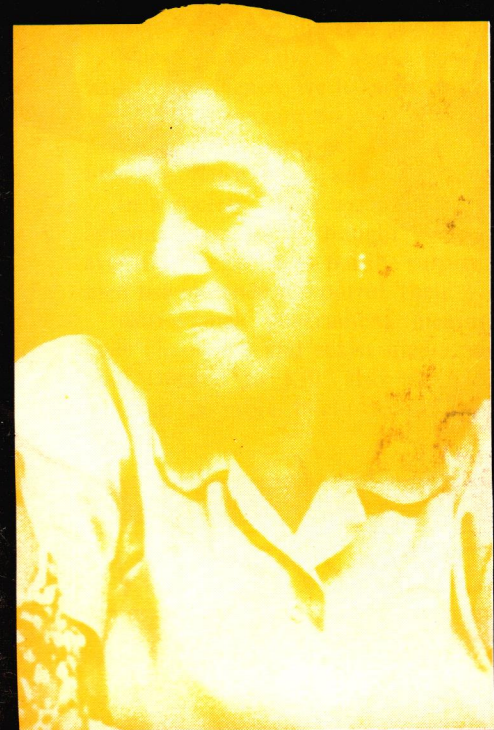
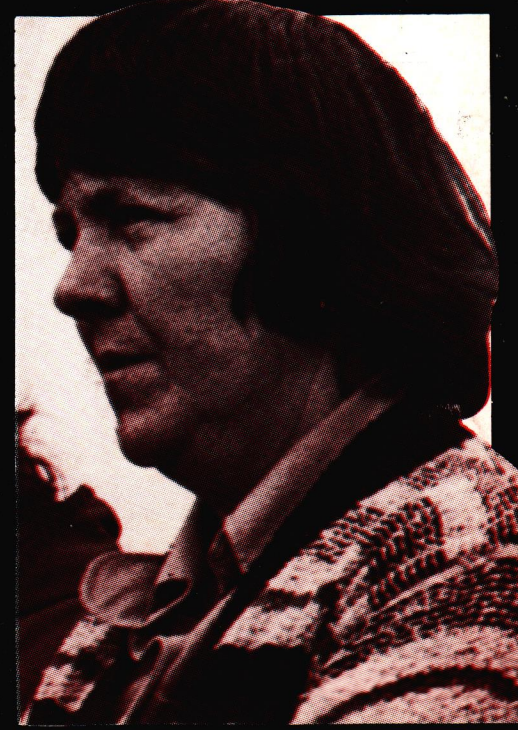


# womens **voice**

Jan '81 Issue 48 Price 25p



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Womens Voice Conference  
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# Violence against women

The latest killing by the Yorkshire Ripper has brought out all the arguments about how we deal with violence against women.

There are calls for curfews against men, for more police on the streets, self-defence and vigilante groups, for women to stay at home unless they are with a man, for better street lighting.

But the Ripper is merely an extreme case of the male violence which goes on all the time - the batterings, rapes, harassment on the streets that we all know about.

When we're talking about how to deal with this violence, we have to start with its cause. It is pressure at work, the misery of the dole, and personal frustration which breeds violence in men *and* women.

In a society where women are treated as commodities, to be bought and sold like everything else, it is hardly surprising that men use violence to control 'their' property.

Anti-women government measures, the male chauvinist and sexist media and films like 'Dressed to Kill' also mean that the violence is more likely to be male than female.

So what are the answers? If we wait for the police to catch the Ripper we'll wait for ever. Even if he is caught he won't be the last of his kind.

We should support and organise demonstrations to Reclaim the Night, we should learn self-defence and we should agitate for better street lighting.

But more police on the streets will not help us - they will be used, as in Birmingham, to harass prostitutes. And curfews on men, apart from being impractical, are an attack on the wrong enemy. Not all men are rapists, many are pro-feminist and we need the support they can give us. Women's self-organisation is positive in an immediate way. It gives us confidence and strength. But given the situation where 25 per cent of *all reported violent crime* is against women, it will take more than demonstrations to change the statistics.

The real roots of the violence are in the way women and men relate to each other, and only a change of the sort of world we live in will change that.

## CONTENTS

### FEATURES

Photo feature on fashion by Henryka Hanzlik *pages 14 & 15*

Nuclear war the real horror. Interview with Pat

Arrowsmith *pages 16 & 17*

Year of the disabled *pages 18 & 19*

News feature on women and violence in Leeds *pages 8 & 9*

NEWS *pages 4-12*

### REGULARS

Health looks at lead pollution *page 13*

Why I became a socialist. Margaret Dewar talks about 50 years as a revolutionary *page 25*

Answering back why the troops should leave Ireland *page 11*

Dear Jane and TV *page 24*

Reviews on the New Woman then and now *pages 20 & 21*

Your letters and Dirty Linen *pages 22 & 23*

Our next editorial meeting is on 28 January at 7.30pm. If you would like to come along or would like a speaker for your group, please give us a ring.

Cover pictures John Sturrock, Jane Munro, Laurie Sparham, IFL, Tessa Howland, IFL

Inside cover of Liverpool unemployment demo, John Smith, IFL

## Thousands join Liverpool jobs march



Tessa Howland/IFL

**Gardners workers were among more than 100,000 demonstrating at Liverpool on 29 November.**

THERE were just over 150 on the Manchester to Liverpool Right to Work March. 17 of us were women. Not too good you may think, but the turnout of women on this march was actually slightly bigger than the turnout for the three week Wales to Brighton march, and we'd had much less time to mobilise the marchers themselves.

**Annie from Camden** 'It was thoroughly enjoyable'. It was one of the most non-sexist organised activities that I've been on in my life.'

**Tracey from Camden** 'This has been the best set of people I've ever met. People think and care for each other. On this march people pull together for each other. No-one has ever been skint, although many ran out of money. It's been great.'

**Cheryl from North London** 'It was quite an experience. I've met a lot of people I wouldn't have met normally. I've enjoyed it, it's been nice because people don't worry what they look

like.'

**Heather from Wrexham** 'I really like the way people came out of factories in solidarity with us. I really enjoyed myself.'

**Celia from Wolverhampton** 'the best part of the march has been going on delegations and talking to people. We found there was a lot of support from the workers we talked to. We need this type of solidarity between employed and unemployed.'

A meeting of all the women was called at the beginning of the march to discuss how we would organise for the next five days. Some of us thought it important to confront each marcher with our displeasure every time something sexist was said or done. Most of the women felt that this would be counter productive; that any sexism would fade away over the course of the march as the fellas realised that we could march just as long, shout just as loud, and contribute just as much as a member of the dele-

gation. This argument won the day.

By the end of the march we had indeed earned the respect of most of the other marchers. Incidents of sexism were few and far between, and we found it was the fellas who were the first to argue against it.

For me, the march was a special experience, it was like socialism on a tiny scale. We went through a lot together and we became a big family. Everyone should go on a march at least once. We must work doubly hard for the next one, and ensure that as many women as possible become involved.

Going on the march has given us fresh energy to take our socialist politics to the dole queues and workplaces, and try and get as many people as possible, especially women, involved in a fightback against unemployment and the Tories.

**Isabelle Capri  
Grays**



## Not so Dullford

Do you remember when I told a story about the time of the Enormous Economic Crisis?

Some time later, the right wingers were still in power, flying in increasingly tighter monetary circles. Mangey the Snatcher had pecked jobs from right under the people's feet. So with sore feet a lot of people just lay down.

A few workers didn't want the right wingers to get fat and healthy at their expense. These included the Gardners in Dullford, who when told of 560 redundancies by their bossbird, Sid Hawk, tried very hard to talk him out of it.

The Gardners decided to stand up for themselves, and occupied their garden, which surprised not only them, but also all the workers lying down. This tactic of fighting back standing up, confused the birds too, especially when the Gardners travelled up and down the country visiting other people, telling them what they had done. The boss birds began to quake because it seemed as if this thing might be catching.

Meanwhile, the Dullford Womens Voice Group, who met fortnightly to start fighting for their rights and socialist revolution (ordinary women much like you and me) heard about their brothers occupying the garden.

'We must intervene' they cried, 'since your cabbage springs from the same soil as ours'.

So they organised a picket, a meeting and collections, talking to the women workers and Gardners about the BIG importance of involving women as the salt of the earth. Arguments raged, when ...

The Gardners WON!

All the arguments stopped and the workers went back to work.

A Womens Voice bulletin was put into the garden saying that although Mangey and Sid may flock together, the people are stronger, 'cos they stood up and fought together.

And where Dullford got its name from, nobody knows.

**Penny Simmons**  
Manchester



Demonstrators at Liverpool demand the Right to Work.

Tessa Howland IFL

## Processors cut jobs

BY 1985 word processors will have cost 21,000 jobs. By 1990, 170,000 jobs will have disappeared, mainly women's. So says a report recently published by the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Womens Voice has long pointed out the danger of new technology to women's jobs, with typists and secretaries in offices everywhere suddenly finding that their new equipment turns out to be a nightmare rather than the labour-saving device they had been led to believe it would be.

Dr Emma Bird, who carried out the study, has a simple solution to the problem. That is, women or indeed anyone faced with unemployment because of new technology should make sure that they have the skills(sic) to go into management!

**Mary-Ann Stuart**

## New rules mean cuts

GOVERNMENT claims that it is spending an extra £200 million this year on heating allowances for those in need. In fact the new DHSS regulations, which take effect from 24 November, represent an overall cut and will cause increased hardship to claimants.

The figure of £200 million derives from a weekly heating allowance which will be paid automatically to people receiving disablement, mobility, or attendance allowances. In fact most were already receiving this allowance on a discretionary basis and the actual increased expenditure is very little.

In the past, some people were awarded as much as £7 a week. £3.40 is now the absolute maximum, so those with the greatest needs will find that their allowance is *reduced*.

Payments to cover special needs are going to be more difficult to get as well. If you have a gas or electricity bill which you cannot afford to pay, and you are threatened with disconnection, the DHSS will only help you in certain circumstances. These are that fuel debts will only be paid following a period of bad weather, after a change



to new heating arrangements or under regulation 30. Regulation 30 says payments can only be made if it is the only way in which serious damage to health and safety can be avoided.

(This Regulation also applies to clothing and footwear grants.)

Inevitably a reduction in financial help from the DHSS will put increased pressure on the local authority social services, in terms both of money and social workers' time. Meanwhile, people in need will go on suffering.

**Alison Cartmale**



# NEW YEAR ABORTION FIGHT

Speaking in Edinburgh recently, John Corrie warned of two Private Member's Bills to be put before Parliament in the new year. The Tories have learned their lesson after the Corrie Bill failed—the new Bills will contain just one clause each. They aim to:

- a) reduce the time limit on abortion to 20 weeks,
- b) to restrict even further our access to abortion care. The MP's sponsoring the Bills are Stewart and Sainsbury.

Over 50 women and men met John Corrie when he spoke to the Edinburgh Catholic Students Association.

Ten of us went into the meeting: the rest chanted outside for Free Abortion on Demand.

Corrie was faced with one group who think him too liberal and another opposing his attempt to restrict abortion facilities. He might have made our hearts bleed if we didn't

know the suffering his Bill would have caused to thousands of women.

