work and support her family, from an employment agency which was recruiting for the British hotel industry.

They handled the arrangements (for a considerable fee) and advised her to use her maiden name on her work permit application, although she was separated. They didn't tell her that this was breaking the law, they were too keen to get their money.

Norma plans to marry her fiance—Edinburgh chef, William Miller. Divorce proceedings are in progress with Norma's husband. If she is sent back it may not be possible to complete them, since divorce is not legal in the Phillipines.

Norma and William have been living together for two years and share a joint mortgage.

While in London Norma handed in a letter to Mrs Thatcher. She also attempted to make a gift to her of the one way ticket to Manila that she does not want.

Despite the obvious benefit to the unemployed of this country if she were to use it, it was not accepted.

Later on the same day Norma put her case at a meeting with concerned MPs in the Commons. There were also representatives of the campaigns on behalf of the other deportation cases present.

Rosie Smallwood a member of the Norma Barnardo Defence, Campaign who came down with Norma, and of Edinburgh Women's Voice said after the meeting:

'We are glad the M.P.'s are trying hard to raise it, but seeing how hamstrung they are by Parliamentary procedure and seeing how much fuss Timothy Raison has managed to fob off about this in Parliament since July, we can't place much reliance on it.'

Gardners engineering factory in Manchester has become the focus of the fight against redundancies since workers sat in two months ago. *Womens Voice* talked to some of the women workers involved.

# GARDNERS WOMEN GOING STRONG

Shirley Johnstone works in the sprayers department at Gardners where she has been for eight years. She is an AUEW member.

'I've not been made redundant. I don't know why. We know of 17 out of our department of 53 who've been made redundant. That's known people. Before the dispute our steward kept us informed very well. He kept nothing back so we really knew what was going on.

'Our department has been very active in the dispute. We've got two groups regularly organised going on delegations. The other week I went to Newcastle. We had a wonderful reception.

'We visited nine factories. All of them were facing redundancies. Everywhere we went. 'Most of the lads involved in the dispute along with myself haven't been made redundant, even though our steward has. That's because the new bonus system, which is part of the offer is as important as the redundancies. If you look around most of the activists are pieceworkers.

'What management don't understand is that pieceworkers can't physically produce any more than they do at the moment. Yet that's what Hawker Siddeley want. They want us to produce more for less and with fewer people.'



Deanna Race works in the wages office. She is a member of APEX. Her husband Pete works in the same department as Shirley.

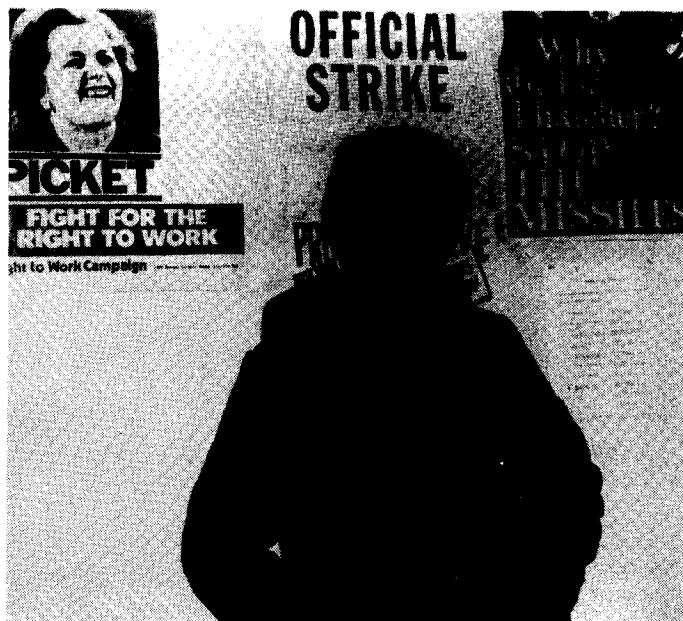
'At the beginning of the dispute we had a rota for sitting in. I was coming in about one day a week because travelling was expensive. Pete was very involved. The delegations committee was overrun with requests and there was a lot of paperwork so they asked me if I could help with the organisation.

'First I refused. I thought, why should I come in every day and 'work' when everyone else was stopping at home. But with

Pete so active I decided then it was better being involved than sitting at home. At least I'd know what was going on.

'We're pretty well organised now. There are three main areas: London, Sheffield and Scotland. For London we have a more or less permanent delegation with some people coming back while others take their places.

'Most of the people involved are shopfloor workers. Many of them I've seen at work but never spoken to. It's amazing how many good people there are involved in the dispute.'



Tracey O'Hanlon has worked in the technical records office for 18 months. She started straight from school. She is a member of APEX.

'The first thing I did was to go on the anti-nuclear march in London. Nine of us went down. We stood at Hyde Park Corner with the Gardner banner, a megaphone, and told people about the dispute while some of us did a collection. All told we collected about £1200. It was the first time I ever did anything like that and the first time I've been to London.

I was co-opted on to the entertainments committee. We've organised indoor games and tournaments. We visited local sports shops for trophies. They were all donated free. Now we're trying to organise a Xmas party for the children.

'I've also been on delegations

to Manchester university, and Stockport bus station, and I've folded thousands of collection sheets. We spent all night sending out our newsletter.

During the dispute I've met a lot of people. I might have known them before to talk to but at work people are like robots. They're completely different people in the dispute. Maybe it's because they're not afraid to be themselves.

'The majority of staff aren't involved, but those that are active come in every day, all day. I think it's better that staff and shop floor are in this together. You feel that if management came back for staff redundancies at a later date the shop floor would support us.

**'To be honest I'm having too good a time to go back to work—at least until we win everything we've come out for.'**

Xmas is coming. It's not much fun being on strike so make sure you do your bit to help the Gardners workers.

What you can do:

COLLECTIONS of money

MESSAGES and resolutions of support

VISIT workplaces to tell them about the sit in

SPEAKERS for meetings can be arranged on 061 789 2202

RAISE Gardners in your own workplace/union branch

SEND toys for the kids at Xmas

All money and messages of support to: Dave Marsden, Treasurer CSEU Strike Committee, 187 Barton Lane, Eccles Manchester M30

## DON'T LET EMPTY HOUSES ROT

At midnight one night in October 50 homeless people occupied Kilner House in south London. This is a block of 60 modernised Greater London Council (GLC) flats up for sale on a run-down estate near the Oval cricket ground. More people have since filled up the flats including 15 children.

The previous tenants were moved out on the understanding that they would return to the flats after modernisation. The occupation coincided with the introduction of the Sales Section of the Housing Act. The squatters are calling on Lambeth Council to intervene and take over the block of flats from the GLC in order to stop it vanishing into the private sector.

They were supported by local tenants associations, the London Tenants Association, Lambeth Trades council and local building workers who have refused to do any work against the quatters.

The squatters have received a high court summons which has so far been adjourned twice. On both occasions over 100 people demonstrated their support outside the law courts with the slogan 'Don't let empty houses rot—squat!'

Dee Smith Brixton WV

## Women's Centre warning

BRISTOL Womens Centre is used to break-ins. It has been burgled about six times over the past year. But last weeks raider was clearly after more than just the petty cash.

Files including details of abortion facilities in Bristol, sympathetic GP's in the area and hundreds of addresses had all been

removed, along with day books containing confidential information about battered womens refuges.

Whoever wanted such information wanted it badly enough to get through the roof. This person was familiar enough with the centre to know how to avoid the burglar—alarm system. There is believed to be a British Movement training centre in the area. We fear that womens centres may now become targets for fascist attack.

We would like to warn women who have been in contact with our centre that information about them may be in the hands of people hostile to the womens movement. Harriet Wordworth (Bristol Women's Centre)

## Anwar fights on

BETWEEN 3-4,000 people marched through the streets of Rochdale on Saturday 15 November. They were demanding that the Home Office allow Anwar Ditta's three children to join their mother in this country.

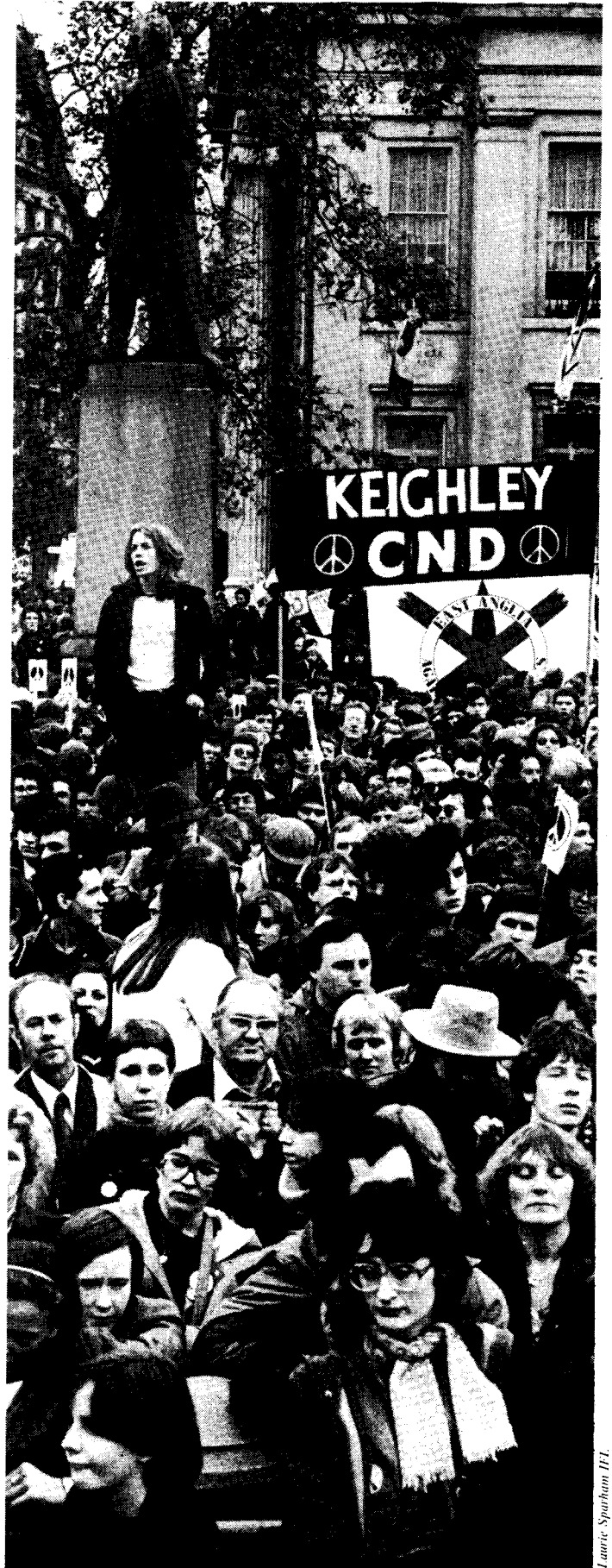
At the rally after the march, Anwar spoke of the tests she'd gone through to prove she'd had more than one child and of her willingness to have skin tests and go on a lie detector. In spite of all this the Home Office still refuse to believe that the children belong to her. The Home Office claim that they are her sister-in-law's! It seems likely that Anwar and her children won't be spending Xmas together.

