

SCDB 21 267

WOMEN'S LIBERATION



1970 NO. I. JOURNAL OF THE WOMEN'S EQUAL RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

PRICE 1/6



IMPERIALISM ROTS WITH EVERY PASSING DAY, PEOPLE'S REVOLUTION SURGES ON

WERC joins the revolutionary people of the world in saying goodbye to the 1960s, amidst the paeons of victory, and advance boldly full of revolutionary enthusiasm and confidence while they march into the 1970s to seize still greater victories.

On this year's International Women's Day, March 8, 1970, we greet the revolutionary women of the world who are today rising up and fighting shoulder to shoulder with men in Asia, Africa and Latin America, not only for the achievement of national liberation from imperialist aggression and colonialist plunder, but also for their own emancipation.

In the citadels of world imperialism, Europe, America and Oceania, millions more young women have played a heroic role in inflicting severe blows against the decaying, dying capitalist system of exploitation and oppression.

Crisis-riddled U.S. imperialism, No. 1. enemy of the world people, has fast declined in the past decade and rots with every passing day. Its aggression abroad suffered disastrous defeats. The whole imperialist bloc headed by it has been rapidly disintegrating.

In an editorial published on the last day of the 1960s, the "Christian Science Monitor" said that to US imperialism, the 1960s was an "earthquake decade" and a "volcanic decade." It said that "seldom in the United States has any 10-year span produced as many violent tremors and shocks over so wide a field." The editorial admitted that this "formidable giant" - US imperialism - found itself "in many kinds of trouble" at home and in the whole world.

Not long after it had climbed to the position of the overlord of world capitalism after world war two, US imperialism suffered a fiasco in its war of aggression against Korea and tumbled down from its zenith. Then it landed itself in an ever more difficult position and could not find a way out. This process of decline further accelerated in the 1960s.

During this past decade, the revolutionary people of more than 30 countries or regions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, in defiance of the frantic suppression and sabotage by imperialism and all reaction, rose up and waged or persisted in revolutionary armed struggles. The torrent of revolution is rolling ahead with irresistible force, sweeping away all the dirt left behind by imperialism and the reactionaries.

With unparalleled heroism, the Vietnamese people have been engaged in a protracted and strenuous struggle against US imperialism, resisting the biggest and most savage war of aggression carried out by US imperialism in the world in the 1960s, inflicting disastrous defeats on US imperialism and further exposing its true colours as a paper tiger. The great victory of the Vietnamese people is an important contribution to the revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle of the oppressed people and nations of the world.

The Laotian people have been fighting heroically and dealing heavy blows at US imperialism and its lackeys. The Burmese and Malayan people have been persisting heroically in protracted revolutionary armed struggles and have brought about an excellent situation through fighting.

Like a torrential wave, the people's armed struggle of Thailand has rapidly spread to more than 30 of Thailand's 71 provinces in spite of the US imperialist intervention with huge forces.

The revolutionary people of India and Indonesia are actively carrying on armed struggles, overcoming numerous difficulties.

In the Middle East, the newborn Palestinian People's Armed Forces are fighting heroically and tenaciously against US imperialism and its tool, Israeli Zionism, and for national liberation.

The armed struggles of the African people are rising tempestuously, pounding heavily on the rule of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

The anti-US mass struggle of the Latin American people has surged to an unprecedented high.

North America, Western Europe and Japan - the "heartlands" of capitalism - and Oceania, have witnessed an unprecedented storm of great struggles of the working class and revolutionary masses in the 1960s, marking the new awakening of the people in these areas. The proletariat (working class) and the revolutionary people there have counter-attacked the counter-revolutionary violence of the monopoly capitalist class more and more frequently with revolutionary violence. They are learning in struggle, directing the edge of revolution right at the decaying and moribund capitalist system and at the US imperialist policy of war and aggression. The struggle is so powerful and fierce that the reactionary ruling circles are thrown into panic and, like sitting on top of a volcano, cannot find a spot of tranquil land, especially in the United States, the most oppressed, black masses have fired the first shot of armed resistance against brutal repression in the 1960s and kindled the flames of revolutionary rebellion. Like a furious hurricane, the Afro-American struggle is shaking the very foundation of the rule of US imperialism and gives powerful support to the struggle of the revolutionary people all over the world. It is of great international significance. The US imperialist ruling circles cry out in alarm that this is "the most serious domestic crisis" in the United States for the past 100 years and more."

In the face of the vigorous upsurge of the revolutionary struggle of the people of the world, US imperialist chieftain, Richard Nixon, cried out again and again after taking office that US imperialism is in "difficult years." The "US News and World Report," mouthpiece of US monopoly capital, also lamented that "no matter where the new US President looks across the face of the earth, he will find trouble" and that "few bright spots are to be seen on the global horizon."

The 700 million Chinese people, following Chairman Mao's line of continuing revolution under the working class power are marching forward with giant strides. China today is the bulwark of world revolution and a staunch supporter of the independence of all countries.

In the Soviet Union, Krushchev and his successors betrayed the great behest of Lenin by raising the banner of 'production for profits' (Liebermanism). Thus they threw overboard the gains of socialist revolution and socialist construction and embarked upon a reign of exploitation and oppression of the working people.

Externally, behind the spurious signboard of 'peaceful co-existence', these renegades from socialism have carried on progressively policies of collaboration with U.S. Imperialism for the suppression of the revolutionary struggles of the world's people. In fact, the rulers of the Soviet Union have clearly emerged as social imperialists; socialist in words, imperialist in deeds; as evidenced by their naked aggression against Czechoslovakia and their war provocations on China's borders. Like their rivals and partners U.S. Imperialists, these social imperialists are riddled with contradictions and crises and are heading towards total collapse and doom, under the impact of the people's revolutionary struggles.