Corrie boasted that he'd visited an abortion ward. So have thousands of women—and for most of them the experience was much more painful.

At question time, our delegation was shouted down by Corrie, the priest, and the Catholic students. They were rather embarrassed to be applauding Corrie—who says he is in favour of legal abortion—in

order to show their distaste for those of us concerned with a woman's right to choose what happens to her own body.

The Sainsbury/Stewart Bills stand a much better chance of getting through than Corrie's. We need to take up the arguments NOW for free abortion on demand. Once again womens' rights are being attacked and we must work with our trade unions and with NAC before the Bills are presented—and

before thousands of women find the right to abortion denied to them. Sylvia Crick  
Edinburgh Womens Voice

FOR THE time being, the right to abortions up to 28 weeks has been successfully defended against Lord Denning. His scandalous ruling that nurses should not assist with prostaglandin—controlled abortions was overturned last month by the Law Lords.

## SPANISH ABORTION SOLIDARITY

IN NOVEMBER, the Basque nationalist organisation ETA (M) attacked the property of Dr Usparicha, who performs private abortions for rich women whilst publicly opposing the right of women to control their own bodies.

ETA stated: 'The denial of abor-

tion rights has meant women being dragged before tribunals, into prisons, and sometimes to their deaths when, in desperation, they go to backstreet abortionists.'

Meanwhile the Womens Assembly of Vizcaya (Basque Country) organised a march of over a thou-

sand people through Bilbao. The demonstrators carried placards proclaiming, 'I've had an abortion too' and 'Free Abortion on Demand' as they expressed their solidarity with 24 women imprisoned for assisting with abortions at a family planning clinic in Seville.

Josefina Gonzales







## Playtex pickets

WOMENS VOICE groups all over the country have been organising pickets and publicity to get across the message that Playtex tampons can kill. Some chemists have agreed to stop stocking them. Others are finding that Playtex tampons are becoming harder to sell as women realise their health is being endangered by this stupid commercial gimmick. We've even had reports of shops selling the things at cut price in a desperate attempt to get rid of them. Leaflets about the dangers of the tampons are available from the Womens Voice office. Here are reports of a few of the pickets.

SOUTH WEST London Womens Voice picketed Boots in Balham High Street. The manager agreed to take some leaflets to the regional managers' meeting.

We gave out 500 leaflets and got a good response. Some women said they had been using Playtex, but now they would stop. Others took leaflets to pass the information on to their daughters and friends.

We got coverage in the local press, and will be going on to picket shops throughout the borough. Marion Upchurch

HACKNEY Womens Voice picketed Woolworths where they are still selling Playtex tampons. We gave out leaflets outside the shop for about half an hour, and managed to dissuade a lot of women from buying Playtex tampons.

CENTRAL LONDON Polytechnic Womens Voice group have picketed Boots in Oxford Street over the last two weeks. We've had a really good reaction from the lunchtime shoppers. At times we were almost blocking the pavement as people stopped to talk to us.



The police came along to see what we were up to, and then wrote down all the slogans which we had written on placards. When we asked them why they said: 'our gov'nor will want to know what we've been doing.'

Lots of women who aren't in Womens Voice have supported us around the campaign, and we will be carrying on the pickets after Christmas.

Jane Ure Smith

### Womens Voice Playtex Tampons Leaflet

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.

## DON'T GIVE UP - ORGANISE

THERE are only four of us in the group but we have been organising support for the Gardners workers. As soon as we heard about the dispute we got a food parcel together and took it down to Eccles. We were

made very welcome and the food was much appreciated. Later we were 'entertained' by Paul Foot who was speaking at a local pub. As well as being very inspiring, he offered some good advice on how to fight the Tories—don't just sit there—ORGANISE.

Later that week we held a jumble sale in college and the response was excellent. As well as raising £13 for Gardners we drew attention to the Right to Work Campaign.

We feel it is important to make students aware of the industrial world outside college. It has not been easy but at least we are raising the issues and putting across real socialist politics, which provoke discussion and argument. This is important in all colleges and arguments can be won—so to all sisters in the same plight, we say 'don't give up!'

Beverly Costello  
Rachel Parkinson  
Jane Marsh  
Jane Mahaffey  
Edge Hill College WV Group

### H Block solidarity

BIRMINGHAM Womens Voice organised a meeting on the hunger strikers in Ireland at very short notice last week. We still managed to get twenty-five people along, including some women from the local H-Block Action Committee. Geraldine McFeely, sister of a hunger striker, spoke about the horrors of daily life in Northern Ireland—the constant army raids on her family, and her brother's arrest and trial in a juryless court.

We decided to give as much support as we could to the local H-Block campaign. We have already leafleted two large factories in Birmingham—Cadbury's and Lucas.

Jenny Austin



Women in Cardiff picket Margaret Thatcher against Tory policies

Tessa Howland JFL



# WOMEN

*THE MURDER of Jacqueline Hill, the Yorkshire Ripper's thirteenth victim, has resulted in demonstrations, self-defence groups, and arguments within the women's movement about tactics and demands. It has also meant, in towns and cities in Yorkshire, that women have been forced to change their lives and routines. Womens Voice talked to students, hospital workers and an unemployed woman about life in Leeds and how women can fight back.*

## Outrage

The media are outraged by the Yorkshire Ripper. They are outraged that he is attacking and killing 'decent young girls' and they are convinced that when he is caught there will be an end to violence against women.

In the last few weeks, since Jacqueline Hill was killed in Leeds, more newspaper column inches and more television time have been devoted to the Ripper than in the whole of the five years he has been killing women. Much of that space has been used to tell the country that Jacqueline Hill was a 'nice girl', that she came from a 'good family', that she was on her way home at a 'respectable time', and, implicitly, that when the Ripper was attacking prostitutes — well, it wasn't very nice, but it wasn't a real outrage.

The assumption running through the media coverage that the Ripper is the only form of violence against women extends to the police and the public. When — if — the Ripper is caught rape, sexual attacks, assaults and murder will not go away. Women will still be frightened of walking the streets after dark. The media don't report the hundreds of attacks on women that take place daily. But the Ripper has made people talk about violence on women and women's response to it.

## Leeds

In Leeds, the scene of ten of the Ripper's 13 murders, the life of women in the city has changed. Daily routines like going to and from work — which in the winter months

mostly takes place in the 16 frightening hours of darkness; popping to the corner shop; going to the cinema or the pub — all these become major expeditions which cannot be chanced alone.

We spoke to Jane, Sarah, Caroline, Elaine, Jo and Rowena (students at Leeds University); Sheila, Sheila and Lyn (workers at St James' Hospital, Leeds); and Sue (unemployed).

'You never see a woman on her own, and not often in twos and threes'... 'Even if home by bus, you have to walk the 400 yards to your front door'... 'Everything has to be arranged beforehand — you can't do anything otherwise. It's not only yourself you have to think about, but your friends. If you say you'll be home about ten o'clock and you're late, then you get your friends phoning everyone they know saying "When was the last time you saw so and so?" You can't unexpectedly stay out all night because your friends and the people you live with will worry'... 'It's paranoid in this city. After 7 pm you don't see a woman on her own — not on the streets, not in a pub, even at tea time, going home from work.'

Since the death of Jacqueline Hill there have been demonstrations in Leeds and Manchester. Both were well attended and for many women it was their first demonstration. Paint was thrown at a cinema screen showing 'Dressed to Kill'. Some women demanded a curfew on men, arguing that an effective curfew on

women already exists. Despite the arguments about slogans and demands, the demonstrations gave women confidence.

'The demonstration altered our position as feminists. A lot of aggression was directed towards us, particularly from men. The attitude was one of "by being violent towards men you're playing the same game". The press reports weren't true — no one got beaten up, but men were shouted at'... 'Some people said that we were taking the police off the job of catching the Ripper. We're not calling for reinforcements'... 'We want to get it across that we're not for more law and order.'

## Fear

The students' union at Leeds University, under pressure from the Women's Action Group, has organised self-defence classes and a transit service for women returning home from the university buildings after dark.

The service is open to university staff, but it will stop over the Christmas vacation.

'One of the problems with the bus service is that it may take you an hour or two to get home after the bus has driven round Leeds dropping people off. It takes ten minutes to get home across the moor, and 20 minutes by road. There's no way round it, but that's going to have an effect on people using the service.'

The hospital workers' union, NUPE, is trying to negotiate a reduced rate for women with a local taxi firm. The biggest problem with raising it at union meetings is that the meetings are held in the evening and most women weren't going for fear of being out after dark.

The feeling of many women is one of not knowing who to trust.

'There's a list of men students who are willing to escort women back to halls of residence, but you look down this list and think "How do I know who to trust?"... 'If a man's coming towards you down the road you think every time "He could be the Ripper" and it's written all

over your face. The man knows what you're thinking and he's thinking "She thinks I'm the Ripper," so it's pretty bad for men too'... 'I've got a friend who was walking home after dark alone and a man came up to her and said "You mustn't walk home on your own — I'll walk you to your front door". She didn't know what to do, because she was frightened of being on her own and she was frightened of accepting his

# NO

offer in case he attacked her'... 'The Ripper has reinforced all the attitudes that a woman needs a man to escort her, to protect her'... 'It makes men more powerful'... 'We have to argue that we have the right to walk without men to protect us, and we have the right to live in single-sex households if we want, without the protection of men.'

## Curfew

A curfew for women undoubtedly exists — not only in Leeds, but all over the country. It's a curfew which is imposed by fear, but the solution does not lie in calling for a curfew on men. To enforce it would require much greater policing of the streets; it wouldn't stop domestic violence or anyone determined to attack/rape/murder women; and, in any case, men are not the enemy. To pretend they are is only playing the 'divide and rule' game which was invented to make us feeble and powerless.

Demands for self-defence for women are important and must be supported. How effective carrying a knife or being a black-belt in karate in the event of an attack depends on the situation, but self-defence gives women greater confidence.

Violence against women can't be isolated from other issues. In Manchester the council is considering turning off street lighting after 11 pm as an economy; in London the power is reduced late at night. Transport is being cut all over the country — many suburban services have been stopped and metropolitan services are few and far between after the rush hour.

# SAY

The fight against violence must include fighting against public spending cuts.

Unemployment is known to increase domestic violence — wife battering and child battering. As more people discuss violence against women, women are more confident about saying 'My husband/boyfriend/father hits men, and I've had enough of it.' It's no good just recognising violence we have

**TO** fight the things that cause it.

Women can't fight the cuts and unemployment alone. But we can organise together to show we won't be forced to stay at home after dark. We can do that by demonstrating on the streets. But in order to get to the roots of violence against women we have to fight the causes — and *that* means fighting, with men, for socialism

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## 'You never see a woman on her own, not even in twos or threes'

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ON FRIDAY 28 November, 400 women marched through the streets of Manchester. They were demanding the right to walk the streets at night free from the danger of attack.