Anita Kanani  
Anwar Ditta London  
Support Group

## Strike over

SOME OF the thirteen King Henry's workers still on strike went back last week. They have returned to worse conditions than those which they originally took action over months ago. They have no union, and have signed an agreement that they won't strike for twelve months. Some were paid off with between £180 and £350. Three have remained out on strike.

The Bakers Union had promised full backing to the strikers. But yesterday they withdrew this, which means there will be no effective blacking at the docks. Management have said they will hold a ballot on whether the workers want a union in November 1981.



27 October saw tens of thousands people on London streets demanding nuclear disarmament. This demonstration included large numbers of women and young people. It ended with a packed rally in Trafalgar Square with speakers calling for an end to missile madness.

Laurie Sparham III

# Answering back

## Common interest?

IN NOVEMBER a demonstration took place in Leicester. It was organised by the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear workers and the textile employers in Leicester.

They felt on this occasion that they shared a common interest—the need to protect their products against too much competition. The union feared for its members jobs and the employers for the success of their business and profits. What was their slogan? Import controls to stop cheap foreign goods coming into Britain.

There are several reasons why some foreign goods are cheaper than home produced ones, but the most important one is that the workers producing them work for lower wages. Either poor or no union organisation stops them from improving their wages and their standard of living. They work long hours, in conditions that no worker in Britain would tolerate.

One story will show what we mean. A lot of cheap imported textiles come from South Korea. Civil rights hardly exist there and the trade unions are either in cahoots with the right wing government or the Korean CIA.

When women in the Dong 11 textile plant tried to organise in their union and elect their own representatives, they were physically beaten and humiliated. At one meeting hired thugs threw human excreta at them. They were driven out of their jobs by their employers and out of their union by its leaders, just for daring to raise their voice.

They tried everything they could to get their jobs back. But demonstrations, public meetings, any sort of agitation is banned in South Korea. People were literally putting their lives at risk to help the women.

One hope was that the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation would support them and discipline its own members, the leaders of the Korean National Textile Workers Union.

The ITAWLF sent a commission to meet the employers and the union leaders. They tried to avoid meeting the sacked women. They decided to support the leaders of the KNTWU and do nothing for the women.

One member of this commission was Harold Gibson, General Secretary of the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers, who called the Leicester demonstration.

If he genuinely believed in stopping *cheap* imports from countries like Korea, he could have used the chance he had to improve the wages of workers there; so that those imports simply could not be so cheap. He chose not to.

We don't believe in making goods unnecessarily expensive. If we can buy cheaper goods from abroad we should be able to do so. But when we can help those workers to fight for higher wages we have an obligation to support them—and so does Harold Gibson.

## BACK AGAIN

COVENTRY Womens Voice had been a strong and active group, especially during the anti-Corrie campaign. Over the summer the group hit hard times and stopped meeting. Well, we're back again.

Twelve women came to a meeting at the beginning of October, with lots of ideas for meetings on Ireland, Poland, violence against women etc.

More importantly, we wanted to get women from Coventry to go to Liverpool on November 29th to the demo against unemployment. We produced a leaflet arguing for a Woman's Right to Work and advertising a meeting about this. We gave this out at the dole and in the shopping precinct; we used a loud hailer which produced a few laughs, as well as getting our arguments across.

Coventry was a 'boom' town, but it's now being ruthlessly hit by unemployment. Women are angry, and determined to defend their jobs, and their family's jobs. We have the chance to build Womens Voice by fighting for the Right to Work.



## Picketing Tandy

PICKETS in support of the women at Tandy's, who are fighting for union recognition have been organised by Womens Voice groups over the past few weeks.

Walthamstow Womens Voice managed to empty their local shop in ten minutes when they turned up with leaflets and placards to persuade people not to shop there. The manager called the police, but as we were not obstructing the shop doorway there was nothing they could do.

The new Hornsey Womens Voice succeeded in turning away people from their local Tandy's and also got some publicity in the local press.





## Playtex Protests

PLAYTEX tampons are made from synthetics and have a plastic applicator, which can scratch the walls of the vagina allowing bacteria to pass into the bloodstream. This can lead to a form of blood poisoning known as Toxic Shock Syndrome, which can be fatal.

They also have, as their biggest selling point a useless, insulting, and probably harmful deodorant, impregnated into the tampon.

Women Voice has produced a leaflet, and groups all over the country have been picketing their local chemists. Here are reports of a few of them.

We discussed Playtex tampons at a WV meeting and decided to take action. We got in touch with the other groups in the university and the women's centre in Hull, and together arranged to picket Boots, the biggest chemist and stockist of Playtex tampons, on the following Saturday morning. We produced posters and leaflets which we distributed around the university and we were also interviewed by the local radio.

On Saturday morning we arrived at Boots and handed a letter to the manager containing a copy of the *New Statesman* article about Playtex tampons and asked that these tampons be withdrawn from sale. The manager was sympathetic and said that he would forward the letter to the head office and agreed to allow us to leaflet the shop entrances.

We handed out all our leaflets and got a very good response from the women we talked to, many of whom were already using Playtex and were shocked to hear of the possible side-effects. One angry male shopper rang the police to try to get us moved on, but surprisingly enough the police agreed that we were perfectly within our rights to distribute the leaflets.

### Hull University WV

**ABOUT 30 women and some men from North East London Poly picketed Stratford Shopping Centre one busy Wednesday afternoon. The response was very good—even the policewoman said she was**



**Womens Voice  
Playtex Tampons  
Leaflet**

Deodorised, plastic applicators, pretty colours—but are these gimmicks good for your health?

Get the facts! WV leaflet £1 for 100 orders to PO Box 82 London E2 9DS

WHY not organise a picket of your local Woolworths or Boots, which have special offers on Playtex tampons.

glad she didn't wear Playtex tampons! We are hoping to repeat our successful picket in the near future, and start a Womens Voice sale as well.

SIX women from Hackney Womens Voice picketed Boots and Woolworths in Dalston on Saturday, to protest about the selling of Playtex tampons. After handing out leaflets to women entering the shops, we went inside to speak to the staff. The management claimed that it was not their responsibility, as they did not select the stock in their shops. But we leafleted the staff canteens, and got a good response from the women

who work on the counters. If shop managers will not stop stocking Playtex tampons, we will have to think about persuading shop workers to refuse to handle them.

IN THE last five years women's unemployment has risen by 62 per cent. At present women are losing their jobs at twice the rate of men.

There will be a 'Womens Right to Work' contingent on the demonstration against unemployment in Liverpool on November 29th. March with this contingent to show Thatcher that we will not let women pay for her crisis.

## WV SCHOOL GETTING TOGETHER

THE North and East London 'Women Against the Tories' dayschool which took place last month was a great success. Over 70 women turned up, some from as far away as Cambridge.

Celia Shalom, the opening speaker, talked about Thatcher's oppressive policies. How can she possibly understand our problems? She might be a woman, but how many of us can afford a nanny to look after our kids like she did?

Workshops ranged from health and education cuts, to Ireland and how women organise at work. The focus for the workshops was on being as practical as possible, so that we could go away with ideas of how to build Womens Voice groups round activities.

During the afternoon we watched the film 'Babies and Banners' and saw how women with kids fought in the front line of a strike and won.

Lindsey German spoke in the last session about what had happened to women over the last ten years. Women from the floor talked about the fights at Tandy's and Gardner's, and how we could best intervene. The Playtex campaign was discussed and a positive decision taken to picket Woolworths and Boots, using the national leaflet.

The whole day was well organised. The creche, run by male comrades, was excellent, and the kids really enjoyed themselves.

Over £33 pounds was collected, and split between Tandy's and Gardner's.

We urged everyone not in Women Voice to join there and then. And to bring their friends back to the social in the evening. The day gave everyone more confidence to go out and fight the Tories.

Mary Robson  
Tottenham WV



## Leeds: no woman is safe

THE YORKSHIRE Ripper has claimed another victim. University student Jacqueline Hill was the 13th woman to be killed. Another four women have survived his attacks.

The Ripper's last three killings, in Halifax, Bradford and Leeds respectively, all seem to contradict the original view that the Ripper was only interested in prostitutes.

What they bear out is that no woman is safe anywhere in Leeds or the surrounding towns whatever the time or area, which is what many women have been saying for years now. Jacqueline Hill was killed just over 100 yards from the Leeds University hall of residence where she lived. It is not in a 'red light' area, nor was it late in the evening—about 9.30pm.

Every woman in the country will feel how frightened and angry women in the area must be. The police response has been one of embarrassment.

The death wasn't confirmed as a Ripper killing for 24 hours. Police spokesmen said that they had thought he may have died or committed suicide. Obviously wishful thinking.

The question being asked is why the police haven't caught the Ripper. They claim they know his blood group, his teeth marks, and that he lives in Leeds.

Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that 50 police were taken off the case only two months ago. Or perhaps because the murders of prostitutes and students don't count for so much as the protection of property.

MEANWHILE in the same city, Leeds, two sisters, Charlene and Annette Maw, were sentenced to three years in prison for stabbing their drunken father after he attacked them. The court heard how he was banned from every pub in the area and that on the evening he died he had drunk 13 pints of cider. They also heard how the girls and their mother were the subject of

regular attacks.

No woman who defends herself in Leeds can expect the backing of the judges.

Lindsey German

KAREN DAVIES was brutally raped and murdered on Friday 14th November in South East London. This is the latest of a long line of attacks in the area.

We are reclaiming our right to walk safely after dark. March Friday 28th November through Lewisham to reclaim our right to walk where we choose when we choose. For details phone 858 5670 or 274 4718

## M&W HIGH MORALE

THE STRIKE at M&W Publishers has entered its seventh week. A couple of weeks ago a delegation of women and the ASTMS official went over to Belfast to get the print

unions to back M&W Publications. The print workers in Belfast agreed to do so, but had to wait for official backing. Due to the threat of blacking for the first time management agreed to talk to the unions about recognition and reinstatement.

Morale is very high on the picket line as the women feel that victory is just around the corner. Mass pickets on Monday and Friday dinner time are still going on, messages of support and donations to: ASTMS Strike Fund, 201 Tower Buildings, Water Street, Liverpool 13 AB.

Jane Mudd.

## SPARE RIB SPECIAL

SPARE RIB, the womens liberation magazine, is celebrating its 100th issue. An exhibition in London shows the magazine's history and development over the years.

Anyone interested in our recent history, and in how a magazine is produced, should try to see the exhibition. It is on at Cockpit Gallery, Princeton St, London WC1 (Holborn tube) Open every weekday from 10am to 8pm until 8 December.

SO FAR temperatures this winter have been below average. If it carries on like this we'll all have problems keeping warm. Even if it proves to be a mild winter it will still be difficult. 700,000 old people risk death from hypothermia even in the mildest winter.

immediate needs of those on low incomes do not allow spare money for central heating or insulation, which would save money in the long term. Government grants to save energy through insulating council homes have been stopped because of the cuts. Paraffin heaters are the

# Fuel prices up -temperatures down

**'It's either they've got to starve to keep warm, or they've got to freeze to live'** *welfare worker talking about pensioners.*

Hypothermia means having a body temperature more than four degrees below normal. If the victim is not treated quickly it can result in death. The other group most at risk is young babies. Having a baby can add £50 to the winter's heating costs, which many people can't afford.

