

womens voice

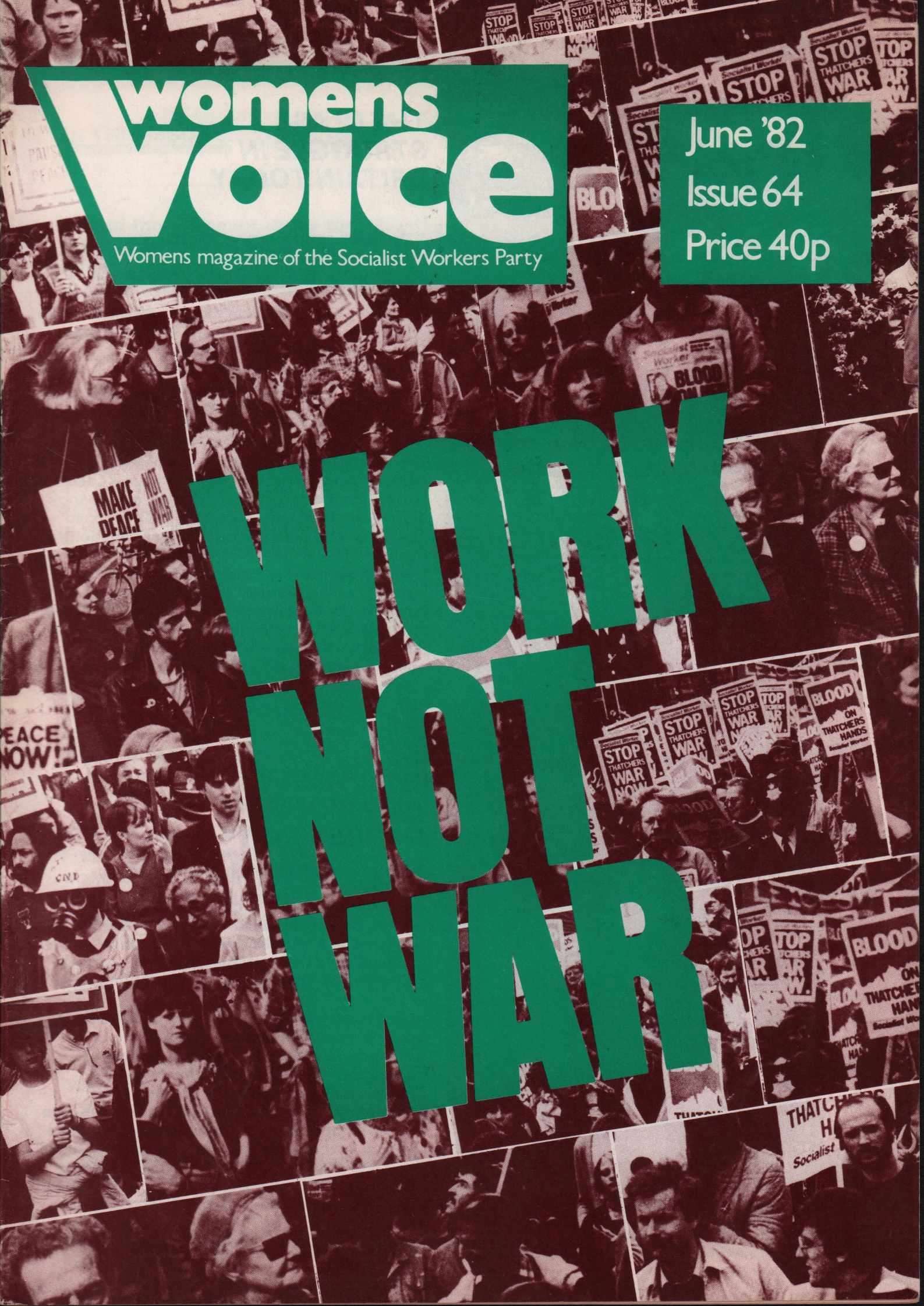
Womens magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

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WORK NOT WAR





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THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN BRITAIN TODAY

- 1 The tenth anniversary of Pentonville.
- 2 Updating the downturn.
- 3 Will Arthur Scargill go the same way as Hugh Scanlon?
- 4 The way forward—Broad Lefts or Rank and File groups.
- 5 Is the Communist Party finished?
- 6 What does the Labour left do now?
- 7 Women's liberation and the working class.
- 8 Will the downturn ever end?
- 9 The black struggle a year after the riots.

The record levels of unemployment plus the demoralising experience of the previous Labour Government have produced a crisis of militancy among workers, that, in its turn, has produced confusion and paralysis among many sections of the left.

In this course we examine and explain the passivity of the workers' movement and we compare the fight this time with the height of the struggle last time—the massive strike to free the imprisoned Pentonville dockers. We go on to analyse how the Left is shaping up to the situation and whether we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

THE FAMILY AND WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

- 1 The origins of the family and women's oppression.
- 2 The pre capitalism family.
- 3 How early capitalism began to destroy the family—and why it did not succeed.
- 4 The modern capitalist family.
- 5 The Women's movement—the last fifteen years.

In this course we attempt to re-establish one of the most misunderstood of theoretical traditions—the Marxist analysis of women's oppression. Despite the fact that Marx and Engels developed one of the first and most penetrating analyses of the role of the family and women's oppression, it has become fashionable to decry the contribution of revolutionaries to the liberation of women.

We intend to look at that tradition, and to show that it has the power, as no other set of ideas have the power, to set in train a successful revolution which will liberate women.

IN THIS ISSUE ...

Tale of three women under the shadow of Uncle Sam: Nigel Harris traces the story of three generations of women reflecting life on the Mexican border. pages 11, 12 and 13.



The wrong route to the right to work. We look at the experience of the fight for jobs in Britain today and take a critical look at the growth of reformism expressed in the women's movement in the forthcoming 'Womens Right to Work' event in London this month. pages 14-15



Why the Tories need Tebbit's Bill and how we begin to fight it. We look at what the implications of the Bill are, and how we can begin to organise against it. pages 16-17



Another view of 'Sweet Freedom'. Last month two women sent in their views of Anna Coote and Beatrix Campbell's book. This month a Socialist Workers Party member replies with our views on the book. page 20.



The Falklands war/fighting the enemy at home. page 8

CONTENTS**FEATURES**

Tale of three women under the shadow of Uncle Sam. Pages 11, 12 and 13.
Wrong route to the right to work pages 14 and 15.
Fighting the Tebbit anti-union laws pages 16 and 17

REGULARS

Health; Disciplined for refusing to administer ECT page 19
Reviews; Womens Voice view of 'Sweet Freedom' page 20
Six weeks on strike at Kigass page 4
The aftermath of the Liverpool Typists strike page 5
Hospital workers fight for pay, Mary Williams speaks to Manchester nurses page 6
Why I became a Socialist page 25
and much more ...

Back cover drawing by Jayne Spittle

Articles, letters, news, for next issue to reach us by 16 June

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Wanted—delegations and blacking

APPROXIMATELY 56 women at Kigass in Leamington and 30 at Abex in Warwick have been out on strike for seven weeks now, for union recognition.

The management still refuse to negotiate with the AUEW and in an attempt to isolate individuals the management sent letters to many strikers' homes, stating the amount of money they would be paid if they returned to work, which meant a £8-10 rise in some cases. The letter had little effect and only a couple of women went back to work.

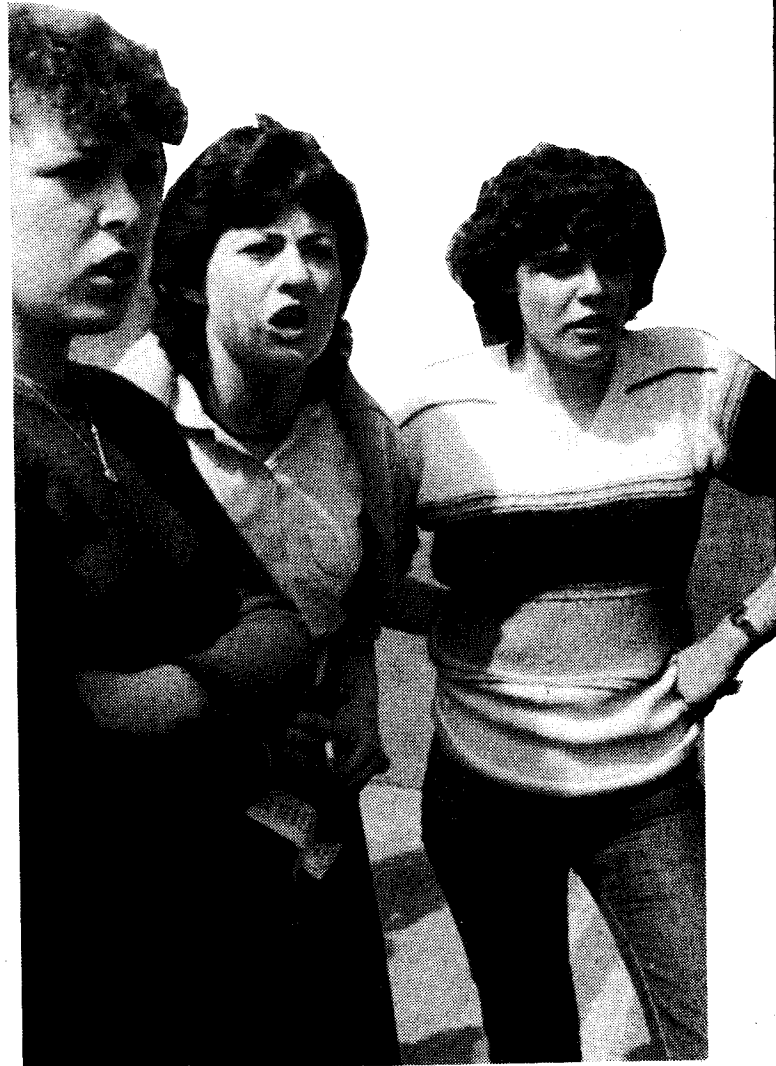
All the women have been feeling the pinch through lack of money. Their strike pay finally came through at the end of the sixth week on strike and many of the women have found themselves in debt.

Iris described the difficulties to be faced, but added that it wasn't so different than normal. 'It's not really that much harder coping on the little we're getting in, when you remember just how small the wage was we were getting inside.' She also appreciated the difficulties of being out on strike. 'I never used to take any notice of strikes: in future I shall feel with them and hope they win whatever they're out for.'

The other women have been very supportive, understanding the extra problems of coping as a one parent family. *They had a collection for Iris, out of the five pounds they received from the strike fund; the only money they'd had in several weeks.*

Iris explained. 'It really gave me a lift. Everybody seems to care about everybody else, instead of just thinking about themselves.'

The women held a demonstration in town on Saturday afternoon. It was fairly well supported but that support is slow in turning to practical support. There is a tendency amongst the



Kigass women on the picket line

strikers to 'leave things' to the union officials. One striker Mary Gibert added: 'They haven't been doing an awful lot. They seem to be saying the same things week after week.'

However, the strike is having some effect. The Kigass factory was closed this Saturday morning and the firm have had to withdraw from an international trade fair.

Many strikers seem resigned to the strike being long and drawn out. Mary added: 'The strike will go on for a long time and I'm prepared to stick it out. I don't see the point in going back after being out this long'. Iris agreed: 'I wasn't really that interested in the first place, but you've got to support your mates. I've got more

interest in unions now—it's the boss who's being awkward. It's no good giving up everything you've stood out here for.'

What is needed now is support both financial and industrial. We need to make sure Kigass and Abex goods are blacked.

But the only way this can be achieved is by the women getting out and making sure it happens. It would also alleviate the tendency to boredom that creeps in when you sit tight on the picket lines all day with little other activity.

Send donations and the much needed messages of support to: J Patstone, 13 South Terrace, Witnash, Warwicks.

**Maureen Casey,
Leamington SWP.**

Liverpool Typists learn the hard way

LAST JULY 400 typists, secretaries and machine operators took the decision to go on all-out strike for an outstanding grading claim. A strike against both their low pay and the lack of opportunity to move between grades.

Most women had never been on strike before, many had no tradition of activity in their union NALGO. Almost all stuck the strike till its bitter end in December.

The strike eventually ended with talks handed over to arbitration. Many were bitter at the settlement that guaranteed nothing — but were forced to accept the deal due to financial pressure, the isolation of their action nationally and the loss of faith that they could possibly win.

Isobel Heskith described her feeling after the return to work: 'It reminded me of post-natal depression — you know — before the strike NALGO gave us so much attention, they cared for us, gave us all the encouragement to take the action we needed to win our claim. At the end, first the talk of arbitration hit us, then in weeks we were voting for a return to work, then in days, wham! we were back at work, after all those months of strike. It took me a while to make the adjustment.'

In April the results of the arbitration were announced — and as expected — they meant nothing to the majority of women who'd fought so determinedly for their claim.

May Sutton and Isobel Heskith both members of the strike committee during the strike explained how they thought the

Liverpool City Council had got away with defeating their strike.

May remembered how suddenly 'arbitration' became the only 'solution' to the dispute. 'We didn't want it. It appeared out of the blue. We felt we had Trevor Jones (Liberal leader of the city council) by the scruff of the neck. He had Shirley Williams coming up to Crosby — the alliance was trying to keep a clean public face and it didn't want to be in the middle of a protracted dispute.

'I argued against arbitration — but the meeting was against us. Someone said that arbitration was the only way out. We'd been told that the NEC was going to leave us in the lurch.'

May continued: 'The executive should have pointed out the importance of this dispute. They should have needed other areas to take action in support of us. We shouldn't have to go to the NEC to get permission to do things. By the time we went through all the bureaucratic nonsense, the hot striking moment of taking action was over. We should be able to say "today we will do this," and it will have an effect.'

Isobel agreed: 'We should have been more forceful, we should have voted for escalation and then done it.'

On the plus side, although many were disillusioned with the final outcome of the strike, the women thought that the union organisation was much stronger now. Ten of the 12 polytechnic stewards committees are ex-strikers and more women are interested in the union since the strike.

Isobel summed up her feelings: 'The real result is confidence in your own ability. Even though we lost, we fought when no-one else would raise their heads on pay.'

