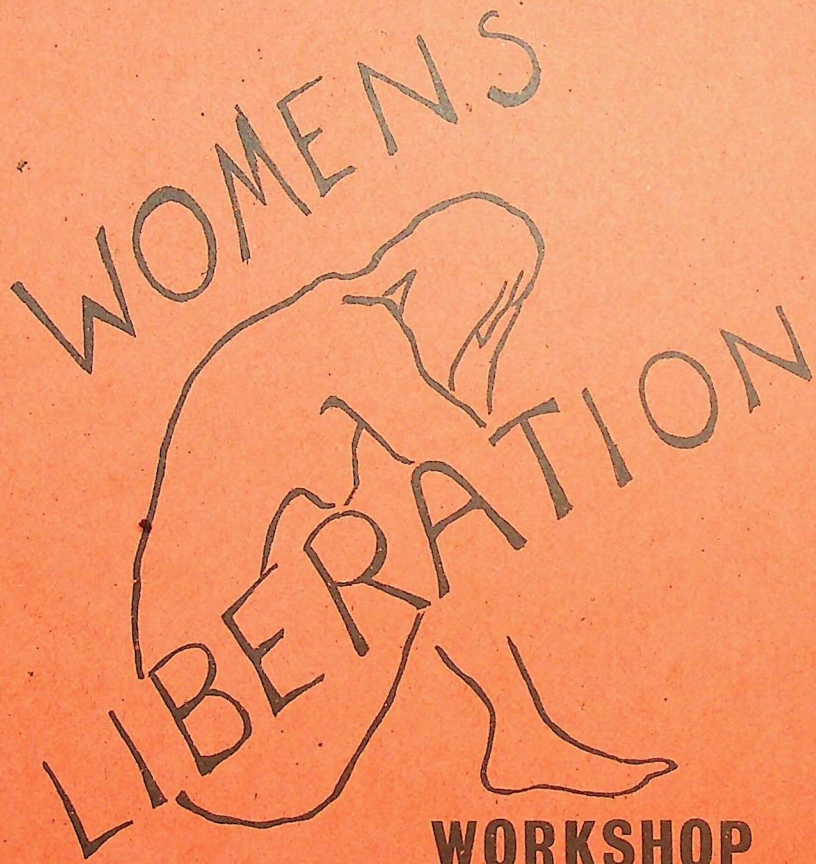


# SHREW



**WORKSHOP**

vol. 3 no.3

7½p

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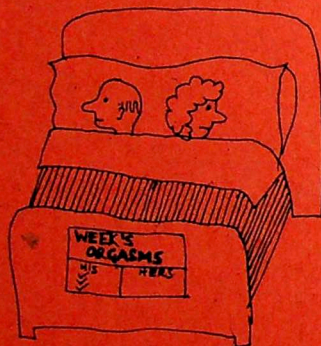
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# CONFRONTATION

# CONFRONTATION

The theme of confrontation emerged from a feeling among people in our group that we should talk to other women about why we were concerned about women's liberation. None of us seemed to know what we would want to say to a strange woman on whom we had just unloaded a leaflet. We started to talk about some of the things we find difficult when we try to confront people with what we think, our position, if you like. Or perhaps we don't have anything nearly so coherent as a "position"...

Assertive, aggressive argument and debate are modes of communication most of us regard as part of a very masculine world. Women don't seem to like scoring points at the expense of other women, although we don't mind hitting back if we're challenged by a man. We are often hung up about hurting or offending one another by being critical face to face. Taken to extremes, this inhibition can result in meetings in which the atmosphere is so cosily supportive that woolliness takes over, and very little gets said or done. How can we move beyond our circle of sympathetic friends, to assert what we care about in a society where people are not free? How can unfree people talk about their unfreedom?

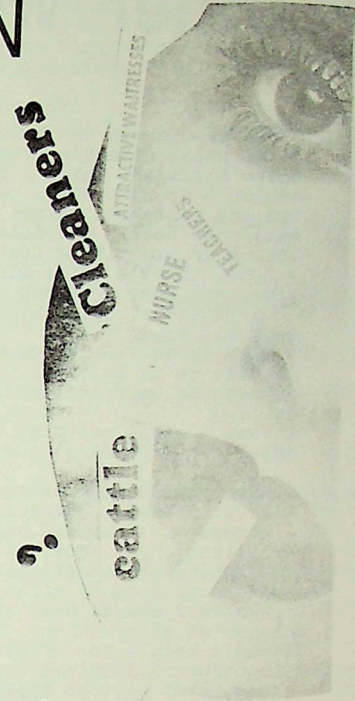
The articles here show how some of the people who meet in the Battersea group see the problems of confrontation. We have not attempted to be exhaustive, and we've still got plenty to talk about. Trying to write about confronting other people seems to be a good way of bringing us up against our own assumptions.

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Already a man in 21 has a different kind of spending power

Do not leave me to drown  
 Wave your flag  
 And let it be a brightly coloured one  
 So I need not strain my eyes to see it  
 They may be useful later on  
 Throw me your line  
 Pull me in  
 Once aboard you will see  
 How confidently I can chart the course  
 (Although I have never captained a ship before,  
 This is easy)  
 And keep the log too  
 But be watchful  
 Do not let me miss a day  
 Once I start flagging  
 It will only be a matter of time  
 Before somebody else  
 Will have to pump me out.



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# one: other women

An evening in the house of my husband's friend and his wife, Penny. We have spent it as usual with the friends of my husband; the men have put on their show à la Spike Milligan, which I find always very funny. We have been watching it, we couldn't do much else. Now they have gone out to buy more drink. Penny has got up and she is taking things to the kitchen. I sit finishing my drink, hoping that she will come back. She doesn't. I go to the kitchen. She is washing up. Something inside me is boiling furiously. Quite out of breath I say to her:

- Look, there's still wine in the bottle. Do you want some?

- No, not for me, thank you. You have it

I remember that she is pregnant. I choose to think that this is why she doesn't want the wine.

- Mike looks very handsome with his hair like that.

Mike is my husband.

- From the back he looks very thin and boyish. I think that he is quite attractive. (.....)

- When I first met him, I didn't think so. But now I think that he really is, you know?

(.....)

- Have you decided if you want to have a family?

- (.....) Yeah...eventually.

- Oh, good. You must come and see me when you get pregnant. I have got a lot of experience, you know. I was a midwife in the hospital. And it's very simple when you know what is going on. But you must know, if not you'll be terrified. That happens to lots of girls, they don't know what is going on, poor things. They are frightened and it's so simple, really. I know that I'm good at that. I'm not very clever at other things, but at that I'm good; and it's silly not to say so because I could help a lot of people, spare them a lot of misery. I love having babies, I'd like to have lots. It's so wonderful. They're fascinating, really.

- Yes, they must be fascinating.

In the handbag I've brought a copy of Shrew. Abortion, nurseries, child care ... I see these words in my mind, burning red. I see myself as a butcher. I don't give it to her as I had planned.



I have gone to the Spanish embassy to get a new passport. In the old one, it says that I am single and a student. Behind the counter, there are two women, Spanish. One of them asks:

- Are you married?

I nod - Si - .

I have to wait for twenty minutes. Only one other person is waiting besides me. When the passport is finished, one of the women shouts with a friendly voice at me. I open the passport and see:

Profession - Sus labores.

Sus labores...Needlework, lace, knitting. I see my grandmother sitting by the balcony, fingering the bobbins of the lace-pillow. The main square of the village, in the afternoon, under the trees a circle of little girls embroidering, with the small drums on their knees. My own mother arriving home with a boy carrying a box full of vegetables. The smell of my mother's house. The sunlight through the lace of the curtains. The soft table-cloth that falls over my knees, the palm of my hands touching the linen, my mother ringing the bell, the maid brings the next course ...

Behind the counter these two women, stamping passports, fingering filing cards. They are obviously middle-aged, their hair has been well dyed, and well set. They wear silk, golden rings and bracelets. They stretch their arms in a grand manner, they lean back in their office-chairs, cross their legs, speak loudly with deep voices.

Emancipated Spanish women? Is this why they work here, in this office in Knights-bridge, London?

Somehow one guesses how they feel. They took the wrong train...

I turn round and leave without protesting.

I met Paddy in the university. Together we have drunk a lot of beer, hitch-hiked, put money on the horses, walked etc. Now he is married to his girl-friend from home. She didn't go to the university. I saw her for the first time the day of their wedding, although I had heard about her. When I see them next, she is expecting the third child.

- Well, when are you going to give us a surprise, eh?  
 - Oh, ... come off it, Pad. - and I add:- After all, it doesn't have to be a surprise anymore.

- Hmmm, -

I turn to her:

- Does it? We're lucky really, don't you think?  
 - Both times they've been a surprise for us, you know. - She has a quiet and soothing voice.

- But with the pill and the ... - She looks alarmed and reminds me:  
 - Oh, we couldn't use those.

(Damn. Is it because I come from a country which is officially Roman Catholic that I always forget that genuine R.C's do actually exist?)

I meet them again a year later. Meantime I have joined the Women's Lib. I'm stunned when I find that Paddy knows this already.

- I'm very sympathetic, you know. I've been talking a lot to my students about it. But you should come and hear the men's point of view.

- (.....)

- They're gas fitters. And they could tell you that when they can't find a job and they have a wife, pregnant, and kids at home...

I jump. We start arguing. I find it very easy to remain cool but he is getting really heated. I am aware of his wife's beatific smile. Somehow I feel that she agrees with me. Paddy is now in such a state that he has to go away.

- Poor Pad - says she.

- Yes, poor Pad. But honestly, he has no right to think that he understands anything about it.

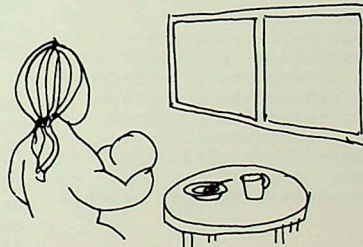
- Yes, I know. I'm glad really that it's you who have spoken to him.

- (.....)

- I'm expecting again, you see.

We start talking about the movement. She seems really interested. Half an hour later, when he comes back, she kisses him and says:

- Don't worry love; it's all right.



The three situations are typical of the usual scene I find myself in. I call it "the English scene". In the country I come from this sort of situation is quite unthinkable. People are well<sup>over</sup>joyed the differences in political views and they instinctively avoid their natural enemies. Unfortunately there are not political views, really, but two distinct political schemes, each one of which automatically implies a series of other minor schematic attitudes. The whole thing is pretty grim and poor: one never meets anybody from the other block so that one enjoys a most curious, free and careless freedom of speech. No risk of quarrels or of hurting anybody's feelings. No chance either of anybody challenging your thought, or pointing at the contradiction between what you say and what you do. You may meet the most enslaved woman with the most revolutionary feminist ideas.

My experience is that to try to convert people is useless. The cause of our movement has two approaches, one political, another psychological. The two may or may not meet, according to individuals. The political approach is revolutionary, i.e. it goes against the broad and flexible (at least for me) political consensus of this country. Again my experience is that people are naturally conservative or revolutionary. Whenever I have tried to talk politics with a non-revolutionary English person, I have bored her or him, very rarely annoyed. The psychological approach gives more interesting results, but I find it very difficult to go far with it without becoming personal and even emotional. I hardly ever believe in an unwanted pregnancy, for instance. It is not coincidence that in the three situations described, I only argue with a man. I have to be very sure of my relationship with a woman to talk long about the movement.

# two: on the march

Male passer-by: "What do you want? - Stuffing!"

Women in uniform: "We're not allowed to think..."

Woman in fur coat: "Abortion makes me turn cold. It's like shutting the stable door after the horse has bolted."

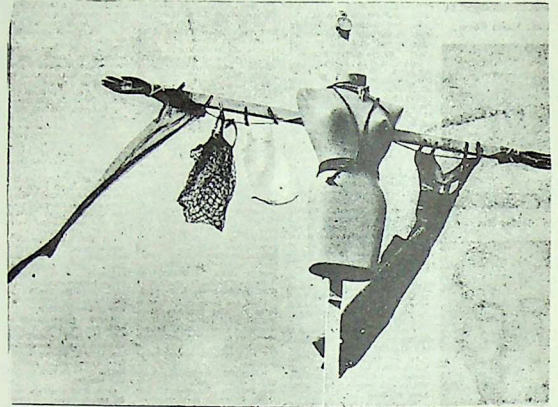
Middle-aged woman shop assistant: "I think I'm in favour."

These remarks of bystanders at the demonstration on Saturday, March 6th, and the attitudes of amused tolerance in the press coverage of the march, must guide us in assessing exactly what we have achieved by the demonstration and raise certain fundamental questions about our aims and strategy as a movement. That over 2,000 women assembled in Hyde Park prepared to march despite falling snow and freezing temperatures was reason enough for spirits to be high. Not only the numbers present, but that these represented nation-wide support for our cause, must be an encouragement. While we need to stand united in the face of press criticism of the demonstration and of the movement as a whole, it is important that our first experience of a national demonstration should provoke self-criticism within the movement.

What were we "demonstrating": was this a demonstration of women's solidarity or was it an outing? Was it a march, or a wander through the West End? In terms of appearances, a useful comparison is the New York Women's Liberation demonstration of September, 1970. Several thousand women, arms linked and chanting slogans, surged down Fifth Avenue, sweeping aside police attempting to restrict the marchers to two traffic lanes. Police had barricaded sidewalks to keep public and demonstrators apart, and crowds gathered to watch the spectacle - expecting a circus. But, infected by the determination of the marchers, middle-aged women left their husbands and girls ducked under the barricades to join the march when challenged to do so. The uncommitted were made to feel that something important concerning them was at stake.

Given the British spirit of moderation in all things, in contrast with the polarisation on equivalent issues in American society, and that the British woman clings more conventionally to the passivity of her traditional role - did we, in marching, really provoke or inspire women "on the side" to commit themselves. Many, questioned on their attitude to the march, came out in favour of at least two or three of the four demands in point but had not been made to feel the need to demonstrate solidarity on the issues. Much more is at stake in the Women's Liberation movement than equal pay, equal educational opportunities, state nurseries, free abortion and contraception: the underlying factor is the liberation of woman for independent self-determination as a human being. To quote a hand-out distributed on the march, "Social reforms do not necessarily mean a change in attitudes". Female emancipation cannot be achieved simply by legislation, as female suffrage has shown.

If all we were doing on March 6th was demanding social welfare changes with which many can agree without any fundamental changes in their conception of and attitude to "woman", what was the real confrontation of this demonstration?



"..grandma would have loved you"

We must avoid putting ourselves in a position in which we can be fobbed off with superficial concessions and be left with nothing more to say.

All women must be confronted with the fact that the liberation of women requires a fundamental revision of definitions of all human roles in society. This raises the question of the role of male support of the movement: on the one hand, their presence on Saturday gives weight to the contention that the movement is one of liberated men and women confronting unliberated men and women through the call to women to do something about their own position. On the other hand, the presence of husbands and boyfriends in the midst of "women united" made us more vulnerable to jokey press comment and public amusement - and possible identification by the public as yet another group of "student revolutionaries", rather than as an unprecedented assembly of women, demonstrating in the cause of all women.

If we failed to communicate the seriousness of the aims of Women's Liberation perhaps we should ask ourselves whether our future efforts to communicate should now involve a choice. One alternative is uncompromising militancy which must of necessity provoke commitment or hostility to the movement, but which brings to light the fundamental and radical issues implied by women's liberation. Or do we try to appeal to the mass of women in this country at the moment who think they are in favour - thus achieving a real following but running the risk of making the four demands an end in themselves.

The moderate method could be regarded as a first step toward greater things, or as the removal of specific grievances, but at the possible cost of true liberation.

WORKING WOMEN?

● So far Women's Liberation is too much simply an intellectual fragment of the rest of our lives. We all go to other meetings, have jobs, etc. etc. Our analyses should be extended to all of this, and our politics seen to include the totality of our lives. One member at her place of work has got staff meetings to rotate chairing and to get the chairman or woman from behind a table. Another is translating the small group experience to her work, getting people who work together to break down a bit of the division between private and personal so that they can work more honestly and supportively together. Another isn't any longer the only one in the office to make tea.

OLD WOMEN?

● An older woman rang to ask about coming to a meeting, but was afraid she would embarrass us because she didn't have any trousers and would have to wear a dress. She didn't come. How soon before we are all older? (Tomorrow!)

MIDDLE CLASS WOMEN?

● Many of us are under attack for being middle-class, bourgeois etc. etc. etc., especially by those groups which go on about "the working class" the loudest while using scab post to send their political attacks round the country. No amount of pretending or rhetoric will wipe out the privileged backgrounds most of us at present in the Women's Movement bring to it. What we do with this privilege and the class and race question among women we have yet to tackle clearly with OUR OWN political analysis. But isn't taking a stance of revolutionary purity against any woman, or group of women, or occupational group, while not confronting the question of maids, au pair girls, being landlords, having a car, washing machine, university education or an

independent income, being politically dishonest and dangerous? - an imitation of others' analysis because we haven't done our own.

three = people's liberation people's liberation people's liberation people's liberation people's liberation people's liberation

"Women's Liberation is People's Liberation" some banner always reads. But we don't really believe it, not really. We lack the confidence to extend our politics beyond "women's issues". We are so tyrannised by "The Revolution" that we are failing to take responsibility for a political analysis which could make revolution possible. What follows are random illustrations of questions we're not asking out loud and together.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION and OTHER WOMEN?

● Someone said we shouldn't publicise our phone number because too many women might phone in to handle. Is maybe the question better put, how can we grow to respond to ANY woman? And in making decisions about mass media appearances, shouldn't we remember the narrowness of a big city/capital-based movement, and the greater isolation of women outside such centres?

POLITICAL WOMEN?

● One woman was discouraged from participating in the exhibition of women artists recently because she didn't paint "politically" from her role as a woman. What does that mean? As a woman she has had to fight to even be able to paint - and now other women tell her she isn't 'political'. One of her paintings is of a closet full of clothes. Are we unanimous in calling that less "political" than a phallic symbol?

WOMEN'S LIBERATION and NATIONAL LIBERATION

● We marched like lemmings at the Cambodia demonstration last year, never asking what relevance our own politics had, although we disagreed in other contexts with the white Western males who were both organising the demonstration and the war in southeast Asia. What is the connection between women's liberation and national liberation? Why are they only called atrocities when women and children are killed in a people's war? Do we realise the dangers of becoming a passing student fad politics if we don't extend our analysis to the totality of our lives?

WOMEN AND MEN?

● Many men were on our demonstration - probably a quarter of the demonstrators. Parts of the movement either say "Of course we don't hate men, it's not men against women, it's capitalism" or ignore the men question, or define those of us still living with men as not really revolu-

● A group of women was labelled reactionary by another group for wanting to demonstrate against Dr. Spock when he was in London speaking against the war last summer. What is the connection between his reactionary position on women (and his treatment of his wife) and his liberal pronouncements on Vietnam? Can we attack one and support the other? What is our relationship to other struggles? What is the nature of our politics that one group of political women call another group of political women reactionary? What is sisterhood and solidarity?

tionary. We are challenging the old roles between men and women. It seems to me that we need to begin, in dialogue with any men who are interested, to try to define new patterns, to build new structures and relationships, FROM OUR OWN POLITICS, for their participation and contribution to the battle for a new society. Isn't it inconsistent to say we are for men sharing more in the raising of children and not to give any lead to how this sharing can be done? or to denounce women who are trying to work this out? All relationships in this society are compromising: we are old people trying to make a new society. How do we start, together, without denying all the options we say we are fighting for?

## four:

## « P A M

When the Battersea group first got together last Autumn the general feeling was that some kind of action to plan for, and work together towards, would help unify the group and be more useful both in bringing the ideas of Women's Lib. to the community and in helping us to work out and consolidate our own ideas. Having talked generally for a few weeks it was agreed that it was very important to get to speak to and discuss with girls still at school, especially those on the verge of leaving, full of hopes about the real role they will be playing in the world. At the same time several of us were interested in street theatre which we felt was an especially good

Pamela, Mother, Careers Officer, Typist;

*in a circle, with hospital masks on, leaning forward as over an operating table by sitting heavily in a rhythmic crouch.*

*We turn round towards the audience; on the background, the mother with baby (a bundle in a shawl)*

*The titles are displayed on a placard.*

*The chorus on both sides of the mother and the girl on her lap. Each one of the chorus comes forward with a present (cardboard cut figure) for the girl. The train is replaced by a book.*

*The girl is sitting down by the mother and listening.*

Scene I IN THE HOSPITAL

Chorus: (severally) It'll be a beautiful boy.....  
Won't your husband be pleased.... Push hard, now....  
Scream if you feel like it...(etc.)

(Silence - pause) *A baby's cry.*

Chorus: (disappointed) Oh - it's a girl.

Scene II THREE YEARS LATER

1st Visitor: Here's a doll for you to play with so you can be just like Mummy.

(Other Visitors follow with similar lines to suit gifts)

nth Visitor: Here's a train for you to play with.

Mother: Little girls don't play with trains.

Chorus: Little girls don't play with trains.

Mother: (reads from story book) ..And the Prince carried off the Princess and they lived happily ever after..

Chorus: And they lived happily ever after.

Scene III FIVE YEARS LATER

Mother: Come and help me wash up.

Pamela: (aggrieved) I want to go out and play - Bobby can - why can't I?

Mother: Help me get your father's dinner. I have to go to the doctor - women's troubles again...

Pamela: What's that?

Mother: You're too young to understand.

Chorus: You're too young to understand.

Pamela: Why should you have to get dad's dinner - you work all day too.

Mother: A woman's place is in the home.

Chorus: A woman's place is in the home.

*Mother wearing an apron in front of a washing up bowl. The daughter rushes through the central space which is limited by the chorus at both sides.*

*The chorus stays in this position until the last scene.*

Whatever its shortcomings, we found this sort of visual aid helped our audience of schoolgirls to grasp the concepts and served as a solid basis for discussion. In some cases they understood so well that just about their first question was, "Yes, I see what you mean, but what's the alternative?" This is, of course, the most difficult question to answer. We can talk glibly about reforms to make the legal/social lot of women better, which they can understand and usually agree with. But what else do we suggest? We can talk about communal living, which would greatly improve the housewife situation and go quite a way towards the liberation of women and



## E L A »

method of putting across ideas in their concrete form of situations which the audience can recognise and understand. Our original idea was to work out several short sketches relating to aspects of female oppression, bearing in mind that our main concern was to approach girls in a secondary modern school. We had no script, no producer, no director: we simply decided on a simple structure, putting together ideas from all members of the group, discussing, accepting or rejecting each idea until we had some kind of whole. Then we tried it out, very self-consciously at first, but growing in confidence at each step, and learning to work together in a very concrete way.

Chorus of Nurses, Visitors, Typists, Women

Scene IV LEAVING SCHOOL

Officer: Now then, what do you enjoy doing?  
 Pamela: Well...nothing really....I do go dancing-  
 Officer: What do you like doing in school?  
 Pamela: I don't like anything, really...I do like pottery -  
 Officer: Ah, you're good with your hands, now ...  
 Pamela: (firmly) I like pottery -  
 Officer: ... there's a job in the typing pool at Brown's, reasonable pay, luncheon vouchers, and you can save for when you get married.  
 Chorus: Save for when you get married.

*The career's officer sitting down. Another chair. The girl comes in (noise as knocking). Polite dialogue about coming in and sitting down.*

*The girl is all meek and sceptical in contrast with the aggressiveness of the previous scene with the mother.*

*The girl leaves with head down.*

Scene V TYPING POOL

Typist: I've had to do this letter five times...I'm bored..  
 Pamela: I can't stand working for Him..He'll want his tea now..  
 Both: ..and don't forget the biscuits.  
 Typist: Are you engaged yet?  
 Pamela: Well ....  
 Typist: I envy you - after all, marriage is the only way out.  
 Chorus: Marriage is the only way out.