Since 1974 fuel prices have risen much faster than the rate of inflation. This year gas rose by 30 per cent. Pensions, supplementary benefit and most workers' wages have risen less. The Right to Fuel Campaign estimates that by the year

cheapest to buy and to run. They are also dangerous. Their fumes can worsen bronchitis or asthma, they cause bad condensation and they are very easy to knock over. Many household fires are caused by paraffin heaters, candles or faulty electric fires, which in turn are a result of high fuel prices.

Ordinary electric fires are the most expensive to run but cheap to buy. So many people on low incomes are using this expensive and inefficient form of heating because they cannot raise the lump sum necessary for a better system.

The electricity boards are reluctant to give people coin meters which would allow them to pay for electricity as they use it. Most households get bills every three months. For people on state benefit or a small weekly wage these bills are totally impossible.

If a bill is not paid the electricity and gas boards will disconnect. Gas and electri-

under 11 all pensioner households (but only between October and March).

In these cases the DHSS or social services can get disconnection delayed while an arrangement is worked out. This often takes the form of an 'easy payment' scheme, where money is deducted from supplementary benefit before it is paid out. Sometimes a coin meter will be fitted, adjusted to charge more per unit so that the debt is paid off.

These schemes derive from the idea that the poor 'mismanage' their money and so end up in debt. The real reasons for fuel debts are low incomes and high prices. Occasionally it is possible to get money towards the bill from the DHSS or social services, but with public spending cuts this is going to be increasingly difficult.

In spite of these regulations disconnections still take place, even where there is 'hardship'. A couple of years ago a single mother in Newcastle, with children aged four and six, was disconnected for non payment of her electricity bill. After a fire in the four year old's room, caused by a candle, she reconnected the electricity herself. When this was discovered she was disconnected again, taken to court and put on probation. As she says: 'in the eyes of the law I'm a criminal for trying to do something for my children'.

**Alison Cartmale**



Photo Michael Abrahams

2000 pensioners will be spending a quarter of their income on fuel. It is not senility or stupidity that makes 89 per cent of old people have rooms at dangerously low temperatures, but fear of the fuel bill.

Many have no choice at all. On some estates councils have installed overhead electric heating which, even in 1977, led to bills of £200 a quarter. One fifth of all homes in this country have electricity as the only source

city are monopoly industries. If your local board disconnects you there is nowhere else to go.

In theory disconnection should not take place where there is 'real hardship'. This is defined as one of the following: where the breadwinner is unemployed where the family gets family income supplement where the main source of income is supplementary benefit where there are children

**'The fuel is the one that gets all my increase in pension. I never get anything out of it myself, it goes straight on the fuel bill.'** *79 year old pensioner.*

The poor spend more on their heating than the rich and yet are not as warm. The

of heating, but far more than a fifth of the lowest income groups do.



# Women and religion

**RELIGION**, said Marx, is the opium of the people. Is it a drug to which women are particularly addicted?

Religion may even have been a female invention. Statues of fat goddesses are found among the remains of Stone Age communities in Europe and elsewhere. These communities may have worshipped their ancestresses or Clan Mothers, since descent was recognised only in the female line. Special ceremonial burials of certain women, painted red, suggest that they may have had women as priests.

By seven thousand years ago, the worship of the Great Goddess was well established. Known as Innana, Ishtar or Isis, the Lady of



Heaven was much more than an earth-mother: usually a sky-goddess, at Arinna in Turkey she was even a sun-goddess. She was a creator too, and an Egyptian text of the fourteenth century B.C. begins 'in the beginning there was Isis, the Oldest of the Old...'

The Great Goddess was served by women, and worshiped in ceremonies that included sex with male worshippers—what modern archeologists have referred to as 'temple prostitution'. The women of the temple were, however, honoured and respected, not bought and sold.

Delightful though this may sound to some of us, brought up to consider God and the sun masculine by definition, and sex as surrounded by taboos and religious prohibitions, societies that worshipped the Goddess were not equal societies. The temples of the Goddess owned land, on which serfs had to work and workshops in which slaves laboured. Rich women, too, owned slaves privately. Some of the earliest known contracts for the purchase of human beings are cases of women buying 'daughters', which run, 'But if she will not call her Mother, or tries to run away, she shall be her slave...'

When men took over religion and

excluded women, however, things probably got a lot worse for everyone. The Akkadians, Hittites, Assyrians and various Indo-European tribes who conquered the peoples of the Goddess brought with them male fire and thunder gods, and patriarchy. These were harsh and warlike peoples who enslaved the conquered population and overthrew their religions.

The Goddess was incorporated into the myths of these people either as a secondary figure, usually the victim of rape or murder by a male god, or as a dangerous enemy. The serpent, the sacred tree and the fig leaf in the story of Adam and Eve are all recognisable symbols of the Goddess.

The status of women fell drastically from at least 3000 BC almost everywhere where the Goddess religion had flourished. The laws of property marriage and divorce, and rape downgraded women to second-class subjects, always under the protection or ownership of a man. Under the ancient Judaic law, a man could be found guilty of raping a woman in the country, but if it happened in the town the woman's consent was assumed, since she could have stopped it by screaming!



The last period in which Goddess-worship flourished was about the time of Julius Caesar. Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt in her own rights, had herself shown on coins as Isis holding the infant Osiris, her son/lover/husband, and many men as well as women worshipped the Goddess in Rome itself.

But the Goddess was taken over, and the figure of Cleopatra/Isis was renamed the Virgin Mary, honoured indeed but not divine, completely overshadowed by her Infant, and served by exclusively male priests.

Despite the downgrading of women's religion by Christianity, many women found it attractive, as many slaves did too although the new religion supported slavery as an institution. Like the Eleusinian Mysteries of Greece in the period before the rise of Christianity, which were dedicated to the earth-mother Cybele and her daughter Persephone, Christianity was a secret and often underground religion, which allowed those who normally had no power or influence in society to organise something for themselves.

Christianity became, of course, the official religion of the Roman Empire and then of feudal Europe. In the early middle ages when Christianity was still expanding, women could play an important role in the church as nuns and missionaries. Sometimes abbesses at the head of communities of women, or of both men and women, had as much power as bishops. It was only towards the end of the middle ages that this was attacked as 'against god and nature'.



Abstinence from sex with men may seem to be a high price to pay for such status, but it does appear that some at least of the nuns of the early middle ages had an attitude not unlike that of some radical feminists today! In the tenth century Hroswitha of Gandersheim, a German nun, wrote Latin dramas in classical style about 'the laudable chastity of Christian virgins'. These seem to have been exciting stories in which a series of strong-minded heroines defended themselves even to the death against persecution by lustful and bloodthirsty men.

Both Protestantism and modern Catholicism allow much less scope for women, and women's attachment to religion in modern times has usually served them badly. The attachment of French women, especially peasants, to the Catholic Church in the nineteenth century served to uphold reactionary governments and prevent revolutions from succeeding. It also caused French socialists to mistrust women's suffrage.

But one woman historian (Olwen Hufton) has suggested that it was *despair* that drove the women of France, who had been very active and daring in the revolution of 1789 but had gained nothing even from the most progressive régimes, to regret that they had gone so far. The proud woman citizen became 'the worn-out, disillusioned, starving hag who sank to her knees ... to demand pardon of an offended Christ'.



Perhaps it is despair of ever changing anything ourselves that keeps women even today clinging to religion. I don't mean just women who belong to churches, though there are many of these, especially among immigrants.

I mean the feeling that 'there is something there after all', the longing for some communal purpose that capitalism denies and worship seems to provide, or even the deeprooted desire for vengeance on an oppressor that gives us the feeling, when all else has failed, if only he could roast in Hell!

What Marx went on to say is that religion is addictive because it seems to be 'the heart in a heartless world'. The real answer is to build a new world, free of Goddesses and Gods because we can understand and control it without feeling the need for help from above.

Norah Carlin

**Fed up with carols? We print two here which can be sung to the old tunes, but with very different words.**

**Silent Wife (to the tune of Silent Night)  
by Carolyn Conway.**

**Silent wife, wholesome wife,  
You're the butter on his knife,  
With sugar-puff smile at the start of his day,  
You oxo-cube crumble your life away.  
Take your valium in peace,  
Take your valium in peace.**

**Silent wife, wholesome wife,  
Iron the creases from his life,  
A persil mum, fairy suds spouse,  
Deodorized you, in his odour free house.  
Take your valium in peace (repeat)**

**Silent wife, wholesome wife,  
How strange to call you trouble and strife,,  
At work and at home your story's the same,  
Too busy to moan and too tired to complain,  
Take your valium in peace (repeat)**

**Silent wife, wholesome wife,  
Living through others all your life,  
Now you're alone, who are you, who can tell?  
There's just you and the silence, at the crossroads motel,  
Take your valium in peace (repeat)**

**Silent wife, why be a wife?  
Yell out your anger from Bromley to Fife,  
Smash all the mirrors they hold to your head,  
Madonna and mistress and tele-ad wed,  
Throw the valium away,  
Join Womens Voice today.**

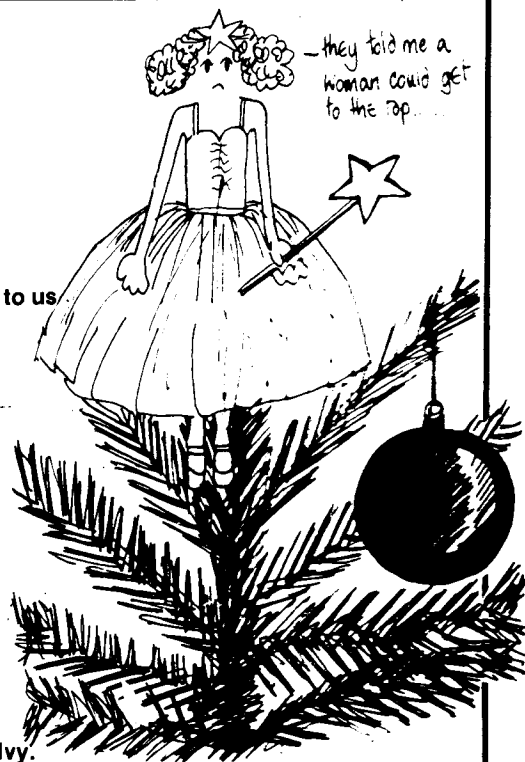
**The coming of the Tories  
has brought us all much fear  
and we'll be on the dole queues  
if they're still in charge next year**

**The rising of the mortgage  
the extra VAT  
these are Maggie's christmas gifts to us  
to hang on our christmas tree**

**Our hospitals are closing  
this winter's filled with gloom  
getting sick will be expensive  
paying for a private room**

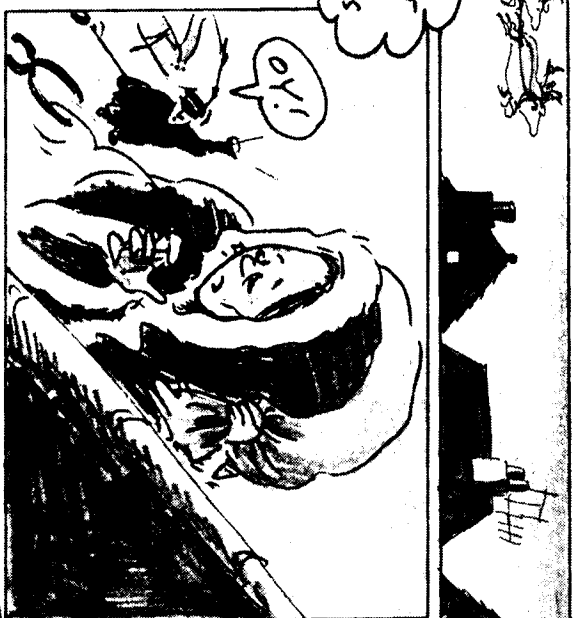
**the coming of the Torys  
hasn't brought us christmas cheer  
we must fight against their policies  
for a happier new year**

**To the tune of: The Holly and the Ivy.**





I'M SORRY ABOUT THIS BUT I DON'T KNOW ALL THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE YET



OY!