Sadly, it is through defeat, that the Liverpool Typists learnt the lessons of the need for effective and determined action, and the need to control your own strike, but nonetheless, typists in other councils should take lessons to heart and have much to learn from the experience of the Liverpool Typists.

Working to rule in Lothian

IT IS now a year since the Liverpool Typists inspired us with their ability to organise and fight back. They went on strike in spite of the hypocritical lip-service given to the lower paid by NALGO officials.

Clerical workers in NALGO are the most undervalued and degraded workers in the union and the endless round of clerical workers' regrading claims marks a deep-seated anger and frustration at the increasing poverty in which they are forced to live.

In several local authorities there has been successful industrial action to win local regrading claims. In Lothian the clerical workers got so fed up with endless promises of 'wait and see' that their patience broke last month and they started a 'work-to-rule' which involves doing only 'simple, repetitive' tasks which is the job description given to them by management.

Management have tried every trick in the book to call off their action, but so far their efforts have failed.

But the biggest threat comes from our own union branch officers. When confidence is low, as it is among all workers at the moment, the impact of your own union leaders telling you not to 'rock the boat' is devastating.

They have shown, right from the start, just how much they care about low paid staff. As Susan Mari a receptionist said:

'It's been a complete balls-up on both the management and union side, neither of them are really interested.'

When the original recommendations for the work to rule were drawn up, they excluded a large percentage of the members affected by the regrading proposals, immediately destroying any potential for a united campaign.

They held mass meetings to discuss a ballot for industrial action, but gave no clear guidance or leadership. They followed up with a letter saying that any industrial action would entail financial

hardship and would have no guarantee of success. Finally they have allowed three weeks for members to give in their ballot forms, inevitably taking the steam out of any anger which still remains.

Jean Russell is a clerical typist. She is angry at the messy way their claim has been handled and the distortions by both management and the union to disguise the fact that the negotiations have not produced any more money.

As Jean put it: 'To tell the truth we've been told so many different things and now I'm so confused, that I don't know why we're taking industrial action any more.'

This is indicative of the support clerical workers can expect. A more vivid example was the way that our service conditions officer reacted to threats of disciplinary action against clerical workers in one of the social work offices where no cover action was taking place over unfilled posts. He attended their meeting and persuaded them to call off their action until after the local elections so as not to jeopardise Labour's chances of re-election.

He did this even though the rest of the office was ready to walk out if any disciplinary action was taken. Not that it did much good as we now have a hung council in Lothian. It is precisely this sort of sell-out and false loyalty that led to the failure of the trade union leadership to call on the membership to fight off the cuts here last summer. No wonder Labour voters became disillusioned and looked elsewhere.

The lessons are clear. We need to rebuild our confidence through independent action. Here's hoping that the clerical workers stick to their guns and are backed by the rest of the workforce. That would do more to build up our confidence, to fight off attacks on our jobs and services than all the mealy-mouthed statements from councillors and trade union officials put together.

Sylvia Crick
Maureen Watson

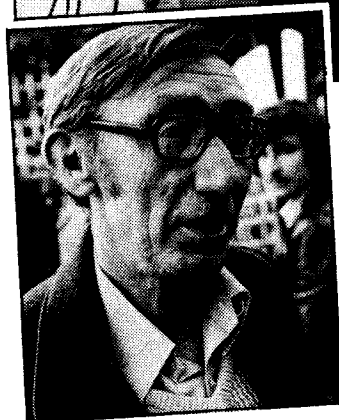
All out action needed to win

'SACK Thatcher, Save Jobs', was the message on the NUPE banners outside Prestwich Hospital Manchester on 19 May. It was one of the hundreds of picket lines throughout the country joining the one-day national health workers' strike for their 12 per cent pay claim.

It was the first time many of the workers at Prestwich Hospital had ever been on strike. Deborah expressed the feelings of the nursing auxiliaries. 'We have always been told that we shouldn't strike. But there comes a time when we have no alternative. A lot of hospital workers live below the poverty line and we will only increase the suffering of patients and staff if we allow the government to walk all over us. I have been an auxiliary for seven years and recently have had to work harder than ever before. As vacancies are left unfilled I find myself rushing around all day, lifting patients by myself, and doing jobs that I'm not paid or qualified to do, like giving enemas. We work anti-social hours, 12 hour shifts for three to four days with three to four day breaks. The government is offering us 4 per cent and 6 per cent for nurses. That won't even put £1.50 per week in my pay packet.'

United action needed

The feeling against the government's pay offer is not just confined to auxiliaries, it includes nurses, porters' kitchen staff, domestic staff, ambulancemen and technicians. Their day of united action has proved to them and the public that hospital workers can have an all out strike without putting patients at risk.



Mike Griffin

'Today's strike has been a great success. Throughout the country the members of all the unions NUPE, ASTMS, COHSE and NALGO have acted because they know the government's offer is seriously undervaluing the work that we do. As a third year student nurse I get £49 per week take home pay. That is the same wage as I got when I started because we lost five hours' pay when we started working a 35 hour week instead of 40 hours,' said Trisha.

Prestwich Hospital's branch of COHSE did not support the national strike because they thought it too extreme. Instead they decided to have a two hour strike and demonstration the following day. 'Many of us will support COHSE's two hour strike and go on the demonstration because we need to show that strike action can only be effective if we stick together.'

If the government see that we are divided they will hold out until we are exhausted from

fighting each other. We need to be united so we can build solidarity with other unions and keep the public with us. That is how we are going to win this strike,' said Cathy.

Building that solidarity is going to involve overcoming opposition from both hospital workers and the public. Already the strike is raising the issue of the billions of pounds that are being spent on the futile war in the Falkland Islands when workers at home are living on subsistence wages. Normam Tebbit's Employment Bill is due to become law next month making it harder for other unions like the miners to strike in support of hospital workers.

'Obviously we are aware of the problems' said Cathy, but we wouldn't have come out on strike unless we were prepared to build the solidarity necessary to win the strike. We have won a lot of confidence from this one day's action and we will use it to spread this strike to every pocket of support we can find.'

Miners show solidarity

'Low wages are like the measles, they are infectious. There are over half a million workers in the health service, if the government can hold down their pay it will affect all of us,' Mike Griffin

lodge secretary of a South Wales pit, explained.

Last week the South Wales miners voted to recommend strike action in support of the nurses' claim. Mike continued: 'But the health workers' unions will have to sort themselves out, it would be a bit ridiculous if we were on strike and half the hospitals were at work. We can support the hospital workers but we can't fight instead of them.'

Health workers must learn the lessons from the civil servants' strike last year. The pay claim is bound to founder unless all out action develops. It is clear that the union leadership is not prepared to call out the membership. Of course we should agitate in health union branches for them to do so, but in reality such action will have to be forced from the bottom upwards, not the other way round.

The civil servants waited in vain last year for their union leaders to make a move. Some offices did take action but the action failed to be generalised.

The government have declared war on the health workers and the only way to win will be the building of a national strike from below.

If areas can be won to taking all out action these could be the stepping stones to a country-wide stoppage.

Mary Williams

NEWS

Friends of Najat Chafee keep up the pressure

The friends of Najat Chafee organised a march through Harlesden and Willesden on Saturday 15 May. More than a hundred people joined the lively and colourful march which met generous support from the shoppers in the crowded streets.

With Najat and her son Mohssim at the head of the march were Felicia Yates and her baby. Felicia's husband, Reggie, has been subject to continuous harassment from the immigration authorities.

Najat's and Reggie's cases highlight the racist and sexist nature of the immigration and nationality laws, and their cruel effects on individual people's lives.

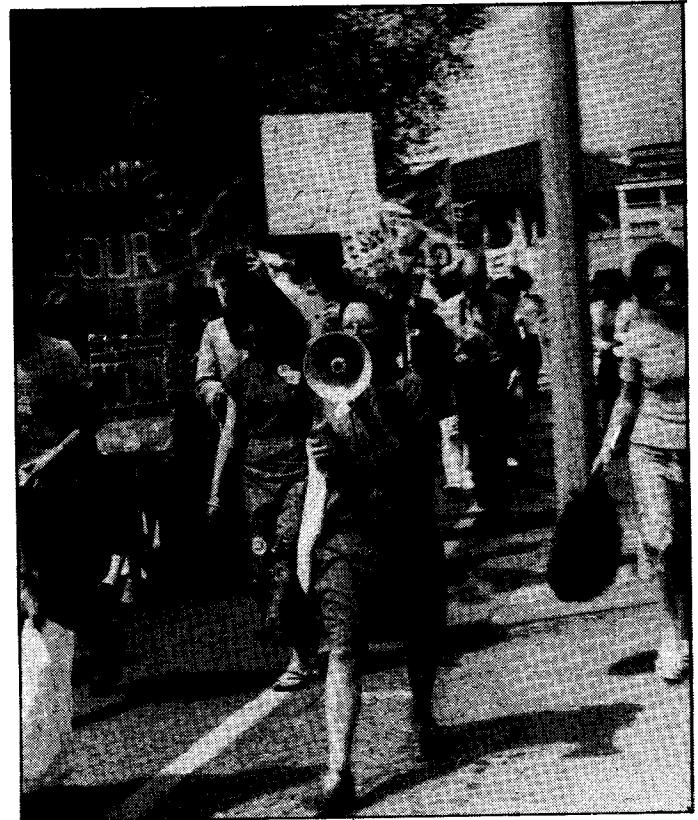
Najat came to London in 1979 after marrying a man who was settled here. She left him because of his violence, and he has since been deported to Morocco. The Home Office refused Najat permission to stay, although she has shown that she can make an independent life for herself and Mohssim (who is a British citizen). She has no rights as an independent person. Her status

under the law depends entirely on her husband.

Reggie's wife is British, but she cannot give him the right to live here. His grandfather was British (white) which ought to make him a 'patrial', but because Reggie is black, the Home Office have decided that his grandparents' marriage cannot have been a valid one — they know what kind of relationship British men had with black women in colonial days in Ghana they say.

Najat's appeal against the Home Office's ruling in her case was heard at Thanet House opposite London's Law Courts on 7 May. There were many other appeals heard on the same day, and most of those appealing had no one to support them. Their appeals were dismissed then and there. The Friends of Najat Chafee had organised a picket of the hearing and some were allowed into the public gallery. Her appeal has not yet been decided. It could be four to six weeks before she hears the result. The campaign pressure will be kept up until she wins the right to remain here.

For details of the campaign, contact: Friends of Najat



Picture : Lucy Cox, Willesden SWP

Chafee c/o 138 Minet Avenue, NW10. Reggie Yates Campaign, c/o MIERU 439 Harrow Road, W10.

Sarah Cox Harlesden, SWP

STOP PRESS

Najat's appeal for leave to stay in this country has been refused by the Home Office. She has a further right of appeal to the

Minister of State. The success of this appeal will depend on the strength of the campaign in support of Najat, so the Friends of Najat Chafee are redoubling their efforts to ensure that she wins the right to stay here.

Messages of support and donations to: Friends of Najat Chafee, 138 Minet Avenue, London, NW10.

Strike for the right to maternity leave

Lorraine Cleaver turned up for work as usual on Thursday 1 April at the 'Spotted Dog', a large Berni Inn in Forest Gate, East London. She was told by the management to go home and that she wasn't to come back that week.

Lorraine and her mother had been working at the 'Spotted Dog' for years. On the morning before the incident Lorraine, who was pregnant, felt sick and couldn't go to work. She got a doctor's certificate and management were told that Lorraine would be coming back to work on Thursday. Lorraine's mother confirmed this on Wednesday evening.

So Lorraine was naturally puzzled and upset to be turfed out on Thursday — in fact on Tuesday morning,

Mrs Bell, the manageress had boasted to other staff that she was going to ring Lorraine and tell her that she couldn't come back to work.

But if the managers reckoned they could get away with this kind of treatment they had begun to learn different by midday Thursday.

On being told to leave, Lorraine informed the shop steward and within minutes every worker at the inn, which employs 25 people, had stopped work and formed a picket outside. They knew Lorraine was being picked on because she was pregnant.

The customers, nearly all regulars, sympathised with Lorraine's case, and respected the picket line, some of them joined it. Deliveries from Birds Eye and Watneys,

both TGWU drivers, were easily turned away. A shop over the road sent over pots of tea and cakes. The 'Spotted Dog' did no trade that lunchtime ...

The management were forced to have a meeting with the workers. At first the managers were not prepared to pay Lorraine for her days off sick. They also made much of Lorraine's pregnancy, saying that they would put her 'behind the scenes'; though she had always done bar work and waitressing.

The manageress said she wouldn't have anyone walking about with a maternity dress. Her reasons were a little unclear to Lorraine and the others. Does she think that pregnancy is a disease? Does she think it's catching? I wonder how she

and Mr Bell got into the world?

Well the workers at the 'Spotted Dog' made it clear what they thought. The managers were forced to take Lorraine back, pay her full wages for her days off sick and drop all threats of changing her job.

Lorraine will now be able to remain at work, unharassed through to eleven weeks before her baby is due, and for her job to be kept open for her up to 29 weeks after the baby is born. She cannot be moved to another job unless she agrees to it.

Lorraine's case shows us that many 'rights' from maternity pay to equal pay, although on the statute books, are worthless unless fought for and defended collectively at work.

The problem is at home

THE murderous death toll in the Falklands war is the latest horror committed by the Thatcher Government. As we argued in our last issue, all socialists should oppose the Tory decision to kill and maim in defence of something called 'sovereignty' in islands 8,000 miles away.

For more than 30 years successive British Governments have conceded that eventually the Falklands will have to become part of Argentina — that they remain British is as ludicrous as arguing that the Scilly Isles should be Argentinian.

But all commonsense has been abandoned as the Tory death ride in the Falklands has got under way.

And the results for socialists and trade unionists in both Britain and Argentina are as we predicted last month. In Argentina the Galtieri regime is now genuinely popular for the first time — after all they're leading national resistance against an invasion of islands that every Argentinian regards like people in Britain regard the Isle of Wight.

Even if the Galtieri regime collapses it will probably be replaced by another even more right wing military regime committed to pursuing the war more vigorously.

The Tory invasion has strengthened the hand of all the elements in Argentina who oppose trade union organisation and the spreading of socialist ideas.