*The chorus mimes the typing and makes noises of the typewriters. The girl and a friend are sitting down in the center. The acting should be very straight.*

Scene VI BACK HOME

Pamela: Mum... I'm going to have a baby.  
 Mother: (shocked) Well...  
 Pamela: Well - how was I to know? He said it wouldn't happen first time - Why didn't you tell me? What am I going to do? What can I do?  
 Chorus: How was I to know? (etc.)  
 Mother: You'll have to get married.  
 Chorus: You'll have to get married.

*The mother is ironing, back to the audience. Girl comes in. After the news, the mother freezes and slowly turns round staring at her. The girl moves forward to utter shout of disbelief to the audience. When she stops, the chorus echoes it in a similar tone of rising panic.*

Scene VII IN THE HOSPITAL

Repeat of Scene I

*Circle, breathing noises etc. The daughter is now the mother.*

men. But to the question, "Yes, but what can I do, now?" we are forced to suggest a completely new society, in which people are free to choose their own lifestyle, but without exploiting others in the way that we are all economically and emotionally exploited now. We must also be prepared to admit to these girls that, right at the moment we can't offer a new way of life, just like that, that "liberation" is not something that women in the movement have, but are working towards, and that really all these girls can do is to start thinking about the role of women in our society and start to see in how many ways we have been conditioned and exploited.

## five: parents

In this SHREW we've dealt with various aspects of confrontation, and one which many women probably have is that with their parents. Somehow it's very difficult for an emancipated woman to admit that she still has oppressive relationships with her family.

When we talked about this in our group, it became clear that quite a number of women - until they are married anyway - have an uncomfortably friendly relationship with their mothers and a little girl relationship with their fathers.

I found the relationship with my mother much harder to act out than with my father. As a child I was fed the statements from my mother that if I didn't cheer up/shut up, etc. then I'd never get a husband, and I accepted this unthinkingly -- of course I wanted to get married, every girl does. To begin with I accepted that my parents should vet where I went and who I went out with. Compared to my friends I did feel a bit shackled but I knew that my parents were so protective because they loved me.

It is amazing how oppressive love is - I often wanted to rebel against them, but I never quite made it. I often thought of leaving home just to make my point, and I'd wander around for days feeling very angry and frustrated inside, wanting to break out of my life, but when it came to the crunch I couldn't do it. It would have been much simpler if the situation had been black and white and I'd felt entitled to hurt my parents but I never did.

The difficulty was that my parents always wanted the best for me - the best boyfriend, the best school, etc., so it genuinely hurt them if I went out with someone they didn't like or couldn't trust. Because I loved my parents I wanted to make them happy so I often stopped seeing people they didn't like. I think things reached a climax when I was going away to university and I was looking at all the information the Students Union had sent me and my mother said, "Which societies shall we join?"

I found the relationship with my mother very strange as I got older because she seemed to want to become my best friend and I think this must happen to a lot of mother-daughter relationships. I still had this awful conflict inside me - on the one hand, I wanted to tell her what I was doing, to have a sort of mother confessor, but on the other hand I would shy away from her since it seemed unnatural to have this sort of relationship with one's mother.

The frustrations were never fully resolved even when I was away at university, and if my mother hadn't died when I was twenty I don't know if I would ever have been able to break this tie. Perhaps I was too weak or cowardly to make a break from my mother and then reform the relationship on an equal basis. I just can't work it out but I will always remember rather painfully the emotional blackmail (probably unintentional) which always made me feel I would have a strong obligation to her.

Or, instead of my personal weakness, is it that it is inherent in the nature of the family structure that I had to act out this unnatural role.



Tell me:  
 God made me in your image  
 To smile as you do  
 And for the same reasons  
 My destiny to celebrate yours  
 Will I in time also inherit your mournful joys,  
   your eyes, your saintliness  
 Together with your diamond rings?  
 Let me embrace you  
 You are smaller and more fragile  
 More admirable, and I admire you  
 with what tenderness  
 I hate you and your insidious moulding.

# six: ourselves

## KEEPING TOGETHER

“ The aims of Women's Liberation are very varied and extensive. Furthermore, only a few of them can be agreed upon by most people in the movement. This means that on joining W.L. women are immediately plunged into general uncertainty: uncertainty of what they are aiming for, uncertainty of how to work towards the achievement of their aims, and worst of all, uncertainty that these aims can ever be achieved at all, a feeling which is bound to come when people confront in their minds the huge bulk of reactionary society with the fumbling and fragmented attempts of the movement to attack that society.

Some of the means we have of combating the pessimism and apathy that is likely to emerge from this situation are as follows:

### "There's something for everyone in W.L."

“ The movement has recently been mushrooming out into various "specialist" groups, who overtly operate to "service" the rest of the movement. This could be a more or less unconscious strategy to ensure people's continued allegiance to W.L. by involving them in working for it in ways that they enjoy. Political action is left on the whole to local groups, but even there it is implicitly recognised that without rewards of some kind people won't want to be bothered. The rewards in the local group are friendship, therapy and even communal living in some cases. These rewards are emphasised in any W.L. literature on local groups. No other liberation or revolutionary movement up till now has seen any need to provide such rewards for its members; indeed, such rewards have been viewed as incompatible with all-out political activity.

If everyone can do what they like in W.L. i.e. join a specialist, research, or local group, are we going to devise a way of organising all these things into a whole or not? If we don't, the overt justification of each group for its own existence - i.e., being a part of W.L. - will gradually fade away, and groups will eventually begin to wonder whether they really have come together because they enjoy research or acting or therapy in company with people like themselves and not primarily to work for W.L. They may then look for some other overt rationale for their continued existence, probably outside the movement.

### "The small group"

“ The small group is viewed by W.L. as its prize feature. Words like "community", "mutual understanding", "grass roots identification" are flung around, but there is a lot of danger to a political movement in operating on a small group basis. Firstly, if

one's small group is satisfactory, one identifies with that rather than with the wider movement. Secondly, this identification is made on a personal, emotional basis, to other members of the group and not on an ideological basis to certain abstract aims. Thirdly, a small group becomes exclusive: if the movement wants to induct new members through small local groups, it is going to meet some resistance to this because groups already established will dislike change in the shape of new members. If, on the other hand the group does try to remain fluid and open to newcomers, it will lose out on the rewards it could otherwise give to its members, of close-knit personal relationships. Without this at one level, and without a clear programme of aims and action to identify with at another level, people may lose their incentive to remain in W.L. It could be asked therefore, if small groups really are an ideal set-up for the movement.

### "We're democratic"

“ Being democratic is intended to encourage people to stay with the movement because participation is believed to create identification with it. This may not in fact be true. Firstly, a lot of dissatisfaction is created when people participating in something they find particularly interesting, feel that they are being excluded from decision-making in other areas which they see as important, but not of direct interest to them. Obviously no-one can be participating everywhere at once and again one only identifies with the small area of decision-making in which one is specifically involved, and not with the whole movement. Secondly, the open structure may itself be a deterrent rather than an incentive to some people. Many people, particularly members of the 'working class' feel insecure when nothing is organised for them. If the question of what structure people really want is not discussed frankly, a lot of people who are unused to radical ideals of organisation will be afraid of a democracy which they would see as chaos, and ultimately they will go.

### "Battles"

“ Ideological battles are not allowed in most liberation movements. There can be no argument about what members are to believe. In W.L. however, this is not the case. Everyone is encouraged to have their own ideas about how the movement should be run, and what it is to fight for. Indeed, those without ideas leave, since you cannot survive in W.L. if you like to be fed your ideas. Argument with others is one good way of strengthening one's views, and so the ideological battles of W.L. are a reasonably effective alternative to the doctrinaire methods used by many liberation movements for building up adherence to the ideology. The disadvantages of the W.L. method is that opposing ideas are strengthened as a result of the battles and that a coming together is made more unlikely the more the process snowballs.

seven:

## misogynists at work

UN Draft Declaration on Elimination of  
Discrimination against Women (adopted  
March, 1967 by Commission on Status of  
Women

Article 10

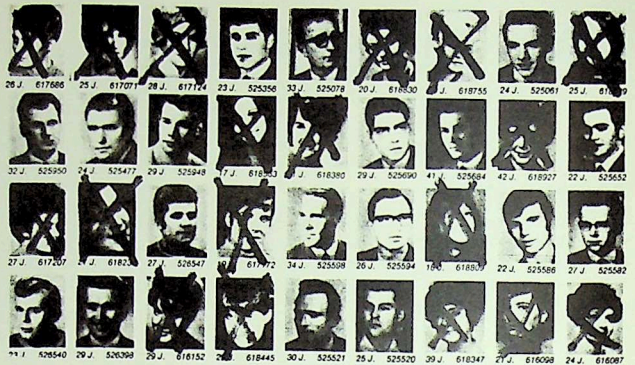
1. All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in the field of economic and social life, and in particular:

a) The rights, without discrimination on grounds of marital status or any other grounds, to receive vocational training, to work, to free choice of profession and employment, and to professional and vocational advancement.....

2. In order to prevent discrimination against women on account of maternity and to ensure their effective right to work, measures should be taken to provide paid maternity leave, with the guarantee of returning to former employment, and to provide the necessary social services, including child-care facilities.

On the face of it, the "Equal pay - equal job opportunities" campaign presents a thoroughly reasonable, basic demand. Yet fundamental to it is a completely new consciousness of woman as a worker. This article attempts to test some typical attitudes of employers with special reference to the graduate sector as a touchstone of the whole field of women's employment.

There's plenty of information about, in sheltered places. For some time now the Times has been running a curiously genteel feature called Women at Work. It rather engineers your admiration for those few women who made it to the top, but nevertheless covers wide ground: from dentistry and catering to a report on American Telephone and Telegraph's motivation scheme for typists. A writer in New Society recently did some research on sex discrimination in job ads in the press. The women's University Appointments Board came out with some depressing statistics on the fate of female graduates of three years back. Well, what do you think they're doing now? And the University Grants Committee have published figures on graduates of the years 1962-68. Of the 1968 graduates entering employment the same year there were about 1,000 more women who



had degrees in arts subjects than men, but nearly three times as many men graduated in the social and pure sciences, and for applied science the UGC says ruefully, "No breakdown is given for men and women in this case because there were so few women applied science graduates". Twice as many men did further research in arts and pure science, though the gap narrows for social science. Of course women consistently outnumber men in teaching - by 32% in arts subjects, and by more than 55% in the sciences. The report adds, "A rather higher proportion of women than men entered posts in the universities, which may reflect the number of women married to research students who take posts in their husbands' universities as research assistants".

Final-year students have access to two basic handbooks: Opportunities for Graduates, and Beyond a Degree, compiled by CRAC (Careers Research Advisory Centre). (Of the two, CRAC gives the most useful advice, as well as, for present purposes, the more detailed breakdown in terms of fields of employment.) CRAC treats the ladies very gallantly; referring to the limitations of a degree's vocational value, it suggests secretarial training, "which should not necessarily be regarded as a retrogressive step, for graduate secretaries are usually able to get secretarial jobs which involve more responsibility than those open to school-leavers, and...may also give them a passport to enter spheres of work - like broadcasting and publishing - which otherwise are almost inaccessible". Never take advice from a stranger. In the first place those inaccessible spheres are usually completely run by successful men, not one of whom has a shorthand speed I'd be seen dead with; and secondly, since nobody ever wants to let an efficient and intelligent secretary pass on to better things, promotion is effectively barred that way too.

However, the real problem is obviously the need to divorce the biological function of women from their economic role. CRAC is hopeful, but vague: "In many areas thought is indeed being given to arrangements which will make it possible for women to return to responsible work after their children have reached school age." A pious hope; but let's be realistic: "...those who are engaged or married may well be restricted in...the length of training which it is feasible for them to undergo...the employer is unwilling to invest a lot of training in someone who may leave employment after a year or two..."

And this is the most repeated argument, that, given career structures in the present industrial

set-up it just isn't worth the employers' while to take in and train women, who cannot be relied upon to stay, or even to maintain an unbroken, consistent effort in the work. The pace is set by men; women will always be non-starters. Without advocating revolution, the argument is watertight - but is this in practice what really happens? If what CRAC says, and what everyone assumes, is true, then there ought to be some correlation between the length of employers' training schemes and the degree of open competition for jobs, i.e. the longer the scheme, the more likely applications are to be restricted to men; the shorter the scheme, the less it would matter, and applications are more likely to be invited from men and women alike. A model company, then, would be one which invariably put its big money on the winners - the winners, by the rules of this game, being men... Like Perkins Engines, for example, who run four different two-year training schemes for which they accept only men, but are prepared to consider women for any one of their eight one-year schemes.

How representative are Perkins? Altogether 107 firms, comprising 150 fields of employment advertised in CRAC this year. Of these, 21 followed a consistent policy of all-male graduate entry (in no field would they consider women) and 37 were equally consistent in inviting both men and women to apply in all fields. Of the remainder, Littlewoods alone was thoroughly cagey - "information available on application" - and the other 48 adopted a discriminatory policy, that is, they specified M (men only) or MW (both) according to each job. Of the 150 categories there were 99 in which some firms practised discrimination; if one discounts from these instances in which the firm concerned seemed to have an overall policy of all-male entry anyway, there remain 78 kinds of jobs from which women might be barred.

How does this tie up with training? The employers' training schemes ranged from anything between a few weeks and 6 years; some gave no training in certain fields, others mentioned informal or on-the-job training, Littlewoods, cagey again, and Dunlop just said "Yes". Now to verify CRAC's hypothesis. The longest schemes of all were run by Barclays Bank - 5-6 years in trust investment, tax work and banking. But Barclays are non-discriminatory by policy, so women are eligible for these. Second longest was Lloyds with 4-5 year schemes in the same work as Barclays. Lloyds are an all-male preserve anyway, so that doesn't really count. Next on the list came the Scottish Amicable Life Assurance, who do discriminate: they train either sex for 4 years in actuarial work and men only for two in insurance.....

So far no good. Let's try again. Seven companies run schemes of 2-3 years' duration. The Bank of Scotland takes only men, trains them for 3 years in banking; EMI (non-discriminatory), Reed Group and the Coventry Corporation train all-comers for 3 years in accountancy, but the latter take one man only for each (also) 3-year course in administration, civil engineering, museum work and librarianship. Standard spend 2-3 years on potential salesmen, but the same time on administrators of either sex. Courtauld and the Civil Service fall into this section, but their structure is more complex (for the former, see below.)

This leaves a large number of firms offering

very much shorter courses where the investment risk in man- or womanpower would, presumably, count much less. Yet, from the examples above, there is no evidence that it counts very much at all anywhere. What is emerging is that well-known phenomenon of job expectation by sex, from the other side of the fence this time; but so inconsistently that it's worth taking a second look at.

In addition to those traditionally closed fields (piloting, stockbroking etc.) are, more surprisingly, meteorology, mineralogy and public health inspection. However, whereas 40 firms are prepared to try out women accountants, 16 aren't; 30% of firms offering jobs in work study won't consider women, nor will 40% with marketing jobs, purchasing and advertising; 50% for electronics, food technology, instrument and control technology, mechanical engineering, production control, metallurgy and patenting; around 55% for chemical engineering and over 60% for banking and civil engineering.

A typical example is Courtaulds, who have very firm ideas about the sexes. Their advertisement in CRAC looks like this:

	Grad training schemes	Starting salary	Approx no. of vacs	Men/women
Mechanical engineering .. x	2 years	£1,150-£1,350	150	M
Operational research .. x				
Organic chemistry .. x				
Paint technology .. x				
Patents .. .. .	Up to 3 years			MW
Personnel work .. .. .				
Physical chemistry .. x	Nil			M
Plastics technology .. x				
Polymer technology .. x				
Process control & instrumentation .. x				
Production control .. x	2 years			M
Production engineering .. x				
Purchasing .. .. .	x			MW

From the way the bracketed areas overlap, it is fairly clear that the sex of graduate required is entirely divorced from the length of scheme, but that each column relates independently to the kind of job to be done. Thus women can do patents work and get a 3-year training for it; but though no training is considered necessary for plastics technology it's only men that are wanted. Once again, the common assumptions about employers' attitudes remain unsubstantiated. Could it be good old-fashioned prejudice at work?

If, as it appears, there is such irrational and inconsistent behaviour (why do firms disagree so completely among themselves) when it comes to women with degrees, how much more fixed are employers' expectations of the majority of women at work? I mentioned earlier A.L. & L.'s incentive scheme: the girls in their typing pool were encouraged to answer customers' enquiries without supervision, and to sign their own letters. As a result, productivity increased and spelling mistakes disappeared. The typists could now think of themselves as super-typists - but why not think themselves right out of the typing pool? CRAC says ingenuously: "In most cases women are much less welcome in industry than men, particularly in those functions where they would have direct control over the male labour force ..... The number of "suitable" functions is however increasing..."

If our demands for equal opportunities at work are to make any sense it is going to be essential to revolutionise attitudes, on both sides. Meanwhile, take heart: there is one job, out of the 150, from which men are utterly banned. It's personnel work, with Marks and Spencer. Presumably, Yiddische mummies only need apply.

# reviews.... wanda

"You want nothing, you are nothing - you may as well be dead - you aren't even a citizen of the United States of America.." Was Wanda directionless because she was a woman? - I kept asking myself, or could it have happened to a man... I am sure this numbed nothingness could happen to a man, but Barbara Loden chose to write about a woman as a result of her own experience - she feels she was essentially like Wanda.

The screen was always blue, green and white - every interior decor was blue - outside there were usually trees in leaf - this coldness of colour reflected the lack of warmth in Wanda's relationships. She touches Mr. Dennis whilst lying next to him in bed:

"Don't touch my head!" he screams.  
 "I was only trying to be friendly."  
 "I don't like people being friendly."

How did she get there?

He picked her up in a bar - no, it wasn't really as positive as a pick-up.

She has a drink at a bar.

He appears to be the barman.

Then, "Come on, let's get out," says Dennis, getting jumpy, having tried to step calmly back and forth over the body he has tied up behind the bar. So Wanda and Dennis are physically together. They drive on and on...

"Where are we going," she asks after a few thousand miles.

"Don't ask questions."

"Why don't you do something with your hair?"  
 (Is he showing interest in her, being tender?)  
 ..."Like cover it up -  
 ...Why don't you buy a hat?"

Accordingly, Wanda buys a hat, a dress and very high-heeled shoes. Dennis slings her trousers out on to the road.

"You don't wear pants with me."

Wanda always passively follows, passively obeys - never smiles except when she points the gun at the bank manager who has turned the tables on Dennis.

"You did good," says Dennis.

Wanda smiles.

She has succeeded in something - by doing as she was told - nothing is of her own volition.

## holloway

The first programme interviewing women inside Holloway prison, on "Men Alive", pointed out in several ways how well the women adapted to prison life. Our group's spontaneous reaction was that this shouldn't be news: it was just too much like marriage, wasn't it? "They've got no security outside - we're their friends" or "Holloway is home" or "Prison is a state of mind".

The women chosen by the Holloway authorities for this first effort, both warders and prisoners, were incredibly sharp and articulate. One explained how most of the women had a lesbian relationship in Holloway, but then she felt that most women are bisexual anyway, implying that she would be bisexual when she got out.

The man interviewer, with a noticeable sneer in his voice, asked "Would you consider yourself a lesbian outside?" "No," she answered, "I would consider myself a normal woman."

Another woman who had been separated from her husband and set fire to his art gallery when he threatened to take away her child, admitted to "a crime, but not a sin". She had been spending £100 per week outside on her flat which she owned, entertainment, a governess, and had earned 42½p inside cleaning floors. He asked her if she thought it a waste of the taxpayers' money putting her in Holloway, referring implicitly to her "respectable background". "It's a waste of taxpayers' money putting anyone in here," she responded.

Another woman, who had been in Holloway on remand for 8 months, said she felt somebody should be able to benefit from their being inside - she recommended a good 8 hours a day of real work - "not just the men but the women too."

But the women interviewed were so obviously handchosen, the picture of life inside Holloway so lopsided, that it created a distorted fantasy world. It not only showed how useless a penal concept like Holloway is but also how much nicer Holloway is in fact than many of the little "holloways" that others of us live in outside.

Having become conditioned to films about women having all male credits, it was nice to see at least, research: Barbara Boyle, and director: Jenny Barraclough, flash past on the screen.

## poem

A spreading fungus is smothering me  
 Penetrating needles, roots  
 That tunnel and twist.

Where?  
 Here, everywhere.  
 Is there nowhere untouched?  
 Nowhere.

Crush it underfoot, only to froth forth again  
 Unleashed yeast.  
 Runaway,  
 Its branches block the way ahead  
 And the way back too is stopped,  
 A valve.  
 Escape, to an inner place where nothing can reach.

That is called madness  
 And it can be reached  
 By the prying travellers into the mind's world.  
 Corrode it, secretly.  
 Perhaps.  
 Can you hold acid and not burn?

IRISH WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Groups in Dublin, Cork and elsewhere. They write: "The initial obstacles are much more primitive here ... the legal inequities still huge ... The contraceptive laws are brutal,". Action includes "pressure on the Minister of Finance for reform in the treatment of widows, deserted wives, unmarried mothers etc." They enclose a pamphlet on The Civil Wrongs of Irish women, price 5p from 18 Fairbrook Lawn, Dublin 14. Does anyone know if there is anything in Belfast?

The Women's Newspaper

The first issue of the Women's Newspaper appeared on March 6. Anyone is welcome to come Tuesdays and Saturdays to the office, 12-13 Little Newport St. (top floor), to write and put the paper together. Ring the office for information (734-9541) or send in news, articles, reviews. Come along to help and sell it. Hopefully it will soon be fortnightly.

W.L. in SCANDINAVIA

This is part of a longer report from Sally Fraser and Ros Delmar which will be circulated to people in the Workshop.

We went to Sweden and Denmark for a week at the end of February to take part in a discussion on Women's Liberation at Lund University in Sweden. What most impressed us was the number of shared problems and ideas that the Workshop had with the groups we met, and, above all, the feeling of sisterhood - that we were all engaged in the same work of trying to create a women's politics, collectively rather than competitively. The symposium itself was a model of a meeting where no real discussion can take place - a panel plus an audience of 2000. But, on one level, there was a possibility of pooling resources: we showed the Luffnell Park film, and got a list of international contacts. On another level we learnt that we are not alone, that W.L. really is an international movement.

W.N.C.C.

The next meeting of the Women's National Coordinating Committee is April 17-18 in Leeds. For further information ring the WLW office or contact 146 Otley Road, Leeds LS16 5JX; Gloden Dallas (Leeds 54372) or Jackie Wootten (Leeds 23561).

Elin Wägner Foundation

swards one postgraduate research fellowship annually worth 10,000 kr. (or two for 5,000) for investigation into the historical, sociological, economic or ethonological part played by woman in society.

Fellowship tenable in country of choice. Closing date for 1973 will be around mid-March next year. Details and application forms from:

Mrs. Barbro Alvine  
Sibyllegatan 59  
114 43 Stockholm, Sweden.

# ...news & notes

POST-MORTEM

The South London meeting on February 19th must be the most hushed-up event of the year. Nobody I've met since has mentioned it, even though it was the first propaganda event organised to cover the whole of south London.

