

womens Voice

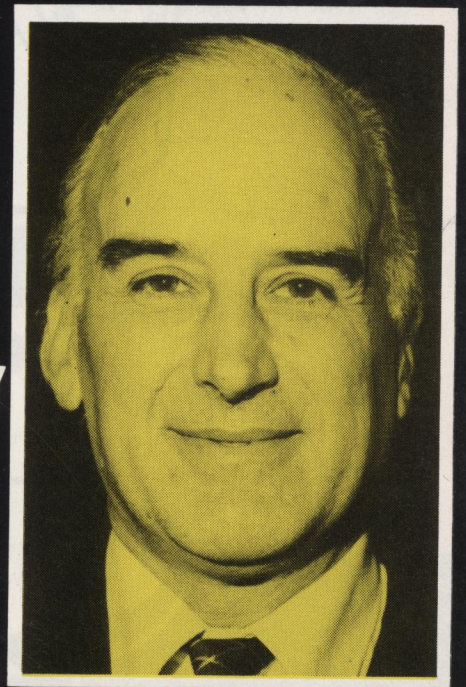
Womens magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

March '82

Issue 61

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ABORTION UNDER ATTACK



2. the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.

2. State main medical condition(s):—
.....

This man is responsible for making abortion on social grounds illegal—see inside

KEEP THE RED FLAG FLYING

Skegness



Skegness '82—the socialist paradise by the sea!
Easter weekend 9-12 April
Every year the SWP organises a holiday weekend, with meetings, discussions on every aspect of politics, films, live entertainment—and much more.

Added attractions this year—a new, olympic-size indoor swimming pool and an adventure playground.

There's plenty for the kids to do—visits to the funfair, football, and a fully-staffed free creche for the under-fives.

The cost is the same as last year—£37.50 for each adult, which includes food, and kids go free if you book early.

So—BOOK NOW! Phone Cath Sutherland on 01-986 3672.



Easter weekend 9-12 April

In this issue...

The London Right to Work March protested at unemployed kids being used as slave labour under YOPs schemes. Pictures and story ... pages 10 and 11.



KEEP IT LEGAL, SAFE AND EQUAL

The Tories have changed the 1967 Abortion Act — abortion is now illegal on social grounds. We look at what's happened ... pages 12 and 13.

'The peculiar employ of women'

Textile workers have always been among the most militant women. In the month of International Womens Day we examine their history ... pages 14 and 15.

Is there a natural bond between mothers and babies — or is it just a myth? Norah Carlin reviews a new book ... page 18.

Is motherhood natural?

PLUS ... strikes, short story, watching your weight, reviews, letters and Why I Became a Socialist.

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Plesseys women determined

THE WORKERS at Plessey's are now in their sixth week of occupation. The 220 mainly women workers are determined in their fight for jobs.

The Bathgate plant is only a few miles away from the threatened Leyland plant also on strike for jobs. The town is devastated by unemployment; if Michael Edwardes is successful in forcing Leyland's workers on the dole, the already high unemployment figures would be pushed from 1 in 5 to almost 1 in 3.

The workers at Plessey's know they have no choice but to fight for their jobs. Mary Brown, an AUEW member who has worked on the production line for 28 years, explained to Julie Waterson.

'I've only two years to retirement, but then there's the youngsters, there's no work for them. I could go easily, I've got no family, but I'm thinking of the youngsters coming out of school.'

Marilyn Stack, a member of APEX, has worked at Plessey's for nearly eight years. In the past 18 months she's become the sole family breadwinner since her husband was made unemployed.

She told of the back-ground to the dispute and about their decision to fight.

'The closure of the plant was announced at the end of November. It came as a complete shock. We set up an action committee almost immediately.

'Plessey's said that they were going to move all the machinery to Italy but that they weren't going to operate it. It's a long way to go for it to be stored!

'We were told there was no way the plant was going to be viable. They said they were running at a loss, that they had never made a profit here, that's a lie for a start! They wouldn't have stayed here for 16 years if



Mary Brown

they hadn't been making a profit, they'd have pulled out a long time ago if they'd been losing money'.

'We knew it was inevitable that we would have to sit in, but we didn't know when it would happen. We wanted it to be a big surprise to management. The shop stewards came in at 6 o'clock in the morning. They locked the gates and let everyone in except management.

DEFIANT

'So much has happened in the last month, we started coordinating delegations to other factories right away. Support was magnificent. We're speaking to people for the first time and it's as if you've known them all your life. Of course it upsets your routine but our families are right behind us. We're making public speeches when we've never opened our mouths before!'

Many of the women will admit that taking industrial action is alien to them. The majority have worked there for a long time. Many started at Plessey's as teenagers and returned to the factory after having children. They have no history of trade union militancy. But occupying has given them great confidence, has changed their attitudes and

their lives.

Three weeks ago an interim interdict was served on the workforce. The women are sitting on £3 million worth of machinery and £650,000 worth of finished goods. A powerful weapon and the reason Plessey's want them out. The workforce had a mass meeting where they decided to ignore the court order.

'The thing is we don't feel as if we're breaking the law' says Marilyn 'none of us feel that good about it—but it isn't justice'.

The occupation continues. The morale is very high, the workers know they can win—and have to. The factory is never left unattended. The women are in alternate days and the gates are covered all the time. On the nightshift you can see groups of women touring the outside of the factory. One woman commented 'It's more like Colditz than an occupation!'

'There are letters of support from everywhere' says Marilyn 'and we get donations and food from other factories, that keeps us going'.

Govan shipyard workers in Glasgow have a weekly levy of between £500 and £600 a week for the occupation.

'The local shopkeepers have been good too, they send us free vegetables, meat, for soup and meals, you see it affects them too. If Plessey's and BL go, so do the shops,' said Mary.

Marilyn added 'Another good thing is that the barrier between the office staff and the production workers has been broken down.

Nothing is moving from Plessey's, but the workers need to campaign for blacking in order to win. And win they must if Bathgate is not to become another ghost town of Tory Britain.

Messages of support plus donations to Mary Murphy, 30 Main Street, Fauldhouse, West Lothian.



Marilyn Stack



Nurses taken for a ride

OVER THE past six years there have been a series of reports which have reviewed our pay. They always recommend that our salaries should go up to be in line with the other emergency services; police, firemen and ambulance. But every government, both Labour and Tory, have ignored them.

Now the RCN is going for 12 per cent, but in the most genteel and liberal manner, which is what the walk from Lands End was all about. The RCN has a problem though, because it passed a resolution at its last conference saying they wouldn't strike. That was done to appease the government, so now that the government has told them to get lost they can't strike.

The other health service unions contain very few nurses. COHSE might take action, but it's unlikely. It is basically a nurses' claim. So it's hard to persuade ancillary workers to come out in support of us, especially since the nurses don't usually support them. In other words it's down to the RCN—and they think filling in

Nurses hit the headlines again last month when thousands rallied in Trafalgar Square. The rally marked both the end of a nurses' march from Lands End to London and the start of negotiations between their representatives, mainly the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), and the government. *Womens Voice* talked to a London nurse, **Sian Hillier**, about the claim, and about what life is like for a nurse.

petitions is the answer.

Probably nothing will happen, but we certainly need an increase. I'm a first year staff nurse which means I've been in the National Health Service three and a half years and I'm nearly qualified, but I only earn £4,450 basic before deductions. You compare that with a policeman in London in his first year who will earn nearly £6,000 and get sheltered accommodation and uniform allowance.

BACKGROUND

THE WARD where I work has 26 beds and a turnover of about 50-60 patients a week, which is quite high because it's a gynaecological ward. That means more work because you have to check everyone in and out, and

change the beds more often. We're not too badly off for staff in our ward with nine qualified staff and our quota of students. There are three shifts and our normal working week is 37 hours. That's one reason why our pay is so bad. When the government reduced our hours they also reduced our pay, which means our past pay rise only just compensated for that.

Anyway it's not a job you can just clock off. It might be your half day, but quite often, you don't actually get your half day. If the ward is busy or you're in the middle of dealing with a patient you can't just leave. You don't work one week early then one late—it can be anything, for instance I'm late shift on Saturday then early on Sunday. When it's a late duty it's quite

common not to get to meal breaks because you can't leave the ward.

The effect of the cuts varies. Meals are getting stodgier—for example macaroni cheese and bread and butter pudding. Patients no longer get a cooked breakfast. But you don't really notice cuts in the sense of equipment. Our unit just overspends. They're caught in a dilemma because for a certain number of beds you need a certain number of staff. If it falls below that level there are two choices—to close the ward completely, or employ agency staff which just goes on the budget.

Our hospital uses a centralised laundry some distance away, because many hospital laundries have shut. So, for example, our ward might have no pillowcases till the middle of next week. In the cold weather we ran out of blankets because everyone was sending down for them and the clean ones weren't coming back from the laundry fast enough.

You also notice it in things like outpatients. There's been a big increase in social admissions too—people who have collapsed at home through not enough food and heating. They just need warming and feeding up.

FEELING

THE FEELING about pay among nurses is very strong—everyone is up in arms, but the problem is one of not being organised, not being unionised, and general apathy. Shift work makes you so drained you don't feel like doing anything. That's why the RCN has so much success with petitions, and then they turn round and claim nurses don't want to do anything about pay and conditions.

The general feeling is that we've been taken for a ride. There are two avenues for nurses leaving the NHS. They can either go into private nursing which is undergoing a massive boom, or they can emigrate. Places like the US and Canada soak up our qualified nurses. Rather than fighting, many just pack their bags. Unemployment is tightening things up tremendously and now it's very difficult to get into nursing. At my old nursing school there were 2000 applications for 60 places.

AFTER a long campaign against the cuts in the education service, teachers in *Barking* returned a massive 80 per cent vote in favour of strike action.

On 17th February all NUT members in the borough's secondary schools stopped work. After half-term it is expected that the strike will be all-out, involving all the members in the borough, and affecting not only secondary schools but primary schools as well.

The most immediate reason for the strike is the council's

Teachers strike against the cuts

threat to cut 160 jobs by this summer. If these cuts go through, the borough will have lost one in five teachers over the two year period.

The strike itself is not simply over redundancy. At a packed general meeting the membership voted for the

following five demands.

- No redundancies
- Automatic renewal of temporary contracts
- No early retirement without job replacement
- No compulsory redeployment or change in job description

● Maintenance of presence staffing levels
At the meeting it was decided that the strike should only be ended by a vote of the membership.

At the moment members are petitioning and leafleting in a bid to sustain public support. The necessity of picketing in order to close the schools is becoming more and more apparent. Morale is high and the membership is ready for a prolonged struggle with the council.

Ann Gebbit
Barking teacher

OUR POINT OF VIEW

The official response of deadly silence

LAST MONTH the Tories finally had to admit that the unemployment figures had topped the three million mark. One in eight adults are out of work. One in three school leavers will join the dole queue.

But the crocodile tears of Tory cabinet ministers can't wash on either the millions living on poverty giro cheques or the millions still in employment.

For, in offices of high finance, in company boardrooms, our employers are singing praise for the work the Tories are doing on their behalf.

The conditions the Tories are deliberately creating—the rocketing unemployment and attacks on our living standards—have given employers the green light to attack our jobs, wages, livelihoods and organisation, with only minimal resistance to their plans.

The Tories have also jumped at the chance to strengthen the hands of the police and the courts with new proposals attacking workers' organisation and effective action.

More sinister, in recent months we've seen the use of high ranking civil servants to attack black and women workers with the introduction of racist pass laws in hospitals and the re-interpretation of the 1967 Abortion Act.

The response from the official trade union movement has been catastrophic. At a time when trade unionists up and down the country are looking for a lead the response has been a deadly silence.

With their sights firmly fixed on electoral change, their words hinged around the return of a labour government 'elected to power on a socialist programme', their actions for support of concrete struggle have been paralysed. Their opposition is limited to words and rhetoric.

Any struggle that has broken out has had to face the double obstacle of confident management and bankrupt trade union officials.

No amount of abstract demands from the official bureaucracy, even from the lowest echelons, helped the part-time women workers of the Ross Meat Pie factory in Hull win their wage rise. It was active struggle and concrete solidarity from other workers that finally forced management's hand.

No amount of rhetoric or calls for import controls or for that matter abstract calls for 'a women's right to work', will help the women workers occupying the Plessey capacitor plant in

Bathgate to defend their jobs. What was needed was the women to take action into their own hands, take over their factory and now win solidarity and blacking from other trade unionists.

When it comes down to anti-union laws what's needed is action, not words. Only Plesseys in Bathgate have managed to successfully defy court injunctions. Plansees, Scotts, Staffas and the Cowglen civil servant cleaners were turned out of their occupations without so much as a whimper from the TUC. The Glencroft women's strike was set back after failing to win Glasgow trades council's support for the mass picketing, being told that the trade council didn't wish to break the law.

Similarly what the unemployed *don't* need is the 'tea and biscuits' unemployed centres, much heralded by the TUC. What *is* needed is the type of organisation the Right to Work Campaign has attempted to offer—active links with employed and unemployed around workers in struggle and unemployed protest marches.

Perhaps the latest attack on women's abortion rights has been met with the deadliest silence of all. It has been left to doctors like Peter Huntingford, who are committed to defending the limited rights granted by the 1967 Abortion Act, to highlight the attacks by defying the law, with the chance that defiance can give the momentum to rebuilding the campaign within the movement for the defence of abortion rights.

The TUC, instead of leading a campaign within the movement to draw on the support from trade unionists mobilised around the Corrie Bill, has kept silent.

For us in the Socialist Workers Party, the fight against the Tories, the fight against our employers, can only be successful by concrete struggle in and around the workplace. United struggle linking men and women, black and white, employed and unemployed.

The success of the Tories' battle of ideas, the fear of unemployment, the crisis in leadership and the fear of illegality amongst workers has had its effect on the confidence of workers to fight back.

Yet even so, there is a minority prepared to fight, with many women workers within their ranks. Today—at Plesseys in Scotland, Jewel Razors in Sheffield, T Lucas in Bristol and many more—workers are in struggle, it's up to socialists to do all within our power from within and around the workplace to build solidarity for those engaged in concrete struggle.

'I think we shook the Ross management. They'll have to think twice before they take us on again. They should show us a little more respect now. We've shown them that we can stick together.'

Ross women shake management

Val Walker, a part-time worker from the Ross meat pie factory in Hull, spoke with fellow workmates to Hull SWP members in the wake of their pay-strike. Listening to the women and men talk put a lie to the myth that part-time women workers are a write-off.