The rapidly decaying and dying British Imperialism is in dire straits, facing ever deepening financial and economic crises. In its desperate attempt to extricate itself from its predicament, the monopoly capitalist class have intensified their suppression of the democratic and trade union liberties.

Continued on Page 9.

END EDUCATION FOR SUBSERVIENCE

CHRIS MACKINNON

In present day capitalist Britain, the educational system is designed to directly serve the interests of big business, monopoly capital and imperialism. A select few are trained to take up technical and administrative posts in big business and the bureaucratic state machine, while the vast majority, the working class, are denied any real opportunities of developing intellectually or acquiring scientific knowledge, and at fifteen are turned out for low paid jobs or to face unemployment.

In this capitalist society, women face even greater discrimination and oppression than working class men. In the capitalists' eyes, a girl's education should prepare her for a subservient role to men in society, for the unproductive role of wife and mother in the system of individual house hold economy, and as an even cheaper source of labour in the industrial front. To justify the more intensified exploitation of nurses and teachers the bourgeois hypocrites use the facade of noble professions.

In her spare time, the woman should have something to think about, and our educational system certainly helps directly here too. She should think of how to make herself most attractive to men. Thus grooming and fashion are always important things. Important things to assign essays on in English class, take up in Health classes, discuss in Careers lectures, or do projects on in Religious Education classes. A trip through any girls secondary modern will be rewarded with enumerable charts on good grooming, how to wear make-up effectively, etc. Of course, the capitalist can be well pleased with the prettified docile creatures who rush to buy his cheap vulgar fashion goods. £20 million is spent annually on hair and another £12 million on face creams and powder.

Not the professed aim, but the real aim, in secondary education is to prepare girls for a subservient role to men with no independent voice in this male dominated capitalist society. Statistics, government reports, indeed casual observation confirm this. In both girls' schools and coeducational schools, girls are funneled into domestic sciences and 'arts' and are not given the same opportunity as boys to learn science and acquire technical skills. The

Newsom Report (1963) shows that more time is given to science and maths in boys' schools than in girls, where the 'practical subjects' (cookery and needlecraft) reign supreme. School buildings for girls are designed with poor laboratory and science equipment. The amount spent on a girl who does take science in school is less than the amount spent on a boy, as the following table shows.

<u>(Schools)</u>	<u>BOYS</u>	<u>GIRLS</u>
Local Education Authority Grammar	13/6	11/6
Direct Grant	21/9	11/3
Independant	27/3	12/-

These figures also display the blatant discrimination against working class boys as the amount spent on boys increases greatly as we go from LEA to Direct Grant to Independent. Teachers come and go at a faster rate in girls' schools and those who do teach maths and science have fewer qualifications than in boys' schools.

Statistics show that in C.S.E. examinations very few girls enter for Physics (some girls' schools do not even offer the subject). In 1965, there were 8,385 boys to 526 girls entered in this subject. In G.C.E. 'O' levels we get a similar picture where more girls enter for Religious Knowledge, English Literature, Biology (to make them aware of their vital statistics?), art, music and commercial subjects, but only 1/2 as many girls take Maths, 1/6 as many Physics, and 1/4 as many Chemistry. A lower percentage of girls stay on after the statutory school leaving age (15) and in 'A' level courses, girls are again funneled into English literature or arts and crafts while boys by about 4-1 are in the scientific and maths subjects. 'A' level entries in 1964 showed that half as many boys took arts than science and half as many girls took science as arts. Nevertheless the total number of boys taking arts outnumbered girls, indicating that a large number of girls who do stay on enter no exam course but merely get 6th form 'finishing' in non exam classes.

Thus, the vast majority of girls even those who stay on after fifteen are not trained to perform or take up any technical or scientific skills but

merely to make subservient docile wives and perform unskilled jobs for low wages. While at teacher training college I was taught an answer to the question - Is a girl's education important? - Yes it most certainly is! The husband a girl marries is largely dependent on the amount and quality of education she receives' (Quality means 'special education' - cookery, needlecraft, taste in fashion and grooming, and the ability to look good while appreciating the 'arts').

After leaving school girls have $\frac{1}{4}$ the chance to get day release courses. There is little opportunity to get apprenticeship, except in hair-dressing and and far fewer university places are open to girls. The ratio of men to women in university is 4-1 and of course much greater in the sciences.

The above facts only confirm that the school serves capitalism and what monopoly capital wants the schools should produce. Monopoly capital wants cheap unskilled women for industry, docile subservient wives spending large sums on fashion and cosmetics, and that is what the secondary school does its best to serve up. General discrimination against the working class in the educational system is further intensified in its discrimination against working class girls.

Schooling of girls helps to reinforce the dependence on men, inertia, and social backwardness of women in capitalist society. But oppression breeds discontent and resistance. Following the militant action of Ford women machinists, more and more women have become conscious of their exploitation and oppression. Demands for equal pay, better child care facilities, and equal opportunities are being put forward by the increasingly conscious women's groups around the country. It is high time that the educational system which blatantly

discriminates against women and girls be exposed and opposed. W.E.R.C. thinks that just such a campaign is necessary.

There can be no fundamental change in the existing social structure, including secondary schools, without a fundamental change in society as a whole.

This fundamental change in society means transferring the political power of the bosses, the bourgeoisie, into the hands of the working class, men and women.