Well, wasn't it supposed to be propaganda? We didn't have much going for us. A room (unsignposted) in labyrinthine Brixton Town Hall with lousy acoustics and high-powered central heating. Perfect conditions for an after-dinner nap. Dynamics of democracy: a semi-circle of chairs enclosing a space in which hardly anything was intended to happen, except, unintentionally, a two year-old's happy, private games. Too many familiar faces, but maybe it was an illusion; most of the other women looked as if one ought to know them, but I only knew my own group.

Whatever the circumstances, and they were loaded, we still had something to say to south London women. You'd never have guessed it. Or rather, if you weren't bored to sleep, you'd never have guessed what it was. Someone talked about the history of W.L., someone else about being a clipper, someone else again about Miss World. A good deal of inbred political gossip, using an inbred language without being persuasive about the validity of that language - the whole tone was one of patient self-justification and self-analysis, the small-group ethos insensitively transferred to a large hall and about as appropriate as doing Pinter in Wembley Stadium.

And the small group brought with it the need to do their own thing - play a guitar, sing a song (why not have a home-baking display too?), and to exorcise the public-speaking bogey. While recognising people's personal difficulties and respecting their courage in trying to overcome them, this wasn't the time or place. If you want to scare away potential supporters, either be boring or inaudible, or, better still, both, then they won't feel they're missing anything. (Whatever you feel about women's lack of confidence in traditional, male-organised public gatherings, there's no need to set your own trap. And walk right into it.

Persuasion, explanation - these imply the presence of an audience whom it is necessary to woo and win over. The most art events that evening were the plays, not that they were intrinsically better, in fact *Battersea* was fairly sloppy, but because drama really worked. And a sense of drama, of interaction between speaker and audience, is essential to effective display. Which, if you remember, is what we were there for.....

Walking home through Brixton - largely black, working-class Brixton - I felt as if I'd just left the mad batter's tea-party.

Women's History Research Center

All Women's Library, 2325 Oak, Berkeley, Ca. 94708, send stamped, self-addressed envelope.

SCDB 21-278

**7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>P**  
vol.3  
no.5  
June 71

# SHREW

womens liberation workshop





WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP  
12-13 Little Newport Street,  
London, W.C.2.  
01-734 9541 (Wed. & Thurs.)

W.L.W. GROUPS

ARCHWAY (Wed.)  
Heather Hopkins,  
19 Gresley Road,  
N.19 272-3158.

ARSENAL (Tues.)  
Hermione Harris,  
80 Highbury Hill,  
N.5. 359-0842.

BATTERSEA (Thurs.)  
Di Macklin,  
38 Albert Place Mansions,  
S.W.11. 720-4462.

BELSIZE LANE (Mon.)  
Audrey Battersby,  
83 Belsize Lane,  
N.W.3. 772-2784

BLACKHEATH (?)  
Rosemary Hayles,  
17 Hassendean Road,  
S.E.3. 858-3604.

CHALK FARM (Mon.)  
Sheila Robbin,  
1 Tasker Road,  
Flat 8,  
N.W.3. 485-9871.

CHISWICK (Wed.)  
Margaret Fox,  
65 Otterburn Gardens,  
Isleworth. 560-0599

CLAPHAM (Wed.)  
Helena Colombe,  
18 MacAuley Court,  
MacAuley Road,  
S.W.4. 622-8071

CROYDON (?)  
Jo Clinton,  
25 Oswald,  
Courtwood Lane,  
Croydon CRO 9HA.  
657-1180

EALING (Tues.)  
Anne & Debbie,  
53 Fairlea Place,  
Woodfield Road,  
W.5. 997-1602.

EAST LONDON (Tues.)  
Christine & Lesley,  
12 Brockfield Road,  
Hackney Wick. 985-9451

FORTESS GREEN (Tues.)  
Beatrix Tudor-Hart,  
72 Fortess Gr.,  
N.2. 883-3445.

FULHAM-CHELSEA (?)  
Jane Caplin,  
19 Novello Road,  
S.W.6. 731-1145.

GOLDHAWK ROAD (Wed.)  
Erin Pizzey,  
397 Goldhawk Road,  
W.6. 748-2150

GOSPEL OAK (Thurs.)  
Val Charlton,  
3 Rona Road,  
N.W.3. 267-1988

HAMPSTEAD (Tues.)  
Frances Robinson,  
45a Hampstead High St.,  
N.W.3. 485-6113.

HAVERSTOCK HILL (Thurs.)  
Monica Foot,  
39 Gondar Gardens,  
N.W.6. 794-6908.

HEATH MANSIONS (Wed.)  
June Montgomery,  
3 Hampstead Mansions,  
Hampstead Grove,  
N.W.3. 435-5687.

HIGHBURY (Wed.)  
Janet Ree,  
2a Southby Road,  
N.5. 226-1681.

HOLLOWAY (?)  
Alison Fell,  
42 Farmend Road,  
N.19. 272-1558.

HORNSEY (Wed.)  
Rosamund Backster,  
14 Warner Road,  
N.8. 348-2857

KEATS GROVE (?)  
Brekke Larsen,  
21 Wentworth Mansions,  
Keats Grove,  
N.W.3. 794-9251.

KILBURN (Wed.)  
Lee Rodwell,  
59 Victoria Road,  
N.W.6. 624-5670.

LADBROKE GROVE (?)  
Rosemary Deane,  
62 Oxford Gardens,  
W.10. 969-8748.

MUSWELL HILL (?)  
Brenda Leys,  
31 The Chine,  
Muswell Hill,  
N.10 3PX.  
883-3655.

NEW TUFNELL PARK (?)  
Kathy Hoyland,  
14 Oakford Road,  
N.W.5. 607-7694.

NOTTING HILL (Wed.)  
Esther Ronay,  
46 Scarsdale Villas,  
W.8. 937-6244.

PECKHAM (Thurs.)  
Kate Laing,  
1 Grove Park,  
S.E.5. 733-4864.

PIMLICO (Mon.)  
Sally Alexander & Mary  
Kelly,  
91 Alderney Street,  
S.W.1. 834-7649.

PUTNEY (?)  
Piki Babs,  
151a Upr. Richmond Rd.,  
S.W.15. 789-5604.

RICHMOND (?)  
Vanessa Gohar,  
86 Forrest Road,  
Kew. 948-0018.

continued back cover....

This issue of SHREW was produced by Ann, Jan, Jenny, Kate, Maureen,  
Miriam, Nicola and Sally.

Peckham Rye Group.

# Housewives talking 1

1. Housewife talking - she has 9 children.

Q. What does Women's Liberation mean to you?

A. Nothing. I s'pose some of the aims are good. I don't agree about abortion for one thing, because I've got 6 girls and I'd hate to think they could have sex any time without any consequences.

Firms should try to provide somewhere for the kids. Women would work if they knew the kids were alright.

Q. What do you think of women meeting together in groups?

A. I don't think it does a lot of good. I think it's a lot of lesbians getting together for a giggle.

Q. Do you treat the boys differently from the girls.

A. Sod that. I bring them up the same. The boys wash the stairs down the same as the girls. I think they ought to bring back conscription. That teaches them to fend for themselves. At least they have to take notice and get discipline.

Men get on my bloody nerves. Sometimes I don't speak to him for days.

2. Housewife talking - she has 1 child.

Q. What does Women's Liberation mean to you?

A. I am liberated. I'm the governer in our house. I think they should have a factory over here the', so we could be doing something. I should've brought my knitting. I hate sitting doing nothing. I'd rather earn the money myself. You can't live on a man's wages. I can't afford to go to bingo or out for a boozy night.

Yes, I do agree about abortion on demand. If I fell pregnant I'd want an abortion.

(Argument between 1. and 2. which ended by 2. saying - "well it's debateable, I s'pose")

I can't see any good in Women's Liberation. I mean you run your own home and if you are anyone you run it the way you want it run. I don't really see how women are down-trodden. Some are I s'pose, and they are idiots.

Q. What do you think of women meeting together in groups?

A. Everyone's alone really, aren't they? No one can help me except Ernie. All I want is a garden, I've got a nice home. My dream's a cottage in the country, with a garden.

Too many people sit on their arses and complain without doing anything about it. I've got 95p to last till Thursday (This was Monday).

Q. What do you think about men?

A. Men are definitely the weaker sex. Ask a man and it's never done. Don't ask. Wait until it becomes their idea, then it gets done. Be diplomatic. Say "it's a good idea darling." I think they're like that because men are mothered from the day they are born.

Q. Do you think there is an inborn difference of behaviour between boys and girls?

A. No. There's no difference. It's the way you bring them up.

Q. What about sex?

A. Well, if women weren't always afraid they were going to fall, perhaps they'd like it more. Contraceptives are always up to the woman. Men getting sterilised'd make it easier. It's daft how men think they're less men for it.

I think it's foreigners that's a lot of the trouble. How many wives do some of them have - 6 or so, isn't it? There's no money for nursery schools, once these welfare cuts have saved some money, maybe they'll think of nursery schools then. I know one thing, if we got these foreigners out of the country there'd be more money. I work in a betting-shop on Saturday and they're there all the time - the same ones. And I know for a fact they're there all week as well. Lazy sods. Rude too,

we've even had to put up a glass panel over the counter to stop them spitting at us. Black power? Freedom from what?

3. Housewife talking - she has 5 children.

Q. What does Women's Liberation mean to you?

A. I don't need liberating, there's no need for a movement. It all seems a load of rubbish, they've no common sense and they don't know what they're doing. It's all against men, I expect most women in it don't have good relationships with men. It's the woman's fault if they end up drudges.

Q. What do you think of women meeting together in groups?

A. If you want something you can do it yourself. Groups don't help. I s'pose some women arn't strong enough and need a push. I don't need to beg so I don't need a group. My husband would give anything he would - after all it's his duty to supply all my needs. Yes I would get a job, for little extras.

4. Housewife talking - she has 2 children.

Q. What does Women's Liberation mean to you?

A. I think it's a load of balls. I like a man to be a man. A woman's always been downtrodden, it makes her more of a woman.

Q. What about equal pay, what do you think of that?

A. Women should pay equal taxes for equal pay. Women wouldn't do equal jobs anyway - like heavy work, lifting and things. I don't want to see women driving buses etc. I wouldn't feel safe. And I don't want to see men doing women's jobs either. Men can't put up with staying at home. Women can't do digging and building jobs. They haven't got the muscles, they'd end up with bad hands.

5. Housewife talking - she has 2 children.

Q. What does Women's Liberation mean to you?

A. Well, the middle classes are liberated. Men need liberating as well though. Its the structure of society that oppresses men. I think kids should be brought up the same. They follow the adults. They shouldn't be left too free though and should be given interests to follow. Single women don't have any problems.

Housewives talking...

- it's natural for a man to make remarks about women who go into pubs by themselves. No, women who make remarks about men are tarts.
- strippers are a different grade of women to us - low grade.
- girls, at a certain age, do want to be feminine.
- free abortion and contraception would only encourage kids to be permissive. I'd rather see a 15-year-old have a baby than an abortion. She could always have it adopted.
- yes I'd buy boy toys for a girl but not the other way round.
- women in women's liberation are different I suppose...



## CONDITIONS IN A NORTHERN FACTORY AS DESCRIBED TO ME BY MY MOTHER

The manager watches us from his office above the shop floor. It is all glass so that he can see out over the packing department. He spends a lot of time just looking. There are about a hundred and fifty women. We are like battery hens, all cramped together. The space where I stand is no bigger than a yard square. It's a very old fashioned building with glass domes above, so it's too hot. You have to change your shoes for the sake of your feet, but if you do it a second too early, you are for it. We have two buzzers at finishing time, which is at half past twelve on the morning shift. The first buzzer goes at twenty-nine minutes past and woe betide you if you go to the toilet or change your shoes before then. It's just petty things like that. He likes to keep us in our place.

The men, at wages night on a Thursday, the darling men, they queue for their money just there at the office window, but we have to go climbing up two flights of stairs and down again for ours. They can just collect and walk straight out. On Saturday mornings when we have to work overtime, the men work with us on the packing. I watched one lad once. In four hours he did six parcels and I did about ninety! For that he gets £19 basic. We get £13 basic pay per week. The men only knuckle in on Saturday mornings for the overtime. They are less than useless at the work.

I've had one or two arguments with the manager. He hates my guts because I speak up for myself. I think men do if you know your own mind and speak up. He wouldn't give me my fortnight's holiday after September last year. He said, "The holiday period is over. If I give you this fortnight off, every woman in the factory will be off for a fortnight". He is an old fashioned type of man. One of his favourite sayings is, "If I let you do this or that, I shall have all the women on to me". I insisted on having my holiday in September. I told him, "You said the holiday period was over and everybody has had theirs, so I reckon that I would be the only one off". He gave in eventually, but he made me work the Monday of my holiday before he would give me my holiday money. I was cheeky in those days because I didn't care about the job, but that was eight years ago.

Since then my husband has been seriously ill. I'm retiring next year and I need the job.

This year my friend got the sack for talking. There's not much time for talking on this job. We get three-quarters of an hour for dinner and a ten-minute break in the morning. We don't get a break in the afternoon. My friend is a good worker and she finished her worksheet by 12.0, so she was just having a chat, I was still working but another girl and I moved along so that we could hear her better. Big brother came marching down the shop floor.

"I've been watching you for an hour, and you haven't done a parcel since twelve".

"I've done my worksheet for this morning".

"You are constantly talking. You stopped this girl from getting on with her work, and this lady you dragged into your conversation. We did you a favour taking you on part time! Take a week's notice."

I began to say, "Nobody drags me into anything", but he was ranting and raving. Later on he said to my friend "Tell that other woman that if she had said anything more she would have had a week's notice as well." Its funny, on the Thursday I was "a lady" and on Friday I was "that other woman".

Everybody was really quiet after that. We all felt bad about the injustice of it all, but not one of us dare say anything. I was threatened with the sack for saying five words. That means that anybody could get it at any time. Nobody is going to answer him back at all now, just for fear of losing their job. My friend has six kids and her husband

is sick. Most of the women want to keep the job because of buying little extras and for a decent standard of living. Some of us really need the job because of hardship and responsibilities at home. We are all scared of losing it and he knows it.

"When you work with him, you get like him," the girls say. The women supervisors are just as bad. They have to be, for the extra bit of money. It's the sort of job that makes your mind stupid. "What do you want a whole hour for your dinner for? There's nothing to talk about," they say. After a few years of it you shut up and get on with the job.

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Snow-white.

- Reads her Ladybird and Janet and John reading books. John dominates the action and conversation, as usual. The first 5 pages Janet doesn't open her mouth:

"John: - Look Janet, look. Come to the shop. I see a horse. Come, little dog! You may look too. See, Janet, here is something red. Can you see it? I see something. I see something brown. It is a brown dog. Look, little dog. Let us go home. Come home, Janet. Come home little dog." (Woof, woof says Janet!)

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"Degas was the first artist to depict naked woman as she really looked in the privacy of the bedroom. A cat licking herself was his description of a woman at her ablutions."

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"As a creative artist, no less a man, Bonnard was responsive to the charm of women. Bonnard sees in woman, in her abrupt changes of mood, her impressionability, her seeming to surrender to the moment, something of the child."

Antoine Terrace.

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## You are "... " I am "... "

It is an extremely dangerous assumption to classify people into the "Gay" and "Straight" categories.

The complete rejection of imposed definitions upon our humanity; surely this is the very point around which Women's Liberation revolves. Where do those definitions spring from? From the people, from us. Therefore we, the people, must bear the blame, and learn from the burden we are carrying. Surely we are fighting ultimately for human liberation, the right to be yourself, no matter how you turn out.

Perhaps it may seem rather pedantic to argue about "Gay" and "Straight" but nothing should be allowed to slip by without question. It is labelling, it is grouping, it is ultimately discriminating. People must feel free to love and not to get labelled for loving. Surely "Gay" and "Straight" are "sexual habit" labels, and this is what we must escape from. Labels do not concern themselves with the individual. They are de-humanising, de-structive and completely anti human liberation, and therefore Women's Liberation, as one must directly follow the other.

## He said it would be all right

..... don't worry". I'd been on the pill, but constantly felt like death on it. Someone said the loop gave you cancer. So he said he'd see to it.

We've got three children, a small flat, and pay a lot of rent. I work full-time to make ends meet and go to evening classes to try for my second O-level. They are 8, 6, and 3 years old and I'm 26.

10 days overdue.

I went to my own doctor. She said she had a headache brought on by my young daughter (3) who I had to take with me. I'd left the boys out playing. So my doctor refused to see me. Then I went round all the doctors in the area, but their lists were full. Eventually a friend suggested one who wasn't full-up. I went to him.

Two weeks overdue.

My new doctor gave me 20 pills to take - 4 a day. He said if I didn't start after them, then I was definitely pregnant.

3 weeks overdue.

Went back to doctor to tell him nothing had happened. He was quite understanding and wrote a letter to Dulwich Hospital saying that, in his opinion, I should have an abortion and that if they didn't do it then I would go to a back-street abortionist. The next day I went to the hospital, but they wouldn't give me an appointment until two weeks time. This is a hospital with a good reputation for abortions. They use the vacuum method and people only stay in for 12 hours. I went to see a friend who's in Women's Liberation and has a middle-class voice. She phoned Kings College Hospital for me and they promised an appointment in the next few days.

4 weeks overdue.

Went to Kings at 9 a.m. (my appointment was for then) and waited in the ante-natal clinic for 3 hours. Surrounded by fat bellies. At midday eventually saw the consultant. He said he, "couldn't tell if I was pregnant or not at this stage and anyway could see no reason for a termination." He looked at me (unfortunately I didn't have a hole in my coat) and said "anyway you're not exactly destitute are you?" I said I would be if I gave up work and he said, "but if wouldn't last forever". I left feeling humiliated and angry. Then a nurse brought me a letter to see the social-worker, and I had a urine test. At 1 p.m. the same day I saw the social-worker. By this time I was in a furious rage and very worried about the children. I'd left the boys out playing and my daughter with a friend. I managed to say, "It's my body and I'll do what I bloody well please with it." The social-worker told me that I must understand the position of the hospital and that they can't just give abortions to anyone who asks for one. She also said, "it's a pretty sordid business you know." I left explaining about the kids.

The social-worker said I could come back the next day with 3 year old daughter. Was gruelled about every detail of my life. At last she - the social-worker - said she'd write a favourable report on me and I was to return to see the consultant in a week's time.

5 weeks overdue.

I waited nearly 2 hours this time and when I saw the consultant he said, simply, that he would do the termination on condition that, "either you or your husband agree to be sterilised". I thought my husband would agree to be sterilised, so I said so. He said, "Right, well I'll let you know when you and your husband can come and see me." I told him I was worried about the time factor and would it be before I was 12 weeks pregnant. He said he couldn't guarantee anything. It could be at least 12 weeks, in which case, they'd use the suction method, or it could be at 16 weeks, or even longer - depending on when they could fit me in - in which case, they'd inject into my womb and I'd miscarry. In view of this I said I'd like to think the whole thing over. (I was thinking that if I persuaded my husband to be sterilised and then have to wait until I'm 16 weeks pregnant and then go through a lot of pain, I might as well borrow the money and get it done privately.) The consultant said, "It's because of silly people like you, who haven't got the sense to use proper means of contraception, that the list is so long." I left with an appointment in one week, to see him, with my husband, to discuss the vasectomy. The sister who gave me the appointment said, "Oh, we're going to make sure it doesn't happen again!" I said, "It's not the sort of thing you wish upon yourself." Sister: "Oh, this sort of thing only happens to your sort of people." Before I could punch her on the nose, the staff-midwife came along and tried to persuade me not to have the abortion. She said I'd regret it. I told her I was 100% sure. She explained to me that I'd have to take the pill for 3 months after my husband had had the vasectomy. Then she added - "It's mother nature's main objective to make you pregnant you know".

I came home exhausted. I couldn't decide to be sterilised under the shadow of all these threats and didn't feel I could try to persuade my husband to either.

Saw my friend in women's lib. again. She got in touch with the Women's Liberation Workshop. I then got in touch with a private doctor, who said he'd do it for £70. He was very sympathetic and said very simply, "Any woman who wants an abortion should have one. But wait" he said, "It'd be better to get it done free."



By this time I was 6 weeks overdue.

10 weeks pregnant.

I couldn't decide about the sterilisation and neither could my husband. I borrowed £70 off various relatives and had a private abortion a few days later. Take 2 towels, 2 sanitary towels and £70 and no-one with you. Have one leg tied to a chair, the other to a settee and hot metal instruments thrust up you. Count up to 10 and pretend it's not you that's there. He did it well, was kind and matter of fact. My husband met me on the corner of the street and we went home. I felt fine, no pain, no depression. Went to work the next day.

Every woman I've talked to since then, has her story. My auntie in Dublin died 4 weeks ago of a back-street abortion. She's left 3 kids.

I got a letter from the hospital two weeks later admitting me for termination. I would have been exactly 12 weeks pregnant. It was unconditional on the sterilisation question. I phoned up the ward and told the sister I'd had a private abortion - her reply was "Yes, fair enough."

We must be able to offer direct help to other women on abortion. One way of doing this would be to compile a list of hospitals sympathetic to abortion, together with a list of lies it is essential to tell from the beginning - like a false address, details of income, number of children, accomodation, etc. We must have a list of people with money who are willing to lend it to women if the N.H.S. fails them. Tangible support as well as going to hospital and being with the women during the long hours of waiting there.

**"I feel like the bitch that had  
too many pups"...**

.....said Alice in "Alice's Restaurant". The commune, revised into a large family, milked her dry. Upbringing has imposed the general Mother-role on women. It's a burden, and it's full of contradictions. Its submissive strength takes the strain of people's love, supportive jobs, and masculine social pre-eminence and vanity.

#### LOVE

Admen glorify the modern Mother Earth image. Men adore the new icons - mother breast-feeding baby in company, or women encircled with kids and domestic chatter. Men's love has a pattern. Some line of their loved one always depicts the Mother-figure. Part-Mother for them. She's often a primary teacher or a playgroup worker. These jobs actually involve mopping up snot, pee, shit and blood, dressing children and generally feeding kids stimulation and materials for them to be creative with. Men with the iciest hearts pour watery affection on the beloved who's "so good with the kids." A man who is struggling to be independent of his girlfriends was comforted about his recent adventure by: "She doesn't look like the kind of person who'll let you become dependent on her". This



suggests the girl is still a bit of a tit, to swing on. Relying on "Mother-love" features in most relationships of Western Civilisation. But it's a limiting and limited love, emprisoning the couple in the misery of jealousies and possessiveness.

### JOBS

Women's work that doesn't support children is usually the kind that supports men. P.A.'s and secretaries run the show while the men take the bows - a fact stylised with deeply affectionate caricature by the T.V. series "Mr. Digby, Darling" with the lovely Sheila Hancock scattily flitting around in a mini skirt, and enjoying every zany moment of mothering an inadequate child-man.

The privileged minority of women with equal jobs have to tactfully modify their work with the right degree of "femininity". Women can become lecturers, but unease at college staff meetings yields to masculine pride in important decision-making and leadership.

### FANS AND SUPPORTERS CHEER FROM THE TOUCHLINE

The ads are clutching at the thinnest straws of our conditioning and guilt that we don't enjoy housework, but even if we no longer turn and look fondly at "the load they leave behind them" but have made the break for equal chores and a worthwhile work of your own, this life can turn into support from the touchline of your man's world. With my bloke I feel resentful every time ideas I've provided become his label his identity; when I find I've been feeding his clique of male friends with good fodder for discussions; or when some outlook I've conceived identifies him, and, after that distortion, my words are heard as indoctrinated support for his ideas. Society makes assumptions about couples: the man does most of the thinking; and for fear of bruised male egos people promote that scene. It's easier for men to establish and transmit their opinions, not only because of their education or culture, but also because they have the foothold of people's expectations beneath them.

