

Socialist Woman

A JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP

SUMMER 1975

free abortion on demand



15p

DEFEAT THE WHITE AMENDMENT BILL!

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EDITORIAL BOARD: Ingrid Falconer, Carl Gardiner, Leonora Lloyd, Geoff Sheridan, Dodie Wepler.

DESIGN: Hugh Richards.

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VICTORY IN VIETNAM

We demand the Ford Administration return all the Vietnamese children abducted to the United States of America and other countries to their parents and relatives so that they can live in their families and homeland as other children of the world.

The same US aircraft carriers and warships which once committed brutal crimes in Vietnam were sent back to assist the 'evacuation of the refugees': thousands of forced evacuees, including children, were drowned in 'shipwrecks', hundreds were shot dead by Thieu's men at the ports. On 5 April alone, 50 children died on ships of starvation, thirst and sunstroke...

We call on all women to condemn and check the perfidious schemes and criminal acts of the Ford administration and the Thieu junta, and to demand that they put an end to their scheme of abduction of Vietnamese children under the signboard 'humanitarian evacuation'.

South Vietnamese Women's Union
Liberation News Agency

In South Vietnam, as in Cambodia, a national liberation struggle has just triumphed. It took the mobilisation of a whole population to defeat an enemy that was infinitely stronger materially. The active participation and autonomous organisation of women during the long history of anti-imperialist struggle in Vietnam—evident in the South since 1930—will be reviewed in the next issue of *Socialist Woman*.



EDITORIAL

In spite of the Labour Government's commitment to International Women's Year—on paper at least!—few real steps have been taken to push forward the struggle for women's liberation. We are celebrating International Women's Year against the backdrop of the severest economic crisis since the 1930's. Following the Tory Government's attempts to deal with the crisis by direct confrontation with the working class, the Labour Government's social contract attempts to do the same thing under the guise of reasonableness, social responsibility and voluntary wages cuts instead of enforced ones. But now the social contract is not enough to meet the deepening crisis and there is talk of a return to incomes policies.

ATTACK ON LIVING STANDARDS

An incomes policy will be a further attack on the living standards of the working class which must be met with a firm commitment from the *entire* workers' movement against such moves. The organisations of the working class are intact—no major defeats have been inflicted since the 1926 General Strike, the living standards of the working class are just beginning to fall once again since the Labour Government has come to power, and increasing numbers of men and women (the latter, in particular) are joining trade unions. However, the *organisational* strength of the working class which will be of utmost importance in the coming months, is not matched by a *political clarity* on a number of extremely important questions. Racism, national chauvinism, and sexism are all central questions on which there is a real backwardness amongst the working class.

It is around these questions that the ruling class will try to weaken the workers' movement. Throughout this issue of *Socialist Woman* we have articles which reflect the extent of the crisis—both on an economic level, as well as in terms of social relations. Low pay, cuts in social spending and strikes involving a male bread-winner all have a particular impact upon women and upon the stable functioning of the family. The opening of battered women's refuges demonstrate the level of tensions and frustrations which are imprisoned within the family unit. But what is the response of the workers' movement to this situation?

DANGERS FROM LACK OF CLARITY

The response of the stewards at the May Day Rally in Dublin (see article *Report from Ireland*, p.10) shows only too clearly the dangers which flow from the lack of political clarity within the working class. Traditionally, the labour movement has refused to take up 'social' questions—like abortion and contraception, the battering of women and children, the provision of nursery facilities. All these questions are seen as 'individual problems' which the Labour Government can deal with at best or which must be sorted out individually at worst. In maintaining this practice, the labour movement is opening up a flank to be utilised by reactionary forces! At a time of deep crisis, there will be continual attempts to draw the links between issues taken up by such groups as the Festival of Light, the nanti-pornography crusaders, and the numerous anti-abortion groups. The thread running through the propaganda of all these organisations is social stability—stability that will come ultimately through preserving such institutions as the Church, the family, and the bourgeois state. And this kind of stability rests upon the role of women tied to the family.

The campaign against James' Whites' Abortion (Amendment) Bill thus has a particular significance. The fact that a Labour MP has introduced it is exceedingly dangerous. It clouds over the class nature of the issue of abortion and has made it easier for the Labour Government to refuse

to take a position on the Bill—treating it as a 'non-sectarian' issue.

The fight in the National Abortion Campaign to gain the widest possible support for the 21 June demonstration (and for the aims of the campaign) has been successful to date. The list of sponsors for the 21 June demonstration is growing daily and there are not insignificant trade union branches that have agreed to sponsor it.

For us, as socialists in the women's liberation movement, there are many special tasks. First, we must ensure that we build the campaign in such a way as to involve the broadest possible forces, drawing in not only those already organised, but also women who have never been active before. This means the types of actions we use to build the campaign must reach women who would otherwise remain isolated. The examples from the South London NAC group are worthy of following—street theatre on High Streets, leafletting markets, picketing hospitals and leafletting patients as well as workers, etc.

TASKS FOR SOCIALISTS

Second, we should try to use the campaign to develop confidence in ourselves and new women who will be joining the campaign. This means when we go to the labour movement for example, we should thoroughly motivate why we think it is important for them to elect women delegates to attend steering committee meetings, etc. (At the same time we should not bar the possibility of men participating in the organising committees—the example of the National Union of Railwaymen branch in Manchester who passed a resolution against White's Bill should be *dragged* into the organising committees, if necessary). In waging this political fight in the trade unions, we bring to the fore a discussion about the traditional chauvinism which exists in the workers' movement. An integral part of ensuring that we, as women, emerge with confidence and ability to wage a strong fight on *all* fronts, is the encouragement of women's caucuses within unions, the development of women's groups in housing estates to campaign for particular needs, etc.

These are the concrete ways that the workers' movement will be clarified on the question of sexism, and will be armed against attempts to split the working class around questions relating to the family.

In addition, as socialists we must have absolute political clarity in the campaign. In past issues of *Socialist Woman* we have pointed out the dangers of this lack of clarity—without an understanding that the starting point for this campaign must be the right of women to control their own bodies—their fertility and sexuality—both reactionaries and pro-abortion forces can line up to demand free abortion and contraception on demand.

FREE ABORTION ON DEMAND!

Of course, we must continue to put forward the demand for free abortion and contraception on demand. Women will never have 'the right to choose' until this demand has been met. And in the context of the massive cuts in NHS spending we must ensure that we fight against the *de facto* limitations that are already being imposed (through hospital closures which provide abortion facilities, for example) on the limited gains that were achieved under the 1967 Abortion Act.

In many cases, the basis for taking the question of abortion in to the trade unions, has already been laid by the Working Women's Charter Campaign. In many localities, much of the resources of the WWCC are being put into the question of abortion. If we can demonstrate in the Abortion Campaign how White's Bill can be used as a rallying point for forces committed to weakening the worker's movement, we can ensure that all attacks launched in the future are met by a *united* working class response.

DOMESTIC LABOUR

Domestic labour under international capitalism is just another factor by which the system tries to rationalise itself, to make its capital more productive. This process can be called the *capitalist socialisation of domestic labour*.

What this means is that the domestic labour carried out unpaid inside the family is separated from the family unit, and carried out outside of it by the State or private capital. The interest of this process to the bourgeoisie, tied to imperialism is paramount. As Jean Gardiner has argued, domestic labour is neither marginal nor outside capitalism, but directly integrated into it. Her work shows that housework is part of the total surplus value produced in the society, alongside productive surplus value.

In socialising domestic labour, the capitalist system releases women more effectively into the labour force, at least in the dominant countries: Taiwan, Formosa, India, etc. there is no socialisation of domestic labour. But in the dominant/dominated countries—countries dominated by international capitalism (yet at the same time part of the chain of domination over the formations surrounding such as Iraq (Kurds), Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, (colonisation of Amazon peoples), Algeria (Mali, Mauritania, joint ventures in SAHEL, patron of the ANC, FRELIMO, the future governments of possible new formations), Zaire (Angola, Brazzaville) etc. —there are other aims for the provision of crèches, etc. But they are to spread capitalist relations among the dominant classes, without necessarily intending the women using them to work.

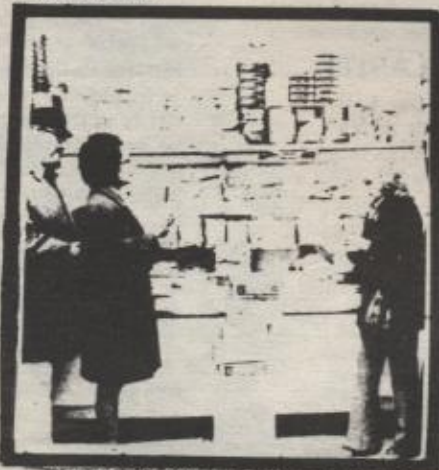
DOMINATED COUNTRIES

The dominated countries provide the international bourgeoisie with an already reared workforce. Clearly the cost of importing workers is unthinkably cheaper than rearing from birth your own 'national' children. Especially when international workers can be thrown out and with their families excluded from consuming or benefiting from the standard of living and services 'allowed' to the national workers. The women of the dominated countries are rearing the workforce of Europe. In emigration we should see not only the exploitation of the immigrant worker, but also the *unpaid domestic labour* of his family.

Domestic labour in the dominated countries of the world undergoes radical changes

The contribution below is the second in the series of articles on domestic labour. This is a debate which has been opened in the pages of *Socialist Woman* and an invitation is extended to the readership to participate in the debate. ROSA OCHTI examines the relationship between imperialism and domestic labour. The editorial board wishes to make clear that the article below does not represent its views but feels that the contribution raises a number of interesting questions worthy of debate. All contributions received by the editorial board—taking up points raised in any of the articles in this series—will be considered.

as international capitalism and its national corporations penetrate these territories. The women of the dominated countries, in keeping home and raising the present and future workers of the dominant countries, are transferring their domestic labour into the heart of the metropolitan countries—be they isolated peasants or working class. This transfer must be seen as part of the unequal exchange that takes place inside the imperialist chain. The surplus value of the exploited immigrant workers is divided, always unequally, between the international bourgeoisie who exploit them and the government or bourgeoisie of their country of origin who *accumulate* from their wages (which) they are compelled to send home through government exchange rates and banking systems). Ireland's emigrants are its single biggest source of invisible revenue. Algeria's emigrant remittances are equal to its oil revenues!



The woman in the dominated countries, through her reproduction of labour power, is directly integrated into the exploitation in dominant countries... obliged to stay at home while her husband emigrates, forced to export her children. Finance capital is well aware of the value of this domestic labour. They are relieved of the burden of rearing, feeding, educating, and nursing the labour force which they draw into the metropolis. The fact that they are 'aware' does

not mean that they will destroy the different mode of production in which this domestic labour will take place.

In the dominated countries, two modes of production can exist. For example, patriarchy as a pre-capitalist mode and wage labour can co-exist. Finance capital will try to integrate these other modes without trying to destroy them...yet.

In Algeria, where a household can contain up to 20-30 people, or on a South African reservation, or in a commune, domestic labour may be *apparently* communal or classless, but that doesn't mean communalised or communist. These forms of pre-capitalist life-style present no contradiction to finance capital, which rips off the labour power produced in them just the same.

The technological developments of birth control are entirely dominated by the international capitalist system. This entails the bourgeoisie to control the rate of reproduction of labour power.

