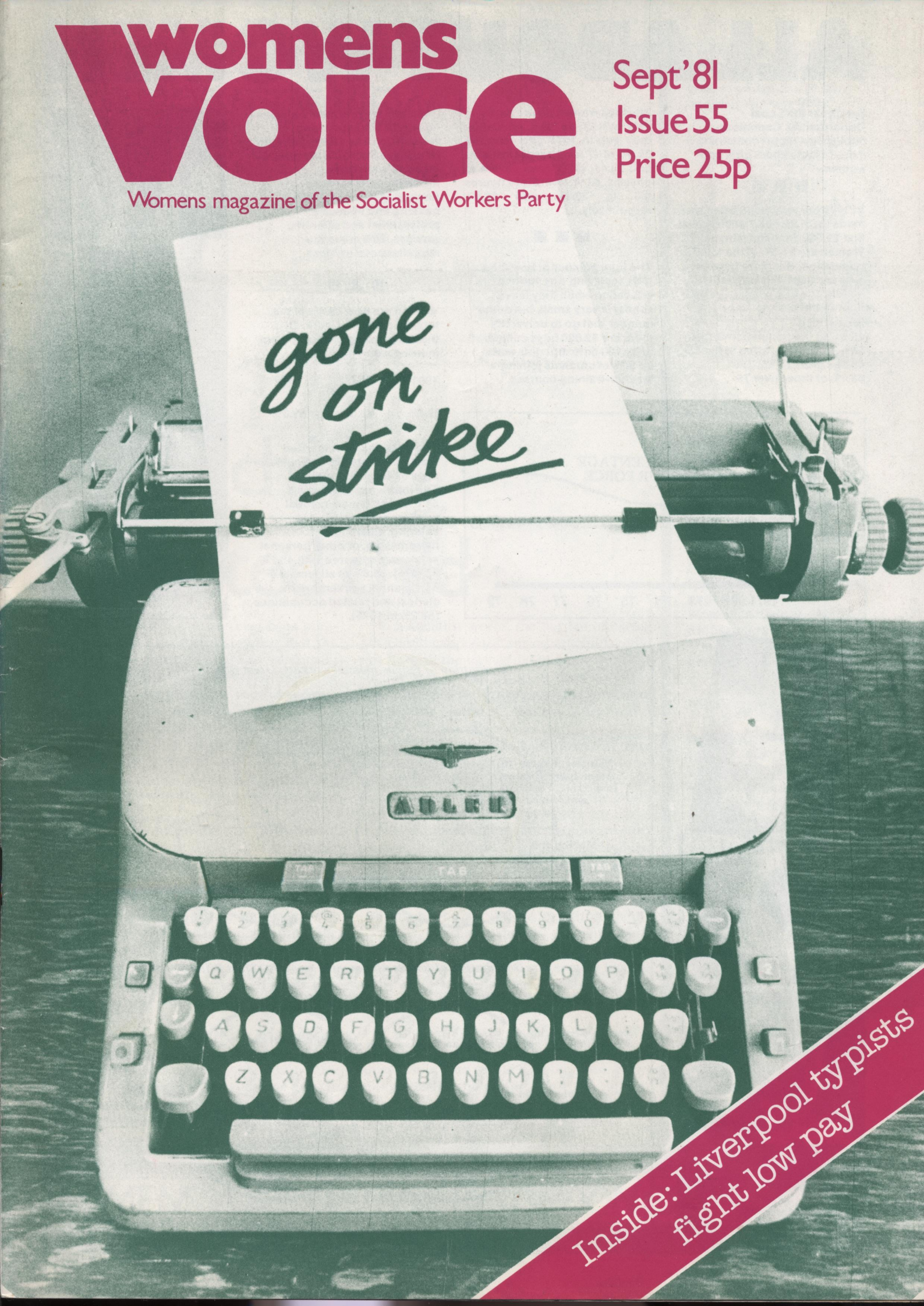


womens VOICE

Womens magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

Sept '81
Issue 55
Price 25p



gone
on
strike

Inside: Liverpool typists
fight low pay

ALL ABOUT WOMEN

Each year the Equal Opportunities Commission publishes a report containing a mass of facts about girls and women:



In 1979 the total population was made up of 26,507.7 million men and 27,900.5 million women. Women are 51.3% of the total population. But more boys than girls are born. It is not until middle age that women outnumber men:
 Women are
 48.6% of the population at birth
 50% of the population in the 45-49 age group
 68.1% of those over 75

The jobs women do are partly determined by the education they get: In 1978 girls received 39.6% of 'O' level passes in maths and 23.4% of 'O' level passes in physics. At 'A' level these figures fall to 23.4% and 18.2% respectively.



The total number of boys and girls receiving any further education when they leave school is very small, but of the number that go to university there are 32,600 boys compared to 21,100 girls. But girls make up 80% of students joining teacher-training courses.

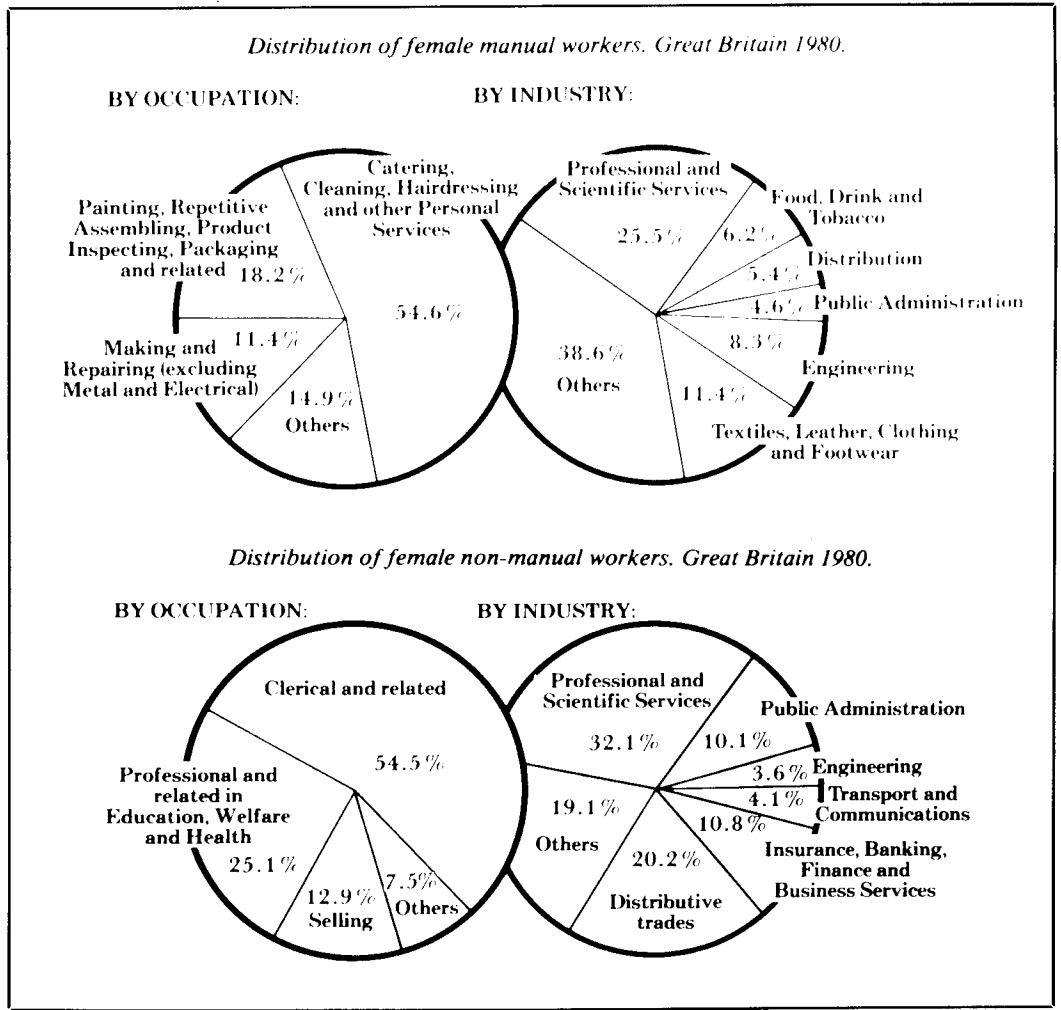
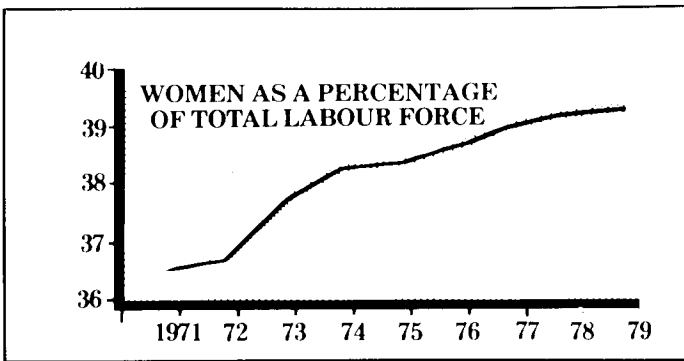
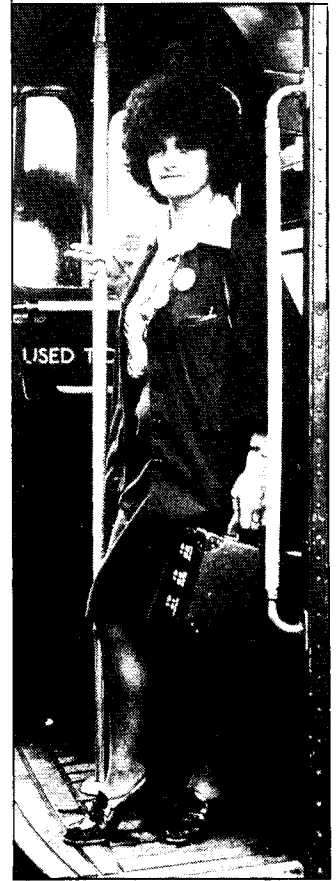
Of school leavers aged between 16 and 18 who go on day release courses during working hours less than 20% are girls. Of these 44% are in the miscellaneous services (including hairdressing) banking and finance or professional and scientific services. 28% are in the miscellaneous services.



Women are now 39.4% of the total workforce in work. Of these a growing proportion are married women:

1961	1971	1979
29.7%	42.3%	51.3%

The peak years for married women to work are between the ages of 40 and 50 years. The jobs women do: 54.6% of all female manual workers are employed in catering, cleaning, hairdressing, or other personal services (compared with 45.7% in 1975). 54.5% of all female non-manual workers are in clerical and related occupations (58.2% in 1975).



OUR POINT OF VIEW

Every child a wanted child

EVERY WOMAN who has ever been pregnant has had at least a passing fear that the baby may be born mentally or physically handicapped. Many couples talk about the possibility, and discuss how they would respond. Would you want such a child to live—is a discussion many have.

That dilemma has hit the headlines in the past weeks following the decision of a court of law that a mongol baby must be operated on to try to save its life, despite the wishes of its parents.

Without the operation the baby would die. Yet it is the very people who talk about 'nature' and 'natural life' who want medical science to intervene to keep it alive.

The courts and those who support them are imposing an impossible burden on the parents. They are demanding that the parents devote the next 20-30 years of their lives caring intensively for a mongol child, maybe at the expense of other children, certainly imposing a massive strain on their lives.

In an ideal world, where the disabled and handicapped had the full resources of science at their disposal, things would be different. Handicapped births would be greatly reduced through ante natal tests at present not widely available for financial reasons.

In a socialist world, the burden of caring for a handicapped (or any other) child would not lie with the individual parents, but with society as a whole. Today it does not.

Medical science is not geared to long term sickness or disability. Neither is the health service. They are good at saving lives, but once that life is saved the quality of care declines, for one simple reason. The government is not willing to pay for the number of people needed to give the disabled the intensive and detailed care they need.

No-one needs telling that the cuts are worsening the minimal facilities the disabled once had. The pressure on parents to take the full burden of looking after their children is immense.

That is why we should cut through the hypocrisy of those who say the child has a right to live. The high court judges, consultants and politicians who say society has the right to interfere in that decision are the same ones who favour cuts in health spending.

It is the right of the parents to choose whether or not they want to artificially keep alive a child who would die otherwise. They, and especially the mother, have the right to choose whether or not they want the burden of caring for a mongol child.

womens
Voice

Womens magazine of the
Socialist Workers Party



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OCCUPATION SMASHED but the fight goes on

AS *WOMENS VOICE* went to press the news came that the 650 strong occupation at Laurence Scotts in Manchester was smashed up. This happened less than four days after the AUEW executive sent a letter to all their branches effectively instructing them to ignore, and therefore isolate, the Laurence Scott workers. As Mary Beaken from Manchester reports, the occupation may be over, but the picketing has only just begun. FORTY HIRED thugs armed with pickaxe handles and sledgehammers forced the eviction of the workers occupying the Laurence Scotts factory in Manchester last month. For the princely sum of £80 each they swooped in a dawn raid on the terrified sleeping workers who had been occupying the factory for the last 17 weeks, fighting its threatened closure.

Picket

The occupation is over, but the fight goes on and rotas had already been prepared for a 24 hour picket to stop anything moving out of the factory. At the first picket **Beryl Hayman** spoke of the effect the strike has had on her, her husband and married daughter all who work at Laurence Scotts. 'It's been hard but somehow we've managed to get by. I got £25 strike pay from APEX and my husband, if he was lucky, got £12 from the AUEW. We've been very careful and it's surprising how you can get by. I've been down here every day during the occupation and something has happened every three or four weeks to keep us going, to make us all the more determined to fight.'

'The biggest eye opener for me was when I went down with three coachloads of us to the AUEW union headquarters in Peckham Road (in London). What I saw that day made me come back more than ever determined to fight. Terry Duffy looked the same colour as his expensive suit—a sort of



sickly grey colour. He looked terrified of us. They just wanted to be left in peace in their executive suite with their drinks and food. I wish that everybody could've gone down that day to see the state of our union executive. They withdrew support for our strike. It left me boiling'.

Solidarity

'Collections have given us an extra £5 a week' and even as Beryl spoke two local trade unionists, one from ASTMS General Electricity Company, came up and asked for the name of the treasurer so that money could be sent to the

strike fund. Now that official union backing has been withdrawn the strike fund is all that more important and the round of delegations to towns all over Britain has been stepped up. As Beryl says 'If we lose this, God help anyone else in the same situation. Massey Ferguson down the road are threatened with redundancies. They'll all be watching what happens here. We've got to stick it out and win.' It is time to step up the solidarity, to join the pickets and to send messages of support and donations to: LSE Strike Fund, c/o George Fryer, 20 Round Croft, Ronily, Cheshire.