This change in political power can only be achieved through the full mobilization of the masses, men and women, to fight against monopoly capitalism and imperialism. Women must be mobilized to play their full part in the struggle against reaction and in the glorious fight to smash the old and build the new. The new socialist society and socialist education to serve the broad masses of the people, the working men and women.

A campaign should be mounted to fight against discrimination in society and in education. In secondary schools a demand for equal opportunities for girls in all fields must be pursued. Girls must have equal job opportunities and equal pay with boys, and equal opportunity in day release and apprenticeships.

The myth of special education and impelling girls into the 'arts', and the 'home economics' subjects must be exposed and repudiated - that is, making them fit for the marriage market and a position of dependence on men in society. We must fight for schooling that prepares girls for full participation in social production and political action.

Above all, young women must take part in the working class struggle to overthrow the system which is the root cause of their present subordination.

W.E.R.C. is launching a campaign to win equality in education for women and thus build a powerful movement to win their liberation.

W.E.R.C. Presents

Peggy Seeger, Militant Folk Artist

In a Revolutionary

CULTURAL PROGRAMME

On Friday, June 19, 1970

For further information, contact:

Secretary, WERC 37, Castletown Rd. W.I4.

WOMEN, EDUCATION & CAPITALISM

— ANNE SCOTT

"The project was felt by many to be impious, morally shocking, because it would distract women from home duties". The project in question was the founding of a college at Cambridge University for women. It succeeded in 1869. That women were now entitled to an academic education of the kind that men had been enjoying for over 400 years was a great advance, but only for the middle class; and as such must be set against the almost total lack of educational opportunities for working women at the time. Nevertheless, the quote epitomizes the traditional approach to women's education: why should they have any?

In capitalist society women have always been relegated to the position of domestic slave and producer of children. Education is not for them. Despite the cries and claims of equality in present-day education, girls are still trained for future domesticity and, by extension economic dependence. A campaign against discrimination in education is a vital aspect of any women's movement, and one which will help mobilise women for the much broader fight to achieve complete political and social liberation.

HISTORICAL NOTES

What one tends to think of as the history of women's education in this country is in fact the history of middle-class women's education. The working-class, both male and female, has always been deprived of education. It is certainly true that working women in the 19th Century earned 50% or less than their male equivalent in most trades, but it cannot be said that men were enjoying an education to which women, through social inferiority, were not admitted. Education was the prerogative of the bourgeoisie in Victorian society. Of course there were successes: the admission of women to university from the 70's on; the founding of the first women's medical school in 1874; the release of women from flower-arranging to teaching; but a middle-class movement can benefit only the middle-class. And though evening institutes for the working class were started in the last two decades of the century, they could hardly benefit working women, who remained tied to their homes with their children, trying to make ends meet on their husbands' income.

When women worked, it was to provide a supplement for their husband's income. There was no question of leading an independent life or of receiving any sort of education other than what was compulsory. At the turn of the century, over one million working women were employed as domestic servants; they also formed the bulk of those employed in sweated labour, where no apprenticeship or training existed. In agriculture they were on seasonal employment, working 12 hours a day, but always to supplement the family income. They remained chained to the economic needs of the home.

EDUCATION NOW

Secondary education has always laid great emphasis on training girls for the home. Some working class boys do study at technical colleges or become apprenticed and attend day-release colleges. In theory girls are also incorporated into further education schemes, but few employers will spend money and time on their female staff to let them attend Colleges of Further Education. The vast majority of working class girls leave school at 16, probably without O levels, and expect to work for two or three years. At most, in unskilled jobs, before marrying and bringing up a family.

What of women at university? They are, of course, a privileged elite. Working class women are rarely educated beyond the age of 16 hence their intellectual development remains stunted. But for the small section of women who do have this opportunity, their 'freedom' is a restricted one. Very few women study science subjects; they are channelled into arts faculties and emerge three years later with a degree and no use for it. Thus women graduates are contained by the very limitations of their education. Law and medicine remain the traditional male professions in Western countries. The fact that 15% of the doctors in this country are women is not haphazard, the admissions do not vary: it is the standard percentage of places 'reserved' for the few women who can prove their worth with higher A level grades than prospective male medical students (another source of inequality).

Girls are taught from the age of 13 or 14 to accept the limitations of being female. And their restricted education is part of the conditioning process.

PEOPLE'S WAR OF S.VIETNAM

SURE TO TRIUMPH!

RESOLUTION: ON FEBRUARY 15th London Meeting on Army Day

on the Anniversary of the ARMY DAY of the REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIET NAM.

This public meeting, held under the joint auspices of the Britain-Vietnam Solidarity Front and the Women's Equal Rights Campaign, hails the anniversary of the unification of all the fighting patriotic armed forces of South Vietnam, the National Liberation Front, the Cao Dai forces, the militias in the cities and countryside, after the great historic Tet offensive of 1968.

Consolidating the great victories won in the general offensive and mass uprisings, the heroic south Vietnamese people further strengthened their unity, took the significant historic step, the establishment of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.

On the battlefield, frustrating all the "pacification" plans of the enemies, the Peoples' Liberation Armed Forces, in 1969, launched four major campaigns, putting out of action some 615,000 U.S. puppet and satellite troops.

The PLAF destroyed 6,400 aircraft, 1,700 war vessels, 10,000 vehicles 500 big guns and 900 storages. As compared with 1968, the enemy lost 7 per cent more in war planes and 7 per cent more in ships.

The PLAF and people blitzed away at 95 per cent of the district towns, townlets and military sub-sectors and over 900 posts, disbanding 130 "pacification" teams, wiping out 18,000 cruel enemy agents, and razing more than 700 "strategic hamlets" and other concentration camps.