And in Britain the situation is all too similar. The Thatcher Government, after three years of presiding over disaster after disaster for ordinary working people, is now actually popular.

Newspapers like the Sun have been able to indulge in an orgy of jingoism which hasn't been seen in Britain since the start of the First World War in 1914.

There is even widespread talk from leading Tories about an autumn General Election designed to break the SDP/Liberal Alliance and return the Tories for another five years.

The response of the Labour and trade union movement has been weak, divided and pathetic. Michael Foot, once the inveterate peace mongerer, once the leader of the left in the Labour Party, has become a weak and feeble supporter of the Tories.

From the day he stood up in the House of Commons just after the invasion and supported the sending of the Task Force, he abandoned his own past.

And he's not been the only one. In the TUC, the support for the Task Force from right wingers like Terry Duffy of the AUEW is no surprise. But among the other vocal supporters of Thatcher's war is Moss Evans of the TGWU — once seen as the left wing leader of Britain's biggest union.

Their collapse is complete. From Tony Benn and a small group of MPs the response has been better. It's very welcome that some MPs were prepared to stand up against the war, however equivocal and ambiguous some of their statements.

But the logic of electoral politics has them in its grasp. Last year Tony Benn went to every union conference arguing for an increase in democracy in the Labour Party and for his own candidacy as deputy leader. He organised and led a long and tough campaign and came within an inch of victory.

But on this far more difficult and deeply unpopular issue he has been far more circumspect. A few demonstrations, a few speeches — that's all. Nothing like the campaign that is needed.

The effort to build a campaign against Thatcher's war in the Falklands is part of the effort to build a campaign against the rest of Tory policies.

There are no short cuts — it will take time and effort and patience to rebuild a strong, organised shop floor with the strength and above all the confidence to take on every aspect of Tory policies and the society which created those policies.



IN Bradford in the third week of May, an Asian family was fire-bombed, staff working in a radical bookshop attacked, and two black teenagers beaten up as they left a disco.

A local journalist walked out of his front door one evening to see white children wielding sticks and chasing Asian kids of their own age down the street.

'What are you doing?' he shouted. 'We're playing paki bashing,' was an excited nine-year old's reply.

In Leeds Crown Court that same week, the jury in the Bradford 12 trial heard policeman after policeman deny any knowledge of such attacks. They also denied knowledge of the Home Office report of racist attacks, even though Bradford was one of the areas studied for that report.

The Bradford 12 are twelve Asian youths charged with conspiracy to manufacture explosives after police discovered two crate loads of petrol bombs in a Bradford field last July.

If found guilty the 12 face life imprisonment. The Act under which they've been charged—the 1883 Explosives Act—is normally used only in IRA bomb cases. It's being used here because the police hope to make an example of the Bradford 12; to deter others from fighting racism.

The Twelve's defence is simple; *self defence is no offence*. Tarlochan Gatuara, the eldest of the twelve, has admitted he made the petrol bombs. His statement to the police explained why: 'On Saturday 11 July, 1981, I made petrol bombs in defence of our community, which was constantly under attack from the National Front, the British Movement and Column 88.'

That afternoon there was a phone call to the 'Fourth Idea' bookshop, from Daleys bookshop saying that coachloads of skinheads were coming to Bradford.

These rumours of the skinhead attack came just one week after the Southall riot. And although they were only rumours, black youth in Bradford had every reason to believe them. There had been

Self defence is no offence



dozens of racist attacks in the Bradford area — arson, threats, stabbings, and assaults on property — all the work of whites, many of them skinheads.

There was every reason for Asian youth to prepare to defend themselves. The police refused to accept this, they say the petrol bombs were made for a riot that night; that Tarlochan Gatuara and the others intended to use them against the police and large shops in the city centre. That is why they won't admit there are racist attacks in Bradford. The only evidence the police have to support this view are 'confessions' extracted from some defendants — after interrogations lasting for up to three days.

And the defence say the twelve were brow beaten with threats and with violence. One was told he'd be deported if he didn't co-operate, another that he'd be charged with conspiracy to murder policemen. Tariq Ali who, like Tarlochan Gatuara, wrote his own statement saying the devices were meant for self defence, was locked up overnight in a cell with a member of the British Movement.

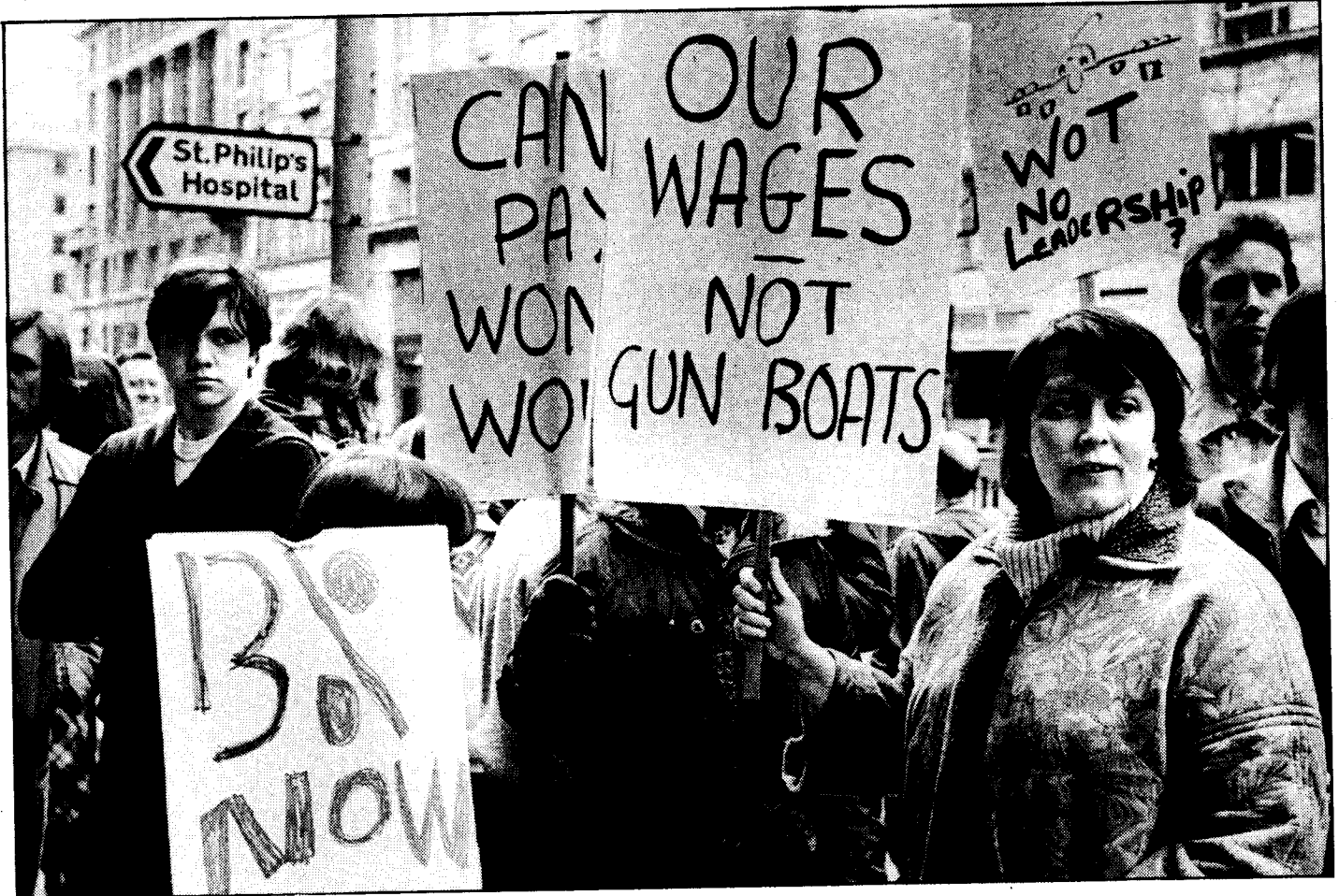
The suggestion that the devices were to be used for a riot and against the police came, say the defence, from the police themselves. The twelve were refused access to solicitors until they'd been charged. Under specific instructions from Detective Superintendent Holland who led the police enquiry. This 'regard for suspect's rights' was, said another detective, 'because certain solicitors would get in the way of this sort of investigation.'

Holland gave evidence in the fifth week of the trial. He is now back in uniform — demoted. He was a leading member of the Ripper team (as were several other officers in this case) and it was he who wrote on Sutcliffe's file 'this man is not the Yorkshire Ripper.'

That's another reason why this trial is so crucial for the West Yorkshire police force; why they've dealt with the Bradford 12 in a manner, one barrister described as, 'using a sledgehammer to crack a nut'

Sending the twelve down would recover some prestige for his police force after their disastrous bungling of the Ripper case.

Joanna Rollo



Left takeover CPSA ...But what will it mean on the ground?

To say that the CPSA went to the left at its annual conference at Brighton would be the understatement of the year. As the election results were announced the left were elated and amazed at the almost complete takeover of the executive.

Militant Kevin Roddy won the presidency and the left took 23 on the executive leaving a miserable 4 to the right wing. Arch right winger Kate Losinska the retiring president was beaten to the senior vice presidency and had to make do with the junior position, and the mentor of the right 'gaylight group' Charlie Elliot was not only beaten to the presidency but did not even win a seat on the executive.

What makes the result even sweeter was that the left were elected by individual balloting of the members, the CPSA having got rid of the block vote

for election some three years ago.

The result reflected the anger and frustration of the predominantly low paid membership at the miserable performance, lack of leadership, and failure to carry out conference decisions over the last year. This was also seen in the number of censure motions passed on outgoing NEC and full time officials.

The SWP welcomed the Broad Left victory, but it's important to look at their past record. The Broad Left in the CPSA is made up of an alliance of Militant, Communist Party and Labour Lefts who each have their own organisation within the Broad Left.

It exists primarily as an electoral machine, its target to win votes and positions. This year they spent more time and money securing electoral success than trying to fight the government's miserable pay offer.

It's interesting that Kevin

Roddy and Militant who make up the majority of the Broad Left, were vehemently opposed to the individual voting that was campaigned for by 'Redder Tape' supporters. Militant say, and still say, that the block vote reflects their base in the workplace.

The Broad Left have some excellent members, people who support every little dispute, but like any organisation that depends on electoral success the Broad Left will compromise in order to win again next time. In order to remain popular they will tail-end action rather than start it.

During last year's pay campaign the Broad Left argued against unofficial strike action by some DHSS members in Scotland. They told them to get back to work as they were 'wrecking' the pay campaign and the planned programme of selective strikes which the Broad Left supported.

They argued against those of us who, early on, called for all-

out action, saying we were adventurist. And it was only at the end of the campaign that they began to talk of all-out strike action. Some of them are still opposed to all-out action.

In the next few months DHSS branches will be organising a campaign against job losses among their members. They stand to lose thousands of jobs in the next round of government cuts. And some offices might decide to come out on strike—official or otherwise. It will be interesting to see the reaction of the new executive.

The victory of the Broad Left does give us confidence in the workplace, it makes it easier to argue left politics and gives a basis for debate. But we must be careful that the membership don't sit back and expect the new left leadership to do it all for them. The election victory is only the beginning in building confidence in the rank and file to fight back.

Jennifer Young, CPSA member, Glasgow

Under the shadow of Uncle Sam: A Tale of three women

Tijuana is a city in Mexico of about a million people. It is on the border with the United States. On the other side is the city of San Diego, and beyond that, the dreamland of California, of Hollywood and Long Beach, of the Flower People.

They say it's the biggest border crossing point in the world, 40 million people moving back and forth — legally — each year.

The border is a greasy metal fence, the 'tortilla curtain' as it is called, a sort of Berlin Wall in reverse. It snakes across the hills and ravines, a comic imitation of the Great Wall of China. It is patrolled by the choppers of the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) by patrol cars and squads on foot.

Tijuana began as a casino for Californians outside the control of US law. It grew as a place you could get cheap marriages and, a week later — no questions asked — quick divorces. The Mexican law was tightened up, the hypocrisy reduced and prostitution expanded.

Tijuana became 'sin city' with more prostitutes and bars than places four times its size. During the war, the giant naval base at San Diego let out a flood of marines every Friday night for the invasion of Tijuana.

In some of the downtown bars they do a different trade. Here, farm boys from villages in Central Mexico wait to find a lift or a guide to smuggle them over the border in search of work in the States. Some of them follow the harvest right up to the frontier with Canada on the other side. But you need a guide to find the part of the border

least patrolled, to find the route on foot across the desert, to dodge the choppers and find water.

No-one knows how many make it, and how many die on the way. The San Diego paper records how some, covered in dirt from crawling across the fields, were mowed down by speeding cars as they tried to scramble across the sixteen lane highway from San Diego to the border, leaving a heap of broken dirt and clothes, a smashed sombrero.

There's another sort of movement. Americans travel south to fill their tanks with cheap Mexican petrol. Rich Americans build themselves great villas along the Mexican coast.

Texan and Californian farmers have bought newly irrigated land south of the border. They ship their lettuces and tomatoes north to the States — where Texan and Californian farmers, employing illegal Mexican immigrant workers, bitterly attack 'cheap Mexican imports.'

Others grow marihuana. Mexican police helicopters chase the crop up the narrow gullies and spray it. But only part of it. The rest moves north across the border.

And American employers have factories all along the Mexican side of the border — with the special incentives and privileges of 'export processing zones' (called In Bond Plants). There are British, Japanese and German managers there too. But most of them are American. Together they employ about 150,000 workers in the Border Region.

Matsushita employs 800 workers, eighty per cent of them young women. The Japanese manager hopes they will make one million television chassis in 1983. The average age of the women is 19; they are all

temporary workers, and there are no trade unions. Matsushita used to make the chassis in Chicago, but it is much cheaper to do it here. He says that Tijuana wages are a third of America, half those of Japan.

In the early morning, tall white Americans travel south. Small brown Mexican women travel north, grim-jawed with that defiant air that comes from living on the border. They go to clean the film set villas of San Diego or Los Angeles. They have the silence of those for whom life on Long Beach is as meaningful as a trip to the moon. The employers go one way, workers the other — the picture must be the same on the border between South Africa and its Bantustans.