Low Pay - No Way!

MORE THAN 400 typists, secretaries and machine operators in Liverpool have been on strike since 6 July. Their action escalated from a work to rule and selective strike action to an all-out strike over a regrading claim.

'Every time typists tried to get something done for them in the past, someone had a very good reason why it shouldn't be done', said **May Sutton**, a member of the strike committee. 'We had to harden our hearts and just get on with it. Our attitude to our jobs has completely changed. We are beginning to realise just how important we are to the running of the city council.'

Typists are picketing the council buildings, the strike committee meets every day and there are weekly mass meetings. The Liberal leader of Liverpool Council, Sir Trevor Jones, is determined to break the strike

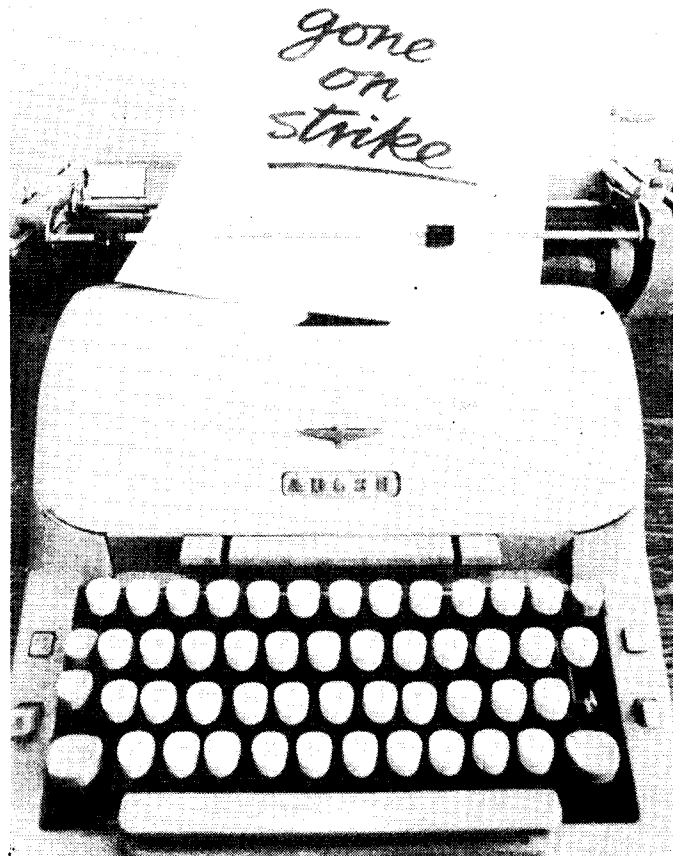
JOAN JANSSON who has worked for Liverpool council for 34 years as a machine operator told Womens Voice, 'It's an injustice, it's all wrong, and it's all about money. When I told my daughter that I was going on strike she couldn't believe it, she's been great. I couldn't have done it without the support at home and I couldn't go back with nothing, we have to win'.

and has described the typists' claim as 'outrageous'. The only offer that has been made so far is tiny.

Despite the strength and determination of the strikers, NALGO nationally is treading very carefully. Its biggest move to date is to talk about bringing ACAS in to arbitrate a settlement.

Council manual workers are giving support to the typists and are threatening action themselves if serious negotiations do not begin soon.

Please send messages of support and donations to: Liverpool Typists Action Group, c/o Branch Office, Duchy Chambers, 24 Sir Thomas St, Liverpool 1. Tel: 051 236 1944. Collection sheets available from the Right to Work Campaign, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 Phone 01 986 6222.



A NATIONAL TYPISTS Charter (the typists' rank and file group) meeting was held in Liverpool in August to discuss the experience of local claims and other typists action. The Liverpool strike was a major item for discussion and **May Sutton** told how their council 'made us so mad it wasn't difficult to get a vote for all-out action.'

Birmingham council typists started a work to rule in June, after submitting a claim last October. **Claire Cavadino** recalled: 'When the claim was submitted it was "We'll talk to you sometime" There was the usual threat of redundancies .. but we're learning to live with them everyday now'. When the action started 'management were trying to isolate people by saying "you're the only section that's taking action" but once the action is going it has its own

dynamic and becomes such easier.'

Birmingham typists suspended their action after being promised an offer but this was overruled by the council leader, so they are starting their action again.

Penny Kaye, gave details of the claim submitted by Manchester NALGO typists. 'Ours is the longest running claim. We have now started an official work to rule and hope to esca-

late the action to give it more bite. The National Emergency Committee of NALGO feel very insecure and annoyed about the Liverpool strike. We know that it is vital for all our claims that the Liverpool typists win. We must give them every support.'

Greater Manchester Council typists have postponed work to rule action to give the new Labour council one month to

ANNE GLENNON who has worked for six and a half years as a senior secretary said, 'I'm skint, I haven't got a bloody penny. You think if it's not over soon you'll go back to work. But the money and support we've had has been marvellous. We've got to win, not only for ourselves—it's for others as well'.

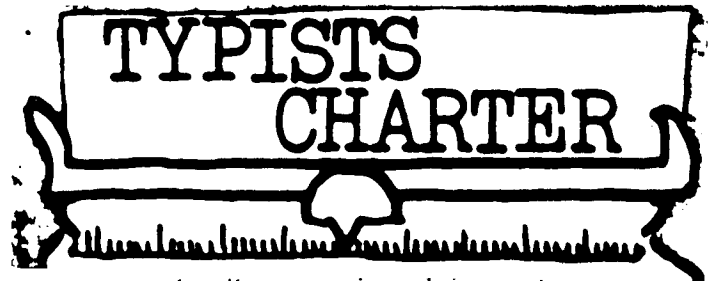
come up with an offer. The deadline is September 11 and if nothing is forthcoming action will be enforced.

In South Yorkshire a mass meeting of typists voted to take work to rule action but were held back by their NALGO district officer. **Lyn Nichols** said: 'We have to put a deadline on our negotiations or we might as well say goodbye. This will have to come to a work to rule. Unless we stick our necks out we won't get anything.'

Delegates went away feeling more confident about pursuing their claims. It was an opportunity to meet other typists and find out ways of taking action.

Pat Gallagher from Newcastle Polytechnic said: 'Now typists are taking action outside London, it has a lot more resonance. The deal we got in the last pay round was an absolute sop to the low paid.'

Pauline Alden



For more details on typists claim and action contact: Typists Charter, 48 Forburg Road, London N16. Phone Pauline Alden 01 985 3086 (home) or 01 986 3266 x 438 (work).

SPAIN:

MORE ABORTION ARRESTS

ON THE morning of 15 July, Spain's Guardia Civil forced entry into a flat in Valencia, and arrested eleven people—a union activist, two abortion counsellors, and nine women seeking information on abortion. The counsellors were held 'indefinitely', without being charged. They joined the innumerable list of women who have been summonsed, detained, or charged with conspiracy to seek or to carry out abortions in Spain.

In Spain, a Roman Catholic country only recently released from Franco's fascist rule, abortion is illegal. Yet over 300,000 women have abortions there every year. Their 'choice' is between one of the progressive, feminist (and illegal) clinics, or the backstreet abortionist. Few can afford to travel abroad for the operation. All are at risk of being discovered and prosecuted.

But a movement for free abortion on demand has started to take the offensive against the authorities. After a raid on a Seville clinic, 23,000 women stated in writing that they had had abortions—defying the police to summons them. The Ministry of Justice in Madrid has put off for nearly a year any decision on who should be brought to trial. Huge demonstrations have taken place in support of a woman's right to choose, and with Spain negotiating to join the Common Market, 9 Euro-MPs have demanded that the Spanish government legalise abortion. The Spanish left are making the same demand.

In Britain, the International Contraception, Abortion & Sterilisation Campaign (ICASC) are calling for legal abortion rights in Spain, amnesty to all women arrested or imprisoned for abortion, and an end to the harassment of women and clinics by police. Further information: ICASC: Tel: 01-278 0153 or write to- 374 Grays Inn Rd., London WC1.

Susan Pearce



Britain: Positive action

JO RICHARDSON, Labour MP for Barking in Essex, introduced a Bill on abortion to Parliament early in July. It was the first step towards positive legislation since the 1967 Act.

Jo Richardson said in presenting the Bill (which was voted out by 215 votes to 139) 'The Act (1967) of itself did not put any specific duty on the NHS to provide abortions. This has produced hardship for many women, and in some cases later abortions than

necessary. My purpose in introducing this Bill is to make it a duty on health authorities to provide facilities for women—free, of course, as are other operations under the NHS... it is indefensible that the NHS should not provide treatment for women who are legally entitled to treatment under the law'

We agree. At a time when fewer than half the abortions performed are done on the NHS and with the Tory cuts things can only get worse, not better—

the Bill was a welcome sight. After years of defending what little abortion rights we have this was at long last an offensive move on abortion, and hopefully the shape of things to come. But ultimately, as in the past, the argument won't be won in Parliament. It will be won by arguing in our trade unions and on the streets—whether in defence of the 1967 Act or in support of extending it.

NEWS

WHAT A SELLOUT

EARLY LAST month the civil servants strike, which dragged on for 20 weeks, ended. The strike involved only small numbers of people on selective action and left the majority of civil servants (nearly 95 per cent) working normally. This led to demoralisation and, not surprisingly, lack of confidence in the union leadership who consistently refused to call all out strike action which would have won their claim of 15 per cent wage rise.

In the end the settlement was for half that amount, seven and a half per cent, plus a £30 taxable 'loyalty' bonus and the promise of pay arbitration in 1982.

Womens Voice asked Jennifer Young, a member of the Civil and Public Services Association in Glasgow, what she thought of the settlement.

'One thing that's making

everyone sick in my office is that after we were sold out by our trade union leadership the first information that we get from them is about our new subscription increases.

'The settlement is disgusting—it's a complete sell-out. Our branch committee is very politically active but now everyone feels apathetic.

'The air traffic controllers in the States got the support from other unions and took all-out action, and they've never been on strike before. They took on the government, and we should have done the same.

'People in my office are saying that they would rather have lost a couple of weeks pay in all-out strike action and be able to say now 'at least we fought as hard as we could' instead of feeling that they weren't really involved in the fight'.

March in October...

THIS YEAR'S Right to Work March, from Liverpool to Blackpool in October, will be the most angry and militant yet.

After nearly two and a half years of Tory government, unemployment has touched every working class family in the country. Many of those families have just one person bringing in a meagre wage that has to house and feed perhaps five or six people.

It is predicted that before very long the official unemployment figures will be 3¼ million. Add on to that all the kids who are on temporary government employment schemes and women who don't register because they're not eligible for benefit—and you've got something much closer to four million.

The People's March in May brought thousands of unemployed and employed people onto the streets. But the organisers of the march were reluctant to make any real connection between the march and those workers fighting for their jobs on the shopfloor.

Wholehearted, unconditional support for occupations and strikes against redundancies

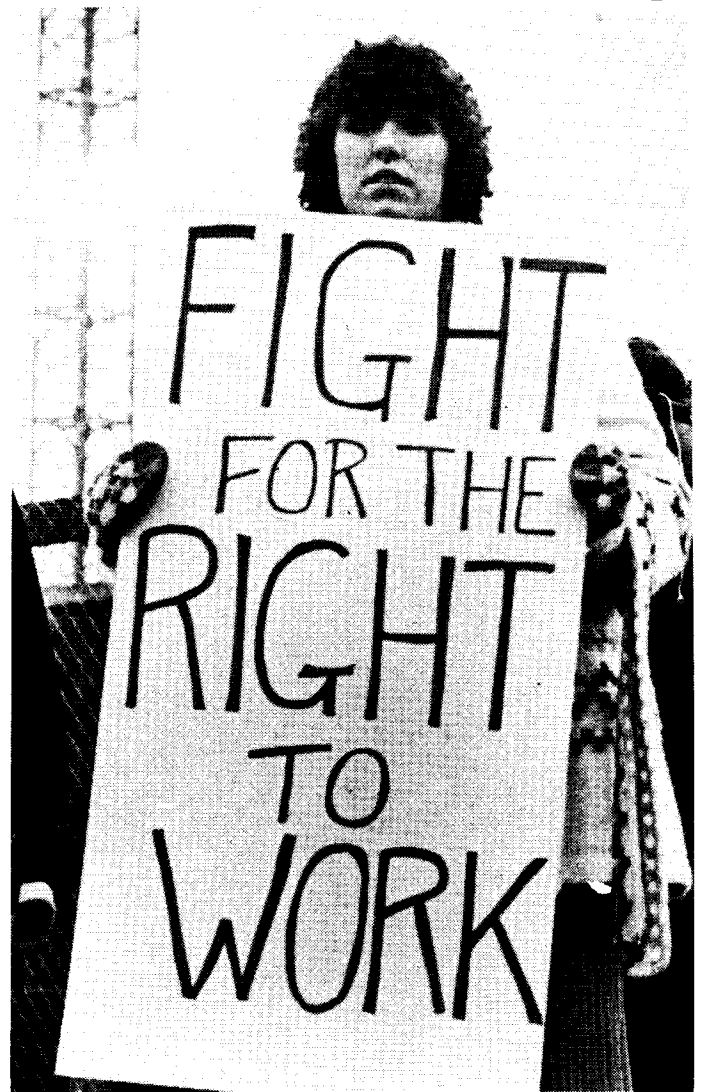
has not been offered by the leaders of the trade union movement. But it is exactly that workplace struggle that can halt the massive increase in the unemployment figures.

That's why the Right to Work March route passes through areas where workers have fought and are still fighting against job losses, and where kids have rioted in protest against unemployment and police harassment. The employed and the unemployed must be united, and that unity be shown in strength at the lobby of the Tory Party conference in Blackpool on October 16th.

The Right to Work March needs support. Put a motion to your union meeting calling for sponsorship and donations, collect money at work, and visit dole queues to sign up people for the march itself.

For details of the march see the back cover of this copy of Womens Voice. Collection sheets are available from the Right to Work Campaign, 265a Seven Sisters Road, London N4.

Julie Waterson



And the spring

'We want the right to work, the end to job segregation, and the right to be independent and those rights will only be possible if we fight—not only against unemployment but also for child provision, maternity leave rights, basic trade union rights, adequate contraception and abortion services.... At a time of economic crisis we want the labour movement to show it's commitment to fighting for all our interests, to defend all working people.'

The Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work.

The National Festival for Womens Rights Against Tory Attacks in London earlier this year called for the Labour Party and the TUC to organise a national Womens Right to Work demonstration. To date the Labour Party Womens conference have backed a demonstration and the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party have backed an event.