If we now see the USA, the most powerful of international interests, pushing birth control on a world scale, we should not be surprised: under new productive forms of exploitation they no longer need masses of unskilled workers flooding into their European and other factories of the world... Irish to England... Uruguayans to Buenos Aires... Moroccans to Algeria... Algerians to France. With the present crisis of capitalism, the international bourgeoisie clearly doesn't need immigrant workers on the scale of the 60s. In fact, the present English 'Prevention of Terrorism' Bill will neatly and conveniently dispose not only of unwanted opposition inside Britain, but could also on a wider scale dispose of its unwanted Irish workers who are suffering from the redundancies in the building trade.

BOURGEOISIE

Although the international bourgeoisie is bombarding the dominated countries with birth control propaganda in the name of women's liberation, it is resisted—particularly by the Latin American proletariat.

Inside Europe, birth control and abortion are vigorously resisted by bourgeois interests (eg SPUC) despite demands from

working class women for control over their own bodies. These anti-abortion lobbies and religious fanatics are the national bourgeoisie opposing the international bourgeoisie and trying, usually unsuccessfully, to bring the working class along with it.

This is perhaps just another side of the rise of neo-fascist ideology spouting 'motherhood and racial superiority'. The glaring example is Sir Keith Joseph's recent speech on the 'degeneration' of Britain caused by unmarried mothers, and his comments on Thatcher's election: 'The values for which Mrs. Thatcher stands—the family, responsibility, work, and thrift—are shared across the nation'. The same with the struggle for abortion in France: demanded by working class women, refused by the Gaullistes, and legalised now that big monopoly capital is in power.

ENGLAND

In England, as in other dominant countries immigrants and working class women have the same use for capital—cheap labour. When the needs of the economy dictate, immigrants are deported. In the same way, working women are pushed back into the home and their time filled with 'home-making'. The *Daily Mirror* has run a series of articles this winter on 'How to Survive in 75' which include 'How to Bake Your Own Bread', 'to Dig Your Own Compost Heap', etc.

The creation of home and home 'atmosphere' is central to the reproduction of labour power in the working class: there is no 'end to housework' (as has been said of Eastern Europe).

In middle class USA where the drudgery of housework has to some extent been abolished, the re-appearance of home-making becomes a new ideology. This bourgeois ideology (these new forms of home-making) is imposed on the working class and transformed into work:—bourgeois—dig your own swimming pool; petty bourgeois—bake your own bread. It appears in commodity form as well, for sale to each class: G Plan furniture, Habitat homes, Brew Your Own Wine kits, etc.

Free Abortion On Demand!



IMG Pamphlet

8 p



"...With the present crisis of capitalism, the international bourgeoisie clearly doesn't need immigrant workers on the scale of the 60s."

The political manifestation of international capitalist domination over this area of people's lives is that, while the new 'home ideology' is being sold to class which are in one way or another represented in the power bloc, a *complete underdevelopment on a world scale hits the dispossessed*. Dormitory cities, shanty towns, transit towns, caravan dwellers, and squatters all must survive alongside Ideal Homes. Their revolt is subversive and finance capital will crush it....

If the central contradiction of international capitalism is the tendency for the rate of profit to fall, forcing capital to be more and more productive, the family will inevitably be socialised. And this socialisation will destroy the family as we know it.

Before the last World War, in England, 1 in 10 married women went out to work. Now it is 6 out of 10. The consumption of 'convenience foods' like TV dinners has increased 25% in the last 20 years; clothes that used to be made in the home are now made in factories; laundrettes are mushrooming; there has been an overall increase in nursery and playgroup provision for children under school age. All so that more women can go out to work.

ALIENATION

But once put on the labour market, the alienation of women's work can be not so much a new factor of class struggle as another invitation to consume—and in unity with other working class housewives to sell commodities to her neighbours. The saleswoman selling to her friends on behalf of Avon, John Craig, Julian Hodge, or Redoute in France, pushes commodity relationships into the hidden interpersonal relationships of the working class itself.

Above all the ideology reproduced in the home—the families function as educators in bourgeois values—is breaking down.

Children brought up in state institutions from their first year (nurseries) can be *directly* indoctrinated. Nurseries, schools, hostels, television, are taking over the families' ideological function at the dominant end of the imperialist chain.

The socialisation of the family is producing certain contradictions for the state—in the shape of 'juvenile delinquents', soaring crime statistics, children in care, etc. These contradictions are inevitable.

FAMILY

Capitalism needs the family as an instrument of ideological control...and its economic development destroys it.

It is not for us to oppose this break up of the family. We must on the contrary seize control of playgroups, nurseries, schools, laundrettes, and attack the denationalisation and desocialisation of these structures under crisis. The fight for a health service that truly serves the people (and against hospital closures) is as important as the fight for control over the science and technology of birth planning.

Only when housework is understood as part of the process of production—as domestic labour—can community and factory struggles be seen as part of the same struggle to fight capital's constant movement to screw more productivity out of every worker, in the home and out of it. This implies a certain conflict with those who advocate wages for housework, and lays greater emphasis on the fight for 'community control' in a class not reformist sense—in relation to domestic labour.

†We use the word 'formation' rather than country to show that international capital has relationships which tie it to the ruling classes and capital which do not co-incide with geographical frontiers.

Battered Women's Refuges

A recent national survey on marriage commissioned by that highly radical journal *Woman's Own*, proclaimed with astonishment that 3 million women are dissatisfied with their marriage, that only three per cent of wives think women get the best deal out of marriage, that the claim that many women enjoy being beaten up as part of sexual excitement is a myth.

The survey goes on to suggest that 'rather than women liking violence, they probably endure it only because they have small children and no means of supporting them, no alternative accommodation, nowhere to turn to'.

Well done *Woman's Own*! You have discovered that we do not actually enjoy being beaten up. But some battered women have in the recent past found a place to turn to, a place

day. They provide a necessary refuge for victims of the violence inflicted in the family. But they are a stop-gap measure.

The real solution to the battering of women will come about when their role in the family is fundamentally altered. But this means we must fight for a society in which women are not forced to play the role they currently do. The frustrations and physical violence experienced by all family members can only be solved when the basis for the family is destroyed. And this means taking up now, as a matter of urgency, the beginnings of the fight to socialise domestic tasks. Feeding and caring for the family, looking after the children—all these are tasks which *should* be met through collectively planned solutions, not carried out by women in individual, isolated family units.

And naturally they are only too pleased that someone is helping them to shoulder the burden. On the other hand, the local authorities are often very reluctant to provide adequate (if any) resources to groups who are struggling to set up a refuge.

SOCIAL PROBLEM

In Exeter, for example, the council positively thrust an empty house at such a group, hoping no doubt that this would be a cheap way out of a social problem they would otherwise have to confront. But the council did not give the group a penny besides the building. The local authorities are continually complaining about overcrowding, but have never been known to actually carry out these threats. They are forced to turn a blind eye to overcrowding and any other regulations that we may be breaking because women's aid centres are filling a gap which social services cannot afford to split open again.

Do you find that social workers attempt to 'rehabilitate' the women back into their marriages?

In most cases, social workers will try to patch up the marriage and family situation; there is also a tendency for them to place the blame at the door of the battered woman herself for things that went wrong. Sometimes social workers try to assert that had the woman fulfilled her role as wife and mother better, perhaps she could have avoided a beating. Yes—in official circles the line is that you are the one at fault and that you should look to your own inadequacies as a woman.

It has been said that violence in marriage is just as rampant in the middle class as in the working class—would you say that is the case?

Well in fact we probably see many more working class women in the battered women's refuges. After all, the middle class have more alternatives. They usually have money or friends with alternative accommodation. Working class mothers don't generally have that alternative. They are usually in a desperate situation before they come here.

It's a big step for many women to take, to leave home. Many women will try hard for a long time to make the marriage work before taking the decision to get out. It's not usually after one beating, but after years of violence that they come to the refuges.

Do you have trouble from the police?

Well they have a very unserious attitude to the whole problem, stemming no doubt from their view of the traditional role women should play. They treat battered women as a result of marital disputes unseriously. They do not consider it their business. They think it is every man's private affair. At the Leeds refuge recently an



Chiswick Aid Centre: three battered women with children who took refuge at the Centre.

where they can begin to think of restructuring their lives in an alternative way, sharing experiences with other women who they come together with in the battered women's refuge centres which are springing up in most areas in the country.

Since Chiswick Women's Aid was first opened in 1971, 28 women's aid centres have been established, and 83 groups are at the present time attempting to set one up. Some refuges came about from the struggle of women's liberation groups, some involve local councillors, and a few are run by the Social Services Department.

The establishment of these centres reflect a fundamental crisis in family relations which mark British society to-

How does the Welfare State view these women's aid centres? And what is the role of the Social Services Department in relation to them? These were among the main themes of discussion when INGRID FALCONER talked to JO SUTTON who is National Co-ordinator of Women's Aid Centres and is based at the Wandsworth refuge.

What sort of relationship do most refuges have with the local authority?

Social Services recognise the problem of battered women but say that for them it cannot be a priority. They recognise the existence of the refuges all right—they cannot afford to ignore them because what the centres are doing is helping to alleviate a problem which the social services face.

irate husband broke down the front door, and assaulted three people including a child. It took the police 25 minutes to get there and they shrugged their shoulders and said almost disbelievingly 'Well he is not here now - nothing we can do about it'.

Do you discuss the ideas of the women's liberation movement within the refuges or do women come to develop a consciousness of aspects of women's liberation because of their own experiences without necessarily having discussed this formally?

We do not have formal discussion as such but obviously there is an invaluable

learning which comes from the mutual sharing of experiences. We feel it is very important to have communal decision making about the running of the house. Basically the experience of living here gives the women an awareness to do their own thing. For many of them it is the first time in years they have felt a sense of freedom.

There is some talk of the possibility of a recommendation from the Parliamentary Select Committee on violence in marriage that social service departments take over the women's refuges that have been set up under their control. Do you see dangers of being swamped by the

local authorities and how could you avoid it?

It's a continual struggle for some groups to avoid compromising themselves when dealing with the social services. Of course we want them to provide the money and resources but we cringe at the idea of having a band of wardens, strings of regulations, etc. This is what the local authorities would prefer - back to the old Salvation Army hostel image. Those refuges with a women's group in support are in a good position when dealing with social services - because the group will continually hammer home the goal we are fighting for and will fight against the compromises that might occur.

BALHAM NURSERY SACKINGS

In the London Borough of Wandsworth, there are at least 4000 children under five whose parents both have to work. But Wandsworth Borough Council have places for only 461 of them - the rest have to use what private facilities there are.

Eveline Day Nurseries Ltd is a chain of seven private nurseries in South London, run on what the management calls the *Montessori system* - this apparently allows them to collect over £2000 a week in fees and spend it on too few staff, paying them insulting wages, supplying too few materials and offering no training.