One of these women was Lesley Davidson who came along to the march after seeing Mary Beacon from Womens Voice being interviewed on Granada TV. Lesley is 25 years old and lives on the edge of the

Ripper'. She spoke of the fear she felt as a woman in Manchester, the fear of being out at night alone - having to pay money she can't afford to get taxis. She spoke of the women in her tower block who won't open the door; her friend who

won't go out after 5.30pm. Lesley decided that she would 'do something instead of sitting, reading and listening.' She decided to come on the demonstration.

At first she was a bit apprehensive - would there be violence? Are they all men haters? She said the demonstration changed her life - she felt strong and confident being with other women, and

# VIOLENCE

'red light' area of Manchester on the 12th floor of a tower block. It was the first demonstration she had been on but she said it won't be her last.

As Lesley said: 'We haven't got time to play games with the

was looking forward to joining the campaign against the proposed Manchester council's cut in lighting after 11.00pm. She is going to tell everyone she knows where she was that night 'and if they call me stupid, I'll say it's you who's stupid - sitting on your bum and doing nothing.'

A VICIOUS attack on prostitutes in the Balham area is continuing in the local press.

Rossiter Road Area Residents Association who quote themselves as 'legal, decent and honest' want to clean up Bedford Hill, Balham and have pressurised the Tooting police force into doubling the number of men in the vice squad. Tooting MP Tom Cox also maintains that more prostitutes should be arrested and punished.

Local women gatecrashed a meeting of the Association to complain about their leaflet which joked: Come back Jack the Ripper, all is forgiven.

Some joke for the women of Leeds ... or Balham.

Ann Webb  
Wandsworth WV

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## A curfew for women exists ... it's imposed by fear.

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A LAW intended to make it easier for battered women to obtain legal protection against violent husbands is hardly being used, according to a report, *Which Venue Now?*, from Welsh Women's Aid.

The Domestic Proceedings and Magistrates Courts Act, introduced a year ago, allows women to seek injunctions from Magistrates Courts, as opposed to County Courts or divorce courts.

Reasons for the ineffectiveness of the Act include solicitor's views that magistrates are too inexperienced to deal with domestic violence cases, and that the Act only applies to married women, not co-habitees. Varying amounts and types of evidence are required by magistrates in different regions and this causes difficulties for solicitors representing battered women.

Harriet Sherwood



A group of women from Violence against Women occupied the Sun newspaper offices last month protesting at sexist news coverage



# The Prisoners Case

GERALDINE McFEELY is 30 years old, lives with her family in Co Derry and works as a machinist in a pyjama factory. She is the sister of one of the original seven men to go on hunger strike in the H-Blocks. Womens Voice spoke to Geraldine about her brother and the situation in the North.

*Can you tell me about your brother?*

Tom is 31 and is married with three small children—Mary nine, Roisin and Aine five. Before he was convicted he owned his own house and car and was a sub-contractor. He has lost everything. Being a member of the family and next to Thomas in age I know him well enough to know that he hasn't taken this decision lightly.

*Why did he go on hunger strike?*

For the last four years the prisoners have been trying, through what is known as the 'blanket protest', to be known as political prisoners and treated as human beings.

Thomas was arrested on May 6 1976 at five, in the morning, and beaten unconscious in the yard adjoining the house in which he was arrested. At the bottom of the lane leading from the house he was made to unload a rifle and was told to make a run for it. This he didn't do. If he had done he would've been shot dead. He was then taken to the local Royal Ulster Constabulary in Limavady. He was held for seven days.

During this time no member of the family was allowed to see him. On the second day I was there, myself and his wife tried to get a visit but the door was closed in our faces. The first time I saw him was the following Saturday in the barracks. There was a cigarette burn on his chin, his new jumper was torn around the shoulder, his hands were handcuffed together—behind locked doors! He didn't tell us the full story, but what he did tell us and he repeated in court, was that a rubber tubing was placed around his neck and tightened until he collapsed.

During the seven days he was held Thomas was constantly interrogated day and night and in all the time he was there he had about ten hours' sleep. He was held on remand for nine

months. He was then taken before the non-jury court, which is just a judge sitting on his own. He was convicted of possession of a firearm for which he got fourteen years and armed robbery twelve years, to be served consecutively, a total of 26 years. He was then taken to the H-Blocks where he went straight on the protest

*Some people would say that the 'dirty protest' and the Hunger Strike are 'self inflicted' by the prisoners themselves.*

To say that it's self inflicted is not to understand the circumstances under which these men and women are arrested, convicted, sentenced and treated in jail. The British Government say these men and women are criminals, but they are not treated as such until they arrive inside the gates of Long Kesh and Armagh. The British Government say there is an emergency situation in Northern Ireland, so they must have emergency laws. So they have special laws, special courts, special interrogation centres but no



special prisoners. It's as simple as that.

*Why did the men in H-Block and the women in Armagh decide to go on hunger strike?*

They have made the decision themselves to go on hunger strike, as a result of the punishment inflicted upon them. They are prepared to die for their political beliefs.

*Does your family support what Thomas is doing?*

Yes For the last four years we have watched him suffer. How can we be selfish and ask him to live for another 22 years in those conditions? We realise that it's a last resort for him. We don't feel we could support him if he was asking for anything

unreasonable. The five demands are not unreasonable, they can be granted.

*What would you say to the accusation that if you support the hunger strikers you are a 'terrorist', or a supporter of the IRA?*

I belong to no political party or organisation nor do my friends who support the hunger strikers. The prisoners are asking to be treated as human beings—can you be classed as a terrorist when you protest against the degrading treatment these prisoners go through?

I want people who read this to realise that my brother's life, along with the other hunger strikers—and there will be more because if they die they will be instantly replaced—lies in their hands. No matter your politics this is a question of human rights and sympathy isn't enough. The only way these prisoners won't die is by mass peaceful action. In the North people have been showing their support by coming out to demonstrations. These are people who normally didn't support the hunger strikers, but now they realise that these boys' lives are in their hands. Demonstrations are growing all the time.

*Why did you come to Britain and how have you felt since your stay?*

I found it amazing the freedom you have here. You're able to walk down the street without being stopped and go from one place to another. In the north we don't have that freedom. We have guns pointing at us in the street, our houses are raided regularly. A couple of months back an innocent 18 year old boy who was painting a slogan on a wall in Belfast was shot dead. The injustice in Northern Ireland is being done in the name of the British people. I came here to tell people the truth, I'm not surprised that people don't know what's going on in Northern Ireland. Why if the British Government have nothing to hide is there a cover-up in the media?

*What can we in Britain do?*

What matters is action, writing to MP's, signing petitions, raising the prisoners demands in Trade Union branches and participating in local activities and national demonstrations. Please remember that their lives are in your hands.



ON MONDAY December 1 three women, Mary Doyle, Mairead Nugent and Mairead Farrell, began a hunger strike for political status in Armagh prison, Northern Ireland. Like their comrades in the H-Blocks they are prepared to die if necessary.

At present there are 31 men and three women on hunger strike. They are prepared to die for their political beliefs.



'WE HAVE reached this decision after years of cruel and inhumane treatment and after having exhausted all other means of protest ... We are preparing to fast till death if necessary.' from a statement smuggled out of Armagh jail.

Of the 32 women on the protest, the three women on hunger strike are the only ones who weigh over eight stone. They are now in the medical wing of Armagh.

Paulin McLaughlin, who is not on the protest, now weighs



barely over four stone. Her condition is deteriorating rapidly. She is still not receiving proper medical attention. Pauline dif-



fers from her three sisters on hunger strike. She has not taken the decision to die, she is being slowly murdered.

## Answering back

### Troops Out!

THE SITUATION in the North of Ireland is a result of what started 800 years ago when Britain first invaded.

There were two main reasons why Britain had always wanted control. The first was strategic, the second economic. For hundreds of years the exploitation of Ireland's agriculture and cheap labour was important to the British economy. The native Irish (catholic by tradition) were driven off the land and it was given to settlers from England and Scotland. Today's Irish protestants are descended from these settlers.

In Ireland religion became the badge that distinguished the oppressed from the oppressor. The rule of Britain meant slaughter, mass evictions and famine for the native community. Again and again the unbearable conditions drove the Irish to revolt. They were met by martial law and violent repression. Religion was used to divide the community.

The industrialists took advantage of protestant fears of catholic competition. They claimed the protestant monopoly over the job market would be lost in an 'independent Ireland', so protestant workers were brought into a class alliance with high Tory interests. This alliance still exists today.

In the 1918 General Election, Sinn Fein (which stood for an independent Irish republic) was victorious. They established an Irish Parliament and demanded the withdrawal of the British forces. The result was that Britain poured thousands of troops into Ireland. The IRA fought back and the war of independence began.

Unable to defeat the Irish forces outright, Britain proposed a treaty under which Ireland was partitioned. 26 counties became a 'free state', and Britain retained control of the six north eastern counties.

What happened was the formation of a state that institutionalised discrimination of the catholics (who are a minority in the six counties) in housing and jobs. By the mid-sixties, catholics, who had suffered years of poverty and had no power over their lives, even in the areas where they were in a majority, began to challenge this discrimination. They'd had enough.

In 1968 civil rights marchers took to the streets. More often than not they were attacked by the police. Despite

opposition the civil rights movement continued to grow - as they grew so did protestant feeling against them. There was rioting in catholic areas in the North. In 1969 British troops went into the heart of Derry and brought to an end rioting between catholics and the police. Britain had taken direct control of events in the North.

At first the catholics welcomed the troops. To them it meant the defeat of the hated Royal Ulster Constabulary. But soon the myths about the troops being there to 'protect the catholics' and 'to keep the peace' were shattered. The troops, who had remained in the background for 50 years, fell back into their traditional role of repressing the catholics.

Many people still believe that the troops are keeping the peace, that they are preventing a bloodbath between protestant and catholic. Yet there have been far more deaths and violence since the troops went in. In fact they are maintaining the existing situation in the north, one which can now only exist by the rulers using brute force.

Getting the troops out won't begin to solve all the problems of Irish workers, but at least it will mean that the Irish people themselves can decide what their future can be.

But what of the protestants? Surely they have rights too?

Most protestants believe they are better off being tied to Britain rather than in a united Ireland, which would have an obvious catholic majority. But they receive very little benefit from their British connection. Unemployment in the six counties is the worst in the whole UK, wages are among the lowest, housing the worst. They have only a few paltry privileges over the catholics to reward them for their 'loyalism' but this is precisely what makes catholic repression so important to the rulers of Ireland.

Socialists have always talked of uniting protestant and catholic workers against the rulers who benefit from their divisions. To most people this seems utopian. Yet it has been done briefly in the past on issues like unemployment.

Our rulers fear that unity again. Before, they were able to buy off the protestants and divide workers on religious grounds. There is not much left in the declining industries of the North to buy them off with today.

That unity is the only long term hope of Irish workers. But that unity will mean smashing those protestant organisations on which sectarianism is based. In the meantime the task of socialists in Britain is to explain why ten people are prepared to die for the cause of a united Ireland, and why they have the support of the bulk of the catholic population.



## SAVE THE BELGRAVE

250 LOCAL people marched from South London to Downing Street to protest about the proposed closure of the Belgrave Hospital for Children. A petition of 5,000 signatures was handed in but few of us have any illusions that Thatcher will do anything.