Under the impact of the PLAF and peoples' offensives, desertions, revolts and mutinies, involving whole platoons and companies, became rampant among the puppet army. According to incomplete statistics, a total of 190,000 puppet troops deserted or mutinied before crossing to the revolutionary forces in 1968.

In addition to big military successes the political struggle has steadily gained momentum. The people as the masters of their destiny are forging ahead to build a new life in the liberated zone, as is amply demonstrated by increased production, extensive education and cultural advance. The people's timely, plentiful contribution in manpower and material to the front has assured a sustained, victorious fight. In the towns the struggle for improved living standards, democracy and peace has drawn in larger and larger sections of the population, while in the camp of the puppets, strife and crisis have shaken the whole structure of the Thieu-Ky-Khiem clique.

The heroic Vietnamese people, keeping up their tradition of revolutionary heroism, have displayed the infinite power of peoples' war against U.S. aggressors and for national salvation, thus making important contributions to the anti-imperialist struggle of the oppressed people and nations of the whole world.

Taking full part in the patriotic peoples' war, the great heroic women of Vietnam have not only made their own important contribution on the battlefield in production and social life, for the liberation of their fatherland, but in fact have marched forward to their own emancipation.

Today, the great example of the heroic women of Vietnam is like a beacon, lighting the path for the women of other countries, to follow.

The vile and brutal nature of U.S. imperialism will never change. Though it has suffered disastrous defeats in its war of aggression in Vietnam, it will never abandon of its own accord its rabid ambition to occupy south Vietnam by force. The Nixon government is pushing its counter-revolutionary dual tactics of chanting hymns of "peace" and playing the fraud of "troop withdrawals" from South Vietnam on the one hand, and proceeding with the so-called "de-Americanization" and "Vietnamisation" of its war

Continued on Page 13.

Not for Women's Equal Rights

But for Personal Careerism

Exposure of N.J.A.C.W.E.R.

Since the women machinists' militant struggle in June 1968 at Fords, Dagenham, against sex discrimination, the whole question of women's rights has come to the fore.

Young women's groups and organisations, supported in some cases by women with long experience in the struggle, have been formed to fight against centuries-old social oppression and male domination.

With a view to cashing in on this new upsurge, some elements in the Labour Party and trade union movement rushed in to pursue their own careerist aims. At a meeting in the House of Commons, a group led by Christopher Norwood, Labour MP, announced the formation of the National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights.

In a fanfare of publicity this group claimed the support of a number of trade unions, political groups and organisations, including the Communist Party. A Five-Point Charter for women's equal rights was also proclaimed. A call was even given for a national demonstration for equal pay for women. Did they believe that after 80 years of hedging, the 'defenders of freedom and equality', the TUC were going to act in 1968?

In May 1969, because of the enthusiasm and hard work of the new women's groups and their supporters, about a thousand people turned up in Trafalgar Square. Except for a token number of trade unionists and MPs, there was no evidence of the proclaimed support of the big unions and the progressives ('In 1968 the TUC overwhelmingly decided to back the Equal Pay struggle. If you decide to fight, the whole might of the Trade Union Movement must swing behind you ..' NJACWER leaflet).

In London a number of militant groups of women joined together to constitute the Women's Equal Rights Campaign. Individuals from NJACWER who claimed they represented various trade unions and the Communist and Labour Parties were also members of WERC. Very soon the younger people realised that these veterans were not only trying to

subordinate WERC to their factional fights for control in NJACWER, but to hamstring WERC from independent development into militant women's movement.

Although one of these NJACWER 'spokesmen' announced plans for a National Equal Pay Day on September 12, not only were no preparations made in any other part of the country, but every attempt was made to sabotage WERC's London meeting by trying to have it cancelled and finally withholding any help or support. subordinate WERC to their factional fights for control in NJACWER, but to hamstring WERC from independent development into a militant women's movement.

These women on one pretext after another tried to oppose supporting action for the hard-pressed nurses. But despite their obstructive tactics, the WERC public meeting, high-lighting the nurses struggle, was a success thanks to the conscientious efforts of the London groups.

The NJACWER 'spokesmen' and trade union stalwarts did not even turn up at the meeting.

Information about the rivalries and infighting among the NJACWER groups has been leaking out. WERC, which adopted a policy of co-operation with all organisations who genuinely support women's struggle, wished to find out more about NJACWER. They learned that the Chairman, Christopher Norwood, Labour MP for Norwich South (a seat which is certain to fall to the Tories in the next General Election) aspires to high Office in USDAW (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers), a Union with a high percentage of women members. Norwood hopes to use NJACWER as a facade for the realisation of his ambitions. He has already announced that he will not seek re-election to Parliament.

Following the founding meeting at the House of Commons, a self-appointed, self-perpetuating clique has been running NJACWER, making no attempt to involve others in Norwood's set-up and allowing no place for branch representation. They have kept a tightly closed shop.

Those women who set up 'branches' of NJACWER on their own initiative have been severely rebuffed by the 'founding fathers', Norwood and Co.

Their eyes were opened at the meeting of the General Committee on October 4 when representatives of 'branches' in Birmingham, West Middlesex, and South London were refused voice or vote on the important issue of electing a new Secretary.

A resolution from South London demanding representation and voting rights for branches was ruled out of order by the Chairman at the start of the meeting without even being heard. From the beginning of the meeting questions were raised from the floor about voting rights and they were all ruled out of order.