The emphasis is on the Labour Party and the trade union leadership to call and organise the demo. This has meant that the direction and activity of the Action Committee has primarily been one of lobbying the NEC of the Labour Party. This is a dangerous direction.

Who are 'the labour movement' if we aren't? The only way to build for the demo—and it must be a demo—is to take it into our trade union branches and argue for support. If the Labour Party back the demo, all the better, but this shouldn't be the whole activity for building for it.

For more information contact the Action Committee for a Woman's Right to Work, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.



THE SAME workers at Lyons Tetley tea factory in West London, many of whom are women, who walked out for the day to welcome the Peoples March, found themselves on the picket line less than two months later. More than 600 workers went on strike over pay, management offered seven per cent but their claim was 11½ per cent. They went back victorious in the middle of August after only three weeks on strike with wage increases ranging from nine to 10½ per cent.

NAMIBIAN WOMAN STAYS IN PRISON

ON 9 OCTOBER 1981, Ida Jimmy, a Namibian woman condemned under the South African terrorism act, will have served one year of her seven year sentence.

Ida, an activist of Namibia's national liberation movement, SWAPO, which is fighting South Africa's illegal occupation of her country, was arrested for addressing a SWAPO rally.

She was seven months pregnant at the time of her trial and gave birth to a son in prison.

Ida has become a symbol of the many women engaged in the Namibian struggle. To demand her release is to protest against South Africa's victimation of the people who resist its brutal occupation so bravely.

In Britain, the SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign (SWSC) is working in solidarity with women in SWAPO. On 9 October this year the group is launching a petition demanding the release of Ida Jimmy and all political prisoners in Namibia. The British Government, which has failed to put effective pressure on South Africa to withdraw its illegal occupation army, bears a large responsibility for the continued suffering of Ida Jimmy and others in Namibia. It must be urged to intervene to obtain their release.

For petition forms to collect signatures for Ida Jimmy's release, contact SWSC, 188 North Gower Street, London, NW1 (01-388 5539).
SWAPO Women's Solidarity Campaign.

Cynthia Gordon wins fight against Tories' racist laws

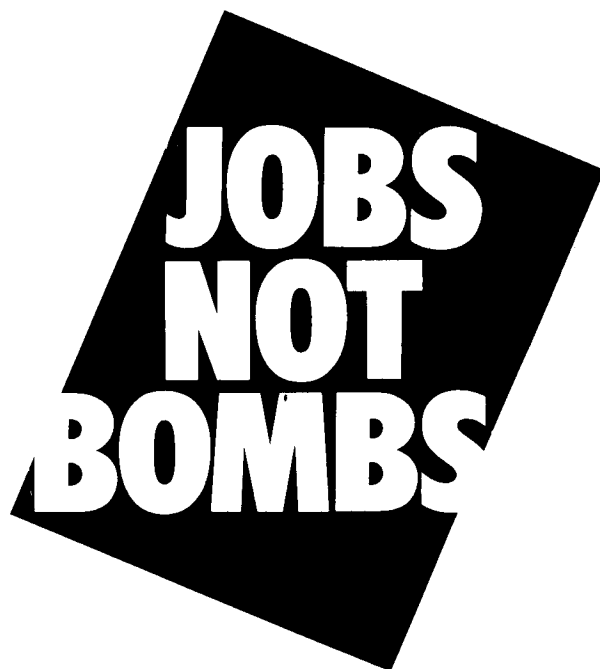
CYNTHIA GORDON has won her long fight against deportation.

The Home Office granted her permission to stay in this country on 'compassionate grounds'. Cynthia is a 52 year old mother with two school age children. Her family would have been split up if the deportation had gone through. The 'compassionate' Home Office were quite happy to ignore these facts at first

and Cynthia unhappily lived under this threat for over two years.

It is obvious that the campaign mounted by the Action Group forced Tory Minister Timothy Raison to change his mind. The campaign based in Moss-Side, Manchester, is jubilant and all the more determined to fight any other cases that come up.

Mary Beaken



**National demonstration called by CND
SATURDAY 24 OCTOBER**

**Assemble 10.30am onwards at Victoria Embankment, London SW1.
March moves off at 11.00am to Hyde Park.
Festival in Hyde Park from midday
Rally in Hyde Park at 4.00pm.**

LOTHIAN: top of the Tories hit list

Until recently Lothian council was making a strong stand against the Tory cuts. But just before *Womens Voice* went to press the council caved in to the government's demands. Penny Packham looks at the background of Lothians resistance and what the implementation of cuts will mean.

ON 4 JUNE this year, the government told Lothian region in Scotland to cut £53 million of its present budget.

If this was carried out it would mean more than 6,000 employees losing their jobs: one in four NALGO education workers, one in six teachers, hundreds of social workers, nursery nurses, transport, highways and drainage workers.

In return people in Edinburgh and the surrounding district of Lothian would experience:

rocketing bus fares, school meals cut.

home helps and meals on wheels slashed

children's and old people's

homes closed

provision for the handicapped cut.

Most of the jobs to disappear would be women's jobs—the lower grades of the public services—and those most affected by the cuts in services would also be women.

Why was Labour-controlled Lothian selected as prime target in the Tory hit list? It's obvious to most people here it was a political rather than economic decision. After all, any government that proposes to spend £6,000,000,000 on a Trident missiles programme can't be short of a bob or two.

The Tories aren't prepared to put their vicious policies to the test in the regional elections next May. Instead they rushed through a special bit of legislation (the Miscellaneous Provisions (Scotland) Act) by 15 June. This enables the government to fine any 'free-spending' local authority by cutting their Rate Support Grant. Under Scottish law a region can't make a supplementary levy on the rates to compensate.

On 9 June 2,000 NALGO members plus delegations from other unions lobbied the council meeting to support the ruling Labour group 'no cuts' stand. This surprised the Labour councillors whose response

was: 'We'll tell you when to go on strike in support of us'.

When the cuts were first rumoured the Regional Labour Group launched the Lothian Action Group at an open conference. But it wasn't long before Labour Party union officials removed the ordinary delegates elected from the floor. Since then the 'Action' Group has been anything but.

However, Rank and File members of the teachers' union EIS and the NALGO Action Group did meet regularly, built support in workplace and union meetings and pushed our union officials into making 30 June a one day protest strike.

An overwhelming 30,000 from a total 35,000 Local Authority employees came out on strike. The demonstration of 15,000 people was the largest that conservative little Edinburgh has seen. TGWU, NALGO, EIS, NUPE, FBU marching together: none of us a 'special case' any more.

We then held a Rank and File meeting of over 80 people from these unions and set up the Lothian Campaign against the Tory Cuts. This has organised speakers' tours, leaflets and pickets of the Scottish Office.

An alternative structure was needed to carry the campaign forward and no-one else was doing that. The Shop Stewards' conferences held, had only union officials on the platform. They refused to discuss action beyond 30 June. They wouldn't allow a civil servant to speak on their experience of selective action. They just assumed this would be the way forward. Just get the waterworkers out—the whisky industry would be hit, and Thatcher would suffer cardiac arrest.

But selective action *doesn't* work. With selective strikes, union officials keep an icy grip on things. And we know from experience they will be unwilling to fight cuts in services and *voluntary* redundancies. Only by taking all-out action and

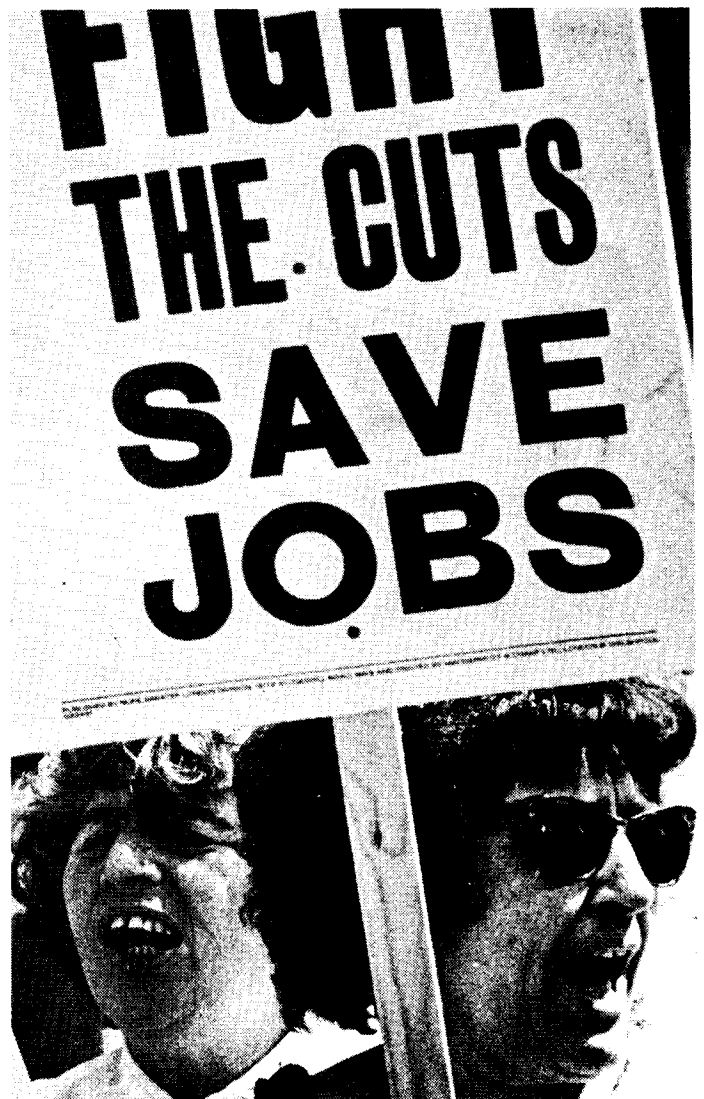


Photo: John Sturrock (Network)

spreading it can we win, and it is only then that we have the right to ask for support from the private sector and nationally from our own union members. And we can't win this battle on our own.

Despite earlier promises of not caving in, Labour councillors have now produced a package of cuts worth £15 million. Particularly hard hit will be education with school maintenance and vital equipment and books being slashed by over £3 million.

The Benn type accountability that Lothian Labour Party had adopted now seems to have gone by the board.

The whole time they have emphasised *their* stand against the government. In reality it is *our* jobs and services that are on the line. If they refuse to administer further drastic cuts, Tory commissioners will do it anyway. It is really Bennism writ small. The Labour councillors have little to offer. Their rates increase of 49% this year and proposed 100% increase next

budget (stopped by the Tories) has allowed the Rate Payers Action Group Executive (RAGE) to spring up.

After the Tories threatened to fine Lothian council £1.5m a week, the council produced the £15m cuts package. Whether this is enough to satisfy Heseltine and Whitehall is doubtful. Lothian's rapid retreat from their 'principled' stand and their refusal to take up resistance advocated by rank and file public employees will add fuel to the Tories' campaign to attack other councils.

The people who benefit from Lothian's retreat are not the working people of Lothian who pay large proportions of their income in rates, but the businesses who don't care about the level of education and social services anyway.

The miners in February and the Toxteth riots have shown that the government only listens to militant action. And if the Tories get away with it in Lothian, other areas could be next.



Chris Jenkins

The seven month sit-in

THE SEVEN month fight to save jobs at Lee Jeans seems to be nearly over. The Greenock, Scotland, factory has a prospective new buyer, who has said that he wants to keep the existing workforce on. But the present owners, VF Corporation, are haggling over the price.

This has meant negotiations have gone on for six weeks, and

still haven't been concluded.

In the meantime, the women are still sitting in at the factory. They are divided into six shifts and are still managing to maintain their numbers. Relatively few workers have left the factory.

But they still face problems. Their occupation is now unofficial—which means they

are no longer getting strike pay or the vital support they should be receiving from their union.

And the donations from other trade unionists are drying up. 'Lots of people think our dispute is over—it's not' said one. They still need money and messages of 'support over the next weeks.

Probably their jobs will be

saved—although even that will not be certain until everything is signed and sealed.

If they do win, it will be a victory for workers—especially women workers—everywhere because it shows that a workforce prepared to take militant action, and prepared to ask for other workers' solidarity can win their jobs back.

It was the blacking by dockers and magnificent collections in workplaces like the Clyde shipyards that enabled a traditionally badly organised group of workers to win.

The victory was not total—VF is still selling—and only about 150 jobs are still there, out of the 240 at the start of the occupation. And the women will have to be on guard that their strength and union organisation built up during the occupation are not attacked in the next few months.

But despite that, the inspiration of Lee Jeans will be one that is with us for a long time to come.

Lindsey German



Gay Rights at Work

Susan Shell picketing Barking Council.

Fight for gay rights

SUSAN SHELL, who was sacked by Labour-controlled Barking Council because she is gay, is still fighting for her reinstatement (see the last issue of *Womens Voice*).

Susan worked as a night care assistant in a girls' hostel. Barking council felt she was a threat to the moral well-being of the girls in care—despite the fact that there is no evidence that a homosexual adult is more likely than a heterosexual adult to form a relationship with a young person. Barking have since offered her another job, but Susan wants her original job back so she turned it down.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee conference in July backed Susan's case and agreed to send a message of condemnation to Barking council.

Gay Rights at Work, who took up Susan's case, have organised a lobby and fringe meeting at both the TUC and the Labour Party conference. The aim is to bring attention to

all attacks on gay workers' rights, and to highlight Susan's particular case.

- Send trade union motions supporting Susan Shell and affiliating to Gay Rights at Work to: Gay Rights at Work, 7 Pickwick Court, London SE9.

GAY LIBERATION, SOCIALISM, AND THE NEW LIFE
SWP GAY GROUP WEEKEND SCHOOL
12 - 13 SEPTEMBER
CITY POLY,
ALDGATE,
LONDON E1

Topics include: Sexual politics and the labour movement, Promiscuity and monogamy, Gay rights at work, Children's rights, Fascism and sexuality, Party, class and sexual liberation.

PLUS social in the evening. The conference is open to all supporters of the SWP. Accommodation and creche available. Details and registration from SWP Gay Group weekend school, PO Box 82, London E2. Registration fee £2 in advance, £1 unwaged.

THE RIOTS

Both black and white kids have got up and said, 'we won't take this any more'



John Sturrock (Network)

Riots on city streets over the last few months have shaken the Tory government. Amongst their responses was Whitelaw's cry of 'blame the parents'. With this in mind Womens Voice talked to **Martha Osamor** who came to Britain from Nigeria 18 years ago. She lives and works, with her four teenage children, in North London, where she organises a black womens group.