Womens Voice groups in Southwark and Brixton have supported the campaign. Street meetings, leafletting, and pickets of the Area Health Authority have already taken place. The campaign has been contacting trade union and community groups to force the AHA to save and improve the hospital. Hospital workers who were involved in the St Benedict's occupation have been contacted, so that workers in this campaign can learn from their experience.

On Wednesday February 8th, the campaign is sponsoring a play at the Oval Theatre, based around the experiences of fighting closures at Hounslow and the EGA. It's necessary to get as many local people involved as possible. If you are interested contact Nikki Mellor 01-737 1791.

Sheila Mitchell  
Brixton WV

## Housing Horror

**OUR Happy New Year Award goes to Labour controlled Hackney Council. They evicted a mother of twin babies from hostel accomodation, a week before Xmas.**

**The reason? She was offered one flat on the fourth floor of a block. She couldn't get a double pram into the lift and she suffers from claustrophobia. So she refused it.**

**Now Hackney are refusing to offer her anything else. Disgusting isn't it?**



Derek Speirs Report

The demand for contraception and abortion rights was at the forefront of a protest by Irish women at the opening of the National Womens Forum. The Irish prime Minister, Charles Haughey, was speaking at the time.

## HESELTINE HITS POOR HARDEST

RATES in most London boroughs will double in the next year. This is the frightening prediction following the latest attacks on public spending by Tory minister Michael Heseltine. He is reducing the central government grant to local authorities.

This will mean two things: much worsening services, and drastic rate rises in many areas. Education will lose another £139 million on top of £200 million cuts already planned. This will mean compulsory redundancy for teachers in some areas, and larger classes.

In South Yorkshire, which has a cheap and popular public transport system, the transport grant has been cut by 25%—a move by the Tories to force an increase in fares.

The aim of these cuts is to force councils to prune their services even further which means cutting staff. The poorest are hit hardest with the inner city areas getting least.

Most Labour councils will respond by putting up the

rates—which places still further burdens on working people, and allows the Tories to get away with their cuts.

Lindsey German

## It's A Victory

**THE eight week strike at a Liverpool publishing company has ended in victory for the 70 ASTMS members.**

**A few months ago the majority of the mainly women workforce at M & W Publishers joined ASTMS. Management reacted by sacking the union rep.**

**Her colleagues walked out in support of her. The following day they too were sacked.**

**During the eight weeks strike we picketed the premises every working day and were overwhelmed by the support given to our call for mass pickets. We received tremendous support from hundreds of trade unionists. As**

most of the women had never been in a union before this solidarity kept morale high.

**After three weeks strikers gained the backing of the print unions. It was due to their threat of blacking that eventually forced the company round the table. They reinstated all union members and granted union recognition.**

**It was a victory.  
Debbie Allen**

## Pay Us Now

A total of 53,000 civil servants joined rallies throughout the country in November and December to protest at the government's pay offer of 6%. Low pay has always been the rule for civil servants, particularly the many women in low grades. Their pay is linked to similar jobs in the private sector where wages have risen faster than 6%. Now the government has stopped publication of wages comparisons in an effort to hold wages down.

Firemen and women narrowly voted to accept a pay offer which works out at about 13%. Whole areas wanted to reject it and stick out for more money. Some of the most militant were women from the fire station control rooms.

# WOMENS HEALTH

## Lead or health

CAN YOU think of a substance so pervasive that its effects have been called a 'silent epidemic'? A substance that is so toxic it was commonly used as a method of abortion in the nineteenth century? That has been called 'the greatest threat to the health of human beings', save for all out nuclear war? That substance is lead and for most city dwellers, there is no getting away from it. Seven thousand tonnes of it are emitted into UK air each year from lead alkyl additives to petrol. It gets in our lungs, our stomachs, the food chain, dust on city streets. It is a permanent pollutant, cumulative in the environment and the bodies of human beings.

At even low levels lead can affect the brain and central nervous system, causing lack of concentration, restlessness and poor learning ability in children. It is thought to be a major factor in stillbirths, neonatal deaths and miscarriages. It can cause malformed sperm, low sperm counts in men and disruption of the menstrual cycle, spontaneous abortions and malformed foetus in women. It is suspected of being a mutagen (a substance that breaks down genetic apparatus) at very low levels and it increases the risk of cancer by injuring genes and chromosomes.

### One in five Birmingham inner city children have some disorder of the central nervous system caused by lead.

So if it is so dangerous, why is it added to petrol? As usual, questions of profit loom large. Ninety per cent of the lead pollution in the air comes from car exhausts. The petrol companies claim that it is the cheapest alternative to better refining. The lead alkyls are added to petrol to increase the octane level of the engine and to prevent 'knocking'. The companies say that to remove lead from petrol would cost the motorist an increase of about 2p-3p per gallon. But anti-lead campaigners think it would cost much less, pointing out that this figure does not take into account the many savings that would ensue—the energy cost of manufacturing the

lead alkyls, the cost of transporting them around our cities and not least the high cost to the health of our children. Children and foetuses are especially at risk from the effects of lead pollution as their systems are still forming.

The lead zinc multinational companies are powerful lobbies and automatically oppose anything which is likely to affect their profits. They argue that leaded petrol is cheaper. But leaded petrol causes deposition on spark plugs so they need changing more often and deterioration of carburettors and exhaust systems. So by having 'cheaper' leaded petrol, the motorist has to lay out more in servicing costs.

One researcher, Professor Stephens, has calculated that one in five Birmingham inner city children have some disorder of the central nervous system caused by lead. Recent studies, outlined in a report of the Conservation Society and called 'Lead or Health', have confirmed the view that most inner city children are affected. The Needleman study, done in Boston, illustrates the point well. In this study, children with high lead blood levels performed less well than those with low lead blood levels in terms of being easily distracted, persistence, ability to work independently, organisation, impulsiveness, hyperactivity, and frustration. The study found that children's performance steadily declined as their blood lead level went up.

Research at Reading by Professor Bryce-Smyth has found substantial evidence that lead is a major factor in still births and malformations. Babies are born with a lead level approximately 80 per cent of their mothers lead level. Women living near busy roads on a poor diet with lead piping in their house are obviously at an extreme disadvantage because of this. Lead combined with all the other factors makes pregnancy more likely to result in mental handicap or death at birth.

Lead remains in British petrol because those with vested interests are combining to keep it there. Official British government policy, until recently, was that there was no 'health hazard' from leaded petrol. That

view has been modified slightly, but largely follows the line that lead in food is the most important pathway in our ingestion of lead, conveniently ignoring the fact that most lead in food originally comes from lead petrol vapours in the air.

The amount of lead in British petrol is far higher than in many other countries. Lead free petrol is sold in the USA and Japan; in the USSR leaded petrol has been banned in cities since 1959. Britain's level will be reduced slightly to 0.40 grammes of lead per litre of petrol in January 1981, but this will still be about three times the level of lead in West Germany, which reduced their levels enormously a few years ago, at a much cost, completely refuting the oil companies' suggestions that it would be too expensive to do.

On an individual level there are several actions you can take to cope with the problem. A diet which is rich in calcium and pectin (found in fresh fruit) helps in the expulsion of lead from the body. Shellfish and liver should not be fed to young babies as the lead level in these foods are high and were allowed to rise in the latest Lead in Food regulations in April 1980. If you live in a soft water area and have lead plumbing, you should 'draw off' the 'first flush' of water in the morning as this contains the largest amount of lead. Feed as little adult tinned food to babies and children as possible, as the food contains lead used in soldering the tin (tinned baby food, by law does not contain lead).

### Lead remains in British petrol because those with vested interests are combining to keep it there.

On a wider level you can bring the issue up in any local groups—womens meetings, tenants association, union meetings. You can ask a local environmental health officer for readings on the amount of lead in air at busy roads. You can ask local doctors to do blood lead tests on children who are at school or nursery near busy roads. Don't be fobbed off by the reply that the results are 'normal': Normal for city children is way over 'natural' levels. Above all you can try to be as informed as possible and campaign against lead in petrol.

**Kath McKay**  
Peoples' News Service

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*For information Contact:  
Campaign against Lead in Petrol,  
68 Dora Road, London SW19*

*You can also obtain the report  
'Lead or Health' for £2.50  
at the above address.*

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It's only in the last year or so that there's been such a relaxation of the despotic rules that used to govern hemlines or decide whether we're all to wear trousers or skirts. 'THOSE DAYS HAVE ALL GONE,' said Vogue's Grace Coddington. 'NOW IT'S MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL TO COME THROUGH - NOT THE FASHION. YOU CAN DECIDE WHAT YOUR OWN STYLE IS.....'





Photo Feature by Henryka Hanzlik



**'We fought World War One in Europe and we fought World War Two in Europe and we would be just as happy to fight World War Three in Europe rather than in the US ... If there was a trade off we would rather trade the Russians London or Bonn than Washington or Boston. That's just the nature of international politics. That's one of the reasons that we are pushing the people of Great Britain to accept more of our nuclear weapons which will be totally under US control, and of course if the Soviets want to knock out they'll be firing at targets in the United Kingdom rather than at the United States.'**

Former Admiral Gene Larocque, who spent seven years as a strategic planner in the Pentagon, and is now Director of the Centre for Defence Information in Washington. 30 October 1980.

# Nuclear war: the ultimate madness

IN THE 1950s and 60s hundreds and thousands of young people were drawn into political campaigning by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. In the heightened international tension of the past 12 months the anti-nuclear movement has taken off again. *Womens Voice* spoke to Pat Arrowsmith, an active campaigner since the movement began in the 50s.

'WE USED to argue that nuclear war was madness, everyone would be obliterated by it and we feared most of all that a war would start by accident. Now it's different. Cruise missiles are first strike weapons. The strategy is not mutual anymore.

Knowing that has revived the movement. The detente of the 70s is over and it has seeped through to people that the Government's 'home defence' policy is a lot of propaganda nonsense.

We used to have so many fights about what we should do 20 years ago. I belonged to the Direct Action Group, around Peace News, which organised the first march to Aldermaston in 1958. (The Government's laboratories were at Aldermaston). We marched there to urge the workers to stop work. We had a nine week long picket of the site, with leaflets and meetings and at one point marched into the forecourt and refused to move until we met the director. We weren't very good at the start. We never thought to approach local branches of the trade unions.

But we got better. My first speech to a trade union meeting was to the National Federation of Building Trade Operatives in Norwich, asking them to black work on a site in their area.

We kept discovering these half built, secret, rocket bases around the place. And we did get some of the work stopped, in East Anglia, in the Midlands. We did door to door canvassing, spoke to trades councils, organised local meetings.

Then we moved to the British Aircraft Corporation, or Bristol Siddeley Engines as it was known then. They made anti-aircraft



missiles. The shop stewards produced a blue print for peaceful production—this was back in 1960. We organised a lunch time meeting and the workers stopped work to come along to it.

We also went to Stevenage—otherwise known as Missileville—where they were building the Blue Streak missiles. We had pickets of the factory, factory meetings, poster parades in the town. It was the building workers again who had an afternoon stoppage in protest at the missile work.