The workers live far from the clip joints of downtown Tijuana — in a vast spread of crowded little cabins, scattered over the gullies and steep hills around the city. Most of the roads are dirt tracks, with rubbish and chickens.

There are others, those who work in the new Tijuana — all glass and cement towers, with giant spaces between, criss crossed with highways. They also go north now and then. They go by car, to buy in the giant supermarkets that crowd the American side of the border.

In Mexicali, the next point along the border, they reckon this trade is worth 113 million dollars a year. Calexico — on the American side — has made massive investments in warehousing to woo more Mexicans over. But, in January, the Mexican peso was devalued, radically cutting the dollar value of all wages on the Mexican side. So, for the moment, the supermarkets stand empty, and the bankers weep.

continued on next page



NIGEL HARRIS talks to a grandmother, a leader of a shanty town and her grand daughter. Between them they give expression to the lives of three generations in Tijuana. A unique reflection of life in a Mexico border town.

Continued from previous page

CARLA, the grand-daughter (19)

'I've worked in this factory about a year and a half. It's American, an In-Bond plant. They make radio circuits. The parts all come from Taiwan, Japan and Singapore. Everything we make is exported to the States.

We're on two nine-and-a-half hour shifts — 7.30 to 5.00, and 5.00 to 2.30 in the morning. They want to make it 24 hour working.

They pay us \$45 (£25.00) a week, and that's below the legal minimum of \$65 (£36.2). You don't get paid if you're off sick. We get one week's holiday a year. If you miss a day, they cut your pay by two days. And if they say you're making mistakes, they lay you off for two days as a punishment. You get two days notice if you are to be sacked.

We're all temporary workers, so they don't pay social security for us. You're supposed to be made permanent after two months, but we just get laid off and rehired.

All the production workers are women. They are no women on the supervisory and technical staff. They say the women would get angry if one of them got promoted.

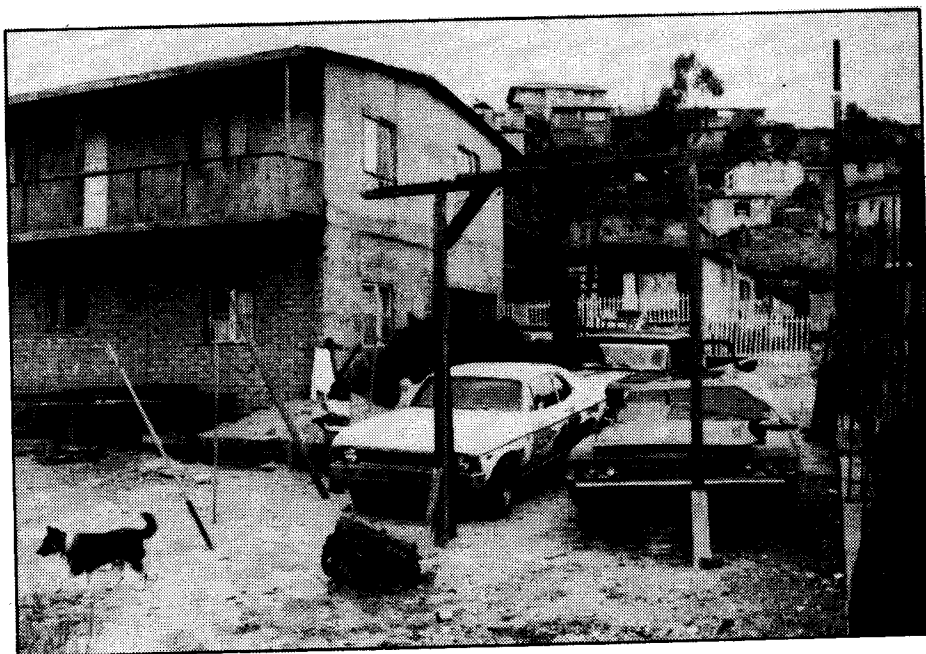
There's about 300 of us, aged between 14 and 35 (of course, it's illegal to employ people under 16). My sister used to work in the same kind of factory when she was 15. But she worked with acids. So first she got a rash, and then she went sick. So they laid her off. My friend Gloria was worse. She worked nine years on the microscope in a micro-processing factory. She got blisters round her eyes, and then conjunctivitis — now she's nearly blind, even with glasses.

About half the women have got kids.



Carla

A Tale of three women



You're supposed to get 45 days paid leave before confinement, and 45 days after. But you'd be lucky to get half that here. Most often, you just get the sack — so girls try to hide it if they get pregnant, or get a quick abortion.

My friend Theresa has got two kids — one and a half, and three months — and no man. It costs \$25 a week for child-minding, and then there's the bus and rent on top. So she works about three hours overtime every day to make ends meet — she never sees the kids.

We keep pushing them to get our pay to the legal minimum, but they won't. There's no trade union — but the man on the gate is in the union. The managers talk to him, but we haven't elected him or anything.

Last week, three girls got sacked for demanding the right pay. Now they'll go on the blacklist, so they won't get another job round here. And jobs are not easy to find — my sister's been looking for a year. One of these days we'll have to have a real strike.

There's seven kids in my family — I've got four brothers and three sisters. Three of

my brothers are under five. Only my grandmother and me work. So we have to keep the family — ten of us, with my grandfather who is sick — on about \$90 (£50) a week. Sometimes my aunt sends something — she married a black football player, and works in a beauty parlour in Los Angeles.'

MARIA, the mother

'She's dead now. She died about a year ago. She used to clean houses in San Diego, going back and forth each day.

Her first job was in Guadalajara, working in a chillie factory. She came here with my grandmother when she was 17, and got a job in a bakery. But they kept her very late. So my grandmother got her a passport, and then she went to work in Los Angeles as a maid. She was good with kids. Her employer was a doctor; when she started in 1968, he paid her about \$20 £11 a week.



She had two boyfriends before she married my stepfather, Oscar. She was pretty and fair, and very good at needlework. My father was the first boyfriend, but his parents refused to let them marry because they were so poor. The second one — the father of my sister, Patti — was violent and used to beat my mother, so she didn't want to marry him.

Then she met Oscar. They got married in a Church — Daniel's brother was the priest. Oscar was in the army, so my mother had to work hard to keep all the family going while he was away. When he came out, he got a job as an insurance salesman in San Deigo. She was working in Los Angeles, so they used to meet up on a Friday, and come here to see the kids over the weekend.

She had six kids with Oscar, but one died. The doctor warned her she would die if she had another. But she didn't pay attention. So the last time she got a blood clot on the brain, and it killed her. My little sister was born by Caesarian.'

ROSA, the grandmother (51)

'I had nine brothers and sisters. We had a farm — a couple of acres — in Aguascaliente. It was hard — my mother was up when the moon was still high, cutting beans and leaves, cleaning and cooking. We

had a hard life — shoes were only for Sundays. In the revolution, there was a lot of stealing and violence — my mother told me how they used to lock her in the barn so she wouldn't be raped.

Those were 'meat hungry' years — beans for breakfast, beans for dinner, beans for supper. They used to say they boiled up the soles of shoes because there was so little to eat.

When I was seventeen, my husband was called to a job in Guadalajara by an aunt who had moved there. He had to provide fodder for the horses.

But then we moved on to Tijuana, and worked in Los Angeles — after all, that's where the dollars are. I worked as a cleaner in Los Angeles, and came back every weekend to build this house. My man was already sick then, so I had to work and bring up the kids and build the house.

Of course, Los Angeles is no place for children. They were all raised here. They don't get enough to eat there — it's a hard place. Here, they laugh all day and play. They get so plump. My black grandson is a great kid — he comes here for his holidays, and he gets so fat. It's healthy and peaceful.

I work as a social worker now, though I've got no qualifications, and only finished three years of school. It's because I became the leader of this shanty colony, Los Perdidos. I go round and help people with medical problems, what sort of medicines

they need and so on. If their men got locked up, I go to the gaol to see how we can get them out. I'm glad to be alive to be able to help people.

The politicians come round to get our vote. So we can try and make them pay a bit. We need a water supply here, some proper drains, pavements in those dirt roads. I'm always fighting them — one of the Ministers from Mexico City called me 'a swine' when I last argued with him.

The Governor of the State promised us a million and a half pesos for water supply if we raised the other six and a half million. We did it, but they still haven't made the connections.

I get some educated person to copy down and type out our demands. Then when we all agree, we start fighting. It's the women that do it, my comrades. We had a demonstration at the municipal offices, and eventually the Governor gave us the money to build a creche.

But the politicians never listen. Sometimes they do here. But not in Mexico City. The peasants send delegations all the way there, but then nobody even receives them, let alone listens.

We need open doors. We need to be heard. We're tired of asking and pleading and begging.

Her son interrupts: 'Things'll get worse and then we'll have Poland and Nicaragua and El Salvador — then there'll be killing.'

The wrong route to



Last October's Right to Work march on the Tory Party Conference in Blackpool reflected something which had already been apparent on demonstrations against unemployment up and down the country. Many more women and girls are beginning to protest against unemployment. Over 200—mainly young girls and some older women many from areas of high unemployment like Merseyside or the West of Scotland — joined the march for the whole of its ten days to show Thatcher what they thought about her government.

Their attitude shows a marked difference from that of previous generations. Then, few women marched, and those who did tended to do so in separate contingents. Today female school leavers see unemployment as their problem.

Today, as well, many of the fights against unemployment have involved and often been led by women. Lee Jeans, Plesseys, Loveable Bra all showed that women organised inside the unions were not prepared to sit back and let their jobs go. The argument that their jobs should go *because* they were women and so not breadwinners, cut very little ice.

Most significantly, perhaps, the male trade unionists who supported them didn't accept the arguments either. The Glasgow shipyard workers who collected a weekly levy to keep Lee Jeans going for six months didn't give less money because they were women. The miners and engineers in Lancashire visited by the Right to Work March didn't refuse to support it because there were women on the delegations. On the contrary, where these women have won solidarity they have done so because their disputes are seen as something local workers should support. By

giving some support for their fight, the male trade unionists have been helping to overcome the divisions which clearly do exist inside the working class.

Some sections of the working class are hit much worse than others. If you are a young black male in the inner city areas you are much more likely to be unemployed than a young white. If you have traditionally worked in one of the declining heavy industries, you will now find your job threatened or already gone.

The point is not that some sections are hit harder — of course they are — but that the attack on jobs hits workers and working class organisation as a whole through the weapon of unemployment. The threat of more job losses has been the most effective way the employers and government have found in the last two years of keeping down strikes, attacking shopfloor organisation and pushing through low wages.

Unemployment cannot be

fought totally in isolation. These other attacks on unemployment cannot be tackled. That is precisely why the recent attacks launched inside the I for a Woman's Right which attempts to do starts from two factions: first that the hardest by unemployment is by organising as to unemployment is structured around concentrated in certain we look at the pattern industry since the was that the traditional tries — shipyards, docks — have suffered haemorrhage of the same time jobs in the tor and light industries rapidly. This meant men's jobs and a women's jobs, over

The pattern of unemployment over the last two years

Mary Williams spoke to three unemployed London women about the problems and ideas about how they can involve themselves in the general fight



MURIEL BASOSVKY is 49 years old. She was made redundant last October from her job as a receptionist/typist. Even with her typing skills her age has been against her in finding work.

'People say that life on the dole is easy, but it isn't. I've brought up two children on my own so I've learnt how to spend money carefully. But the dole cuts into the necessities of life. For instance, my fridge has broken. When you are trying to eat economically a fridge is a necessity of life and I'm going to have to scrimp and save for weeks to afford even a second-hand one. Things I would previously have bought because they are good value are now out of my reach — like clothes from Marks and Spencer. Now any clothes I buy will have to be the very cheapest, even though they wear out quicker.

'Out of my dole money of

£22.50, about £12-£15 goes on food. Although the Social Security pay my rent, they don't pay all of it so a couple of pounds of my dole money goes on rent. Then I have to pay for gas and electricity — last winter that was a £120 bill. The summer bill will be less than this so I'm hoping I can buy a winter coat.

KAREN JACOBSON is an actress.

'I got involved in the Unemployed Action Group in Finsbury Park. I thought they would be determined to fight for jobs because the unemployed bear the brunt of the Tory policies which lead to mass closures and redundancies. I was surprised to find that it wasn't like that at all.

'The issues we discussed most, were things like our rate of benefit and the way the

unemployed are treated in the dole office. It is true that the unemployed are treated worse than ever else. Our benefits are not above subsistence. There are not enough seats in the dole office we are kept waiting for periods and there isn't a crèche.

'But I think the unemployed are powerful enough of their own to change things. We have no voice with those who do. We can join the struggles of the employed to save their jobs because they do have the power to bring down the Tories if they don't.

'The setting up of a women's section made the Action Group even more isolated. Unemployed women do have a time on their own — more than men — employed women — especially if they have children. For women the cohabitation is a vicious denial of women's rights. To think that if you

to the right to work

in isolation from attacks. Certainly of one section ckled on its own. sely the problem ecent campaign e the Labour Party 's Right to Work s to do just that. It wo false assump- at women are hit hemloyment, and e way to fight it is as women. In fact t is not mainly und sex, but is con- ertain industries. If atterns of British e war, we can see ional heavy indus- ards, mines, steel, suffered a massive of jobs. At the s in the public sec- industry increased meant a net loss of nd a net gain of ver the years. of unemployment wo years has shown

a similar massive loss of jobs in the overwhelmingly male auto and steel industries, with much less (though nonetheless important) losses in most of the female dominated industries.

But the real argument is that even if it were the case that women were being forced out of jobs first, how do we fight it? Do we fight by separating off the issue of women's unemployment as the most important and just fighting on that? This is what the labour Party aims to do. After all, it fits in with their idea that if a certain sector is hit badly this must be the fault not of capitalism but of other sectors of workers.

For revolutionaries, the answer is a different one. We say how can we ensure that everyone who wants to work has the right to do so? Actually we don't believe that right will ever be guaranteed before socialism, but that doesn't mean we do nothing till then. On the contrary the confidence we build now can help

to build the fight for socialism.