Even according to their own rules, the closing date for nominations was July 19 and, at that date, only one valid nomination for Secretary had been received. Norwood over-ruled the half-hearted reminder of the outgoing secretary, Fred Blake, and insisted on further nominations there and then. Norwood himself was promptly nominated and vacated the Chair.

When one of his own cronies, Ken Graham, suggested that the voting be deferred in view of the new nomination until the 'Working Party' had decided who had the right to vote, Norwood completely lost control of himself. Panic-stricken, he thumped the table and shrieked that he 'ruled' that only members of the General Committee (i.e. those who had appointed themselves on October 22) had the right to vote.

During a furore of protest from the majority in the meeting, the new Chairman Audrey Hunt went through the farce of reading from a list of the privileged people who had been at the House of Com-

mons on October 22. Only 17 were present and voting cards were handed out to them. Out of about 50 or 60 people present at this meeting, Norwood was elected by 11 votes to 6.

In their own leaflet, NJACWER claim to lead and co-ordinate the struggle with the support of 40 other organisations. However, in spite of their Five-Point Charter, in one whole year since formation, these frauds have taken up no other issues apart from their half-baked equal pay campaign, have brought out no constitution, nor have made any attempt at mass membership.

Seeing this, the Women's Equal Rights Campaign wants to establish a serious organisation which will fight on all fronts for women's equal rights and will co-operate with all individuals and organisations who wholeheartedly take up this struggle.

The liberation of women is an integral part of the struggle of the entire working class and oppressed peoples for emancipation, and Christopher Norwood and his ilk cannot stem the rising militancy of women.

The Women's Equal Rights Campaign has drawn the necessary lessons from the disgusting displays of Norwood, the phoney claim of 'massive' trade union support, the hypocritical faith in Barbara Castle and the trade union bosses and the rampant male supremacist leadership.

We hope to build a genuine revolutionary women's movement, to reach a common understanding among ourselves, and to spell out our own demands to represent women's real interests.

Despite all the manoeuvres of the T.U. bosses, the broad masses of the working class are rising in revolt. As for example from January to November last year, the British workers' strike struggle inflicted on monopoly capitalism a loss of 6,300,000 working days or one third more than that of the whole of 1968, and the highest record in 12 years. At present more than two million workers and employees in Britain have taken action for higher wages. They include car and railway workers, postal workers, nurses, school teachers and local government employees.

It is in this background that women, especially young girls are gaining a new awakening. While college and school girls have been taking increasing part in the anti-imperialist upsurge and solidarity actions with the national liberation movements, as in Vietnam, the Ford women machinist's militant action added a new dimension to women's inequality and super exploitation in the national economy. There is a new revolutionary consciousness among women which is finding increasing manifestations in their own organisations to fight sex discrimination, social oppression and male domination and for their total emancipation. The fraudulent 'Equal Pay' Bill by the Labour Government can not hoodwink women for long.

In the present era of world revolution, W.E.R.C. while observing this year's International Women's Day hails the great victories won by the women in the national liberation movements, People's China and Albania, extends best wishes for new successes to our sisters all over the world.

New Abortion Laws, an Advance, But Denies Women's Freedom

SHARON EARLE

The women's Equal Rights Campaign states clearly in its aims that women should have the right to decide whether or not they will bear children. A woman knows her own economic and social situation best and must be the judge of whether or not the position she has been forced into in society will allow her to be a good mother. No-one knows better than a woman herself whether or not she should go ahead with the pregnancy. She knows that if she feels disinclined to bear a child, then she will not do justice to the upbringing of the child.

WERC underlines that if a woman wishes to have children, social and economic conditions should not deny her this right, nor must she be forced to give birth to a child. This decision should be hers and hers alone, and not the prerogative of any experts, medical or psychiatric, who can only be advisers.

WERC firmly believes that since women only have to bear children this fact should not be used as the pretext for denying her full participation in the economic and social life of the community thus reducing them to economic dependence and servitude to men.

In keeping with this firm stand, WERC held a public meeting on February 4, at Student Movement House at which Paul Ferris, well-known author and journalist who has written on the subject spoke. The meeting was well attended and a lively discussion took place.

Mr. Ferris gave a brief account of the Abortion Act (1969) itself and went on to give some information on the development of law and the views currently held among the medical profession.

One thing that came out at this meeting was that the new Abortion Law has changed women's situation in this respect, and for the better. Whereas up to 1967 only rich "society" women could obtain a safe private abortion, now a wider section of women could use the facilities of the National Health Service.

The new law states that under certain conditions any woman can obtain an abortion on the National Health Service. But the conditions are that in the views of two registered medical practitioners 1) the continuance of pregnancy would cause risk to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any other children in her care than if the pregnancy were terminated, or 2) If the pregnancy will cause substantial risk to physical or mental well-being of the unborn child so as to render it seriously handicapped.

The law also states that account may be taken of the woman's "actual or foreseeable environment."

This law does not give the right of decision to women as to whether or not they will bear children. It gives the right of "judgement" to two registered medical practitioners both of whom are likely to be unfamiliar with the factors which will determine whether or not it is best that the woman go through with the pregnancy. Their arbitrary decision which so strongly bears on the woman's future is more affected by their own attitude than an acquaintance with the facts surrounding the woman's physical and mental situation.

In assessing the Act, it is important to remember that basically any woman is at the mercy of the two medical practitioners whose advice she is forced to seek. If she is denied approval at the first attempt, she can go to other doctors but, having been denied abortion by the first two, other doctors may not be inclined to contradict the first decision. Also, the longer she is forced to wait for consent due to reluctance on the part of doctors, the more difficult and hazardous will be the operation.