I'LL HAVE TO SKIP THE ONES WITH BURGERS ALTHOUGHT IF THEY'VE GOT THAT MUCH WORTH STERLING THEY DON'T NEED ME



SEAN & JULIE SKATES & MY LEARN TO COOK BOOK. LUCKY JULIE - I ALWAYS WANT SKATES WHEN I WAS A KID



WINSTON, HORACE & GLORIA - CHEMISTRY SET TRANSISTOR & DOLL. IF HE THINKS I'M GIVING THIS TO GLORIA...



HOW NICE! FORGOT FRANK'S



THERE HE IS!



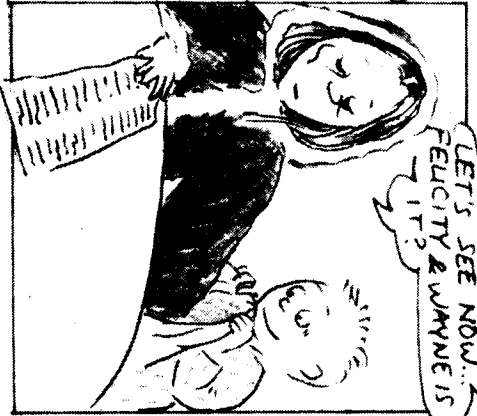
IT'S NOT HIM AT ALL! IT'S ONLY AN ODESKIMO WOMAN



WHAT DO YOU MEAN ONLY AN ODESKIMO WOMAN? SHHH! YOU'LL WAKE MUM & DAD ARE YOU REALLY FATHER CHRISTMAS THEN?



SIT DOWN - I'D BETTER EXPLAIN... HAVE YOU GOT ANY PRESENTS FOR US?



LET'S SEE NOW... FELICITY & WINNIE IS IT?



BYE BYE AND HAPPY CHRISTMAS! KIDS! OF COURSE THEY DON'T CARE WHO - JUST WHAT AND

# CHRISTMAS

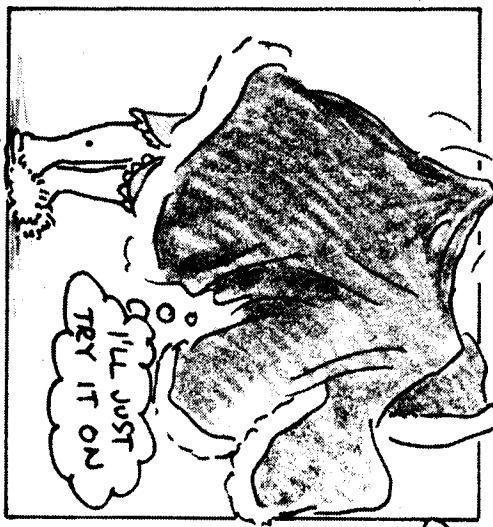
She goes mad



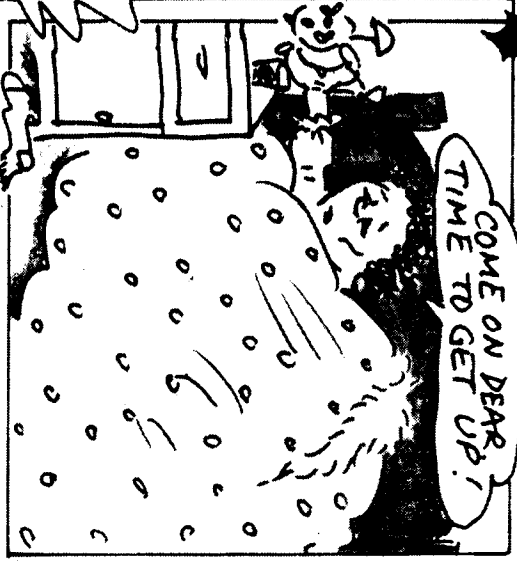
CHRISTMAS  
EVE, AND OUR  
STORY BEGINS AT A  
CERTAIN RESIDENCE NEAR  
THE NORTH POLE



FOR GOODNESS SAKE  
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO  
SPEND ALL NIGHT  
AT THE BASE  
DRINKING BOBAGON!  
OR YOU  
COULD'VE GONE  
TO THE OTHER  
BASE - VODKA  
NEVER GIVES YOU  
A HANG-OVER!



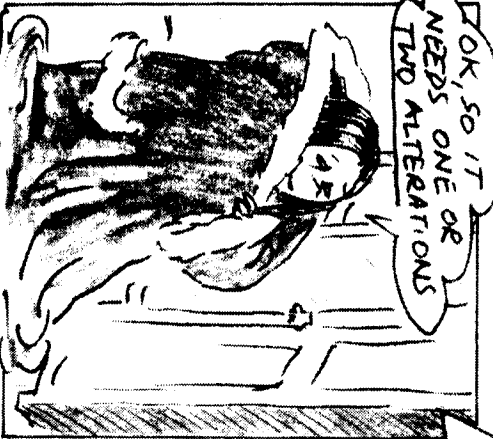
I'LL JUST  
TRY IT ON



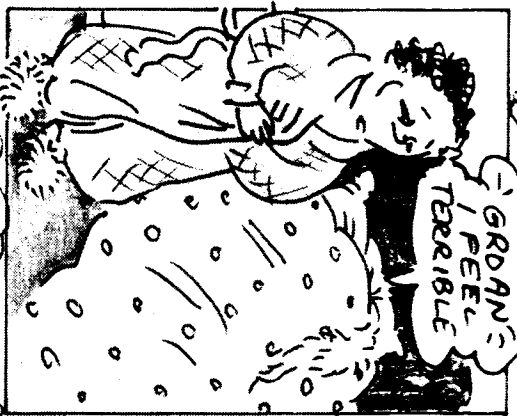
COME ON DEAR!  
TIME TO GET UP!



I DID HAVE TO -  
I WAS AT THE RUSSIAN  
BASE LAST YEAR -  
NOW LEAVE ME  
ALONE



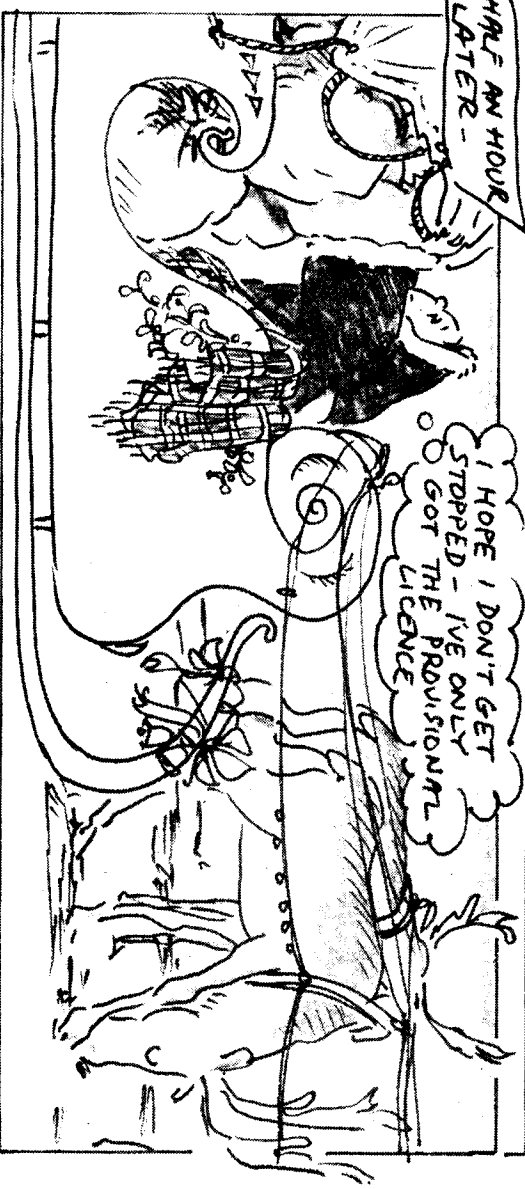
OK, SO IT OR  
NEEDS ONE OR  
TWO ALTERATIONS



GODDAMN!  
I FEEL  
TERRIBLE



WHEN I THINK HOW  
MANY PEOPLE WOULD GIVE  
AN ARM & A LEG FOR  
HIS JOB - THE SHORT  
HOURS, THE GOOD CUSTOMER  
RELATIONS, NO SUPERVISOR  
BEATING DOWN  
YOUR NECK, FREE  
TRAVEL...

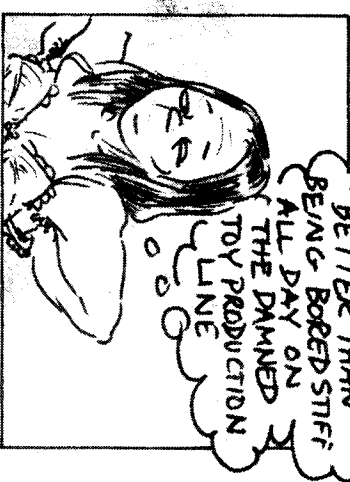


MAKE AN HOUR  
LATER -

I HOPE I DON'T GET  
STOPPED - I'VE ONLY  
GOT LICENCE



DON'T FORGET  
IT'S YOUR BIG DAY  
TODAY - YOU MUST  
GET UP! I'M GOING TO  
DIE



BETTER THAN  
BEING BORED STIFF  
ALL DAY ON  
THE DAMNED  
TOY PRODUCTION  
LINE

I WENT TO the Family Planning Clinic just after ex-President Carter had almost started World War Three. The receptionist made out the card for the next appointment six months ahead and said that she'd see me then 'if we're all still here. It certainly isn't a world to have babies in. Who wants to see their children blown up or conscripted?'

Women have traditionally been concerned with peace for these reasons, as well as out of a healthy desire to stay alive. But concern for the future of their children alone isn't enough to take women into active opposition to the Bomb. Unless they have a clear vision of the future they are fighting for, they'll probably just lie awake at night worrying. And without that vision of an alternative, women may even be willing to see their children blown up or conscripted, may even volunteer to fight themselves, for the preservation of 'civilisation'. Even feminism doesn't guarantee opposition to war.



Rent strikers demonstrate their determination in 1915

# WAR ON WAR

The outbreak of the First World War revealed deep divisions in the suffragette movement between the followers of Mrs Pankhurst and those who had begun to make the connections between their feminism and socialism. Emmeline and Christabel promptly renamed their paper *Britannia* (instead of *Votes for Women*) and encouraged their supporters to hand out white feathers to able-bodied men still wearing civilian clothing, to taunt them with their cowardice in not volunteering to fight. Many women, like Vera Brittain, were caught up in the patriotic enthusiasm only to find out the hard way what terrible slaughter it involved. But even in 1917, when it was clear that a whole generation of men had been massacred, Mrs Pankhurst had learned nothing. She was to be found touring the Welsh coalfields urging men not to yield to the 'bolshevik bacillus' by striking for decent wages and conditions.