NURSES

Last February two nurses at the Eveline Day Nursery in Balham were sacked for trade union activity. They had been working a 40-hour week, with no proper breaks, for £20; the child/adult ratio was 16:1, although the legal maximum is 8:1. The facilities for the children and staff were unworkable - 8 paintbrushes between 20 children, and a few books or toys; no training was offered to the staff. The children's afternoon nap was a compulsory sit-down with heads on arms; floor were unprotected stone - one child fell and cut his head badly, but was left sitting in a chair, as staff could not be spared to take him for hospital treatment. Parents were refused access to the nursery. Children were forced to sit for long periods of time doing little or nothing. There were no Montessori-trained teachers at all. It was against

these conditions that the two nurses, Peggy and Anna, were protesting

The management was unsympathetic, so Peggy went to the Department of Social Services for advice. Peggy and Anna then joined the General and Municipal Workers Union and recruited two more nurses; the first union meeting was planned for 29 January. The company was informed by the DHSS of the union membership, and on 30 January Peggy was sacked with a week's notice; Anna was sacked on the spot a week later. The reasons given were that the girls were 'unsuitable' and 'too inexperienced' - yet one of them was replaced by a less experienced 16 year old girl.

LAW CENTRE

Peggy and Anna then discussed the case with Balham Law Centre, and as a result, the Balham Nursery Action Group was formed at an open meeting held on 13 February. About 40 people turned up including a woman from the DHSS, about 20 parents, and ten 'lackeys' from the nursery management. The latter attempted to pose all the issues in personality terms. In fact the nursery secretary in a fit of pique blurted out the reason for Peggy's dismissal - 'We had to sack her, she was too militant'.

It was quite obvious at this meeting that many parents were afraid of involving themselves in any campaign against the nursery for fear of losing their own place there, and anxiety



that the nursery might be closed down. The company reacted quickly by launching its own campaign and called a meeting which practically all the parents attended. It started a smear campaign against the two nurses, and articles appeared in the local press, mostly portraying them as trouble-makers and agitators. The GMWU answered by lodging a complaint with the Industrial Tribunal Court, calling a picket to demand reinstatement of the nurses, and threatening to black services to the nurseries. The Tribunal dismissed the GMWU's case but as a result of the campaign a parent/staff association was set up, and the struggle for better nursery facilities continues.

CAMPAIGN

A campaign of this nature has very special problems. It is not seen as an 'industrial' dispute, and the fact that children are involved introduces an emotive element. In addition, parents have diverse political and social perspectives, and they tend to shy away from involvement because they rely so heavily on the nurseries. The

nursery staff are mostly young with no trade union experience and a great deal of suspicion; in this case they had seen two of their colleagues dismissed for union activity, and some of them stood to lose both job and home, since the company supplies a certain amount of accommodation. The nursery management were quick to recognise the threat of unionisation and to organise against it; whereas we failed to relate and explain to the parents where their real interests lay, and thereby gaining their support and solidarity from the outset. The GMWU did not succeed in gaining the nurses' confidence, and the actual organisation and mobilisation for the picket was left to the intervention of NUPE, (The National Union of Public Employees), the South London Working Womens Charter Group, and Wandsworth members of the National Union of Teachers.

Although the dismissal of the case by the Tribunal actually signalled the effective end of the reinstatement struggle, an ongoing campaign for improved nursery facilities has now been established.

-Shoshanna Morris

Electrolux Equal Pay Strike

Electrolux workers at Luton are still out on equal pay strike as we go to press. The factory employs 800 men and 600 women. Although they work side by side on the production lines doing the same work, there is an average difference in their wages of £15 a week!

Last autumn Electrolux conceded the first and last equal pay increment in the form of a bonus. But the average male rate is £53 for a 40-hour week, while women receive only £38 for 37½ hours. Unlike recent cases such as occurred at Salford Electrical Instruments where men scabbed on the strike, the men at Electrolux have joined with the women. Their jobs could be threatened next year by management proposals.

The management has so far offered the women to accept on their own £4 with back pay in the hope that the workers' unity will be weakened. In addition, management proposes two new rates to replace the current male and female rate. However the rates of these two new grades would be lower than the present lowest male rate. This means that men doing the same jobs as women would actually get a cut in wages next year.

Electrolux is a Swedish-owned combine that controls or owns 130 factories producing domestic equipment. As in all other cases where there are multi-national companies, it is imp-

ortant to try to develop international links in the fight against the bosses. Many cases come to mind — the action taken by British, German, and American workers in May 1971 in support of Kodak workers on strike in Vincennes, France; the more recent refusal of workers in Portugal, Spain, Belgium and Northern Ireland to do any work normally done by East Kilbride workers of the Standard Telephones and Cable factory which was on strike; etc.

In the wave of chauvinism which is surrounding the debate on the Common Market, it is these kinds of international links which must be established, not some political and economic union of the bosses.

But this is not to down-play the fight required in this country to build solidarity for the women and men at Electrolux. The Working Women's Charter campaign has shown in the past that it can use its links with the organised trade union movement to throw its weight behind such struggles.

And the Charter has an additional useful role to play: in order to help ensure that women do not get sold out when they are involved in disputes, it is absolutely necessary for them to meet together during the strike, discussing how their special needs are being met. The Charter Campaign can not only mobilise support for such disputes but can also help open up such discussions.



International Marxist Group



(British section of the Fourth International)

97 Caledonian Rd., London N.1.

I would like more information about the IMG and its activities

NAME

ADDRESS

Women Fight Low Pay

For three weeks 600 clerical workers at Dunlop's Coventry factory have been on strike for more pay. The strikers, 400 of whom are women, belong to the white-collar unions APEX and ACTSS and are demanding a £10 rise across the board with no mention of equal pay. It is this strike which is bringing large sections of the car industry to a grinding halt due to shortages of wheel and suspension units.

Top grade clerical workers at Dunlop earn less than internal postmen who get £50 a week and sweepers-up who get £48. Even greater divisions exist in clerical grades between male and female rates. At present there are four grades for clerical staff. Male earnings rise from £33.43 a week, but women on the same grades are stuck between £30 and £35.

Last week British Leyland announced that it intended to re-import components sent to its Innocenti factory in Milan. Approaches have been made from Dunlop shop stewards to BL stewards as well as the docks and the airports to stop this attempt to break the strike.

But after initial promises of blacking, the Longbridge stewards are now saying that they can't black the products because they are British goods being re-imported! Meanwhile, despite the strike being official the strikers have received no strike pay since they stopped work.

Dunlop is now offering up to £7.35 for men (an increase of 35p on their original offer) and £6.40 for women (20p on the original offer). This is conditional on a new grading structure which would scrap the existing system in favour of five tier structure with women on the lowest grade! Equal pay on this basis would be a sick joke.

Local union officials have colluded with management all down the line in allowing clerical workers' wages to slip in value over the past five years. For the last two years no claim was submitted because of promises made of equal pay in 1975. The women are now discovering what a fraud this is—but it might be too late to change the course of this strike.

Maureen Smith

NUT Conference Shaken to the Bones

Sam Fisher, leading member of the Communist Party and member of the NUT executive, in summing up his opposition to the adoption of the Working Women's Charter by the NUT called its supporters the 'lunatic fringe'. But this 'lunatic fringe' managed to shake the NUT Conference to its very bones.

The Communist Party lined up with the right-wing of the union to block the adoption of the Charter. But the support by over 300 delegates makes one thing clear. The women who are in the majority of this union and of the teaching profession are not going to tolerate their second-rate status for much longer.

MOTION

The motion was not expected to get onto the agenda of the Conference. But despite the opposition by the Communist Party and even by the International Socialist-controlled rank and file group, it was prioritised on the order paper. This indicates that support amongst teachers as a whole is even greater than that expressed in the Conference. Women teachers are on the move. Their determination to take up the fight against their oppression was expressed throughout the whole debate.

Even the male-dominated Executive were unable to oppose directly the sentiment of women teachers. After attempting unsuccessfully to get the motion taken off the agenda, they manoeuvred to substitute for the Charter a vague, non-committal statement on women's rights. The amendment was put forward by Sam Fisher, playing his usual role of covering up

Vanessa Wiseman



from the left for the NUT bureaucracy. The amendment was seconded by Dr. Roy, a right-wing member of the Executive - a most 'unholy alliance'.

AMENDMENT

The whole amendment was a 'botched up job'. The actual wording of it was lifted out of the Anti-Discrimination Bill and is completely meaningless.

The speech used by Fisher to motivate the amendment was cribbed from an article written by the women's officer of the NUT, which made great claims about the union's stand for women, but he had to dredge up gains made over 20 years to give it any credibility. 'We have long been in business in this matter...Already the union has a number of achievements to its credit, including the overcoming of the marriage bar, equal pay itself and a maternity leave agreement.'

WOMEN

Little wonder that the tiny handful of women members on the Executive voted against the amendment in favour of the Charter and were prevented from speaking.

The most vicious arguments were used in support of the amendment. One delegate tried to argue that the inclusion of the demand for free abortion on demand would alienate support for women's rights. But, as a speaker for the Charter had previously pointed out, the whole importance of the Charter was in showing how discrimination against women in teaching was bound up with her oppression in the family. Free abortion and contraception on demand were essential if women were ever going to get equal rights.

CHARTER

But the issues raised by the Charter debate were by no means confined to a small corner of NUT policy. This was made clear in the most important debate at the Conference - on the social contract. Reg Prentice (Minister for Education) appealed directly to teachers to take up the cudgels on behalf of the social contract. Given the present crisis, he said, 'The only answer is a permanent social contract, a long-term voluntary incomes policy in which the whole

community exercises restraint...the more that is taken out of the national product for personal income, the less is available for schools and hospitals.'

If this wasn't clear enough, Prentice went on to say that for every rise in salary outside of the social contract, the result would be one less nursery school.



Cath Young

IMG delegates to the conference continually pointed out the need to smash the social contract. Liz Smith (Lambeth) said that unless we were able to confront the social contract head on, the position of women would not be improved. If there are less nursery schools - who does it affect? When there are redundancies in part-time teaching staff because of cuts in social spending - who does it affect? To both questions the answer is: Women!

SOCIAL CONTRACT

Throughout the whole conference, no mention was made by the executive of the social contract. When Sam Fisher, speaking on the amendment to the Charter motion, talked of 'a vigorous campaign against sex discrimination in all areas of education' and 'overwhelming support for the principle of women's rights', how did he envisage these things would be won - by empty words asking for more nurseries? or for women to be placed higher on the promotion ladder? No! It will happen only if a fight is waged, against the social contract and for the types of demands raised in the Charter.

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REPORT from IRELAND

There have been two recent *distorted* and *confused* indications of the ferment going on in Irish society on all questions of sexuality and the family. First, Ireland's one and only 'girlie' magazine has successfully defeated all the attempts made to ban it.

Secondly, the brash *Sunday World* has made its appearance accompanied by a raging debate around its infamous sexist advertising campaign. Advertisement hoardings are plastered with a woman holding an issue of the new paper and a caption which says 'Don't you get it on Sundays?' This advertising has sparked off a popular wide-ranging debate in the pages of many a paper.

Developments such as these are indications on what might be called the 'official' level of Irish society that the ideological grip of the Catholic Church is gradually being broken.*

The opposition of the Church and the State to abortion and contraception, for example, is being increasingly challenged throughout the whole of Irish society. A recent opinion poll estimated that 69% of the population were in favour of contraception. Not surprisingly in this situation a number of women's groups have sprung up.