The facts about the availability of abortion and procedures as to how to obtain it are not widely known to large sections of working class women and this in practice means that abortion is not available to many.

Continued from Page 6.

THE EXPERIENCE OF REVOLUTION

The advocates of gradualism who believe that women's situation will be changed in stages, bit by bit, have a lot to learn from the experience of revolution. It is significant that in the Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions, the secondary position of women was one of the first inequalities to be attacked. And attacked on all levels. When women take up arms alongside men to change

society, they cannot be ignored when the revolution has been won. Their demands are listened to. Thus the series of laws and social reforms concerning marriage, educational opportunity, legal equality, contraception, abortion, the formation of women's unions. The demand for education is not an isolated campaign; only in the context of a whole social awakening can it be fully realised. It must be integrated into all other spheres of activity relating to women and women's liberation.

When considering abortion, it is also necessary to take into account the availability of birth control measures - for the better and more easily available the birth control measures, the less necessary is abortion. If safe and reliable birth control facilities were made available to all women, abortion and any health risks would become much less an occurrence.

During discussion, Mr. Ferris, in response to various points raised on the final decision whether or not to bear children must be the decision of the woman herself, stated that the medical profession would be offended if the decision-making prerogative was taken away from them - that they consider this part of their "professional rights." According to Mr. Ferris, the doctors would be reduced to the position of "technicians." To this, the women in the meeting clearly stated that this was unquestionably the right of the individual woman and not of a handful of "professional men" whose function in reality is that of a technician of the human body. Why should they be given ultimate jurisdiction over this important matter which affects every woman's personal and social life, besides her health?

Along with this is the fact that, as in all other aspects of life in capitalist society, a petit-bourgeois (middle-class) woman is more likely, because of her privileged class background, to know how to go about getting favourable medical opinion than would a woman of the working class.

Further discussion also revealed that because many doctors refused abortions in most cases, those doctors who do readily consent to performing abortions, did as many as 40 to 50 operations in a few hours which results in hastily and ill-performed abortions, in a lot of cases women leaving the clinic less than an hour after the operation, having undergone the operation under insanitary and crowded conditions. Here again, clinics vary according to area, the clinics in working class areas being far inferior to those in areas of well-to-do classes.

The majority of those present at the meeting agreed that doing away with the oppression of reactionary abortion laws and all other forms of oppression and exploitation, means it is necessary to alter not only the abortion law,

but to change the whole of society which governs attitudes and laws under capitalism which operate to subjugate and oppress not only women but the whole of the working class. This can only be done by social revolution.

The socialist society would provide proper medical care and all-round facilities which enable women to lead healthy lives as mothers and citizens, along with men, in the interest of the working people.

Equal Pay Law—Lawyers' Paradise: says 'Observer'

(an article by Hugo Young published
in the 'Observer')

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WHAT?

In the History of British social reform, Mrs. Castle's Bill establishing equal pay for women who do similar work to men will doubtless be counted an important milestone. And so, in its way, it is. It means that women cannot now be regarded indefinitely as slave labour, undercutting men's rates for the same job. It holds the promise that employers may be compelled to do what many have never done for themselves: use their female labour efficiently. Above all, it will bring a modicum of basic justice into the lives of some women. These arguments are so obvious and so incontestable that they would be redundant, but for the astounding fact that they have been resisted for 50 years.

Only a society steeped in conservatism and riddled with anti-feminine prejudice could regard the equal pay Bill as a radical measure. It is, in fact, a puny thing, likely to have a narrow effect. It proposes to correct a flagrant detail of discrimination which, had it been practised not on women — a silent majority — but on an arbitrary minority — such as people with red hair, would long ago have been recognised as intolerable. But if the Bill is expected to usher in true equality for women at work it will prove to be a mirage. The reason for this can be simply expressed: although the Bill says something about pay, it says nothing about work.

For the great majority of women, equal pay is not their problem. Relatively few are doing jobs alongside men, and even fewer may be doing them after employers, under the impetus of the Bill, have redefined their work to establish that it is not the same, or automated them out of existence. Most working women are in jobs which men never touch, at the very bottom of the pay scale: the drastic decline (34 per cent) of skilled women in industry between 1911 and 1951 has steadily continued. Likewise there is much convincing evidence which suggests that, at the professional level, the woman's

dilemma is not so much pay as gross and systematic lack of opportunity.

The cycle of inequality which consigns women to the bottom of the labour market reaches into virtually every corner of British life. It can be traced in formal education, vocational training and job allocation, in the professions and management and public life. Naturally there are historic reasons for this, although few of them survive rational examination. But before rehearsing the ingenious panderies and ageless rationalisations of prejudice, it is necessary to recall a few of its manifestations.

Discrimination commonly begins at school. Girls unlike boys are not encouraged to acquire vocational skills useful in employment; and it has long been Government policy to supply girls' schools with markedly fewer facilities for science subjects. At university, where there are about three times more men than women, in engineering, technology and applied science men outnumber women by more than 40 to 1. If this reflects sexual taste, it is a taste largely fashioned by schools and employers.

The same prejudice is found at all levels of industry. It is a rooted assumption of most employers and many unions that girls should simply not be trained. In 1967, only 2 per cent of girls entered apprenticeship, compared with 43 per cent of boys. Only 8 per cent of girls under 18 were granted day-release for further education, compared with 34 per cent of boys. When women are denied basic training on this scale, it cannot be disputed that they are incapable of skilled work — or that in many cases they will fall outside the equal pay Bill.