We have to aim to overcome the divisions within society, not continue to encourage them with campaigns for a woman's right to work or black's right to work. The only basis on which that can be done is by fighting as a class. Unless it is done like that, we see the sorry spectacle of shop stewards at Hoover in South Wales allowing women's jobs to go first — precisely because they didn't fight on a general class basis but tried to play off different sections. Compare that to the solidarity the women got at Lee Jeans and Plesseys — where local workers saw their class interests were under attack.

The festival and march for a Women's Right to Work may attract a large number of people from the Labour Party and elsewhere. But unfortunately unless it directs itself to fighting alongside men, using militant tactics like occupation and right to work marches, its good intentions will remain empty rhetoric.



problems they face through unemployment. They give their experiences against unemployment.

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with a man for three nights your benefit can be stopped because they say he should be supporting you.

'Women have other difficulties too. We can't go out and hang around as easily as men. Women are often hassled by men.

But a women's section of the unemployed action group is not going to solve these problems. It isolates us even further from any potential source of strength. We get demoralised and then fail to act at all.

'I can't imagine when I'll next have an acting job. I could probably go to an agency and get a commercial modelling job. The money is usually very good, but I refuse to prostitute myself.

'I didn't develop political ideas which mean that I can produce theatre with workers in factories, shoppers in the street or children in schools so I can be sold to the highest bidder when Margaret Thatcher makes it hard for me. I can carry on my

political work more effectively on the dole.'

LINDA DAVRAY has been unemployed since she finished her degree in July 1980.

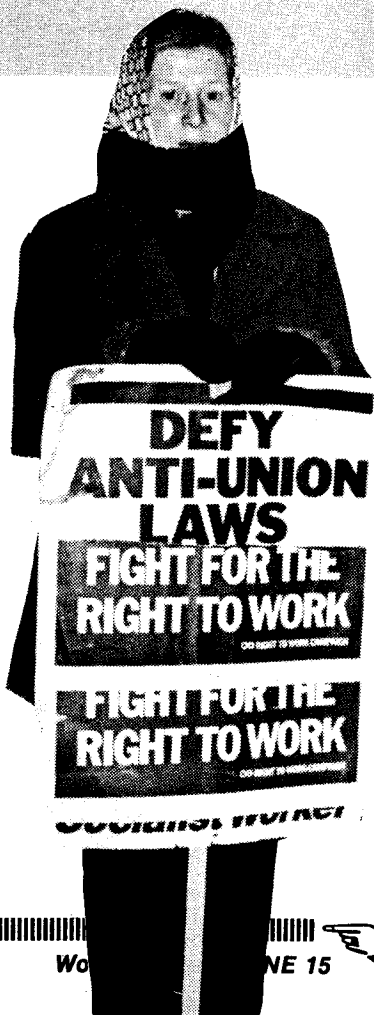
'Having qualifications does not make it easier to find a job. Most employers want you to have had some experience and when they see that you have been unemployed for a while they lose interest in you. You are either under experienced for a 'posh' job or over qualified for an 'ordinary' one.

'I can understand why people get depressed on the dole — even to the point of suicide. You have so little money that it's hard to participate in anything that is going on. It's easy to feel isolated.

'The doubling of London

fares has probably hit the unemployed more than anything. They mean that you are restricted to your immediate area. Travelling on a bus or train for an interview can easily cost a couple of pounds, you can't do that every week or you'll find yourself going without food to attend an interview for a job that you have no chance of getting.

'I don't think that the fact that I'm a woman makes my fight for work any different than a man's. You can't say that one group of people have more right to work than another. We all have the right to work, men, women, black, white or young people. To me the plain fact is that we have a Tory government hell bent on smashing the working class, their jobs, living standards and their will to fightback. We play into the hands of the Tories if we allow ourselves to be weakened by claiming our fight is different from everyone else's.'



Shop stewards are losing influence, says Prior

BY CHRISTIAN TYLER, LABOUR EDITOR

MILITANT SHOP stewards are losing their influence in Britain, Mr. James Prior, Employment Secretary, told an audience of U.S. businessmen yesterday.

He said management was developing a new authority, and unions were responding with a new realism. Power was moving back to full-time union officials as managements "called the bluff" of the militants. This was welcome to the vast majority of full-time officials, particularly at regional level. "They won't ever say it, but they know that a resurgence of management that clearly knows what it is about is the best support they can have against the militants," he told the Business

and Industrial Community of South Carolina at South Carolina University.

This change was not just the result of recession and fear of unemployment, Mr. Prior suggested, but probably because the "facts of life" were being brought home to companies. Managers with their "new self-confidence" were more determined to put the facts across.

The Employment Secretary said that pressure for industrial democracy had also weakened. "Employees, it turns out, don't really want to be pulled into detailed decision-making; rather they want to be convinced that those in managerial authority are up to their job."

Tebbit's bill: Why the Tories need it - how we begin to fight it

This cutting from a *Financial Times* article written in 1980 showed the then employment secretary, James Prior, gloating over successes in the undermining of trade union organisation.

Since then unemployment has risen to above the 3 million mark, pay settlements have been limited to low single figures and public spending cuts have been accepted with only minimal and isolated resistance.

In recent months we have seen brave attempts by some sections of workers to fight on pay, jobs, against cuts, and defence of conditions and union organisation. Some local disputes, as in the case of the Liverpool Typists and Laurence Scotts; some national, as in the case of the civil servants and ASLEF members. Sadly, nearly all have failed through bankrupt trade union leadership and the lack of vital solidarity action needed.

With things going so well for the employers and the Tories, at face value trade unionists might wonder why Tebbit and his business advisers are refusing to leave any stone unturned as they forge on toughening up and making additions to the already powerful 1980 Employment Act.

For the Tories and employers these laws provide legal shackles on our right to organise effectively ... their insurance to attempt to weaken the battles, we can expect to see when any slight upturn in the economy effects the confidence of trade unionists. The confidence needed to begin to win back some of the attacks made on our living standards, conditions at work and organisation.

HOW THEIR LAWS AFFECT US

- 1 Millions of workers will no longer be able to sue for unfair dismissal and those that can will find that they have to prove that the dismissal was unfair.
- 2 Women wanting to return to work after a pregnancy will now be caught out by more complicated notice provisions and if they do return may have to make do

with an alternative job to the one they had.

- 3 They have reinforced the rights of workers who don't want to join a union. The 1980 act now provides a scabs' charter by making it unlawful to pressurise anyone to join any union. Under Tebbit's proposals a scab can require the union to pay the compensation if they are dismissed for refusing to join a union. These payments have rocketted.
- 4 Scabs who are sacked for refusing to join a union, including those who object to union membership because of 'deeply held personal convictions', will be held to be unfairly dismissed. The act also further attacks 'closed shops' by requiring that new 'closed shops' be approved by at least 80 percent of the workers. Tebbit intends to extend this to existing closed shops so that the

dismissal for non-membership of a union would be unfair if there hadn't been a recent ballot showing 80-85 percent in support of it.

- 5 The 1980 Act and Tebbit's proposals fundamentally threaten our picketing rights, rights held since 1906. The right to picket will now be restricted to 'at or near their own place of work'. So picketing of another plant, even of the same employer, becomes unlawful — as for example the picketing by Laurence Scott workers of their parent company in Doncaster.
- 6 Union officials can only attend pickets with members they actually represent. Anyone else attending a picket can be sued for damages. This will affect union recognition strikes particularly hard. These rely on outside help. Now solidarity action by workers in support of a strike like the mass pickets at Grunwicks, Chix, or M&Ws in Liverpool would be unlawful except for those actually working there.



ASLEF drivers earlier this year—they had enough obstacles without Tebbit's anti-union laws.

7 Tebbit also proposes to make trade unions themselves liable for any act which is outside the limits of lawful industrial action, with fines up to £250,000 for the larger unions. The Tories see this as a means of ensuring that the unions will themselves curb unlawful action by providing that the union will themselves curb unlawful action by providing that the union will not be liable unless the National Executive made the dispute official or failed to condemn it. This provides union leaders with the perfect let out to break strikes by refusing official support or ordering a return to work or a ban on picketing.

8 At present dismissed strikers can claim compensation, if they can prove discrimination. Re-enacted by the last Labour government, this provision was intended to protect militants from being victimised. Now Tebbit proposes that employers will be lawfully entitled to dismiss any striker refusing to return to work after being told to—making victimisation easy and lawful.

9 Also banned will be action in support of disputes occurring outside Great Britain. Such as the blacking of products meant for South Africa or Chile.

10 Similarly 'political strikes' will also be illegal. This would cover TUC Days of Action as well as action by local authority workers against cuts in council services etc.

11 Tebbit also attacks 'union labour only' agreements, such as are operated by many local authorities. Clauses requiring sub contractors to employ union only labour are to be unenforceable. Thus undermining the right to ensure that work done in the name of local authorities is carried out by workers who get the union rate for the job and under union safety conditions. Workers taking action against lump labour are to be sued.

Although the Tories have not looked for a major confrontation with parts of these proposals that are already law, we can't underestimate the effect 'illegality' has on workers' confidence to fight effectively today.

The number of occupations in recent months that have ended through court injunctions being threatened or enforced have shown this. Some occupations like Plansees in Sheffield ended with the occupation turning into a strike as the workforce filed out and set up a strike from the outside. Others like Staffas and Holman Michell ended with massive police operations that involved the use of violence, police dogs often in the dead of night, return of the plant to secure the plant returned to the hands of the owners.

In all these cases it's often the weak who suffer hardest. The Tories haven't picked



Recognition strikes like Grunwicks and Chix would suffer with the new picketing laws

on the likes of the miners or dockers yet, but are happy to see the actions of sections of workers like the women cleaners from the Cowglen sit-in be undermined or the women workers at Commonwealth Curtains in Kirkby who refused to spread their occupation and take it outside the limits of what their union officials said — in order to prevent the court from taking action on their injunction.

The TUC's response to date is to dish out much 'fighting talk', threats of 'Mobilising the whole union movement' in defence of union organisation under threat.

However it was Duffy's withdrawal of support for the Laurence Scott occupation that allowed the Scott management to win the day, it was the TGWU's lack of support for the Holmann Michell workers, or the Ansell strikers that ensured the defeat of both sections of workers. In words they're all for crushing the Tories' and employers' attacks on our organisation, in action sadly we see a different picture.

For us, in the face of a trade union movement under attack, lacking the confidence to resist, the job of fighting Tebbit's laws is difficult.

We need to learn the lessons of the successful struggle against Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

LESSONS OF THE STRUGGLE

The lessons of the struggle against the Heath law are very relevant to the fight against Tebbit.

They are:

■The preparation for the real struggle against the implementation of the law had to take place very early on, with one day strikes, meetings during work time, local leaflets and bulletins.

The TUC and the leaders of the individual unions could not even be relied on to organise these without unofficial action from below first.

■There had to be a very intense and very hard argument in every union, from top to bottom, against the inclination of the union leaders to try to collaborate with the law.

The fact that there was a special court and that unions had to 'register' under the law made the argument easier in some ways.

Nevertheless, without a sustained rank

and file campaign for boycotting the law, union leaders would have collaborated with the court, and ordinary activists would have assumed that they had to do whatever the court ordered them to do.

■In fact the law was defeated because individual dockers were prepared to go it alone. They were jailed for contempt—but it was because they had open contempt for the law that they tore it to pieces. Had they not done so the Heath Act would probably still be with us today.

We can start today, with doing all in our power to support sections of workers taking industrial action today. Like raising support for the Metal Box workers occupying their factory in Shipley against redundancies or the women of Kigass and ABEX in Leamington and Warwick fighting for union recognition. Supporting the women textile workers in Rulecan in Runcorn or the hospital workers fighting the government over pay.

There are always a whole number of disputes like this that desperately need solidarity. We need to reintroduce the most basic principle of trade union solidarity in all our workplaces.

Taking collection sheets round our sections, offices, hospital wards arguing with our workmates for financial support. Supporting local picket lines, raising money and messages of support for workers in struggle in our union branches, shop stewards committees, and trade councils.

After the grand talk of 'mobilising the entire labour movement' from the TUC this sounds very low level stuff — however its where every one of us can start to reintroduce the need for solidarity action around concrete struggle.

History has taught us that the successful struggles against the Heath industrial Relations Act and the hated industrial relations court started from precisely such concrete struggles that were generalised as in the case of the Pentonville five and the tiny Con Mech dispute to involve wide sections of the movement.

We must keep this firmly placed in our heads when we discuss how we begin to build a fight against both the Tories and Tebbit's anti-union laws.

Sylvia Pankhurst:

From the vote to the Russian Revolution

'I regard the rousing of the East End as of utmost importance. Not by the secret militancy of a few enthusiasts, but by the rousing of the masses.'

HERE lay the difference between Sylvia and her mother and sister — and indeed the bulk of the suffragette movement. She understood that working class women had to lead the campaign for women's suffrage.

Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst had built the suffrage movement on very different lines. She launched the campaign largely among women of her own class and of similar political persuasions.

The movement grew rapidly. Particularly in the years from 1905 onwards when the militant, direct action tactics took off. Then thousands of women joined. There were massive demonstrations and many local activities. Many women were arrested in a vicious government attempt to not only deny them the vote, but also any voice to protest.

But the action was carried out by individuals and the movement itself was dominated by women from the middle and upper classes. They were women who by and large, only wanted to alter the structure of existing society — to abolish their inequalities with men of their own classes. Their concerns did not stretch far beyond the issue of votes for women.

Sylvia had a very different attitude to the fight for women's suffrage. Her political influences were those of the ILP, of left reformism. She believed that the existing world was unequal not only for women, but for working people as a whole, and she wanted to do her bit to change it. But she was never clear about how that change would come.



Sylvia Pankhurst

The years of struggle for the vote saw many other struggles as well. The workers' movement was once again on the up and up, with a large strike wave before the outbreak of the First World War. There was also a growing movement for national independence among the Irish.

Sylvia supported these, and increasingly realised that they were not separate issues from votes for women, but part of the same fight against the employers and rulers.

The suffragette movement as a whole didn't move in this direction. As British capitalism moved even deeper into crisis, the middle and upper class women nearly all rallied around in the most reactionary way.