But where does this ferment come from? It is at least partially bound up with the fundamental involvement of women in the national liberation struggle and the impact which the crisis of imperialism and the struggle against it is making on the consciousness of Irish men and women. Indeed, the number of women and girls who were previously interned in Armagh and elsewhere—as well as those still in prison on Charges in the North and South—is eloquent proof of their active involvement in the republican movement.

POPE PAUL

Pope Paul may well be remembered for his belief that '...women should not have outspoken ideals,' but women like Theresa Holland, Marie Delaney, Margaret Shannon, Angela Nelson and Ann Walsh—and now Rita O'Hare—will think differently. All these women were tortured by the RUC Special Branch. Their cases are at present being highlighted by Amnesty International. Of course the borderline between torture and abuse is very thin.

Take the case of Rita O'Hare which is prominent in the republican movement at present. Rita became involved in politics a few years ago when

Recently Ted Coxhead travelled to Ireland and had the opportunity of talking to women active in the republican movement and involved in a campaign for abortion and contraception. *Socialist Woman* asked him to write down his impressions of developments in Ireland particularly in light of the growing campaign to free Rita O'Hare and also in light of the attack on the women who were to address the May Day rally in Dublin on the question of abortion and contraception.

she saw the brutality of repression in Andersonstown (Belfast). She eventually found her way into the republican movement and was shot three times by the British Army hooligans.

On October 25 1971 this young mother of three children was shot in the head, leg and stomach. A month later while still in critical condition in the hospital, she was charged with the attempted murder of a British soldier! She was transferred to Armagh jail where she was denied proper medical treatment. Surprisingly, she was released on bail—and not so difficult to understand, she came to the conclusion that she was being set up. She fled across the border and in January 1973, she was arrested in Dublin.

When she was finally brought to court in June, the Irish police admitted that she was wanted for extradition by the RUC in the North. Even the District Justice could not stomach this and Rita was freed.



But this didn't stop the attempts of the RUC and the Gardai to get her. She was arrested again in September 1973, released, and finally the Dublin police got her through the Special Criminal Court. She was given three years. And the harassment continues even in prison. On Saturday, 26 April, her husband Gerry and their three children were forced to wait over 2 hours before they could see her! And when it was finally agreed to begin the visiting time, Rita discovered that she was expected to 'visit' with her children and husband from the inside of a glass box—while they remained on the outside. She therefore refused to continue the 'visit' on the conditions set down by the prison authorities. Eventually it was agreed that she could see the children without a wall of glass between them and her husband was escorted away. The normal time for a visit is 30 minutes—but Rita's children were physically thrown out into the street, crying, after only 5 minutes!

SOUTHERN IRELAND

It is not surprising that the imperialists and their unsavoury friends in the South of Ireland should be so vicious to Rita and all the women like her. They have seen the role that such women play in the struggle which is taking place in Ireland. These women are the continuation of the tradition established by Countess Markievitz and Mod Gonne. But what is significant is that the campaigns against the treated meted out to revolutionary women has raised in the left and in the republican movement itself to some extent, the question of women's oppression. Since the campaign to free Rita was established a number of women's groups have come into activity on a whole range of issues. Groups ranging from Women Against Imperialism to Irish Women United are beginning to pick up the pieces of the women's liberation movement that was started several years ago in Ireland and then faded away. The first meetings

in Dublin a few years ago, organised by a group of radical journalists actually attracted a thousand women. Local groups were set up all over the country. In Dublin the response came from working class women as well as middle class. Although this has more or less disappeared, the oppression of women in Ireland clearly has not.

IDEOLOGY

But any regeneration of the movement will have to clearly take up the domination of reactionary Catholic ideology especially in the sexist education system and in the family. In education, it is notable, for example, that 18.9% of boys took maths at Honours level ('O' level) in 1971, and only 2.8% of girls. In the economy the pattern is the same. In June 1974, the average weekly wage of a male industrial worker was £42.42 compared with the £21.37 for a female. It has been calculated that overall women earn only 70% of men's wages.



Unemployment is soaring in Ireland. Participation in the EEC has had the effect of producing widespread unemployment in the export industries. But among the male labour force, unemployment is calculated as being around 22%, whilst for women the figure is about 50%. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that about 44% of women are unionised in Ireland. The highest concentration of women is in the T&GWU which has 49,000 women members and the WUI which has 11,700.

We can begin to see why it is so intolerable to the Irish bourgeoisie and to British imperialism that any self-

consciousness should begin to develop amongst Irish women. All workers in the South begin to understand something about imperialism when this British dominated economy throws people out of work and on to short time. All workers begin to understand something about imperialism and the bourgeoisie in Ireland that depends on it, when they see the way their brothers and sisters are treated in the northern part of their country.

IDENTIFY

When women students and trade unionists in Ireland begin to identify the continuation of imperialism and the capitalist system as the cause of their oppression, then from that moment, the development of the revolutionary movement is immeasurably strengthened. In Ireland, unlike Britain that question is being answered in a concrete and graphic way: not by debates and conferences, so much as by the actual participation of women in the fight against imperialism. Many of the women involved in the struggles since 1968 will find it impossible to go back to the old ways of domestic drudgery and the chains of housework, childcare and husband care.

So the challenge of women's liberation is doubly important in Ireland. First, because of the acute oppression of women and the vast reservoir for active participation in the struggle which the female population contains. Secondly, because of the significance that the developing consciousness of their oppression has for the anti-imperialist struggle as a whole in Ireland.

But it won't be a simple fight. Generations of reactionary ideology and prejudice have to be swept away, not least in the anti-imperialist movement itself. It is obvious that in a situation where 2000 Irish girls and women come to Britain every year for abortions that the demand is a key demand for working class women.

WOMEN'S GROUPS

It was for this reason that the seven women's groups marched on the May Day March in Dublin and demanded the right to speak on this issue. But in things turned out quite differently that anticipated! The speaker chosen by the women was rejected by the platform of the United May Day Committee, on the grounds that she would 'attack the platform'. Many of the women were so incensed that they stormed the platform. Many of the women in the audience were shouting 'Let her speak', and the platform speakers attempted to drown them out.

It was at this moment that the stewards moved in. Many of them were well-known Communist Party and Official Republican movement supporters. In the fray that ensued, Margaret Williams



was knocked to the ground and sent to the hospital for two days. A woman from the Revolutionary Marxist Group (Irish section of the Fourth International) was finally able to speak and was well received by the audience. The platform became so infuriated that they started up singing the 'Internationale' (sic!)

MASS INVOLVEMENT

Incidents such as this cast grave doubts on those who call themselves socialists. Their ability to build a mass movement that will defeat the bourgeoisie and the imperialists is seriously questioned in light of these incidents. Revolutionary in Ireland have the duty to take up demands that offer a way forward against capitalism for working class women. The forces that are prepared to fight against internment and repressive legislation must also fight against the oppression of women and specifically that means on the question of abortion and contraception.

And those of us already involved in building a movement in the British working class for Troops Out Now and for the self-determination of the Irish people must lend whatever support we can to the development of a women's movement in Ireland and in Britain. In the abortion campaign in Britain it is essential to develop an international perspective in the campaign - to be prepared to give support to the fight in Ireland for free abortion and contraception on demand.

Footnotes

*Of course these developments have very little to do with the liberation of women. They indicate however that the so-called 'liberalisation' of sexual norms - which Elisabeth Wilson notes were introduced to serve capitalism's needs at a time of high unemployment in the 50s - has come to Ireland at a much later date.

FREE ABORTION AND ON DEMAND

Photo: Angela Phillips (IFL)



A workshop at the one-day Conference organised by the National Abortion Campaign held in April to acquaint people with the implications of the James White Bill.

The Women's Trade Union Congress recently passed a resolution calling for free abortion and contraception on demand. But just as this body of the labour movement—and many others—are calling for an extension of the 1967 Abortion Act, moves are afoot in Parliament to introduce severe restrictions to the Act.

JAMES WHITE

James White's (Labour MP, Pollock) Abortion (Amendment) Bill is seeking to restrict abortion facilities to such an extent that only in cases where it can be proved that a 'grave or serious risk' to the woman's physical or mental health exists, would an abortion be granted. This would cut the present numbers of abortions performed by about 80%. Some 80,000 women would be forced to choose between an unwanted child or a backstreet abortion.

RESPONSES

These contradictory responses to the law as it stands, and this fight over the availability of abortion facilities in the future, reflects more than just a different 'moral' outlook. It reflects rather the struggle between those forces in society seeking to tie women to the home, reinforcing and stabilising the family, and re-introducing Christian 'morality' as the basis for social life and social relations. On the other hand are those forces prepared to fight to free women from unwanted pregnancy, to make it possible for a woman to plan her life, and to look beyond the home and the family; to release her from a fearful and cautious sexuality.

The dispute is therefore not so much about the rights of the 'unborn child'

as about the right or otherwise of women to control their own fertility and thus develop an element of control over their own lives.

CAMPAIGN

And for these reasons, the present Amendment Bill must be defeated and the basis laid in the process to fight for a campaign for free abortion and contraception on demand. A National Abortion Campaign (NAC) has been set up to organise a mass national campaign against this legislation (and all restrictive legislation) on the basis of a woman's right to choose. Many local groups have been set up throughout the country and work is going ahead to build the campaign around the projected national demonstration on 21 June in London. Resolutions of support for the demonstration and the campaign have been passed in a large

BY **Linda Smith**

number of trade union branches and Trades Councils. The demonstration itself is sponsored by a long list of organisations including the IMG, the International Socialists, the Communist Party, Labour Party Young Socialists, National Union of Students, local Labour Constituency Parties, etc. In addition, nine women Labour MPs have put out a formal call for the labour movement to support the demonstration.

LABOUR MOVEMENT

There has been welcome support from bodies of the labour movement. But we must demand now that the TUC take a position for the trade union movement for free abortion and contraception on demand, and they fight to implement any decision. This means not just a fight against the amendment but a fight for abortion to be a woman's right to choose, not that of two doctors required under the 1967 Act. It also means a fight for the necessary facilities to be provided to ensure this is realistic. The Lane Commission's Report recommends setting up out-patient facilities, and training para-medical staff.



Michael Tomlinsorn (IFL)

The British Medical Association's headquarters in London were occupied for the first time ever on May 22. A group of doctors and medical students staged a sit-in insisting that Dr. Derek Stevenson, Secretary of BMA, organise action by the BMA in opposition to the James White restrictive abortion bill. Copies of the BMA's confidential evidence to the Select Committee have since been released. Even the staid and conservative BMA had been forced to 'criticise almost every clause in the Bill', according to one of the Doctors occupying. The BMA—rather embarrassed by the whole thing—told the occupiers the next morning that they would come out publicly in opposition to the Bill. This is the type of action which will ensure a massive turn-out for 21 June demonstration.

CONTRACEPTION MAND!

These things must be built into the fight against the Amendment Bill so that whatever the outcome of the Bill in Parliament we can take the campaign further. In the event of the Bill being passed we must make the law unworkable and must throw the whole weight of the labour movement behind those doctors, journalists, teachers, social workers, etc. who will be prepared to defy the law (and whose present activities of performing and assisting at abortions, referring people for abortions, reporting anything to do with abortion will become illegal under the amended bill.

SPRINGBOARD

The campaign will not end with the 21 June demonstration. This should be seen simply as a springboard for further activity in the campaign. We must then go forward with a national conference, and an international demonstration already called for in Italy, as further ways to unite those forces prepared to fight for free abortion on demand and for a woman's right to choose.