In just three weeks of strike action, they forced Ross management to up their offer of £70 basic to £72.50. Even then the vote to accept the offer was not at all cut and dried. The mass meeting voted 60-40 to accept.

Eileen Flynn a fulltime worker admitted that she'd voted for the offer. 'The official advised us that we'd only get "pennies" more if we held out any longer. If the officials had advised us to stay out, I would definitely have supported them.'

Val came back: 'I felt annoyed. I think we could have got more. But even for a few pennies it would have been worth staying out. I should imagine they're making enough profits to pay us more. And looking at how close the vote was I think a lot of people felt the same. It was important to me to fight

for every penny, not just for myself but for the widows, the one parent families, the women whose husbands are out of work or on low wages, those with whole families to support.'

Sue Jackson, a shop steward, echoed these feelings, 'I think a lot of the women were looking for leadership. I argued that there should have been a definite recommendation to stay out at that mass meeting.'

Fantasy

We talked about Britain's first woman prime minister. There were no Tories amongst these Ross workers! Everyone spoke at once.

Eileen started off: 'I knew a lad who was working from 8-5 and taking home £52 a week. I bet Maggie Thatcher's knickers cost more than that! She's never had to live in a shamfour, washed in a tin bath or had to go next door to borrow a cup of sugar. What does she know about real life?'

Mandy Lowery summed it up: 'She's there to make sure the rich get richer and we get

poorer. It's all going to get a lot worse. The other week there was a bit in the local paper about a fella who robbed a supermarket with a sawn-off shotgun. Things are that bad now. Mind, if I'd have had that shotgun I would have headed for the nearest bank.'

Terry Jackson, the senior steward, said: 'The women have been marvellous. They've shown great militancy. Even up to the time of the vote for strike action, some of the men felt a bit despondent towards the women. There are still some misguided blokes who think part-timers just work for pin money. But I tell you, when you looked at the vote at the end of the strike 98 per cent of the hands up to carry on the action were women! The women were really committed and active in the strike. Take the Employment Act for instance. When the police said six to a picket line we answered with 200!'

Val agreed: 'I was surprised how well we stuck together ... mind you if anyone talks about us part-timers working for pin money I just fume. When I was at home with the child-

ren, we struggled on my husband's wage, we had no holidays, no extras. Today it's even worse and my money pays for necessities. You don't have any money left over at the end of the week, those days are long gone.'

Although there were mixed feelings about the settlement all agreed that they'd learnt from the experience of the strike. 'We organised pretty well,' explained Julie. 'We drew up picketing rotas, nearly everyone did their stint.'

Sue Jackson described the atmosphere on the picket lines. **'We had a great time. We sang, chanted, made up songs, we discussed all sorts and got to know each other's ideas. It was great seeing outside support coming in. We never expected it to be so easy winning support from others.'**

Involvement

'I never missed my picket duty,' said Elaine. 'It was really important to me. I think my dad thought I must be meeting someone, he couldn't understand why I kept going down there, with my hair done and mascara on and all that! He must have thought I was mad.'

Terry Jackson commented: 'I think we've been organising for something like this strike for years. Building confidence in the union. Trying always to take up the small issues, trying to make the union mean more to the women. We've tried to encourage more women to become stewards. I think the strike will have helped the women take up more for themselves when we go back in.'

Julie agreed. 'When we go back we'll have plenty to do. Some of these girls should become shop stewards. We've only got three women stewards at the moment. We'll have to look at the gradings, keep up the watch on health and safety. There's lots to do and one thing is for sure a few more girls will see now that we're the union, not the full time officials.'

Compiled by Jim Sullivan and Wendy Dobbs.

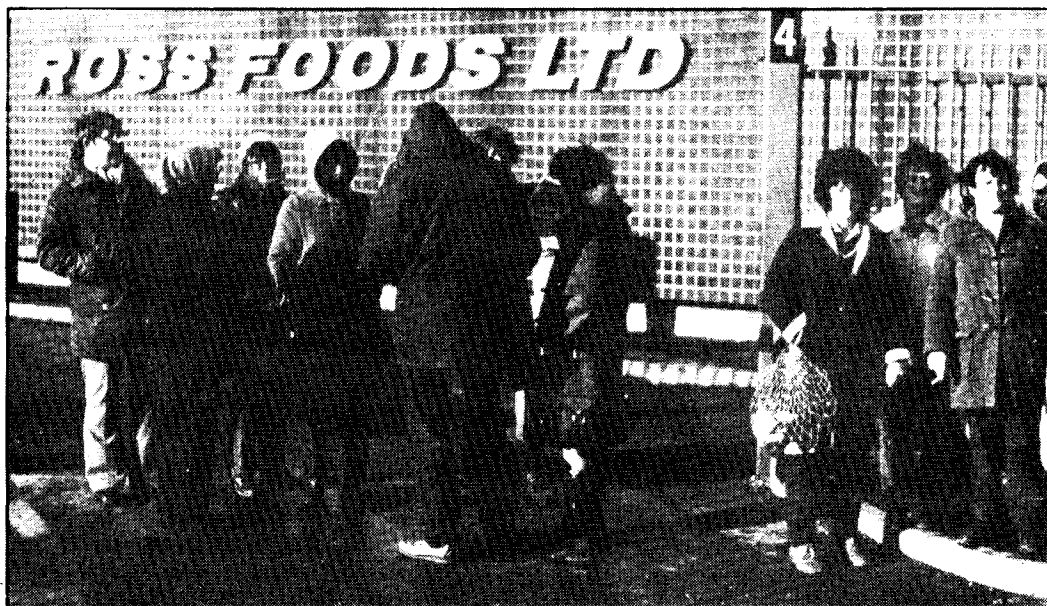


photo: Jim Sullivan

Brutal treatment

The Borough of Trafford in Greater Manchester is notorious for its poor services. Successive Tory councils have been more concerned with keeping down the rates in the affluent areas bordering on rural Cheshire, than with the quality of life in the working class areas of Stretford and Old Trafford.

The Area Health Authority has been implementing cuts with enthusiasm. These cuts have almost killed one woman, and her daughter Janet has faced an increasing conflict between her own job and her mother's needs. We are sure that this is not a unique case.

Janet told *Womens Voice* what happened:

'Doctors don't take depression seriously in women. My mother is 52, her doctor said she was bound to be a bit down in the dumps "at her time of life". She said she was depressed and was sent away with tranquillisers and not a word of advice.

'When she began pacing up and down or sitting with her head in her hands for hours she was prescribed more drugs, nine or ten different sorts, prescribed in bottles of a hundred tablets each. She became obsessively anxious about every minor detail. On one occasion it took me three hours to calm her after she found there was no milk in the fridge.

'Five weeks ago my mother had a breakdown proper. She was pacing up and down incessantly, shouting and hitting anyone who came near her. I called her GP and was told to take her to the surgery. I insisted that he must visit and he came three hours later.

'The GP told me that my mother had "severe depression with anxiety" and needed an emergency admission to a mental hospital. The psychiatrist from the mental hospital agreed, but he frightened her with talk of ECT (electric shock treatment).

'The next four weeks were a nightmare. The hospital had no beds. The GP took away all the tablets and would give no further treatment. I couldn't leave my mother so she came to stay at my house. She had to have company 24 hours a day. I rang the psychiatrist every day but only spoke to him once. Each time the message was the same: the number of hospital beds has been cut by half this year, there are no beds available, you will have to cope.

'Eventually the GP agreed to

prescribe tablets, but only if I would see that she took them as prescribed. My work suffered as I was coming home early and taking time off.

'After two weeks my mother went home, convinced she could "pull herself together". A symptom of this kind of depression is that you think you can pull yourself round. Within a week she knew she couldn't get better. I visited her every day and spent hours reassuring her. When I left on Saturdays she took the phone off the hook, locked the doors and took between 200 and 300 tablets washed down with a bottle of rum.

'As the police broke in the next day we knew what she had



done. I couldn't go upstairs. I couldn't take the awfulness of what happened. My mother was alive and was admitted to the general hospital with a 50-50 chance. That was Sunday.

'On Thursday she was medically fit but the drugs had worn off and the depression returned. They discharged her. We couldn't believe it. My mother came to live with me again and I felt that I was at breaking point. I had been off work all week and didn't see any possibility of going back.

The conflict between the love for my mother and the fact that I have to work was unbearable. I had pestered the doctors at the hospital and my mother was allowed an outpatient's appointment with the psychiatrist at the mental hospital. She was so ill by then that she was indeed admitted.

'If my mother had a Rolls Royce and didn't live in a council house they wouldn't have treated her in such a brutal way.'

Interview by Helen Mayall

Kigaff: A lesson for us all

THE women workers at Kigaff, a Leamington factory that produces components for Ford and British Leyland, have recently learnt a bitter lesson about the need for rank and file control of strike action.

Last month a mass meeting of 130 women workers voted to join the AUEW. The management responded quickly and immediately suspended the two newly elected stewards. However they underestimated the women's strength of feeling, 100 women walked out in their support.

The next day they were locked out and sacked for joining the union. A picket line was set up and successfully turned away all deliveries from the factory and went on to secure a blacking agreement from Ford workers.

By the next morning Kigaff had advertised the women's jobs in the local paper. But management's attempts to employ scab labour were foiled as the women succeeded in turning away all applicants—

several of whom said they wouldn't take scab jobs anyway.

Hearing the women talk about the pay and conditions in the factory explained the strength of feeling behind the need to belong to a union.

Their work involves the use of acid and other noxious substances, yet there is no safety officer or industrial nurse. Their pay is little better than the dole; they take home approximately £31 a week! Pay rises are promised and then postponed and there is never any mention of back pay.

What could have been a successful strike was sabotaged by the their union official, Ray Lisserman. On the first day of the strike the women were told by the union that they might as well go home.

It was the women's own initiative that set up effective picket lines. There was no advice from the union about setting up a strike committee or strike fund.

Ray Lisserman made it clear from the start that He would negotiate with management over the two women suspended.

After being out just one and a half days the official advised the women to return to work to 'save their jobs'. The women were still uncertain as to whether the union had been recognised or the two shop stewards reinstated. On return to work it quickly became clear that their strike had been completely unsuccessful, the union still remains unrecognised and the management refuse to negotiate.

Alison Ball explained how she saw history repeating itself. Two years ago Alison and a workmate were both sacked after supervision overheard them talk about the need for a union.

'The only way to win anything is by coming out and staying out, till all the demands are won. Management have got away with too much too long.'

by Anna Bonald

Union-bashing bookshop sacks workers.

The workers at Foyles, the biggest bookshop in the world, have been on strike for nearly a month over union recognition. **Julie Waterson** spoke to one of the strikers, **Sue Taylor**, about what's happened.

'WHEN you go for an interview at Foyles you never get a chance to ask questions about holidays or anything like that — it's all brushed over.

'The first day you go in you sign a contract for five months. Once you start you realise how awful it is.

'Most of the girls are stuck on the cash desks. It's like a little box and you just take the money; it's very boring. You only get an hour for lunch, and no tea breaks.

'If you're off sick you're quite likely to come back to find your job's gone. People get the sack whenever

management feel like it. Every Friday or Saturday they sack someone.

'Out of 150 staff only 15 are on permanent contracts.

'Just before Christmas I read an article about USDAW (the shopworkers' union)—how they wanted to get into Foyles. So we wrote to them and asked them about setting up a union. About seven of us wanted to join.

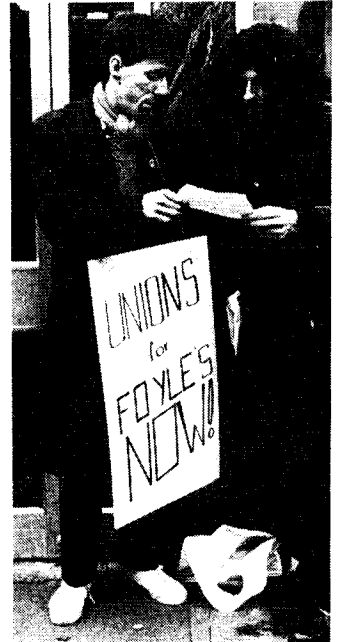
'We met three officials in January and they agreed to help us organise a recruitment meeting for the staff. They had some leaflets printed and we put them up

at work, but management tore them down.

'They tried to intimidate us once they knew who was responsible—they started searching desks. We got more people to the meeting because of this. Since then seven have been sacked.

'We started picketing and collected 2000 signatures from the public. We've had £500 in donations from passers-by, and we've got collection sheets for other workplaces.

'We've had lots of success in turning people away. The post office workers have blacked Foyles and some publishers are refusing to deal with the company.'



An appeal to all readers of Womens Voice from Socialist Worker

Help us raise £10,000

Socialist Worker needs to raise £10,000 by Easter to keep our price at 20p for the employed, and 10p for unemployed, strikers and pensioners. With £10,000 we can guarantee our price for another 12 months. We believe this is well worth fighting to achieve.

The Tory government's manipulation of the 1967 Abortion Act is part and parcel of their general attack on the living and working conditions of us all.

A week before the television news had mentioned the question, and well before there had been anything but cursory reports in the Fleet Street papers, *Socialist Worker* carried a full page interview with Peter Hungtingford about the restrictions of the 1967 Act.

Since then *Socialist*



Worker has been in the forefront of the fight to defend the gains of the 1967 Act without losing sight of the need to win free abortion on demand.

Throughout 1981 *Socialist Worker* campaigned hard in

support of groups of women who took on the Tory Government and the employers. Week after week we offered our columns to the women of Lee Jeans and the women typists on strike in Liverpool, as well as many

others. Every week in *Socialist Worker*, working class women put forward their ideas about this society and the need to change it.

Socialist Worker believes that the struggle for the liberation of women is part of the struggle for socialism. You can't have one without the other.

We want to make these ideas and arguments available to as wide an audience as possible — that is why we need to keep our price as low as we can.

And that is why we want you to support our £10,000 Appeal. Any contribution, large or small, will help us towards our target.

Unlike Fleet Street, we don't get money from advertising and we can't rely on multi millionaire owners or giant multinational corporations to shell out an extra few million. All our income depends on contributions from readers and supporters. Every donation will help us. So please give what you can manage.

Cheques should be made payable to either Larkham Printers or *Socialist Worker*. Send to Appeal, PO Box 82, London E2.

YOPS **what it is...**

IN ALMOST all areas of the country as many as one in four young people are on the dole. Thatcher and Tebbit aim by next year to have most school leavers on YOPs schemes or similar. Already many young people are being offered this 'training', and soon they will have no choice. For the majority there is little alternative. *Womens Voice* takes a look at YOPs courses and the role of young women within them.