So while Sylvia spoke on the same platform as James Larkin, leader of the locked out Dublin workers in 1913, Christobel supported Sir Edward Carson, who was fermenting revolt against Irish home rule.

Sylvia parted from the suffragettes and set up her own East End Federation of Suffragettes. The differences continued—just a year later on the outbreak of war, Emmeline and Christobel gave vociferous support to the British

Empire, while Sylvia opposed the war.

Yet the formation of her Federation showed up Sylvia's weakness. She saw her role as social worker as well as revolutionary agitator. There was plenty of social work to do. The appalling conditions of the East End could only worsen as war broke out and the women left behind had to bear the brunt.

Food was in short supply and highly priced. Work in the munitions factories was unpleasant and dangerous. Sylvia agitated around these issues. But nothing could disguise the fact that although this was good work, it was more concerned with propping the system up than bringing it down.

The war and more importantly the Russian Revolution in 1917 forced socialists of all kinds to take sides. Sylvia took the right side. She changed the name of her paper from the Women's Dreadnought to the Workers' Dreadnought, because she wanted it to deal with broader class issues affecting men and women.

She was fully behind the Russian Revolution and travelled to Russia. She and her organisation, the Workers' Socialist Federation, were involved in

talks to found the British Communist Party, although in the end she didn't join it.

The irony was that the women who had fought so hard to win the vote for women, had, by the end of the war, swung round to being almost totally opposed to having anything to do with parliament.

This was the basis of her disagreement with Lenin, who argued that revolutionaries could use parliament, as a platform in some circumstances, as long as they never pretended that change could come through parliament. He said this was especially the case when workers might still be looking to parliament for a solution to their problems.

She was like many of the revolutionaries Lenin had to argue with after the Russian Revolution. They had come out of a period of big struggles, but they didn't understand that something has to be built from those struggles and movements if revolutionary ideas were to survive and eventually succeed.

Sylvia was incapable of learning the lessons of those movements and of building a revolutionary party from them. Because of that, she couldn't cope with the downs of the movement as well as the ups, and so she couldn't apply the lessons to future struggles.

Incredibly, by the time all women got the vote in 1928, Sylvia Pankhurst had all but disappeared from the political scene. We can learn from her enthusiasm and abilities in organising working class women, and we can also learn from her failings.

Only a party based in the working class is capable of fighting not just on the single issues but for the overthrow of the society which produces the misery and oppression which is around us.

Sylvia Pankhurst's failure to see the need for such a party meant that her contribution to socialist politics was less than it might have been.

Lindsay German

WOMENS HEALTH

**'We are not faulty
radio's or broken
computers'**

THE story of Les Parsons a student psychiatric nurse in Norwich disciplined because of his refusal to participate in ECT has been publicised in national papers in recent weeks. This month Les writes his views on ECT.

The dispute provoked by my refusal to participate in the administration of ECT (Electro Convulsive Therapy) on ethical grounds, has now reached national level. My stand is based upon the very nature of the treatment—one that deliberately induces cerebral convulsions where medicine in general seeks to prevent such irregular activity, recognising it as harmful ... as in epilepsy. As such ECT constitutes a form of medically inflicted injury to the brain producing harmful effects such as random brain cell death, and memory impairment.

Such a crude electrical attack has been likened by one eminent neuro-biologist, to attempting to mend a faulty radio by kicking it, or a broken computer by removing some of its circuits.

It is clear that this raises moral as well as medical issues and justifies informed responsible individuals making personal decisions as to whether or not they are involved in psychiatric use.

Unfortunately medical domination of psychiatry attempts to deny the existence of such non-medical issues. This control extends to the nursing profession and thus I am being sacked and prevented from qualifying for working as a psychiatric nurse because of my stand.

Naturally I am fighting this decision and will be appealing to an industrial tribunal, supported by Larry Gostin, legal director of MIND (National Association of Mental

Health). The issue is also being raised within relevant unions, and already ASTMS have passed a resolution opposing ECT.

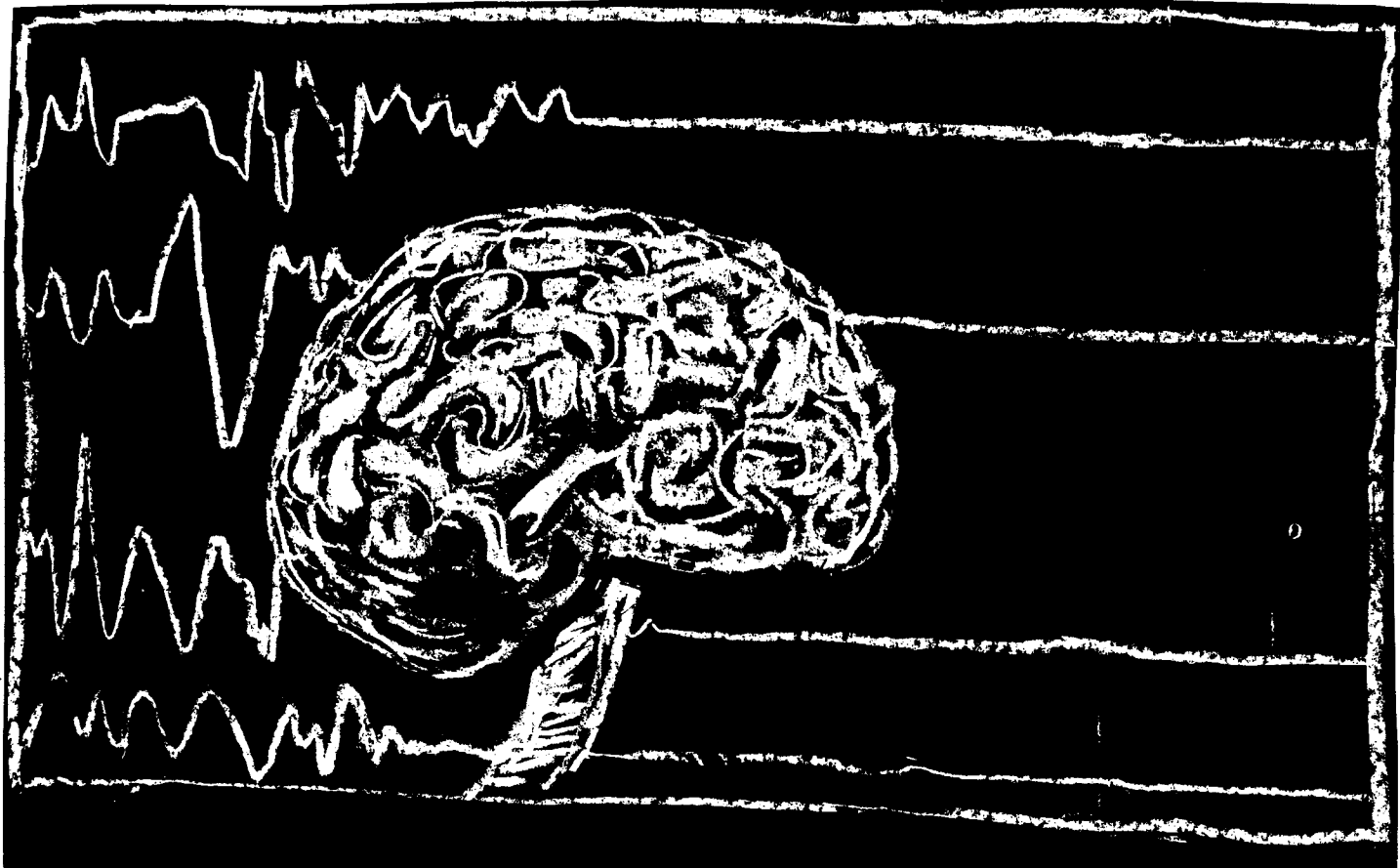
I believe that the social political and moral implications of psychiatry are denied by the medical profession, whose hegemony over psychiatry is complete. In particular the medicalisation of complex social problems ends up with dysfunction within individuals classified as mentally ill ... and diverts attention away from the social conditions that create so much human unhappiness and despair in our society.

By seeking constantly to re-adjust individuals, primarily through drugs and ECT and other physical treatment, it fails to question social structures and acts politically to reinforce the unjust status quo.

The political nature of psychiatry is illustrated by the use of ECT. Studies reveal that it has consistently been used more often to treat working class people, and also that it had been used far more frequently on women than on men. It represents a crude alternative to a genuine therapeutic intervention that demands greatly increased human resources and a commitment to changing the repressive social conditions that cause crisis and breakdown.

As a socialist I cannot believe that it is right to deal with such problems as despair by treating individuals like machines, like broken radios or faulty computers; or that electro shocking the most sensitive organ, the human brain, is an appropriate way of helping individuals overwhelmed by the circumstances of their own lives.

I hope that women in particular, so often the victims of a medical psychiatry, can see the importance of, and the wider implications of this issue, and offer support for my stand, through their unions and other organisations.



REVIEWS

The politics of Mental Handicap

Ryan & Thomas
Pelican £1.75

'To each according to his needs, from each according to his ability.'

The 'mentally handicapped', with which this book is concerned, make more demands on the humanity implicit in this statement than do any other group of people. This book reveals yet another unacceptable face of capitalism. For any society which hospitalises 50,000

unsick people must itself be a sick society.

The book contains extracts from the diary of a nursing assistant about everyday life in a large 'subnormality' hospital ward. The diary, which is very funny and moving at times, is arranged around particular

topics and events such as definitions of handicap, care or control, work, ideology, and a way forward. Each being amplified historically and theoretically by the co-author.

The book is a welcome contribution to the current debate (where you may ask is it taking place?) about the lives of these current-day 'lepers' and those who work with them in hospitals, schools, training centres and hostels.

The book is often illuminating for the new reader, but its ultimate resolution,

simply asking for a change in attitudes, is depressing to say the least. As Marx said, 'Time is the room for human development'. But under capitalism time is equated with money, and as a result these people are quietly disposed of and considered an economic burden. There is no profit in them. Dehumanised, and further handicapped in the process, they are often drugged as one consultant puts it in the book, 'to enforce order'.

The tragic thing about it all is that the 'mentally handicapped' are guarded by staff, who although often sincere, share the same fears and prejudices as ourselves concerning this growing number of people. Their demands are often simple — time, patience and understanding.

In the last decade or so, public attention has sometimes been centred on conditions in these hospitals, often revealing appalling conditions, chronic staff shortages, forced sterilisations, cruelty and shortages. Reports are quickly manufactured for the media, as it is seen that something is being done. In reality, little changes.

David Ennals, Minister of Health in 1975, said he would support any changes in the handicapped services, providing, wait for it, that it wouldn't cost any money! The government's own reports reveal that over 1,000 children in Britain each year are born handicapped, simply because enough money is not released for ante/post natal services.

Finally, one hospital resident sums it up, by saying: 'I am not handicapped — I can do things!' The question then is not how different they are from us, but how like us. Employers are quick to recognise and exploit this fact. Well worth a critical read.

Owen Gallagher,
Ealing SWP



Sweet freedom offers sweet nothing

Last month two views of Anna Coote's and Beatrix Campbell's book 'Sweet Freedom' were published in Womens Voice. This month Jean Boyle writes our view.

I was shocked to read the two very uncritical reviews of *Sweet Freedom: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* in the May issue of *Womens Voice*. The politics of the book and the authors are reformist through and through. They identify the problem for women as being patriarchy male domination or just men in general.

They don't see that liberation for women will only come from the emancipation of the working class as a whole, and that that will arise as an act of the whole class itself.

They believe the problem is the wrong people are at the top of society, get a new set



A Liverpool typist and unemployed Right to Work marcher show solidarity with the men and women of the Barnes Flexible occupation for jobs.

of people with the correct demands and they will liberate us. They talk the whole time about 'all women' or 'most women' as if all women have interests in common. *Whatever happened to class?* The arguments about having more women in the trade union leadership and the TUC, more women MPs are reactionary in that they believe the divisions in society are between men and women, not between the employing and ruling class and the workers.

Their theory of positive discrimination in favour of women bureaucrats in the

Left: Lee Jeans strikers talk to a London docker.

Below: Women and men at King Henry's fought together for union recognition.

trade unions etc, leaves the capitalist system exactly where it is. They provide no analysis of who really holds potential power—ie the working class and *therefore none of their ideas challenge the existence of capitalist society.* The idea of getting women with the right policies elected means these women can act on behalf of the millions of working women. They have no conception of organised united working class action and power that can transform society *from below*, establishing a real equality and socialism.

I can't imagine what they base their evaluation of today's womens liberation movement on. 'In the early 1980s the WLM is entering an exciting new phase'. Where is the evidence? The Womens Festival (yes, a festival) last year?

The demand for a women's right to work this year? Admittedly a very large number of women went to the festival, but the main discussions were about how women should join the Labour Party! These meetings are all about talking about how awful it all is not about how to change it.

They are a cosy reformist shelter from the grim political reality outside. The demand for a women's right to work is an abstract

demand that means nothing. The way to fight unemployment now is for workers to fight to defend their jobs and wages. It means uniting the unemployed with the employed. Do they seriously believe any section of workers can win on their own? And that women can fight for the right to work in isolation from male workers? These ideas lead to passivity when a real struggle takes place because the ideas do not fit with struggle.

The latter part of the book is about how nice it is that feminist ideas are becoming current rather than being thought of as nutty, and how much better we all understand women's oppression. Where does this leave working class women? Out in the cold as far as the WLM goes. I'm not saying the ideas of equality etc of the WLM in the 60s didn't affect working class women—of course they did. But the WLM didn't and can't point any way forward for working class women. Because their ideas do not challenge the existing system.

Building a revolutionary party to move towards smashing the capitalist system rather than patching it up with reforms is what we want. The SWP is the beginning.

**Jeanne Boyle
Leeds SWP**



LETTERS



What about self determination in the Falklands?

Dear Womens Voice

Much as we all dislike Maggie Thatcher, she did not start this war. The Argentine fascist junta did, by military invasion of the Falklands — much as the German Nazis started World War II by military invasion of Austria and Czechoslovakia. Whether she ought to have sent the whole navy down there after having left the islands completely undefended, is another matter.