Not all the suffragettes yielded to this flagwaving hysteria. Sylvia Pankhurst was horrified by the workers of the world being marched off to kill one another in 'this capitalist war'. Her old friend, Keir Hardie, leader of the Labour Party and MP for Merthyr, declared that 'a nation at war must be united', but Sylvia could see how all the old divisions of class society still existed, war or no war.

In fact, it made them deeper. Many workers in the East End of London were thrown out of work when the war began. The men had the 'option' of enlisting, but the women had no choice but to stay with the children—and with very little to feed them. Sylvia Pankhurst helped to set up a cooperatively-run toy factory as an

alternative to employment in the armaments trade. A local pub, the Gunmakers Arms, was taken over as a creche and renamed the Mothers Arms. It was used as a centre for the distribution of fruit and vegetables in an effort to counteract the effect of food shortages.

There were problems. The manageress of the factory turned out to be fiddling the books and had to be sacked. Private charity could do little to relieve the enormous suffering that war brought. But the Mothers Arms centre wasn't simply charity. It encouraged women to rely on their own efforts as well.

Nor was it an isolated challenge to the myth of national unity. All over the country, the women who were left behind when the men marched away were refusing to 'pull together'. On the Clyde, the Womens' Housing Association formed Tenants Committees to resist rent rises. 15,000 tenants refused to pay the increased rents. Would-be rent collectors were smeared with flour and rubbish before being kicked out of the flats. When people were summonsed for non-payment of rent, workers downed their tools in several local shipyards. The threat of a general strike forced the government to pass the Rent Restriction Act, which kept rents all over Britain at the pre-war level.

In the first enthusiasm for the war there was no difficulty in persuading workers to sign up to escape the monotony of their daily lives for the chance of adventure and heroism. 191,170 miners volunteered between August 1914 and February 1915—nearly a fifth of the total workforce.

But by 1916 the supply of willing lambs couldn't keep up with the slaughter, and the

government introduced conscription. It also began to use its dirtiest weapons to smash all resistance. Alice Wheeldon of Derby had been an active suffragette. After 1914 she put all her energy into the resistance to the war, and her house became a haven for the 'flying corps' of socialist agitators, for deserters, and later, for men trying to escape conscription. A police spy posing as a deserter came to the house, and left with her four phials of poison. He'd suggested that she could use them to help rescue war resisters held in a prison outside Liverpool, by poisoning the guard dogs.

When Alice was committed for trial on this man's evidence, she wasn't charged with conspiracy to poison alsatians—she was accused of plotting to murder the entire War Cabinet! Ludicrous as the charge and the prosecution case were, she was found guilty and imprisoned. She served two years of her sentence before being released due to ill health, and died only a few weeks later. Her coffin was draped in the red flag, and John S Clarke, one of the most talented socialist organisers of the day spoke at her graveside. He said:

*'There are several ways of murdering our valiant women fighters. There is the straightforward brutal way of sheer murder, which killed Rosa Luxemburg, and there is the sinister, secret and cowardly method, which killed Alice Wheeldon.'*

Alice Wheeldon died because she didn't just pray for peace or march for peace. She realised that there could be no peace without socialism, and that socialism would have to be fought for. **She made war on war.**

*Lin James*



# WOMENS HEALTH

## Cystitis – 60% of us get it

WE are familiar with the common caricature of ourselves as neurotic women. Only half the battle is won when we manage to convince a male doctor that we are not hypochondriacs but actually in pain. We still often need to explain symptoms which he has no experience of and for which he will receive little training. Even today only half a day of lectures is given to urinary tract infections out of a five year medical training course. Meanwhile 60 per cent of the world's female population suffer them.

Cystitis accounts for much of this percentage. It is a loose term, but covers three main symptoms – frequency of passing urine, with pain and often blood loss. It causes pricking or stabbing pains, and pain in the lower abdomen as it affects the bladder wall. A serious condition, renal pyelitis, can develop if a severe attack reaches the kidneys.

Cystitis attacks usually recur. Each one means even more frequent trips to the toilet. Old scars open up and are aggravated by the acidity of the urine to cause increased pain.

There is very little medical treatment. Antibiotics are usual, but while they relieve pain they kill off not only the harmful bacteria, but also that which aids the body's defences. Left vulnerable the body is soon attacked by more harmful bacteria. Often thrush appears, which, because of the itching it causes, further irritates the urinary tract.

Back to the doctor goes the victim, only to receive another course of antibiotics, and so the cycle continues.

Clearly an alternative is needed. The most important thing to do when cystitis attacks is to drink copiously. Infected urine burns so it needs to be diluted and flushed out of the system. Drinking a pint of water with a teaspoon of sodium bicarbonate immediately the attack starts and following this up with water based drinks every 20 minutes should do the trick. Keeping warm and trying to relax also helps.

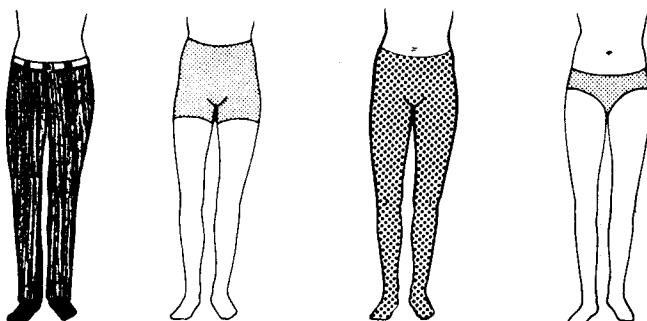
But prevention is more important than cure. Many things cause cystitis. Despite being labelled the 'honeymoon disease' celibates and even men and children suffer from it.

The existence of skin allergies is common knowledge. That there can be internal irritation as opposed to external is not. Just because baby's skin doesn't reach outwardly to scented powder doesn't mean it won't internally. Soaps, washing powders, even contraceptive devices, can cause cystitis.

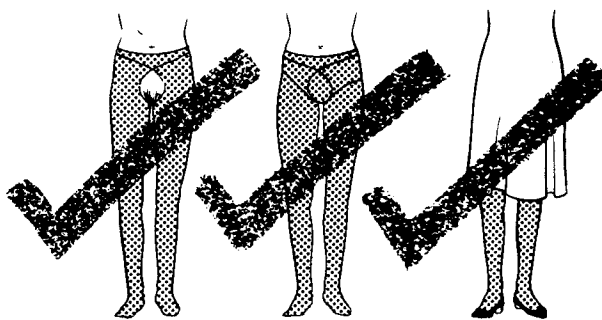
Bacteria lives naturally in the rectum, not the urinary tract, so cleaning from front to back is the sensible approach.

There is much we can do to help ourselves. Understanding cystitis is the first step. But working class women face the worst difficulties. Overcrowded, bad housing without adequate water supplies.

### WHAT TO WEAR



**Avoid**  
tight trowsers    pantygirdles    tights    nylon briefs



**Choose**  
crotchless tights    cotton panties    skirts and dresses

Modern clothes are also responsible. Fashion dictates that we pour ourselves into tight jeans and trousers. Manmade fibres like nylon have taken over the underwear world and tights have replaced stockings. Skin cannot breathe encased in layers of nylon. The warm and moist environment that is created is a haven for germs which would not otherwise be able to survive. Cotton underwear and looser trousers can help solve this problem.

No one likes to think of herself as unhygienic, but cleanliness is important.

or even bathrooms, make high standards of hygiene difficult to maintain. Clothing is chosen for cheapness, so cotton and wool is beyond the price range of many. Here also then she who has most is best able to help herself.

**Frances Smyth**

*Understanding Cystitis* by Angela Kilmartin, Hamlyn, £1.25 is an invaluable book, on which much of this article is based.

Portugal

# Women in Prison

IT WAS the first time I'd been in a prison and I was nervous as we waited outside the Custodias prison in Porto, Northern Portugal. Once through the main door men and women were divided and taken into separate rooms, rather like customs clearance. Passports and entry tickets checked, plastic bags crammed full of food and newspapers glanced at, we moved on to the body search. Into a large sunny courtyard, through another door into a large empty room

with benches all around it, a couple of tables and one guard lounging around.

It was here I talked to Isabel Carmo, a founding member of a political group the PRP. Isabel, a doctor, has been in prison for over two years. Earlier this year she was convicted of 'moral responsibility' for bank robberies, the proceeds of which were to finance political activity. The trial caused an international outcry, especially among legal circles, because hearsay was admit-

ted as evidence and no transcripts of the trial were kept. She is now waiting for her appeal.

Isabel and another prisoner, Fernanda Fragua, are writing a book on prostitution based on the knowledge they have accumulated in the prison—fifty life stories of misery, all but one telling the tale of women selling their sex to survive. The stories all follow the same pattern, a story I will tell you as it was told to me.

**BORN** of poor parents, peasants, factory workers or irregularly employed parents, who cannot afford children in a catholic country, little girls are put into colleges for the poor run by nuns. From the age of about six to that of the majority, anything from 14-21 years, the girls are brought up to learn little reading and writing and a lot of crochet and tapestry. When they are old enough, they are let out of the colleges into the world, with nothing—no money—no training—nowhere to live. It takes only a few hours to a



Girl in Shanty Town near Lisbon, one of several which surround the city.

Chris Davies Report

few months for poverty to make prostitution the inevitable way of earning a living.

Uneducated and very young, the women knew nothing of contraception and have many children. Mother needs to continue to work especially now she has more than her own mouth to feed, and so puts the children with a baby minder, who is expensive. Mother must now work even harder, to pay the minder, the room to work in, to sleep and eat in. The remaining money must go to the pimp, her protector and often her lover. She is trapped.

Of course prostitution is illegal in Portugal and the law imprisons those who fail to support themselves financially. They can be so poor when they arrive in prison that they have to use newspaper, to stop their monthly bleeding, because they can't afford sanitary towels.

A prostitute's great hope is to get married, to their pimp, their gigolo. Sometimes he will remain dedicated when the girl is imprisoned, thinking of the day when she comes out, the money to be earned, an investment in the future. Usually he drops her and finds another—there is no shortage of supply.



The penalty for prostitution is from 6 months to 3 years. Imprisonment occurs on the second or third offence and is nearly always for over a year. This is the one crime in Portugal where legal speed is renowned—no hanging around for appeals, straight to the Central Women's Prison in Lisbon.

The Central Prison is terrifying. Prisoners have been beaten and drugged. One woman died. It is run by nuns, with only a few civilian guards. Once again, reminiscent of their childhood, the women are put to work in prison, from 8am to 12noon,



and from 2pm to 6pm—making tapestries. Trapped again.

One prostitute was picked off the streets in Porto, taken to Central Prison and returned 16 months later for another trial in Porto, carrying a beautiful smiling blue-eyed baby. The child didn't look normal, it couldn't walk and looked vacant. The mother explained that it had been born in prison, and since then the baby had been shut up alone in the cell while the mother worked. It saw nobody but its mother. It had never been in the fresh, the 'free' air, because the nuns thought that was how infectious diseases were spread, and they could take no responsibility for the child's health. Their responsibility for the baby would only allow them to incarcerate it alive.