The jobs that YOPs entails have kept young girls firmly in their place. There still exists the myth that 'it takes a boy to do a man's job', so excluding girls from the factories and workshops and forcing them into clerical jobs and hairdressing. There is also a greater tendency for girls to totally substitute for other workers. This is more prominent on Work Experience on Employers' Premises (WEEP).

When kids are being recruited for WEEP they tend to be pushed into 'traditional' roles. The majority of the girls go into hairdressing salons, where they are basically doing the job of an apprentice at half the wages and with no training. Most girls go into retailing where, with a couple of weeks experience of learning the till or stocking shelves, they are once more doing the job of a full-time worker.

These are small salons and corner shops which nine times out of ten will not be unionised and where the employer has the free hand. The same is true for many of the boys on WEEP, but they have a higher chance of landing a job where there is a bigger workforce and which is unionised—say the local factory.

You can only stay on WEEP in one workplace, for six months. In one major industrial town there are over 2,000 kids on WEEP and every scheme should be visited once every six months by a Manpower Services Commission (MSC) worker, just to keep things in 'check'. Because of the cuts they are lucky to be visited once every three years. The employers are laughing—when one kid goes just get another, plus the advantage that no-one is likely to check what you're doing

The other major YOPs scheme is

Community Service—more commonly known as doing the jobs of unemployed public sector employees.

These were set up on a large scale, most schemes have nearly 300 kids training, and are backed financially by the local authorities. It is here that kids are meant to earn a more 'rounded' knowledge of skills. Such as sewing, clerical, catering and painting and decorating. They are then meant to go to their local employers with these 'new found

skills' and sell their labour. Most of the kids go straight back to the dole, unsurprisingly.

Girls are, once again, are steered into catering and clerical jobs. Even when they ask for places on the painting and decorating courses they are not given the opportunity. There are also cases where boys have been excluded from the 'girls' jobs' like typing.

We spoke to Christine Stirling and Lynda McAdam, two recent school leavers from Cumbernauld in the West of Scotland and they told us what their YOPs courses are like and what life is like on £23.50 a week.

LYNDA: I left school last May and went for one interview as an office junior. The careers office told me

... and how to fight it

More than 500 youngsters marched around London last month protesting at youth unemployment and the Government's YOPs schemes. The march culminated in a mass lobby of Parliament, organised by the Labour Party Young Socialists.

The slogan of the march was 'Angry and Unemployed' — and the mood was one of anger too.

One factory along the route stopped work to show their support for the Right to Work march, and were immediately locked out by the factory management.

One day a group of marchers left the main body of the march to occupy the office of the Tory employment minister, Norman Tebbit. On another day a Right to Work picket of the TUC headquarters was mounted to protest at the TUC's failure to organise the unemployed.

All along the route factories and workplaces were visited by marchers calling on workers to fight for jobs and decent wages.



about this course—it's keyboard training. We're taught ordinary typing, copy typing, and data preparation. It improves accuracy and you can use it as a reference. But you get a report on your timekeeping: it's 8.45am to 4.30pm. It's not too bad. Some people I know are in food stores doing YOPs. There you get someone working for normal pay next to someone on YOPs.

A few people stayed on at school. They weren't going to but they did. Quite a few are on the dole. Most people who left school with me are on YOP jobs now, but you have to wait months for them. The Job Centre was useless—the only jobs were for people over 45. I've never seen anything up there in my life that would suit anyone.

It's terrible around here with no

money. There's only one disco on a Sunday otherwise you have to go to Glasgow. Who can afford that? It's a bit better money than the dole but you're supposed to give your mum £13 a week.

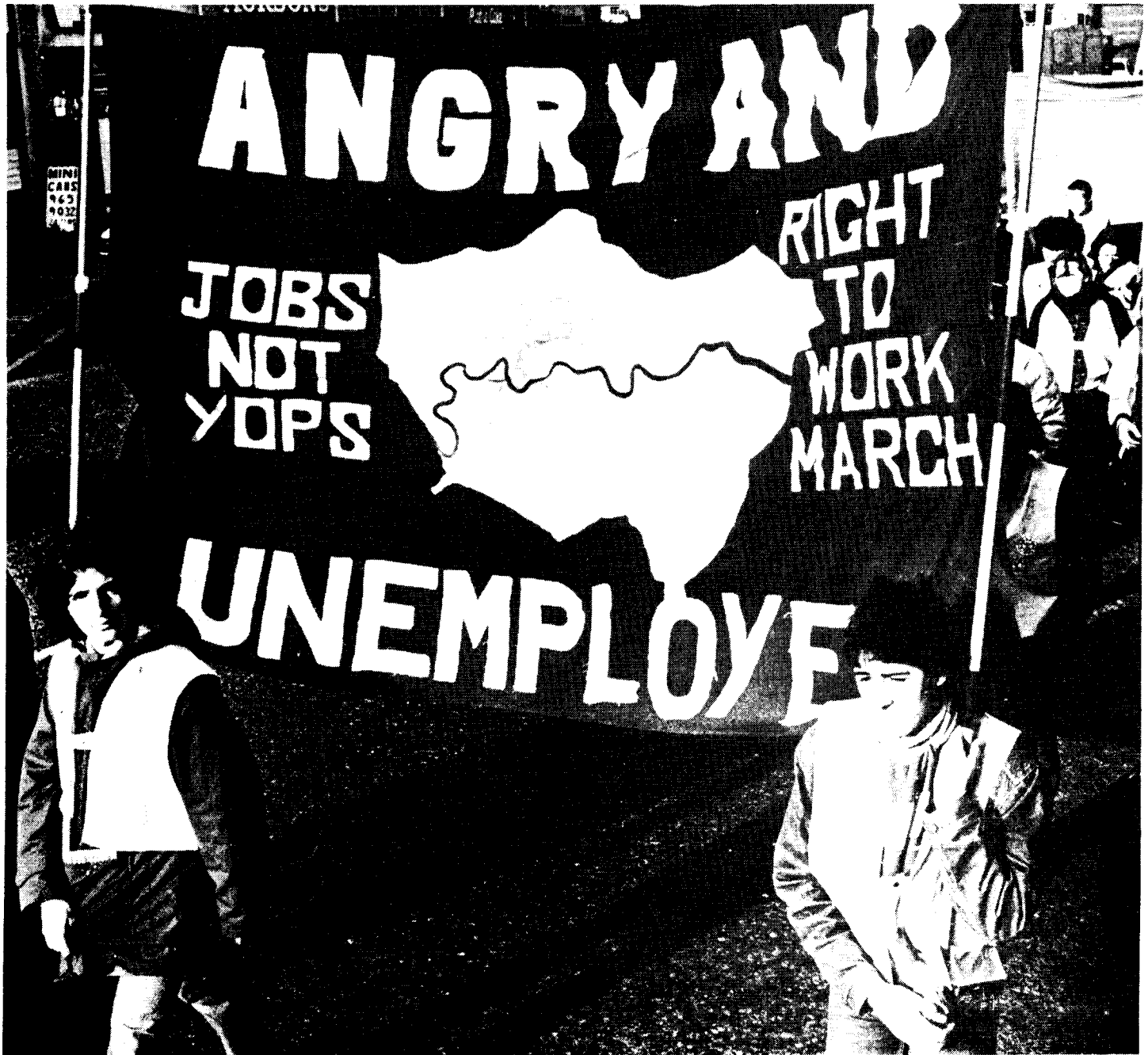
People say about Tebbit but they don't want to do anything. On the course we had a big discussion on the Right to Work Campaign and they thought that was a good cause fighting unemployment. But we talked about having a strike when the TV cameras came up to interview us and no-one was interested. But this is near the end of the course—it might have been different near the beginning.

CHRISTINE: God knows what's going to happen when Tebbit's thing comes in at £15 a week. I don't want

to do YOPs jobs now because I know it's slave labour but everyone needs the money. They should put the money up but really we've got to get rid of Maggie and the Tories. People talk about moving to find work but I don't see why we should move away. We should be able to get work where we are. Cumbernauld was designed to attract jobs but it hasn't.

I'd like to organise a strike but we're in the last three weeks—it's only a three month course. No one's ever mentioned unions to us. When the Jobs Express came, lots of YOPs went on strike and took the day off. But I heard of one girl who lost a whole week's wages when she took a day off.

I was really interested in the Right to Work Campaign. Women should be able to get jobs.

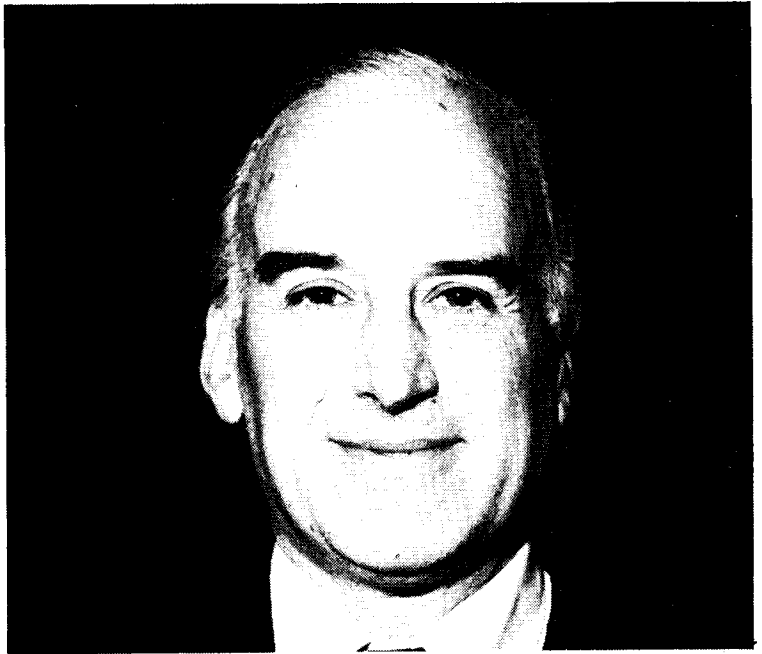


ABORTION UNDER ATTACK

This is Gerard Vaughan, the tory minister of health, who engineered the change in the 1967 Abortion Act which makes abortion on social grounds illegal.

In a recent television appearance he tried to justify the change in the law by saying it was small and insignificant.

What Gerard Vaughan didn't say was that about 1.2 million abortions have been performed on social grounds since the 1967 Act and that those and future ones would now be illegal.



'Our bodies, our lives, our right to decide'. That was one the slogans shouted on the London demonstration last month against the change in the abortion law.

But it's clear that, even after 14 years of legal abortion, women don't have the right to decide. At least eight out of ten of the abortions performed since the 1967 Abortion Act are now illegal. The decision to make abortion on social grounds illegal was taken by Gerard Vaughan, the Tory Minister of Health and a handful of highly paid, unaccountable civil servants.

Since 1967 one and a half million abortions have been performed. But women have always had abortions whether they are legal or not. In 1948 it was estimated that 250,000 illegal abortions were performed each year. Even in the year after the 1967 Act, there were 257 illegal abortions known to

the police; in 1978 the figure was seven.

But now it looks like illegal abortions may become more commonplace again, because of the change in the law, brought in last March.

The form used to notify the Department of Health and Social Security no longer includes space for non-medical grounds for abortion. Now gynaecologists are required to fill in 'the main medical condition present'.

A handful of doctors who are in favour of a woman's right to choose have written 'none' in that space. Five were investigated by the police, and two have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions who will decide shortly whether to press charges. If charges are brought for illegal abortion, they will be made under the offences against the person Act of 1861, which carries a maximum sentence of life

KEEP IT LEGAL, SAFE AND EQUAL

WE ARE in favour of a woman's right to choose whether or not to have a child. In order to make that choice a reality, there should be free abortion on demand, provided by the National Health Service.

The decision to have an abortion is often a difficult one. But it need not be a traumatic experience. Abortion is *not* a complicated or dangerous operation.

The safest and quickest way of performing an abortion is by 'menstrual aspiration'. It's not necessary to have a general anaesthetic — a small tube

is inserted into the uterus and the foetus is pumped out. It takes no longer than a few minutes.

Unfortunately this is not the most common procedure for abortion. This method can only be used in the first few weeks of pregnancy — which is when nearly all abortions *could* be performed. But because of the complexities of the 1967 Act, there are weeks of unnecessary delay in obtaining an abortion. A woman needs the consent of two doctors, and there's often a waiting period in NHS clinics. That delay increases with the health

service cuts — there are fewer hospital beds and fewer doctors and nurses employed by the NHS.

Abortion must be available to women because, apart from abstinence or sterilisation, there is no absolute guarantee of not getting pregnant. Lots of women can't use the safest forms of contraception — the pill and the coil — for medical reasons. And young girls may not know about contraceptives or where they can get them.

Unless abortion is available on demand women cannot be equal. If you live

with the fear that you may be forced to have an unwanted child, and the restrictions that will place on your life, you will never have equality.

But some women have always had abortion on demand. If you can pay for it, the Harley Street doctors will never ask you questions about your social circumstances or your mental stability—they'll get on with the job for which they're being paid.

It's because abortion has always been available for the rich, and because working class women suffer most if they're forced to

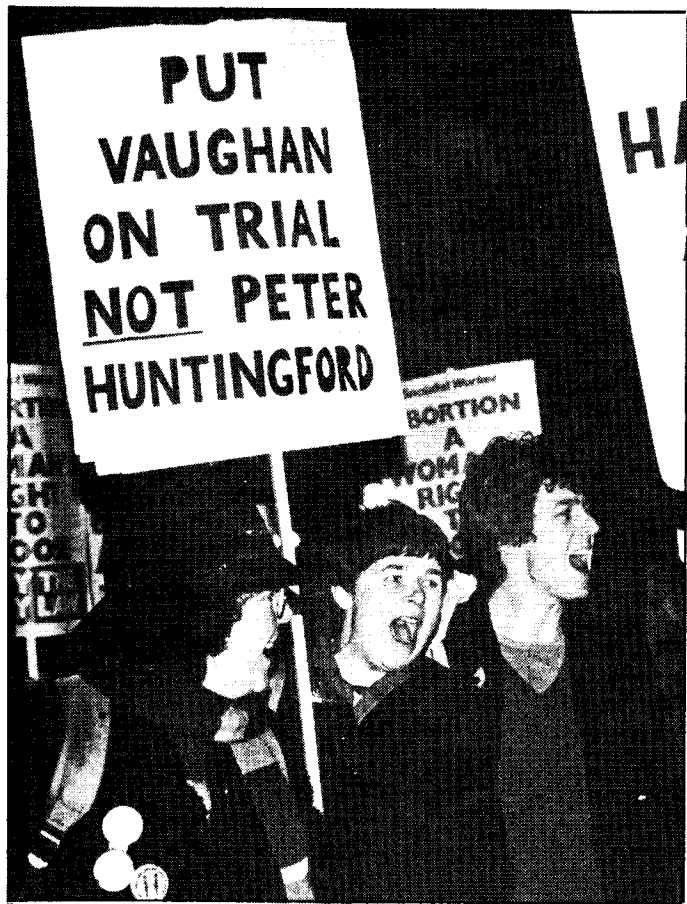


photo: John Sturrock (Network)

More than 1200 men and women demonstrated against the new Tory law on abortion last month in London. And in Manchester, nearly 100 protesters picketed the Area Health Authority.