Your thoughts and information get taken to his work. Fair enough - except it's to another jealously guarded male-dominated clique. And I feel the picture presented to colleagues is composed partly by things I've said and "HIS" raging Women's Liberation ideals. I've given some hard grind of the imagination over to his work preparation, which cost me a day. I was exhausted at the end. I got his thanks, no recognition, and a catty remark, by his only female colleague, about women at home draining men. No recognition? Well-fed babies do go to sleep afterwards, I suppose.

A hasty argument comes readily to the lips of men and their unwittingly supportive fans. They say "We all feed each other with the products of our lives. That's how social contribution works". They're talking about the future, and nobody's there yet. You can't disregard the fact of the male clique, and men's need for domination, and for being one rung up the ladder of superiority from their women friends. It's just trying to sweep dirt under the carpet to skip glibly past those events onto human aims. It's more honest to claim domination for a sex-role. That's not glossing over present day facts, and it gives us room to question its modern genuineness and social relevance. Human Equality can't happen until we, women, are surer of our identities as people, and both sexes can give their emotional security to Women's Equal Status, and not merely intellectualised lip-service.

WE COMPETE WITH EACH OTHER...for instance at parties, to remain attractive by flattering men. Let's help each other fight the habit. My mother's words rang in my head as I recalled this party scene: Man talks about Communes. Topic continued by man and wife. Another woman looks at the wife and says she's wrong, turns slightly and warmly agrees with the husband. BUT.. she was agreeing with the opinion actually spoken by little wifey. Chance? Distortions like that often happen. Watch it.

MUM HAD SILENT STRENGTH, when Dad was around.

Women usually interject, and feed in sentences which get swallowed up and assimilated into the main belly of men's conversation. When we say something important and the men can't take possession of it, some man will set up distractions like "Fuck me! There's no salt on this table!", "Anyone else for a drink before last orders?"

You've made a fuss, they're aware they distract, now you've got to suffer their sincere but condescending apologies, start again, knowing what you say had better be forcibly important to warrant the considerate silence.

Confidence in speaking up for ourselves is inched out by our everyday surrenders to male-dominated conversation. So we're timid to speak out about major issues for us, like abortion. Persistence in talking is the only way to break the day to day pattern of unequal say.

I'm disenchanting with the way society uses the Mother's biological feeding function in so many social capacities. We have other abilities to use.

## one day crêche

It seems to me we've got a lot of thinking to do about what we expect of children through our involvement in Women's Liberation. For me just seeing the creche at the One Day Workshop on April 24th working or not working made me admit certain things: we expected children under 5 to respond positively to a one-off experience - they were among children many of whom they had never met before, looked after by adults they had never met before or were unused to in a building and room they had never seen before.

Added to this they were in the same room together for the whole day. Enough to make an adult restless never mind kids.

That in itself was limiting. But what happened in that room was even more limited and limiting.

By 10.30 their room looked like something between a refugee camp and a station waiting room. To get into the hall where the workshop was held we had to walk through the creche. To go to the bog we had to walk through the creche. We dumped our coats, bags and kids in the creche.

With doors constantly opening and closing onto the creche there were children escaping, looking for their mothers or something better and this resulted in kids being brought back to their side of the door and the door closed again.

We had a fair amount of material in the creche for the children to handle, but when the clay is mushed and trodden with newspaper and you fall over bits of wood to get there; when layers of paper are stuck together with paint, potato cuts, glue and orange juice; when there is no room to ride the bike or push the pram because everyone has been stupid enough to leave the tables in a line down the middle of the room then nothing is really worth the effort. You just give up. Hence a number of rather miserable, disengaged, disenchanted, bored, weary, and uneasy children.

To end, some questions: Why do we do this? Why are we so thoughtless about children? We're messing them up. It's no good going on about changing patterns of child care if we don't actually care. Why don't people who haven't got children try to relate to children anyway as much as they can? It's always the mothers who end up harrassed trying to control multiple areas of responsibility. Why do we use the word creche? - It sounds warm and protective. It seems to me we use it to obscure the rottenness of the experience we are forcing on the children and we ought to start thinking of them as a real part of our movement.

## Letters

Dear Shrew,

I'd like to send a message to 'lousy, boring, stinking, rotten, two-year-old' who wrote so articulately in May Shrew.

"I like you: I like what you say; but be careful. Your Mum isn't only caring for you and standing by you while you learn. She's 'teaching' you that she's indispensable to you for five years; and that's wrong. She's 'teaching' you things about the way men are and the way women are, and children are, and that she doesn't even know she's teaching you. So be careful of learning through someone else's example.

What you need to learn is how to live your life: so try and learn from everyone and everywhere. Tell your mum you'd like to learn with other children and grown-ups: tell her you're only boring because there aren't enough whole people in your life for you to enjoy: tell her you like her, but you also like it without her (if she won't listen, prove it to her): tell her pots and spoons are less important than the way you learn about living; and some things you'll learn better without her, and with others. Tell her part of Women's Liberation is getting men to take more part in caring for children and standing by while they learn: part of it is getting women to accept and enjoy that they aren't completely indispensable to their children even in the first five years.

Tell her you're not going to learn the nuclear family: tell her women's lib is people's lib; it's new ways of making our lives if we have the strength and courage. Tell her you have the strength and courage; tell her she has too, if she'll learn to trust herself, and trust you to learn by exploring the world as you need and are able to, with the help of anyone there is. Tell her the two year olds won't be liberated unless women and men work on it now, while they care for you.

Tell her, "Right on Mum: we need you to change the world."

Janet Gooch

Dear Shrew,

We have been corresponding for 1½ yrs. now and would really appreciate it if you would print our blurb in your newsletter or just "All Women's Library, 2325 Oak, Berkeley, Ca. 94708. Send self-addressed envelope and International Reply coupon for info." This would mean a lot to us as it would make the library available to many more women.

Laura Muria  
for WHRC

A research, lending, corresponding, and selling library of women's literature: books, periodicals, pamphlets, bibliographies, articles, clippings, tapes, and pictures. Topics include women in countries, in women's groups, specific women, roles, subjects, women in history, action projects, specific men's statements on women. Work done by women using it. A running catalogue including addresses to order materials is available at cost to other groups to avoid having to start from scratch. (For \$1, a bibliography of items in our files with addresses (as of July 1969) for ordering the material; for \$5, a packet of action project ideas, and periodical, paper, book and book review bibliographies (as of Sept. 1969) of WL interest; for \$2, addenda to bibliography to Jan. 1970; for \$4, addenda to bibliography to Aug. 1970). A synopsis of women in world history is HERSTORY available for \$1 including poster and postage. A paper on the suffrage movement in Western Europe is 15¢ plus stamp, Redstockings Manifestos East and West likewise. A SPAZM newsletter of women's news, April to December 1969 (personal statements, news events, reviews, etc.) is available: 30 issues for \$15 to individuals, \$20 to institutions. (Tax deductible)

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After reading the last few issues of Shrew, we feel that the magazine should rethink its purpose, its audience, and its general content. After a group discussion, we decided that there was a need for more contact within the movement and outside the movement.

- 1) Letters printed every week exchanging views from all groups, news about groups, own campaigns.
- 2) Shrew should be more informative about our aims. We don't have enough about the 4 campaigns. What is the Workshop? What has been done? What is being done?
- 3) We feel that the constant use of long words, e.g. misogynist, is off-putting. Not everyone is prepared to use the dictionary every time she reads the Shrew. Generally it is too intellectual e.g. the theme of confrontation is far too intellectual for most women.
- 4) The Shrew collective should be more positive.

To sum up our points - recently I sold a copy of Shrew to an interested male friend. After reading it from cover to cover he commented that it had told him nothing about the movement, its aims or its achievements. He felt that it was too exclusive and, in its present form, not adequate for general readership. What is Shrew's purpose?

We feel it should be two-fold. For the movement, and, the general public.

Sue Murdoch  
Wandsworth Group

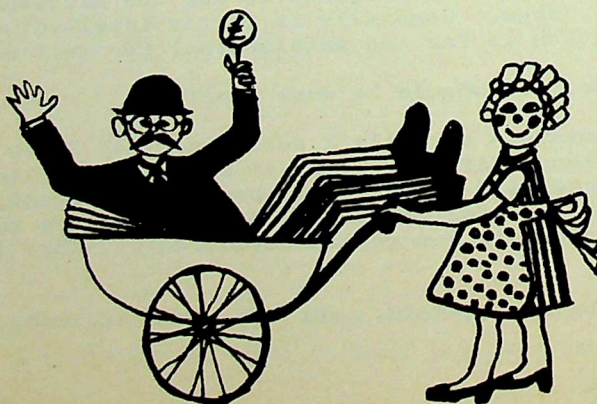
## Lets stop TALKING shop

We never wanted a central authority organisation. We've always wanted participation by everyone, for everyone. Everyone learn, everyone talk, everyone listen, everyone work. Equality amongst women. We've had five different offices in two years, and now have to find the sixth one. Who finds it? Who moves it? Who works it? The same few people. They struggle, sweat and break down under the strain and get attacked for their trouble-organisation-minded power maniacs. They are not trusted. One central organisation even if it were just for London which it isn't at present, is unworkable. Telephone ringing every minute, hundreds of letters piled up waiting to be answered, authoritative money-laden demands from the media, loud cries for help from women who are desperate, constant financial muddle; it goes on and on and mostly there is only one person present to deal with it all. We can't really help anyone. The tears can fall down your face at the thought of a homeless woman with a new baby. But it is no good saying 'join your local group' or contact Shelter. We have said that we are in Women's Liberation and we must be able to help women practically to get into a position where they can start thinking in terms of women's liberation.

Could local offices solve some of the problems? Shops can be rented for around £10 a week in deprived areas. They usually have accomodation behind or above them. If several groups combined in one area it should be possible to staff a shop and pay for it. Four groups together - minimum 40 people - 5s each a week. That would be the rent at least. The accomodation could be used for women in desperate situations, at least, temporarily. With a shop in the area, we would have more of a chance of finding other accomodation for women who had nowhere to go. Local nursery school facilities would be easier to start and lists of doctors who are sympathetic to women's problems can be kept. A much more meaningful feeling of a community could be built up with a shop as its focus.

We are so used to going into shops! We could try and get away from the cosy atmosphere of each other's living rooms and make more definite attempts to reach out to other women.

Anyone in South London interested in this idea please contact Peckham Group.



ST. ALBANS (Mond.)  
Sue Rogers,  
93 Dalton Street,  
St. Albans.  
S.A. 50910

SOUTHGATE (Mon.)  
Pat Nicholas,  
27 Greenway,  
Southgate,  
N.14. 886-0759

STREATHAM (Thurs.)  
Sabina Roberts,  
83 Leigham Court Road,  
S.W.16. 674-6984.

TUFNELL PARK (Tues.)  
Wisty Hoyland,  
6 Southcote Road,  
N.19 485-2868.

W.11 (?)  
Judith Kalentzis,  
7a Clarendon Road,  
London, W.11. 229-4073.

WANDSWORTH (Thurs.)  
Eileen Jarvis,  
1a Herondale Ave.,  
S.W.18. 870-0937.

WEST HAMPSTEAD (Wed.)  
Mrs. Johnson-Laird,  
30 Solent Road,  
N.W.6. 794-5731.

#### SPECIAL STUDY GROUPS

FAMILY STUDY GROUP (Thurs.)  
Ursula Bachtold,  
9a Porchester Court,  
Porchester Gardens,  
W.2. 229-5988.

LITERATURE STUDY GROUP (Tues.)  
Hazelanne Lewis,  
15a Christchurch Hill,  
N.W.3. 794-4601.

STREET THEATRE  
Dinah Brooke,  
5 Seaford Court,  
222 Great Portland Street,  
W.1. 387-2054.

## urgent

We desperately need more leafleters for the Night Cleaners Action Campaign. During the next few weeks we are making a concentrated effort to get enough members to form a branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union. If you can walk, talk, and give up at least one evening a week between about 9.00p.m. and 11.00p.m. then you can help.

If you want to join the union contact:  
May Hobbs, or Jean Wright,  
13, Middle Lane, 144, Eastferry  
London, N.8 Rd.  
01-348 2817 Millwall, E.14

If you want to join the leafleters contact:  
Liz & Lucy,  
58, Butterfields,  
Walthamstowe, E.17  
01-521-2554

The Shrew Collective is made up from a group of 7 representatives who have committed themselves to helping with the production of Shrew. Anyone who is interested and prepared to learn about the way Shrew functions is welcome to come along to our next meeting on Sunday June 6th at 7.00pm in the office. For further information, contact:  
Jenny Peel 01-340-5004

#### Riddle.

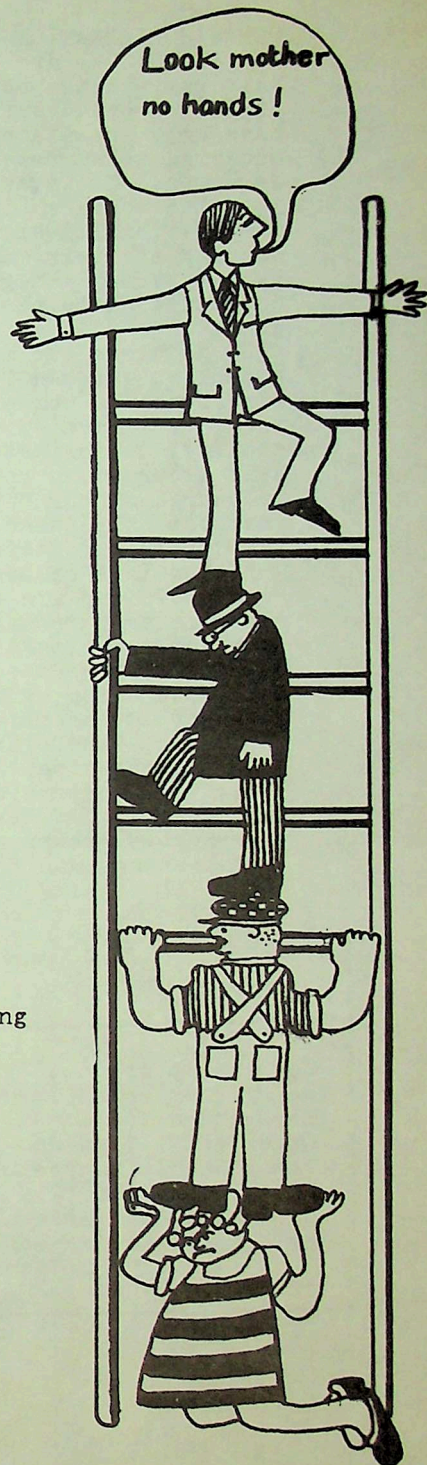
A man and his son are driving along.  
They have a bad accident.  
The boy is taken to hospital.  
The surgeon comes out from the operating theatre and says:  
- "Oh my God it's my son."

MEDIA GROUP  
Gillian Ronson,  
23 Baalbeck Street,  
N.5.

Surgeon is a woman

Girl to sister:

- "Did you see that lady in the park? She had huge DADDY bosoms!"



WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP believes that women in our society are oppressed. We are economically oppressed: in jobs we do full work for half pay, in the home we do unpaid work full time. We are commercially exploited by advertisements, television and press; legally we often have only the status of children. We are brought up to feel inadequate, educated to narrower horizons than men. This is our specific oppression as women. It is as women that we are, therefore, organizing.

The Women's Liberation Workshop questions women's role and redefines the possibilities. It seeks to bring women to a full awareness of the meaning of their inferior status and to devise methods to change it. In society women and girls relate primarily to men; any organization duplicates this pattern: the men lead and dominate, the women follow and submit.

We close our meetings to men to break through this pattern, to establish our own leaderless groups and to meet each other over our common experience as women. If we admitted men there would be a tendency for them, by virtue of their experience, vested interests, and status in society, to dominate the organization. We want eventually to be, and to help other women to be, in charge of our own lives; therefore, we must be in charge of our own movement, directly, not by remote control. This means that not only those with experience in politics, but all, must learn to take their own decisions, both political and personal.

For this reason, groups small enough for all to take part in discussion and decisions are the basic units of our movement. We feel that the small group makes personal commitment a possibility and a necessity and that it provides understanding and solidarity. Each small group is autonomous, holding different positions and engaging in different types of activity. As a federation of a number of different groups, Women's Liberation Workshop is essentially heterogeneous, incorporating within it a wide range of opinions and plans for action.

The magazine, SHREW, is produced by a different group each month. Thus, to a certain extent, it reflects the preoccupations of the group producing it. W.L.W. meets monthly, the small groups weekly. We come together as groups and individuals to further our part in the struggle for social change and the transformation of society.

SUBSCRIBE TO SHREW

Regular Subscription  
(until the end of the year)..50p

Sustaining Subscription  
(obtain Shrew and help finance its production).....£2

Annual contribution to running of Workshop.....£1

Name.....

W.L. group.....

Address.....

.....

Phone no.....

Please make all cheques or postal orders payable to:  
Women's Liberation Workshop  
12/13 Little Newport Street,  
London, W.C.2.

How sad it is to be a woman!  
Nothing on earth is held so cheap.  
Boys stand leaning at the door.  
Like Gods fallen out of Heaven.  
Their hearts brave the four oceans,  
The wind and dust of a thousand miles.  
No one is glad when a girl is born:  
By her the family set no store.  
Fu Hsuan.

Printed by: Laurence Ray  
1-3 Orchard Lane  
Stewkley  
Leighton Buzzard  
Bedfordshire



*sisterhood*

# **SISTERS**

7½ p  
vol. 3  
no. 6  
july 71

**womens liberation workshop**



WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP

12-13 Little Newport Street,  
London W.C.2

01.734.9541 (Wed. & Thurs.)

ARCEWAY Wed.

Heather Hopkins,  
19 Gresley Road,  
N.19. 272.3158

CHISWICK Wed.

Margaret Fox,  
65 Otterburn Gardens,  
Isleworth. 560.0599

FULHAM-CHELSEA

Jane Caplin,  
19 Novello Road,  
S.W.6 731.1145

ARSENAL Tues.

Hermione Harris,  
80 Highbury Hill,  
N.5. 359.0842

CLAPHAM Wed.

Helena Colombe,  
18 MacAuley Court,  
MacAuley Road,  
S.W.4. 622.8071

GOSPEL OAK Thurs.

Val Charlton,  
3 Rona Road,  
N.W.3. 267.1988

BATTERSEA Thurs.

Di Macklin,  
38 Albert Place  
Mansions,  
S.W.11. 720.4462

CROYDON

Jo Clinton,  
25 Oswald,  
Courtwood Lane,  
Croydon CRO 9HA  
657.1180

HAMPSTEAD Tues.

Frances Robinson,  
45a Hampstead High Street,  
N.W.3. 485.6113

BELSIZE LANE Mon.

Audrey Battersby,  
83 Belsize Lane,  
N.W.3. 772.2784

DARTMOUTH PARK

Susan Jones,  
64 Dartmouth Park Rd.  
N.W.5

HAVERSTOCK HILL Thurs.

Monica Foot,  
39 Gondar Gardens,  
N.W.6. 794.6908

BLACKHEATH

Rosemary Hales,  
17 Hassendean Road,  
S.E.3. 858.3604

EALING Wed.

Debby Gregory,  
148A Darwin Road,  
Ealing W.5. 568.0457

HEATH MANSIONS Wed.

June Montgomery,  
3 Hampstead Mansions,  
Hampstead Grove,  
N.W.3. 435.5687

BROMLEY, Kent.

Catherine or  
Lorraine Hodges,  
7, Celtic Avenue,  
Bromley, Kent.  
460.4816

EAST LONDON Tues.

Christine & Lesley,  
12 Brockfield Road,  
Hackney Wick 985.9451

HIGHBURY Wed.

Janet Ree,  
2a Southby Road,  
N.5. 226.1681

CHALK FARM Mon.

Sheila Robbin,  
1 Tasker Road,  
Flat 8,  
N.W.3. 485.9871

FORTRESS GREEN Tues.

Beatrix Tudor-Hart,  
72 Fortress Green,  
N.2. 883.3445

HOLLOWAY

Aison Fell,  
42 Farmend Road,  
N.19. 272.1558

Continued inside back

# **Sisterhood is ....**

Sisterhood becomes possible when, at last, we become aware of ourselves as women in common plight with other women. It is, for the individual, a consciousness of her situation vis a vis men and society.

However it seems to us that Sisterhood really only exists when the individual goes out and relates to and acts with other women in the light of this consciousness. We identify with other women in terms of our common oppression and servitude and we have a solidarity between us born from this.

In our discussions, in our minute examination of how we see ourselves and how we really feel towards our sisters, and towards men, is formed a bond of communication and understanding. This is the confidence of Sisterhood, which is constantly confirmed through our action in the workshops.

Our solidarity is that of any selfconscious group distinguished by its lack of rights and its denial by the rest of society. When we deny the stereotypes of beauty, of social roles and work, of aims and ideals which are traditionally apportioned to the female. When we burn our bras because we deny that the size and shape of our breasts has any intrinsic relation to us as people, then we act in solidarity and draw from it strength and support. We no longer stand alone. We are not peculiar, society is.

Sisterhood is an attempt at redefining our relations with each other. Instead of seeing women in terms of stereotypes and therefore denying them their true nature we learn to see women and act towards them as full personalities. Learning ourselves to see and treat women as the equals of men. To have commitments to women friends in the same way that we so readily have commitments to men friends (lovers or otherwise). Sisterhood works to overcome woman's most tragic alienation, her alienation from and rejection of other women. Men divide women from each other. As lover, husband, and father to her children, a man is central to a woman's life while her own sex is peripheral, incidental.

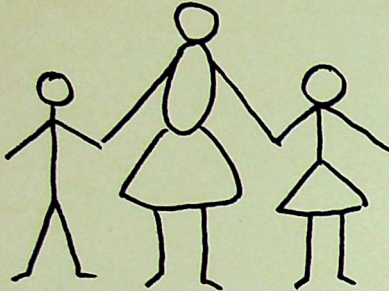
On this we base the sexual exclusiveness of our workshops and this is why Sisterhood has such importance for women's liberation. We need to be liberated not only from men and their domination of our environment but also to be liberated in relation to other women. Sisterhood is a way of relating to other people as they present themselves to us, not in terms of our or society's expectations and needs. We hope this is possible at least with other women, with whom we have common experiences and common cause.

Sisterhood can never be an alternative way of life. It is not a solution for our present situation but rather it is a framework in which we can relate to others and through which we can become liberated.

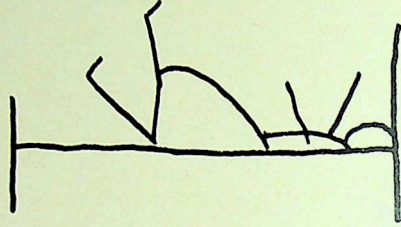


"The man's desire is for the woman; but the woman's desire is rarely other than for the desire of the man."  
S T Coleridge 1772-1834

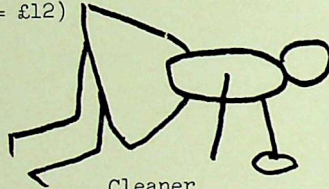
# A Woman's Worth



Childminder/Teacher  
50p per hour  
(24hrs per day = £12)



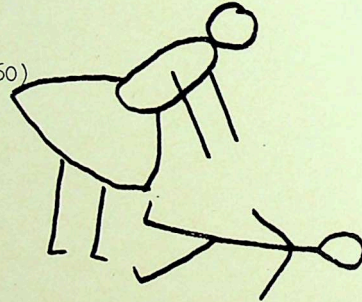
Lover  
Prostitute's wages - £5 per hour  
(1hr per day = £5)



Cleaner  
40p per hour  
(4hrs per day = £1.60)



Cook  
40p per hour  
hrs per day = £1.20)



Nurse  
25p per hour  
( $\frac{1}{2}$ hr per day = 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ p)

Per day £19.92 $\frac{1}{2}$

Per week £139.47 $\frac{1}{2}$

Shirley

## On a tired housewife

Here lies a poor woman who was always tired,  
She lived in a house where help wasn't hired.  
Her last words on earth were; Dear friends, I am going  
To where there's no cooking, or washing, or sewing.  
For everything there is exact to my wishes,  
For where they don't eat there's no washing of dishes.  
I'll be where loud anthems will always be ringing  
But having no voice I'll be quit of the singing.  
Don't mourn for me now, don't mourn for me never,  
I am going to do nothing for ever and ever.