Your article 'Warmongers on the Warpath' does not mention the people who live and work on the Falklands. As one of their spokesmen said, 'the fascist junta had caused the disappearance of about 20,000 people in Argentina, so what would they care about 1800 people on the islands?'

Maggie was clever enough to use this argument in her demagoguery. Unfortunately the extreme left seems to be ignoring it, telling the Falklanders to wait for the revolution in Argentina.

But where are the Argentine revolutionaries? Disappeared. The trade unions are obediently supporting their governments' (completely unfounded) claim to the Falklands. But they would probably have 'disappeared' if they did not.

Argentina has no just claim whatever to the Falklands. People should not be compelled to be governed by countries from where they get their

supplies, and supplies can travel over thousands of miles as they do now between Argentina and the USSR. The Falklands are no more part of Argentina than the British Isles are part of Europe.

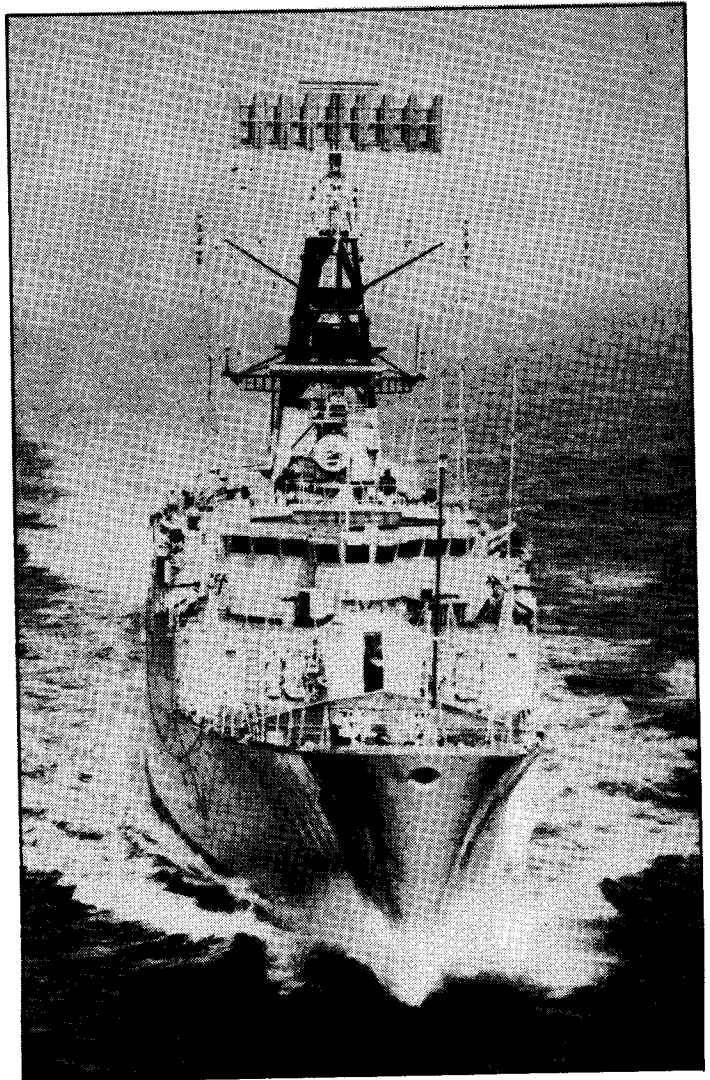
You are quite right of course, about the hypocrisy of Britain. It is matched only by the hypocrisy of the USA, which through the CIA put into power every reactionary government in south America. Western capitalism has again raised its own Frankenstein, as it did in Nazi Germany.

Now British imperialism is moribund, die-hard as it is, and South American fascism is a rising monster. I do not think the extreme left has grasped its potential menace.

The UN should have been urged to *act* right from the start, not just pass pious resolutions or 'mediate'. It can send forces when it chooses and then take charge of a territory. It is by no means ideal, but it is the only worldwide co-ordinating machinery in existence.

Although I have drawn parallels with the situation in 1938-39, I do not think there is much danger of world war at present. But I may be wrong, and the longer this war goes on, the greater the danger.

Pressure on the UN to act must be redoubled, and whatever happens, in war or peace, the fight for the



liberation of the working class, especially of women, must be kept up.

Susan Pearce may consider herself superior to shepherds, but she isn't really. An agricultural worker's job is as skilled and valuable as any town dweller. So there is no

cause for sneering. Also a population of about 1800, regarded as a 'handful' by a townee, should not be handed over to the fascists. We would object to that in rural Shropshire.

Kathleen Jones
Shrewsbury.

Welfare not warfare

Dear Womens Voice,

We note that there has been a curious silence in the media concerning our struggle; in fact we have scarcely been able to read about anything except the Falkland crisis. The government has spent millions of pounds on sending troops, supplies, guns, nuclear weapons et al to the Falkland Islands to involve innocent working class people on both sides in killing and destruction, and yet they blame the health service workers for putting patients at risk during this period of industrial action.

It is *because* we care about the patients that we work in the ever decreasing health service.

We are now trying to ensure that the National Health service has some kind of future. This below inflation offer of 4 per cent is all part of the government's plan to reduce the free health service in this country to a minimum.

We ask the public to support us by writing to your MP Normal Fowler (Health Service Minister) and Margaret Thatcher. Please help us to fight for our rights and future of the National Health Service.

Mary Buck COHSE steward
Claire Edwards COHSE steward

Andrea Campbell Acting
COHSE Branch Secretary,
Hackney.

Sweet Freedom Reviews miss the point

Dear *Womens Voice*,

The book 'Sweet Freedom' and the two reviews of it in last month's *Womens Voice* irritated me to near screaming pitch. The book is a straightforward portrayal of Anna Coote's feminist/reformist politics and I won't attempt to better Lindsay German's excellent review of it in the latest *Socialist Review*.

The reivev in *Womens Voice* misses the point. Sheila Duncan is right to say that women's liberation showed that politics is right there, in the kitchen, the bedroom and the labour ward. And she's right to say that this was a breathtaking gust of fresh

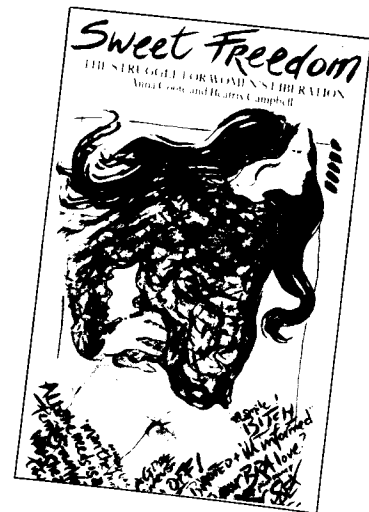
air. But for years the slogan the 'Personal is Political' bolstered me and worried me at the same time. I didn't want dependance, I didn't want to be the 'little woman' or the 'dolly bird' image. I raged at the unfairness of contraception. But, brought up with unemployment, joining a trade union and becoming a steward, was neither 'male politics' nor 'out there' as they put it.

Because the world is organised around class, our lives, including our personal lives are about class. The women's liberation movement and Sheila's and Sue's reviews, treat the 'personal' from a purely

feminist standpoint, and it's nonsense.

Wealthy women have abortion on demand, not working class women. The nurseries close — wealthy women employ a nanny, working class women stay at home. The cuts hit care facilities for old people. The wealthy still pay for private nursing homes — working class women squeeze in another bed and reorganise their lives. Sex, too. Ever tried staying 'in love' when you've got no money, no decent housing no job? Wealthy battered women can find a new flat, working class women crowd into refuges and council homeless family hostels and often end up returning to the husbands that battered them.

When the women's movement describe themselves, they describe the middle class. When Sue Beardon asks why 'are people generally, running from organised collective activity and towards psychoanalysis, individual development in work and cultural practice?' she is not describing working class



women, she is describing a few thousand women's movement activists floundering in an economic downturn.

To have revolutionary politics without an analysis of the different positions of men and women in society is crazy. To have an analysis of women which ignores class is flying in the face of all reality.

Let's take up the arguments of the women's movement, let's have a debate, let's argue that revolutionary politics has far, far more to offer women than Anna Coote's campaigning for a few more MPs and women in influential places — and please, when a book is published that the women's liberation movement are all talking about, let's have some decent reviews.

Vera Breatly
Islington SWP

Spanish Civil War—get it right

Dear comrades,

I was completely amazed to read the extract praising Spanish Communist leader Dolores Ibarruri (La Pasionaria) in the latest *Womens Voice*.

Undoubtedly Ibarruri was a dedicated militant and played an important part in the defence of Madrid. However it's impossible to overlook her party's role in the Civil War.

This wasn't just a simple struggle against fascism, but was accompanied by a profound social revolution. And it was this revolution, led by anarchists and revolutionary socialists, that the Communists so bitterly opposed. In order to present the Spanish Republic as a nice bourgeois regime, thousands of revolutionaries died at the Communists' hands.

Ibarruri herself, in her autobiography, repeats the normal stalinist lies that the anarchists and 'Trotskyites' were fascist agents.

Its true that many women fought against Franco's troops, The Communist Party had other ideas and the new regular army, set up to replace the workers' militias, prohibited

women from the ranks. In fact Ibarruri was sent to the front to persuade more militant women that their place was in the rear.

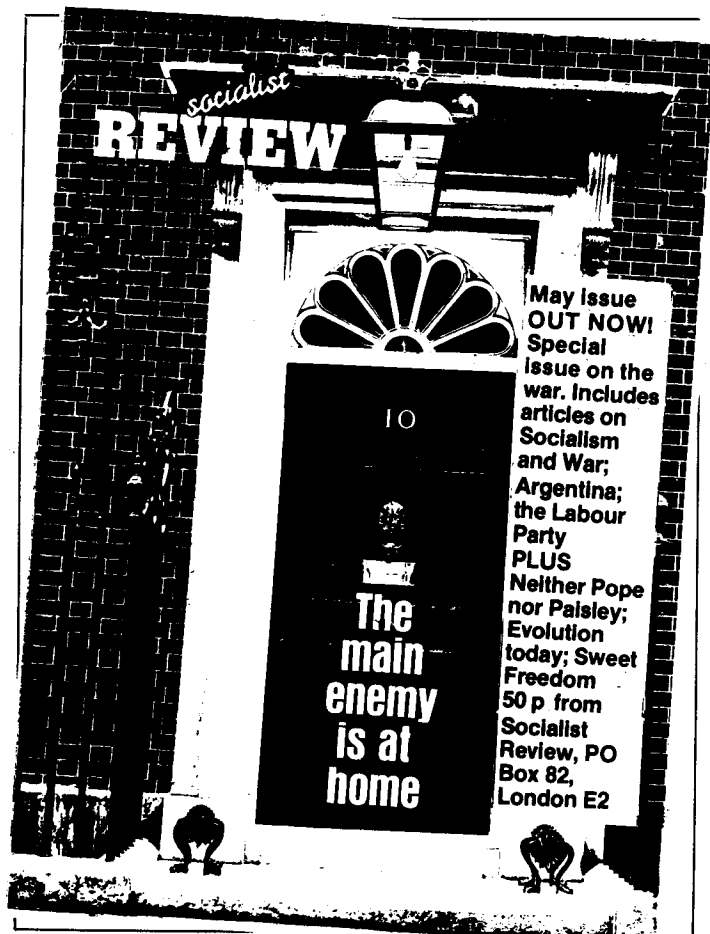
It would have been much more worthwhile to have talked about the anarchist leader Fredrica Montseny. Although no means perfect, at least she believed in genuine women's liberation and the revolution.

The extract you printed not only is sycophantic about Ibarruri and approves of the Stalinists' moralism over sex, but it also praises the 'natural soldier' (Enrique) Lister—who suppressed the revolutionary stronghold of Aragon.

Richard Kisch's book, *They Shall Not Pass*, from which this comes is surely one of the worst on the Spanish Civil War around. No doubt whoever chose this piece bought one of the many cheap copies littering bookshops at the moment.

If you really want to know about the Spanish revolution, and the many men and women who fought and died it in, read Ronald Fraser's excellent *Blood of Spain* (Penguin £4.95).

Andy Durgan.
Socialist Review



SANDRA



JUNE 1972 Gill Brown looks back

'IT'S no use keeping this under the mat. The trade union movement must smash this act.'

You could be forgiven for thinking that these words come from *Socialist Worker* June 1982. In fact they are from the front page of *Socialist Worker* 1972. They were spoken by Alan Williams, one of three London dockers threatened with imprisonment by the Industrial Relations Court.

The response to the court from the dockers was a magnificent nationwide strike, the government and the city were terrified. The Official Solicitor appeared to reverse the court's ruling and the dockers were freed. No one had heard of the official solicitor before and some of us at the time were cynical enough to think that Ted Heath had done his magician

bit and pulled him out of thin air. Official response to the situation was predictable.

Jack Jones, leader of the TGWU, was 'gravely concerned' but did nothing to mobilise his members. Vic Feather, the General Secretary of the TUC, appealed to the government to put the Industrial Relations Act 'on ice'. The scenario so far is very similar to today, rising unemployment, rising prices, cuts in the welfare state, and a Tory Government desperate to smash the unions. It didn't work in 1972 but that is no guarantee that it won't work now. As Alan Williams said in 1972:

'The situation has now come to pass where the whole fight has been passed to the shop stewards. It really seems that the official union will not fight the Act. Any steward worth his or her salt must do so.'

This is one thing that certainly has not changed one bit. Tebbit's Bill will not be defeated by motions to conferences, it won't be defeated by fine words and good intentions. Rank and file action is the *only* way to win. Workers on the shop floor refusing to recognise Tebbit's

law. If there is, as they say, one law for the poor and none for the rich then let's show them what they can do with their law.

Some unions have been very active around the Tebbit Bill, they've sent out so many bits of paper I think they've got shares

in Bowaters. What they haven't told us is what we should *do* — and it's the doing that's important. The rank and file activity that got the dockers out of Pentonville and destroyed the Industrial Relations Act is what we're going to need to finish Tebbit's Bill.



The fight against the anti union laws in 1972 came from below as it must today

why I became a socialist

Hilary Davies is 21 and a member of Luton Socialist Workers Party. She joined the party at Easter this year and looks back at what brought her towards socialism.