Photo: Angela Phillips (IFL)

Part of the NAC contingent in the IWY demonstration held recently by the TUC

And in South London the Campaign forges ahead!

Women from all over South London came to a meeting called by the Working Women's Charter Campaign on 21 March. At this first meeting for activists in the women's movement there were more than 40 present. It was decided to launch a campaign to defeat James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill, with the eventual aim of free contraception and abortion on demand for all women.

The most effective way of waging such a campaign, we felt, was in the form of setting up 5 sub-groups dealing with the various aspects involved. In order to get support from local trade union branches, Trades Councils, and Labour Constituency Parties, one group was set up to make contact with these organisations and to encourage them to invite women to speak on the National Abortion Campaign. Also, they will be asked to pass motions, supporting the Working Women's Charter, supporting the demand for 'free abortion on demand', as well as sponsoring the campaign and giving donations. The Lambeth branch of NALGO has already sent up £50 after passing such a motion. Southwark Trades Council has offered to send out information from the campaign to its affiliated branches. The Women's Sub-committee of the GLC branch of NALGO are organising a meeting at the beginning of May. This sub-group has also now collected information on the way MPs in South London voted on White's Bill

SUB-GROUPS AND GENERAL MEETINGS

A street theatre sub-group was set up, to perform a short play exposing the Amendment Bill and providing argument for free abortion on demand. The sketches will also show that a real choice for women will only be possible if there are adequate nursery facilities, freely available contraceptives and if research into contraception is taken out of the hands of profit-making companies.

The hospital sub-group has written to consultant gynaecologists and is contacting other sympathetic doctors, nurses and hospital workers asking them to unite in action with the National Abortion Campaign. It has compiled a list of local Family Planning Clinics and is investigating the availability of abortion in the area. We will leaflet hospitals, surgeries, and family planning clinics and discuss with people the implications of the Bill. A fact sheet will be produced.

Another sub-group will be organising a public meeting with MPs from the constituencies sympathetic doctors, and a speaker from the NAC. This will be held a week before the national demonstration on 21 June. The work of all the sub-groups will help to build support for both this meeting and for the 21 June demonstration.

The publicity sub-group will be making press statements locally. We have designed posters, stickers, badges, balloons and one initial leaflet has been produced.

Each fortnight we hold a general meeting where the sub-groups report on their activities. Here the general policy is worked out and our activities are co-ordinated. This structure is designed to involve as many women as possible - we felt that many would not be willing to sit on a formal committee, but would be interested in street theatre or in their unions if it was on a more informal basis.

MEN INVOLVED THROUGH SUB-GROUPS

One of our decisions regarding policy, which we felt was important in this campaign, was our attitude to involving men. At our first meeting we concluded that as the abortion issue affects women in such a direct way, women should decide on the direction of the campaign. This decision will mean that interested groups and organisations encourage women members to play an active role as representatives at the general meetings. Therefore the fortnightly meetings will generally exclude men, but it is important that men are involved in the campaign through the sub-groups.

The South London NAC has developed an organisation with which it is drawing in more and more support in our locality for the national campaign. We hope that more local groups will be set up to mobilise massive support, through the national committee, for events such as the 21 June demonstration, and that these groups will make more men and women aware that the James' White Bill is only one of the weapons being prepared against women.

Jo Bradford, Miny Jansen (South London)

THE CAPITALIST CRISIS

Periodic economic crises are a fundamental feature of capitalism. Just now the capitalist world is going into such a crisis. And, like its predecessors, this crisis is not just a simple economic matter, but has echoes in every part of society.

There is often a temptation to see the parts of the crisis in separation from each other—we say there is a political crisis, a crisis in the colleges, a crisis in the health service and so on.

Such separations have their uses, but the most important thing to do is to explore the connections of aspects of crisis with the crisis as a whole, and most of all, with its underlying economic causes. This is most true for the generally neglected fields—in particular, it is important to look at what is happening in the family, to sexuality and to the situation of women generally.

MISTAKE

The most common mistake made in dealing with these topics—one which the women's movement has been in the forefront of overcoming—is the artificial separation between work in industry and work at home. A problem that was not fully dealt with in Ann Foreman's contribution to the debate on Domestic Labour in the last issue of *Socialist Woman* is that such models are static. You cannot explain how the family develops if you look on it as an isolated servicing unit

completely apart from its circumstances. Yet at the present time, important changes in the family and for the position of women are underway—and they must be understood.

The Marxist theory of capitalist crises is based on the law of the declining rate of profit. Essentially, this law says that as capitalism replaces people by machines in work places, as it becomes more 'capital intensive', so the rate at which profit is made goes down. This is a general tendency at all times but moments come when the decline reaches a low enough point for us to speak seriously of a crisis.

ATTEMPTS

There are a number of attempts capitalism can make to deal with the declining rate of profit. The simplest is the 'holding-off' manoeuvre of expanding the market—the lower rate of profit is not so damaging if it gained on a number of products.

In the present crisis this is one of the least practicable for any capitalism (and most of all, incidentally for British capitalism). Potential new markets, in the 'third world' for example, have been exhausted already.

A big war also helps in some circumstances—it gives outlets to all sorts of products and at the same time attempts to batter rivals out of competition. In the present circumstances, a major war is not a viable idea for any

big section of capitalism. The only other real option is a lowering of real wages. If wages are forced down then the amount of value got by the capitalist from a particular piece of work increase in relation to his (or very rarely, her) outlay on labour. This process can jack up the rate of profit. Attempts to lower real wages have been the concern of the ruling class in every major capitalist country in the last few years.

WOMEN

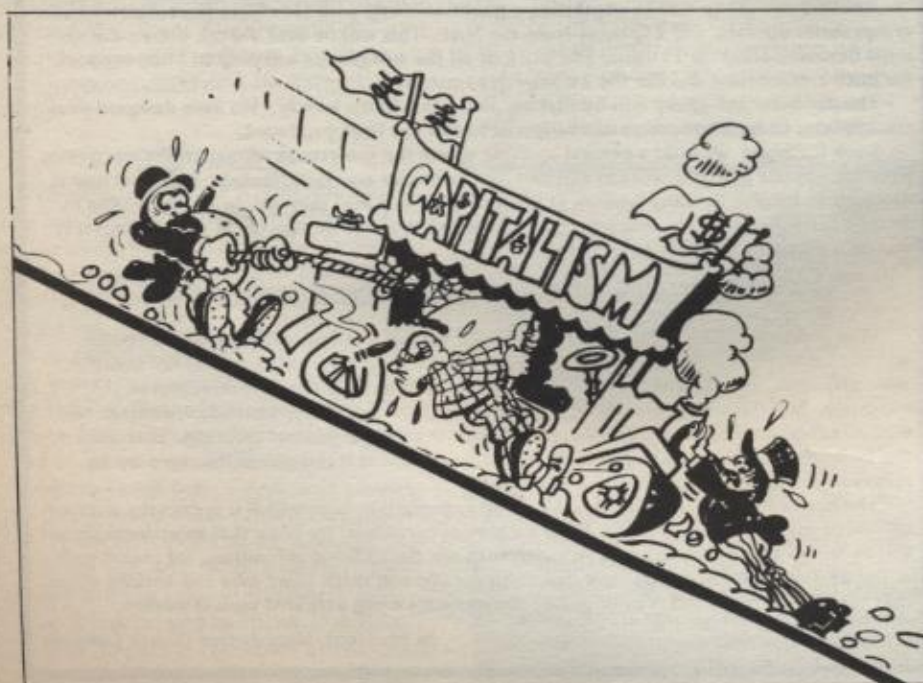
These attempts hit the position of women in a number of very specific ways. The most obvious are the ones that hit women directly to increase the number of women in the work force, because it is understood that their labour power costs less.

There has been a tendency in this direction for instance in the electrical engineering industry. The Equal Pay Act is so loosely formulated as to positively be a help in this process—for instance there is a provision in it that practically excludes the equalisation of pay between two factories in different areas if the workers in one are men, while in the other are women. It has been estimated that the Act even if fully implemented will not affect two-thirds of women workers' wages. A neat device for increasing productivity without granting wage rises!

On the other hand, firms whose worries are less those of keeping up production but are more of reducing costs (and this is becoming the case for more and more sectors of industry) are and will be making their biggest drives to reduce labour costs by lay-offs, cutting out shifts, and so on. And of course it will in many cases initially be women who bear the brunt of this.

FAMILY

Saying this sort of thing only gets us so far. A number of other aspects of the crisis come to light once we explore the implications of the industrial developments for the family. The success of the capitalist strategy towards women workers depends on the maintenance of the family, and of male chauvinism—first of all, because the cheapness of female labour is as much as anything a product of the pressures put on women by their domestic situation that make it so much more difficult for them to become



WOMEN

In the article below, JANICE MILLS examines how the present capitalist crisis has an echo at every level of society. Some alternatives facing the ruling class are outlined, and the implications for the family of developments now taking place are investigated. The impact of the crisis on women's jobs and of cuts in social spending are related to the family. In addition, the relationship between the crisis and sexuality is examined.



effective militants at work. The bourgeoisie very much want the cooperation of male workers in keeping things so. At the same time, this aids them in victimisation of women during lay-offs, selections of shifts to be dropped and so on.

The effect of the crisis on the family can be felt in another way. The cuts being made in social services represent not simply a lack of resources on the part of the state but a backdoor way of cutting real wages. And this is done by returning the burden of social services to the family, that is to say placing it on working class women.

CUTBACKS

The present struggles against the cutbacks illustrate how important it is to understand the ways the law of value affect the domestic unit. The bourgeoisie's present moves are to ensure cheaper labour power in the factory by increasing the amount of labour-time extended on the maintenance of the home.

A third aspect of the impact of this crisis is the one it has on sexuality. The financial and industrial instability of a crisis period will tend to introduce squander-mania amongst the bourgeoisie. Luxury grows amid ruin.

One effect of this is that increasing numbers of women and male youth are forced into prostitution and 'allied trades'. And we have already seen in publishing that the only field in which prices have stayed steady is in pornography. These tendencies sharpen the sexual conflicts in society. As the sexual market expands, so its values are intensively promoted.

At the same time this development also impinges on relations in the family also impinges very directly on the family in two senses: —first of all, the weakening effect it has on relations in the family obliges the ruling class to undertake periodic 'anti-vice' crusades so that we see decadence and sexual repression going hand in hand.

But on the other side of the coin, the money gained from, for example

prostitution, go into the maintenance of the family's servicing functions.

The value embodied in these goods, and re-expressed in the labour power of the workers in the family concerned, comes from that portion of capital that the bourgeoisie sets aside for his own use, and would set aside anyway. In short, this operation also helps the bourgeoisie in an effective, reduction in the cost to them of unit labour.

LAW OF VALUE

In conclusion—it is, I think, clear, that the operation of the law of value does not stop at the kitchen door. What is even clearer is that without that understanding we cannot grasp the full impact of the crisis on this situation of women and on the family. And, contrarywise, if this isn't understood then neither are some of the most vital economic mechanism of capitalism in breakdown understood.

TUC Charter

As the Working Women's Charter Campaign continues to grow—in many areas concentrating on the demand for abortion at present—the TUC has searched in its dust-covered cupboards and has come up with a Charter it produced in 1963!