In the professions, inequality is almost as easily quantifiable. There are, in fact, two professions in which women outnumber men. But it is significant that these professions, teaching and social work, where equal pay obtains, are among the most abysmally rewarded. In engineering, accountancy and the law, the proportion of jobs for women is infinitesimally small, in many cases less than a fraction of 1 per cent. The traditionally inferior position of women in the med-

ical profession is buttressed by the strict entry quota operated by most medical schools against women, regardless of intellectual ability.

In public life the "statutory woman" is still closest to the heart of governments. The small number of women in Parliament is only partly the fault of the electorate. On the list of approved candidatures compiled by Conservative Central Office, only about 40 of the 1,000 names are women's. Of the 186 members of Royal Commissions and related bodies appointed between 1964 and 1966, only 27 were women.

In particular cases, of course, the reasons given to justify this historic imbalance are valid enough. It is sometimes true that women are physically incapable of doing the same work as men. It is sometimes fair for an employer, if he looks no further than next year's balance sheet, to resist training women on the grounds that they will not stay. It is very often true that women, by their passivity in the face of injustice, are their own most enduring enemies.

But discrimination against women is not a matter of particular cases. It rests on a Victorian attitude to women's work, which itself depends on assumptions which are now false. It is false to suppose that Britain does not urgently need all the skills she can cultivate notably in science, engineering and medicine. It is equally false to imagine that women are not interested in supplying them, both before and after marriage. The 1965 Government survey of women in jobs found that 20 per cent believed they were making less full use of their qualifications. Again, if all married women doctors who wanted to work could be fitted into jobs, they would

add the equivalent of 400 full-time doctors.

Least credible of all, finally, is the supposition, festering deep in the male subconscious, that women are not "appropriate" in certain jobs. If the State of Michigan can outlaw female bartenders, while permitting female shift work at night, where is the justification for British practice? If 75 per cent of Russian doctors and 75 per cent of Russian engineers are women, what is so peculiar about British society that its situation must be so different?

The revolution will not be easy. It involves a profound readjustment of social attitudes, and far more flexibility than now exists for women to work without totally abandoning the home. But in justice and economic wisdom it must be done, and by a law which establishes the framework far more comprehensively than the equal pay Bill. The Race Relations Act provides an obvious model: an assertion by society, with powers of enforcement, that women shall not be unwilling victims of discrimination.

It is well known that the great American Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided a model for the Race Relations Act.

What is less familiar is that the American law covers sexual discrimination, and that in its first year of operation more than 40 per cent of the cases under it were brought by women. This was effected without noticeably imperilling the integument of American society. Until something like it exists in this country, equal pay is likely to provide a bigger feast for lawyers than for women, and leave undisturbed the multiple oppressions of the majority.

Continued from Page 7.
on the other, in order to hoodwink the people of the world and achieve its criminal objective of colonial occupation of south Vietnam.

The progressive and revolutionary people of Britain are convinced that following the great teaching of the immortal President Ho Chi Minh "keep firm resolve to fight the U.S. aggressors till victory", the heroic Vietnamese people, by persevering in protracted war, in maintaining independence and keeping the initiative in their own hands and in relying on their own efforts, will certainly smash the intrigues and plots of U.S. imperialist aggressors and other reactionary forces. The heroic Vietnamese people shall completely defeat the U.S. aggressors, liberate the south, defend

the north, and achieve peaceful reunification of their sacred fatherland.

Victory to the National Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam!

Victory to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam!

Long Live the Memory and Teachings of President Ho Chi Minh!

Long Live the Friendship between the British and Vietnamese people!

Death to U.S. aggressors and other Reactionary Forces!

Workers and Oppressed Peoples of the World, Unite!

LETTERS

TO OUR READERS AND WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS:

'WOMEN'S LIBERATION' welcomes your views on women's struggle for emancipation and your comments on events which affect the working class and oppressed people. Women's organisations may also send reports of their activities for publication. We also welcome articles, poems, skits, sketches and contributions in the graphic arts on the problems of liberation of women.

Miss A.M. Pierotti of Kew Gardens writes:

"Although it is the stated aim of your Campaign to secure equal opportunities for women in employment, the claim that they should be entitled as of right to maternity leave with pay and to return to their former job after such leave would, in fact, militate against the employment of all women of child-bearing age since it would make a woman a less desirable employee than a man of similar qualifications and experience. It seems to me that the only safeguard for women is to require that incapacity for work on account of maternity should be dealt with under the same regulations as apply to other absences owing to illness, injury or disability. In this way the employer's liability would be the same towards the worker, man or woman.

I trust that your Committee will give further consideration to this point for, as it stands, you are asking for special terms for women workers which are not only inconsistent with the other aims but would as I said, militate against the employment of the younger woman. Equal pay, important as it is, will not meet the claim for equal economic equality unless women have equal opportunities with men of securing the posts.

A similar view is expressed by Amy Fleming, Chairman of the Open Door Council, when considering the constitution of WERC regarding the free choice of employment for women.

"Creches should be provided by local public authorities and not by employers. Maternity leave should be determined by a medical certifi-

cate just as is leave due to incapacity to work due to sickness or injury. To have the right to return to the same job after maternity leave not determined by a medical certificate would mitigate against the employment of women."

WERC REPLIES:

Both our sisters, A.M. Pierotti and Amy Fleming, seem to share views with those who on one pretext or another resist women's right for equality with men. Some even, in their incorrect equalitarian approach, suggest that if women demand equality then they should be prepared to lift heavy loads and work at night.

Don't these friends know that not all men have equal physical capability to lift heavy loads, nor are they expected to work at night to enjoy equal opportunities?