I went to a grammar school in Bedford after the eleven plus. While I was there the place turned comprehensive. There was an influx into the school of people I'd never met or spoken to before, particularly blacks and Asians.

I'd never met anyone black before. I lived in one of the posher areas, and of course it was entirely white.

I was just 13 and I made a lot of black friends. I realised that the school was a much better place to be at just because it was suddenly full of different people—not just the types I'd mixed with from my earliest years.

My parents were Tories—my father's a real Tory and my mother followed his lead. She wasn't really political but there was always a sense from her that somehow things weren't fair. She's a Christian and doesn't agree now with anything I stand for, but from as early as I can remember there was always this idea that somehow things weren't fair. It just seemed obvious to me that some people had more than others and that this simply wasn't right. I just had this nagging feeling.

It was this vague concern of my mother's and the dramatic change in my school which started me on the road to socialism.

For years I was convinced that something was wrong, but I didn't know what. I left school at 16 and it took me three years to discover that anyone had the same sort of feelings as me, let alone that there were people who were trying to do something about it. For years I worried by myself about why people didn't have enough to eat or why people couldn't get somewhere decent to live.

When I first left school at 16, I worked in a jewellers. There were only about 5 of us working there on a lousy



It wasn't dramatic or exciting my becoming a socialist. I worried and worried, but the most important thing for me was discovering that there were lots of other people and finally an organisation that could explain what I felt and explain what to do about it.

£28 a week. My third job was as a wages clerk in a local factory. I joined the union TASS on my second day, but no-one tried to get me more involved than that. We had just two meetings a year, usually about wages, that was it. Redundancies went through on the

nod. On the the third round of redundancies I lost my job.

Now I work at the head office of The Beefeater Steak houses. There are about 80 of us who work there. All the women do the clerical work. The men are in management. They tend to patronise us something terrible. There's no union. Though sometimes the women talk about the need for a union. It's still early days, because it's quite a new office.

At a party in Bedford I got involved in a row about abortion. It seemed obvious to me that it wasn't fair to bring children into this sort of world if you couldn't provide for them—it was a coming together of different ideas and worries I'd had for years. I got involved around abortion, then around the Anti Nazi League.

I went to Skegness one year and I listened to Tony Cliff speaking on the last morning. A year later I went again; I still wasn't a member, but I listened to the speech, and I thought about all the people that were doing something and I added up the amount of time I'd spent sitting and thinking and not doing anything. I realised you can't be on the outside for ever, and that I could avoid arguing anything because I was outside.

Now at work I feel I can't cop out of arguments. Every day I feel I've got to argue about what everyone else has read in the papers. I see other people now like I used to be—worried and concerned, but isolated and not clear that anything can be done, let alone that there are real answers to everything you see around you all the time.

It wasn't dramatic or exciting my becoming a socialist. I worried and worried, but the most important thing for me was discovering that there were lots of other people and finally an organisation that could explain what I felt and explain what to do about it.

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.

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SUNDAY 6 JUNE RED SPOKE SOCIALIST CYCLING CLUB RIDE REAGAN OUT OF TOWN. Two rides starting Turnham Green (West London) and Whitechapel (East London) tube at 10am, joining up and meeting the CND/Reagan Reception Committee demonstration, at Hyde Park. All cyclists welcome.

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TRADE UNION

And another thing

by Susan Pearce



Lord Denning has always been more outspoken than the average saloon bar politician. And of course as Master of the Rolls he is more able than the aforesaid blatherer to get publicity for his views. (At 83, he's had a lot of practice.)

Now he's written a book, *What's Next In The Law*, presumably as a last poisonous testament before he goes to meet his maker—although I think the reason he's lived so long is that god is refusing to take responsibility for him.

Denning is saying that not all English citizens are 'qualified' to be jurors. 'The English,' he says, 'are no longer a homogenous race. They are white and black, coloured and brown. They no longer share the same standards of conduct... the same morals or the same respect for the law.'

He means, I can only suppose, before the British government welcomed black immigrants with open arms in the fifties, there being a shortage of people willing to work the nation's buses and clean the nation's toilets for three bob a week in post-war boom-time Britain.

Before the fifties, of course, the English were a terribly homogenous race. Pure-bred from Adam's rib down through the ages, our island race allowed no foreign blood to mingle with its own. Angles never mixed with Saxons, English artisans were not conscripted to build Caernarvon castle, the Norman invasion was a figment of your history teacher's imagination and Cromwell's army would have died rather than set foot in Ireland and have their pure blood corrupted. Henry the Eighth was well known for his insistence on an English Queen and the sun never even rose on the British Empire.

We can't at the moment read the Truth according to Lord Denning; his book has been withdrawn following a threat of libel action from two Bristol riots trial jurors over his remarks about packing out juries with black people in order to get off black defendants.

To give him the benefit of the doubt, it may be that Denning is just a hardened racist, unremarkable except for the fact that he is one of the most powerful lawmakers in the land. But I think it's more likely that in his senility he has overlooked the fact that 'justice' in this country has always been administered on a basis of class—the property-owning class have a built-in win factor, and in a magistrates' court the defendant knows it only too well.

But juries tend to mess up this nice little arrangement. Jurors, whatever their colour, tend to be working or lower-middle class. The uppers and upper-middles get out of serving on the grounds of having 'essential business' to attend to—like being barristers, magistrates and judges. So your average jury is likely to be rather sceptical about police evidence, cynical about the lifestyle of the lawgiver, and sympathetic to the defendant. Even the way juries are packed before they're picked—how come in the court at the Elephant and Castle, South London, only ten per cent of jurors are black, compared with up to fifty per cent of defendants—despite this, it is said that eighty six per cent of cases tried by jury are found not guilty.

Could it be that Lord Denning is worried, not about colour, but about the rising consciousness of the working classes?

Couldn't pay didn't pay!

The late thirties and the early war period saw struggles by working class people fighting 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 the East End of London, in the streets and in the Council Chamber.

This extract tells of the rent strikes in Stepney in the late 30s where men and women fought hand in hand for five months and won rent reductions, grants for repairs and waiving of rent arrears.

In some cases, after a week or two, the landlord caved in or negotiated, and a reasonable conclusion was reached. In other cases however, the fight was bitter. The Brunswick Buildings tenants were out on strike for eleven weeks. Langdale Street Buildings and Brady Street Mansions, both owned by slum landlords were on strike for five months.

These latter battles were particularly fierce. The landlords were firm and brazen. They refused to negotiate and after a while issued eviction orders to some of the most active tenants. The battle now began in earnest. Barbed wire barricades were placed around the entire blocks. Pickets were on duty day and night. Only those who lived in the buildings, or could give a reason for entering were allowed to enter.

One day in June the bailiffs, with the police, decided to act. They managed to gain access into Langdale Mansions. The alarm was sounded. The police drew their truncheons. The men and women of the buildings defended themselves with saucepans, rolling pins, sticks and shovels. The police were brutal, especially in their treatment of the women. A cordon was placed around the building. More police, a score of them mounted, were called up. They broke open the doors and forcibly removed the tenants.

By the end of the morning the news had spread throughout Stepney. The menfolk left their work to come home. The police would not have attacked as they did, with such 'courage', if they had had the menfolk to deal with. The police, using the dirty tactics not unknown in Stepney, waited until the men had gone to work, and then attacked the women.

Some workshops closed down. Thousands of angry Stepney people gathered round Langdale Mansions. The police, sensing the feeling, withdrew. Immediately, the Stepney Tenants' Defence League loudspeaker van toured the area, calling a meeting, not only in connection with the tenants' fight, but now

ended they marched to the Leman Street Police station to protest. A deputation of three, including myself, were appointed to go into the police station to make our protest. While we were inside a stone was thrown at the window. At this signal, the police, without a word of command from any officer, immediately drew batons and charged the marchers.

It was obviously planned. The throwing of the stone through a police stations window by one individual did not call for an attack on several thousands, by hundreds of police all prepared for this action. There was some rough scuffling. A number of arrests were made. These actions caused a stir throughout the country. Questions were raised in Parliament. But the Stepney people depended on themselves.

Tubby Rosen, on behalf of the Stepney Tenants Defence League, immediately issued a statement that the 7,500 members of the League would join in a solidarity strike with the Langdale Mansions and Brady Steet Mansions tenants, unless their demands were met. The tenants themselves were now filled with indignation, bitterness, and hatred of all those who supported the landlords.

Messages of sympathy came from many prominent citizens and leaders of the labour movement. The Communist Party itself lent all its forces in obtaining Stepney wide support. On Tuesday 27th June, the police and bailiffs had entered Langdale Mansions and a number of families had been evicted, by Friday of the same week the landlords had caved in; £1000 worth of reductions were obtained; £10,000 worth of arrears were ignored, £2,500 to be spent on repairs immediately £1,500 each succeeding year.

The twenty one week's rent strike, bitter, and bloody had been won. Other landlords wishing to avoid trouble now became quite amenable. They too, had learnt the lessons of Langdale Mansions One thing was in no doubt. Tens of thousands of working class men and women had organised themselves for common struggle. There was a common bond between them, and in some areas, such as certain suburbs-where, as suburbanites know only too well, you could live in a road for ten or fifteen years and not even talk to your next door neighbour—this was indeed an achievement.

All these people came together. Committees were formed and hundreds of people who had never been on a committee and had no experience of organisation or politics learned these things and learned them very well.

Outstanding were the women. Every feminist claim was proved. There was nothing that the men could do that couldn't be equalled by the women, and in fact, they were mostly more enthusiastic, and hence more reliable. For example, during the rent strike at Brunswick Buildings it was the women who did most of the picketing. The strike lasted for eleven weeks during a severe cold winter, and braziers were lit in



ON SEEING A MOVIE TONE NEWSREEL

IS IT a thing for laughter? Is it a matter for jest?
First that you smile him welcome; then that you slay
your guest?

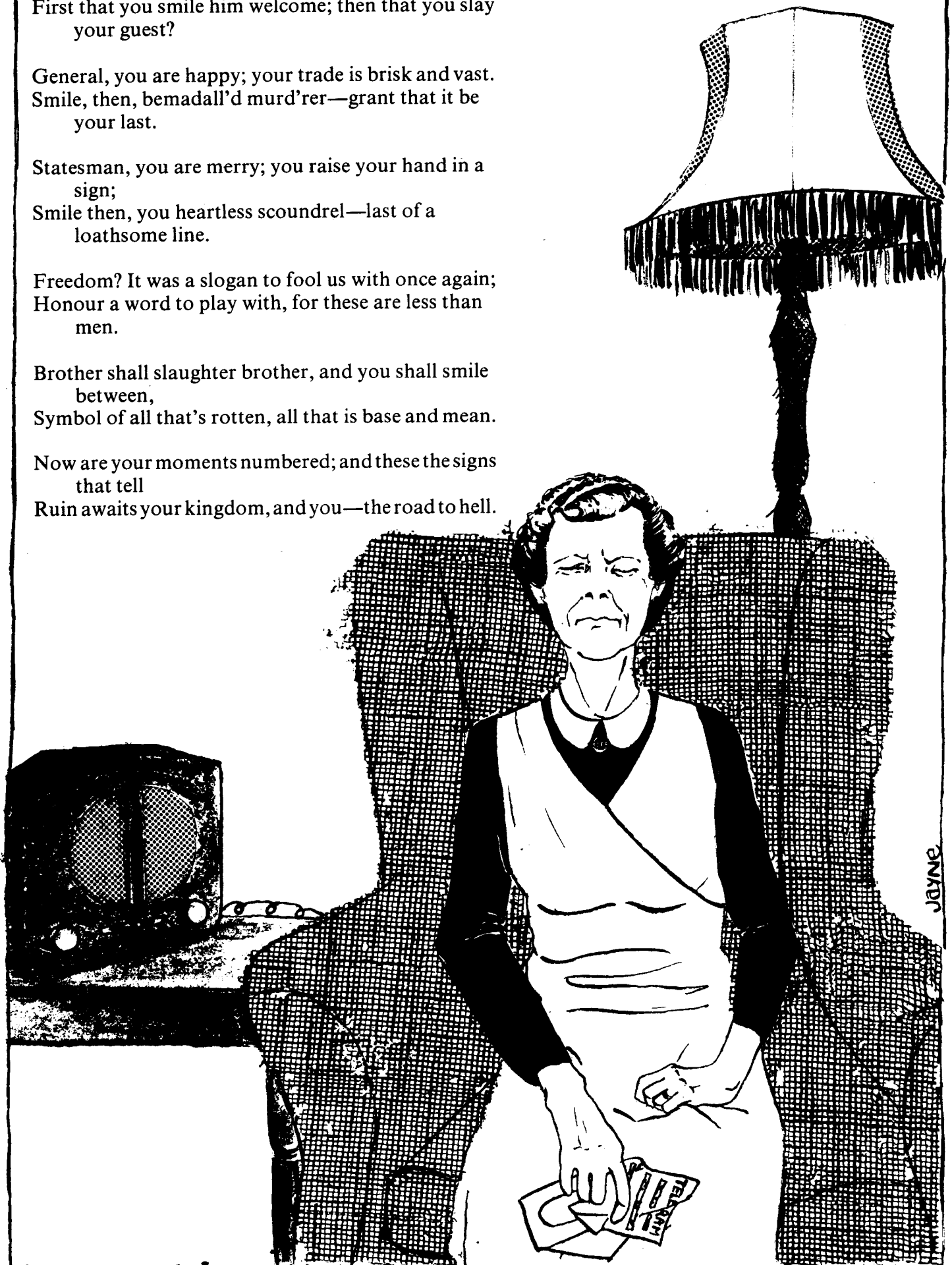
General, you are happy; your trade is brisk and vast.
Smile, then, bemadall'd murd'rer—grant that it be
your last.

Statesman, you are merry; you raise your hand in a
sign;
Smile then, you heartless scoundrel—last of a
loathsome line.

Freedom? It was a slogan to fool us with once again;
Honour a word to play with, for these are less than
men.

Brother shall slaughter brother, and you shall smile
between,
Symbol of all that's rotten, all that is base and mean.

Now are your moments numbered; and these the signs
that tell
Ruin awaits your kingdom, and you—the road to hell.



The more things change, the more they stay the same.