We didn't come over here to throw stones at people. We thought our children would be better off in this 'dream land'. They told us 'don't worry, we'll take care of your kids' and we were told not to teach them to read or write, that the schools would deal with that. Then they classified our kids as educationally sub-normal. It's not even education they're talking about—it's behaviour, what they do, how they act. The kids leave school, in most cases having been encouraged to underachieve, and there's no jobs.

It's the same thing with law and order—we must obey. A lot of us believed in British justice and the police. That's until your kid is charged under SUS (suspicion of committing a crime) and you sit in court and watch how things really work.

We've gone through it all—we came with dreams, but our children are born here and their expectations are different. They can watch things getting bleaker and bleaker. No matter how well organised we are in bringing complaints against the police we discover that it's the police investigating the police. We don't win, we always lose.

Now we're being told that the riots in the inner-city areas like Liverpool—areas that we live in, that we inherited, are *our* fault, that we're to blame. If there hadn't been a riot in Liverpool, Heseltine wouldn't know where it



Chris Jenkins

was. Now they're making promises of inner-city development and jobs—promises that we know they're not going to keep. And then we hear that these kids have no right to stand up and say they're being harrassed.

It comes back to the way the media have managed to report the uprisings—the picture of young blacks going out vandalising. But they couldn't get away with that one. It wasn't true. Although we suffer most—no jobs, immigration controls—there's a lot of white kids who live in inner-city areas. They suffer the same—they feel the same frustration. Both black and white kids have got up and said 'we won't take this any more'. All this stuff about copycat rioting—it's rubbish. The experience of kids in different areas is the same, their frustration is the same and their response in the same.

Our kids know they can't go out without being picked up, but you can't tell your kids to stay at home. There's no clubs for them to go to, they're all closed down. The cuts mean that there's nothing for them. And the government's blaming the kids and the parents. We're not to blame. We tried to bring our kids up and now they're saying to us

MORE THAN 10,000 people marched through the streets of Liverpool last month calling for the resignation of Kenneth Oxford, the Merseyside Chief of Police.

The march was mainly angry local kids, black and white, women and men. Their message was clear—they'd had enough of 'positive policing' which has led to the murder of 21 year old David Moore and numerous injuries and arrests.

'bring your kids up properly or you'll have to pay their fines'. I don't know who they thought paid the fines before now.

It's almost impossible to bring kids up in this society and not get caught in a trap. You try to give them what you can afford—but it's never enough to match their needs. It's a lot more than working hard to get money—it's that there are people who have got it, lots of it, and then there's those who haven't—our kids. It's so unequal.

One thing we know now is the role of the police: they protect property. When a kid is beaten up in a cell they can't fight back, but they can get back by damaging the property the police are there to protect. The way the police are given more money than ordinary workers shows that they are there to protect someone's interests—ruling class interests. And to do that the police will use tear gas, we saw that in Liverpool, and water cannon and rubber bullets like they do in northern Ireland.

What the media hasn't shown is the damage the police and the government has done to youngsters—destroyed their whole future. They're being made unemployable. That *is* damage and it's criminal, and they've done it very well. We have to prepare ourselves: our kids need our support, they need the support of the labour movement.

Unfair AuPair

THE AU PAIR business has been around for a long time. Young women find that the only way they can legally learn a language in another country is often by becoming the badly-paid skivvy for a well-off family in the country of their choice.

Chantal Galliker spent six months being just that. She earned £15 for a working week of more than 40 hours including babysitting. Out of that 'pocket money' she had to pay her school fees of nearly £6 a week.

Towards the end of her stint Chantal and 24 of her class-mates wrote a letter to their local paper in response to an article which implied that au pairs had an easy life. They said: 'We consider that the above conditions (of an au pair's work) exploit the au pair as cheap labour and that she is often reduced to a form of family status symbol and treated as a modern day servant.'

In this article Chantal explains her own experience as an au pair and how she thinks the situation could change.

When I finished school in Switzerland last year I didn't know what sort of job I wanted, but I wished to improve my English. The only way to do this without being dependent on my parents was to become an au pair.

I went to an agency which claimed to be non-profit making, although I had to pay £25 for their services, and completed a superficial questionnaire. After a few weeks I got a letter about a family in Edgware, stating their religion, the husband's job and describing my work as helping the wife with light housework and the children (a girl aged five and twins of two). The letter also told me of my pocket money—£15 a week. I was promised each afternoon free, one full day off and my own room. I was expected to babysit three or four evenings a week. I accepted this offer and came to England last October.

After a while my working day looked like this: at 7.30 I had to prepare breakfast for the children and then change, wash and dress them while their mother was locked in her bedroom laboriously perfecting her cosmetic work of art. At about 9.00 she took the kids to school or the nursery. From then on I had to clean the kitchen, all the bedrooms, the toilets and the bathroom, and the dining-, sitting-, and TV-rooms. In the last three I had to brush the carpets every day and my job was only considered done after having used disinfectants, polish and air sprays in excess.

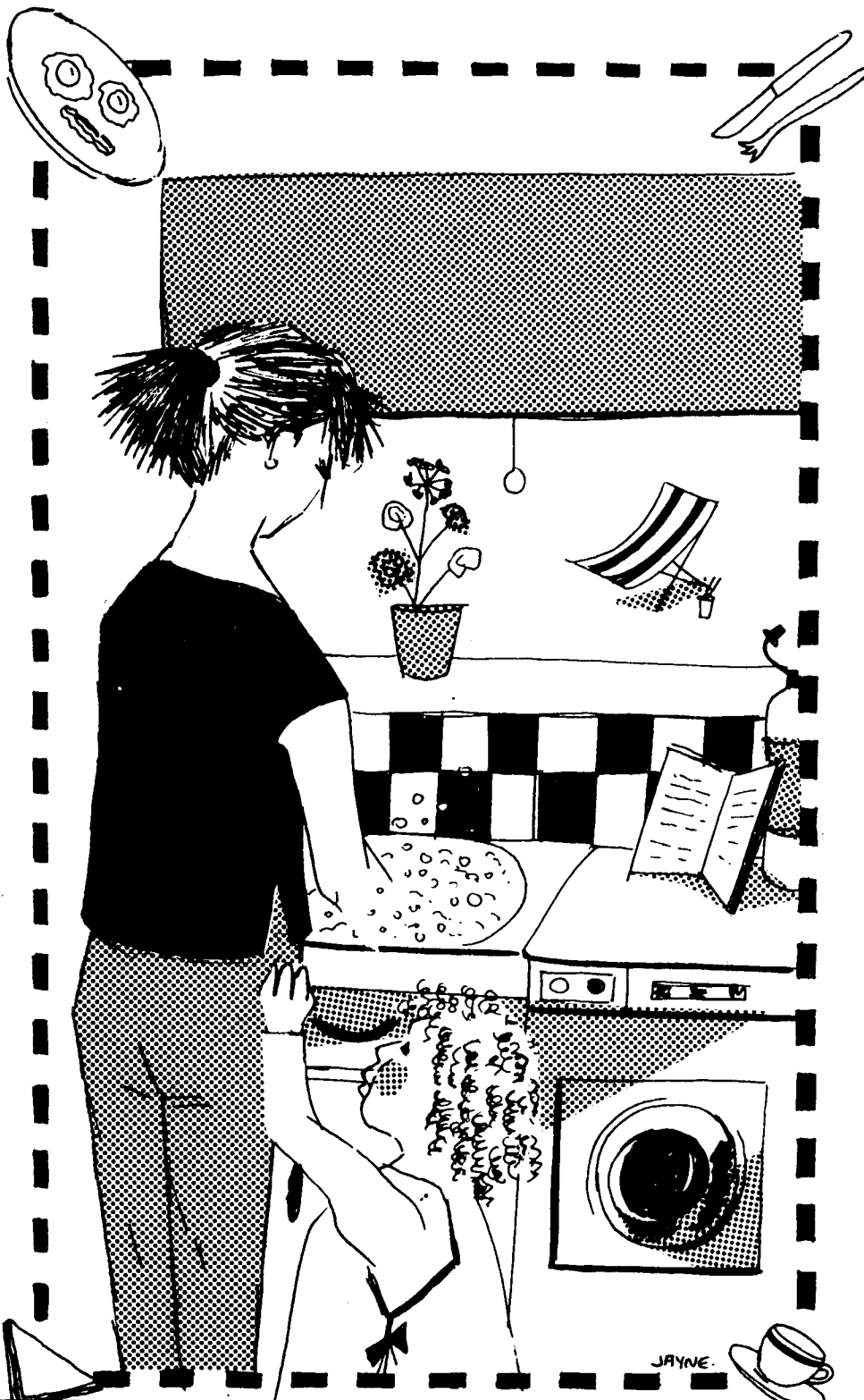
Every day I did a machine-load of washing, and the kitchen floor was only clean when I had swept it carefully and then thoroughly washed it on my knees. Meanwhile the husband would sit with his business friends in the kitchen undoubtedly proving that he could afford an au pair.

Two days a week I had to clean the bedrooms thoroughly, cleaning the doors and windows, hoovering and dusting everything—even the toys and the pictures on the wall. The wardrobes in one of the four bedrooms had to be done in turn. On another day all the beds had to be changed and everything washed, and the micro-wave oven and fridge be cleaned.

At about 11.00, when I came round to polish the brass door step, the twins were brought back and I had to prepare lunch for them. Although they were often tired and grumpy and their nappies uncomfortably full, I looked forward to these moments. We all got on well.

As soon as they were in bed I finished off whatever remained to be done. My morning's work was supposed to finish at 12.30, but too often there was a pile of ironing that 'just had to be done'. These 'small favours' as well as the many hands I was asked to give during my free afternoons resulted in considerable overtime, which surprisingly was never mentioned.

In the afternoons I went to college or tried to study in my room—which was hardly big enough for a wardrobe, a small desk and a small fold-up up bed. After 3.00 the eldest daughter came home, and studying was impossible because of the shouting of the kids and the noise of the TV. It was also quite common that I would be asked to do 'a favour', especially if it was changing the twins' nappies. Sometimes I



would just be too tired to study—tired because of the work and also the sleepless nights when the kids started to scream very early in the morning. Another strain was the colds I kept catching, but I was not allowed one day's rest besides my day off.

I had to babysit two or three nights a week, often at short notice, and if I didn't do that amount one week I was told I had to do more the next. I was free to stay in for dinner in the evenings, but if I did I had to clean all the pots and dishes and the kitchen. By the time I had finished that everyone was dying for me to offer coffee.

My relationship with the family wasn't too good. The wife and I communicated on a command-obey basis. Most 'conversations' were instructions. I was not asked but told, and when she wanted my working hours changed for a day, I wasn't asked but told again. In return for all this I got pocket money of a terrific £15—and I was one of the better off. Finally I tried to explain to the wife what was depressing me. The next day I was told to leave immediately.

Being an au pair means you have to depend on your employer for everything. It is she who provides your food, room and pocket money, who influences and controls your personal life and personal freedom. So she can—and does—insist on you never spending a night outside her house and forbids that any male friends come to see you.

An au pair is supposed to be treated as a member of the family. But the fact that she is constantly told by another member what to do, and that she does all the dirty work for the other family members, makes a farce out of this fairy tale of equality.

The other body au pairs are subjected to is the Home Office. They give out recommendations, but point out that these are not enforceable laws. They state that the main purpose of an au pair's stay is to learn English. For five hours of housework for six days a week and a couple of evenings babysitting, pocket money of £14 or £15 is considered reasonable (March 1981). The other regulations are that an au pair must be female, aged between 17 and 27, unmarried and without dependents, a national of a western European country and not spending more than two years as an au pair.

In my opinion these rules are racist, because all but white Europeans are excluded. They are sexist because no boys are allowed as au pairs nor can a single father employ an au pair because there must be an adult woman in the household. But also I don't think these recommendations are enough to protect the 25,000—30,000 au pairs in Britain from exploitation.

I think the first step must be to recognise the work of an au pair as labour, and therefore give her a contract and protection under British labour laws. Her pay shouldn't be considered 'pocket money' but as a wage, big enough to live on, pay school fees and the fares home. Light housework must be defined. Babysitting should be included in the contract. Au pairs should have the option of staying with the family or in a room paid for by them. There must be tighter control of au pair agencies and the profits that they make out of the au pair business.

Positive action in struggle

Patronising attitudes towards women workers come from all sections of society. You can see how serious the problem is if you look at the Tetley's strike in west London. One fifth of the workforce is female, but you won't find any women on the picket line. The men sent them home saying that a picket line was no place for a woman.

Employers gain by keeping women and men workers divided. Women workers gain nothing—and neither do male workers—although it is often difficult for them to understand just how destructive their attitudes towards women workers are.

Hostility from employers and prejudice from male workers are forcing an increasing number of women workers to support the case for positive action. Many trade unions, and indeed many employers have already formally committed themselves to equal opportunity and an end to discrimination against women workers. But this mean little in the abstract.

Quotas

Positive action is an attempt to build on that commitment by asking employers and trade unions to actually do something to ensure greater equality. Proposals for positive action include such things as reserving a certain quota of places on training schemes for women. In trade unions, members are being urged to set up special committees at all levels to deal specifically with women's questions, and to reserve places for women on all leading committees. Other proposals include day care at skill centres and non sexist codes of practice to be adopted on training schemes.

Supporters of positive action point to cases where they say it has been successful. A recent handbook* quotes the case of NUPE, two thirds of whose members are female. In 1973 only one in ten branch secretaries and 28% of stewards were female. Now after five years of special efforts to ensure participation by women, efforts which include setting up womens committees and working parties, 40 per cent of shop stewards are women and there are eight women on the national executive where there were none before. Case proven? Maybe—but there are other ways of interpreting the facts.

The past five years have been active years for NUPE members. During strikes it was women who often emerged as the leaders of the rank and file. As Anne Robertson wrote in *Womens Voice* during the Low Pay strikes:

'Women proved themselves more militant than men because they would not

use codes of practice dreamed up by male officials to limit effective picketing. The women cleaners in Hackney Town Hall actually went to picket a depot in Greenwich right on the other side of London because the men were crossing the picket line. In Manchester hospitals men, the traditional leaders, were much more cautious than women when it came to spreading tactics as occupations or withdrawing emergency cover. The recent wave of strikes turned hundreds of women into leaders noted for their anger and determination to win by whatever means possible.'

Confidence

In struggle, lack of tradition turned from a weakness into a strength, and women NUPE members went out taking the initiative in organising actions at rank and file level. The confidence gained in action undoubtedly reflected itself after the strike in a greater number of women becoming active in the union. The idea that rank and file activity from below, rather than working parties from above, were behind the increased participation by women in NUPE is borne out by the figures. The proportion of women holding union positions is greatest at rank and file level, and decreases as you go up the union structure—in spite of positive action at all levels.