The bearing of children cannot be equated to suffering from disease nor to an accident requiring absence from work.

Motherhood is an honour and service to the community, without which the further propagation of the human race cannot go on.

In ancient times, because of motherhood, women were held in high esteem and even enjoyed higher status than men. With the emergence of private property in social production, women were not only treated as chattels, but as household slaves and child-bearing machines for men. Motherhood became a curse.

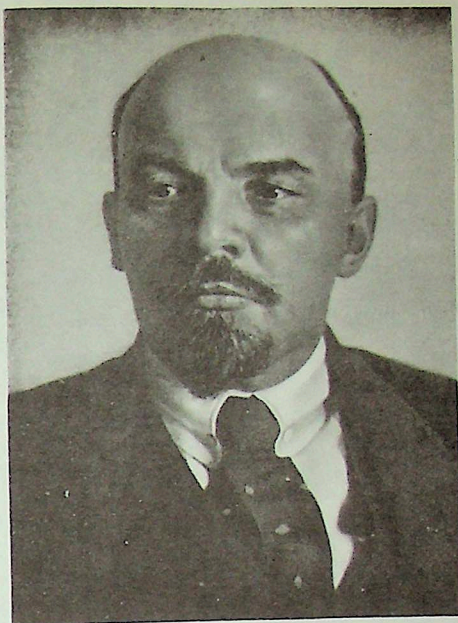
Bearing and rearing of children has been used to tie women to the household, thus denying them opportunities of participation in economic production, or the social and political life of the community.

Continued to Page 15 (Bottom)

LENIN on INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Woman's Day is a token of invincibility and an augury of the great future which lies before the liberation movement of the working class.

Working women - workers and peasants - are the greatest reserve of the working class. This reserve constitutes a good half of the population. The fate of the proletarian movement, the victory or defeat of the proletarian revolution, the victory or defeat of proletarian power depends on whether or not the reserve of women will be for or against the working class.



WOMEN ORGANISE FOR
LIBERATION!
JOIN W.E.R.C.
Subscription 10/- p.a.

LENIN CENTENARY

CELEBRATIONS
April 22/23/24/26
Camden Studios, Camden St. N.W.I.
FILMS, EXHIBITION, LECTURES.
On Lenin's Contribution to
PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION
Enquiries: R.M-L.L.
58, Lisburne Rd, N.W.3.

Continued from Page 14.

In the present day world, with the development of modern technology, services can easily be made available both to end the household drudgery and looking after children, thus freeing women to become again first class citizens.

Unless concrete conditions and opportunities are actually created, any law for equality shall remain a dead letter.

Since the society and the employers benefit from the fruits of motherhood, it is they who should bear the responsibility and expense and enable women to actually enjoy equal opportunities in social production and not be penalised for bearing children.

Of course, with present day society, the capitalist bosses are only concerned with making maximum profits at the lowest cost. If they had their way they would keep the

fittest workers to work at the lowest possible wages for the longest hours, till the workers drop dead. Defying the bosses' wishes, the working class has had to wage a relentless struggle to win better working conditions and higher earnings.

After more than 80 years of struggle, despite the Trade Union Congress resolution demanding equal pay for women, even now a fraudulent bill for this has been introduced in Parliament by the Labour Government. Not depending on the good wishes of the bosses, but by fighting for their just demands, women will win some concessions in present day capitalist society.

Real equality and the end of oppression shall be possible only when the working class shall own and control the economy and run the state machinery, ie. when we have Socialism.

W.E.R.C.

AIMS & OBJECTS

1. PREAMBLE.

In present day capitalist society, while the vast majority of people are exploited and oppressed for the profits of the few, women suffer double oppression. In the community in general they are denied opportunities in the political, economic and social fields. At home, besides being the instruments of production of children and men's sexual pleasure, they suffer domestic drudgery and servility to men who dominate their whole life. The emancipation of women requires a relentless struggle against all forms of discrimination and denials and winning specific demands, step by step, while at the same time taking full part in the social and political struggle, along with men, to change society.

In order to raise the consciousness of women to liberate themselves, a fighting women's movement is necessary. For this purpose, W.E.R.C. is established with the following aims and objectives.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.

- a) To organise women in general, working class women in particular, and win support from other sections of the community, to fight for a society in which there shall be no exploitation and oppression of women and where they shall enjoy rights and opportunities with men. Obviously, this will be possible only in a social system where all kinds of discrimination, exploitation and oppression cease to exist.
- b) To fight for the equal rate for the job in all realms of social economy.
- c) To fight for equal opportunities in employment, education, training and political and social life. For the realization of this, to fight for special facilities: for creches at the place of work or study, maternity leave for a definite period (with no loss of pay) in the pre-natal and post-natal periods and the right to return to the same job without suffering any loss, as of right, guaranteed by statutory law.
- d) To fight against all discrimination against women with regard to marriage, divorce inheritance of property, taxation, insurance and in all fields of economic and social life in the community. All discrimination with regard to children born in or out of wedlock must be abolished.
- e) All women should have the right to bear children or not. In order to make this effective, adequate contraceptive and abortion facilities should be made available free on the national health service.
- f) To involve women in political and social activities, thus to help in the development of their long-suppressed talents and to wage a consistent struggle against male chauvinism.
- g) To support the struggle of women of all countries in the realisation of the common aims to end the system of exploitation and oppression and, for this purpose, to take part in the struggle in Britain and support the struggle of all workers and oppressed people all over the world.

Published by: Women's Equal Rights Campaign, 37 Castletown Rd, W.14.

Printed by Larcular Ltd., 32, Paul St., London E.C.2.