Move this resolution through your next union branch meeting:

WE reject the change in the 1967 Abortion Act slipped through Parliament in March 1981.

WE call upon the TUC to organise a national campaign and a national demonstration involving all trade unionists, men and women, to fight for the right to abortion for all women.

WE call for the removal of health minister, Gerard Vaughan and the Chief Medical Officer for England, Sir Henry Yellowlees.

WE agree to support the mass picket of the Old Bailey in support of any doctor prosecuted under the new regulations.

have an unwanted child (rich women can always pay for nannies), that abortion is a class issue, involving both men and women.

And because some women can't continue with a pregnancy on the grounds of 'social

conditions'—because they can't give up their jobs, or their income is too low, or they live in overcrowded homes, or there are no nurseries,—abortion must be fought for hand in hand with the fight for better living conditions.

Socialist Worker has produced a fact sheet which explains the change in the abortion law and restates the arguments for a woman's right to choose.

Order them in bulk, and sell them to your workmates, outside your local hospital, at the bus stop, at your union meeting ...

They cost 5p each - bulk orders are 25 for £1 post free. Make cheques etc payable to Larkham Printers and Publishers, and send to: SW Abortion Fact Sheet, PO Box 82, London, E2.

'I knew what was going on and I was very angry'

Dr Peter Huntingford faces possible trial for performing 'illegal' abortions on social grounds. This is part of an interview published in Socialist Worker (6 February 1982).

'When I got the new forms I quite consciously wrote 'none' where, in my opinion the woman wasn't physically or mentally ill. I knew what was going on and I was very angry.'

After having had several of the forms returned to him, Dr Huntingford was visited by two police officers from Scotland Yard.

'They cautioned me — they said that anything I said could be used in evidence against me. I was questioned for two hours. It was like a medieval inquisition — they wanted me to recant. They had a form which said that I'd been wrong over the returned forms that they wanted me to sign. They were trying to get me to change my mind.

'...But they've picked the wrong person for this. My attitudes have been so consistent, I'm probably the most committed doctor in this respect. If they could persuade me it would have a profound effect on doctors who don't have such strong convictions as me. But I'm not prepared to prostitute myself or the women on whose behalf I act.

'... Illegal abortions won't be easy to come by either. The price of an abortion will double overnight — and it's the women who can't pay who will really suffer.

'The backstreets just don't exist any more. Those illegal abortionists, who have lost their skills now, provided a social service. The abortions were dangerous, but no-one made a fortune. They were women from the same street, from the same background. That network of help just doesn't exist any more.

'It's the Harley Street charlatans and the second-rate doctors in their shabby back room surgeries that I really object to.

'The result of this change in the Act is that women will be forced to have babies they don't want — and that will have a serious effect on people's lives.

'... I've always said that if a government wants to restrict the Act, they can do so — and now they have. The political attitude of those in power is very important. If there's something they don't like, they can change it. In this case they paid lip service by laying it before Parliament, so they don't offend the democratic process, but there was no debate.

'... They can't back down now without backing down on the change in the form. The worst thing that could happen would be for me to "recant", because then they'd say that even Peter Huntingford complies and therefore agrees.

'In a sense what I did was absolutely private — it was a confidential form and they didn't *have* to initiate all this. But now they've done it, I'm going to make as much noise as I can.

'If it goes to trial I'm sure public opinion will be on my side. As long as the government gets away with chiselling at our rights they'll go on doing it. This is just the thin end of the wedge.

'I haven't done anything without thinking very hard about. Abortion should not be a crime. Although you can't really imagine going to prison, I have thought about it. I think this is so important that it warrants that.'

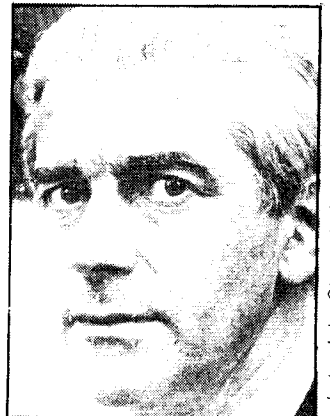


photo: John Sturrock (Network)

Doctor Peter Huntingford

MARCH 8 will be the seventy first INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY. Since Clara Zetkin, the German socialist, moved its founding resolution at the International Socialist Congress it has been a day of action in support of working women's struggles.

LINDA QUINN takes a look at some of those struggles and especially at what the opening quotation calls ...

'The peculiar employ of'

THE inspiration for International Women's Day was provided by American garment workers who took to the streets of New York's East Side in their thousands demanding the vote for women, and an end to the intolerable sweat shop conditions women workers toiled under.

Such demonstrations and strikes of women were not new. What was new was the scale of organisation and determination of the women. Women were not part of the permanent workforce of the industrialised countries of the world, and were raising their voices to assert their own demands: for the right to work, an end to low wages, equal pay, for the vote, and for civil liberties that had been denied them.

Women textile workers were often in the forefront of these struggles. Textiles and clothing were traditional areas of women's employment both in the cottage industries of pre-capitalism and then in the factory system.

One of the first areas of industrialisation on a large scale was spinning. Spinning wheels were replaced by machinery; power looms and water frames were invented. Factories were built to house the new cumbersome and large machines. The spinners and weavers had to follow their work into the new factories and out of the home or starve.

The textile mills of New England were amongst the first factories in the United States. In England, the most advanced industrialised country, early in the 19th century only 23 per cent of textile factory workers were men, the remainder were women and children. Despite their numbers women's wages were only half the male rate. Women tended to do the unskilled work and were on the lowest rates.

The conditions in the early factories were atrocious. Women often worked 78 hours a week in unsanitary, badly lit conditions for below starvation wages. The women often had to take their children with them to work, either to nurse, or as assistants in their work. Laudunum was widely used to quieten crying babies. Infant mortality in many mill towns was over 25 percent. The average number of live births to married women was 5.71. Women factory workers led lives of unspeakable drudgery and monotony only broken by regular childbirth and the ensuing poverty created by another mouth.

It was not untypical for women 'to work from 6am till midnight with less than two hours for meals so that on five days of the week they

'The business of spinning in all its branches have ever been time out of mind the peculiar employ of women, insomuch that every single woman is called in law a spinster.'

Petition to Parliament from the sisterhood of Hand Spinners Leicester 1778

have only six hours left out of 24 for going to and from their houses and resting in bed.'

The Second Report from the Children Employment Commission in 1843 gives the following description of a Nottingham Lace Worker:

'Mrs Houghton is a lace drawer. She has four children. Harriet 8, Ann 6, Mary 4 and Eliza 2. She begins generally at 6am in the summer, seven in the winter; in the former she goes on till dark, in the latter till 10pm. The two biggest children work with the mother these hours, Mary beginning at the same time in the morning, but she leaves off about 8pm ... There is a mass of evidence all tending to prove that 13 or 14 hours is the ordinary work of these very young children ... Many mothers have told me that their hearts ache to send their children to work at such an early age, but they are compelled to do it to get bread for their families.'

As legislation to restrict child labour increased, women who were the second source of cheap labour were more and more employed to work long hours.

Traditional crafts were eroded by the factory system. De-skilling and mechanisation led to high unemployment. Women were often seen by male trade unionists as a pool of scab labour to keep wages down and to break strikes. Women were seen as the enemy and competitor in the labour market.

Either women had to be removed from the labour market altogether, or paid decent wages to prevent their undercutting the male union rate. The prevailing view of craft unionists was to exclude women from their organisations. Trade unions at this time were still restricted to skilled craft labour with high subscriptions and so excluded the lowest paid and unskilled men.

The most advanced, benevolent attitude towards women was in some of the textile unions who established the first mixed unions for men and women. Some unions, although not prepared to open their membership to women, supported the women's separate organisation and lent their support. However, these were generally the exceptions.

Very early on women textile workers formed their own unions due to their exclusion to the craft unions which represented only a minority of those in the industry. In 1833 in Scotland women power loom weavers formed a union and raised money to fight for equal pay from the trade union movement in Glasgow. Unions were generally formed during strikes, but only in the textile industries were women only unions a lasting phenomena.

With one or two exceptions like bookbinding all these unions were localised.

The Dundee women for instance organised around the Jute trade. Women's unions existed in Aberdeen, Leicester, Manchester, Bristol. These were the exception though.

It took great courage for women to strike. Having no union generally, they had no strike funds and being starved back was not untypical. The law was also used freely against strikes, and did not discriminate in this sphere against women. Women were sentenced to hard labour for refusing to pay fines levied by employers for lateness. Strikers could be jailed for breach of contract and frequently were for Lockouts were frequent as were wage cuts.

The textile workers of the 19th century were the shock troops of organised labour (in the same way as transport workers are today). The cotton spinners began to admit women members, but only in certain sections. It wasn't until the 1870s and 80s that these restrictions were lifted, under the impact of the centralisation of organisation required to deal with the new industrial situation of improved national communications, transport, joint stock companies, the centralisation of capital, and limited liability companies.

Textile unions did however negotiate the rate for the job, rather than a rate by sex, and were unique in the sense of having a mixed union membership however limited.

Aside from the cotton weavers union which always included women, the question of organising women in a serious way was left to the Women's Protective and Provident League. This organisation of women was set up by Emma Paterson in 1874. Its aim was to organise women that the trade union movement, with some honourable exceptions,

women'

had largely ignored. Any union which admitted women could affiliate. Of the 60 affiliated unions, 30 were local associations of cotton operatives. At this time textile workers formed 75 per cent of all organised women. The Webbs in their survey of trade unions reckoned only one in 200 women manual workers was in a trade union compared with one in five males. The other major areas of women such as domestic service were notoriously badly organised.

The League at first, from understandable if incorrect motives, opposed the restriction on women's working hours contained in the Factory Acts, arguing that by reducing the number of hours women worked, reduced their meagre earnings even further and made women less competitive with unrestricted male labour. League members were suspicious of the motives of those male trade unionists who supported restricted labour laws. Often they were the same people who inveighed against 'the iniquitous system of female labour.'

The trade union contradictory attitude towards working women can be summed up by the fact that although the TUC passed an Equal Pay resolution in 1885, its secretary Broadhurst could declare he 'doubted the wisdom of sending women to these congresses because under the influence of emotion they might vote for things they would regret in cooler moments.'

The Women's Protection and Provident League changed its name to Womens Trade Union League and altered its character to advocacy of strike action and support for the eight hour day spearheaded by a strike of laundresses. There were a number of isolated limited victories for women's organisation, but attempts to organise women's unions were sporadic and tended to collapse. One of the most notable victories was that won by the Dewsbury Woollen Weavers against cuts in wages. These women formed the first branch of General Union of Textile Workers. The development in this period of unions for the unskilled and semi-skilled were of crucial importance for the organisation of women workers. These new unions, the forerunners of the TGWU, GMWU didn't exclude women on grounds of sex.

As technology and commerce developed so the type of work women altered. The biggest employers of women were no longer the mills,



'In a Glasgow Cotton Spinning Mill: Changing the bobbin'
painting by Sylvia Pankhurst

but the clerical sector, teaching, nursing and new industries such as processed food. And of course the war dramatically altered women's patterns of employment. Women only unions disappeared as they merged with the new general unions. The experience and attitude of textile unions towards organising women were adopted. Craft unions still excluded women and continued to do so for another 30 years.

Despite women's integration into the trade union movement, women's average pay is still only two-thirds of male rates, women still tend to be lumped together in 'women's work', remain the low paid and the unskilled. Women are still under-represented in trade unions, with the exception still of some textile unions where women are still the majority.

The solidarity and organisation of women workers that inspired International Womens Day in 1911, has grown in confidence, and strength with the passing of the years. The demand for the vote was won early on. But it is meaningless without real equality, the freedom from exploitation and oppression that women workers face. The Leeds clothing women struck for equal pay in 1970 capturing the imagination of a new generation of women whose turn it is to take up the struggle.

OBITUARY

'I worked with Brian Eastwood for many years,' said the manager. 'He was one of a dying breed in this country, a hardworking, devoted and loyal employee, a self-made man of the finest sort. Self-sacrifice and determination against sometimes formidable odds raised him from the ranks to a position of status and leadership. For him the company came always first and last, all decisions were made on that premise, and he allowed nothing to stand in his way if the good name of the company was at stake.'

'I remember on one occasion ...' The voice went on, recalling telling incidents in Brian Eastwood's working life. The manager continued, 'His untimely death is a severe blow to the company. We shall be hard put to find a person of his calibre to replace him: the exceptional qualities he had are not the ideal of today's youth. We miss him deeply and extend our sincere condolences to his sadly bereaved wife and family.'

★★★★★★★★

Brian Eastwood had been a lowly accounts clerk in a big firm. He was small, rather weedy looking and very obsequious. He did not stand out in any way from the other dozens of accounts clerks employed by the firm. One day a rather serious mistake was found in some accounts, and suspicion lay with one of two clerks, including Brian. Brian knew that he had made the mistake and that it was serious enough to run the risk of dismissal. He had no intention that that should happen to him.

He stayed late one night, rearranged papers, his own and the other clerk's, some of which he had surreptitiously removed for the purpose, and rewrote a figure of two. Next day, after secretly replacing the papers, he sought out the accounts manager.

'I am anxious to help rectify the mistake, sir,' he said. 'I have brought my relevant papers.'

The manager perused the papers. 'Well, it obviously isn't you who made the error,' he said.

'No sir. But I can't believe Mr Stone did it either. I am a friend of his and I know he's a good, honest chap.'

'It's decent of you to say that,' said the manager.

'I am sure he would be as willing as I am to show you his papers.'

'Thank you, Mr Eastwood.'

The other clerk's papers were duly investigated and the mistake found where Brian had put it.

The duped clerk exclaimed in astonishment and anger, 'But I didn't make that mistake. I know I didn't.'

'I'm afraid it's there in black and white,' said the manager. 'And you keep your papers locked up, so no one else could have done it.'