Attitudes don't change in the abstract—they change when there is something going on. Women in action learn confidence for themselves—and they can inspire respect in men too. Many male workers were amazed and impressed by the way women participated in the public sector and steel strikes.

Struggle

For these reasons rank and file activity is vital in the fight for women workers' equality. You rarely convince people by arguing with them—however reasonable your case. And you don't make equality simply through formal arrangements. It's positive action in struggle that is needed.

Positive action on its own can increase the opportunities available for women to participate. But wanting to participate comes through the confidence gained out of action.

If a positive action resolution comes up in your branch—support it. But use the opportunity to argue the case for rank and file activity as the way to build the strength and the motivation to win women's equal rights.

Anna Paczuska

*Positive Action for Women by Sadie Roberts, NCCL, £2.00

Can the Labour Pa

Traditions die hard when it comes to women's equality and nowhere more so, than in the Labour Party. But recently the Labour Party has announced its plans for women under the next Labour government. In this article *Lindsey German*, the SWP women's organiser, argues that the Labour Party cannot liberate women.

The role of women in the Labour Party has always been a secondary one. Men make the policies; women make the tea. The image of Labour Party women is a very passive one—canvassers, jumble sale organisers, members of the Co-op women's guild.

But now, it seems, things are beginning to change. In the last year more than 60,000 people have joined the Labour Party. Although the number of women who join is not monitored, and neither is the proportion of women members, most people would agree with the assessment of the Labour Party women's officer, Joyce Gould, that 'there is an influx of women, especially young women, into the party'.

An unprecedented step was the devotion of an entire party political broadcast in June to the subject of women's equal rights. The following week more than 200 women applied to the national office to join the party.

So what makes women join the Labour Party, often after years

of political activity in the women's movement or in a revolutionary organisation? And what sort of demands are they putting forward?

The first obvious reason for joining is the movement around Benn. Despite the abysmal record of the last Labour government, including its record of attacking women through spending cuts, unemployment and pay policy, many people now genuinely believe that a new Labour government committed to left wing policies is the only realistic way of advancing socialism.

Benn's arguments have been coupled with a very low level of industrial struggle which has demoralised many people who once would have looked to factory organisation.

This is especially true in the case of women, where there has tended to be an even bigger gap between what women need and what they are fighting for. The list of successful women's strikes in the last few years can be counted on the fingers of both hands, and the amount of invol-

vement in politics from working class women remains minimal.

So, many women, especially those traditionally involved in the women's movement, have seen the alternative as political work in the Labour Party, to commit its conference and future government to a programme of women's equal rights and thus to achieve something tangible.

Women's Sections

They also have a ready made structure in the 1200 party women's sections around the country which purport to organise women locally. There are 13 women's sections in the Rother Valley alone, and the number of them nationally seems to be growing. It is felt that they are needed to positively discriminate in favour of women.

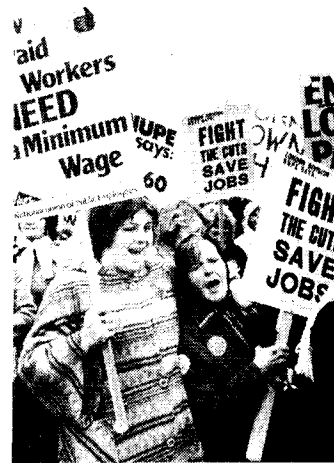
But the reason for their origins lies in the fact that the early Labour Party meetings were often held jointly with trade unions, where it was often impossible for women to attend. Hence the founding of special sections—not really anything to do with women's liberation.

But, the argument goes, the woman's sections can be transformed into fighting units for women's rights. And certainly there seems to be a move in that direction. This year's women's conference heard arguments on a whole range of issues which reflected the influx of feminists into the party. Many wanted it to be mandatory for women to be on selection short lists for MPs. The motion was defeated by the National Women's Committee and it was clear that such mechanisms do not mean much to the party's traditional women supporters. As one agricultural worker said: 'I don't care who my MP is as long as they're the best person for the job. This has been an "I hate men" conference. I bloody love men.'

Such views show the difficulties in trying to graft the ideas of the women's movement, coming as they do from the higher grade white collar and professional women workers, onto a body set up as a token gesture to women who are seen as 'less political' and therefore needing

their own meetings.

This demonstrates a problem facing those people who believe they can transform women's organisation inside the Labour Party. There is one argument that feminists put forward about the need for separate organisation for women. There is another view that women should not really be involved in the heavy politics, but can play a servicing role to the party as a whole. It is the latter view that guided the establishment of the party women's organisation and which continues to be the



view of many, including some in the women's section today. The existence of women's sections is not due to women's emancipation, but their subordination.

What of Labour's policies on women? This year a campaign was launched, 'Listen to Women - For a Change', with a week of action just before the women's conference. Although the major national event of the week was a flop - the rally and the lobby of parliament attracted only 100 women - there were meetings and debates in local areas.

Pledges

The pledges of the next Labour government on women are very reasonable on paper. 'It will promote education and training to give women the same job opportunities as men; it will provide the necessary nursery and school care so that mothers can stay at work; it will improve maternity leave to give a minimum of nine months on full pay; it will end discrimination in tax and social security; and it will guarantee these and



Party liberate women?



other rights in law.'

It sounds marvellous - but *how* is it going to happen?

By electing a Labour government committed to these policies. *It's here that the alarm bells start ringing.*

Labour's past record on such matters has not been good. It was 'battling Barbara' Castle who gave us among the most ineffective equal pay laws in Europe. It was the last Labour government which introduced cuts aimed at women's jobs and the social services they use. It is 'red' Labour councils today who are leaving nurseries empty and refusing to cover for women on maternity leave. It's not because they don't care about the issue, but because they will not and *cannot* stand up to the bankers who charge them massive interest rates and who tell them the economy will only recover through cutting public spending.

Even so, we are told that a new Labour government would be different. But how will it achieve what has never been achieved before?

Let us assume that the next Labour government is one committed to Benn's policies. But even if Labour's policies change, the people who run society don't. The industrialists, bankers, top civil servants, judges and police chiefs, stay the same whoever is in government. It was the banks that organised a run on the pound when Harold Wilson tried to implement some very puny reforms in the mid-sixties, forcing him to adopt policies which favoured big business rather than workers. Those people will not keep quiet while their prof-

its are eaten into by more public spending on nurseries, maternity leave, or anything else.

Our experience in Britain is one of behind-the-scenes pressure from big business which has meant governments always cave in. In other countries, for example Chile, the more drastic 'solutions' to left wing governments have been the imposition of military rule and the smashing of unions, using imprisonment, torture and murder.

The people who really run Britain are not the 630 MPs, but those who have wealth and power—and they will not give up without a fight. They have armies, judges, and the police to back up their rule.

Power

We *can* fight them—not by getting 'left' majorities into parliament, but by building our strength and organisation where our power as workers lies—in the workplace. That is the only power which can defeat

the people who rule us, and which can establish a genuinely socialist world. The real fight we have today is to build the strength and confidence in the workplace which has been weakened in the last few years—not to pretend that the fight between the left and right in the Labour Party can really challenge the division of wealth and power in today's capitalist society.

If we want a revolution, it has to be built outside the Labour Party.

But do the people pushing the 'Listen to Women' campaign really want a revolution? Some do, but most do not. Behind their ideas is, much more, a reformism which is aimed not at working class women—the manual and clerical white collar workers—but at the higher grade and professional women workers who have something to be gained by the reforms put forward. It is these women who benefit almost exclusively from maternity leave, because they

have jobs and salaries worth going back to. They will benefit from reforms in tax laws, and will benefit most from improved educational opportunities. The only way that such reforms could benefit the mass of working women would be through a workplace campaign—which Labour will not launch.

The 'Listen to Women' campaign is aimed at those women who have an interest in reforming the existing set-up to give themselves more rights and opportunities, but who have no interest in a revolutionary upheaval which would threaten their position, relatively privileged compared to working class women and men.

A revolution is the festival of the oppressed, and it is the people who have nothing who gain most from it. These are the people who must begin to organise now because they are the future of women's liberation and socialism.



Sexual harassment has been a hot topic for some time. It has become a major issue in the workplace, and one that is being taken more seriously than ever before. Many women have reported incidents of harassment, and this has led to a growing awareness of the problem. It is important to take steps to prevent such incidents from occurring in the future. This includes creating a supportive work environment, providing training for both employees and managers, and ensuring that there are clear policies in place to deal with any complaints. It is also important to encourage a culture of respect and equality in the workplace. Only by taking these steps can we hope to create a safer and more productive work environment for everyone.

4. The shop steward or adviser should keep the branch secretary informed at every stage.
5. The branch should seek an informal approach to management to explain the problem and seek to resolve it.
6. If this doesn't work, the grievance procedure should be continued.

It's a cautious approach, but it's a recognition that sexual harassment is a trade union issue.

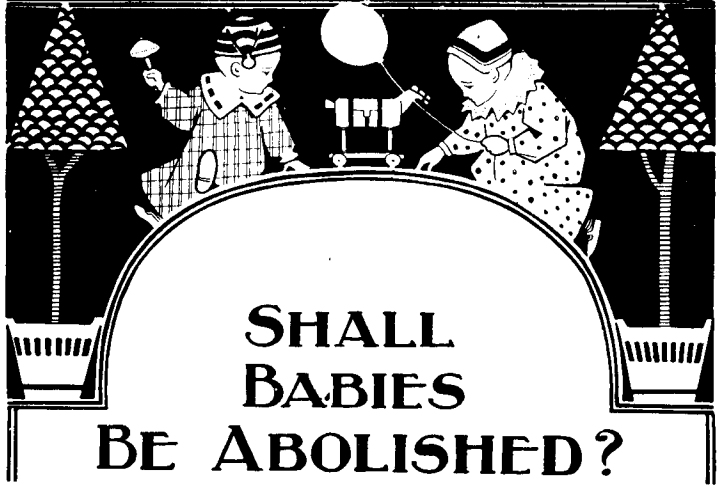
NALGO's Liverpool branch circulated a questionnaire on sexual harassment to its women members last May. There were 14 questions covering different aspects of sex, physical attractiveness and work. One asked women to say why they may not have reported an incident of harassment. The answers include: 'I didn't want to cause trouble'; 'it would not be taken seriously'; 'because it's my boss who's doing it'; 'I accepted it as one of the hazards women office workers face'; and 'it's the sort of thing a female has to learn to put up with in a male-dominated place of work.'

Of the questionnaires returned, nearly half the women said that they had suffered sexual harassment either at their current place of work or in a previous job. Of those who had been harassed at their present workplace, about half experienced staring, leering, sexual remarks or teasing, and the rest were touched, brushed against or grabbed. The majority were in the 16-25 age range.

Liverpool NALGO say that it was only a preliminary survey with a small return (about 200 out of 700 questionnaires circulated), but that they now plan to include the issue in their shop stewards' training courses.

It is encouraging to see NALGO recognise the harassment that women often face at work. Women are all too often judged on the basis of how attractive they are, and whether they are willing to comply with the bosses' requests for sexual favours. For women who have suffered continual and unwanted leering or touching at work, the 'casting couch' is not a funny joke.

Harriet Sherwood



MARIE STOPES is remembered as a woman who campaigned for increased birth control and outraged many of her contemporaries with her outspoken views. Yet was she really an early women's liberationist or did she have

some rather dubious ideas behind her campaigning? Jeannie Shaw takes a new look at Marie Stopes and shows how her radical views weren't always for the benefit of working class women.

She was described as 'the first woman to tell the world that sexual pleasure and birth control were the right of every human being'; denounced as an enemy of the British Empire, worse than Hitler; blessed by millions for freeing them from a world where sex was unmentionable even in the marriage bed.

Yet her own upbringing was so puritanical that it took her three years to realise her husband was impotent. In 1918, still a virgin, she published *Married Love* and married again. The book's frankness created a sensation, selling millions through the world. In 1921, she founded the first birth control clinic in Britain. She devoted her life to this work and was involved in many scandalous court battles.

But Marie was no socialist — or even a complete feminist. She was first and foremost a member of the ruling class. Originally a brilliant Doctor of Science, she saw herself as strengthening the family by making it less burdensome for women — less kids and more enjoyment in sex. Her new woman was to be liberated from being a passive sexual receptacle, but remain the desirable goddess, 'for man is still essentially the hunter, who experiences the desires and thrills of the chase.' Woman had a right to intellectual development but marriage was her ultimate goal.

Her concern for the plight of the poor was real — but why? Their birth-rate must be kept down or poverty would 'breed revolutionaries' and scroungers off the state! 'Are these puny-faced, gaunt, ill-balanced, feeble, ungainly, withered children the young of an Imperial race? she asked. Was the pure stock of the educated English gentleman to be destroyed by the fecklessly breeding inferior classes? No. If the working classes wouldn't use birth control voluntarily, Marie suggested compulsory sterilisation of those 'totally

unfit for parenthood'. We can be sure that all of us would be in that category. Children of mixed 'race' should be sterilised at birth. She was against lesbianism, abortion and especially socialism. When two revolutionaries were arrested for publishing birth control information, (something she herself did), she urged the pressing of charges. This was because socialists linked birth control with complete women's liberation and socialism. During the miner's strike in 1921, Marie took it upon herself, personally, to save British capitalism. She asked the Prime Minister to send her in as a one-woman guerilla force, insisting that if 'made to listen to me, it would only be a question of hours before they yield'.

This sense of her own importance led her to believe that God spoke to her. She wrote to the Bishops, 'I speak to you in the name of the Lord. I am his Prophet.'

Her second marriage crumbled when her husband felt obliged to state, in writing, that he could no longer manage intercourse and so she was entitled to take a lover. So she did.

She dominated her son's life completely. Coming from such superior stock herself he must breed the best, so she even wanted to choose his wife. Marie attacked his choice as 'physically defective and so morally should never have children', because she wore glasses!

Her central belief was that the human race could be improved by selective breeding through birth control. She shows that however radical a person may be on woman's issues, unless these are united with the socialist movement, these demands can not only be granted, but used to strengthen the ruling class by strengthening the family, the ideology of motherhood, and the state's power to control population by force if necessary.

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 TRADE UNION...
 She is planning out a special outlining the...

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

THE OBSERVER carried an article on 26 July about 'Sex on the Dole'. It was looking at Liverpool in particular, but making generalisations which may well apply to the rest of the country. The main point of the article was to pick up on the increasing concern amongst those working with teenage girls that one of the effects of massive unemployment amongst the young is for increasing numbers of girls to embark on early motherhood.

In 1977 the figures for teenage pregnancy reached a low of 83,000 but they have been rising since then, and in 1979 they were up to 92,400.