Anon.

# **jailhouse rock**

3

At several recent W.L. meetings, the topic of women in prison has been brought up in various contexts. This has reminded me of when I was in prison, and has stimulated me to think again about what that experience meant.

Part of my response to and evaluation of that experience is attached to specific features of the situation; i.e., I was arrested 6 years ago in California during a civil rights demonstration, spent 3 days and nights in a modern women's prison, and eventually had charges against me dismissed. Part of my experience, though, seems relevant to women everywhere. I have been thinking about it especially in terms of sisterhood and would like to share my thoughts.

Forty-two women were arrested together and were initially kept together in a large dormitory-style room. During this time we were kept completely isolated from the "regular" prisoners. Morale was high, and we had almost complete solidarity with respect to "them" - the prison guards, officials, and U.S. Marshalls.

Solidarity, but not sisterhood. We didn't even have an articulated concept of sisterhood, had no consciousness of being women together, as opposed to civil rights workers together.

Our behavior toward each other confirmed our lack of awareness. Hierarchical factions soon developed, based on length of time involved in "the struggle", number of previous arrests, and whether or not one had been in the South. Personal, individual differences were evaluated only in terms of commitment, or lack of it, to the movement, as judged by the members of each faction. Only the urgent, continuing need for solidarity kept us together at all.

Adding greatly to the general stress was the complete uncertainty of our position. Our questions were met only with stares, glares, or a barked, "Just shut up and do as you're told."

On the second day we were dispersed, marched up and down endless silent corridors, and taken to the cellblocks to be integrated into the regular prison structure. Just 1 or 2 of "us" in each cellblock of about a dozen prisoners. My cellblock contained a couple of prostitutes, some petty thieves, a check forger, some dope pushers, a smuggler, and a murderer. (Conversation: "What are you in for?" "A civil rights demonstration. What about you?" "Murder." "Oh...")

In retrospect, I find it chillingly fascinating to see how the prison authorities acted consistently to try and prevent the development of sisterhood, in order to make the convicts docile and manageable, and ultimately to get them to identify with the authorities' goals. This is accomplished in a general atmosphere of depersonalization and alienation, in which individuality and personality are made subordinate to role functions. The only thing any guard ever said to me beside, "Shut up and do as you're told" was "You're no different from anyone else." Likewise, since every guard said and did exactly what every other one said and did, I failed utterly to distinguish between them. Guards were known among prisoners simply as "the Keys" (as in, "Watch out, here comes the Keys!").

Life in the cellblocks is almost completely public. You can only shit in peace if everyone agrees not to watch you (normally tacitly agreed on). I was made aware immediately that transgression of the rules brings nearly unredeemed misery.

The principle of collective punishment is rigidly enforced. This means that if anyone in the cellblock is caught breaking a prison rule, everyone in that cellblock is punished. It was made quite clear to me that the prisoners helped enforce the rules in so far as this protected them. Both the authorities and the prisoners stood vigilant against the development of individualistic, possibly dangerous behavior.

Since the prisoners normally had no means of expressing the hostility they felt toward other people and institutions, they necessarily turned it on each other. This had to be confined to verbal abuse, a real fight being too risky. The level of tension and barely suppressed violence was always extremely high.

Outside the cellblock, the general rule is silence. After line-up and inspection, the women are marched by cellblock down corridors to the dining room. Silence in the corridors, except for shuffling feet and guards growling, "Shut up, You." Silence in the diningroom except for clinking cups and guards growling, "Shut up, You."

Of course there was also solidarity between prisoners, against the authorities. Collective punishment induces people to cover for each other. There is a certain amount of affectionate, defiant camaraderie, as long as behavior remains clearly within the limits of predictability. Again, solidarity but not sisterhood.

A word about the authorities. All the real power in this prison belongs to men. Men wrote and passed the laws that labeled certain behaviors criminal. Men tried, prosecuted, defended, and sentenced these women. Men made the prison rules and were ultimately responsible for everything that happened within its walls. Everything this prison stands for and the context in which it operates is a function of a male-defined and male-determined society.

Women are used as representatives and agents of the repressive, male-dominant prison system. They are the visible authority symbols, the guards, the matrons, the administrators. Women are made to be the immediate oppressors of other women. They are locked into a system which negates the individuality of all women.

Sisterhood means refusing to identify with the oppressors. It means refusing to aid in the exploitation of women for the benefit of our economic and cultural oppressors. It means creating a positive system, based on values which we develop ourselves. Sisterhood ultimately means tearing down all our prison walls.

*Debby*

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## M Y V I E W O N T H E A I M S O F T H E L O C A L G R O U P

The Movement, for its survival, relies heavily if not solely on the small local group and it is for this reason that the local group should be aware of its functions both locally and nationally. I mention below some major points that I think essential for the survival and continuance of our Sisterhood.

In order to become an effective small group it is necessary to relate to and trust one another as a group. To attain this closeness as a group we can talk together at weekly meetings on a personal level but due to the lack of time at these meetings it may become necessary to spend a longer period of time together in order that everyone can get a chance to discuss their problems and air their views on different subjects - perhaps a weekend away. Once this close knit friendship has been attained we should have the basis of an effective group.

The workable group being established, an important aim of the group is to become aware of the local problems in the fields of Family Planning, Play schools, Nurseries etc. If there is a lack in any one or all of these essential social services the group should endeavour to do all it can to rectify the situation. As I see it, this can be done in one or two ways: through the local press, and in this way focusing the attention of the local community on the present state of amenities in these fields: or directly through the local council. The latter to my mind, is the most effective, as in the hands of the councillor lies the power to institute social services of this nature.

Support of the Workshop is another important function of the group because only by attending office collectives and one-day Workshops can the local group help in making major policy decisions. It is therefore in the interest of as many members as possible of the Sisterhood to participate and thereafter report back to those members in their group who were unable to attend.

In order to give the Workshop the financial backing it so badly needs to make it really effective I am personally firmly convinced that yearly subscriptions should be compulsory after a member has been with the Movement some two months. Also, group donations should be widely encouraged.

The last point I should like to raise and probably one of the most important is the awareness of the group about national policies affecting the status of women and whether there is any likelihood of the achievement of a better standing in the community, such as with the Anti-Discrimination Bill - these national issues should be given wholehearted support by all.

To conclude, in my opinion, if all groups in our Sisterhood throughout the country would participate to the best of their ability in all issues local and national we would be a force with which to be reckoned.

Diana ..

## our younger sisters

Sisterhood is a very important feeling in the Women's Liberation movement. I was interested to find out the views of young girls who are not yet fully conscious of discrimination against women, so I asked six fourteen year old grammar school girls for their ideas of sisterhood. This concept was rather difficult for them, so I changed the theme to "all girls together". All six of them believed that a girl should have lots of other girl friends. One thought a special friend was very important, but another thought girl friends should be changed at certain points in life e.g. after leaving school. Only one girl was in favour of all-girls schools as she felt that more work got done. One girl was really opposed to them and a third girl did not agree with females being thrown together, as in dormitories. I also asked them what they wanted to do when they left school. All but one wanted to get married eventually and the girl who did not "believe in marriage" qualified it with "at least not until about thirty." Four of the other girls wanted to get married late and they all wanted to have a career first, although only one girl knew what she wanted to be - a doctor. This same girl also thought she would carry on her career after marriage, but the others were unsure about this.

We must remember that these girls all have a similar standard of education. It would be interesting to conduct similar interviews in a girls' secondary modern school, a co educational school and an all-boys school.

Shirley

## 6 **Boarding school blues**

I was a boarder for eight years in a very middle class girls' high school. Looking back, it seems that, for an institution run by and for females, there was very little sisterhood. Perhaps this was because, especially the boarders, we lived in a very close society almost totally divorced from the outside world and its pressures. Also our daily life was so regimented that very little thinking was required from us, in fact everything was geared to leave us free to concentrate on work.

There were spasms of sisterhood. The 'matey' discussions after lights during which we discussed the mysteries of sex, other girls, the latest scandals and our grievances. This carried on throughout the years and the subjects seldom varied.

If another girl or group of girls was thought of as being unfairly 'got at' by an older girl or member of staff, a solidarity front would spring to life, but never for long, our attention was easily diverted. Around the ages of thirteen and fourteen there were many cases of post-puberty lesbianism - crushes on much older girls and staff and very close relationships between contemporaries. These relationships were actively discouraged by the staff, which was foolish as these great loves were usually short lived. On what or whom did they think confused teenage emotions could be spent? We only had each other: boys were forbidden, even to look at during church, the scrapbooks of pop idols were frowned upon, and mail with unfamiliar postmarks was withheld to be opened before the housemistress and heaven help you if it was from an unrelated male! Sisterhood came in very small doses, a boarding house of about thirty girls would fall into five or six groups plus a few individualists. There were seven in our group, we thought we were magnificent. We always went out on weekend walks together, usually because one of us had the fags or had arranged to meet the boys. We had a penfriend group with ratings on an aircraft carrier - we stuck together to flout the rules. Obviously, this group was constantly under pressure from the staff in an attempt to divide us. I am now in touch with only one of the girls, and then only occasionally. The ratio of boarders to day girls was 1:3 and, especially when we were younger, we ganged up on each other. Boarders were considered snobs, probably because their families were doling out more money on their daughters' behalf. This ended when it was realised how useful daygirls could be as postboxes, food suppliers, excuses for weekends out, and that there was really no difference between us.

Amongst the boarders themselves there was friction as a contemporary was made a dormitory head or house prefect and attained superiority. On reflection, perhaps there was sisterhood, but where it mushroomed authority saw it as a threat and it was firmly squashed; thus even our small society performed its role - divide and rule.

Sally

## **The Consumer Con - Game**

It is obvious that women are doubly exploited by the advertising media. First as the consumer object, we are told we can make ourselves smell look feel be more beautiful if we buy certain products. Secondly as sexual objects who are selling the products - For very many girls the pinnacle of feminine achievement rests in becoming a model - a crying talking, sleeping, walking, living doll - commercialisms' meccano - toy woman - see how perfectly all her parts slot together - eyes by Revlon - lips by Quant - hair by Sassoon - expression possibly by courtesy of Mr. David (I feel that a woman should always be learning from a man) Bailey.

"New Model Agency wants to see girls with pretty faces and beautiful bodies". We went along to talk to two girls who had answered the ad successfully, to find out how women who are models relate to each other and women outside modelling. We met Sarah and Chrissy who have been models for about a year.

Chrissy emphasizes that she is in modelling strictly for the money and to avoid the infinitely worse fate of joining the "skirt and courtelle sweater brigade" in the city's offices. She has other aspirations and specifically towards working for the magazine Oz. She does not specify in what capacity and I am reminded that atleast one thing which the cock-rock underground press has in common with its overground manifestations is a singular dearth of female writers - unless she means posing for the cover of Oz. She tells us we must not be misled by propaganda about the underground press being anti-capitalist. Sarah who sings a little and dances a little feels that most girls, ideally want modelling to be a stepping stone to a career on the stage or in films. Both girls recognize that modelling is a short-lived career. 'Modelling is for young and beautiful girls.' There are approximately 28,000 girls in London trying to become successful models. The bread and butter of the models existence is a daily struggle to sell her looks to demanding and fickle customers and this is intrinsically a very competitive business. "A models' life is over at about 25." The girls liked to stress the creative aspects of a models job they point to the fact of the 'teamwork' and sympathetic interaction' required of the model and photographer in order to achieve the finished product. No longer the aloof expressionless clothes peg of the 50's the model girl is not allowed to obtrude upon the product being sold. rather as Chrissy pointed out - "the model and product merge" - indeed they are both goods for sale. Sarah described how at each audition there will be at least five or six models for whom one is chosen "perhaps because her nose is uptilted to the right degree or her lips are just thick enough - it is not in the least bit glamorous. . . it's a cattle market really. You've got a better chance of making it if your rich. . . you've got to supply your own clothes and wigs for some shots and if you can afford to take a taxi to an audition you'll look better than someone who is taking the tube." One of them speaks of the exploitation of the girls who do 'glamour work.' She describes one outfit which purveys its wares all over Europe and Australia and yet pays the girls a compararively meagre 2-4 gns. an hour. These girls are used at most two or three times because the customer gets tired or seeing the same 'face' but as one of our models comments it may be to prevent the girl getting wise to the economics of the transaction. Both girls finally insisted that every woman wants to be physically beautiful, no matter what she says she really wants that. Elyse x BRIDGET

"This I set down as a positive truth. A woman with fair opportunities and without a positive hump, may marry whom she likes."  
 VANITY FAIR  
 Wm Thackeray 1811-1863

THE UNBEATABLE MADONNA / WHORE COMBINATION \_\_\_\_\_

Everything in our society today contrives to both restrict and fragment womans' personality. Everywhere she is encouraged to believe herself personally inadequate and incomplete. She is actively discouraged from trying to achieve the wholeness of personality which was at some point in history or pre-history shattered and destroyed. This destruction whatever its origin (possibly in early mans' attempts to harness and control her 'magic' as life creator/bearer) proved a necessary factor in the development of property-based inheritance-based society which required womans' thralldom physical and mental within the limits of the family and home. The conventional wisdom in its efforts to cling to past glories and present privileges sees fit to continue to artificially confine female life to the sexual-reproductive, denying woman this personal completeness. It is man who is regarded as fully human and the sphere of the spirit or intellect which is seen as exclusively pertaining to the human species is simultaneously seen as peculiar to him. Thus woman is essentially an unwelcome intruder in this domain.

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The Madonna/Whore combination succinctly expresses the range of female life experience in accordance with the Gospel of Freud et al. It especially maintains the triad of passivity, masochism and narcissism which Freud defined as the organic traits of the female personality. Despite their superficial polarity the images evoked have an essential unity in a single source which is the almost exclusively sexual definition of woman in this society.

Given this society's palpable need to fragment the personalities of both its men and women, for example through the division of labour, it remains that the process of fragmentation strikes with differential force and emphasis and the insecurity engendered by woman's status as incomplete male makes her within her limited role more disintegrated and alienated than the male and renders her specifically vulnerable to the type of commercial practices which exploit and batter upon insecurity and a sense of inadequacy. Every detail of her existence is dissected, probed and inspected for commercial possibilities by the 'consumer society' embodied in the telly ad-men neurotically concerned about 'understain', the fashion cultures and varieties of sexploiters. A 'thing of shreds and patches' fragmented woman is driven to become a mere composite of the varied and often contradictory images created by the insatiable greed of the money-makers. Freud spoke reprovingly of woman's innate narcissism whilst ignoring the very ample evidence of personal vanity amongst men. (Possibly though if the remaining components of female 'nature' were to be construed as passivity and masochism a little light relief was much needed!) Like Freud the market has until recently remained in a state of innocent unawareness of the seething potential for male frivolity.

If the fragmentation of free woman practiced in our society cuts her up into wigs, wombs and washing powder - imposes upon her a limited sphere of activity - how can we expect this fragmented fragment to be capable of leading a fulfilled life or of participating in political existence.

BROGEE

## to be or not to be?

Like most women we come up against the idiosyncracies of the NHS and the prejudices of particular doctors. Here are the experiences of a Sister who tried to get assistance.

Five years ago, in the dark terrible years before the Abortion Act, I tried to obtain a termination. The whole procedure was purposefully made humiliating by the psychiatrist and unsuccessful. (Great words of thanks to the GP who looked after me during the ensuing months.) The hospital was not aware I was unmarried, and I got the same casual treatment as other mums.

Three years later aged 24, still single, liking sex and men, but with ecology in mind I went again to my GP (the sympathetic lady of the group) to try to get sterilised. I was referred by the doctor for a minor gynae op. and on the note to the specialist was written "sterilisation". The specialist ignored this part of the note, and when reminded of it was very abusive. The other doctor at the hospital was more sympathetic, but he hid behind the specialist/surgeon's skirts. Afterward, I approached the FPA. After a long time-wasting questionnaire the answer was "No - they had no-one to whom they could refer women for sterilisation, this had to be done through your own doctor".

Going back to the doctor, she said she did not know whom else she could refer me to (that is after already having approached another doctor in her absence who turned out to be Irish RC).

To add further fuel to the fire she informed me quite gaily that abortions under the NHS were as difficult as before the new Act, as she could only refer people to the local hospital which had little bed space and two not very sympathetic gynae specialists. No easy way to abort if things go wrong, and no sterilisation - but why should I remain under medication for the rest of my fertile life?.

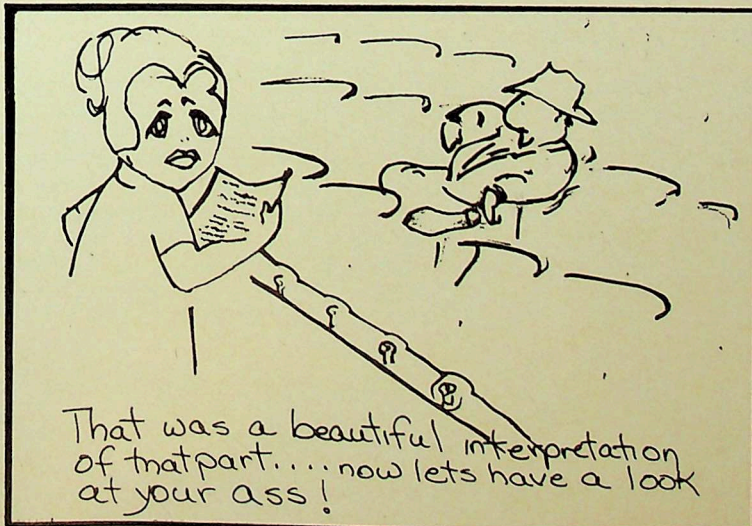
When a woman has a small salary, and has to pay proportionately more for accommodation, the NHS is in a position to dictate to all who have not the money to go elsewhere. The members of the GMC and Hospital Management Committees are predominantly male. Few women become consultants, therefore we have no-one to help us. We Sisters must fight for the right to control our own bodies.

## The Broadway Boogie-Woogie

From a very early age I believed that the glamour of performing on the stage and screen was the most wonderful thing a girl could have. At 10 I pleaded with my parents to send me to Drama School and they consented to a Saturday class. Oddly enough there were no little boys of my age with similar aspirations, and I can remember how I felt towards the other girls in my class... jealousy, fear, sometimes hatred if someone would get more attention from the man teacher. We tried to be more cute than one another and vied for the opportunity of sitting on his lap. For the next 12 years I felt those same hostile feelings toward any girl or woman with a similar ambition to myself.

Throughout school and at university, where I did a degree in Drama, there were masses of women in competition. (Fewer men wanted to act and there were more parts for those who did.) Feeling the need for female friends, I went outside the realms of aspiring actresses for the race continued and in order to attract the attention of the men directors you had to be one step ahead of your sister.

When I decided to try my luck in New York I was warned that it would be an incredible struggle for a woman to get a 'break' unless you were the most beautiful, most persevering, and most talented in that order. Sitting in an agents office with all the other 'meat around me is a horrible memory - the tenseness that filled the air as we eyed each other up and down comparing our faces and vital statistics. There seemed to be something available if you were willing to give something in return. I was offered a small TV part providing I gave the producer a 'blow job' - when I objected I was told 'You're still a little girl, it doesn't entail getting emotionally involved.' Another agency promised to take me on if I assured them that I wanted to act so badly I would do anything he required of me, ie. sleeping with anyone who would be a good contact. When, at last, I got my first part with a touring company I nearly lost it for refusing to pose for some pornographic publicity pictures which had nothing to do with the play.



I cannot say that these humiliating events happen to all who want to get work in theatre. Perhaps I wasn't talented enough to have made much impression on producers with integrity who were doing good work and forced to exist in a world of Grade B entertainment. But I think I can say that throughout all of the profit-making theatre it helps for a woman to be physically desirable and make herself physically available, and the competition among women is so great that few bonds are created with sister actors. The business of type-casting has always been more obvious with women than men. One is either innocent, glamorous, or funny and it most difficult to get work outside your age and type range.

When I became involved in experimental theatre I saw that there was HOPE - working in a company where roles and types were not defined. I might play women-men-children-old people-animals-inanimate objects. We all had a share in writing, directing, producing. The word competition didn't exist and our energy could be directed to the work itself rather than in petty rivalries. It was my first experience of working with women in a warm and creative way. I see the experimental theatre as the alternative, and moreover the concept of women's theatre, if both are not structured in a hierarchical manner as the best way to counteract the drabness of the commercial theatre and as a means of establishing bonds among women in this profession. Ek.

## **games children play**

In W.L. we have made one of our aims the attainment of safe paid 24-hour nurseries. What do we really envisage this to mean?

As a teacher of a class of 5-year olds I know that children are already at that age aware of male/female roles. Facts which I had previously accepted now need questioning. Why do the boys bash each other more readily than the girls? Why are girls less adventurous on climbing apparatus?

When the children are playing they choose their own activities. A little girl said to me, "Girls don't play on the woodwork, do they?" I looked and realised that the girls almost never did, while the boys leapt to the woodwork and hauled lumps of wood and hammered loudly. A girl said to me the other day when I was trying to persuade her to play with the leggo, "Mummy says girls don't play with leggo." Play in the home centre tends to become a game of attack and defend. Usually the girls are inside defending and the boys outside attacking. Sometimes the children dress up and often the boys dress as girls. This sight causes enormous guffaws of laughter from the children and sometimes one or two of the rougher, more aggressive boys will shout, "He's a sissy."

I asked the children today what they wanted to be when they grow up. Of the boys, 2 wanted to be footballers; 2 policemen, so that they could lock people in jail who steal money; 2 soldiers; 1 a cowboy; 1 Jessie James; 1 a barber; 6 airpilots; 1 a farmer/milkman; 4 (West Indian and Indian children) wanted to drive school buses, cars and buses; 1 wanted to work where they kill cows; 1 wanted to work in a library; 1 on a bread round "like my Dad", an adder "like my Dad", "I like my Dad" (he didn't know what his Dad did). Of the girls, 2 wanted to be nurses; 2 bridesmaids; 2 mothers; 5 hairdressers; one wanted to have a sweet shop and 1 wanted to work in the school kitchens.

The choices of the children at this age are obviously very influenced by what their parents do or want to do. This, after all, is where role playing starts. "So having realised that role training is already taking place what are you doing about it?" I asked a friend in W.L. "Well, I make the boys clean up as well as the girls."

What do I do myself? I try to change bits of stories so that the girl isn't the wet who has to sit on her mother's knee on the first day of school while the boy goes off to join in the play.

Sometimes I think, well, what is the use of these little bits I do when the real answer is a more liberated school environment. If only I didn't have to say, "Yes children, you may play but play nicely." Meaning, don't make a noise or paint your friend's face.