The South East Regional Council of the TUC chose International Women's Day March 8 to publish a revised version of this document, a 12-point Charter for Women at Work. At a conference where the unveiling took place, the gross inadequacies of the TUC Charter were taken up by most of the delegates present.

The preamble of this revised document informed us that the TUC Charter for Women first appeared in 1963 (strange that hardly anyone had heard of it!) and that it had been revised to 'bring it in line with the needs of today'.

But in speech after speech, it became quite clear that this Charter failed completely to confront in any meaningful way, the real problems facing women today. No attempt is made to abolish the false division made between women isolated in the home and those struggling in the workplace. There is no mention of such key issues as abortion and contraception facilities, family allowances, national minimum wage in order to fight against women's low pay (although this is TUC policy), or of opposition to deterioration of working conditions. As if that weren't enough, the TUC Charter has not even a word on the role of women in the trade union movement.

The Women's Advisory Committee of the TUC, which formulated the revised Charter without consultation with any trade union or women's organisation whatsoever, clearly spell out their aim to consolidate the traditional view held of the woman's role in society. When it is suggested that 'employers must accept the need for women to work the hours which would enable them to meet their commitments as mothers, or assist them to care for elderly dependents' the TUC is in effect telling women to help the State solve the problems which are faced in social spending.

They are placing the tasks of child-care, of care of the elderly which are the responsibility of the Welfare State back on the shoulders of women. Rather than addressing itself to the necessity of a national effective campaign for free 24-hour child care facilities, the TUC is simply attempting to alter the work conditions of women so they can carry out these responsibilities themselves! The idea of freeing women from these responsibilities does not enter into the TUC Charter!

All these points came under very heavy fire from many delegates at the Conference. The idea of even trying to amend such a document was rejected. Rather the necessity for the labour and trade union movement to continue to adopt the ten-point Working Women's Charter (of the former London Trades Council) as the basis of an ongoing campaign against women's oppression was stressed.

INGRID FALCONER



Photo: Angela Phillips (IFL)

Winmarie Greenland, from Camden Teachers Association addresses the S.E. Region Conference of the TUC.

NUT cont'd

The executive's pledges of a vigorous campaign cannot be taken seriously when we have just witnessed their complete acceptance of the Houghton Report, which has widened even further the differentials against women teachers.

Despite sexist heckling, it was interesting to hear from Pat Brown (East London) that since they had set up their own women's groups in the Association, many women came to their meetings who had never been to a union meeting before. She urged all local Associations to set up their own Charter groups and not to argue against them.

EXECUTIVE

Although the Charter resolution was defeated, as Bernard Regan (East London) correctly said 'For anything to come from the vague motion adopted, the Executive would have to be watched very carefully.'

The many teachers who voted for the Charter are not intimidated by the executive and will continue to build and support the campaign.

There will be a conference in the Autumn around the question of women's oppression in education. If any *Socialist Woman* readers are interested in it, or helping to organise it, please contact: Cath Young, 58 Wishford Point, London E9.

CAROLE REGAN



Photo: Angela Phillips (IFL)

The TUC Women's Charter fails to understand the connection between women's home commitments and their ability to fully participate in trade union affairs. The practice of the TUC is also sadly lacking. The above is a photo of women forced to look after their children as well as trying to listen to the debate at the Conference. No nursery facilities were provided.

NEWS NEWS NEWS

Conference on Abortion

At a time when the British press is filled with chauvinist arguments as to why Britain should remain in the Common Market, the Conference in Paris on 19, 20 April was a refreshing attempt to build an *internationalist* perspective into the fight for abortion and contraceptive facilities.

ATTACKS

In recent months the capitalist class in Europe has undertaken a whole series of attacks to restrict even further women's right to abortion. In Germany, the new abortion law has been thrown out by the Supreme Court, while in Italy abortion clinics have come under attack.

In response to this type of attack, pro-abortion groups from most European countries, in addition to delegates from Latin America and the United States, met to exchange information and plan further co-ordination. The meeting was organised by the French group MLAC - *Mouvement pour la Liberte de l'Avortement et de la Contraception* (Movement for free abortion and contraception).

The first day was a public meeting with plays, films and songs as well as reports from each country represented. The second was a conference in which four workshops discussed the experiences and problems in carrying through abortion campaigns—which ranged from how to do illegal work in Spain, through open

campaigns in Italy, to the situation in Colombia in Latin America—where abortion, contraception and sterilisation are freely available but are carried out without the consent of women.

This meeting decided to set up in Paris an International Secretariat to plan European activity and act as an information exchange centre. As a first stage in the European campaign two international actions were called. The first is an international solidarity demonstration to be held in Italy in October. The second will be a week of action in Portugal in July or August with meetings, films and plays on the question of abortion. Delegations from all over the world will be invited to attend.



Photo: Peter Harrap (Report)

The International Women's Day Meeting held by the IMG. Speakers from other sections of the Fourth International including Switzerland, France, Belgium, Holland, Luxemburg, Ireland, and a Chilean woman exiled in Britain addressed the meeting. A conference was later held with these women to discuss further co-ordination in the Fourth International in the fight against women's oppression.



Photo: Angela Phillips (FEL)

Dr. Berry Beaumont addressing the TUC Women's Congress. The Conference voted in favour of free abortion and contraception on demand. Now we must organise to ensure the Trades Union Congress also adopts this resolution.

National Women's Liberation Movement Conference held in Manchester

Well over a thousand women attended the Manchester National Women's Liberation Conference, while about 600 children were entertained for the week-end with outings and parties by the men who ran the creche.

The wide-ranging discussion at the conference—with workshops including women and health, music, psychiatry, the media, as well as the Charter, and the demands of the Women's liberation movement—gave a fair representation of the many sides of the movement. But the different political ideas contained within it and its attempts to bring 'culture', politics, and 'personal' life together. Not least, the unanimous agreement of the conference to take up the role of women in the struggles in Spain, Chile and Indochina, gave a clear indication of the internationalism of the women's mo-

vement.

The discussion in the workshops gave a picture of women's groups more systematically involving themselves in campaigns than ever before. In addition, it is clear that attempts are being made in every campaign to involve women who do not identify with the women's movement, was particularly true of the workshops on the Working Women's Charter and the Abortion Campaign. Specific recognition and prioritisation was given to the Abortion Campaign and a resolution calling for women's groups to affiliate to the National Abortion Campaign and to take up the fight against restrictive legislation on abortion was unanimously passed.

In the discussion on organisation it was generally agreed that the woman's movement is a social move-

ment which can not be contained by a rigid structure based on some kind of programmatic unity. The proposals which were accepted, for better communication via a national centre, and a national newsletter, were based on the understanding that the women's movement will develop in particular through its campaigns and the setting up of groups in institutions—colleges, schools, factories, and in the unions.

All in all, the two days of discussion and recreation—not the least, the music of the two women's rock bands, and the social itself—gave most of us attending the conference a confidence in the ability of the women's liberation movement to take real steps forward in the struggle for women's liberation.

—Ann Foreman

NEWS NEWS NEWS

Photo: Angela Phillips (IFL)



DEFEND DR. EDELIN!

On May 3, in Boston, USA, hundreds of demonstrators marched to the Statehouse to protest the conviction of Dr. Kenneth Edelin. Dr. Edelin is a black physician accused of manslaughter for performing a legal abortion on a young black woman. The demonstration and rally culminated a week of abortion-rights activity organised by the Coalition to Defend Abortion Rights (CDAR).

The rally was addressed by well-known feminist and civil rights leaders. Marcia Codling, a coordinator of the National Student Coalition Against Racism, pointed to the connection between the anti-abortion forces and the racists who are trying to prevent desegregation of the Boston schools.

RACISTS

'The vengeance with which the jury shouted its verdict,' said Pearl Shelton, speaking for Thomas Atkins, president of the Boston NAACP, 'shows this was no less than legislative lynching. I detect a strange coincidence between those who cry out for Dr. Edelin's blood on the one hand and those who have been defying the federal court on desegregation on the other.'

Florence Luscomb, an outspoken fighter for women's rights since 1892, hit the same theme when she told the crowd: 'The most violent opponents of our cause call themselves ROAR. (Restore our Alienated Rights). You know what ROAR means? R-reactionaries, O-opposing, A-all, R-reforms.'

ROAR, the racist, anti-bussing organisation in Boston, broke up a rally for the Equal Rights Amendment at Faneuil Hall on 19 April and threatened the same for any future women's rights gatherings.

BOSTON

Other activities in Boston during abortion-action week included a meeting of black and other minority women to discuss their fight for abortion rights. This meeting was addressed by Dr. Edelin, who told those present, 'You are not defending me. You are defending a woman's right to choose and don't forget that.'

A morning seminar on 30 April to discuss the special problems faced by high school women was attended by 125 people. (The Militant)

Photo: Angela Phillips (Report)



On 14 March, the London Student Women's Action Group (SWAG) called a demonstration demanding nursery schools. The march went to the Department of Education. This kind of action must be seen in contrast to the failure of the NUS Executive to take the Women's Campaign seriously.

On 15 February, a picket was held outside the Italian Embassy in solidarity with Italian women who are fighting against fascists' moves to close down abortion centres, established by the Radical Party. This attack has been launched at a time when the first cracks in the Italian abortion laws have appeared since the time of Mussolini.

International Women's Day (March 8) was celebrated with a march through the East End this year. The internationalism of the march was reflected in such slogans as 'Free the Price Sisters', 'Free Eva Forest and Lydia Falcon' (two Spanish political prisoners), and 'Against the military junta in Chile'.

Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)



Dear Sisters

The problem of chauvinism and sexism within the British working class has always been a very difficult and crucial one and since I have been a 'clippie' on London Transport, I have found myself really overwhelmed as to how I can deal with this problem in my workplace.

From the moment women start training with London Transport they are treated differently. During my 2-week training programme the instructor continually directed all his comments towards the men in the group. In his attempt to project a 'friendly image' of himself he constantly cracked chauvinist jokes apologising to the women if he thought them somewhat crude. Ironically, the first time he did address both sexes 'undiscriminately' was during his desperate recruitment attempt. He informed us all that the promotion doors were opened to everyone regardless of sex. When I then asked him how many drivers there were who were women, he proudly announced the grand total of 9—as though this were some great feat on the part of London Transport. He then proceeded to blush slightly when I asked how many inspectors there were (there are only 2 or 3) and how many women in his position as instructors (there are none).

LIGHT JOBS

He also claimed that London Transport took care of all its employees and that it always found 'light jobs' for those who had accidents and could no longer work as drivers or conductors. I have just discovered that a woman conductor who has been working for LT for 22 years has been sacked because she has arthritis (probably caused through her work) and can no longer work on the buses.

When I spoke to an official of LT about this he explained that 'after all, since there is a shortage of light jobs, these in all fairness should go to the men who have a family to support. There are women in my garage who have managed (despite the shifts and against all odds) to bring up a family on their own—God help them if they have an accident. When another male conductor and myself met the Garage Manager he eagerly asked the other conductor to become a driver when he had finished his probationary period perhaps his vision was obscured but I was obviously not worth asking. No discrimination indeed!

During the past week in Coventry around the Chryslers' dispute, a confused force of housewives has emerged trying to get the men back to work. Last year, in Cowley near Oxford, the same thing happened. These women may be confused but they are very dangerous because of the way in which they attract right-wing, reactionary forces.