The clerk continued to protest his innocence, became very heated and ended up accusing the manager of malice towards him.

The manager lost patience and dismissed him with one week's necessary notice. The clerk, furious, brought in his union representative between whom, and the manager no love was lost and the issue blew up. A meeting of the hundred clerks in the accounts section was held, advantage was taken to air a host of grievances, tempers rose, the manager was accused of victimisation, and a strike was called.

Next day a large proportion of the hundred clerks turned up to picket. Posters proclaimed the injustice committed, and employers were requested not to cross the picket line. No one except the managerial staff did, and the strikers were jubilant. But as they were congratulating themselves a small, rather weedy looking, obsequious little man walked through. He had almost entered the building before the pickets noticed. They shouted out, 'It's Brian. Hey, don't cross the picket line'. He continued to walk.

'Don't cross!' they shouted. 'No!' And as his intentions were made clear, they yelled bitterly, 'Scab! Scab!' Brian disappeared into the building.

The strike resulted in at best a compromise, with some money being paid, but the clerk was not reinstated. When the other clerks returned to work, bitter at the result, they found another change too. Brian Eastwood had been promoted to supervisor. He grew smarter, taller and more robust. He bought a house. Committing himself to his task with utmost diligence, he rode many a sticky situation, always to the company's advantage.

On one anxious occasion the accounts had to be got ready for auditing. There was a flu epidemic which drastically reduced the workforce, and the clerks, before they fell ill and after they returned, could not or would not work hard enough to complete the task. Rather than draft in expensive temporary staff, Brian nobly took the books home night after night, stayed up till unearthly hours, and had the work ready in time. His flu came after the auditors, not before. He was further promoted to under manager of the accounts section. He got the use of a company car.

His section were the most punctual in the morning. There was no dallying after lunch, and no creeping into the cloakroom at quarter to five to dash home at ten to. Absence was frowned upon, and leave, even compassionate leave, almost unheard of.

★★★★★★★★

The manager hung his head reverently and moved aside. Another man took his place. 'I was a friend of Brian Eastwood and his family for many years. The care, devotion and loyalty he showed in other spheres of his life he lavished in abundance on his family. Nothing that it was in his power to provide was too good for Rita, his wife, Alan, his son and Emma, his daughter. As soon as he was able he bought a family home in the quiet

residential area on the edge of town where Rita could have space to make it beautiful for him and the children, and where the children could go to good schools and meet a better class of person. You have heard how many unpaid hours he devoted to his work, often continuing till late into the night either at the office or at home. Whatever time he could spare from that activity he put into the home and his family. At home as at work he was one of that fine old school that seems unhappily to be dying out fast.' He paused.

Rita sat at the front of the hushed gathering, crying softly. She was dressed in black with a light black veil from her hat covering her face. Alan and Emma, also in black, sat on either side of her, looking miserable, the daughter quietly shedding tears in tune with her mother every so often.

★★★★★★★★

They had married soon after Brian became an accounts clerk. Rita was a typist, a lively, pretty girl. She felt in Brian the force of his determination to make good, and was strongly attracted to this, his outstanding quality. Brian was immensely proud of winning such an attractive girl in the face of competition from obviously more dashing suitors and took every opportunity to display his prize to workmates and other acquaintances. They lived in a cramped flat in a rundown part of town but Rita's instinct held true, and it was not many years before Brian saw and seized the opportunity to break out of his lowly status. This coincided with Rita's first pregnancy, and the house purchase was a celebration of both events.

The house was large but needed a lot of renovation. This led to their first arguments. Rita wanted the kitchen and living quarters to be restructured for utmost labour saving and maximum luxury. Brian's eye was on the purse strings and the fact that Rita would now stop working. Cheapest materials and minimum structural changes were his aim. In the match of wills Rita won. Brian harboured resentment and sought further promotion.

Their two children were born in quick succession. Brian transferred his pride and interest in Rita to the children. It soon became evident, however, that each parent had an overriding love for one child. Rita emotionally adopted the boy, Brian the girl. Rita lost her good looks, her shapely figure and the vivacity which accompanied them, and Brian lost interest in her. The company's staff functions where he used to show her off with such pride now became a torture for the two of them with endless preparatory wrangling over dress and behaviour, and subsequent quarrels over Rita's lack of interest.

Their daytime behaviour consisted of estrangement, otherwise quarrels. Their bedtime behaviour followed suit. Brian had never developed highly the art of love-

'Self-sacrifice and determination against sometimes formidable odds raised him from the ranks ...'

making. He now lost even the initial impetus. Rita would go to bed while Brian worked late. On getting into bed he would, when he wished, without preliminaries, climb on to the sleeping or wakeful Rita, pump away till he was satisfied, then flop over and go to sleep. Seldom was a word spoken. Rita could either refuse the overture, risking a violent quarrel, or freeze and accept the situation. The latter, however nervewracking, took less time. She submitted, praying it would be over quickly.

As the years went by and the children grew. Rita and her darling son were pushed into the background. The more attention Emma claimed, the less Rita got. She grew fatter and more silent, and began bungling through the day quite incompetently, to the continual rage of Brian.

'I work my guts out providing for you' he would shout. 'Can't you even run the house properly? Why do I always have to get you out of a mess when I come home worn out with working for you?' Rita would creep away silently and keep out of his and Emma's way for the rest of the evening.

Brian's love for Emma, his one consuming interest outside his work, grew. He fondled and caressed her and gave in to all her fads and fancies. She responded. The more her parents became estranged, the more she flouted her mother, treating her with utmost disdain, and the closer she grew to her father, learning early how to curry favour with him. Brian was content — daughter could be used to get at mother. Emma was content — father belonged to her, not Rita.

One night Brian came home late from a business engagement. He had had too much to drink and was unsteady on his feet. Rita had long gone to bed, and so had Alan, but Emma stayed up. She wanted some new clothes which were expensive, and it would take some wheedling, even with Brian, who was not the most generous of people, to draw it out of him. Waiting up for him was the first ploy. She ran up to him, jumped into his arms, put her arms round his neck and kissed him.

'Mum and Alan have gone to bed,' she said, 'but I stayed up. D'you want some coffee?'

He put his arms round her and hugged her close. Her young breasts and pliant body excited him in a way he hadn't felt for years.

'Come', he said panting, and reeling slightly so that Emma had to hold him up. He led her to her bedroom, muttering, 'Come, come,' all the way. He quietly closed

and locked the door, then started undressing her, shivering violently with excitement as he did so. Emma, though surprised, did not object. Her mind had for some time been wholly preoccupied with getting out of her father the wherewithal to satisfy her extravagant adolescent needs. Instinctively she felt that this would serve her ends better than the usual wheedle, not only on this occasion, but in the future. And this time she wasn't begging; he was.

'Don't tell your mother,' he croaked.

'No, I won't,' she replied.

'Don't tell your mother,' he croaked.

'No, I won't,' she replied.

In spite of his drunkenness, he was more loving and tender with her than he had been with Rita, even in his stupor wanting not only his own satisfaction but hers too.

Brian was more excited than he had ever been, and Emma, knowing her father so well, responded like a practised hand, gaining no small satisfaction herself, in spite of her early trepidation. Brian's joy was unbounded, and when he had exhausted himself he fell asleep beside her, still hugging her close.

Emma stayed wide awake, exhilarated at her new found power. She let him sleep for about half an hour, then woke him up quietly, and told him to go to his own room. He was too heavy with sleep and drink to be able to do anything himself, so she led him along to his room and half pushed him through the door. Brian never mentioned the incident, and was not quite sure whether it had happened or he had had an unforgettable dream. Emma, however, insinuated it constantly into the web of her daily actions, knowing that for him, whether dream or reality, it was sufficiently real in his mind for him to feel the threat of revelation. She now ruled the household completely, treating her mother and brother with utmost contempt, and manipulating her father.

Brian felt keenly the challenge of Emma's threat. He now came home fearfully, never quite sure that the headstrong girl might not have revealed the secret and ruined his career. He gave into Emma's wishes more and more abjectly, and she revelled in her power and took full advantage of it. He grew smaller, seedier, and very obsequious.

Not long after, the company car accidentally ran off the road into a tree and Brian was killed.

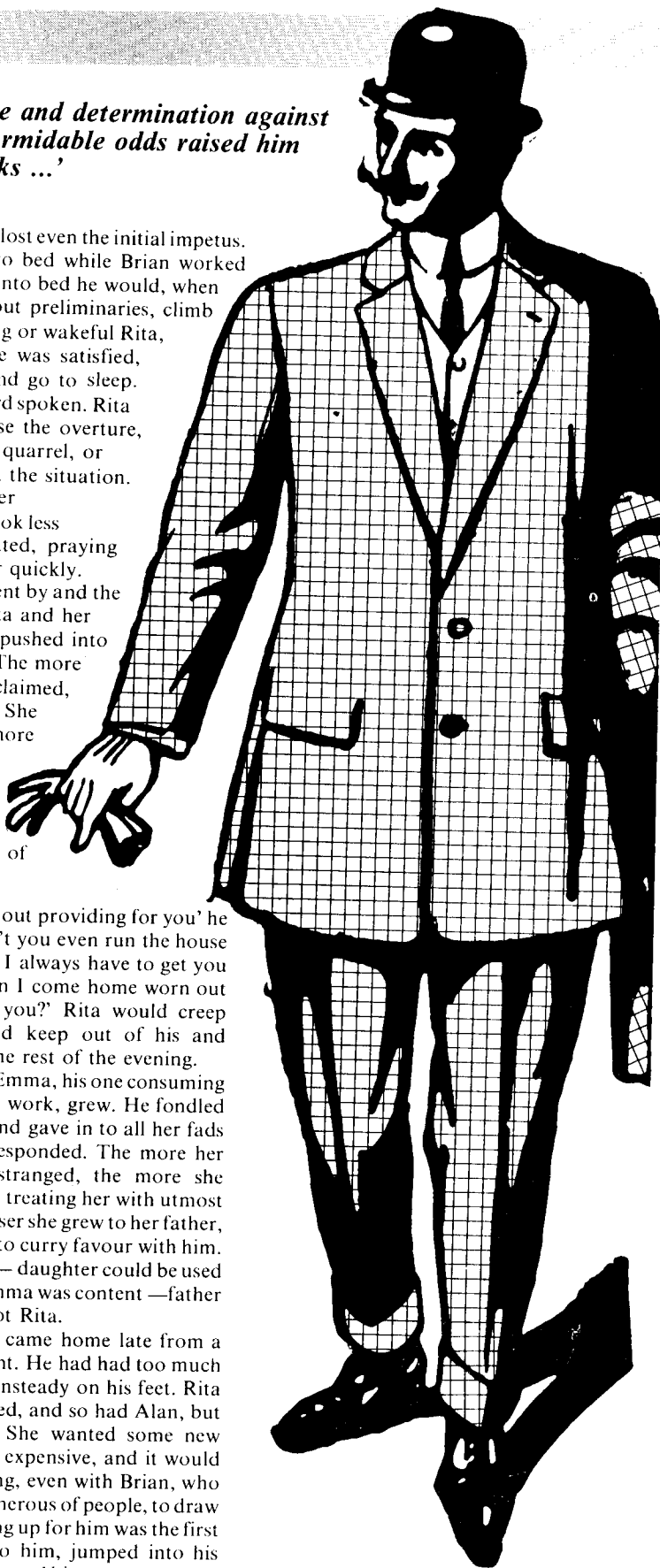
★★★★★★★★★★

The friend of the family continued, 'If one could talk of a model family, then the Eastwoods were that. With Brian at the head, providing for them and loving and caring for each, dear Rita serving their needs so competently and with such loving care, and Alan and Emma whom they both loved so dearly and who reciprocated their love, growing up so healthily, I was indeed privileged to count myself their friend. I cannot begin to say how devastated I, all of us, feel for poor, brave Rita's and the dear children's loss.'

He pulled out a large handkerchief and blew his nose.

The mourners left the hall. Alan and Emma clung sobbing to their mother's arm as, blinded by tears, she stumbled slowly to the waiting car.

*by Chanie
Rosenburg*



The Myth of Motherhood began to create shock waves as soon as it was published in France in 1980. Its author, Elizabeth Badinter, is a lecturer at the famous Ecole Polytechnique (an élite institution, and for three centuries a bastion of male privilege) and her husband is a trendy left-wing lawyer. How much of the fame of the book is due to this setting, and how much to what it says, is a

The question of child care is an important one for socialists because it is central to how much freedom and equality women have. A book, by a French woman, created some stir when it was published because of its analysis and criticisms of the 'maternal instinct'. Review by *Norah Carlin*.

the idea and practice of fatherhood — a topic which she shows has been neglected since the decline of the seventeenth century authoritarian father.

No Marxist could disagree with the basic argument that relations between parents and children are what society makes them, and that nineteenth and twentieth century 'motherhood' is a major feature in the oppression of women.

Is motherhood natural?

difficult question.

Far from being a complete 'historical view of the maternal instinct' as its English subtitle would seem to suggest *The Myth of Motherhood* brings together just three themes, yet they are most interestingly and cleverly chosen.

The first theme is the 'neglect' of children by French mothers in the seventeenth century. In the towns only a small number of babies were nursed by their own mothers: newborn infants were packed off in their thousands to country wet nurses. Many died on the journey, and many more during the two to four years they spent at the wet nurses'. Even peasant women often did not feed their own babies, for they were busy taking in babies from the towns, or setting off soon after childbirth to hire themselves as live-in wet nurses to better-off families.

Nursing out was not confined to rich women: women workers, artisans and craftsmen's wives sent their babies away because they could not afford to stop working or neglect the productive work of the household for the luxury of giving special attention to young children. Those children who survived to return 'home' (in effect, to a family of strangers) at two to four years old were often sent away again when they were six or ten: as servants or apprentices if they were poor, to boarding schools or convents if they were rich.

The second theme is the invention of 'good mothering' in the eighteenth century. Elizabeth Badinter points out that, although this reaction probably saved the lives of millions of children in the long run, it imposed on women a new ideal



photo: Charlie Fellowes

of the 'natural woman' — subordinate, devoted, dedicated to the comfort of her husband and children — and this idea was, of course, created by male philosophers such as Jean-Jaques Rousseau.

Following on from this is the even greater stress on 'maternal duty' in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, culminating in the heaping of guilt onto 'bad' mothers, who are seen in the psychoanalytic tradition of Freud and others as responsible for every imaginable personality disorder.

In this perspective, the 'maternal instinct' is clearly seen to be a myth. Seventeenth-century Frenchwomen, from countesses to clothworkers, somehow managed to do with-

out a close relationship with even their newborn babies; so did the babies, and they didn't all die of neglect.