Then Merseyside CND appointed me as a full time trade union organiser. We had a committee made up of trade union delegates—dockers, postal workers, and so on. The biggest success was a one day stoppage by 1000 workers at the petro-chemical Carrington site, organised against

the resumption of nuclear tests.

The Direct Action Committee ceased to exist when the Committee of 100 began. It involved some of the same people, but it had a different strategy. In direct action we were arrested because of what we did. The Committee of 100 set out to get people arrested.

I was sent to jail several times. When we demonstrated at the Holy Loch in Scotland, against the Polaris missiles, I was arrested on a breach of the peace charge and sent to jail for three months.

I was put to work making sand bags when I arrived. Ironic, isn't it, me doing civil defence work. I decided I wasn't going to and spoke to the other women about it. I went on hunger strike until the women got an official explanation about what they were doing and the chance to refuse. They sent me to solitary for organising a mutiny!

On the fifth day the Governor persuaded me to see a psychiatrist. That was nice, sitting there talking about life. And then I discovered the psychiatrist was a member of Scottish CND and had no intention of persuading me to eat again. After that they force fed me. That got the MPs going and Judith Hart was given permission to speak to the women.

Once the atmospheric tests were banned and the dread of fall-out disappeared, the movement declined. Then the non-proliferation treaty was signed and although Cuba was frightening it seemed to prove that the theory worked—nuclear weapons were a deterrent against war.

The potential for the campaign is greater now than the last time around for two reasons. Some countries, for instance Holland, Belgium and Canada, have refused to have Cruise missile bases. It is possible to win the demand for no bases in Britain. I also think the possibility for organising industrial action to black work on the building of the bases is better now than ever. The Southern Region of UCATT, the building workers' union, has already passed a resolution to black work on missile sites.

# CRUISE IS DIFFERENT

CRUISE missiles are small, pilotless aircraft launched from mobile carriers. They are no more than one yard wide and six yards long, and contain a computer programmed with maps of Europe and the Soviet Union. In flight, the missile checks its position with satellites stationed in orbit over Europe. It can change and correct its course continuously during flight. It can bob and weave low over the land, avoiding both hills and anti-missile weapons. It can fly below normal radar detection. The missiles are very accurate, to within 100 feet of their target.

Cruise missiles represent a new military strategy. In the 1960s while East and West stockpiled ballistic missiles (missiles launched by rockets) a 'balance of terror' existed. Both the US and USSR were capable, even after suffering a full scale nuclear attack, of retaliating with a nuclear attack of their own. The strategy was known as 'mutually assured destruction'—MAD.

Ballistic missiles, entering from space at great speed, were accurate only to something the size of a city. Cities were vulnerable, but missile sites, where missiles are stored, and deepwater submarines, were safe to hit back at an aggressor.

Cruise changes that. With its ability to strike precisely at military targets, above all missile sites, the Pentagon now believes it can destroy the USSR's capability to hit back—**provided of course that Cruise is used first**, before the Russians launch their ballistic missiles.

With Cruise the Americans have switched from deterrence theory—both sides have so many bombs neither can use them—to a strategy that specifically envisages fighting a nuclear war, and winning. The concept is one of waging a 'limited nuclear war in the European theatre'. Limited doesn't mean that the damage inflicted by nuclear missiles would be relatively minor, only that the war would be confined to Europe.

Cruise is a lethal weapon, specifically designed to be used first, in other words to start a war, and to be used in Europe.

# PEOPLE OR PROPERTY?

What about the Neutron bomb? The French Government has decided to go it alone and build the neutron bomb, a bomb which destroys people not property. It has a smaller blast, which destroys buildings, and a greater radiation fall out, which kills people. How long will it be before America and Russia follow suit?

Written and Researched by  
Margaret Renn and  
Elana Dallas

# NO CRUISE MISSILES!

**WAR is madness. Nuclear war is the ultimate madness.**

**How is it possible that as millions die of starvation and, in comfortable Britain, thousands of old people die of cold each winter, half a million a minute is spent on weapons of total destruction?**

**War is not the exception, war is the rule. In a competitive capitalist world each power bloc fights to maintain its own political and economic domination. That ultimately means war. For the last 100 years there has always been a war being fought somewhere.**

**So while we must demand 'No Cruise missiles' we want more than this—an end to war in all its forms. That means an end to the capitalist system which produces war. We believe that neither the Americans in Washington nor the Russians in Moscow should rule our lives. We want a new world order—International socialism.**

# PROTEST TO SURVIVE

THE Government's home defence policy involves the distribution of a pamphlet called *Protect and Survive*. It tells you how to make a fall-out shelter in your home, and includes the advice to 'contact your landlord' about arrangements for your protection.

Last June Pat Arrowsmith did just that. Her landlord is the local council and she wrote to the housing officer, who put her in touch with the emergency planning officer. He wrote to say there was no crisis yet. She wrote back saying she thought there was.

Pat also wrote to her local Labour councillor, Toby Harris. He successfully moved the following resolution on Haringey council: 'This council believes that it is important for the people of Haringey to know that it will be impossible to provide adequate protection for them in the event of nuclear attack and declares that it will not be a party to civil defence 'exercises' to mislead the public into believing that adequate protection is available and therefore that 'limited' nuclear war and increased military spending are acceptable.'

It was a good propaganda exercise. The local paper carried a lengthy correspondence and it hit the national papers too. As Pat says, everything helps to expose the Government's confidence trick for what it is.

To contact the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament write to them at CND, 11 Goodwin Street, London, N4

# HOW CLOSE TO WAR?

1946: Two atom bombs were dropped by the Allies (America and Britain) on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 300,000 people died. The nuclear arms race had begun. Today the countries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact between them have the equivalent of 1,000,000 Nagasaki bombs.

The race became a balance of terror in the 1950s. Both East and West had similar arms and defences and could destroy each other many times over. It brought about the stockpiling of ever more deadly weapons.

1962: The Cuban crisis brought the world close to a nuclear war. Deterrence seemed to work. With the detente of the late 1960s, and the rapidly escalating costs of the new weaponry, arms limitation talks began.

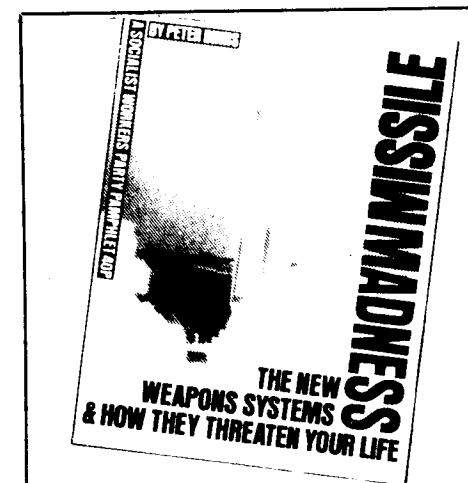
1972: The first Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement was signed. SALT remains unsigned.

December 1979: NATO decided to re-equip with Cruise missiles. The US is spending a trillion dollars—a million million—on its arms programme in the early 1980s. Current world spending on arms is about \$500,000 million, with the US and USSR spending about half of this total.

1980: The British Government announces two decisions:

- to allow 160 Cruise missiles under American control, to be based here;
- to spend £5000 million on Trident nuclear missile systems, as a successor to the outdated Polaris submarines, to maintain Britain's 'independent nuclear deterrent'.

1981?



**MISSILE MADNESS. SWP pamphlet by Peter Binns on the new weapons systems and how they threaten your life. 40p (plus 10p postage). Bulk orders £3.25 for 10 post free from Socialists Unlimited, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.**

# 1981: YEAR OF

***'People think that because you're physically disabled you're a mental defective.'***

'YOU'RE MADE to feel like a non-person. That's your first battle—to be accepted as a person. One of the most insulting remarks made about me was when I was at an airport and a porter said to the person I was with, "Where is it going?"

Maggie is paraplegic. She broke her back in a climbing accident nearly 20 years ago and is now paralysed from the chest down. She uses a wheelchair and has to face problems every day which able-bodied people rarely, if ever, think about. Uneven pavements, public transport, access to libraries, shops and cinemas are just some of those hurdles, and the situation won't improve while the Government continues to cut public spending and ignore the needs of disabled people.

There are over 500 million disabled people in the world and that includes 10 per cent of Britain's population. As well as obvious physical disabilities there are elderly people whose hearing or sight has failed, or who have become less mobile and there are people who suffer from mental illnesses. All of them are individuals, with differing needs. All of them have abilities as well as disabilities.

1981 is the International Year of Disabled People (IYDP). Like the International Year of the Child and the International Year of Women, the IYDP promises to be a real non-starter. In all the publicity material that the organisers of the IYDP have produced, not once does it mention the single factor that will have the biggest effect on the lives of dis-

abled people in 1981—the cuts.

Every area of spending cuts affects every person who uses public services. In the case of special facilities for disabled people the cuts don't just mean a reduction in services—they mean that projects will never begin.

Although the right to buy council homes doesn't extend to purpose-built homes for elderly and disabled people it does apply to council homes which have been adapted. In many cases, disabled tenants only need to make minor adaptations—widening doorways, fixing rails in the bathroom and toilet, installing electrical points at a suitable height. Once these alterations have been made, they stay and become part of a pool of much needed public sector housing for disabled people—or else they are bought by the tenant and disappear into the private market.

But a more serious problem now is the Government's moratorium on council house building. It means that no new housing, including purpose-built housing for elderly and disabled people, will be built for an indefinite period. The waiting lists for such homes are long enough; now it seems they are a complete waste of time.

'Unless you're very rich you can't get adequate housing—and I don't know very many rich, disabled people', says John Stanford, the Housing and Access Officer for the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR). 'Blocks of purpose built housing can become ghettos for disabled people. What is needed is wheelchair housing scattered around new estates, and that's where the cuts are really going to bite—there aren't going to be any new estates.'

Public transport is a no-go area for people with disabilities. The DHSS have recently taken the invalid car/tricycle off the road and substituted a mobility allowance of £14.50 a week. 'The advantage is that it is extended to non-drivers', says Maggie, 'but with that amount there's no way you can buy an adapted car, and without a car you can't get out of the house. I can only go as far as I can push myself without a car, and if you can't get around you can't find a job. If you haven't got a job you can't buy a car.' At least public transport, however inadequate, exists for able-bodied people.

Mary, who has been partially paralysed since she was six and can't walk very far, has to take mini-cabs everywhere she goes. Her

union, the NUJ, negotiated an agreement with management whereby Mary's mini-cab fares to work and back are paid by her employers. 'Public transport is out of the question', she says. 'I can't stand for more than ten minutes so I can't wait for buses and trains. Mini-cabs cost me a fortune.'

Mary and Maggie both have jobs and so would many more disabled people

***'People are always telling me what I need. They think I have no thoughts of my own. The worst are people who insist on helping and organisations who depend on disabled people for their very existence.'***





# THE DISABLED?

if employers complied with the law. The 1944 Disabled Persons (Employment) Act requires companies with more than 20 employees to ensure that at least three per cent of the workforce are disabled. At the moment only one of London's boroughs (Newham) employs its quota of disabled people, and not one of the country's Area Health Authorities has more than two per cent of disabled people amongst its workforce.