Within two months of being in Porto prison, in an open dormitory, with other women and children, with exercise and fresh air, the child began to develop normally and learnt to walk. The time came for the mother to be sent back to Central Prison. What was she to do with the child? She did what many women have been doing in Portugal, and gave her baby away rather than take it with her, to the life she knew before. You give your baby away or you try to sell it. The rates are from £5 to £70 per child.

ISABEL now holds classes with her 29 other women prisoners—on family planning, health and rights for women. It's a hard job teaching a mother child care and hygiene—difficult even to get the women to understand the need for boiling babies' bottles. North Portugal has the highest infant mortality rate in Europe,

mostly due to gastroenteritis. No reading, writing or money makes education difficult. The education of the mass of the people in Portugal needs the commitment of central government, the mass media, television, but this won't take place under a Government which denies these problems exist and would keep them secret.

The hopes of the revolutionary spirit of 1975 when Portugal's fascist regime was overthrown have been dashed. As capitalism develops and industrialisation increases, Isabel explained, women are increasingly being imprisoned.

But things can still change. The Central Prison was denounced in the left press with information passed out by civilian guards. In September the nuns were due to be withdrawn. It was a small victory in a sea of misery. What is really needed is for the revolutionary spirit of 1975 to be rekindled so that the people can learn a new way, a better way of living.

SINCE the 14 September, eight political prisoners—all members of the PRP—have been on hunger strike. Isabel is one of them. She and six others had been accepted

officially as Parliamentary candidates, but were denied their electoral rights. They could not carry out electoral activities, have access to television, public meetings or the press because they were not released. These rights can only be denied to those prisoners who have had their sentences confirmed through the courts. Isabel and the others are still awaiting appeal and therefore were eligible for release to participate in the elections.

Readers of Womens Voice can:

•Write to the prisoners c/o Sede da Comissao de Apoio a Candidatura dos Presos Alameda Afonso Henriques, 52-3F-Lisboa-882334.

•Send money towards solidarity work in England and possibly to help pay for a member of the Portuguese Committee to come to London to lobby Amnesty International and other interested parties in England.

•Buy stickers from Supporters of the Portuguese Political Prisoners c/o Room 265, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1, or just contact them for information.

by PENNY SIMMONDS



# REVIEWS

Buying yourself a book over Christmas? Want some ideas for presents? Sandy and Tammy work in Bookmarks, the left wing bookshop in Finsbury Park, London. Both of them are always ready to recommend books they know or pass on other readers' comments. They've picked out some books that are selling well at the moment.

WE WHO work in the bookshop, after having to be tightly and unwillingly selective, have listed books that we would like to recommend. They're not all 'fun' reading, not at all in keeping with what is supposed to be the festive season. But then these are not festive times; and anyway Christmas, with all the people who can't afford it and who are left out of its family-oriented 'warmth' is for a lot of people not a happy time. These books are politically important and enlightening and involving. We'd like to say again that there are many other titles that could have been included. So come to the bookshop and browse.

**FROM HAND TO MOUTH: Women and Piecework** by Marianne Herzog — £2.95

This is an account of the experiences of Marianne Herzog and others on the production line in West German factories. Back-breaking piecework, boredom, fear of unemployment and coping with ill-health, shopping, home and the family are all part of the hand to mouth existence of these factory workers.

**STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT** edited by Michelene Wandor. £2.95

Three plays about sexual politics — *Strike While the Iron is Hot* from Rad Ladder Theatre; *My Mother Says I Never Should* from the Womens Theatre Group; and *Care and Control* from Gay Sweatshop. Dealing with the division of labour at home and at work, the double stan-

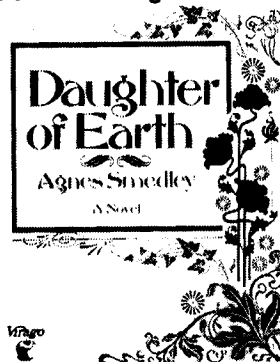
dard in sexual education, and the attitude of the State to family life, these plays are both informative and exciting.

**DEAR COMRADES — Readers' Letters to Lotta Continua** edited by Margaret Kunzle £1.95

In 1977, under the banner of the 'personal is political' women members of Lotta Continua, a group on the far left in Italy, led an exodus of young people out of the party... and the party disbanded as a result. But its daily paper remained, capturing in its letters columns the bewilderment of a generation. Fourteen year olds tear into the political poses of their parents; women deplore the sexism of their men comrades; all sorts try to come to terms with violence, terrorism, death; with love and tenderness and with themselves.

**ON THE BLANKET: THE H BLOCK STORY** by Tim Pat Coogan £2.50 and *Women Protest for Political Status in Armagh Gaol* by Women Against Imperialism 50p. The Tim Pat Coogan is a good account of the facts behind the protest in H Block and Armagh which have now led

to the hunger strike and is essential reading for this reason, although his attempts to find a solution are less than convincing. The Armagh Gaol pamphlet is an account of the Tribunal enquiry into conditions in Armagh.



**DAUGHTER OF EARTH** by Agnes Smedley £2.50

It's not a new book but it's always been one of my favourites. It is the autobiographical novel of an American feminist at the turn of the century. Brought up in rural poverty in a world where most women were married at 17, had a dozen children and then died in their early thirties, Agnes Smedley became a teacher, a socialist, a feminist and an internationalist. First published in 1929, it's quite unputdownable.

**THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD** by Buchi Emechta, £1.25

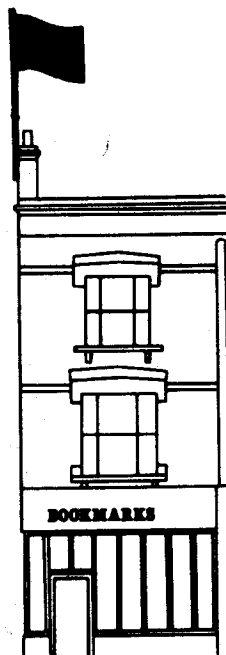
A novel by the author of *Second Class Citizen* and *The Bride Price* about the position of women in Nigeria. Compelling reading, it tells of a society where a woman has no identity, is not considered a complete woman unless she bears children, male children who will continue their father's line...

**A DRY WHITE SEASON** by Andre Brink £1.95

The story of how a white Afrikaaner in South Africa who has always kept completely out of politics is slowly drawn in when a black friend dies in custody after the Soweto riots. This is a committed documentary novel which gives a better idea of life in South Africa than many of the more technical political books available.

If you want to order these or other books, write to Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4, 01-802 6145.

Also available are the free women's booklist and details of the Bookmarks Club.



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# DAY BY DAY



'My consciousness is fine, it's my pay that needs raising'. But I did wonder just how much such a woman was supposed to be capable of. It contains information about housing, health, womens lib, eating out, night life and 24 hour services. It's a lot to do in a day and end up in New York for breakfast where the diary suggests you dine at Mama Leone's—the largest eating place in the world. Phew. And they don't even mention Valentine's day. It's hard on your way to the top I suppose.

*The Nineteen diary* is just as overawing. It tells how to make a complaint, gives guides to tourist offices, London, help centres like Samaritans and Rape crisis, tells you how to be your own dry cleaner, gives you a calorie counter, a mileage chart, and tells you what fruit and veg are in season at any one time.

As a bonus it even tells you how to interpret your dreams. Fascinating to know if you dream of a witch you will get unexpected help from a friend of your own sex—isn't it?

This diary doesn't mention Valentine's Day either—not even among its list of notable dates.

I'm not obsessed about Valentine's Day or anything. It just seems to me that these dairies are all work and no fun. Even going out is a tightly organized and skilled activity. *Woman Diary* is just the same. Sewing, food, personal problems and stain removals. No wonder it also includes a section on banishing tension. I felt tense just thinking about all those things.

*The Prediction Diary* was more fun. (Though why Letts sent me this as an example of a womens diary is another matter). This diary confidently informed me I was 'generally placid, pleasant, and reliable, loving the good things of life, and a secure home and relationship'. Great at last someone had been perceptive enough to

see beneath the thin veneer of neurosis and instability I wear just to fool people. I felt grateful. Until that is I read that for love 1981 would not be 'not on the whole a marvellous year'.

Next please.

*The Good Housekeeping Guide* at least has the merit of being clear about women's role. Yes you've guessed—it's in the home. And to help you manage your home (and servants—there is a space for recording wages) the diary provides pages on which to keep account of your household expenditure. It has lots of space for recipes perhaps? Anyway it was too much for me although it looks immensely smart and impressive.

*Spare Rib* is of course a specifically feminist diary. I enjoyed reading it. It contains many useful addresses and kicks off with some sound advice:  
Trust in God  
She'll provide  
But if she's tired  
Organise.

Right on—and it remembers Valentine's Day (thus laying the myth that feminists have no sense of humour).

By my favourite diary was the one from the Womens Press, *Everywoman's Almanac*. Its theme this year is friendship.

'It is the support we get from growing networks of friends that gives us the courage to take control over our lives, that enables us to push beyond our personal networks to larger structures of collective action.'

That's right. Knowing the price of vegetables or the fact that eucalyptus removes tar stains won't make our lives better. Sisterhood, comradeship and friendship will. That's why I think the stories of friendship in this diary are better company for my list of next years activities than all the slick information of more commercial publications. (And anyway I can't cook and I hate housework).  
*Anna Paczuska*

'I ALWAYS say keep a diary and some day it will keep you'. Mae West said that. But then she was a stylish and astute woman well skilled at marketing her abilities.

Most of us keep diaries for more mundane reasons. We simply need to keep a note of meetings, birthdays, anniversaries, school holidays, and more meetings. We also need somewhere to jot phone numbers, odd scraps of information and reminders. It's hardly the stuff history is made of.

But it is the stuff money is made of. For from now until February the stationers will be packed with a variety of glossy looking diaries for every possible activity—with classy prices to match.

The specialisms of dairies are enormous. And there are

a large number geared toward women. Which in itself is a strange thing. It is easy to see what anglers, golfers or musicians (of both sexes) have in common. But women?

After all women come in many kinds. From food freaks to slimmers, single and married, superstitious and scientific. The information packed into the front of diaries for women is presumably aimed at what women have in common. And it makes you think a lot about images of women.

*The Cosmopolitan Diary*, for example is clearly geared to the modern, independent, working girl. A neat quote at the beginning gives you the clue:

# DIRTY LINEN

ALTHOUGH baby clothes are zero rated for VAT other baby goods are not and the Child Poverty Action Group calculates that if you add together the 15 per cent on cots, baby bottles, teats, cotton wool and all the other paraphernalia that is needed a parent can expect to spend anything up to £70 just on VAT. This is nearly three times the £25 maternity grant which most mothers receive.

What the Government gives with one hand it shall take back threefold with the other. Well what do you expect. You don't get to the top for nothing.

IT REALLY is a bit much when Tory MPs accuse the Equal Opportunities Commission of being 'almost wholly led and staffed by female busybodies.' If only it were!

AN EXHIBITION called Women in Trade Unions, organised by the TUC and on show at its headquarters, Congress House, was open throughout November, Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm.

Pity most women in trade unions, or those working women not yet in trade unions, were unable to see it.

Perhaps it's beyond the wit of the TUC to realise that the women, and men, they are supposed to represent have to go to work.