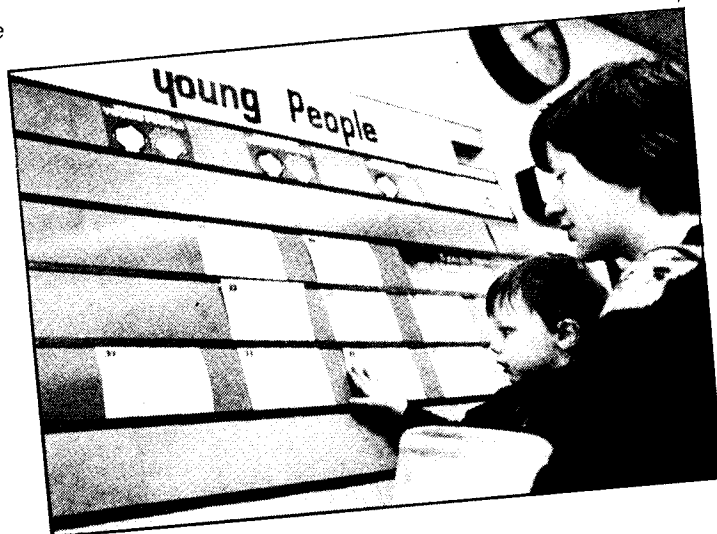
I worked in a young people's advice centre for over two years. During that time I had many discussions with teenage girls about the 'dangers' of early motherhood and pregnancy. The conventional arguments that I and others used were that pregnancy and motherhood would interrupt their education. It is extremely difficult to get back into education with young children and domestic responsibilities. The prospects of having a 'good' job, or embarking on a 'career' would be limited. Still more dangers were those of missing out on life, being able to have a measure of independence, earn money, or not settling down with one man very young.

During the last year in particular I began to feel that these 'dangers' and reasons for not having children very young were beginning to have an increasingly hollow and ironic ring to them. The few opportunities that opened up for young women during the '60s and '70s are vanishing daily. The message that early motherhood will 'ruin' a girl's chances of a career or education are meaningless when there is massive unemployment, and education is under attack from Tory cuts.

Youth unemployment

amongst girls is rising rapidly, traditional areas of employment like banking and insurance have cut their recruitment from over 30,000 to less than 7,000 this year. One of the big five banks sent out letters to hundreds of young people (mainly girls) whom they had offered jobs to earlier in the year, withdrawing the jobs.

Another disturbing aspect of unemployment amongst girls is the way in which many of them become 'invisible' after a while.



Careers officers have said that after the initial flurry of activity on leaving school, registering at the careers office and religiously turning up every day of the week to look for vacancies, many girls are 'disappearing'.

One of the reasons for this 'disappearance' is that some girls are becoming totally absorbed into the home and domestic life. They become an extension of their mothers' traditional roles, and end up taking on considerable housework and care of younger children. Girls' social lives also tend to reinforce this 'invisibility'. The streets and youth clubs and space-invader cafes are populated by unemployed young men. They are visible and more confident about voicing their discontent and problems, either verbally or in physical confrontations

on the streets.

The Youth Opportunities Programme and training workshops offer girls few opportunities to break out of traditional female roles and work.

So what's happening teenage girls? Few live the street-corner life that boys do; they stay at home, get up late, do domestic chores, visit their friends in each other's houses, listen to records, chat, make occasional window-shopping sorties. There's not much to look forward to,

and like their mothers, the erosion of social and health services means that they are under pressure to care for the young or the sick at home.

With the bleak prospects that face teenage girls, an unplanned pregnancy may well not be the disaster that it was a few years ago. Pregnancy and motherhood can seem a positive alternative to the grim and meaningless existence of life on the dole. Having kids isn't going to take away career prospects that don't exist. The girls are living on social security anyway and having kids isn't going to change that. Local authorities have a legal obligation to house homeless families. This means that a single girl and her child may be offered a flat.

The myth of romantic motherhood, having a place of your own, and a baby of

your own is strong. The grim facts are that many girls in this position end up in the vicious poverty trap of bringing up children on meagre state benefits, and the worst rundown council housing. Motherhood is often seen by young girls as a glamorous escape from leading a life that has no meaning and nothing to do. If you are a mother then you're an adult, you have instant status. You're important if you have a baby, and the baby will provide the love and caring that seems to be the missing ingredient in their lives.

A recent television programme, following the fortunes of young people who had been on a Manpower Services Scheme, looked at them two years after the course had ended. Several of the girls were pregnant or mothers already. One of the girls commented that her baby now meant that she 'had something to live for'. In response to the article in the Observer was a piece by a teenage mother who said that having her baby 'means everything to me - it makes sense of the world'.

My fear is that the myth of motherhood as the solution to a boring and soulless existence on the dole may gain popularity amongst young women. The rise in the abortion rate from 12.1 per 1000 to 16.8 over a period of only 8 years means that large numbers of teenage girls are becoming pregnant, but not going through with the pregnancy. Is that going to change, will young women desperate for an identity and some meaning to their lives like the girls mentioned above opt for having the baby instead?

The reality is that the girl can find herself trapped in grinding poverty with young children, with no chance to break out of it. A better future than that must be provided.

Jane Foster

WOMENS HEALTH

Womens health at risk

The TUC has launched a Workplace Programme to improve the health of women. Three points have been chosen to campaign around.

Point 1 - 'expanding workplace health education projects for pregnant women'.

Some of the TUC proposals would be a big step forward if agreed in more workplaces — for example, arrangements for temporary transfer to lighter jobs if necessary. More workers need to know of their new right to paid time off for ante-natal leave, and health education in working time would be a big improvement. However, this idea of health education in the workplace is taken and pushed by the TUC in a dangerous way.

Robert Belding, of Sandwell Area Health Authority, put in effect what is an employer's line at the recent TUC Conference on women and health. Your body is like a machine and you have to be educated to look after it properly. Several big employers have already happily started schemes just like that themselves. If you eat properly, lose weight, stop smoking, wear sensible shoes, you'll be healthier and the employer won't need to spend money making the place safer. It is worrying that many delegates echoed this approach, such as the woman who said we should stop poisoning our children with sweets. Health Education Council leaflets were everywhere and the TUC wants to encourage this approach.

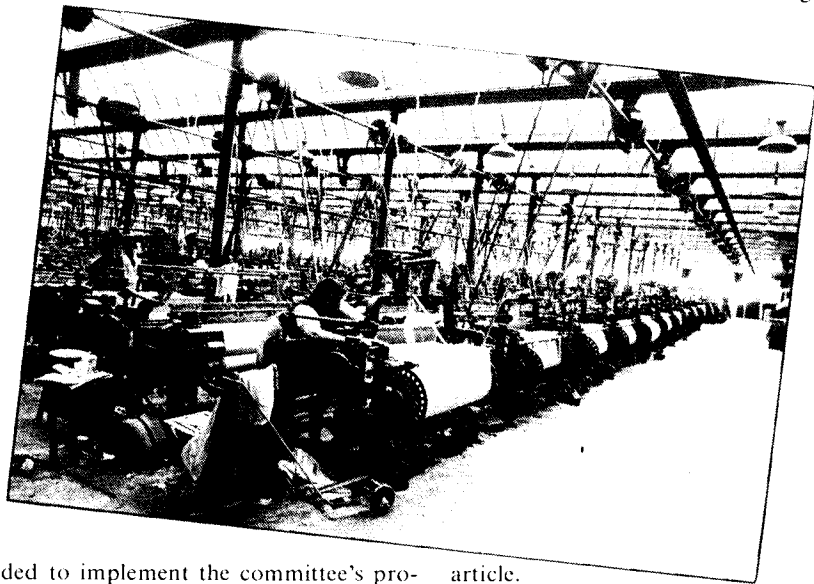
But it's not just ignorance about health that makes women workers smoke and their diets poor. It's a whole lot of things to do with living in a capitalist world, like the stress of the job and the housework, not having a lot of money but lots of problems. All that kind of health education does for a lot of women is make them feel even guiltier and more inadequate than before.

Belding and a lot of the TUC Programme, looks at the workplace only as another way of reaching women at risk, not as a place where we can organise to fight for better conditions and take that fight on from there. 'That person in 10 Downing Street is the biggest threat to our health', said one delegate. However, fighting the Tories was absent from the TUC line.

Renee Short spoke about the Perinatal Mortality and Handicap Report which she was involved in. Britain has had a much slower improvement in reducing perinatal

mortality and handicap than any other European country and has dropped right down to bottom of the League. The Report, and the TUC, take the position that more doctors, midwives, and better-equipped hospitals would be the most important thing to fight for to change this.

It is obviously true that we have got to fight to maintain the services we already have. The Tories refused to find the £30m



needed to implement the committee's proposals. However, the Tories were able to use some of the suspect evidence in the Report in turning it down. For example, stillbirth and infant death have more to do with baby weight, which has more to do with poverty, unemployment and inner city decay and racism and the cuts, than with expensive hospital machinery.

The TUC also emphasises uncritically the need for the 'excellent services' of the NHS to be used more in the workplace. It is time that trade unions took up the issue of industrial health services under the control of the shop floor. There is a group in ASTMS, including doctors, doing this now.

Point 2— making available for every working woman, services for screening for cancer of the breast and cervix.

Here again, useful agreements are suggested. More use of cervical cancer screening services (cytology clinics), such as already exist in a few places, could save lives. Details of these are in the TUC booklet.

Unfortunately, the impression is that women's health is defined only by their reproductive system, which has to be protected, and all the other bits come under the umbrella of general workers' health. But we are more than just baby machines and there are a whole number of ways in which we need to look specifically at women's health and how we can organise around it through trade unions.

A new pamphlet outlines some of these points to look at. Did you realise, for example, that a lot of protective clothing comes in three sizes — small men's, medium men's, and large men's! That can be critical at times when talking about goggles or gloves. But it is a small part of the consequences of the 'invisibility' of women workers' problems and how our biology is used against us at work.

Point 3 — 'Protecting workers, particularly women workers, from the effects of certain industrial hazards on their reproductive systems.'

At last, something on work hazards — even if only about our reproductive systems! Nevertheless, it is a very important step forward in an area where previously very little was known. The range of chemicals involved, and the arguments about who should be protected, and how, are too long for this

article.

What needs to be said now is that women have been excluded from certain jobs, particularly lead and the potteries, in the past. However, the kinds of work usually regarded as dangerous for women are invariably also dangerous for men's reproductive system too except for some where a pregnant woman and a foetus are at risk. Standards need improving for all workers and women should not be excluded.

The Programme is a start in the right direction. Don't use it, as Belding enthusiastically said, as a 'charter for health education projects,' but as a help in fighting work hazards, and in getting your union and workplace involved with fighting the conditions that affect our health and our children's health.

Kathryn Smart

'Women's Health at Risk' — 35p from TUC Publications, 61 Russell Street, London, WC1B 3LS.

** WEA Studies for Trade Unionists. Women's Work: Women's Ill-Health. May 1981. Elspeth McVeigh. 70p.*

REVIEWS

INNOCENT FLOWERS WOMEN IN THE EDWARDIAN THEATRE

JULIE HOLLEDGE
VIRAGO

£4.50

Edwardian actresses had a freedom in their personal lives, partly through financial independence, but also a more tolerant moral attitude among their circle, to divorce, lovers and having children out of marriage. Yet on stage they had to play dutiful wives, daughters or scarlet women often under dictatorial actor/managers.

Thousands of these women in the first decades of the century set out to change these conventional roles. Politicised by the battle for the vote they set up the Actresses' Franchise League producing Agit-Prop feminist plays all over the country. With the slogan 'one play is worth a hundred speeches', others, notably Edy Craig, Ellen Terry's daughter, set up the Pioneer Players, run by women, putting on hundreds of plays, many on taboo subjects such as VD, prostitution and the exploitation of women workers. Some were written by little known dramatists, men and women, as well as established writers like Shaw and Ibsen.

Innocent Flowers is an inspiring book about these women and their lives. Julie Holledge uncovers much new material. Throughout the book she packs in historical analysis, summaries and extracts of the plays, reminiscences, and personal details of the women's lives, so that we are able to share with them the excitement and vigour of these early achievements. A really enjoyable book.

Sandra Shears

Yuan-tsung Chen THE DRAGON'S VILLAGE

An autobiographical novel of Revolutionary China



THE DRAGON'S
VILLAGE
YUAN-TSUNG
CHEN
THE WOMEN'S
PRESS
£3.50

This story opens in the early 1950s with Shanghai in the throes of the revolution. The ruling class—the industrialists, businessmen and bankers—are in the middle of clearing out of the prosperous city, taking their property with them, as the red army advances. Ling-ling, an 18 year old girl, refuses to leave the mainland for 'Free China' (Taiwan) with her wealthy family. Instead she chooses to get involved with

the work of the revolution.

Ling-ling has never been involved in politics before—but the chance to be a part of building the new China excites her. She volunteers to work in land reform, helping the redistribution of the landlords' land among the peasants. She goes with a band of young cadres to the extreme North-west of China, the Gansu province.

She finds extreme poverty, and a way of life which hasn't changed in 3,000 years. The peasants scabble an existence from the poor soil, waging a constant battle with the weather to see the fruits of their labour taken away by the landlords.

Ling-ling is the only woman in the work team, and so is given special responsibility for the women in the village.

After educational classes and 'speaking bitterness' sessions (similar to the consciousness raising of the European women's movement) they learn to trust her and begin to see what they have to gain from land reform.

The book is a colourful account of the problems encountered in putting politics into practice. The peasants cannot believe that they are going to benefit from the revolution and Ling-ling's work to break down the barriers is both soul-destroying and dangerous.

It's a great book. If you know nothing about China (which I didn't) then rush out and buy it. If you do, read it for the story!

Claire Harris

UNFINISHED
BUSINESS
PRESSURE POINTS
ON THE LIVES OF
WOMEN.
MAGGIE SCARF
FONTANA £1.95

ROUGHLY one third of all Americans at some time in their life experience serious depression. Of these, two-thirds are women. Maggie Scarf's book documents a variety of case histories in an attempt to discover why depression affects women so much more than men, and how they can be cured. This is her first serious fault: at no point does she examine how depression might be prevented.

Her basic thesis is that women tend to judge themselves according to the success of a few (or one) close emotional involvements, as opposed to men, who tend to judge themselves by achievement at work. Seeing themselves only through the eyes of others, women are vulnerable to rejection, especially by a parent or husband/boyfriend.