In Cowley last year, Mrs. Miller's meetings attracted people who publically challenged the trade union speakers as to 'whether or not they were British nationals'. Everyone from the National Front to the

In the garage itself one feels like a piece of meat up for sale. The drivers and conductors ask you three questions: are you married? are you engaged? have you a steady boyfriend? and if you answer in the negative, the bidding starts. They won't have any sort of serious discussion with you about their chauvinistic attitudes and merely asked you if you burn your bra, or else they try to start a titillating conversation about sex.

RAMPANT

As far as the union branch goes, the problem is as rampant here as elsewhere. When I spoke to my shop steward and area delegate about bringing up a motion on the Abortion Bill the latter turned to me with a startled look and said 'I don't see what this has got to do with the trade union, but it might make 'interesting' discussion. I wanted to give out leaflets to encourage women to come to the branch meeting but apparently that was against union rules! And anyhow, says another man, 'the women are quite out-numbered in this garage'. The area delegate said however he'd inform people of the motion and get them to come along. One person came to that branch meeting

When I spoke to another rep. about the question of nurseries he merely pointed out that it wasn't an important issue because most of the children of women conductors weren't of nursery age. Too true, brother, because at this moment it is impossible for a woman conductor to work before the kids are of age if there are no nurseries! This fact just didn't seem to be grasped and anyway he was more concerned about whether there were adequate tea facilities at the terminus.

DESPERATE

There is an absolute desperate need to raise the question of chauvinism and sexism within the general context of women's oppression. I am hoping to be able to introduce the Working Women's Charter and to raise the question into the discussion.

If other sisters have come across similar problems in their work place perhaps they could write and share their experience so that we might form clearer ideas on how to raise these questions in the British working class.

—Woman conductor on London Transport

management working in the interests of the ruling class can potentially use these women who lay the blame for the real difficulties they face at the feet of the union, rather than the bosses and the capitalists where it belongs.

Luckily, in Cowley last year, and here in Coventry, this development was immediately challenged by women who supported the attempts of the trade union to stave off the attack of the working class living standards.

The way forward at the present time is for the trade union movement to take a firm

ADVERTS

NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN national demonstration is being held on 21 June. Coaches are being organised from most large cities everywhere in Britain. Demonstration leaves Charing Cross tube station (at the embankment) at 2.30 pm. Pickets will be held in solidarity in other countries. ALL WELCOME! If you want details on the campaign in your locality write to the NAC, 80 Railton Road, London SE 24.

Following the MLAC Conference in Paris (see article in this issue), it has been suggested that the first meeting of the International Secretariat meeting be held in London on June 22. Further details on the 21 June demonstration.

SPEAKERS FROM THE N.A.C. Steering Committee are available to address all kinds of meetings (trade union, college, women's groups, Labour Party, etc.) Write to Jane Noble, 4 Painsthorpe Rd., London N16, (01-254-8109)

N.A.C. Steering Committee meets in London every Tuesday evening at 7.30 at the London School of Economics, Houghton Street.

Write to the Abortion Law Reform Association for publications on the issue of abortion. Speakers notes (20p), Abortion Today pamphlet (25p), Lane Committee Findings (30p) Reductions for women's groups. 186, Kings Cross Rd., London N1.

Working Women's Charter Campaign Badges and Posters available: Posters, in a variety of colour: 20p each, 17½p each for 10, 15p for 20.

Badges, white on red, 10 p each, 8p each for orders of 20.

Contact S. Handley, 24 Vicarage Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham 14.

stand on this issue and to encourage the participation of housewives and the wives of workers in the struggle. In this way, those of us who depend upon the wage from declining industries like cars, will not be left out in the cold and become prime bait for reactionary forces.

Just as important is the willingness of the trade union movement to put its weight behind such campaigns as the Working Women's Charter Campaign. The right to work affects all of us, and we all must be involved in the fight for this right!

—Maureen Smith,

abortion flashpoints

● **FRANCE** In France the mass mobilisation organised by MLAC has made the Government retreat. This has resulted in a 'liberal abortion law'. But the problem is still far from being resolved. The cost of abortion is 400 francs to 700 francs (£40-£70), limited to the first 10 weeks legally, forbidden to immigrants and minors, and rarely applied in hospitals.

● **WEST GERMANY (FRG)** A law was passed in Spring '74, after an intense campaign in 1971 and 1973. However, a conservative grouping in Parliament managed to get its suspension. In March of 1974 this law was declared unconstitutional. The movement has re-emerged right across the country and a national meeting was held to plan how to fight this ruling on 19, 20 April.

● **SWITZERLAND** A short while ago, a law was passed to liberalise abortion. 50,000 signatures had been gathered in December 1971 demanding a referendum to legalise abortion. But this petition didn't mention the right of women to choose, nor did it mention that abortion should be freely available. The federal law in fact only allowed abortions on medical grounds.

The women's liberation groups have launched a campaign for free abortion on demand, for a woman's right to choose, and for abortion to be covered by medical insurance, available to immigrant women.

● **ITALY** The divorce referendum in May '74 demonstrated a change in the consciousness on the question of women's oppression paralleled by a decline in the hold of catholicism. An opinion poll recently indicated that 75% of Italian women were for the legalisation of abortion. The Communist Party of Italy, on the other hand, does not agree that it should be free and proposes even the use of penal sanctions in those cases where

a woman is placed 'outside the law'. The Christian Democrats want to limit the law to victims of rape, of incest, and in cases where there is immediate danger to the life of the woman. The Socialist Party includes therapeutic grounds and social grounds in their proposals.

In contrast, the women's liberation movement and the far left groups are fighting against the repressive laws, sometimes dragging behind them, the radical party and the Socialist Party.

Demonstrations were held against the moves by the police which closed the clinic of the Radical Party in Florence. In the north of Italy united committees have been set up in many towns. The co-ordination of these committees will help build a mass national campaign.

● **HOLLAND** In Holland, the law is very repressive (comparable to the laws of the 1920s), but abortion is permitted for some. Many clinics have been established which are private and which provide abortions particularly to foreigner. Needless to say, they make enormous profits.

● **SPAIN** Here the fascist laws make abortion illegal. There is little possibility of a mass struggle on this question.

given the clandestine nature of any kind of activity.

● BELGIUM and LUXEMBOURG

The repressive laws in these countries force women to have clandestine abortions or to go abroad. In 1972, Dr. Peers (Belgian), who practiced abortions which were very expensive was prosecuted. A campaign was built — led at the time, principally by the Communist Party.

● **PORTUGAL** The fascist laws haven't been repealed. MLAC (the French abortion campaign) sent a team in April to begin to inform activists of the Carman method. Hospitals that had been taken over by the people were given instructions on this method. The struggle is only in an initial phase right now, built by the women's liberation movement and a movement for free abortion on demand which is just being created.

The MLAC conference held on 19, 20 April gave the opportunity to build a campaign on a European scale. One decision taken was to hold a week of action and meetings in Portugal this summer. This will obviously help reinforce the limited steps which have so far been taken in Portugal.



The National Abortion Campaign contingent on the TUC International Women's Year march.

REVIEWS REVIEWS...

A Woman's Place in the USSR, by Tamara Volkova, (IMG Pamphlets, Communism versus Stalinism series)

'A woman's greatest embellishment is her femininity. There is nothing surprising in the fact that woman's weakness is man's inspiration: her weakness complements man's strength. Women are often timid and shy, coquettish and frivolous. Such are the typical and therefore 'endearing' qualities of the female character and they can be considered positive or negative according to taste.'

No, not a quote from *Woman's Own* or J.J. Rousseau, but one of the many taken from Soviet publications of today in Tamara Volkova's study of woman's position in the USSR.

Volkova's ample and up-to-date documentation on both the material and ideological levels sufficiently illustrate the inequalities and oppression that exist today. Taking recent surveys, she points out, for instance, that although there is almost universal female employment in the USSR, the contradiction between social and domestic labour remains through the continuing role of women as housewives in the home, despite creche facilities during actual working hours.

Linked to this, a sexual division of labour still operates in production itself,

communism versus stalinism no. 4

A WOMAN'S PLACE IN THE U.S.S.R.



by Tamara Volkova
preface by Branka Magas

IMG

25p

women tending to be employed in non-productive sectors of the economy, and at a wage rate 69% of that of a man. Similar figures show drastic inequalities in the educational achievement of women. This is again linked to the fact that Soviet women still bear the main responsibility and burden for family and domestic life, and most will admit that this is the main impediment to getting higher skilled jobs or further education, let alone to enjoying a fuller participation in

cultural, social and political life generally.

Volkova also uses ample Soviet material expressing the official line on women - this boils down to a justification of this situation by upholding the contemporary family as a *socialist institution* which plays and will continue to play, a major role in education and socialisation of Soviet citizens.

BOLSHEVIKS

Taken at face value, the picture is rather gloomy. Did the Bolsheviks and the Russian women in 1917 struggle only for this in the fight for women's emancipation? Did they expect this? If not, how has it come about, for what reasons and through what forces? Any study of women's position in the USSR, in Eastern Europe, China and other bureaucratised workers' states, poses these problems. What distinguishes Volkova's pamphlet from others on the subject is that she not only situates the problem within the wider context of the degeneration of the Russian revolution, and the betrayals of Stalinism (which is elementary for Marxists), but she attempts to confront the problems involved from a revolutionary Marxist position.

To do this, she stresses some fundamental points. Firstly, that, contrary to the well-known stalinist justifications of the status quo in the Soviet Union (based at root on their counter-revolutionary 'theory' of socialism in one country), it was not just a question of Russia's economic backwardness which led to the retreats from Bolshevism. Rather, it was a complete abandonment of the world revolution by the bureaucracy, at the expense of which it solidified and entrenched its own privileges.

SOCIAL BASIS

What did this mean for women? It meant precisely a retreat from what Lunacharsky had described as a fundamental aim of the revolution - putting family life on a socialist basis. This was necessary both as a prop to the regimes economic policies, (the same cushioning role of the family under capitalism), and to contain the autonomous movement of women. Hence, the bolstering up and glorification of the family and motherhood. This reached shameful levels during the bleakest period of stalinism in the 30s and 40s.

Volkova therefore sees the position of women in the Soviet Union today as inextricably linked to the policies of the bureaucracy, concerned only with maintaining its privileged position. The question of a solution to the problem therefore cannot be discussed or envisaged outside a revolutionary transformation of Soviet political institutions - i.e. the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the reestablishment of proletarian democracy.

The posing of these political questions, as well as the specific situation and role of

women during and after the revolution are a welcome contribution to a discussion which has been taking place for some time both inside the women's liberation movement and within the revolutionary left.

-Sheila Coxhead

Social Class and Psychiatric Disturbance among Women in Urban Population by Professor George Brown, Maire Ni Bhrolchain and Tyril Harris, in *Sociology*, May 1975.

Naomi Richman, a psychiatrist, was carrying out a survey into the health of pre-school children living on a council estate in North London in 1971, when she decided to interview the mothers for psychiatric symptoms. She came up with the finding that 42 per cent of these working class women were psychiatrically disturbed, 16 per cent very seriously.