Just how and when conventional modern myth was created is also shown in Badinter's account of the influence of Rousseau and of Freud. She shows that these theories are *not* universal truths about human nature but deliberate propaganda aimed at getting women to *behave differently* (in the eyes of such writers, to behave 'more naturally'!)

Motherhood, she concludes, is a product of society, not of nature. And society can redress the balance, the overload of duty, responsibility and guilt placed on women for two centuries and more, by developing

Yet the book is disappointing. There is, for example, a terrible lack of evidence as to what *women* thought about motherhood and separation in the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries. Elizabeth Badinter makes up for this by using the speeches of fictional characters from literature — but from literature written by *men* with a satirical or critical purpose.

Her practical conclusions are extremely weak. The lead in future development must be taken, it seems, by highly educated, professional couples. 'Underprivileged women', she says without much explanation, 'have attitudes and motivations diametrically opposed to more highly educated women's.' It might also be a good idea, she suggests to pay women for looking after their children — ignoring ten years of arguments on the question of wages of housework.

The women's movement has produced many attacks on the ideas of Rousseau and Freud about motherhood and femininity. What is unusual about Elizabeth Badinter's book is really the discussion of seventeenth century 'neglect'. The topic has been dealt with before, but always by male historians. What has created the scandal in France, and is likely to interest women here too, is that Ms Badinter looks at these facts *as a feminist*, and comes away with some very disturbing criticisms of the 'myth of motherhood'.

'The Myths of Motherhood: an Historical View of the Maternal Instinct', by Elizabeth Badinter, is published by Souvenir Press, price £5.95 (paperback).

WOMENS HEALTH

Watching your weight?

I read *Fat is a Feminist Issue* on holiday totally agreed with most of it, but still thought (and still think) that if only I could get slim I wouldn't be miserable and depressed. That way I wouldn't eat, so I would stay slim. And because I was slim, I wouldn't be unhappy—and so on.

I've tried every diet around, from the ten-day grapefruit diet to 1000 calories a day, but somehow I never succeeded. I'd lose some weight but I never managed to get *slim*.

The thought of sitting with a group of feminists discussing why I eat, body images, etc, was not for me. But I still desperately wanted to lose weight. Some of it was vanity and social acceptance, but there was also the health factor. No matter whether you're unhappy being fat or content with your body weight, I personally still believe that fat is unhealthy.

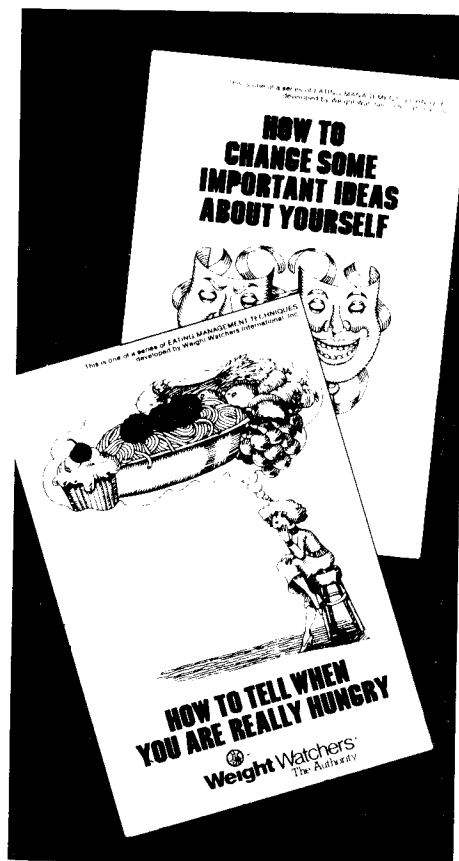
So I decided to try my last resort and join the Weight Watchers. All kinds of horrors were conjured up in my mind and I was also very scared of telling my friends because sometimes I feel that dieting is a dirty word amongst feminists.

I have to say that it's nothing like I expected. Women of all sizes attend, from the teenagers who are trying to squeeze themselves into a size eight to extremely overweight people.

What I first walked in I was very dubious about paying out money to a multi-million pound company to try to deal with my weight problem. But not for long.

I was weighed (discreetly—that is, the person in charge of the class didn't stand on the table and announce my weight over a tannoy system, like they do at the ante-natal clinic).

I have a goal weight to achieve of 9st 4lbs. The thought of having to lose more than three stone disheartened me at first. But when everyone had paid their money and been weighed in (sounds like



The Weight Watchers 'Modules'

a boxing bout), things seemed to brighten up.

We have a booklet about our eating programmes. The word diet is forgotten, and 'sensible eating' is drummed into us. All food must be weighed, and I can see how you could become obsessed with food.

Each week everyone receives a pamphlet called 'The Module'. They are very helpful and try to point out to people why we turn to food—from the reward of sweets as a child for being good, to a box of chocolates as a present.

These 'modules' usually stimulate good discussion within the group about eating through boredom, feeling guilty, secret binges etc.

It's a bit like being part of a club where everyone understands how everyone else feels. And you're not alone either—everyone else turned to Weight Watchers as a last resort too! I'll probably be a life long weight watcher but, as crazy as it sounds, I'd rather do this than be fat. I can't cope with being fat in a society where so much emphasis is put on appearance.

Some people may think I'm a nutter, but I don't see what else there is to do within this system. I've talked the compulsive eating theory over loads of times, but still find no comfort in it—I'm too scared to follow it, too scared about putting on loads more weight if I do.

At Weight Watchers foods that are not allowed are called 'illegal'. So they teach you to always eat 'legal' things, and reject the 'illegal' sweet things.

If I can do without these foods it must be better for me because, let's face it, sugary foods are bad for your body. My body doesn't need them.

I have lost weight at Weight Watchers, and I feel better for it.

One of the best 'modules' we had was 'How to tell when you are really hungry'. We had to write down what meaning food had in our lives. We discussed the difference between hunger and appetite, stress eating and how to deal with it. On the back of the pamphlet was a chart we had to fill in during the week on how we felt each day. We talked about how to take our minds off eating, and being positive rather than negative.

There is a tremendous variety of food in the eating programme, and each week we discuss any problems people have had and how to overcome them. All of us now realise that we are not fat or overweight because we are greedy.

There is the obnoxious side to Weight Watchers—for example you are given a badge on reaching your goal weight. But when you do you're not abandoned, but taught to maintain your weight.

It's not cheap—it costs £4.20 to join, and then £1.95 a week. Perhaps I've fallen for the myth that if you pay for something it must be good. But I'd say that if you've got a weight problem, don't be afraid of joining Weight Watchers. Just as long as you have no illusions—it offers no miracles: only you yourself can do it.

Weight Watchers doesn't reinforce the stereotype image of women as little sticks. The goal weight is a sensible one—they don't try to churn everyone out size ten.

I have been 14st and sat and cried alone, disgusted at myself, so overweight and grossly unhealthy. Because no matter what reason I eat for, it's still only me that suffers at the end.

Chris Fellowes

REVIEWS



Destination Biafra **Buchi Emecheta** **Allison & Busby** **£7.95**

Do you remember being told to 'eat your dinner up. You know you're lucky to have food on your plate, just think of the starving kids in Biafra'. That was what the civil war in Nigeria meant for a lot of us, horrifying pictures in the press and lots of prayers in school.

This latest novel by Buchi Emecheta is about that war. It is about the suffering of millions because of the greed of a few — the ruling classes not only of Nigeria but of Britain and their struggle for power, especially over the increasing rich oilfields of the east (Biafra).

Her book is centred around the daughter of a rich northern politician and her relationship with the British military 'advisor' to Nigeria whom she met while being educated in Britain.

When Debby Ogedemgbe's father is killed during the military coup she finally decided to join the army and fight for 'one Nigeria'. Her mother comments: 'We all want freedom for women, but I doubt if we are ready for this type of freedom where young women smoke and carry guns instead of looking after husbands and nursing babies.'

She is sent as a peace-

maker to the east but on the way she discovers the reality of war for many women — she is raped: 'The pain and humiliation would forever be locked in their memories. She could not shut out the horrible way the Ibo woman with the child was killed, how they had pushed the butt of a gun into her, how they had cut her open, how the unborn baby's head had been cut off and the older child kicked to death ... Oh, it was all too horrible'. At least she survived, the men weren't as lucky — they were killed outright.

Debbie, with a group of women and children are forced to try and make it to Biafra on foot, very few of them do. After countless days and nights of starvation one of the women asks: 'Do you think those at the top will starve? No, they are probably there drinking champagne. And as for the businessmen, they don't want this war to end'. And she was right '... the Biafran soldiers were hungry; they had nothing to fight with but their enthusiasm, and even that was on the wane'.

The war ends — but not without claiming the lives of many innocent people caught between imperialist greed. Buchi Emecheta herself lost many relatives and friends in the war.

It is a book worth reading, but I'd wait until it comes out in paperback (cheaper).

Julie Waterson

Women on the Line

Ruth Cavendish **Routeledge and** **Hegan Paul** **£5.95**

In 1977 Ruth Cavendish left her job as a sociology lecturer. She felt that her job and politics had become 'limited and frustrating'. The socialist wing of the women's movement which she supported had 'lost some of its earlier dynamism', and had anyway failed in one of its main aims — to contact and involve working class women. The economic crisis had forced her to think about how women's politics could be linked 'with the concrete realities of class'.

She took a manual job in a factory — one of the few white women among women manual workers who were mainly Asian or Caribbean in origin. For seven months she made autoparts on the line with them.

Afterwards, she wrote a book. Libel laws forced her to change the name of the factory, the identity of the trade union and to disguise the names of her workmates. But that does not detract from the book at all.

For Ruth Cavendish has written an extremely readable and honest account of the situation of a group of women workers. She describes their strengths and their weaknesses, their prejudices and their divisions, their attitudes towards other workers, to trade unions and to struggle.

It's an exciting and interesting book. And she comes to some thought-provoking conclusions about topics which have concerned feminists for years. Her experiences led her to ask why working class women did not join the women's liberation movement: 'The reason we haven't attracted working class women to the women's movement is not that they

aren't feminist or unaware. Our discussions are too up in the air for them and reflects a different way of life.'

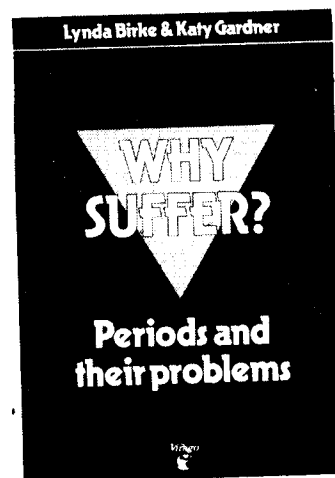
She states: 'We were probably naive in expecting working class women to become involved.'

In conclusion she argues the need for a new relationship between intellectuals and the working class.

Anna Paczuska

Why suffer? **Periods and their problems**

Lynda Birke and **Katy Gardner** **Virago £1.95**



This is a short book, which is reasonably priced, about pre-menstrual tension. It describes itself as 'essentially a practical book', which is true.

Unfortunately, the first chapter is heavy going and may put off a lot of readers from continuing, which would be a pity. This chapter describes the monthly changes in a woman's hormones, womb lining, cervix and vagina which take place from one period to the next. The information is accurate and fully covered, but I don't think the two writers have been successful in making it easy to follow. More drawings would probably have helped.

After that it's very good.

There are many theories about the cause of pre-menstrual tension (it's the hormones, it's psychological) but no definite proof of any theory. Here, the attitude of society to menstruation is discussed (often it is thought to be dirty).

Many working class women who are struggling to handle the demands of small children, never-ending money worries, and probably half a dozen 'little' cleaning jobs as well, go to the doctor, not because of their own distress in the pre-menstrual week, but because they are bad-tempered with the kids and feel guilty because they can't cope.

There are no magic answers in the 'dealing with it' chapter, but a range of possible remedies to experiment with and most sufferers will find something which will help. There's also good advice about when to seek medical help about various period problems.

Mary Edmonson

The Great Lie

Abbie Bakan
Canadian
International
Socialists
£1

(Available from Bookmarx,
265 Seven Sisters Road,
London N4)

Recent events in Poland have shown that Russia and the Eastern European states have nothing in common with socialism.

Abbie Bakan's new pamphlet provides a valuable service in showing that what exists in Russia, Eastern Europe, Cuba and China is not socialism but state capitalism. She says:

'If these countries are indeed socialist, then socialism offers no better prospect than the exploitation and alienation of capitalism ... genuine socialism is workers' power, the self-emancipation of the working class.'

From this basic premise the first part of the pamphlet plots the rise of Stalinism in Russia and the betrayal of all the hopes and aspirations of 1917.

Out of the defeat of the revolution a new bureaucratic ruling class grew up, subject to the same pressure as its counterpart in the West: to accumulate capital in

order to survive the international competitive rat race.

The growth of imperialism in Eastern Europe is also analysed; how Russia extended its influence throughout Eastern Europe after World War Two. The other Eastern bloc countries were, and still are, economically and politically subordinate to Russian interests.

As the state capitalist countries have become increasingly enmeshed in the

world economy, the pamphlet shows how they have been forced to bear the brunt of a crumbling world system. The implications of this are apparent in Poland. The Polish workers were not prepared to accept an ever-decreasing standard of living and a continual denial of political freedom. The only way the bureaucracy could maintain control was through martial law. Just as happened in Chile in 1973, state terror is now being used

to preserve the power and privilege of the ruling class.

We need to understand what has happened in the so-called 'socialist' countries of the world because 'until we can come to terms with what socialism is *not*, we cannot confidently fight for what socialism is.'

For anyone who wants a short, readable introduction to the theory of state capitalism this pamphlet is an excellent starting point.

Chloe Watkins



Richly famous and awful

Rich and Famous Rich and Famous Director: George Cukor

I have to confess that, for me, one of the pleasures in life is curling up on a Sunday afternoon with a can of lager and an old black and white weepie on the box. The director was often George Cukor and the stars were Bette Davis or Katherine Hepburn.

These actresses, particularly Hepburn, managed to maintain their considerable skills at characterisation and forge witty, intelligent roles for women, when every other was a stereotyped and exploited sex symbol.

'Rich and Famous' is the remake of an old Bette Davis weepie, rehased by director George Cukor and set in the

80s. It is also the only film I've ever walked out of.

This time round Hollywood sex symbols and B-movie mediocrities, Jaqueline Bisset and Candice Bergman, take the leading roles equipped with at least three cases of J&B whiskey, a case of hair spray and the most appalling script I have ever heard.