BRITAIN'S introduction from today (10 November) of an 11.8 per cent EEC tax on its food imports is strengthening the view that Mr Peter Walker, the UK's Agriculture Minister, looks likely to become as firm a captive of the Common Agri-

cultural Policy as most other EEC farm ministers.

The UK's decision to apply it means:

- British farmers are being sheltered from the competition of cheaper food imports whose prices in the UK would otherwise have fallen;

- British food prices are being kept artificially high as a result. The UK food index would be 2.2 per cent lower if the current tax was not being applied.

Financial Times, 10 November

**SAVE MONEY**—make yourself sick. That's the message from the Department of Health and Social Security in its latest advertisements on prescription charges.

These go up from 70p to £1 per item on 1 December. If you need 15 items or more each year, the ad says, 'you can save money with the Pre-payment Certificate.' This will cost £15!

If the prescription charges stayed at 70p you would of course pay £4.50 less. If the prescriptions were still free you would pay not a penny. And you wouldn't then have anything to save. 'Saving' is an advertising con-trick.

*'WHAT annoys me is that they aren't asked the important questions. I'm not interested in their brains—I want to know if they can do the housework, if they can cook, if they know how to look after a man. That's a woman's job—to look after her man.'*

**Sporting Life commentator on the Miss World male fantasia.**

If you have any stories, silly ads or anything else for this column, send them to Dirty Linen Po Box 82 London E2

# ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE!

Dear Womens Voice,

I have been intending to write for a long time, since the July/August issue which comments on 'Beyond the Fragments'. I thought you started off trying to be fair, but political assumptions kidnapped the whole attempt. I'm writing all the same because it's an important debate which ought to be aired.

There were two basic faults with the review. The first is that it collapses the three different authors and assessments, and then accuses them of telling us it is unrealistic to be revolutionary. The second is that it assumes that the existence of Women's Voice is somehow enough to make up for all the years of sexual-political blind spots on the left.

The choice implied by the review is between WV/SWP politics and doing nothing. But at least two organisational alternatives to both reformism and leninist parties are suggested. Hilary Wainwright has put a lot of energy into developing socialist centres, and Lynne Segal into the revolutionary socialist organisation Big Flame. Women's Voice may not agree with these alternatives, but it should acknowledge that they exist.

WV can be a very good publication—but it doesn't do away with the need for autonomous feminism, just as no revolutionary organisation does away with autonomous black organisation.

The purpose of feminism is not to remain separate for the sake of it, but to make up for the neglect of centuries and the blind-spots and give more priority to putting women first, transforming the whole of socialism with feminist insights.

I think it's true that many people attracted to 'BTF' have been very vague about their politics, and that the book, as the authors have agreed didn't stress enough the importance of confronting the state.

I'm often in disagreement with the SWP and other groups—but I do try to recognise the positive things it achieves. However, once people decide for themselves that it's important to join, many of them seem to slip into

thinking that everyone else who hasn't made the same decision is wasting her or his time.

Sue Greenberg  
North London

## Women's fingers do the walking

Dear Womens Voice

I am compiling a directory of women workers, a women's yellow pages, which I hope will be published in 1981.

I hope it will increase women's employment, enable women to employ other women and encourage women to learn skills in areas still dominated by men. I hope to have sections on women's experiences in training and finding a job.

I want the directory to be as comprehensive as possible and will include manual trades, artists, crafts women, musicians, therapists, professionals of various kinds etc.

If you would like to be listed or could offer information or personal experiences please send me a largish SAE for a questionnaire at the address below.

Lauren Harvey  
43 Beaconsfield Rd  
London N15 4SH

## LETTER FROM GERMANY

Dear Womens Voice,

I'd like to subscribe to Womens Voice for a year. I enjoy reading Womens Voice. It's obvious that this is a feminist and socialist magazine, whereas Spare Rib, which I subscribed too, doesn't seem to be too certain about its political standpoint. As an active trade unionist I'm very interested in the English fight of women. Brigitte Becker  
West Germany

# LETTERS



## SHOULD WE DEMAND PART-TIME WORK?

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
Many women in my union, the Inland Revenue Staff Federation, see the winning of the demand for part time working as a positive gain. This is understandable as many of them not only work full time but have another job being housewives and mothers and playing the role that is expected of them.

At present part time working is allowed as a concession and many women take time off without pay during the school holidays to look after their children.

I am, however, in two minds about whether it is correct to press for part time working. I believe that ultimately the choice should be available to all, but there are certain problems. Firstly, at present the Civil Service is under attack and restricted to cash limits.

To reduce the size of Civil Service, people who leave or retire are not replaced. They call this natural wastage. If we obtained part time working this would help the Tories in reducing the size of the Civil Service, because it is highly unlikely that they would employ more staff.

Secondly, people employed part time are more difficult to unionise, let alone organise. We already have problems getting women along to meetings. Many unions do not try to organise workplaces where the majority of the workers are part time and women. They use this as an excuse.

Lastly, if it became

common practice for women to work part time, it could eventually come to be expected rather than the exception. There is nothing Thatcher would like better than to get us all back in the home.

Despite all this I still feel that we should all be able to choose, and so control our working lives. I wonder if anyone else has any thoughts on the subject.  
Maxine Bowler  
Leicester

## A Right to Work holiday

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
I spent a week's holiday from work in October by joining the Right to Work March. We walked 300 miles from Port Talbot to the Tory Party Conference in Brighton to protest against rising unemployment.

The girls on the march walked just as far and hard as the boys, and it's a real shame that more women weren't there. Of course, there was a lot of sexism going around — crude comments and dirty jokes — especially after a few beers. However, about half the male marchers had probably never before thought seriously about why men oppress

## Boring and costly - it's just too much!

*Dear Womens Voice,*

If you went into a K Shoe Shop and paid £18 for boring brown shoes would you assume that you'd walk out in a pair of leather shoes? I would and I did.

When I took them off I was amazed to see 'man made' inside. Everyone agreed that as I'd worn them there was no hope of changing them.

After a couple of days I phoned the shop and the manager told me to bring them back. (Many shoe shops take the precaution of having no phone!) When I showed the shoes the manager lamented over the fact that he'd never be able to sell them... Then he told me that this synthetic material was superior to leather in many ways and K had spent millions on perfecting it. I repeated that for £18 I expected leather.

Eventually he told an assistant to bring me some shoes. The only leather pair in my size cost £24!

A pair of leather shoes half a size smaller were found costing £19. Not many people could afford a pair of shoes at that price anyway. The only reason it's worth mentioning is that we are ripped off all the time and as long as we have a system where profit is the only thing that matters we are the losers.

In *Womens Voice* there have been reports of pickets of supermarkets for particularly expensive/lethal products. Italian housewives are even more energetic — when prices become too high they help themselves! 'We can't pay, we won't pay' is a very funny play about a shoppers' rebellion.  
Julie Fancy  
South East London



women and treat them as inferior, and at least they were discussing that on the march.

It's up to us women to show that we're equal to men in every way and fight against the media's image of us as sappy, decorative, little housewives. We must show that we can walk as far, shout as loud and fight as hard against the Tories. Thatcher's vicious cuts are hitting us first as the lowest paid, least well organised sectors of the Trade Union Movement. Women are losing their jobs and being forced back into the home every day. The few reforms we won in the 60's are being snatched back from under our

noses. So we have to fight every inch of the way.

The women who marched those 300 miles — from 72 year old Gladys from Port Talbot to 16 year old More and Mindy (as they were nicknamed) from Glasgow are an inspiring example to us all. It is important for us to work now to encourage more women to fight against unemployment — it fits us as well as men! I'll certainly be going on the whole of next year's Right to Work march. It's probably the best holiday I've ever had, as well as the most worthwhile.  
Wendy Pettifer  
TGWU  
Stoke Newington

# Dear Jane

CHRISTMAS SEEMS to be one of the strongest reasons for having a family. It is the final answer to people who say that the family is an oppressive institution that we'd be better off without. Can you think of anything worse than having to spend Christmas on your own?

But how would Christmas be dealt with if we all lived differently?

One year I lived in a house with some Spanish friends who were working over here. They had no families with them and were glad enough to work over the holiday period, but they arranged it so that their shifts fell at different parts of the day. While any one of them was 'on', one of the

others was at home, keeping a sort of everlasting paella going in a big earthenware pot. Other people in the area who were working over the Christmas were invited in to eat the paella and drink wine with us. What was original about this was that people were only there in the house because they wanted to be. There were no scores to be settled, no skeletons waiting to fall out of cupboards.

A different experience is to go home with your lover and/or children to your parent's or your partner's parents. A few drinks and there is the risk of something spilling out that is "better left unsaid". Often I go back to work with a sigh of

relief, but not rested, feeling that I have wasted the few precious work-free days on endless washing up and polite conversation.

Yet I keep going back to the family for Christmas.

Why is the family so actively encouraged, not just by the myths of family togetherness round the Christmas tree, but by taxation, social security, housing regulations and all the other red tape our rulers tie us up in? Early feminist writers treated it as just a superstitious relic from the past, but many feminists today would argue that it is encouraged as the most economical way of keeping workers fit enough for their forty

hours a week of grind.

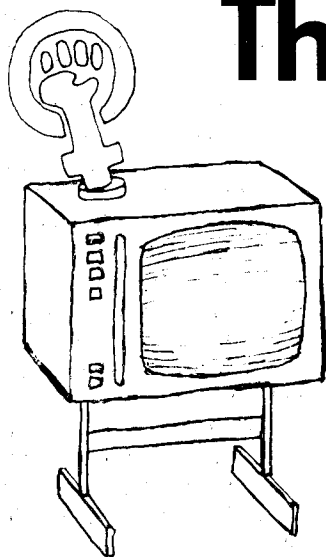
Meanwhile, for many of us, Christmas will beckon us back to the tradition of family gatherings. But many others—in womens refuges, in campaigns for homes for single people, in experiments in communal life—may be in the emotional vanguard.

These women and men will be exploring and inventing the festivities of the future. By choice or by necessity they have stepped outside the traditional family structure. There are probably readers of *Womens Voice* who escape from routine at Christmas—WV would like to hear from them (and so would I!)

Mel Bartley

## Yours Worried

# The Thursday Fix



EVERY THURSDAY for the past three months I have driven through red traffic lights to get my weekly fix of *Mackenzie*. It's hard to say why—everyone around me says it's nonsense, and admittedly with the last few episodes I have begun to agree with them.

Andrea Newman's previous melodramas—*Bouquet of Barbed Wire* and its successor—were simply about the possible combinations and permutations of who could screw whom. And in the end it turns out that that is really what *Mackenzie* is all about as well, with the added spicy ingredient of incest.

But until the final few episodes that hasn't been absolutely apparent. If you disregard the whole family-screwing-itself/sins-of-the-fathers strategy for drawing the plot to a close then one or two interesting sidelights emerge.

Firstly, the title *Mackenzie* is completely misleading. The series is not about the rags-to-riches builder millionaire—it is about the

a world created by women who surround him. It is the women who actually act. Considering how rare this kind of thing is in either films or television, it seems to me something to be applauded, no matter how stereotyped the women might be.

Secondly, the structure of the series means that all characters are presented equally. In other words you are not forced to identify with anyone in particular. Andrea Newman has done away with goodies and baddies.