What may be true of twentieth century America is assumed to be true of all times and all places. Scarf believes that the genetic/biological inheritance of women (to love, nurture and, she supposes, to depend) is a kind of permanent emotional trap which we are condemned to fall into until the end of time. 'Some females', she says with surprise, 'in fact a not inconsiderable number of females, haven't ever really contemplated the idea of taking care of and being themselves'. Yet from childhood women are consistently discouraged from such thoughts of independence. After many interviews she notes that, 'In both younger and older groups... it was as though, beyond being Child or Mother, there was no way of existing that could be envisioned or encompassed'.

Every case points up the destructiveness of the nuclear family, especially for women, but at no point does Scarf question whether this institution is itself damaging to mental health.

Just as Scarf does not question the inevitability of women loving in the role of dependents, neither does she doubt that men must be aggressive and competitive, and hide their emotion. Each woman's breakdown is an individual problem requiring only an individual solution and economic and social pressures are virtually ignored.

This book does have some interesting sections, for instance on the chemical effects of pregnancy and childbirth on the mood of the mother, but it is by no means a feminist book, nor, as the Washington Post claims on the cover, a 'hope-giving' book.

S. Grumble

If you want to review a book you have read, a film you have seen, a television programme you have watched or a band you have listened to, contact the Women's Voice Office (Reviews), PO Box 82, London E2. PO Box 82, London E2. Phone 01-986 6222.



GREGORY'S GIRL

DIRECTOR: BILL FORSYTH

Set in a modern comprehensive school in a Scottish new town, *Gregory's Girl* is a film about adolescent sex.

Gregory, your average 15 year old, gangling and gauche, finds himself awakened to the opposite sex when a girl joins the school football team. Aside from the obvious novelty of her sex she turns out to be the best player on the team and quickly captures the admiration of most of

the school. Gregory finds himself in love.

With Gregory's tongue tied adoration, frustration and bewilderment, the film becomes a touching recreation of what it is like to be fifteen, regarding the opposite sex as a mystery with a mixture of frustration and awe.

Gregory's Girl is very much an adults eye view of adolescence, but nevertheless hits the mark. It shows how relations between men and women are painfully learned, usually misunderstood and bound by all sorts of elaborate conventions. Meanwhile it manages to be charming and touching without being sentimental and slushy.

Despite being made on a low budget, it is a beautifully produced and acted film. It evokes a flood of memories that will both make you smile and your toes curl under, but above all it will make you laugh, at yourself as well as the film.

Marta Wohrle

GRACE JONES NIGHTCLUBBING (ISLAND RECORDS)

Grace Jones is not a feminist as such, but without the steps forward women have taken in the past few years, there is no way such a singer

would have been accepted. When most women appear on chat shows, for instance, they are expected to sit pretty and giggle in the right places, but when Ms Jones felt Russell Harty was trivialising her, the solution was simple: in front of a TV audience of millions, she wallowed the smug expression

right off his face. There's a lesson for us all in that...

To make this autobiographical album she returned to her birthplace of Jamaica, picking out some of the island's finest musicians, including Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, the brilliant reggae bass and drum team. Rhythm comes as naturally to this pair as heartbeats do to the rest of us, so it's no surprise that their backing tracks are tight, sharp, inventive and generally about as perfect as any human can do. What is a surprise is that it all fits in so well with Jones' languid, raunchy vocals and songs, a sound that owes more to disco than reggae. Wonderful!

As I said, Ms Jones is no campaigning feminist, and the lyrics here—in French and English—deal mainly with her past life as a model in Paris and with sex. What is so refreshing is that she is no passive girlie singer of the type you usually see on Top of the Pops. Here is new kind of woman performer, powerful, strong, uncompromising and sexy but on her own terms. And she has made a great album.

Diana Windsor



LETTERS



SIGN UP TO SIGN ON!

Dear Womens Voice,
Despite rising unemployment figures, it has no doubt come to readers notice that many people without paid jobs are still failing to sign on. The main culprits are, as usual, married women and single parents with pre-school age children.

These people distort official unemployment figures and so impede the campaign to oust the Tory government, making the general public think there are 'only' about 2½ million unemployed, when, in fact, there are probably about six times that figure.

In addition to this, these people who choose to look after their children at home (so depriving their offspring of education and social contact) decrease the need for nurseries

and so cause a high level of unemployment among professional childcare workers as state facilities are closed down.

All readers must know of people who are not in paid work but who are not registered as unemployed either. Perhaps the time is right for Women's Voice to start a 'signing on' campaign to urge those without jobs to make their situation known to the government. Many will not be entitled to the dole, but that is not important. What matters is that they will be raising the unemployment figures (and entitling themselves to free evening classes!) and lowering Tory morale.

Z.E. Pitt
Nottingham

Cheapest is best

Dear Womens Voice,

A news reporter on the radio this morning was going round asking 'housewives' if they would 'succumb to the temptation of cheap French turkeys' or if they would stay patriotic and carry on buying expensive British ones. I was happy to hear that most people said they didn't have the choice—of course they would buy the cheapest.

The hoary old argument about foreign-produced goods comes up every time something becomes available more cheaply than its home-produced equivalent. Whether it's steel, cars, apples, or lamb, we are told to buy British, not to let 'the invaders' steal British

workers' jobs. What is never mentioned is that in the capitalist system no matter how many of us buy British turkeys (or cars, or apples) if owners don't invest in new plant and research into more efficient methods of production, the business will remain uncompetitive and in the long run the 'foreigner' will take over the market. What's more, they never mention that as most large concerns are multinationals, profits are not restricted to the country of manufacture. For instance, the Rank organisation has businesses all over the world. It is not their workers who benefit—it is their shareholders. And they don't see things in terms of individual countries—they see them in terms of money; cheap labour and more profit.

Governments try to intervene by putting import controls on certain products. Other governments do the same thing in retaliation. But since no country is self-sufficient, this system eventually has to break down. And where company profits are concerned ways will always be found to get round import controls.

So until the 'housewives' of the world refuse to take part in these games and take the turkeys they need regardless of origin, I'll be carrying on the arguments against import controls of any kind and for the common interests of workers all over the world.

Susan Pearce
East London.



WOMEN IN GRENADA

Dear Womens Voice,
Grenada is an island of 110,000 people in the Southern Caribbean. Two years ago they had a socialist revolution. Since then, like Cuba, they have experienced complete hostility from most of the West.

Women played a considerable role in the vanguard of the revolution, organising distribution of the underground 'New Jewel' newsletter, building up strong local women's organisations and raising the political awareness of the people. This was despite a regime which insisted on sexual favours in return for employment for women and where the low level

of health care and education, and job opportunity very much affected women.

They are very aware of the gains they have made and continue to take a very active role in political meetings and in community projects, repairing roads, schools and nurseries. Their place as a major interest group is acknowledged by a developing political structure which allows for a national convention annually, where an accountable 'Womens Desk' is elected. The role of this group is to ensure that government not only proclaims women 'equal in production and defence', but provides them with the means. In the last two years, they have won legislation to combat sexism and establish equal pay and maternity leave. They also send delegates to the area meetings to which ministers report and play a considerable role in mobilising the community.

Recently as US pressure increased, they were

What is feminism?

Dear Womens Voice

I am researching into Feminism and Socialism in the 1890's and 1900's and would be interested in any material readers may have. Also, I have to define 'Feminism'. I would like to be clear about your definition—perhaps there could be a debate in your columns about this, whether it is any activity for equality or presupposes a social revolution and different social structure, whether it is the seven demands of Womens Liberation Movement etc.

C. Collette,
9, Castle st,
Steventon,
Oxon,

encouraging more women to join militia training regularly and mass for a rally on the site of the proposed airport, as a protest against US attempts to interfere with attempts to raise funding from the EEC.

Allied to this, their local groups also function as consciousness raising and support groups, where they can work to combat the sexism still existent on a more personal level. There is some resistance still to shared childcare from men and contraception is not completely acceptable, due to a strong Roman Catholic heritage.

Also because of acute housing shortage, many adults live at home in extended families and women find themselves running the home as well as carrying major job and political responsibilities.

The attempts at making equality a reality do however extend further than a policy of starting each speech with 'sisters and brothers'. There is a genuine non-sexist approach from the government and the new network of agricultural and trade co-operatives specifically take nominations from the National Women's Organisation and new scholarships to study at socialist universities abroad are providing concrete opportunities for women.

And the strength and optimism of the many active sisters is undeniable and inspiring. However, they have a continuing struggle to develop their society with few material resources. Any support from socialists abroad would be welcome.

Nadine Finch
North London

Social workers are not to blame

Dear Womens Voice,
I feel I must comment on your article 'Child Battering—Why does it happen'. I am one of your so called 'professionals'. I'm a residential social worker in Hemel Hempstead.

It is obvious to all socialists why parents under so much pressure batter their children. But what can we do? Say its OK, they are a victim of

society, leave the child there.

You seem to be knocking social workers but we try our best with the little money and facilities we have. If we lived in a socialist society there would be less need for social workers, but until then you have to help us to improve community facilities and help us to help the ones who *can't* cope with the society we live in.

Julie.

Hemel Hempstead

Sex: past and present

Dear Womens Voice

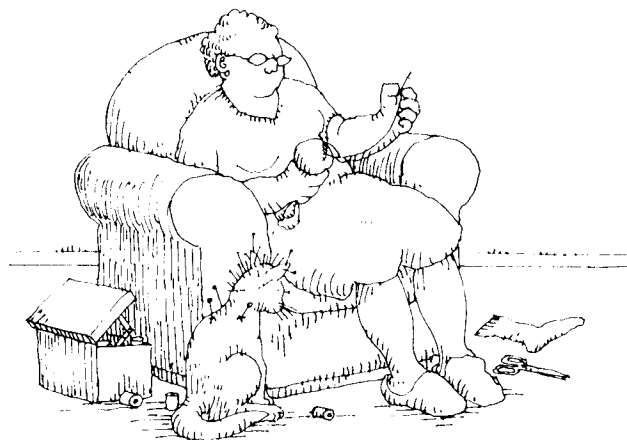
I've just seen a schools programme where a group of teenagers were arguing with Mary Whitehouse. Not surprisingly, the argument centred around sex before marriage. 'People haven't changed since I was a girl,' says Mary. She argues, and rightly, that young people have the same feelings and wishes now as then. What has changed is the society in which they live. In her days, good girls and boys were 'supported' by the institutions (family, school etc), and public opinion generally, teaching them what was right or wrong.

She continues, saying that the institutions have abdicated, give no guidance, leaving young people to the mercy of advertisers. That young people are now pressurised into sexual relations unwillingly because they lack this support. She points out how much their attitudes are influenced by the very people who profit from them. She gives makers of the pill as an example, and the profits to be made in an expanding market—'look at the power behind them.'

Oh Mary! how can you be so right, and yet so very wrong. As my mum said, young people don't *behave* any differently now either. They are just more open about it, (which suits the profiteers). Girls and boys were pressurised into having sex just as much then as now.

But the solution is not to be found in the repressive restrictions our Mary proposes. It lies in a socialist world where we are free to threat each other as individuals, not categorised objects.

Now can I ask for some help. I want to hear from anyone interested in marxist economics and the position of housework in a Marxist analysis. Is it



WITHOUT COMMENT

'Cats are delicate creatures; male or female, they like to be treated like women, to be gently caressed and fussed over; to be softly stroked, and always admired. If you run your fingers through their fur as if you were stroking a girl's hair, they will purr with delight.'

Caring for Cats and Kittens, by John Montgomery.

'In many respects a cat resembles a woman—no human being will ever fully understand it.'

DEDICATION

To the memory of my colleague and friend
ALAN LL MCKERRELL
whose character and skill inspired all who knew him and whose courage and manly dignity epitomised the essential masculinity of the veterinary profession. Tough but sensitive, Alan had a heart of gold and an incredible kindness towards all God's creatures.

Cats—their health and care, by Dr G Crighton, PhD MRCVS

productive labour (producing a commodity for a market) or is it not? I believe it is productive but my reading is limited, and there are not many people near me interested in arguing the point. I want to hear from anyone, for or against.

Arguments, and books or other sources.

Get your male friends to write too, I'd like to see if there's any difference in their views generally.

Sue Wilkins
Co. Durham.

The cosy company of men's groups

Dear Womens Voice,

Jane Foster's article on men and sexism in the last issue of WV panders to a strategy of consciousness-raising and individual change.

She makes only a half-hearted criticism of men's groups. In my opinion they are places where men go to congratulate themselves for being 'non-sexist', lament about the oppression of women and seek to purify themselves in the cosy company of a few like-minded souls.

This, like women's consciousness-raising groups, does not strike me as the way to eradicate sexism.

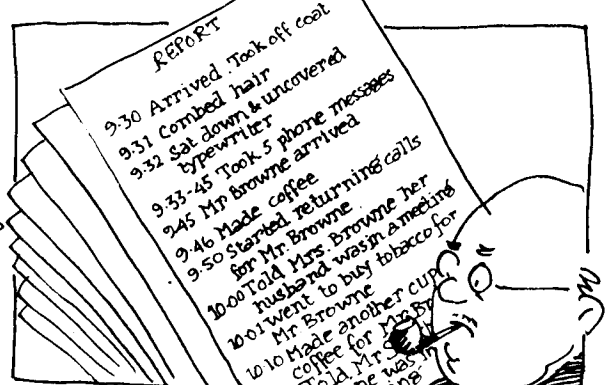
Traditional attitudes about women may have changed in

the heads of a few self-critical, self-congratulatory, non-sexist men, but for the huge majority of workers those ideas will only change by seeing women active in struggle and by learning through that struggle that the interests of men and women are inextricably linked.

Individual change does not change society, and women's oppression is rooted in the way society is organised. The man who will actively support women demanding the right to work or a living wage but still calls me 'love' is far more important than a man who changes nappies but is not interested in changing society.

Wendy Lewis
London

SANDRA



Thanks to Joanna C.

Sophie

Dear Jane

What to say to the doctor after you've said arghh...

CONSULTATIONS, or should it be confrontations, with doctors, are experiences that many women myself included find nerve-racking ordeals. Intelligent and confident women are often reduced to tearful heaps by their treatment from doctors (most particularly, male doctors).

What is it that causes this reaction, why do I clam up when I get into a doctors surgery? I knew what I was going to say as I stepped through the door. Once in there I find myself feebly muttering about feeling 'not quite right'. At this the doctor usually adopts a benign but weary expression and starts on a 90 second lecture on hormones, pitched at the level for the severely retarded. I exit on a good day muttering furiously about how dare he speak to me like that, on a bad day weeping tears of frustration.