The plot isn't that hot either. Two women graduate from college and go their separate ways. One to Malibu Beach and marriage (Candice Bergman), the other goes to trendy Greenwich Village to become an intellectual (Jaqueline Bisset).

The married one (hubbie is nauseatingly referred to as Doug-bug) has a talent for writing trash romance novels with, as the years go by, an

alarming resemblance to Barbara Cartland. The other wrings out an intellectual masterpiece every ten years. Predictably, they both get rich and famous. Barbara Cartland look-a-like gets nastier and drives poor old Doug-bug through the divorce courts. The intellectual is secretly in love with Doug-bug and seeks solace in J&B whiskies and young boys.

At this point the steadily-worsening script really goes to town with winners like:

Young man: 'I never sleep with women of my own age because they are always looking for their own orgasm.'

Jaqueline Bisset: 'What's wrong with that?'

Young man: 'Gee, it should be *our* orgasm.'

I left.

Marta Wohrle.

LETTERS



We need support

Dear Womens Voice,

The time has finally come when the authorities have decided to take action over the presence of the Womens Peace Camp outside Greenham, and we are now in great need of your personal commitment and support.

Newbury Council have asked us to leave within fourteen days and have issued a press statement to the effect that, if we do not leave, legal proceedings will be begun to have us forcibly evicted. They claim this action is being taken because of local ratepayers' complaints, but we feel Ministry of Defence pressure has been brought to bear. Whilst such proceedings can take up to six weeks, even six months, we have the feeling they will speed this through as we are an embarrassment.

Needless to say, we have no intention of leaving until we are carried away, and we are consulting a barrister who is highly regarded and we hope will take the case on for us. National Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament are also involved in helping us with the legal side. However, what is needed now is a large presence here *all the time*, so that, when bailiffs and/or police arrive, there are enough people here both to give a feeling of strength and solidarity and to make things difficult and embarrassing for the authorities. Therefore, what we are asking for primarily is the physical presence, for a day, two days, a week, of people who can spare that time. *Please* spread the word to everyone you feel would be able to come along.

Secondly, this case needs plenty of publicity, and letters

of protest can be written to Newbury Council, your local newspaper/radio phone-in/TV network and, of course, to the national press also. Ask them why they are not covering this vital issue and tell them why we are here and whom we are doing it for.

Help us make the national focus of protest that it should be.

Annie Tunnicliffe for the Women's Peace Campaign

Where the blame lies

Dear Womens Voice,

I bought your magazine for the first time last month and I was surprised to see your editorial saying that we can't rely on the state for our protection.

I'm sure that the state — the police and the judges — are not that good, but where else is a woman supposed to look for protection?

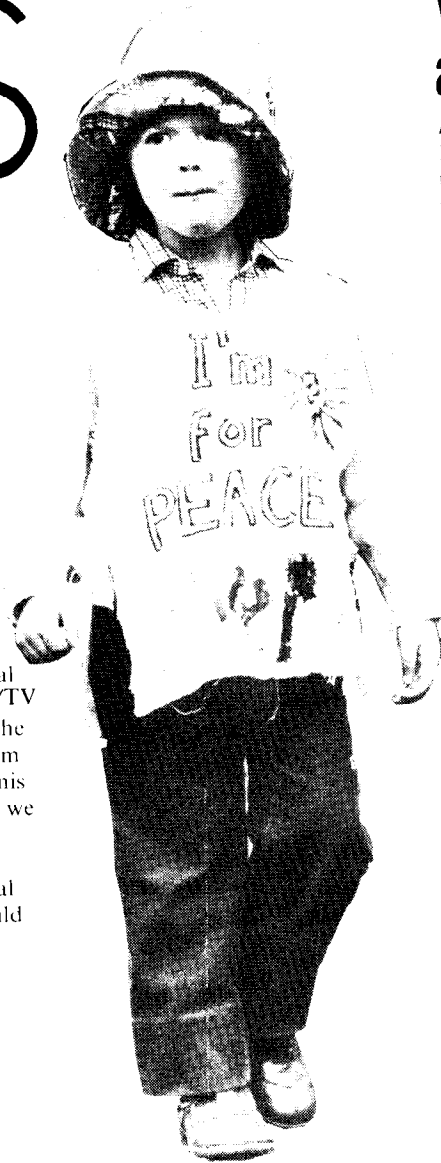
And what do you suggest we do with rapists, if not put them in prison?

My belief is that we should be calling for *longer* prison sentences for rapists — that's the only way we can convince men that rape is a serious crime and it should be punished as such.

You call yourself 'Womens Voice' — you certainly don't speak for me and other feminists. And I certainly don't agree with your ridiculous statements that men and women must fight together to rid society of oppression.

Let's be clear about where the blame lies — with men, and men must be made to pay for it.

Rita Morris Goldaming



What's in a name?

Dear Womens Voice,

I was with a group of women the other day and I happened to refer to a friend of mine as a 'girl'. I was told off for this — and I don't understand why.

Alright, I know the argument that 'girl' is a putdown term, but surely there's more important things to be fighting over?

Rents are going up, there are loads of people on the dole, abortion is being attacked, nurseries are closing — does it really matter that much if someone is called girl instead of a woman?

Actually I don't much care what I'm called — I mind much more about getting support in my union for defending our rights. Some women seem to have their priorities all wrong.

Alison Swain Bolton

A good series

Dear Womens Voice,

The *Why I Became a Socialist* series you are running is by far the best thing in *Womens Voice*.

Each person who has written their story has something to say about this filthy society we live in. Everyone's life is different — and there's nearly always something that I feel is part of my life too.

Mary Shaw Bradford.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK
41 Ellington St., London N7. Tel 01-607 9052

Conference for Women in the Unions

March 27 1982

called by Women's Fightback. About 25 topic workshops in the morning; afternoon workshops grouped by union, aiming to help women organise as women in their union. Followed by film show (*Rosie the Riveter*) and discussion in the early evening, and ending with a bop. All-day creche and kids' events. At Kingsway Princeton College, Sidmouth Street, WC1, starting at 10am.

Open to all women (delegates or otherwise). Registration £3.50 (with reductions) including lunch. Write to Women's Fightback, 41 Ellington Street, London N7 (01-607 9052) for registration, extra leaflets, notes on organising for the conference etc.

Sensitive

Dear Womens Voice,

I thought the poem by Peggy Seeger on your back page last month, *I Want to be an Engineer*, was really good—and it's even better when it's sung. It made an ever greater impression on me as a few days before I saw the film *Rosie the Riveter*. What I particularly liked about this film was the sensitive way it portrayed the women. It made the argument that women not only have to fight for themselves as workers but have to link up with the rest of the working class—ie men.

Doreen Wilkes

**womens
voice**
Womens magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

Feb '82
Issue 60
Price 30p



Harmless fun

Dear Womens Voice,

What killjoys you are. Your very predictable cover on Valentine's Day went down like a lead balloon. Don't you realise that Valentine's Day brings harmless fun to millions of young girls who live out their lives in boring office jobs. What on earth can be wrong with it?

Rosemary Collins
Chelmsford

Men Welcome

Dear Womens Voice,

I thought you would like to know that, like many of our sisters, I was shocked and appalled at the police treatment of the raped woman who appeared on the TV programme.

The next day I joined a protest over it, but I was disgusted to see many men being turned away from this.

Surely we should welcome into our ranks men who feel strongly about the important issue of rape—not discourage them.

Nicky Degreer

DIRTY LINEN

There is still one European state which forbids women to vote: Liechtenstein.

This tiny country borders on Switzerland — the last but one Western state to grant women the vote — which still has some cantons where only men may vote. Liechtenstein was voted entry to the Council of Europe in 1978, on condition that it enfranchised women and abolished the death penalty. But when the general election came round last month Liechtenstein's adult male suffrage system still showed no signs of cracking.

There is not much likelihood of a political issue being made of women's suffrage *inside* the parliament. It appears that nothing much is a political issue in Liechtenstein's parliament: the nine seats are shared between two parties which have been in coalition since 1938.

However, a vigorous feminist campaign took place round the recent election: women produced posters, stage plays and picketed the polling booths. And the issue is not only the vote. Husbands in Liechtenstein still have a number of legal powers over their wives, including the right to decide whether she works, how the children will be educated, and where the family will live.

The feminist campaign has met with an angry male response in a leafletting campaign showing a big bosomed woman carrying a man's head on a plate. Freud would have a name for that. (Fear of castration.)

Recently the pope pronounced that there is marriage but no sex after death. Which sounds rather like death.

The Catholic Church in Chicago has now also decided that marriage *without sex* is forbidden (before death, presumably). And that just sounds like an arbitrary exercise of power. Catholic authorities in Chicago are refusing to marry a couple because the man is paralysed and cannot make love. The authorities say: 'If someone is not

capable of that kind of relationship, he is not capable of marriage.'

If you want to get swept off your feet by Omar Shariff, steer clear of fried egg sandwiches. He has revealed to *Woman's Own* that he was put off Julie Christie because she ate fried egg sandwiches on the set of *Dr Zhivago*. 'Nothing wrong with fried egg sandwiches,' he says 'except they are unfeminine.' (This could add a new dimension to anorexia.)

Julie Christie, on the other hand, can't remember anything very much about Omar Shariff. Not surprising, if he was just sitting there silently assessing her by his own unfathomable standards.

The chairman of the board of the BBC, George Howard, lives in Castle Howard — as seen in the BBC TV series *Brideshead Revisited*. But how does he know when he's home? — 'It feels like home. I think that's how I distinguish it from other people's palaces,' as he explained in the BBC radio series *Great Families of Britain*.

The final episode of soap last month was unusually grim, with several of the major characters abruptly killed off.

But the TV series itself was even more abruptly killed off — its departure is a sad victory for the tireless lobbying of the reactionary and very efficient American 'moral majority' pressure group.



SANDRA

~ a spine-chilling tale ~



Sophie

MARCH 1972 Gill Brown looks back

On the 17 March 1972 a young black woman appeared in court in California. She had already spent 18 months in prison facing the death penalty on charges arising out of a court room shooting in August 1970. A worldwide campaign was underway. 'Free Angela' slogans and badges appeared everywhere.

Angela Davis came from Birmingham, Alabama, the deep south in America. She was brought up in an area known as 'Dynamite Hill', named after activities of white racists in an area, where attacks on black families were commonplace.

She went to university in California and was a pupil of Herbert Marcuse, and later got

a teaching post with the university—from which she was sacked in 1968 because she had joined the Communist Party. The sacking was later contested, but Governor Ronald Reagan fully supported her dismissal.

In January 1970 a white prison guard was killed at Soledad prison. Three young black men, who became known as the 'Soledad Brothers', were charged with his murder. One of the brothers, George Jackson, had served 10 years in prison for an offence committed as a teenager.

During his stay in prison Jackson became a revolutionary, respected amongst his fellow inmates, and a threat to the authorities. Davis had met Jackson and had taken up his case; they exchanged many letters, showing a growing affection between the two. This was later to be debased in the court as the prosecution was to use this as prime evidence against Angela Davis.

On August 7th George Jackson's young brother Jonathan walked into a Marin County Court room, armed with a gun registered in Angela

Davis's name. A gun battle erupted and Jonathan and the judge were both killed. The authorities claimed this was part of a plan to take hostages to be exchanged for George Jackson. No evidence was ever found in support of this.

Angela Davis went on the FBI most wanted list. Many people around the world had no doubt that Jackson had been framed for the prison warden's murder, and that Davis was innocent of any part in the plan. This frame-up was for most people confirmed when George Jackson was shot dead in August 1971 for supposedly 'attempting to break out of prison'.

During the case against Davis the prosecution claimed that her love for George Jackson had led her to take part in this plan. Davis stated that she was on trial because she was black, and a communist. Mass demonstrations took place, and finally on June 2nd she was acquitted by an all-white jury. This was just another example of American justice at work—the list of these overtly political trials in America is endless from Sacco and

Vanzetti to Michael X.

Davis, once freed from prison, became a prominent personality. She toured the world speaking on political injustice and political prisoners throughout the world. Sadly she never condemned the political prisoners in Eastern Europe as she fervently believed that Eastern Europe was socialist and beyond reproach. But what she did highlight for many people was that America was not the 'land of the free', and it's worth remembering that the governor of California during her trial is now the President of the USA.



Angela Davis in 1972

why I became a socialist

Jaki Bell is a nurse and a NUPE member at a hospital in north London. She is 28, married and has two children of 11 and 7. Her own childhood was not very happy, and she describes how that and, later in life, a strike she was involved in led her towards socialist politics.

I was brought up in an overcrowded house in Southgate, north London. There were eight children in our family, and that meant a lot of pressure for my parents. There was never much money—my dad's a builder and my mum did different jobs, homework and night shifts in factories.

There was a lot of aggravation at home. My mum and dad were always arguing, my mum used to hit me. My older sisters had left home, and I had to do loads of housework and take care of the younger ones—but I always wanted to go out and enjoy myself.

I used to bum off school all the time, and then I ran away from home. I met these two blokes in a pub, and they said to go with them. I had sex with one bloke the first night, and then the other bloke the next night. I was only 13, and I didn't really know what was happening.

I went home the next day. I didn't tell my mum where I'd been, but I'd written the address of the blokes in my diary and my mum found it. She told the police, and they went round to visit the blokes.

The police said that I had to go to the station to make a statement. At first I wouldn't say anything, so the police locked me in a cell for a few hours. That really frightened me—I didn't know what they were going on about. At the time I just thought they were kinky, all those questions like 'did you enjoy it?', and I told them I thought they were filthy bastards. Eventually I started crying, and I agreed to make a statement.

The police insisted that I have a 'virginity test'. I had a big argument with the two coppers that came to the house because my period had started and I was embarrassed about being examined. I was forced to go and see this police doctor, but when I got there I said I wasn't going to have the test. Then five big coppers appeared from nowhere—they were going to hold me down.

It wasn't a very nice experience, especially with a police woman watching the whole time as a 'witness'. I was really upset.

There was a real atmosphere at home after that—I couldn't cope with it, so I ran away again. I went to my auntie's, and the next day the police came round and took me down the station. My dad came and said it wouldn't be

advisable for me to be back home. I was taken to a children's home for assessment.

While I was there I had a fight with another girl. She was like the gang leader, everyone had to bow down to her. She'd picked a fight with a mentally disturbed girl—I thought that was unfair.

So I was sent to Middlesex Lodge, a remand centre. It was more like a prison. Everyone had to wear uniform, and you only got one change of clothing a week.