Yet A.S. Neil in what appear to be near ideal conditions is able to give children the freedom within his school to develop as people, and still he says that he finds that boys and girls tend to have interests which fit their roles. Boys tinker with bikes, girls choose to sew. This, I think, proves how strong the influence of the larger environment outside the school is. I do however feel that education where children are looked on as people would help enormously to liberate them as adults. Children are often even viewed as part of adults' property. They are often seen as being of value when they have been conditioned into society - by the ruler/ruled relationship of parent/child, teacher/child. It is at this point that the dehumanising process takes place.

In early agricultural and industrial societies children were valued because they worked and so could be said to be property like cars and women in harems, but in present society their services to adults are often more psychological - they are trendy reflections of their parents. They act as an outlet for their parents' creative energy. The child is all his parents dream to be themselves.

Parents are human beings too. Week after week with children round your feet in a small flat being "free" sounds like sheer hell. We can't all afford expensive free-thinking boarding schools for our children so that we can have a little liberty ourselves. So we demand 24-hour nurseries and child care facilities, but let's be quite clear that to make our children the property of the commune or state is to liberate them in no way.

Do we really want our children to go to nurseries or child care centres for even longer periods where they will be treated just as they are being treated in schools now. Where parents have virtually no right of complaint or comeback. Where the children are as unfree as ever and the same patterns continue; where teachers can only be as free as the head will allow; where the head can only be as free as the Education Authority will allow.

Listening to Michael Duane talk, I am given to understand that there is fairly conclusive evidence that most normal children, no matter whether their parents be university lecturers or road diggers, start life with the same intelligence, capacity for mental development. It is mostly through their contact with other human beings in a stimulating environment that their intelligence is developed. Through talk and play in the first few years they will develop or not. The children of non-verbal people will tend to be non-verbal, etc. The school system as it now stands is geared to the middle-class child who comes to school have had constant falk with interested adults, knows how to use a pencil, and will come out of the system with an intellectual training which fits her for future life using that particular skill as an administrator. The children from less intellectual parents will start school at a disadvantage. If they have been stuck in a tall block of flats with little playing space they have had limited opportunities to play. When this child goes into a class of nearly children she will not get the chance to play freely and talk to

adults; so she will tend to remain at a disadvantage until she leaves school to take up unskilled or semi-skilled work. Thus society continues its patterns of ruler/ruled, boss/worker, man/woman, teacher/child, white/black.

I feel that it is vitally important to know just what kind of child care, nurseries and schools we really want.

Womens' liberation = people's liberation = children's liberation =

Women's liberation

Liz.

## ENCOUNTER

A whole year after joining the Workshop I was surprised to find that it was still difficult for me to communicate fully with other women. I had assumed that our common cause would dissolve all the inhibition I often feel with people. Although I made friends in the group, at the meetings there was so much wariness cemented into my psyche that I never felt I was telling the whole truth. As a result of wondering about this I came across references to encounter groups, which explore relationships. I was interested and went along to an introductory meeting.

It was a mixed group of twelve people, mostly young, who congregated in a basement room belonging to "Quaesitor", the organisation which runs the groups. After a preliminary chat we experimented somewhat nervously, first moving round in the room with each other, and looking each other straight in the eye. Then we allowed ourselves to touch, brushing past, touching hands; both these things were interesting because in ordinary life we do the opposite. The leader reminded us simply to accept whatever we were feeling, and stay aware of it. I was feeling embarrassed and tense. After that the leader suggested various exercises. We got together in pairs and contacting the other person 'non-verbally', i.e. by touching and looking instead of talking. We fantasized (like one does about strangers on the Tube, only out loud) about the life and character of our partners. We then exchanged 'feedback' on our reactions to each other. The primary characteristic of these exchanges was the unusual honesty with which we found ourselves capable of responding to others. I found this peculiar honesty exciting, and signed up for a weekly on-going encounter group soon afterwards.

I was unprepared for what I found. The first evening it was like stumbling on a number of people deeply and painfully involved in emotional revelation - the kind of situation everything in my uptight middle-class girl's training taught me to avoid. I noticed instantly that it differed from a normal mixed group in that men did not dominate the talking. The relationship between men and women there seemed to be most unrepresentative of ordinary life. This was partly because 'status' things are not valid in the encounter situation - what you do for a living, etc., is irrelevant.

We began the group by saying as well as we could 'where we were at', i.e., what we felt like now. E.G., "I feel slightly tense, a bit excited, and my left leg is stiff". The talk expanded to include how we felt about each other. I found myself wincing frequently at first at the frankness of exchanges. Often a hidden resentment or a feeling of embarrassment might come out towards someone in the group, or sometimes towards a person who had been in their thoughts at the time. Feelings peeled back like the many skins of an onion until raw emotion was contacted. This emotion, to my astonishment, turned out more often than not to be violent anger, or deeply felt resentment which had been forcibly repressed. Sometimes another group member was the target of these feelings, but sometimes it was a father, a husband, a mother, etc. If the resentment was towards someone in the group then they would probably fight. If it was towards someone not present, then a cushion assumed the identity of the person resented. If talking to cushions sounds daft, I can only say that in the circumstances it doesn't feel it. What becomes immediately of concern is what you really have to say to this person, as opposed to what you do say to them in actual life.

Quite often people reaching an untapped pocket of emotion in themselves were encouraged to let their feelings go, cry, scream or whatever they felt like doing. At

first this was frightening to me; it reminded me of my childhood where whenever I displayed intense emotion I was advised that it was better to control it. After a traumatic event the group rallied round the person who had been upset, giving 'feedback' and supporting them in various ways, by stroking, smiling, being loving.

At last, thanks to another member of the group who let go his aggressive feelings towards me, I got into something and experienced myself digging down past all my own defences to the real truth. I became again a little girl in the playground, being terrorised by larger children. The group leader watched me burst into tears as the 'children' (fellow members of the group, playing parts) rejected me. Then he asked me to choose one 'child' whom I felt most difficulty with, and ask that person to accept me. The person chosen was to turn his back and not turn round until he felt I really meant what I was saying. At first I asked quietly, then harder, then finally, and most difficult for me, I screamed the demand in anger. He turned round. I began to understand the extent to which we smother our feelings in everyday life. Outside the group, conversations seemed stiff and unnatural.

I decided to go to a one-day group for women only, and I had high expectations, feeling that here I would be able to express a great deal. In the event I said practically nothing, and that showed me a lot about the way I relate to other women. In this group it was suddenly as if men didn't exist. Women related gently and cautiously at first, then gradually their strength appeared. Soon the group was in full swing, and the aggressions, sympathies, antagonisms and attractions emerged just as they would have done in any other encounter group. I felt, however, that the atmosphere was even less pretentious than usual.

I'm not saying that this type of group can solve your problems as a woman. It can be of great help however in leading you to realise what it is you really do feel, and by neutralising some of the pain which unresolved conflict leaves nagging within us. An encounter group can either make or break a marriage. It can certainly help it to become more honestly based. Many group leaders specialise in working with couples and unearthing their real difficulties and tensions with one another. What is gained is a new feeling of oneself, a new sincerity, and a sense of being able to take responsibility for oneself whatever happens.

In the women-only group we had to write down a secret each about ourselves on a piece of paper - something we wouldn't normally feel able to tell anyone. Then the papers were folded and tossed into a bowl. Later we each drew a paper 'by lot' and had to try and speak to the group about the secret we had drawn as if it were our own. As I heard my secret read out I experienced the tension and anxiety which this fact myself normally produced in me - and then it suddenly softened. It wasn't so terrible after all! The feeling of community was very real at that moment, as we all had something to lose. The feeling tied in closely for me with the way I have felt at occasional workshop group meetings when I have admitted something new to the group.

I feel what I have learned in encounter will be directly useful to me in any group situation, as well as with individuals. I also realise more now, how difficult it is for a group functioning along everyday lines to operate, without there being continual damage done by suppressed tension, hostility, etc. The only way with these feelings is to deal with them, and we need to learn how. We also need to learn how to be open with strangers who come to our groups for the first time, and how to be a real source of emotional support and strength.

Although I have the ideas and actions of womens' liberation behind me, I still need to be able to relate for myself when dealing with my everyday situation, husband, children, etc. My relationship with my husband deteriorated when I first joined the Workshop. He felt betrayed and could see me as nothing other than a feminist figure-head 'standing' for certain principles. After the encounter experience I find myself being much more honest with him, hiding less behind the abstract support of others who feel like me. E.G., instead of saying in an intellectual way, "It isn't fair that women have to do all the childrearing single-handed" I would now say "I feel resentful that you don't take an equal share." The second way I am expressing directly, personally what I feel, and getting the anger out. It feels more healthy,

and my husband has to take it on a personal level too.

I'm not saying don't change the system. Change it must; but don't let it fuck you up too much meanwhile.

Patricia Lowe, who led the group I went on, would like to start a group for women from W.L. and would like to hear from interested people. Her address is 22 Avenue Rd., London N.W. 8 6BU. Tel: 586-0496.

M.F.

## Sisterhood should be Powerful

Women almost always rely on men to think and decide for them on major issues. We have been taught that men and not women are complete, intelligent human beings. Because of this we have seldom met together to examine our position and to discover ways of changing it. Only women can organise themselves about their own problems, because they know what the problems are and they experience these problems in their lives. In society women play the deadly "passive" role. Once our sisters realise the power that men hold over them they will become active and intent upon solving their problems, working together for liberation.

Sisterhood means welcoming all women. We seldom stop to talk to women we do not actually know, although we may see them every day - when we do the shopping, wait at the bus stop, etc. When women become involved with men they tend to drop their own friends in favour of their men's. Sisterhood is preventing women feeling lonely, trying to contact those who are shut in their homes all day with only young children to talk to. Sisterhood means eliminating competitiveness between women. When men and women meet together the women usually compete against each other for the men's attention e.g. by wearing "sexy" clothes. Women also tend to compete in the fields of housework - for the cleanest home or the newest washing machine. I believe the former type of competition is set for us by men to boost their egos, and the latter by advertisers etc, as one of the primary functions of a woman in a capitalist society is that of consumer. Sisterhood means accepting all women. Personally I find it much easier to accept a "working class" woman who is oppressed both in her job and at home, than a wealthier woman who can afford to pay someone to do her housework and look after her children. But I must remember that we are all products of this society and, whatever our differences, all sisters.

I believe that we must work towards an eventual "fellow" feeling for all human beings. So, my friends, let us join together in sisterhood and lead the way for men to follow us.

Shirley

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9a. Porchester Court,  
Porchester Gardens,  
W.2. 229.5988

#### STREET THEATRE

Dinah Brooke,  
5 Seaford Court,  
222 Great Portland Street,  
W.1. 387.2054

#### LITERATURE STUDY GROUP, Tues.

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N.W.3. 794.4601

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23 Baalbeck Street,  
N.5.

HORNSEY Wed.

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N.8. 348.2857

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Ilford, Essex  
590.5954  
599.7168 (Diana)

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485.7730 / 267.3149  
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MEN'S AWARENESS

c/o Matthew Toby  
328.2858



# WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP

believes that women in our society are oppressed. We are economically oppressed in jobs we do full work for half pay, in the home we do unpaid work full time. We are commercially exploited by advertisements, television and press, legally we often have only the status of children. We are brought up to feel inadequate, educated to narrower horizons than men. This is our specific oppression as women. It is as women that we are, therefore, organizing.

The Women's Liberation Workshop questions women's role and redefines the possibilities. It seeks to bring women to a full awareness of the meaning of their inferior status and to devise methods to change it. In society women and girls relate primarily to men; any organisation duplicates this pattern; the men lead and dominate, the women follow and submit.

We close our meetings to men to break through this pattern, to establish our own leaderless groups and to meet each other over our common experience as women. If we admitted men there would be a tendency for them, by virtue of their experience, vested interests, and status in society, to dominate the organisation. We want eventually to be, and to help other women to be, in charge of our own lives; therefore, we must be in charge of our own movement, directly, not by remote control. This means that not only those with experience in politics, but all, must learn to take their own decision, both political and personal.

For this reason, groups small enough to take part in discussion and decisions are the basic units of our movement. We feel that the small group makes personal commitment a possibility and a necessity and that it provides understanding and solidarity. Each small group is autonomous, holding different positions and engaging in different types of activity. As a federation of a number of different groups, Women's Liberation Workshop is essentially heterogeneous, incorporating within it a wide range of opinions and plans for action.

The magazine, SHREW, is produced by a different group each month. Thus, to a certain extent, it reflects the preoccupations of the group producing it. W.L.W. meets monthly, the small groups weekly. We come together as groups and individuals to further our part in the struggle for social change and the transformation of society.

The Shrew Collective is made up from a group of 12 representatives who have committed themselves to helping with the production of Shrew. Anyone who is interested and prepared to learn about the way Shrew functions is welcome to come along to our next meeting in the office. For further information, contact: Jenny Peel 01-340-5004

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AUGUST '71  
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womens liberation workshop

# editorial

'The positions taken by Women's Liberation groups...tend to be more explosive and one sided than is likely to be acceptable to the majority of women, and their effectiveness is limited in the long run. Extremist militants...tend to attack as the enemy the very groups - in this case men - with which they must ultimately work if they are to achieve a satisfactory result...But though new structures have ultimately to be built not with dynamite but with cement, dynamite has its place for breaking a situation open and clearing the way to build.'

This is how a recent book, otherwise comprehensive, interesting, and sympathetic, saw us.

But we don't attack men as the enemy. Sex roles and women's oppression are caused by a way of thought which has the weight of centuries behind it. To change the way we think, we must learn to relate to each other as women. To do this we have to come closer together without men. The small group organisation of the Workshop is designed to help us to get together to change our perception of our selves and our own roles. Men have their own liberation to achieve and because their current roles and oppression are different from women's they need to attack different things. They need most of all to come together, as women have done, to work out what it is that is oppressing them. Then we can work with them for a civilised way of life, but not until men have recognised that they too need to re-think their roles and the way they act.

But this new way of organising to elevate the individual above the organisation holds out more hope for changing ideas about sex roles than anything the established organisations have to offer. We believe therefore that the Women's Liberation movement has as crucial a role in building the new society as it does in exploding the myths and clearing the way to build.

Political and Economic Planning,  
'Sex, Career and Family,' 1971.

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HAZELANNE, MO, ESTHER, MARY, ELENA, LESLIE  
MARIA, FRANCES.

# home and health



## PARENT'S CHILDREN

"... in the crucially formative period of early childhood it is the character and attitude of the person who spends most of the time with the child which largely determines the basic and special qualities of the child's personality - whether (s)he will turn out optimistic or pessimistic, trusting or suspicious, loving or withdrawn, creative or conventional." Dr. B. Spock in 'A Young Person's Guide to Life and Love'.

Even nowadays our society tends to look at women mainly as mothers: either a woman is a mother, or was a mother, or will be a mother. Those who are not mothers - who never had any children and are incapable of having any - are considered very often as failures "as women". Those who don't want children are regarded either with mild suspicion or their intentions are put in doubt.

Women's maternal function has been put forward as one of the explanations for their oppression. Certainly the bearing of children provides a much used justification of discrimination against women.

"Doesn't seem much point in training a young girl if she is eventually going to have children and leave."

Many people defend that when a woman has small children she should stay at home and look after them, at least if she can afford it. The husband will be the family's breadwinner.

One could argue that it is unfair to give mothers a role that implies that they will have to live in a position of complete economic dependence and great isolation; or to give fathers the entire responsibility of earning a living, refusing them many of the pleasures of caring for the children.

"But it is all for the children's good!"

- We are told.

Is it?

Very often, people who defend this point of view will tell us about an ideal mother always pleasant, relaxed, stimulating, and will compare her very creative influence with the cold atmosphere of, say, a nursery.

They don't mention that there is really very little research done on good day care and they tend to ignore the mothers who are too unhappy, too poor, too tired, too neurotic or just too ignorant to give much to their children.

It was when I had my first child that I became well aware of my particular oppression as a woman. Even in the labour ward a woman loses her identity - she is just called "Mother". But only much later did I see the contradiction of my role; becoming a mother-housewife (after my third child I had eventually to give up my outside work) I was denied many rights but at the same time I was allowed by society nearly dictatorial powers over my children. My children belonged to me, they were my own.

It is true that children in a close family life tend to be regarded as possessions by both parents - not just the mothers. Both parents have great physical power over the children - they may beat their children, even with some cruelty, and only when the aggression is very serious does the case reach the doctor, the hospital, the law, the press. Parents have power over their children's health - they can refuse a treatment, decide on a diet. They decide on how the children should dress, how long their hair should be. They control their religion and their friends.

The mother, although she has less power in the face of the law than the father, is usually the major influence in determining the children's personality, as Dr. Spock points out. The father's influence is less important in the early years,

since he spends little time with the children; but in situations of stress - mental illness, for instance - it can become a very distressing factor in the children's development.

### The Mother

What makes matters worse is that the mother's influence, until the children are five, can be free from any interference from the outside, except in extreme cases. "Ideally" she is a full time mother, at least for some years. This full time mother is also a full time housewife. And, if being a mother can be a most fulfilling experience, being a housewife certainly isn't. Domestic work is dull, repetitive and petty. It is true that the work of most people is equally dull; but at least people who do it are part of a group and have, up to a point, a sense of purpose. A mother-housewife is isolated. Glorified, in words, as Mother, her work is considered a non-work. Cut off from the world, without any adult company for most of the day, submerged by domestic routine she very often becomes as dull as the work she performs. And yet she will have the main task of moulding the character and personality of her children during "the crucially formative period of early childhood". She may teach the children love, hatred, generosity, prejudice, honesty, hypocrisy. She may make a genius out of one of them or she may cripple him for life. Isolated as she is, she will give them a set of values probably not very different from the one she received from her mother. She will most certainly stimulate the children's intellect according to her own intelligence and social background and, therefore, she will be giving them, from an early age, a class to belong to. "So a working class child entering school - itself a middle class institution ... not merely begins with a disadvantage, but arrives with social inequality already built into him ..." (1)

I believe most parents have much to give to their children. Each one of us is unique and has something unique to offer. We are the permanent presence throughout

the years, a source of love and understanding.

We guide and protect our children. But when does guidance and protection become oppression?

For the children's sake there should always be other people who love them, care for them, educate and influence them from a very early age. A variety of influences isn't necessarily confusing - it can be a source of learning and enjoyment. It can give the children the extra security of feeling part of society - not only part of a family unit. The social adjustment of the children later would certainly benefit.

I also believe the future of Women's Lib. will depend in part on the solutions that we might find for the problem of child care. Talking of our own liberation implies talking of a change in society. In a different society the education of children must change. Two of our aims are already Equal Education and Free Nurseries.

Women's Liberation is closely linked to children's upbringing and there are many questions about parenthood that we should ask ourselves. One of them relates to Parent's power.

We should also question if it really makes sense to ask - as is sometimes suggested - for a salary for housewives and mothers who prefer to stay at home and look after their own children. Shouldn't they instead be stimulated into doing some work in child care?

### Reading List:

- "A Young Person's Guide to Life and Love" B.Spock (1971)
- "The Pre-School Years"-W.van der Eyken Penguin (1969)
- "Children's Rights" P.Adams & others Elek Books (1971)
- "Children in Need" -Denney SCM Press Ltd (1966)
- "Children Have Rights" NCCL Papers
- "The Special Child"- B.Furneaux Penguin (1969)



# No belt.

# No bulge.

## MENSTRUATION AND YOU

The following are some of the comments made in a discussion of menstruation with a "cross-section" of both middle class and working class women.

Q. "Why do we menstruate? What happens?"

A. "Its the seed coming down from the ovary, going down and piercing the wall and causing the blood to come down every 28 days."

"During the 21 days beforehand, certain things are going on inside us and some of these release ... oh they're all long words - but I've read about it. There's a lot going on inside us anyway and because of that at a certain time of the month we have a period."

Q. "Where does the blood come from?"

A. "I just take it for granted."  
"It's a natural sort of thing."  
"Maybe I'm thinking of having babies but aren't there hundreds and thousands of these things inside you?"

"What things?"  
"I don't know, they're sort of going on their travels inside you - into your stomach. Ready for release day."

"Doesn't it come from the brain? The egg or something. Not literally from the brain, but doesn't it travel...I always thought..."

Q. "How do you feel while you are having a period?"

A. "My stomach puffs up, my waist goes up about 2". It goes away after so it must be the fullness of the womb."

"I get spotty, it's bad coming out somewhere. Your blood getting rid of the excess through the skin."

"However many times you wash you still don't feel clean."

"My hair gets greasy, I think you get greasy all over. You get hotter, all that blood building up."

"My Mum made me feel like a freak every month."

## About the Pill

"A girl I know took the pill for some time and eventually she was doubled up in pain and had to go to hospital and they found that all that, that should have come away every month had congealed inside her."

"Usually I go for 5 days, but then

(while taking the pill) it was only 2 and I was feeling pains all over me."

"I gave up the pill because after a while you only have one day and you feel this isn't right."

"After 4 years I just didn't feel happy. After so long there must be such a build up you feel that...you don't feel right."

"If you are worried you could use the syringe - in case there's anything left inside you."

"Yes, if you're ultra clean you can douche."

## Comments

Of course there were other comments but the rest of the discussion did suggest them to be revealing of the attitudes of most women towards their bodily functions.

In the Jewish religion and in other Eastern religions, a woman is regarded as 'unclean' during the time of menstruation. It would appear that this feeling of being unclean is just as present in women in England today - and this archetypal image probably affects us all. We all certainly do have symptoms before menstruation, spots do appear, hair does become greasy and our bodies do feel heavier, but these symptoms should not serve to support the fantasy that we are becoming filled with dirt. These sorts of fantasies leave women open to commercial exploitation and to unfounded fears. It is no use Women's Liberation campaigning for free pills if women do not continue to take them because they are so frightened of what they imagine the consequences will be. It is no use expecting women to be unmoved by advertisements persuading them to use vaginal deodorants if it is women's fantasies of their dirty smelly bodies that are being exploited.

Lastly we should question why it is that women are so ignorant of their anatomy and physiology and of the effects the pill has. All the information necessary to correct the sorts of misconceptions evident from the quotes above is constantly appearing in the media. The avoidance of unwanted children is surely motivation enough to read it. Do women in fact really want to know about their bodies? If not, why not? Is it really to preserve that feminine mystique of the naturally creative, life-giving earth-mother?

# No blushes.

# fashion

## PACKAGE DEAL PARIS-STYLE

Beauty is still largely the prerogative and duty of women. However talented we are in other respects, we are still supposed to remain attractive to look at, and a woman's looks, aided and abetted by a vast range of beauty preparations, are still considered her main asset. To a large extent we are judged, and ourselves judge other women, first and foremost on their appearance and fashionability. Our attitudes, unlike our broader political views, are apparent at a glance, so that many people feel that the existence of so many trendy women in Women's Lib is inconsistent with our aim to change the image of women as objects of beauty and adornment.

Many women will feel that this is not a critical issue for us to consider at this time; but since the whole area of fashion and beauty is one in which women in particular are commercially exploited, it can perhaps be seen as part of the wider, and very important issue, of the extent to which we conform to and uphold the existing materialist values in society.