'The trade union movement is very good at raising money but it has never used its power to enforce that Act', says Maggie. 'Trade Unions are very hot on other pieces of employment legislation.'

**'Disabled people are badly cut off from the rest of the community. They pat you on the head and then go away.'**

People who cannot work because of their disability can claim benefits but they have to undergo an 'incapacity for work' test before they are entitled to any money. For married or cohabiting women who are disabled the process is complicated further by another test—the 'normal household duties' test.

This test assumes that housework becomes the normal occupation of women once they marry—even though more than half of married women are in paid employment. If a woman gives up work because of a disability she may not be entitled to the Housewives Non Contributory Invalidity Pension (HNCIP) if the DHSS considers her capable of doing housework—even though she may have been working for many years.

The Equal Rights for Disabled Women Campaign are

## Does She



## Take Sugar?

seeking to abolish this discriminatory test. A report, *After Working All These Years*, quotes a number of cases including the one of Mrs H.

'Mrs H had a stroke which left one arm very weak, and her strength generally impaired. She used to work as a home help for the council, but had to give up because of her ill-health. Her claim (for HNCIP) was refused and she appealed with the help of an advice centre. The Insurance Officer did not dispute that she was incapable of doing paid work—housework for others in this case—but argued that she was capable

of doing her own. Mrs H won her case.'

The current rates of supplementary benefit are £21.30 a week for a single householder; £34.60 for a husband and wife; and £17.05 for any other person over 18. These are the ordinary rates. The long-term rates are an extra £4-9 a week. The amounts speak for themselves.

Much of the help offered to disabled people comes through charitable organisations. This, plus patronising attitudes—the 'Does she take sugar?' syndrome, angers many disabled people.

'People have been brain-

washed into accepting charitable status', says Maggie. 'People don't make demands but are grateful for what is offered. Political institutions are as bad as anyone else—they adopt this charitable attitude, not one of demanding basic civil rights. All these groups for disabled people are nonsense. Disabled people aren't a homogeneous group—we're different ages, sexes, IQs, we have the full range of human ability and potential. Why have a music group for disabled people?'

**'I'd like to put every architect in a wheelchair for a month.'**

'There's no votes in being disabled', says Mary. 'There aren't enough disabled people in Great Britain to make it worthwhile in the eyes of the Government to do anything, except a little cosmetic surgery.'

Disabled people often find themselves isolated and lack political strength because of it. 'We haven't got a loud political voice', says Maggie, 'so we need support from others—but we want real support. We want political action, not charitable offers.'

Harriet Sherwood

### Further Information

The Disability Alliance  
1 Cambridge Terrace,  
London NW1  
Tel: 935 4992

Equal Rights for Disabled Women  
c/o The Disability Alliance  
address as above

Disablement Income Group  
Attlee House  
Toynbee Hall  
28 Lombard Street  
London E1  
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# REVIEWS

## Women then...

WV REVIEWS THE NEW WOMAN

THE New Woman was an inspiration born in the novels of the late nineteenth century. Writers conjured a world of feminist characters who were striving after a new morality and a new world for women.

These new women had many different faces depending on the authors who described them. But they were all seeking independence. They were restless and ambitious, passionate about causes but rarely about men. Some had miserable and unfulfilling relationships with men. Others rejected marriage and sexual relations with men in favour of fighting for the liberation of women from their biological roles.

women who created them. Several women writers of this period committed suicide.

Subjects of other novels nevertheless found inspiration and fulfilment through fighting for women's cause. Some campaigned for the right to train in skills that would enable them to work in jobs other than as governesses and domestic labour. Others fought for the vote, for greater educational opportunities for women and for the right of women to make their careers outside the home.

These ideas and visions arose from a society in which women's role was being challenged and changed as radically as in the novels which

*Saw the infants doomed to suffering,  
Saw the maidens slaves to lust,  
Saw the starving mothers barter  
Souls and bodies for a crust.  
Then she rose—with inward vision,  
Nerving all her powers for good  
Feeling one with suffering sisters  
In perfected womanhood.  
'The New Woman' 1895*

Men and women had differing ideals of the new women. Male novelists frequently created a woman who was wholly sexually liberated. Women writers on the other hand often pictured the new woman as a spirit strong enough to bypass the needs of men in favour of struggling for women's desires to be taken seriously. Male sexuality was seen as demanding and oppressive, and female characters urged restraint by men rather than greater sexual activity for women.

These literary heroines were often sadly unsuccessful in their aims. They led depressed and tragic lives, often reflecting personal horrors in the lives of the

reflected it. From the late 1840's there had been an increasing surplus of women over men in the population.

Many middle class women who had traditionally looked to marriage as a career were faced with dying gracefully in poverty stricken spinsterhood, or trying to do something about it. The new opportunities available through the growth of clerical work, caused many to make a concerted effort to train and support themselves through office skills.

The circumstances which forced women into new roles were not of their own making. But their very existence provided a focus for all the frustrated aspirations of a generation of middle class



women.

We remember only the famous ones—Florence Nightingale who refused to marry, and pioneered nursing as a career for women, Elizabeth Anderson who blazed the trail into the medical schools. But there were many others breaking their way into all-male preserves—law schools and educational reform, into the arts and into the sciences. Society had forced them to change in order to survive. In responding to that change they had changed their whole way of looking at women's views.

The New Woman finally faded out of society with the slump of the late 20s. She wasn't dead however, for when another set of economic circumstances forced vast changes in women's lives in the fifties and sixties, the new woman was seen again in the spirit of the modern women's liberation movement.

The modern movement has caused us to look again at the literature of last century, and at what women

Virago Modern Classics

H. G. Wells

Ann Veronica



wrote and thought about themselves. But we should not look at those writings as if they were of historical interest only. The perceptive and sensitive appraisals of women's relationships with men, and of their inner sufferings, have rarely been bettered.

And the ideals that the New Women put into words are still as inspiring as ever. Two of the finest feminist books of that era were Olive Schreiner's *'Story of An African Farm'*, and Sarah Grand's *'The Beth Book'*. The central character of Olive Schreiner's novel is Lyndall. She has been described as the 'first ever wholly serious feminist heroine in the English novel'. Set in the bleak isolation of a farm on the South African karoo, Lyndall tells of woman's conditioning and frustration. Her painful attempt at rebellion is unsuccessful, but that does not mean that the book is depressing. For Olive Schreiner is a feminist writer who, despite her own limited experience of the world, managed to write with an extraordinary ability to express exactly what was common in women's emotional experiences. To read her writings, and to read this novel in particular is to believe that it is partly your own experiences and feelings that are being recorded.

Sarah Grand's *'Beth Book'* also writes of the frustrations

and isolation of conditioning into the female role. In it the central character seeks freedom, first by writing in secret, then by breaking with her husband and writing in order to support herself, and finally by discovering her life's work-agitation in the suffragette movement.



Books by men, even sympathetic books never express the same depth of emotion. And they were written with completely different motives. It is clear that George Gissing wrote *'The Odd Women'* from the view

that if only women were more emancipated, they would make more fitting companions for men. He nevertheless produced a sympathetic and clear sighted picture. Odd women, those who didn't marry, were not failures in his eyes. He saw in their independence a glimpse of the future.

George Bernard Shaw in the *'Unsocial Socialist'* describes a different view. The central character runs away from a new wife whose beauty distracts him, because her very presence interferes with his ability to work. He gropes for a view of womanhood which would be easier to live with, and eventually ends with a different kind of woman altogether.

And H.G. Wells, again hardly exemplary in his personal attitudes toward women, wrote a powerful novel about a young girl struggling to free herself from a dominating family and make an independent life of her own. *'Ann Veronica'* caused a sensation when it was published because of its frank appraisal of the woman's course of action. It is no longer sensational,

but still plenty to ponder on.

We have yet to achieve the world in which such new women could develop and thrive. The characters in these novels point in the right direction—away from cloying maternity and self indulgent homemaking, toward independence intellectually and socially.

Florence Nightingale once remarked that writing was a 'substitute for living'. Writing was more than a substitute for the new women. It was a vital part of the way women struggled to change themselves and build a new society.

Anna Paczuska

**BOOKS:**

*The Story of An African Farm Olive Schreiner Penguin £1.25*

*The Beth Book Sarah Grand Virago £3.50*

*The Odd Women George Gissing Virago £2.50*

*An Unsocial Socialist G. Bernard Shaw Virago £2.50*

*Ann Veronica H.G. Wells Virago £2.50*

## ...and now

### SISTERS AND WORKERS— ANNA PACZUSKA

FROM strikes by the women workers at Fords, Dagenham and women textile workers in Yorkshire to the massive and successful campaign against John Corrie's Abortion Bill lies a decade of womens struggle for social and economic equality. A decade that's given us the legislation of the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act, the inspiration of the Womens Liberation Movement, and National Abortion Campaign.

Despite a huge increase in trade union membership among women in the 1970s, it soon became apparent that the trade union machinery would not solve the special problems of women workers. It was only when women workers themselves organised action that any gains began to be made and their action was even more successful when it was supported

by rank and file solidarity from other workers.

In a new Womens Voice/SWP Pamphlet *Sisters and Workers*, Anna Paczuska examines working class womens' fight for their rights as workers and as women and their resistance to the traditional role of women workers as being passive, poorly paid and badly organised. The pamphlet points out that while legislation itself has not worked well, it has made women more aware of their oppression and exploitation and the need to organise and involve other workers in their fight for equality.

But individual campaigns, no matter how successful, are not enough nor can the exploitation and oppression of women be divorced from the exploitation of the working class as a whole. Capitalism, as typified by Thatcher's Government, depends on inequality and exploitation, as long as that system exists there can be no women's

liberation.

Of course we must organise among ourselves to fight for our own liberation but we must also link with the struggle of the working class as a whole for feminism is part of that struggle and its sation of the working class,

men and women, that will over rule that system which exploits us all.

Jennifer Young  
Glasgow

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# LETTERS



## DREAM YOUR LIFE AWAY.....

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
'Dreams are important messages from which we can learn about ourselves.' So say the ad people for Moussec sparkling wine on their promotional beer mat series which attempts to interpret the language of dreams.

Number one in the series is *Dreams and Relationships*, containing such pearls of wisdom... 'Dreams often reveal your true feelings about relationships. A baby chick could refer to a girl in a man's dream, or to a baby in a girl's dream. What happened to the chick in the dream? Was it caressed or was it

beaten?... If you dream of being chased perhaps you are neglecting your emotional life -- to a girl it might indicate that she wants to be chased by a particular man, or that she wants to get away (and perhaps remain chaste). A man being chased might be afraid of losing his freedom.'

Moussec retails at around 50p per tiny 94 ml bottle and is marketed by R & C Vintners of Carrow, Norwich. I am sure that *Womens Voice* readers would like to send their opinions of this sexist tripe to R & C Vintners.

**Katrina Tully**  
Bristol

## Merry Xmas?

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
I just had to respond to your invitation to write on this subject, as for years Xmas has been a nightmare.

When I was a kid I thought it was magic, even when it was spent down the shelter during the war. All I was worried about was whether Santa would miss me out. When I left home there were the dutiful visits home, but I started making excuses to avoid them and spent Xmas in miserable bed-sitters. The year I got pregnant, I spent four days in an empty house and never spoke to a soul. In desperation, on Boxing Day, I robbed the meter and took myself off to a dance hall, tummy and all!