It's not quite so difficult when there is something obvious and physical ailing you. You can then have quite straightforward conversations with doctors like, 'See this arm, its broken, or this ankle is sprained, or this cut on

my head means I'm bleeding'. These encounters are usually relatively successful, the arm is put in plaster, the ankle strapped up, the head stitched. However, when the problem that you're seeking medical help on is not quite so straightforward, difficulties arise. Especially when it is anything to do with contraception, period problems, or pregnancy. This does not mean to say that I think all other medical matters are problem free, but these are ones that actually change the kind of relationship that you have with a doctor.

Bedside manners of most doctors are limited to occasional reassurances to those who are sick, usually fairly captive in a hospital bed. You need to hear nice things if you are that ill. Healthy women who nevertheless have medical problems, are not looking for bland reassurances. We are not sick, not ill, if we are pregnant, suffering from side-effects to our contraception. This is challenging the conventional doctor patient relationship, when the person is ill, doctor prescribes treatment and reassures... end of story. We, however want to know why things are or are not happening to us, we need to know in order

to carry on living our lives without discomfort and worry.

In the mean time women have to deal with doctors whose manner is one of, at best treating a sick child, at worst a tedious hypochondriac. There are several very practical things that you can do to try and get satisfactory treatment from your doctor. Firstly you can write down the symptoms of your problem, if it is related to anything gynaecological its useful to do this in relation to your menstrual cycle.

Secondly, write down the questions that you want to ask the doctor. I always get too flustered to remember all the very relevant things that I want to ask. Questions about the treatment, drugs prescribed, possible effects, alternative treatment. A very effective move is to ask a friend to go with you even if it is only to wait in the waiting room.

If you have been bending a friends ear regaling them with brave words like 'I really will ask him/her about X, or I'm not just going to come away with another bottle of valium and no explanation this time', it's a powerful incentive to be more assertive, if you have to face disapproval, scorn or rid-

icule from a friend. It can also be enormous moral support to have someone to wait with, and provide the sympathy that you may well not get from the doctor.

If problems that you are having with a doctor are more serious than this, or you believe that the doctor is not treating you correctly, there are several things you can do. You can ask for a second opinion, but you may have to find another doctor yourself. You can change your doctor, not always easy if you live in a small place, or where there are very full doctors lists. Complaints about doctors are worth drawing to the attention of the Community Health Council (the patients/consumer side of the NHS) who will be able to advise you.

Getting good service from the medical profession is not always easy, particularly if it involves 'womens problems'. The best way to start is by being confident and assertive in consultations with doctors. This isn't always easy, but with support and encouragement from other women we can start to challenge doctors who attempt to dismiss or diminish the problems.

Jane Foster

Yours Worried

why I became a socialist

Debbie Allen is 21 and has lived in Birkenhead, Merseyside, all her life. She told *Womens Voice* how her class background influenced her to get involved in socialist politics at the age of 16, and how her experience in a recent strike for union recognition cemented those ideas.



My family are very political, but my dad's a Labour man and considering that my mum has had to bring up seven kids she's quite political. My mum and dad always talked to be about racism and other things. I was brought up as a catholic and a school we used to go on 'retreats' at weekends with 'radical' priests. That was interesting, the types of issues that were raised.

With my working class background I realised what was going on around me—like things on the telly. I remember when I was 13 years old there was a series of documentaries about South Africa on the telly. I was interested and talked to my mum about it, she was good and related it to other issues, she always done that. My dad was a plumber and was a member of the EEPTU, I knew when he had been to a union meeting—he used to come in drunk!

But my mum was good. I remember at school the English teacher gave us an essay to do and the title was 'Women should remain in the home barefoot and pregnant.' I was really irate at that—I was about 14 at the time. I went home and told my mum and we spent all night writing the essay. She explained it all to me, about how women were forced out to work in factories during the war and all that. In the end the essay really shocked the teacher.

My big brother, who is two years older than me, and I used to love black music and he always read black literature. He used to go to Young Communist League meetings. I was shocked that he was going to meet a load of communists and how when he was sitting watching the telly he'd say it was a bunch of lies—I always wondered how he knew. He said to read but I didn't know what to. Then he started to bring papers home. The Morning Star and Socialist Worker. I used to buy Socialist Worker in a left wing bookshop in Liverpool sometimes. It was around the time of the big Anti Nazi League demos, about 1977, and there was a lot of coverage about racism in SW. It was the realisation that people felt the same as me that was good—not a bad alternative to the daily papers!

I left home at 16 to go and live with a

bloke, I still bought the paper. Eventually I filled in the slip to join the Socialist Workers Party and we both started attending SWP branch meetings in Birkenhead. At the first few meetings I just sat there listening, but I vividly remember one meeting where a woman was speaking on abortion. With my catholic background I thought that the SWP would be anti-abortion—the whole thing about the preservation of life. I considered myself a socialist then—but it was really hard to break with the catholicism. I was 17 and had just left school where we used to go on anti-abortion demos organised by the school. We thought that pro-abortionists were murderers, and of course it was a day out. It was hard to break with it—but I did.

The bloke I lived with got a job in a bar at night so he stopped going to meetings. He didn't want me to keep going to things, he said I was too involved, I didn't know what I was doing and why shouldn't I spend more time with him? We had lots of fights so we split up. He's joined the army now.

'We always had loads of discussion—the role of the police, scab labour—the lot.'

I went to Spain for a few months and when I got back I was unemployed for a while. I got involved with the Right to Work Campaign and went on the 1979 march from Liverpool to Blackpool, that was really good. We used to have fights with the young blokes about sexism saying 'we're unemployed the same as you and I want to fight the same as you—so don't treat us any differently'. Then things were alright.

I got a job in M&W Publications in Liverpool doing clerical work—they print a police magazine. It was really bad—a sweatshop. Some girls had worked there six or seven years since leaving school. The conditions

were bad, the management used to come along and say 'your pay day has changed' or 'you can't take your holidays.' I used to argue that we needed a union—but they all thought I was a bit of a looney. After I had been there about eighteen months something happened that made everyone angry—I think management changed the dinner hours. So a group of women approached me and asked me about the union, they felt the need for one. We went round the office and discovered nearly 80% of the women wanted to join a union (it was ASTMS).

The union wrote and told management that we'd joined—the management told me there was no way that they'd recognise the union. That was on the Friday (September 1980) and on the Monday morning I was sacked and escorted off the premises. The union official came back in with me to argue against it—but we were both thrown down the stairs. During that week we had meetings and then a ballot which was in favour of strike action for my reinstatement and union recognition. We started picketing straight away.

The strike lasted seven weeks—we won—and it really changed most of the women, they became very militant. We spoke at loads of meetings to get support and argued all the time with people. The support we got was terrific, the dockers used to come along to our mass pickets and a delegation visited us from the union recognition strike at King Henrys meat pie factory in Manchester—that was good. We always had loads of discussions—about the role of the police, scab labour ... the lot.

Once we returned to work we knew that we had to keep going. Loads of the girls went on the Labour Party demo in Liverpool earlier this year against unemployment and some of us went to the recent one in Cardiff. We always have collection sheets and petitions for other disputes in the office. Two other people have joined the SWP since the strike and we always sell SW and WV in the office.

I don't think I can say that I became a socialist because of this reason or that. It was my class background and the injustices around me that made me a socialist.

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.

**Your nearest
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I want to join the fight ...

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Send to Womens Voice
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**WHAT IS
GOING
ON?**

WV groups

- **ACTON WV** Ruth or Jude 740 6660
- **NORTH BIRMINGHAM WV** Maggie 021 449 4793
- **SOUTH BIRMINGHAM WV** Jill 021 459 1718
- **BLACK COUNTRY WV** 27 Glen Court, Compton Road
- **BRADFORD WV** Trish Bradford 585 913 for details of meetings and activities
- **BRIGHTON WV** phone 696897
- **BRISTOL WV** Katrina 46875
- **Cambridge WV** contact Trisha Cambridge 68226
- **CANTERBURY WV** Barbara, Lyminge 862 742
- **CHELTHENHAM WV** meets every Thursday. For babysitters and information, Jacqui 511370
- **CHORLTON WV** Claire 226 1048
- **COVENTRY WV** meets Hertford Tavern fortnightly. Mondays 8pm. 361 585
- **COLCHESTER WV** 22 5650 for details
- **DUDLEY WV** Brigitte Brierley Hill 78308
- **EALING/SOUTHALL WV** Christine or Jane 571 1838
- **ECCLES AND SALFORD WV** Jannie 707 2557 or Ann 737 3800
- **EDIINBURGH WV** Penny 57 0731
- **EDGE HILL COLLEGE WV** Bev Southport 212 140
- **ENFIELD WV** Nora 807 1741
- **FINSBURY PARK WV** Wendy 01 254 9632 (days)
- **GLASGOW WV** Clare 357 1157
- **GLOSSOP WV** Derbyshire - Carol, Glossop 64287
- **GLOUCESTER WV** Maggie Gloucester 413910
- **HALIFAX WV** every Friday 12-1pm, Co-op Arcade on the Precinct
- **HAMMERSMITH AND WEST KENSINGTON WV** Ginny 749 7292 or Eileen 960 6088
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- **ST HELENS WV** Carol, St Helens 28178
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- **TOTTENHAM WV** Mary 802 9563
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Small ads

WORKING? CHILD-CARE PROBLEMS? Kingsway Children's Centre in the centre of London has places for children from 3 months to 5 years. KCC is an employer subsidised nursery run on a non-profit making basis by a management committee of parents and staff. The nursery workers, who include an SRN,

nursery nurses, music and infants teachers will provide a caring and stimulating environment for your child. We try to keep the fees for parents to roughly childminder levels (they are currently £78 a month, going up to £99 in October for parents, plus an employer subsidy of £156 rising to £198). If you are working or thinking of going back to work and need somewhere you can trust for your children why not give us a ring on 242 4284.

**WOMEN AND THE RIGHT TO WORK
Kings Cross/Camden Council WV Public Meeting. Tuesday 8 September 6pm, Community Centre, Marchmont Street, WC1. All welcome.**

Midlothian Socialist Workers Party public meeting. Tony Cliff speaking on 'From Riot to Revolution' on Thursday 27 August, 7.30 at Lasswade High School, Eskdale Drive, Bonnyrigg. All Womens Voice readers welcome.

THE RENT INCREASES AND HOW TO FIGHT NATIONALLY

Conference September 12, 1pm to 6pm, Lecture Room A, The University, Crown Street, Liverpool. Two voting delegates per organisation plus unlimited observers. Creche and refreshments. Registration fee £1. Details from Rents Conference, NHL C/o 35 Deri Road, Penylan, Cardiff.

SCOTTISH NACering Sponsored Bike Ride. 26-27 September, linking Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth, Stirling, Edinburgh, Falkirk and Glasgow in legs. Sponsors urgently needed. Contact Priscilla, Dundee (0382) 25945.

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- FOR liveliest, up to date, inside news on ALL workers struggles.
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- FOR black and white unity in action.
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- FOR the Right to Work. Employed and unemployed unite and fight.
- FOR workers solidarity and international socialism.



Buy it, read it and sell it!

DO IT YOURSELF

Making a banner is usually in response to a specific need, like a march, a meeting, or a rally. Once you've decided to make your banner, you'll need to decide certain things such as size, message, colours.

DESIGNING YOUR BANNER

Keep it simple, as large as you can manage, and try to keep to just a couple of colours. It's cheaper and more effective. Resist the temptation to paint every letter a different colour, it just confuses the observer and makes it more difficult to read. Make the letters as large as you can. What looks enormous to you as you're painting looks just about right from the top of a bus 100 yards away. If you're going to use a picture, try to keep that simple too. Always remember that the people you're trying to reach are not on your march or whatever, they are the bystanders who just get a glimpse, and bother to read your banner if you're lucky.

TRANSFERRING YOUR DESIGN

Your most useful tool at this stage would be an Overhead Projector. Most schools have them, so try to persuade a friendly teacher or school-worker to help you. If this is impossible, try to get hold of an Epidiascope. Lots of places, including libraries and community centres have these. If both of these are unobtainable, proceed in the traditional manner.

a) Traditional transfer. Draw your design to scale on graph paper. Number the square along the top, and use letters down the sides. Increase the scale to fit your banner, so that you have the same number of squares marked on your banner surface as you have on your small scale design. Transfer by pencil or chalk exactly square by square till your whole banner is marked up. This method is laborious but it works.

b) Epidiascope. This is a form of projector which does not require a transparency. It projects your small drawn image directly onto a flat vertical surface like a wall, so pin your banner material to a wall, move the epidiascope back until the image fills your banner, and draw round the outlines.

c) Overhead Projector. Draw your design onto acetate or very fine tracing paper. Acetate is available from art shops and is best for this method. You can draw on acetate with

MAKING A BANNER

spirit based felt-tips. Place your image on the platform of the projector, switch on and off you go. However, an OP is designed to project upwards, so to get a non-distorted image on a wall tilt the back of the projector on a book or something similar until the image projects correctly. Pin your banner material to the wall and draw round the outlines.

MATERIAL FOR YOUR BANNER

Try to use a lightweight material. Banners get very heavy when wet. Old sheets work, but the best material is Banner Canvas. It is best to paint your banner much lighter and less work than applique or embroidery, and less likely to bleed or run in the rain. Acrylic paints are best, and are available from all art shops. They are expensive but are waterproof, quick drying and easy to use. If you need a cheaper

alternative, powder paints mixed with PVA glue do the same job. Again, your local school has these.

MAKING-UP THE BANNER

You will need side-support for the banner. Cross supports aren't usually necessary, unless your banner is massive, or a traditional Trade Union type. Remember that the police have restrictions on size, usually not wider than four people walking abreast, and massive banners also need sash supports to stabilise them in the wind. All more weight. Staple or nail your material to the side supports—2x1 wood does well. Lastly, remember air-holes. Without them you're like a ship in full sail. A popular method for air-holes is to cut out the centres of letters but just as effective, and more attractive is to cut a series of semi-circles down the sides of the banner.

STORING THE BANNER

With just side supports it's possible to roll up the banner. A fancier method is to make long vertical pockets or a series of fabric loops down the sides which the wooden supports slip into (and out of). You could also lace the banner to the wood, using large eyelets and strong string or rope. This method eliminates the need for air holes, as a well laced banner has an air-vent all round. This method is handy if you do need a top support, as when unlaced it can all pack down for storage.

Jill Brownbill



MAKE BLACKPOOL ROCK

LIVERPOOL - MANCHESTER - BLACKPOOL

OCTOBER 8-16

The Right to Work Campaign is organising a march of unemployed people from Liverpool and Manchester to the Tory Party Conference in Blackpool. If you are unemployed, why not join all or part of the march? If you have a job get your shop stewards committee/trade union branch to sponsor it. Start collecting money and organising for the march now.

For more details write to the Right to Work Campaign, 265 Seven Sisters Road London N4



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