However much we may like good quality, well made clothes, suited to our personality, without a lot of money it is difficult to buy anything which is made to last - the rapid growth of boutiques is evidence of this - and the choice offered to us is generally very limited. Shoe manufacturers, in virtually a monopoly situation, state explicitly that we are expected to buy a new pair of shoes every 3 months, and many women are content to do so. The contrived rapid changes in fashion, such as the one from minis and maxis to hot-pants this summer, demonstrate how well they can manipulate our taste. Many styles are disliked soon after they have gone out of fashion, and we laugh at the fashions of 10-12 years ago (stiff petticoats and stilettos) - or even at the styles of last summer (mini-skirts)? We tend to treat these changes as inevitable; but some cultures have adopted a relatively stable style of dress - eg the Chinese, Japanese, Indians and most European peasant groups, and - in the past - the ancient Greeks and Romans. However we still manage to justify each change in fashion on both aesthetic and practical grounds. A recent French magazine even found a justification for the emergence of hot-pants:

"In the past, many of us wore trousers like our husbands. Many of us shortened our skirts in an uncomfortable way. That was the first symbolic solution. Now we still wear trousers, but very short so that we

prove that we don't forget where our fight should lead us; showing a large expanse of leg for the sake of being feminine."

The function of clothes: clothes obviously serve many different functions, which we should examine when working out our attitudes.

- (i) Expression of one's personality.
- (ii) Identification with a particular group eg hippies, skinheads - or social class - (in the past in particular women's clothes were important in showing their exemption from productive employment, and it is significant that the corset was used only within well-defined social strata, the women of the poorer classes retaining it as a holiday luxury).
- (iii) To attract men - though it is difficult to assess the importance of fashionability as such.
- (iv) 'For other women'
- (v) As short term rewards - to cheer ourselves up; to feel 'good', and give ourselves self confidence.

The 'normal' need to feel good: The most common justification of our fashion and beauty habits is that it's fun, harmless and makes us feel good to wear nice clothes. This is of course the line taken by the advertisers and fashion magazines to persuade us to go on buying. This view is well expressed in a recent issue of 'Vanity Fair'

....(that) "virtually all of us are happier when we know we look good is so obvious that even the psychiatrists have noticed it. What's more they even say that it's normal....so why all the hang-ups? Why the notion that improving your looks is in some way incompatible with improving your mind, or the world or the pay set-up? ...'Take me as I am-defects and all' is fine fighting stuff as long as you honestly and consistently mean it. But it can be a horrible confidence stealer if you merely think you ought to mean it, and keep discovering at wildly inconvenient moments that you don't."

But why do women suffer from this terrible lack of confidence, so that they have to hide behind their appearance? Isn't this part of what Women's Lib is all about - helping one another to gain that confidence?

## views

What should our attitude be? We could adopt the extreme view that clothes should be purely functional, and even introduce the idea of a uniform. This would no doubt be horrifying to most of us, but it wouldn't necessarily be unattractive (eg the Chinese) and has to some extent been tried also in some kibbutzim in which clothes are communal and handed out according to need. Most of us probably take an intermediate position. We accept some of the aesthetic aspects of dress, while rejecting the extremes of fashion writing in women's magazines, and claim that we personally are not slaves to fashion. But if raising our consciousness means changing our attitudes, is such a position really tenable?



Recently I met a man who was starting yet another underground newspaper.

"It's aimed" he said confidently, "at the gap that exists between say 'The New Statesman' and 'Ink'.

A gap scarcely perceptible to the human eye, I would have thought, but asked him instead what kind of a paper would it be?

"Oh, a daily paper with all the usual news coverage - you know, but we'll be looking at things really truthfully, telling what really happened. The news behind the news. That sort of thing. No stereotypes, no preconceived ideas, no traditional attitudes. Are you interested in writing for the Woman's Page?"

Which all led me to pay rather more attention recently to these strange and anachronistic institutions, Women's Pages. The range and treatment of material covered by them in the six national dailies is ranging, as a friend of mine remarked, from the sublime to the cor blimey. Society's confused, many-faceted view of the traditional role of women is faithfully reflected in a lay-out which puts the problem of handicapped children next to an in-depth discussion on whether eyebrows are being worn this year. While the treatment of different subjects will vary from paper to paper, nobody seems to question the underlying assumptions of having a woman's page. Myself I'm all for doing away with them and replacing them with People's pages, firstly because I think the kind of formula which most women journalists is writing for is outdated, and secondly because whether they mean to or not, the very existence of Women's Pages perpetrates from day-to-day the idea that there are

certain topics which are a woman's province - the home, education, social services. I'll concede that fashion and beauty are of limited appeal to a man, but who named the sports pages, Men's Pages? There's clearly a difference in the type of news that's offered on page one - 'hard' news about the so-called Real World of Finance, Politics and Disasters as opposed to what's on the better women's pages, but it's the difference between hard and soft news - why put a sexist label on it? The present formula for women's pages runs something like this.

- 1) Think pieces about social problems and education.
- 2) Personal colour stories about eternal triangles and unmarried mothers.
- 3) Children's problems and education.
- 4) A plethora of fashion and beauty.
- 5) Astrology, dieting and recipes.
- 6) Personal beauty secrets from well known nonentities.
- 7) Holidays and a very few consumer services.
- 8) Beautifying the home.

Three weeks intensive reading of Women's Pages gives you a pretty strange idea of the Average British Woman. As a young girl she's plotting to marry; while marriage is seen as the acquisition of a permanent background against which to display the consumer durables which indicate a really happy marriage i.e. oil fired central heating, twin tub washing machines etc. A married woman cultivates a lovely home to stop her husband wandering; as a mother she is conscientious in helping the children to win the academic race; she is simultaneously totally self-denying



and very possessive; a panther in bed and a mother at the stove; childishly gullible and innately superstitious, unable to resist anything new and well packaged. There's no mental problem that can't be solved by a new recipe, a hair do or a change of loose-covers.

It's not the subject matter - which I'll

#### A SUPER GIRL IN A SUPER JOB

This supergirl uses new Super-shit Hairspray. Why? - because she's got no time to waste, no time to sit around. When you work alongside a world-famous car designer, fractions of a second count.

discuss later - that I'm objecting to so much as the treatment, especially in the tabloids, which, with a very few exceptions can render even the genuine dilemmas of domestic lives both trivial and superficial - an endless series of open ended colour pieces describe the eternal triangle: (petite, red haired Miss B. makes a plea for The Other Woman). Or take fashion for example. The treatment of this topic forms the majority of most women's pages. Since Women's Lib. succeeded Student Power as the media subject most likely to raise a laugh a very slight note of self-consciousness has crept into fashion journalism because fashion journalists, like most working ladies, believe they are totally liberated. But this has manifested itself solely in ranges of cosmetics designed to make you look as if you aren't wearing any; no-bra bras, and endless pictures of clothes to be liberated in - a godsend for the tabloids whose criteria of fashion seems to be related to the amount of breast and thigh that it reveals. But there's been no real analysis of whether women need to be so dependent on clothes and cosmetics, why, in spite of all the old adages about beauty being Skin-Deep and Personality Winning Through - women are still encouraged daily to put their faith in their faces and bodies in that great quest for social definition we call marriage. Consciousness has simply chang-

ed the copy-line - as was clearly shown recently in a magazine which gallantly devoted itself to a whole issue on Women's Lib. In it a series of beautiful and talented ladies made moving pleas to be taken seriously as real three dimensional people with lives of their own. "Women aren't just sex objects" says lovely authoress/poet/actress, mother of two, Mrs. X (dress by Highly Expensive, hair by Kostabomb) which really crystallizes the whole dilemma of fashion in a woman's magazine - you can't afford to start asking questions about whether women need to behave like the Gadarene Swine every time a New Look comes out when you're dependent on advertisers for your very existence. But surely this isn't true of women's pages in the dailies who aren't tied by advertising in the same way?

#### **Why not start your husband's first affair.**

After all the first is  
always the hardest.

But is this what women really want? The fashion editor of a woman's magazine recently assured me that women above all required escapism from the utter tedium of everyday life. From my own experience of interviewing a series of women from a wide range of educational backgrounds, who have access now to all daily papers, I wonder if, in fact, the kind of formula that women's pages are turning out at present isn't simply old fashioned and out-of-touch. Only one woman I spoke to regularly read the fashion page, all the others said emphatically that they couldn't be bothered with all that fashion and beauty because no-one had the money to take them seriously. What was interesting was that while they thought the better women's pages had something to offer, the kinds of thing they wanted more of weren't necessarily extensions of the most superficial aspects of a woman's life - they wanted to read more about other people's lives - both men

and women - and how they dealt with the problems that affected them. They wanted more about alternative ways of living, for men and women.

It's clear from the number of men as well as women who read Women's Pages that they can carry some of the best and most compassionate writing in the whole paper. But take these subjects - education, social services, child-care - out of the formal province of women's interests. Fashion and beauty can be fun, but placed in some kind of preparation to the realities of life. This business of isolating certain aspects of life and character and labelling them feminine has got to stop if there's ever going to be any real breaking down of the stereotypes society tries to force on us. Women are being treated as fools, and men as if their life ended when they left their office desk. Why doesn't an editor take a chance on the intelligence of their audience and produce a real worth-while people's page, about people's real lives instead of perpetrating the myths of the advertisers? No stereotypes, no preconceived ideas, no traditional attitudes. Anybody interested in producing a People's Page?

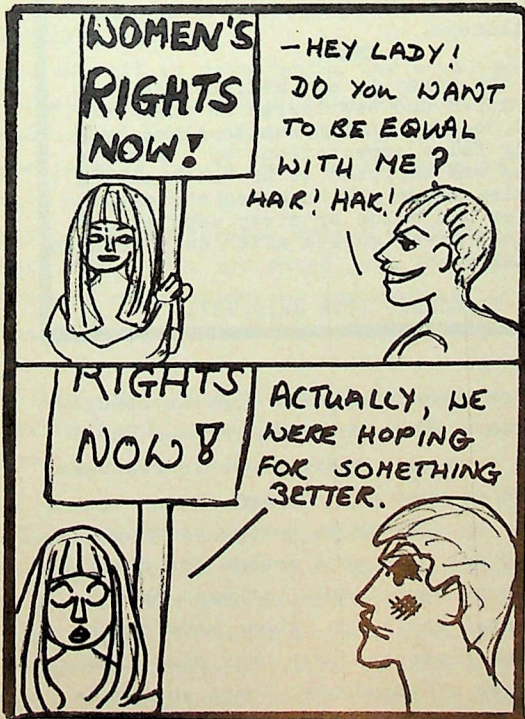
\* \* \* \* \*

# topics in the air

## DO YOU HAVE TWO JOBS?

Career mistress to sixth form girl:  
"Ah, Jane, what are you interested in?  
Hm, science! Well, medicine's a good career - you marry a doctor."

Women are discriminated against in employment. They don't get equal pay in many jobs and they don't have equal opportunities to do the job they are best suited for. We want to change that so that women are not treated as inferior labour. But this doesn't mean that we want them treated as equal or superior labour either. We want everybody treated as people so that as far as possible they can choose their own way of life. This means that we want to change the way people work and what part work plays in their lives as well as making sure there is no discrimination because of sex.



At the moment the myth is that men work to keep their families and women stay at home and look after the domestic welfare of the husband and the family. So the worker (ie the one who actually gets paid) works all day and comes home to find all the domestic work done. In fact he can work such hours as he does just because there is somebody to do his domestic work for him. This is why it is so important that everybody should be convinced that "the woman's place is in the home". If the woman's place isn't in the home who is going to do all the domestic work for the worker? If he doesn't have somebody to do it all for him - look after his children, provide his food, look after his house - he will start agitating for changes in his working conditions so that he can do it himself.

There is some agitation for changes in conditions of work like hours but it is quite insignificant when we consider what actual changes there have been on the domestic front. There are millions of women working, the great majority of them married. All of them have been indoctrinated as we have been that a woman's place is in the home. So all these women, whether they are working because they like the work or because they need the money (usually a bit of both) still feel that they must be responsible for the domestic work. No wonder that men are not kicking up a huge fuss about having too much to do. Women are still doing the domestic work even though they are now fully fledged workers themselves, albeit suffering discrimination and an inferior place at work but nevertheless working as hard and as long as the men.

Of course women in the lowest social strata have always worked and it has always been a myth that "women's place is in the home". That there is now activity to change things to make it easier to combine family and careers is an indication that what has always oppressed working class women is now oppressing middle class women. The Women's Liberation Movement must be on guard that any changes which it achieves benefit all women and not just those who are now finding life difficult where they didn't before.

If you ask working women who have families what they want most it will probably be part time jobs, shorter hours, time off for domestic emergencies (even if it is unpaid time off), longer lunch hours to do their shopping and proper facilities for looking after their children. All this is because they just have so much to do and in very many cases it is becoming unbearable. In other words their problems are caused by working conditions which are designed on the assumption that they have domestic support just as men are supposed to have. But to give women special conditions of work to cope with these problems would strengthen the idea that women's first responsibility was in

the home. What we must campaign for is working conditions which acknowledge that there are two equally important parts of life for everybody whether they are men or women - work (ie the specific contribution to the community) and family. This holds true whether you have a family which is just the parents and children or is wider and consists of more people. We think that there will be a better chance of people living fuller lives if families were not so isolated as they are now, but in the meantime we need changes to ease the dreadful oppression which so many women suffer now because of their work and domestic responsibilities.

#### 'SLAVE LABOUR MAKES WOMEN CRACK'

Many married women sent to mental hospitals for treatment are suffering from "battle stress", a doctor says today. Their symptoms are strikingly similar to those found in soldiers after active service in the Korean war, says Dr. D.M.F. McDonald.

"They are obsessed and oppressed by their husbands, treated not as a person but as a thing, and are just like an oppressed proletariat - exploited slave labour."

Dr. McDonald, medical superintendent of Kingseat Hospital, Auckland, New Zealand, adds that women suffering mental illness now outnumbered men four to one in his hospital. Many were married women without any previous medical history to explain their illness.

#### ENEMY

"But the enemy is not men, who are just as trapped and bewildered as women are," he said. Society itself was to blame by creating false expectations of a woman's role. She was supposed to be "eternally 17", desirable, raise well-behaved children who never had colds or dirty nappies, and graciously greet guests after an afternoon in the kitchen.

Evening Standard, 12th July, 1971.

As well as campaigning for working conditions which make it possible for men and women to cope with their domestic responsibilities we must also demand that pregnancy be treated as having communal value and not used as a reason for dismissing women as "unreliable workers" "bad investments" and so on. Women should have their jobs protected when they need time off because of pregnancy. There should be

no dismissal and the State should give adequate pay during at least six months maternity leave. For at least a year after that a woman's job should be available to her if she wants to return, and she should not be penalised because of her time off. If men want to take time off to look after the babies they too should be allowed to do so and they too should have their position in the career structure protected. Only this way will we be able to start getting people willing to work out their own patterns of job and family life. Men won't take time off if it is going to affect their careers, and women will always be penalised if they are the only ones to take time off for children. Not to mention the deprivation of children because they hardly see their fathers and how men are deprived because they are so tied to their jobs and can't be involved in their growing family. Another way to help this change in attitude would be to encourage people to retain their trade union membership. Then the unions couldn't neglect so much the interests of people at home looking after the family who are at present a kind of "nonbeing". It would be a public recognition of the existence of "family workers".

#### CONCLUSION

So, as well as campaigning for equal pay and equal job opportunities, we must also campaign for everyone but especially people with family responsibilities to have much more flexible conditions of work - shorter hours, longer holidays, part time jobs, protected jobs for anyone looking after children, and minimum standards for pregnancy and maternity leave.\* And we must continue the campaign to get women into trade unions whether or not they are actually out at work right now.

Of course these changes alone will not fundamentally change the position of women, as we can see from the experience of Eastern European countries and others like Sweden. There, even with many of the changes for helping people to have a job and a family, women still struggle along

doing much more total work than men and without a balanced family life. But the changes will help women now and will, with the help of the Women's Liberation Movement, help people to start thinking about their sex roles, and how to work out a more balanced work and family life.

\* Most of the information necessary for such campaigns can be found in PEP's recent book "Sex Career and Family", published by George Allen and Unwin.

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## star letter



Dear Shrew,

The article "housewives talking" in the June 1971 issue of "Shrew" underlined the difficulties of getting through to many women. I feel that as well as writing about the abstract concept of liberation, or about psychological and social attitudes to women (which are often elusive and subtle and difficult to grasp by anyone not committed to Women's Lib), we should concentrate on more specific issues where women are exploited. A much neglected but vicious type of economic exploitation which affects a lot of women, is outwork or domestic work done by women in their own homes for very low pay; this includes sewing, knitting, typing envelopes, fitting together bits of electrical equipment, making paper flowers, and the middle class equivalent is Tupperware parties, selling cosmetics from door to door or simply trying to sell other women goods out of catalogues! At most of these jobs it is impossible to earn more than 25p-30p per hour, usually much less, and materials often have to be provided by the women themselves. Employers are able to make money out of women who are confined to their home due to their child rearing burden. I think it would be useful for Women's Lib. groups to collect information (first and second hand) about this type of work, and mount a campaign to get rates of pay improved.

Patricia Knight  
Surrey branch of National  
Joint Action Campaign for  
Women's Equal Rights.

Well said, Patricia! 25 years of Shrew subscription is on the way.

## fiction



# PASSIONS LAYTHING

The story so far : -

I, Harriet Humble, found myself plunged into a world of international intrigue when I took a job before University as the governess to enchanting, 4 year old Samantha, daughter of dark, saturnine, widowed, rich, withdrawn Lord Jonathan Ruthless. At his Greek villa I soon began to suspect that VELMA CRUMPET the red-haired vivacious international film star was desperately in love with Lord Jonathan Ruthless and Velma's ageing property millionaire husband, hated him for it. Meanwhile, Lord Jonathan's black sheep half brother, Gilbert Moneybags appeared and was pressing his attentions on me. But strange things were happening at the Aston Villa. Who was the man with webbed feet? What had really happened to Velma's green shield stamps? How had Jonathan's wife died? Against this turmoil was my discovery that I wanted Lord Jonathan to be more than an employer - I wanted him as a husband. That night Gilbert Moneybags attempted to ravish me and Jonathan found us struggling on the terrace. Now read on.

Jonathan stared at us with an expression I couldn't fathom in those dark enigmatic eyes, then, swiftly turned on his heel and disappeared.

"Let me go!" I panted, the thin silk of my kaffan tearing on my shoulder. Gilbert laughed tauntingly, his flushed face close to mine.

"So that's how it is, is it?" he sneered, "In love with my brother, hey? Well, you're wasting your time. He's too occupied with Velma..."

A shot rang out in the night. Ashen of hue Gilbert dropped my arm and together we raced....

Turn to page 42

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## WANDSWORTH GROUP JUMBLE SALE

We held our first jumble sale recently, in which we made a profit of £42.83, representing the first deposit in a group bank account. There was a refreshment bar next to the literature table to encourage informal discussion of the aims of the movement. Many thanks to those who gave jumble and to those who came and helped.

## T H E A T R E

VAGINA REX AND THE GAS OVEN, by Jane Arden, Calder and Boyars, £1.25

This theatre piece was first performed at the old Arts Lab. in 1969, and having read it, it became clear that it was impossible to review it without bringing in the recent Holocaust women's theatre production of 'A Communion for Freaks, Prophets and Witches', also by Jane Arden. As well as having certain parallel ideas and images, they also raise exactly the same questions.

Vagina Rex is a succession of lightning visual and verbal images, a surreal collage asserting the validity of one's experience as a woman, fighting accusations of paranoia and the ridicule of current assumptions that women are passive, inferior and masochistic. Following on from this assertion, all the expression is cathartic; the women in both plays are free to express the anguish, horror and 'madness' of their situation - the way they feel. There is tremendous courage in the way Jane Arden presents the chaos which many women feel; the plays seem to come from someone who has been there and knows what it's like. Everything she says and the way she says it is important; and it's because they're brave and important I feel it's possible to say that I think they are limited statements. They are about the beginnings of awareness, and then stop short - in fear, ignorance - it is hard to know. At the end of 'Communion ...' and after reading this play I thought 'So what are you suggesting we might do?' Neither play gives any indication that there is some hope, that some women have begun to try ways of dealing with their understanding of all the rage and confusion they have experienced for so long. The activity of the small groups in the movement is the most obvious attempt, in their stress on learning about how you feel yourself, how other women feel and the political understanding of these experiences which comes about as a result of a group understanding or consciousness. Understanding reasons for women's oppression is inevitably followed by the question of how one puts that understanding into practice. The reason I bring this question up is because in the book's blurb Jane Arden is associated with the Women's Liberation Movement, and it seems to me that this is confusing since there are no attempts to go beyond the scream.

This is not to say that Jane Arden should have written an overtly sloganising play; but she appears to want to have it both ways. She offers the anger and passion, and then withdraws the chance of dialogue.

The end of Vagina Rex is a statement (a threat?) about the imminent implosion (undefined) and the end of 'Communion...' is the statement that 'death will greet the one who dares to analyse our pain'. The trap snaps shut; we are back with the image of woman as angry, afraid, defensive, self-destructive in a hostile world. It is a strange conclusion to plays which appear to give some of the reasons for women's current position: they both mention capitalism, the nuclear family, society's assumptions about women's inferiority. The language appears to understand, in total contradiction to another statement about the 'polluted' language which women have to use.

So what are we to believe? That there are reasons for women's situation, but that we are totally paralysed? This is probably a state that many women outside Women's Liberation are familiar with, and, judging from the reactions I have heard to 'Communion...' the passion works for these women on a level of 'yes, this is how it is'. But it doesn't embody any possibilities of change, and surely this hope is the basis for our involvement in Women's Liberation.

It is surprising that in the two years between the plays that Jane Arden's attitude should not have been affected by the mushrooming of the movement. Perhaps she is afraid of other women or of herself, or both. Well, she isn't alone. That our society teaches us to distrust one another is the realisation; that we want to trust each other is the understanding; that we are beginning to trust each other is the consequence of this understanding.

And this is politics growing from the inside outwards, not crude sloganising or irrational images, or refusing to take responsibility for your own understanding. As a writer Jane Arden obviously understands the difficulties of expressing oneself in another language, which is what all women have to do. But as a woman she does not appear to have faced or begun coping with the need to find a new language, or to re-create the old one. The problem is mammoth; in some way writer, woman and political being must come together and demonstrate themselves as together. Mayakovsky's work and life, both before and after the Russian revolution was one of the bravest attempts at such a synthesis. However, although his writing achieved the synthesis, he himself, as a human being was destroyed by the struggle, until he finally destroyed himself. There are too many moments in both Vagina Rex and Communion... when self-destruction seems the only answer; surely it is life that we want to transform.

Micheline Victor

Cont'd from page 18. **PASSIONSPLAYTHING**

"You fool!" I cried despairingly. "Don't you realise I'm in love with you!"

(Cont'd page 19)



### Family Life and Sex Roles in Infant Primers.

Dr. Spock begins his famous book with an apology to the mothers of girls for using the pronouns "he" and "him" to refer to both male and female children. We begin this article with a similar apology to the mothers and teachers of boys.

In a recent issue of Shrew there was a note about the obnoxious Janet and John of that well known primary reading series published by Nisbet. If you yourself didn't meet Janet and John, you probably met some of their chums in other similar reading schemes. And despite much criticism, these traditional books are still best sellers.

We believe that their basic flaw is the way they tell and retell the current social myth of ideal family life. In thousands of schools around the country, John points things out to Jane, Mother smiles graciously over her fancy cake-making, and father walks up the path of the suburban garden, brief-case in hand, ready to solve all the problems.

The role of the girl child is quietly restricted. Ladybird's Peter gets the trains and bricks and airplanes; Jane is landed with the dolls and the pram. The boy is invariably the hero of whatever adventures there are. ("I'm afraid," says Jane. "Girls are always afraid," says Peter.) The role of the girl is basically sustaining, basically dominated.