As a mother, Xmas became a continual reminder of my poverty and I struggled on social security to make a magic experience for my son. Recently he told me that I succeeded but the effort nearly drove me into the ground and always left me in debt. I ended up exhausted from doing all the shopping and all the cooking. Of course there was no jollification, no theatre trips, parties etc, you can't go anywhere unless you have a car or can afford a taxi and have lots of money.

Things improved a bit when I became a student and I got tax-free holiday work in the Post Office. Every penny of my earnings went on extras for Xmas and when it was all over I couldn't see what I had spent it on. The hypocrisy of it takes my

breath away. It's all 'let's all be nice to each other for two days, it doesn't matter what happens the rest of the year.'

I think the average British family is particularly insular. Black communities have open house at Xmas and anyone is made to feel welcome. Their greetings of goodwill are genuine. I know it's heresy to say 'drop the family at Xmas' but recently I've started to rebel and think there should be a serious move to undermine the social prison of the family that passes for Xmas. There are many possibilities -- organising a collective Xmas in your neighbourhood; perhaps you can use a church hall or community centre and unite all those people who spend Xmas alone. All the chores and activities can be shared and as a result we wouldn't wake up two days later feeling overworked and exploited. After all Xmas was originally a pagan community festival, shrewdly taken over by christianity and is now used by capitalists to make their fortunes.

As socialists, and particularly as feminists, we should be in the vanguard of finding alternatives which take us out of the neurosis of the nuclear family and into something co-operative and genuinely fulfilling.

I'd be interested to know what other readers did at Xmas -- perhaps they had a *Womens Voice* festival?

**Shirley**  
London NW1

## WELL DONE

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
Congratulations on the smashing December issue of *Womens Voice*. Every article was a winner, especially Penny Simmon's on women in Portuguese prisons. I kept wondering why I found 'Mackenzie' so riveting and of course Jane Ure-Smith hit the nail on the head, some marvellous female acting and progressive attitudes.

As a sufferer from chronic cystitis for 12 years it was great to read an article on it. A couple of additional points from experience of years of drugs, minor surgery, and more drugs. Don't let a

doctor prescribe antibiotics unless he has first cultured a sample of your urine. I was on various antibiotics for two years non-stop and they make the condition worse if they are not the correct ones for your particular bug.

If the culture doesn't show anything (a sign that it will be if your temperature is raised) you are *not* imagining your symptoms but the cause probably relates to urethral damage caused by intercourse when not completely aroused, intercourse after a period of abstinence or by inadequate hygiene or both. This condition does clear after about a week if you abstain from intercourse, rest a lot, drink a lot and wash a lot (without soap). Different things help different sufferers, so experiment!

**Sandy Rose**  
Manchester

## Part-time Problems

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
I would like to answer Maxine Bowler's letter in issue 47. I do have thoughts on the subject of part-time working. I feel that we should fight for a shorter working week for everyone and if the women in your particular place of work are honestly interested in working a shorter week, encourage them to fight for one, not part-time working.

Also part-time working reiterates the opinion that women belong and also *prefer* to work in the home. This is an idea I would like to banish

once and for all. And remember part-time work means part-time wages and possibly financial dependency.

We need to fight for parental (not mothers') care of children. We need creche and nursery facilities, after school play groups, holiday break group holidays for school children, paternity leave and equal pay etc.

When women have an equal social position, if we still want part-time workers female/male then I'd say 'Yes, let's fight for it!'

**Jill Lake**  
Basildon

# Heaven-Here We Come

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
I was very interested in your article 'Women and Religions' in the December issue of *Womens Voice*, since it described the history of religions as yet another source of the oppression of women. It is interesting that Marx described religion as the 'opium of the masses', particularly because church services are attended mostly by women and children and, that apart from being authority figures or sermon givers, men hardly play any part at all in church.

Having spent most of 16 years as a catholic in convent schools, I feel particularly resentful for the time I spent on my knees senselessly reciting meaningless lines from a book or prayer, but I realise now that on your knees is exactly where the bourgeoisie want you — hence the popularity of religions and their consistent support by the ruling class.

Historically religion has been used as a justification for wars. Take Ireland as a prime example; most people will accept the view of the bourgeois press, politicians and the clergy that the war in Ireland is a war between protestants and catholics, regardless of the hundreds of years of war between Britain and Ireland. Similar wars have taken place in Europe and the fighting in the Middle East today is often shrouded in religious proclamations and statements from the political leaders.

Father figure/boy child number one, Jesus Christ, must be one of the strongest opiates when he did his 'sermon on the mount' number, justifying all ill-

treatment, injustice and pain as preparation for a life-of-ecstasy-after-death in our maker's heaven — really a sop for the meek — it could be Thatcher, Callaghan or Wilson, saying that if we suffer a little now, in time things will stabilise and we shall prosper again! If only it were true!

But what is so striking is the blatant attack on women's freedom that religions profess; no abortion, no contraception, no sexual enjoyment or freedom and, particularly with some Eastern religions, no choice in any way regarding your future. Instead, self-sacrifice, non-worship, humiliation, suffering which is good for the soul, and as if that wasn't enough, the fear that if you didn't follow your maker's doctrine, you will be struck down forever into everlasting damnation that befalls sinners. This damnation is illustrated as being within a arm's length of what you want, but never able to have, a bit like hell on earth!

It would seem to me that heaven is going to be quite full in the end, with all those that have suffered; it will be full of the working class, the Jews, blacks, gays, Indians, and all the oppressed societies and races that ruling class have used since we evolved. Better than that, I look forward to the day the bourgeoisie are defeated by all these people.

Lynda Woodroffe  
North West London

PS It is interesting to note that the countries most savagely hit by poverty and starvation are catholic countries and yet the catholic church is one of the richest institutions in the world!

## THANKS FOR THE WARNING

*Dear Womens Voice,*  
After learning of the consequences of using 'Playtex' tampons, and the fact that they have not yet been banned, I would appreciate it if you could send me some more leaflets

to distribute myself around my area. Thank you.  
Lindsay Brooks  
Epsom

P.S. I am 15 yrs and thanks to your leaflet will not ever be using 'Playtex'.

## DIRTY LINEN

The number of women in prison has risen by 30 per cent in the last year and many prisons are grossly overcrowded. Holloway prison has 423 women prisoners but space for only 245.

Could this be why the doses of behaviour-modifying drugs are so high? Holloway gives an average of 941 doses of these drugs a woman, a year.

On the night of Monday 17 November the Yorkshire Ripper found his thirteenth victim. It took the police until the following day to realise what had happened. The press ran the story on Wednesday 19 November.

'Leeds killing—It's the ripper' ran the front page in the *Yorkshire Post*. And what did they run alongside this gruesome story? A pin-up, just to show you that the *Yorkshire Post* at least has its priorities well worked out.

Our contradictory speech of the month award goes to Dr Elizabeth Vallance, who said at the launching of the 300 Group (which aims to get 300 women into Parliament):

'Timing in politics is all important. I feel the time is now ripe. Perhaps it is something to do with Maggie Thatcher becoming Prime Minister ... I'd like to see more women in Parliament because they have a different style of politics. Instead of just concentrating on foreign policy or how many cruise missiles we should have we now accept that education, health and social welfare, not to mention equal pay, are also important issues.'

The Independent Broadcasting Authority has decided to ban the TV advertising of tampons and sanitary towels because it received so many letters of complaint, even though no one was ever allowed to actually show anything so risky as a tampon or sanitary towel.

The British Pregnancy Advisory Service is also having problems with its advertising. Their ads have already been banned by London Transport and they are also apparently unacceptable to the International Publishing Corporation, the biggest publishers of women's and teenage magazines in the country. According to Diane Munday of BPAS, *Womens World*, *Look Now*, *OK* and *Photo Love* all refuse to accept ads which mention abortion services.

The new Family Planning Act in Ireland is causing some hilarity. Contraceptives, of any kind, can only be had on a doctor's prescription and then only to bona fide married couples. Prior to November, when this new act came in all contraceptives were banned although many illegal clinics set up by the womens movement, sold them. The government now has egg on its face—the only supplies that are available are still in these damned unlawful clinics.

WE'VE known for a long time that working class people are more likely to die young than rich people. But a DHSS report just published shows that, for women, this trend is getting worse.

In a foreword, Patrick Jenkin, the Minister for Health says that improving health care in working class areas, as the report recommends, is unrealistic in the present economic climate.

As an alternative the group who put the report together has suggested 'a determined shift of resources into community care' within the limits which the Tories are putting on spending.

In other words, the way to save money on health care is to get women to do it for nothing.

But perhaps being overworked like this is the reason women die young in the first place.

# Deat Jane

HAVE you ever had that feeling that no moment of time is your own, no square inch of space completely private? Life seems to have a will and momentum all to itself, giving you a 'stop the world I want to get off' feeling. This can make decision making, thinking through thoughts and feelings seem almost irrelevant, unnecessary. If you feel that you are being carried along by fate then 'things' like kids, relationships, life-styles, lovers just seem to happen. The need to choose and plan life fades away.

So what? Everyone faces enormous pressures and tensions in the most routine of lives. But for women there are special problems in making choices about our lives. Betty Friedan in the *Feminine Mystique* described a generation of young American women who had lost themselves in the

American Dream of perfect fulfilling motherhood and homemaking. Women whose whole purpose was to serve their families, be passive, responsive. Women who did not know who they were, what they wanted to do or be, discovering an awful emptiness in their lives.

Women who are not 'conned' by those myths still face huge problems in asserting themselves, deciding what kinds of lives they want to lead. To be conventionally 'successful' as a woman, we are expected to be undemanding, and sensitive and responsive to other people's needs. Putting the kids first, buying them clothes when you need things yourself. Feeling guilty about not living up to parents' hopes for our careers and settled (married) futures.

Men too, face the pressures of other peoples needs and demands, but it

is not the central core of their lives. Most men feel that it's good to have a clear idea of who they are, what job they want, to make sacrifices to achieve their goals. It's OK to be a mean moody man, to be ruthless and ambitious, and people may like them for that nevertheless.

It is easy to think that the solution for women is to adopt male attitudes, be less concerned or caring about other people. But women's ability to be caring, sensitive is not always a bad thing. Many of us find that our lives and personal relationships can be richer. We may be more aware of feelings and emotions, be able to have close caring friends who give us love and support. Women often find it easier to be

open about their feelings than more emotionally repressed men.

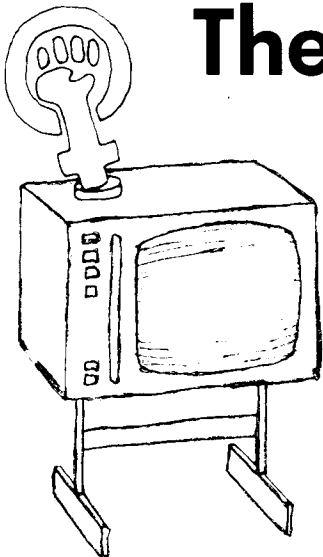
Our dilemma is to find the time, even physical space, that allows us to decide what we are, what we want to be, and how we are going to live our lives. Women have a history of clearly defined roles that require them to be self-sacrificing, dependent and to serve other people. To change that is a formidable job.