Therefore, as the audience we are freer than usual to make up our own minds about the rightness or wrongness of the characters' choices and actions, which is surely a good thing. And because moralising is done

Diana, for example, although at this stage in the series Andrea Newman seems to be panicking and forcing her to become the stereotyped 'heartless whore', was shown initially quite sympathetically as a woman who rejected the roles of both wife and mother. Ruth, again quite sympathetically, is presented as a woman with two relationships, both equally important to her, when we are all supposed to only need one.

Next time round she needs to have the courage to carry through her initial insights without resorting to neat devices of plot or trendy quirks like incest to keep her in the best-seller bracket.

Perhaps she might choose ordinary working people as her main characters, and she might relate events a little more to the politics of the outside world. The next twenty million viewers



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# TALES WE TELL OUR SISTERS

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## Monkeys and mangoes

CHRISTMAS Cheer is here again, that means I've got to behave like a Good Girl at the dinner tables of my middle class relatives. I love some of these people, especially one at a time, but get them all together and it's dreadful. Here's two years ago at Christmas Dinner:

Round the mahogany table, sumptuous cut glass, a choice of fine wines and so on. On my left, the great white whale, the aunt recently returned from South Africa, a crimson slash of lipstick, the cigarette holder, her educated voice squeezed out of a tube. Then stepmother – that shrill voice drilling through the air, alert to the dangers of hostility between the warring family factions. The cousins sit glumly, they too have decided on the path of least resistance and eat their food quietly.

Father smiles benevolently and sits in splendour at the head of the table, one sister winks conspiratorially at me over the table, they've separated us to stop us giggling. She's begged me to play the game, not say what I think, not be the commie they laugh at to hide their fear of my ideas. Then there's the other sister, she and I only meet when there's no way to avoid it.

Aunty starts. 'Oh God,' she drawls, 'So many burglaries at this time of year, they got my mink and my ocelot.'

'Darling!' shrieks stepmother, 'Too ghastly.'

'And of course one can't afford the insurance these days, so I've had to make do with a fun fur.'

'Too appalling,' I murmur, through clenched teeth.

'And what are you doing now darling?' enquires Aunty.

'Nothing,' I say, 'unemployed.'

Silence, knives and forks scrape, survey the choice of sauces and unrecognisable fancy dishes.

'Goose a la godknowswhat,' announces our hostess.' A nice change from boring old turkey.'

'Unemployed? Oh how terrible, and with your education, you *poor* thing. What do you live on?'

I say, 'Dole.'

More scraping. My dad chuckles, himself romantically inclined to what is unacceptable.

Aunty says, 'Well, one gets an awful lot on the dole these days doesn't one? I mean it's really awfully convenient for all these people who don't want to work.'

She looks to me for support. I'll get her now.

'I wanted to be unemployed, it's OK for me, it's really frightening for people who want jobs and can't get them and that's 99% of the unemployed.'

'Stuff and nonsense,' she retorts, in that tone which the upper classes use, which sounds like arfarf whaafarf whaaf. I give up.

My stepmother will do anything to avert the disaster of an all out battle. She yells down the table at the demon sister, the moneymaker. 'And how was India darling?' 'Darling' has a delightful little house down in the South of India. With-

out waiting for a reply, stepmother continues by way of addressing the family and informing them with unshakeable pride in the offspring (as long as it's not me). 'Do you know, she's quite marvellous, cooks on a kerosene stove, wears a sari, don't you?'

'Yes,' replies madam. 'I find that the natives have a point, saris are jolly comfortable.'

'Do you have much to do with the, um, "natives"?' I enquire. Stepmother gives me the evil eye. Sister glares glacially at me, tightens her mouth and is about to reply, when stepmother screams with true passion.

'She's quite wonderful with the natives!! She has employed one. She pays a little man £5 a month to keep the monkeys off the mangoes. If he didn't have that God knows what he'd do.'

'AGH!' I emit a noise. The nice sister is kicking my shins, and giving me that pleading look, but it's too late, the demon is awoken and bad sister scrapes out her favourite insult.

'Well, of course you're a commie and we all know what goes on in Russia. I don't know why you don't go there and stop eating our parent's Capitalist food, and stop scrounging off *our* taxes. You disgust us!!'

This is standard practice at Christmas, and it never fails to reduce me to tears, so this year I'm going away. I'll write them a telegram:

'Gone to High Gate Cemetery. stop. Am eating sandwiches with Karl. stop. Happy Karlmass and top Marx for the new year. stop. I hear the Engels singing.'

And I'll secretly really miss all the good food. Never mind. After the revolution...

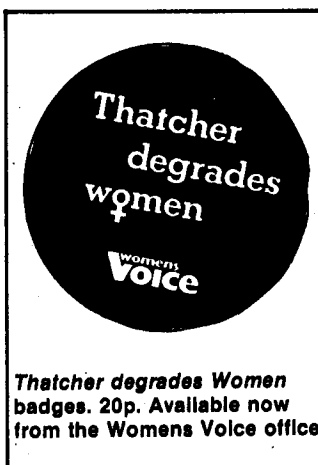
# WHAT IS GOING ON?

## WV groups

- **ABERDEEN** Womens Voice Liz 51059
- **ABERYSTWYTH** Womens Voice c/o Students Union, UCW, Aberystwyth.
- **ACTON WV** Ruth or Jude 740 6660
- **NORTH BIRMINGHAM** Womens Voice Maggie 021 449 4793
- **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM** Womens Voice Jill 021 459 1718
- **BLACK COUNTRY WV** 27 Glen Court, Compton Road.
- **BRADFORD** Womens Voice Janet c/o Textile Hall, Westgate Bradford or Trish 306447.
- **BRIGHTON WV** phone 696897.
- **BRISTOL WV** Katrina 46875.
- **BURTON ON TRENT WV** Kim 33929.
- **CANTERBURY** Womens Voice Barbara (Lyminge 862742).
- **CHORLTON WV** Claire 226 1048
- **COVENTRY WV** 361585
- COLCHESTER** Womens Voice, 22-5650 for details.
- **DUDLEY WV** Brigitte Brierley Hill 78308.
- **EALING/SOUTHALL WV** Christine or Jane 571 1838.
- **ECCLES AND SALFORD WV** Jennie 707 2557 or Ann 737 3800
- **EDINBURGH WV** Penny 5 0731
- EDGE HILL COLLEGE** Womens Voice Bev Southport 212140
- **ENFIELD WV** Nora 807 1741
- FINSBURY PARK** Womens Voice Wendy 01 254 9632 (days)
- **GLASGOW WV** Clare 357 1157
- **GLOSSOP**, Derbyshire Womens Voice Glossop 64287 Carol.
- **HACKNEY WV** Jan/Maddie 249 8716
- **HALIFAX WV** every Saturday 11am-12.30pm. Co-op arcade on the Precinct.
- **HÄMMERSMITH WV** Kate 748-7336
- **HARLOW** Womens Voice Pat, Harlow 28022.

- **HATFIELD AND WELWYN** WV phone Cathy Hatfield 65238.
- **HEMEL HEMPSTEAD** Womens Voice Val Berkhamstead 74468
- **HIGHBURY WV** Clara 226 7066
- **HORNSEY WV** Maggie 341 1182
- **KENTISH TOWN WV** Pauline 586 5693
- **LAMPETER WV** c/o SDUC Lampeter. Dyfed, Wales.
- **LANCASTER WV** ring 36196
- **LEEDS WV** Gilda 622 800 or Bev 457 098.
- **LEICESTER WV** Fiona 0533 62855.
- **LEYTONSTONE WV** Annie (556 5595) or Pam (558 1509)
- **LIVERPOOL WV** Jane 727 1182
- **LOWESTOFT** Womens Voice—c/o 107, Montgomery Avenue, Lowestoft.
- **LUTON WV** Denise 35, Chatsworth Road, Luton.
- **MEDWAY WV** Lici, Medway 571628.
- **NEWCASTLE** Womens Voice Liz 854 782
- **NEWHAM** Womens Voice Pam 534 1417
- **NORWICH** Womens Voice c/0 56 St Benedicts St. Norwich.
- **NOTTINGHAM WV** Chrissie Langley Mill. 62356.
- **OXFORD** WV phone 723 395 or write to PO Box 20.
- **PIMLICO** Womens Voice Helen 730 7983 or Leslie 834 0760
- **READING** Womens Voice Shirley 585554
- **ST HELENS** WV Carol, St Helens 28178
- **SHEFFIELD** Womens Voice Sue 613 739
- **SOUTH LONDON WV** Sally 720 5768
- **SOUTH WEST LONDON** Womens Voice. Marion 947 0560.
- **STOCKPORT** Womens Voice. 061 431 7564
- **STOKE ON TRENT** Womens Voice Sandra 814094
- **TOTTENHAM** Womens Voice Mary 802 9563
- **TOWER HAMLETS WV** Helen 980 6036
- **WALTHAMSTOW** WV phone Sue 521 5712
- **WREXHAM** Womens Voice Heather 87293

## Small ads



- **LESBIANS** supporting Womens Voice/Socialist Worker contact the Womens Voice Lesbian Group. Jane Scragg c/o PO Box 82, London E2 9DS.

AS Polish women who have either grown up or live in Britain, we have common experiences. We would like to start a group where we can share our experiences. The first meeting will be on Tuesday 9 December, at the Womens Art Alliance, 10 Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1, at 8pm.

**BATTERED** Women and the State. Conference jointly organised by Scottish Womens Aid and the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties. Saturday 13 December, Music Halls, George Street, Edinburgh. 10am-4pm. Sessions on developments in housing provision for women after marital breakdown, state-induced financial dependence, police treatment of domestic disputes and women who retaliate against violence, plus workshops.

£3.00 per adult, includes coffee, tea and biscuits but not lunch. Creche provided. Registration to Scottish Womens Aid, 11 St Colme St, Edinburgh EH3 6AA.

**A Womens Place** is a womens liberation information centre

**WRRC: a feminist library,**  
190 Upper Street, London N1

Tel: 01-359 5773

Collection of feminist publications including novels and poetry; details of who's researching what and where the Womens studies Courses are.

Free library use to all; membership fee to borrowers

We also run meetings and workshops. Suggestions and offers welcome.

based in central London. It provides anything from tea to useful information on the law and how it affects women. But they are being forced to move and need all the help they can get—mostly financial—  
Contact: A Womens Place, 48 William IVth Street, London WC2.

### 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.

**ANY** women in Bradford area interested in starting a rape crisis group contact Trish 585913, Rachael 43415, Maggie 492075, Brigitte 48422.

**POSTERS**, headed paper, tickets printed. Cheap rates for political/community groups. Contact Alison 01 515 8994, Alex 01 791 1150.

Look out for the National Council for Civil Liberties revised and updated pamphlet 'Maternity Rights for Working Women'...

## WV public meetings

**Womens Voice WOMEN IN HISTORY** series. 7pm The Roebuck pub, Tottenham Court Road. (Warren Street/Goodge Street Tube). Friday nights.

Dec 12 Catherine Chidley - *Nora Carlin*.

Coventry Womens Voice meetings, 8pm, Hertford Tavern (near Technical College)  
8 December **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**  
12 January **POLAND**. Speaker Eva Barker

# 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

**THE CAUSE OF  
LABOUR IS THE  
HOPE OF THE WORLD**



**A Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year,  
With good luck to Labour, hand, heart, & brain.  
Stick fast to your banner, stand solid, nor veer,  
Till the cause of the Workers renews earth  
again.**

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