While I was there I had to see a psychiatrist for a court report. I was really nervous and then he started asking me if I had enjoyed sex, so I called him a filthy bastard and walked out. His court report suggested I was maladjusted and had sexual hang-ups. I was nearly 14 then.



After court I went to another remand centre, and then to an approved school in Bristol. I was there for 18 months.

After six months I went out to work. My first job was as a waitress, and I got paid £4.9 shillings a week. I thought it was cheap labour, so I fiddled the till and got the sack. Then I did a machining job in a factory. I had to give my wages in to the approved school and they gave you your pocket money back.

I was at that job until I left the approved school. I went home and it was horrible—it was like no-one cared about me. So I started going out to pubs every night and taking drugs. I had jobs here and there, but I used to

chuck them in when I got fed up. But I never went on the dole—I used to beg, borrow and steal.

After four months I met Stuart, my husband, and three months later we were married. I was just pregnant although I didn't know it at the time.

We lived in two rooms. Then the landlord said he wanted us out for two weeks while he redecorated, and after that the rent was going to go up by £2 a week. I had this big row with him, and we did a moonlight bunk.

We stayed with my sister, then the council put us in a homeless families' place. It was tiny, with no bathroom and a shared toilet. We were there for 18 months. I got so fed up that I used to sit in the council office all day long, and eventually they gave us a flat on the 22nd floor of a tower block.

Stuart and I went through a really bad time. We never had any money, and we could never afford to go out. I felt really down, I never had any new clothes, and I thought Stuart wasn't interested in me anymore. But we sorted it out.

Then we moved here, to a new house, and I got a job at Thorn Electrics. When I'd been there for about a week, we went on strike over the victimisation of a shop steward. I didn't really know what it was about, but I thought it sounded like time off work, so I joined the union and went on strike.

I thought it was just a one day strike, so I went to work after the weekend and found this picket line. I didn't go through it, I stayed to talk to the pickets.

These people from the SWP came down to the picket line. I thought they were a load of weirdos. I couldn't understand what they were so worked up about—it wasn't their fight.

After a week we all went back to work, and I got a lot of aggravation from people who'd not come out. I started talking to the shop stewards, and got involved in the union.

I'd started going out socially with the girls who'd been on strike. Then I met someone from the SWP in a pub, and she talked to me about *everything*. That really helped in the rows I was having with Stuart—I could explain what I meant, not just row. I started going to SWP meetings—but I never said a word.

After a while I felt I'd had enough at home, so I just packed a bag and left Stuart and the kids. I spent the nights at the Ford's picket line, they were on strike then. It was really great—spent all my time talking to the women, the wives, who were there supporting the blokes.

I went home after a few days and talked everything out with Stuart. He started coming to the pub to meet the people from the SWP. I joined at a meeting when I felt the speaker was talking directly to me—suddenly it all made sense. He said everything I'd always wanted to say, but couldn't. Stuart joined about six months afterwards.

I think I've always been a socialist at a basic level. But I always felt that I was on my own, that I was a bit mad. Then I found that there's other people who think the same, and if we all fight together we can change things. When I joined the SWP I felt that I 'belonged' for the first time in my life. It was like a weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

WHERE WE STAND

INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS ACTION

The workers create all the wealth under capitalism. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

REVOLUTION NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed as the established Labour and trade union leaders say. It has to be overthrown.

THERE IS NO PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

The structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against the workers. The working class needs an entirely different kind of state—a workers' state based on councils of workers delegates and a workers' militia. At most parliamentary activity can be used to make propaganda against the present system. Only the mass action of the workers themselves can destroy the system.

INTERNATIONALISM

The struggle for socialism is part of a world-wide struggle. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose everything which turns workers from one country against those from other countries. We oppose racialism and imperialism. We oppose all immigration controls. We support the fight of black people and other oppressed groups to organise their own defence. We support all genuine national liberation movements. The experience of Russia demonstrates that a socialist revolution cannot survive in isolation in one country. Russia, China and Eastern Europe are not socialist but state capitalist. We support the struggles of workers in these countries against the bureaucratic ruling class. We are for real social, economic and political equality of women. We are for an end to all forms of discrimination against homosexuals.

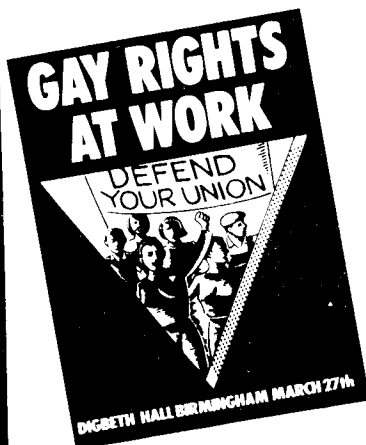
THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To achieve socialism the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by activity in the mass organisations of the working class. We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. We urge all those who agree with our policies to join with us in the struggle to build the revolutionary party.

Small ads

WOMEN AND UNEMPLOYMENT — a cause for concern. Conference on how unemployment affects women and how we can fight it. 27-28 March, Newcastle. Details from Newcastle Centre for the Unemployed, 2 Jesmond Road, Newcastle, (0632 812242).

Open Meeting organised by Doctors for a Woman's Choice on Abortion. Saturday 20 March, 10am, John Barnes Library, 275 Camden Road, London N7. All welcome. Details: Dr Max Mayer 01-287 5086.



Gay Rights at Work Conference. 27 March in Birmingham. For details write to PO Box 82, London E2.

If you want to help produce Womens Voice phone 01 986 3672.

For details of the Socialist Workers Party, fill in this form and send to: National Secretary, SWP, PO Box 82, London E2.

NAME
 ADDRESS

 TELEPHONE
 TRADE UNION

And another thing

by Susan Pearce



If I were Princess Diana, I too should be deeply offended to find my near-naked body splattered over the pages of the international press.

As I'm not, I can sit back and cackle with malicious Republican glee at the waves of outrage bouncing vainly around our fair isles.

'The Princess,' said Michael Brown, Tory MP for Brigg and Scunthorpe, 'is still a very young woman with all the pressures of motherhood. Anyone in her position would be extremely distressed.'

Makes your heart bleed, doesn't it.

In fact it equals the time the prime minister declared she was deeply concerned about the plight of the unemployed.

I'm making too much fuss though. Really. The Royal couple, like thousands of young parents-to-be, have only taken a short break, 'for a bit of peace... to prepare Diana for the birth.'

And I have every sympathy with them. After all, they've had to spend the whole of the last two months at Sandringham in company with the Royal Family. I bet you'd need a break after that.

And you must agree those pictures were thoroughly distasteful. After all, with unemployment figures and hypothermia deaths soaring, it's being rammed down our throats that Cheeky Charlie and the saintly Diana can afford to choose a different patch of sunshine every two months.

It's currently reckoned that it costs *thirteen thousand million pounds* (yes, that's £13,000,000,000) to keep the unemployed in Britain—that's in benefits and lost tax revenue. If you divide that by the real number of unemployed, you get £26 a week. Each, that is.

Now these figures are approximate, but not even the most bloated bigot of a newspaper editor could fail to see the gap between £26 and the millions of pounds it costs us to keep the Royals loafing about.

Fear not, there is a giggle in the gloom. The *Daily Mirror* now has to re-plan all its July issues—how can they scream 'Exclusive! Royal Baby—First Pictures'? (I must admit to some surprise that no-one thought to take a telephoto ultrascanner along to the Bahamas.)

And Rupert 'Dirty Digger' Murdoch must be really sick. His heartwarming pictures of the 'People's Princess' have backfired in a hail of angry Palace grapeshot; the knight-hood, surely so near after the thoroughly reasonable, firm and businesslike way he has been dealing with bolshie trade unionists at the *Times*, can now only be faintly glimpsed in the great New Year's Honours List in the sky.

Plus it turns out that the *really* naughty pictures were bought for huge sums by German magazines—from the *Express* (owned by vacuous Victor Matthews). So much for Victor's heated defence of the privacy of the individual. Victor (he's a Lord already so that's one less thing for the poor dear to worry about) must be tying himself in knots to uphold public manners, accept large sums for the pictures and conveniently forget that the Trafalgar House group owns the *Star* as well as the *Express*, all at the same time.

All in all, I enjoyed those pictures. It creases me up to think that, in spite of the fact that more people go to church every week than attend football matches, even the most palsied monarchist media-bum can't try to persuade us we are witnessing a re-enactment of the immaculate conception. A great stride forward in the field of test-tube babies, perhaps, but certainly not a virgin birth.

The great invasion

The late 1930s and the early war period saw struggles by working class people on many fronts—against high rents, against fascism, for the equal right to civil defence. Phil Piratin, Communist MP for Stepney from 1945 to 1950 tells the story, in his book 'Our Flag Stays Red', of organising in the east end of London, whether on the streets or in the council chamber.

These two extracts tell of the rent strikes of 1938/39 and the famous invasion of the Savoy Hotel in 1940.

THE CONTRAST between the shelter conditions for the rich and the poor called for exposure. This was done. When the blitz had continued for some days, we in Stepney took the initiative. One Saturday evening we gathered some seventy people, among them a large sprinkling of children, and we took them to the Savoy Hotel. We had heard from building workers of the well-constructed and luxurious shelter which had been built for their guests. We decided that what was good enough for the Savoy Hotel parasites was reasonably good enough for Stepney workers and their families. We had an idea that the hotel management would not see eye to eye with this proposition, so we organised the 'invasion' without their consent. In fact, there was some effort to stop us, but it was

only a matter of seconds before we were downstairs, and the women and children came streaming in afterwards. While the management and their lackeys were filled with consternation, the visitors from East London looked round in amazement. 'Shelters', they said, 'why we'd love to live in such places!' Structurally, the lower ground floor had been strengthened with steel girders and by other means. But the appearance of the place! There were three sections. In each section there were cubicles. Each section was decorated in a different colour, pink, blue and green. All the bedding, all the linen, was, of course, the same uniform colour. Armchairs and deck chairs were strewn around. There were several 'nurses'—you could easily recognise them. One happened to be standing around and she was wearing the usual nurse's white outfit, with a big red cross on her bosom.

We had earlier appointed our marshals to take care of all our people. They immediately made contact with the waiters, and asked for water and other such provisions. The waiters were most helpful.

We were expecting trouble; we knew that the management was not going to allow us to sit there, just so easily. After a few minutes the police came. A plain-clothes officer said to me, 'What is it all about?' I explained, he said: 'We will have to get you out.' I said: 'OK—I'm curious to see what you do with the women and children.' (The blitz was on.)

I said: 'Some of these men have seen mass murder, God help you if you touch the women and children'. He wasn't very happy. They tried intimidation, such as calling for identity cards, but we sat there.

The management was in a dilemma. They urged the police to throw us out. We were able to impress the management that any such attempt would meet with some opposition, and that some of his guests in the dining room were likely to be disturbed. The manager left. He agreed to ignore us; that was what we wanted.

Then we settled down. The first thing the marshals did was to call for refreshments. Many of our people had sandwiches with them, and we therefore

asked one of the waiters to provide tea and bread and butter. The waiter explained that they never served tea and bread and butter, and in any case the minimum price for anything was 2s.6d. We said to the waiter: 'We will pay you 2d a cup of tea and 2d a portion of bread and butter, the usual prices in a Lyons' restaurant.' Three or four of the waiters went into a huddle, with one in particular doing the talking. He was evidently convincing the others. How they convinced the chef and management, I do not know, but within a few minutes, along came the trollies and the silver trays laden with pots of tea and bread and butter. The waiters were having the time of their lives. They were obviously neglecting their duties, standing around, chuckling and playing with the children.

The next day this news was flashed across the world. The contrast was made in bold headlines between the terrible conditions of the shelters in Stepney and the luxury conditions of the shelters of West London. As a result, the Home Office took special steps to improve the conditions in the Tilbury shelter and others. But this militant action led to further developments. A demand had been made for the Tubes to be made available as shelters. The Home Secretary, Mr Herbert Morrison, said that this was impossible. The only valid reason he gave was that children might fall on to the line and be killed. This was not a very impressive argument, when you consider the hundreds who were being killed because they had no shelter. The police were given instructions to allow no one to use the Tubes for shelter. Loiterers were moved on by the police. The Communist Party decided that the Tubes should be open for shelter. This was done.

Two or three days after the Savoy Hotel incident preparations were made to break open the gates of the Tubes which the police were closing immediately the air-raid siren was sounded. At a number of stations these actions were taken. Various implements such as crowbars happened to be available, and while the police stood on duty guarding the gates, they were very quickly swept aside by the crowds, the crowbars brought into action, and the people went down. That night tens of thousands sprawled on the Tube platforms. The next day Mr Herbert Morrison, solemn as an owl, rose to make his world-shattering announcement; the Government had reconsidered its opinion in the matter of the Tubes being used as shelters. From now onwards, they would be so employed. They were expected to accommodate 250,000. Arrangements would be made for refreshment and first-aid facilities. Later, bunks were being installed. 'The Government had reconsidered the matter.' They had, indeed! They had been forced to by the resolute action of the people of London which they had been powerless to prevent.

Our Flag Stays Red, by Phil Piratin MP with a foreword by William Gallacher MP, price £1.75, is available from Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4. Please add 10 per cent for postage.



Ballad of paragraph 218

Please, doctor, I've missed my monthly ...

Why, this is simply great.
If I may put it bluntly
You're raising our birthrate.

Please, doctor, now we're homeless ...

But you'll have a bed somewhere
So best put your feet up, moan less
And force yourself to grin and bear.

You'll make a simply splendid little mummy
Producing cannonfodder from your tummy
That what your body's for, and you know it, what's more
And it's laid down by law
And now get this straight:
You'll soon be a mother, just wait.

But, doctor, no job or dwelling:

My man would find kids the last straw ...

No, rather a new compelling Objective to work for.

But, doctor ... Really, Frau Griebel

I ask myself what this means
You see, our State needs people
To operate our machines.
You'll make a simply splendid little mummy
Producing factory fodder from your tummy
That's what your body's for, and you know it, what's more
And it's laid down by law
And now get this straight:
You'll soon be a mother, just wait.

But, doctor, there's such unemployment ...

I can't follow what you say.
You're all out for enjoyment
Then grumble at having to pay.
If we make a prohibition
You bet we've a purpose in mind.
Better recognise your condition
And once you've agreed to put yourselves in our hands, you'll
find

You're a simply splendid mummy
Producing cannof fodder from your tummy
That's what your body's for, and you know it, what's more
And it's laid down by law
And now get this straight:
You'll soon be a mother, just wait.

BERTOLT BRECHT