No doubt the bucket-loads of tranquilisers handed out by the local GPs would have testified to a similar result, yet Richman's discovery has until now stuck out like a sore thumb in the acres of *scientific* treatises which have attempted to root mental states in childhood experiences and the body's chemistry, totally ignoring social reality.

Putting a rosy tint on reality with pills, or persuading those who are depressed to *adjust* are of course the most convenient ways of transferring the cause from class society itself. But a report published in the May issue of the journal *Sociology* at last puts forward evidence for social and environmental factors playing a causal role in all kinds of depressive disorders.



Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

Continued on p.22

Reviews...

The report by three investigators at Bedford College, London, is based on analysis of 344 women living in South London, 114 of them patients being treated for depression. The research firstly found that the onset of depression is directly related to what are described as major adverse life events, and to a lesser extent to serious difficulties that have continued for a number of years.



A sharp class profile emerges. For example, one in four working class women in the random community sample with children at home were considered to have a clear psychiatric disorder, compared with one in 14 of their middle class counterparts. And 41 per cent of the working class women with children at home had experienced at least one major event in the year prior to the interview, as against 18 per cent of the middle class women similarly placed.

The experience of overcrowded living conditions, eviction, a husband losing his job, or in jail, is needless to say, not equally shared. Yet even when only those women who had experienced a major event or severe difficulty were considered, working class women were found to have a five times greater chance of breaking down as a result.

The investigators identify four *vulnerability* factors which according to their findings, account for both the onset of depression after an event or difficulty, and the class differences. These are: lack of a confiding relationship, having three or more children under 15 at home, the early loss of a mother by death or separation, and the lack of employment outside the home.

CIRCUMSTANCES

'The circumstances imposed by at least three of these factors', the report says, 'generate a sense of failure in meeting internalised expectations of being a good mother and wife, and this leads, to chronically low self-esteem, leaving the women particularly vulnerable to the effects of the loss.'

The report sees the problem as essentially dealing with the objective circum-

stances...providing better housing, nursery facilities, and job opportunities... which is certainly a major advance on the lies and pretences of the medical establishment, but it fails to recognise the need to additionally confront both the internalised expectations of the woman's role and the roots and nature of that role *itself*, which in large part account for the fact that women are twice as likely as men to suffer from depression.

—Dick Brinsley

CONDITIONS OF ILLUSION, Ed. Sandra Allen, Lee Saunders, & Jan Wallis. Feminist Books, £1.85 paperback, £4.75 hardback.

The American women's movement has produced a plethora of collections of articles and papers. In Britain, although at least as much has been achieved on both the theoretical and practical level, this is not reflected by a similar richness of published material. This book represents only the second collection of British writings. (The first was *Body Politic*). All have been written since 1972 and represent a wide range of subjects and viewpoints within the movement.

One unexpected aspect of this book is the wide-ranging source from which the original material has been taken—not simply from women's liberation magazines or from conference papers, but also, for example, from *Forum*. It thus represents a collection which is bound to have something new in it for the reader.

The areas covered by the book are: body politics—our attitudes to our bodily functions, especially birth, contraception, and abortion which deals with our attitudes to our own sexuality and gives accounts of research into the subject; the patter of tiny contradictions—which explores how sex roles are determined and takes up especially how these role are learnt in childhood; sexism, capitalism, and the family—this section can only touch on the subject, since an immense amount has been written on this, especially recently. (Perhaps an anthology is needed on this last subject).

WOMEN'S WORK

'Trying to stay human' looks at the nature of women's work out of the home in the past and now, and 'The Struggle' goes on to deal with such issues as equal pay and the Working Women's Charter.

The final section is a selection of documents giving the aims of various groupings, such as Mothers In Action, together with a list of groups, women's newspapers, etc. This list is particularly helpful.

The editors state that they do not claim to represent all the viewpoints held in the movement, nor do they attempt to cover all the debates currently going on. This is obviously impossible, and it would be equally impossible to have a selection that would please everyone...we all have our favourite articles or conference papers that we feel should be in and are not. This emphasises the necessity of more collections being gathered and published. I would like to see one rather more slanted tow-

ards the new-comer to the women's movement—one that tries to guide her on the debates on the family, on trade-union work, on the structure of the movement, etc. and that gives a history of the movement so far.

We also need anthologies devoted to one subject, especially on the family. Meantime, *Conditions of Illusion* fills a real need and the main problem for the reader is where to start. This collection is almost uniformly interesting and well-written, with a good selection of cartoons.

—Leonore Lloyd

SOME NOTES ON SHORT PAMPHLETS RECENTLY PUBLISHED

The NCCL has recently produced a number of pamphlets which can only be welcomed by women in the movement. They are especially useful for groups running any sort of advice centre, and for Working Women's Charter Committees.

Equal Pay and How to Get It is essentially a practical handbook. It explains the Act, tells you if you can claim equal pay under it, and if so, how to go about it. The pamphlet gives ten examples of how employers can and are getting around the Act. There is a useful appendix on job evaluation.

Women Factory Workers—the case against the protective laws. This is more of a discussion document and will be of interest to all Charter groups who are considering ways to improve the Charter. The pamphlet explains what the laws are, how they could be abolished and what the effect of that would be. It gives the main arguments for and against repeal. There is also a section giving the views of women workers on the question of shift work, one of the most important areas covered by protection.

Battered Women—how to use the law. A useful booklet, especially for women's centres. The law is different for married and single women and therefore there are different sections giving the exact procedures open to the woman in either case. Married women require a solicitor because the procedure is so complicated, but single women are provided with an 'injunction kit' which perhaps with the help of a friend, enables them to manage without having to use a solicitor. In addition, there is a section showing how the law could be improved—a necessary part of any campaign proved—knowledge which is necessary for any campaigning group, on issues connected to battered women.

A number of other pamphlets of interest to the women's movement have also been published recently from sources other than the NCCL.

Women of the Revolution, for example, published by the CFMAG, is a brief account of the oppression of women in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau before the liberation struggle began. It includes poems and quotations from some of the women themselves active in the struggle in the Portuguese ex-colonies. The interesting part of the pamphlet is where it is devoted to how the opp-

CHILEAN WOMEN EXILES SPEAK

Below is the text of a speech given by a Chilean woman exiled in Britain. It was given to a meeting organised by Sheffield Trades Council's Charter Sub-Committee on International Women's Day. She points out the gains that were made in the position of women under the Popular Unity Government and the importance of international solidarity now to the resistance against the military junta.

However, even when the revolutionary movement was at its height in Chile the struggle for women's liberation was not fully integrated into its practice. For example, while the Mothers' Centres set up by the Popular Unity Government gave—for the first time—housewives a measure of independence and a practical focus for organisation, they operated within the framework of the family and the responsibility of women for childcare, etc. From this starting point the Mothers' Centres offered advice to women on how they could most easily and efficiently organise these tasks. And although in theory the revolutionary left was committed to women's liberation, in practice, it failed to offer a revolutionary perspective to the reformist one of the leadership of Popular Unity.

Friends, we would like to thank you for your invitation to this meeting, and to greet you fraternally, and to tell you about our experience in the fight for the liberation of women and for real knowledge of women in society:—

In our underdeveloped country, with a high percentage of illiteracy, the Chilean woman has found herself set aside in capitalist society, as just one more object that can be bought on the market. She has been forced to work without laws protecting her in pregnancy, pushed out to work in the brothel of domestic employment, and in any job which has no important role to play in society. It was only through trade unions that we could get laws passed to protect our health, and nurseries set up at work, for our children.

DEMANDS

For the last 30 years, all women's demands have been taken up and supported by the socialist movements of our country. Comrade Allende, in Parliament, was the creator of laws

to protect the Chilean working women, and, it was under the Popular Unity Government that most was achieved for the independence of women, and their participation in society.

Under Allende, a Ministry for Women was created, as well as Centres to defend the legal rights of women. These Centres took on the job of discussing their problems, proposing the necessary solutions: they participated in the distribution of food, and called for a criticism of the Chilean educational system.

MILITARY COUP

With the military coup, which assassinated our President, the women's movement has lost all that it had won over the years, in street demonstrations and struggles with the police. Today the military junta has gone back to considering women as an object to serve, like a machine, to be exploited. In spite of that, what Chilean women, mothers, students and peasants have learnt and won is not something they are prepared to lose.

Now there are many resistance com-

mittees of the Chilean people in which women play an important part, through agitation and promoting the struggle for Chilean liberation. This is shown by the many women in concentration camps. The military gorillas hold many women in prison, and beat and rape them.

MILITANT

Comrade Laura Allende, the sister of the assassinated President, a Socialist Party deputy in Parliament, is imprisoned—no one knows where. Some months ago, comrade Laura Videla, a militant of the MIR (the Revolutionary Movement of the Left) was arrested, beaten and murdered—they threw her body into the garden of the Italian Embassy, saying she died there in a fight between political exiles.

Carmen Castillo, wife of the Secretary General of the MIR was arrested in October in a confrontation with the military in which comrade Enriquez died. She was six months pregnant, and these apes used psychological torture on her.

WOMEN WORKERS

This comrade left Chile thanks to international solidarity especially of women workers and the women's movement of England. We, as Chilean women, are sure that the liberation of women also goes with the struggle to replace an unjust society with another more progressive in which women's social position is recognised, and in which women will find opportunities to realise themselves as human beings. We give our support and thanks to English women who are fighting at this moment for their just reward, and especially to the women of Sheffield who have helped us find a new home in exile.

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ression is being overcome in the context of the struggle for liberation. No matter how backward a country may be in its treatment of women, once it enters upon a revolutionary struggle, the position of women becomes transformed. There has been some documentation of this process in the case of Vietnam, Cuba and China, but very little in the case of the African countries. This book is a useful beginning in unveiling the wall of silence.

The Alternative White Paper on Ireland will be of interest to the women's movement especially in light of the controversy aroused at the Edinburgh National Conference over this question. It was pointed out there that few groups have discussed this subject, although women's groups are usually represented on Troops Out demonstrations—and

a number of conferences and meetings specifically on the subject of women in Ireland have been held. It is quite clear that what is happening in Ireland affects us all. This pamphlet shows that the State is using Ireland as a testing-laboratory for the class struggle in England; can anyone doubt this after the use of the troops in the Glasgow dustmen's dispute. This pamphlet is written from the point of view of those who are struggling in Britain to get British troops out of Ireland. But it is written by an Irish organisation.

British Strategy in Northern Ireland on the other hand is written by an Irish organisation. Both of these above pamphlets detail the events over the last few years in a clear, simple way, helping to make sense of a situation that is so distorted in the bourgeois press. Both also spell out some of the steps necessary to begin to change that situation.

armed with one or preferably both of these, a woman's group could start the necessary self-education needed to understand the complexities of the Irish 'question'.

Equal Pay and How to Get it By Ruth Lister & Marion Low, 20p

Women Factory Workers By Anna Coote, 15p

Battered Women By Tess Gill and Anna Coote, 30p

All from NCCL, 186 Kings Cross Rd., London WC1X 9DE

Women of the Revolution, CFMAG Topics No. 3, 15p. from CFMAG, 12-13 Little Newport St., London WC2

Alternative White Paper on Ireland, Troops Out Movement, branches all over the country.

British Strategy in Northern Ireland, Revolutionary Marxist Group (Irish section of the Fourth International) from IMG, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1.

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