Choosing to live our lives as we want requires time, courage and support from those close to us. It's a dilemma that all feminists face, dealing with the 'daily contradictions' of life. But that is what feminism is all about, our personal lives are political, and the fight is to live the political.

JANE FOSTER

## Yours Worried

## Chains Round Their Necks



RINGS on their fingers?—or chains round their necks? For the uninitiated, Sandy (alias Diane Keen) lives, or should I say *lived* with her boyfriend—Oliver.

Obviously, this was funny, a good basis for a comedy half hour, especially

from Oliver's view, because of course, it was only Sandy who wanted to get married, not Olly, living with someone is funny, and it only becomes a serious relationship when you get married!

So the BBC in their wisdom, have made Sandy and Oliver serious, and they've got married! Not only have they got married but they've moved house. Sorry, not house, flat! In fact, I do believe they are buying a new flat. 'Cos it's all right renting property when you're living together—but if you've decided to take the plunge (and get serious, as it were), then it's only right and proper you get serious about your home.

What bilge! And guess what's on the cards now.

You've guessed it, Sandy's preppers—no, sorry let's be serious—she's having a baby.

The week they discovered the news of Sandy's arrival (after all it's only Sandy's baby), they were on holiday. Serious business finding out your pregnant (sorry having a baby). So the holiday was curtailed and discussions started around another serious subject now. Finance!

There was no mention of perhaps an abortion, until their economy was a little more stable. No. How disgusting, abortion, living together, all OUT words now!

And yet according to statistics, over 1 million people live together. But the BBC have to convince all young, conventional, married-girls and boys-to-be that marriage and security is right. Like in the ad for roast pork, *...got what it takes my*

*wife....yeah no brains-no mind of her own-no future.*

I'm not knocking marriage, (just tapping). It's just the charisma attached to it. But there's no charisma to it. The announcement of an "arrival" in our house, would probably start a ten yard dash for the gas oven.

Until programmes like this, and ads too, all around the institution of marriage are taken off the air, all we can do is to keep hammering away at the institution of marriage, and chipping away at the cement anchor it has in society—showing women that you can still be happy, and secure living alone, or with other women, and even with a man!!

It should be your CHOICE, not a case of well, we've been going out for two years, engaged for two, married for two, then one child, ..... you know the rest.

Christine Fellowes



# why I became a socialist



Margaret Dewar

'THE IMMEDIATE reason for my joining the socialist movement, when I was in my twenties, and living in Germany, was my friendship with a Soviet Russian who was living in Berlin.

But everything that had gone before, my whole life, had made me a socialist. I was born in Russia in 1901 and my family were not, as far as I remember, political. My mother was too busy bringing up her three children during the first world war to be particularly concerned with politics.

In school we read the nineteenth century Russian writers and essayists, who wrote about the plight of the peasantry, or, like Tolstoy, about the life of the aristocracy. We could see the contrast and the conflict for ourselves even if our teachers could not openly say what they felt. They tried to instil in us a sense of justice. The younger teachers tended to be left wing, and the older ones had been called up for war service.

The strictness of the school regime changed when the revolution came all the young Russians and the 'intelligentsia' enthused about it. They paraded in the streets with red carnations stuck in their coats and hats. It was a real holiday atmosphere.

When the Bolsheviks took power in October the atmosphere changed and became very tense. Like a lot of people I didn't really understand what was happening. People began to organise themselves—the tenants set up house committees. There were guards on every home. At night you could hear the rumble of cars and trucks passing, as they rounded up people under suspicion, political opponents or members of the aristocracy.

At school reforms began immediately. In that winter of 1918 life became so much more interesting, so lively. Relations between teachers and pupils were easier. Drama groups, study groups, discussion circles were formed out of school hours. The young teachers tried as far as they could to initiate us in the ideas of the Bolshevik revolution. They couldn't be too explicit—it was early days and there was a lot of uncertainty about the future.

The war had ruined the economy, but after the revolution it collapsed, totally. There was nothing to be had, and the Allied blockade of Russian ports made it even worse.

My stepfather was an official in a

What makes some women become socialists and commit themselves to a life of struggle? Is it true, as so many people say, that you have these ideas while

government ministry. His monthly salary bought him one loaf of bread on the black market. I left school and went to work in the Ministry of Finance. The building was unheated, and in that winter the temperature fell to—15 degrees. I was supposed to work from 10 to 4pm; but we arrived at 11am, went for lunch at 12 for two hours, and went home at 3pm. As inflation spiralled they began to pay us every day and we spent our wages at lunch time because by night it would be of no value.

Of course there was food available, in the villages. But the peasants would only sell it in exchange for goods. It was fantastic what was carried out to those villages—pianos, household goods, furniture. One woman asked me to get her some face powder, french powder, for an extra sack of grain. I brought it and lipstick too, but it wasn't French. What disappointment! But I still got my grain.

I had to go because I was the most able-bodied of the family. It was hard work. The village was six or seven miles from the station, and once I got back on to the train I had to dodge the red guards who would confiscate everything.

My stepfather was German and one day he suddenly announced that he was going back to Germany. There was a last train taking out the repatriated prisoners of war. We could not refuse to go with him. I thought my mother would die if we stayed, she had been so ill with typhus. We packed up and went, taking what we could carry. It took us two months to get from Moscow to Berlin on that train.

We were all homesick and miserable and within three years my mother was dead.

A lot was happening. These were the first years of the social democratic Weimer Republic in Germany. The amount of German reparations to be paid to the Allies was being hotly debated. There was massive unemployment. Only the Soviet government, or so it seemed to me, was stable and firm, trying to re-establish the country after the civil war.

A friend took me to see a Russian film *Turksib*, about the building of the trans-siberian railway. I met a young Russian there. He was very interesting and totally mysterious. I only ever knew his first name—Vladimir—and the street, but not the house number, where he lived.

He behaved very oddly, suddenly jumping up and saying he had to go home to wait for a phone call, or some other excuse. I thought he must be working for the Communist Party, but he said he wasn't, he was in Berlin on behalf of the Soviet Govern-

you are young but 'will grow out of them'.

In the first of this new series *Womens Voice* spoke to Margaret Dewar.

ment. So to this day I don't know what he did. He had become a social revolutionary at school, and knew a lot about literature and the theatre. He brought me books to read. *October*, by the brilliant young woman journalist Larissa Reissner; the famous poem *Twelve*, by Alexander Blok; poems by Mayakovsky and others. He told me about the aims of the Bolshevik revolution, but without ever forcing those ideas on to me.

What fascinated and puzzled me was this complete devotion and dedication to a cause. What is it that holds people like that? I had to find out. He had a secret awe about him and I decided I should have my own.

So I joined the International Workers Aid, in 1930. I was 29. That summer there was an enormous transport strike in Berlin and I naively offered to run PT classes for the women. The last thing they wanted was someone to teach them eurythmics when they were all busy running soup kitchens!

I had joined and now I had my secret. I would tell him 'I have to go out' or I would let him accompany me somewhere and then tell him I must leave him at the corner. It was very childish, and he knew what I was doing.

Then one day my mysterious Russian rang me. He was leaving for another European capital. There was not time for a meeting, he could not explain as there was someone with him. There would be no letters.

That was that. I was very much in love with him and now I was miserable. But somehow I had already learnt that discipline which makes it possible to accept that sort of thing, without despairing or rebelling against it. Not that it would have helped anyway.

I had answered my own question. I understood about dedication. I had found my own cause. In 1932 I joined the Communist Party.'

**IN 1933 Hitler came to power in Germany. The Communist Party collapsed, almost without a murmur. No one organised the members, there was no resistance. Overcoming the disillusionment she felt Margaret joined with the Trotskyist movement in the Left Opposition.**

**After an attempt by the Gestapo to recruit her as a spy on the Russians she left Germany and eventually arrived in Britain in 1937. She married Hugo Dewar the following year and joined the Trotskyist movement in Britain. She is, to this day, a committed revolutionary socialist.**

# WHAT IS GOING ON?

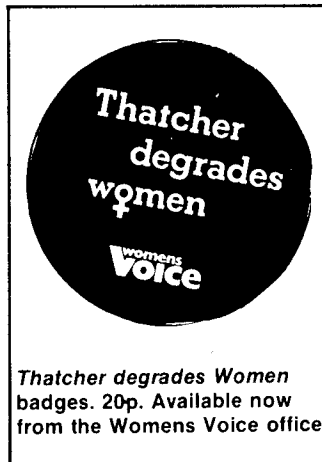
## WV groups

- **ABERDEEN** Womens Voice Liz 51059
- **ABERYSTWYTH** Womens Voice c/o Students Union UCW, Aberystwyth.
- **ACTON WV** Ruth or Jude 740 6660
- **NORTH BIRMINGHAM** Women's Voice Maggie 021 449 4793
- **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM** Women's 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** Women's 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.
- GLOUCESTER** Womens Voice: Maggie Gloucester 413910.
- **HACKNEY WV** Jan/Maddie 249 8716
- **HALIFAX WV** every Saturday 11am-12.30pm. Co-op arcade on the Precinct.

- **HAMMERSMITH 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/o 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
- SOUTHWARK** Womens Voice: PO Box 82, London E2 9DS.
- **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.

**ASSOCIATION** of Radical Nurses—second national meeting on Saturday 31 January from 11 am until 6 pm. Venue to be confirmed. For further details please send a SAE to: 20 Melrose Road, Sheffield 3, Yorkshire. National Newsletter—we welcome contributions on nurses' pay, conditions, the role we fulfil as women and workers. Please send to the address above.

**NATIONAL FESTIVAL FOR WOMENS RIGHTS**—against the Tory attacks. Planning group meeting 5 January 7.00 pm in the NAC office, 274 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Meetings to be held fortnightly, same time, same place. All women welcome.

**SOUTHERN** and South West Womens Conference, 7 and 8 February at Students Union Building, Southampton University. For details and registration contact: Southampton Womens Centre, 145 Empress Road, Southampton.

**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 Women's studies Courses are.

Free library use to all; membership fee to borrowers

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

## 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.

**A Womans Place** is a womens liberation information centre 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 Womans Place, 48 William IVth Street, London WC2.**

**A FORUM** on the politics of abortion—Saturday 21 February at Starcross School, Rising Hill Street, London N1. For more information contact NAC, 01-278 0153.

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

**NEW** catalogue of feminist posters now out. Send a large SAE to: See Red Womens Workshop, 16a Iliffe Yard, off Crampton Street, London SE17.

## WV public meetings

**FINSBURY PARK WV**—Public Meeting 'Women and Violence', speaker Wendy Pettifer, 7.30 pm, 12 January, at 34 Avenell Road, London N4.

**Finsbury Park**—Playtex picket. Assemble 10 am Boots, Nags Head, Holloway Road, London N7.

**Coventry Womens Voice** meetings, 8pm, Hertford Tavern (near Technical College)

**12 January POLAND.** Speaker Eva Barker

# SANDRA



Sophie.

## 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  
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