How can the child learn when presented with these stereotyped figures? This supposedly average, normal family, in its idealised insipidity does not resemble her own family or any that she knows. There may be psychological damage even to the middle class suburban child, in that the myth is described in terms of the familiar symbols of her environment and so she can be more easily seduced into believing that this myth is reality. The working class child will suffer a double alienation from being presented with this material. These books are presented by the first important social authority outside the family. As such, they cannot help but be influential.

Some of the newer series are making a serious effort to portray a more realistic social milieu, but family life as presented still has the quality of a pleasant myth. Mother now clearly works about the house, but everything she does is characterised by joy and lack of effort. In reality, bags of groceries weigh nearly a stone each, yet Mother is shown gaily juggling three of them as if they were filled with styrofoam. Ironing uses up more calories of energy than most household chores, yet Mother smiles brightly while she swings her five pound metal iron. Doesn't this

remind us of the happy housewife in the television commercials burbling with idiotic glee over dangerously slippery waxed floors?

According to a study of the Newsoms, 52% of British fathers are "highly participant" in the care of their children. 36% of British mothers go out to work. Yet these realities are barely reflected in the primers.

Sex roles are less stereotyped in the more modern series. Yet, though children may live in tower blocks and play in disused rubbish dumps, girls still play nurse while boys play doctor and it is still Mum, just a little more harassed, who copes single handed with all domestic chores.

\*\*\*\*\*

We would like suggestions from anyone who can help us contact teachers, publishers, etc. We would like to encourage the use of better primers in the classroom. We feel this is a form of early brainwashing perpetrated on little males and females. We have heard that the Inner London Education Authority is thinking about a general reevaluation of the primers being used.

Anyone who has suggestions please call:  
Frances - 602-2082, Judith - 229-4073,  
Peri - 602 -2199

## op press stop press

BERNADETTE DEVLIN

Our support goes to Bernadette in demonstrating that Women's Liberation means the right to have a child as well as choosing not to have one, and that abortion should not be forced on women having so called illegitimate children.

ILLEGITIMACY

There is no humane reason to continue to label children 'illegitimate'. All children are equally precious. The legal concept has been abolished in Sweden. We can do it too. Campaign to abolish the law on illegitimacy

WOMEN SPEAKING

This is a quarterly magazine which has been going longer than the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain. It is in sympathy with our aims and is worth reading and contributing to articles, reviews, and letters. 70p a year: The Wick, Roundwood Ave. Hutton Brentwood, Essex.

MR/MRS/MISS

Why should we declare our marital status on every letter, every form? Men don't need to. It's another indication that the law has different treatment for married women. Never sign with your marital status, never give it unless it is absolutely unavoidable. When you write to people address envelopes with full names or M/S. All titles are oppressive. Throw them away and be yourself.

## growing up gracefully



We held a meeting with the men to hear their views on the Women's Liberation Workshop (WLW). We decided to report it because the meeting helped us clarify our views and may add to other people's views. The discussion covered the following topics:

### Individual Liberation and the Workshop.

One of the men said that, by coming to our meeting, he was joining the movement. We explained to him that just as whites cannot, by virtue of their colour, join the black liberation movement, so men cannot join the women's liberation movement. One of the major differences between these liberation movements is that all blacks are aware of their oppression, whereas few women are aware of theirs. It is because of this that the WLW emphasises the importance of individual liberation, unlike groups in other political movements. We explained that the workshop is open to all women irrespective of their political leanings, though some of us felt that the members will have to see that the ultimate aims of the workshop are socialist. It is then up to each member (with the help of consciousness raising groups) to decide whether they wish to stay in the workshop. This open membership shocked some of the men, who felt that it would attract "middle class women who had it good, making it better for themselves." They thought that our approach was too leisurely, that when it came to the crunch these women would join with men, against the working class.

### Politics.

Another thing that the men found difficult to understand was the non-alignment of the WLW. We explained that the force of the workshop is in its non-alignment and non-exclusiveness. This non-alignment means that we cannot as a workshop take a stand on any public issue (aside from the four campaigns). It is up to each individual member of the workshop to decide for herself where she stands. In the same way the workshop would not have a member standing at local elections, whereas an area group might decide that they wanted a member to stand. Nevertheless the men thought that ultimately we would have to make a political alignment. They thought that this would occur after infiltration by members of other political groups. They were worried about the women's liberation movement being a one generation movement like GND. We thought that these problems were too

far in the future to require much attention at present. One of the men thought that our vision of the future was Utopian, and did not see how we were going about changing society. On the other hand, someone else expressed the fear that we would never achieve our revolution by our present attempts to patch up society. The main thing to emerge from all this was that the WLW does not fit the stereotypes of a political organization. It is this which is worrying outsiders so much. We thought that the workshop may have assumed its original synthesis because of the unsuccessful historical examples.

#### The Four Campaigns.

There was some doubt as to whether the four campaigns (equal pay, equal education, free contraception and free twenty four hour nurseries) were enough to bring about a revolution. Some men thought that these were the total aims of the WLW. It was explained these campaigns had been adopted by the Women's National Coordinating Committee as the lowest common denominator that all the women's liberation groups in the country agreed upon. They serve as workable and uniting aims for all groups.

The men argued that these aims met only the middle class needs. They did not see that they cut across class barriers. We argued that nurseries were needed to change the class structure - to give women a real choice of going to work instead of staying at home. Equal education would offer the opportunity of more interesting work than that in the home; it would also cut across the class as well as the sex barrier. Free contraception and abortion would free women from the tyranny of child bearing. Child rearing would be shared more, once other things like equal pay and equal education were in operation.

#### Femininity.

We found this difficult to discuss. All the feminine traits we could think of seemed to equate femininity with submission. We were told that the image of Women's Lib is defeminising. This is not surprising if femininity does mean submissiveness. The men were interested to know what, if any, were the advantages of being a woman, and whether we exploited these advantages. Child bearing was the only advantage we could think of, and not all women want to bear children. It was difficult to decide whether paternal or maternal instinct was greater. Reports of different experiences in our homes showed that the major difference was in the amount of care given by fathers and mothers.

Some men thought the differences between men and women were enhancing and should be kept. As we could not decide which of the existing differences, apart from the physical ones, were not cultural, it was difficult to develop the theme. We decided that the only thing to do was to allow differences to develop naturally in a society that did not teach a child to react in a sex-oriented manner from early infancy onwards. The thought was expressed that if women were liberated they would lose the things they have now, such as the freedom to touch and to be emotional. We hoped that everyone would gain these things.

## **PASSIONS PLAYTHING...**

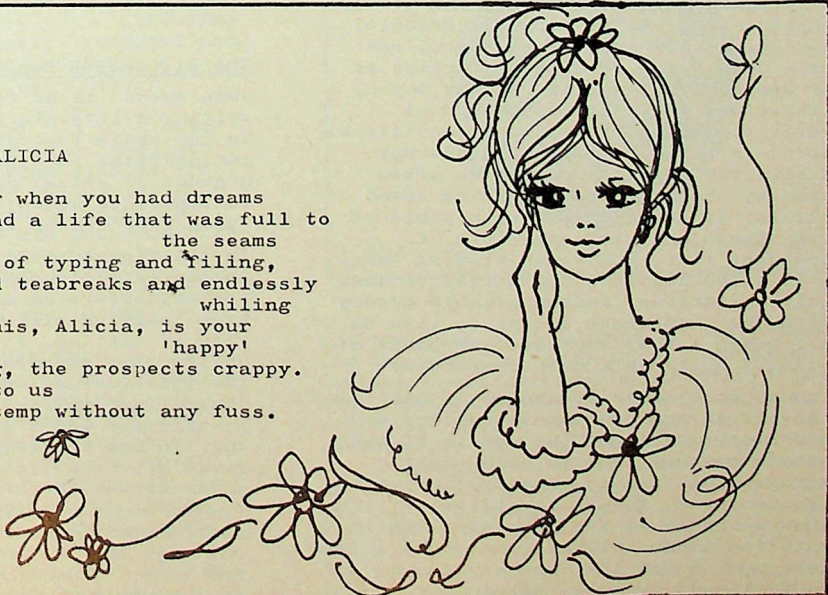
(Cont'd from page 27)

"But what about your University place?" For a moment I was tempted. Then I lay back contentedly in Jonathan's arms.

(Cont'd page 39)

#### LIFE IS BLISSIER ALICIA

Your days are over when you had dreams  
Of independence and a life that was full to  
the seams  
'Bliss' is a life of typing and filing,  
Of lunch hours and teabreaks and endlessly  
whiling  
The hours away. This, Alicia, is your  
'happy'  
The work is boring, the prospects crappy.  
Bring your bliss to us  
We'll make you a temp without any fuss.





# intellectual supplement

## A PERSONAL VIEW

The spirit, we know, is not free. It is conditioned and limited by circumstance; the integrity of the individual is constantly threatened by the crude pressures of society. And this is, surely, what Women's Liberation is all about. We want to explore why and how we are oppressed, in order to bring alive what was dead in us: to become fully human.

Since the birth of the present Women's Liberation movement, a fair amount of theoretical literature, varying greatly in quality, has been produced. Most fortunately we have Kate Millet's "Sexual Politics" which is, so far, the crucial book for the movement. But what about the novels that have been written by women during the past few years? Are there in England any women novelists who are major "in terms of the human awareness they promote; awareness of the possibilities of life"? (F.R. Leavis) Come to that, how far have women novelists from Jane Austen to the present questioned the crude materialistic assumptions of their age and culture, and the stranglehold of these assumptions on the emotions and expectations of women? How far have they felt, with a contemporary poet, Nathaniel Tarn, that:

"The destruction of history by not setting down the history one knows  
By refusing to be a witness to one's times is a crime against the earth."

## The Current Scene

Reading again such influential and widely discussed novelists as Margaret Drabble, Edna O'Brien and Penelope Mortimer, one feels a deep sense of dissatisfaction at their apparent refusal to venture beyond the territory of female psychosexual neurosis to that of female socio-political concern. In addition, although one may criticize the male stereotype so often created by the nineteenth century women novelists, at least they were capable of imbuing their men with some form of independent life. The women writing today seem so withdrawn into the morass of some largely mysterious, incommunicable misery - which they sometimes appear to wish on to all women - that they are incapable of creating a believable male character.

And what about their treatment of marriage? The novels of the nineteenth century end with a happy marriage; the novels of the twentieth century tend to take their starting point from an unhappy marriage. Our contemporary female novelists certainly show marriage as the grim and sterile institution it so often is; but they offer no real option for the "emancipated woman" who suffers and wriggles within her restrictive bonds. Their women move

(largely uncritical) in the context of masculine values, and are not subject to any confident inclusive judgement.

In fact, this detached analytical perceptiveness about the male-female relationship exists more securely in three nineteenth century women novelists, Jane Austen, George Eliot and Charlotte Bronte. Let's look for instance at the opening sentence of "Pride and Prejudice": "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a fortune must be in want of a wife."

Of course the truth is exactly the opposite - it is the woman who needs the affluent man - and we're immediately inducted into the fine Austen irony thoroughly aware of the predicament of every nubile woman. Every woman, perforce, must look for a man of means; she is the hunter (willing or unwilling) concealing her weapons beneath a velvet surface of civilized manners. She must, in order to survive economically "fall in love" with a "gentleman". Charlotte Lucas can be honest about the romantic sham, but only when she has hooked her man - in this case a vain and inane clergyman:

"Mr Collins to be sure was neither sensible or agreeable: his society was irksome, and his attachment to her must be imaginary. But still he would be her husband - without thinking highly either of man or of matrimony, marriage had always been her object; it was the only honourable provision for well-educated young women of small fortune, and however uncertain of giving happiness, must be their pleasantness preservative from want."

## The Eighteenth Century View

Jane Austen is no revolutionary, but she is writing a literature of women's liberation in the sense that she is well aware of the inequalities in a patriarchal society. The urgency of sexual needs may motivate a D.H. Lawrence woman; marriage is the 'primitive' power in Jane Austen's novels.

In the figure of Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Austen marvellously depicts the temptation society offers an intelligent, independent, high spirited girl to compromise her integrity of feeling. In "Emma" we are shown the destructive effects when a young woman with the intellectual energy commonly considered "masculine" is forced to remain in the restrictive world of the provincial lady and, in her frustration, nearly ruins the lives of those around her. Despite the anger behind the humour, however, Jane Austen sees marriage (though she herself didn't marry) as women's inevitable destiny, and tends to picture the ideal man (a Mr. Knightley or an Edmund Bertram) in a master-pupil relationship to her heroine. All one is saying here is that

she, like the rest of us, cannot escape certain assumptions of her age.

### Nineteenth Century Freedom

What of George Eliot, the "wise woman", liberated in her own chosen mode of existence? In Dorothea Brooke ("Middlemarch") we move towards "the emancipated women" of, say, Doris Lessing. Her creator once remarked: "It is the habit of my imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which the character moves as of the character itself." Dorothea is described as the "offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur, ill-matched by the meanness of opportunity." She is one of "the later-born Theresas" whose "ardour alternated between the vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood; so that the one was disapproved as extravagance and the other condemned as a lapse." She wants to achieve heroically; instead "hemmed in by a social life, which seemed nothing but a labyrinth of petty causes," she makes the disastrous mistake of marrying an ancient pedant with a tortured awareness of his own intellectual and emotional sterility. Can one imagine "Woman" or "Woman's Own", as it regales us with the story of pretty Jenny and her ideal man, admitting the possibility that "the radiance of her transfigured girlhood fell on the first object that came within its level."? This would indeed spoil the image of Mr. Right!

We are presented in "Middlemarch" with a different kind of female in Rosamond Vincy, a beautiful parasite whose torpedo-contact destroys her husband, Lydgate. Rosamond has been brought up to be dependent, childishly self-centred, passively demanding, and George Eliot's insight into the destructive potential of such a 'female education' is devastatingly accurate. She is equally accurate when she shows the danger of a man being educated to see himself as the centre of the universe. Lydgate marries Rosamond and fails in his professional ambitions because of his "spots of commensal".

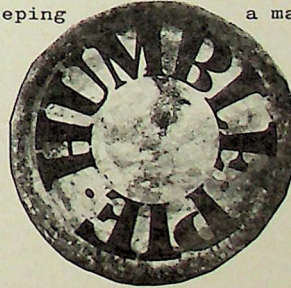
These "lay in the complexion of his prejudices which, in spite of noble intentions and sympathy, were half of them such as are found in ordinary men of the world: that distinction of mind which belonged to his intellectual ardour did not penetrate his feelings and judgement about furniture, or women, or the desirability of its being known (without his telling) that he was better born than other country surgeons".

For him, Rosamond has "just the kind of intelligence one would desire in a woman - polished, refined, docile, lending itself to finish in all the delicacies of life, and enshrined in a body which expressed this with a force of demonstration that excluded the need for other evidence". It is only after marriage that he begins to feel the "hampering thread-like pressure of small social conditions, and their frustrating complexity". George Eliot can say "Poor Lydgate! Poor Rosamond!" Unkindly perhaps one feels that Drabble, O'Brien and Mortimer would only say "Poor

Rosamond!" and leave it at that. Evoking our sympathy for female neurosis, they seem to evade the challenge of placing it in that complexity of social situation which, for example, Doris Lessing explores with such integrity.

Finally of course, the women of Jane Austen and George Eliot accept their place in a man-made world. The characters of Charlotte Bronte do not. They're in revolt - as women. Obviously Charlotte's heroines - particularly Jane Eyre - are a projection of their author. But the novels are not just wish-fulfillment dreams which represent the 'feminine' longing for love. The first part of "Jane Eyre" is one of the finest renderings in English literature of the frustrated youth of a sensitive, idealistic female. It is only with the introduction of Rochester - symbol of virility par excellence - that the novel tends to fall into absurdity (though the treatment of sexual passion is sufficiently powerful). It's unfortunate that Rochester has to go blind so that Jane may be magnanimously victorious in the battle of the sexes. One is uneasily aware of the novelist's own longing for emotional nourishment from a man, which Jane rather grotesquely achieves from Rochester as the "sightless Samson" the "caged eagle with his gold-ringed eyes cruelty has extinguished". One is tempted to assume that all this is a fantasy which compensates for the other fantasy of a master (male) - pupil (female) relationship which pervades Charlotte Bronte's novels, and which diminishes, though it does not destroy, the effects of a mature talent.

This week's recipe for  
keeping a man.....



Directions: First catch your man.....

Whatever the restrictions of their lives, the heroines of these three nineteenth century novelists have an admirable toughness, independence and energy. Austen, Eliot and Bronte are not, we feel, obsessed by their private hang-ups. They speak directly to other women precisely because their psychological perceptions are part of their general social concerns. They write out of a questioning spirit which makes their work profoundly subversive. They may, finally, stop short of any fundamental judgement and condemnation of a society which bases the logic of its institutions so firmly in men's

favour. They are, however, writing before profound social upheavals of the twentieth century which made this sort of evaluation possible.

What of the women novelists writing in England today? One does not, obviously, expect from them abstract theory or political polemic, but one might fairly expect the attitude one finds, say, in George Eliot, about woman's predicament to have been fruitfully developed in the light of a hundred years of 'history'. Women still perhaps have little alternative but to marry, and the main character in Margaret Drabble's "The Waterfall" realizes:

"It is a curious business, marriage - nobody seems to pay enough attention to its immense significance. Nobody seemed to think that in approaching the altar garbed in white, I was walking towards unknown disaster of unforeseeable proportions; and so I tried to emulate - I emulated successfully the world's fine confident unconcern."

#### ONE DAY WORKSHOP

The second one day workshop for WLW members was held in Deptford on 3rd July. 100 or so women (and assorted children - cared for by men) attended. Group discussions on politics, action and the family. Very good films: 'Women against the Bill', from Contemporary Films, 55, Greek St., (£10 with projectionist), otherwise free from Esther Ronay, 937-6244 (without projector); and 'A Woman's Place' from Liberation Films, 6, Bramshill Gardens, N.W.5. (£3-£5) More one-day workshops to come on special subjects.

Both Drabble and Mortimer, particularly, deal often with a kind of female masochism, and almost perverse refusal even to try and understand one's situation. The sort of comment made by the same character in "The Waterfall" - "If I were drowning I could not reach out a hand to save myself, so unwilling am I to set myself up against fate" - is fairly irritating and sterile, because there are no convincing indications that the novelist has understood such confused emotionalism for what it is. One can't help but feel, to take another example, that the very raison d'être of the woman in "The Pumpkin Eater" (Penelope Mortimer) is to suffer - as though a tendency towards negative suffering were an obscure curse laid on all women. And we - women readers - seem invited to sympathise uncritically with this woman, who feels a sort of sub-tragic inevitability about the mess that is her life. At one point she even says: "Nothing I could do to myself would hurt enough", and she appears sometimes to be using her husband and children to prove her own inability to experience life as anything but guilt and agonising insecurity.

In many ways these women novelists are fine writers. Drabble's "The Waterfall" especially, is a considerable achievement in delineating the inability of an educated woman to confront her emotions in any genuinely emancipated way, as she

broods on "the sexual doom of womanhood, its sad inheritance". But in fundamental respects their work does not escape from the sub-romantic narcissism, the fatalistic solipsism of the mushiest women's fiction. A Drabble character wonders at one point "if other people have ever suffered so, and how they found time to suffer through lives so full of jobs and work, and cooking and society". But the novelist herself - like those others in England praised for their 'social realism' - evades any genuine confrontation of the 'other world' where men and women must work for their bread and cake. There is, moreover, no male character who is more than the shadowiest of pegs on which the women hang their feelings. And these women are not shown as making any real attempt to explore the male-female relationship as in some senses a political one.

#### Conclusion

The social perceptions of a George Eliot, alas, are no longer in evidence. Instead there is a confused emotionalism about what it is to be a woman. Narcissism, withdrawal and sentimentality never helped the cause of literature or liberation! When it comes to charting socio-sexual territory there is an evasion. Where is the English novelist to even approach the passion, logic, intellectual curiosity and authority of, for example, Simone de Beauvoir? She is, in the most genuine sense, a social realist of the twentieth century. Dare one suggest that only when women writing in England today can free themselves from the lingering definition of "feminine = passive = submissively-fated-to-suffer" will they offer us genuinely new perceptions about us as women?

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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George Eliot:	Middlemarch
Charlotte Bronte:	Jane Eyre
Margaret Drabble:	The Waterfall
Penelope Mortimer:	The Pumpkin Eater
Edna O'Brien:	All novels.



## PASSIONS PLAYTHING

(Cont'd from page 69)

The moon was rising over Aston Villa.  
"Are you happy, my love?" asked Jonathan, his face enigmatic no longer.  
"Very happy" I answered.  
A long life stretched before us.

T H E E N D

Next week a dramatic new serial about a young woman doctor who gave up everything to clear the man she loved.

# dear mabel prune

## He's my father's friend

I'm afraid I have caught VD but I can't go to the doctor as he is a friend of my father's.

Either arrange for your family to fall out with your doctor or persuade the person you think gave it to you to go and see him.

## His violent temper.

I want to have my hair cut short but the very mention of it infuriates my husband.

How does your husband feel about long boots?

## Too shy to eat

How does one get invited to a Royal Garden party at Buckingham Palace?

Start one. Where's your initiative? Write to me again and I'll tell you the formalities.

## Am I a freak?

I seem to spend a lot of time thoroughly disliking my children. Do you think I'm an unnatural mother?

What sex are you?

## Homosexual worry

I'm fourteen and have been out with several boys, but they all seem to be after one thing (sex). Are all boys like this?

No, some of them are interested in fretwork.

## This frightens me

I have been told that my husband was seen having lunch with a good friend of mine. Could there be a simple explanation?

Yes, adultery.



## I think of nothing else

How can you tell if a man's going to be a good lover?

By the way he drives his car. Suggest a day's drive in the country and keep an eye on the petrol gauge.

## My lonely nights

I've managed to keep from my husband my big worry - the fact that I have hairs on my stomach and chest but I can never have the bedroom light on and am very jumpy while undressing.

How do you know that it's your husband you're concealing it from?

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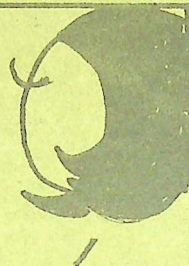
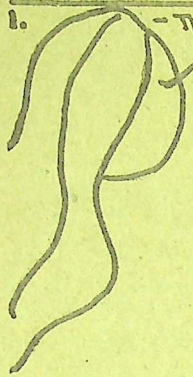
WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP

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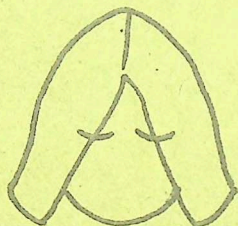
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1. - THERE'S JANE,  
ON HER OWN  
AGAIN

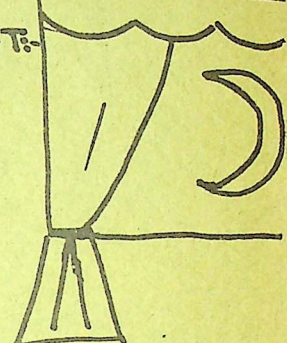


WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?  
WHY DOESN'T SHE DO  
SOMETHING ABOUT THE  
TERRIBLE HAIR ON HER  
LEGS.

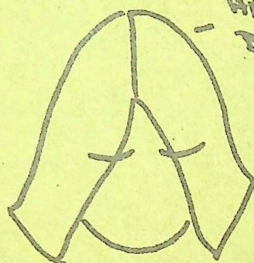
LAST  
WEEK :-



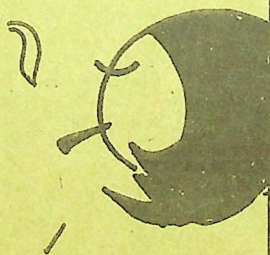
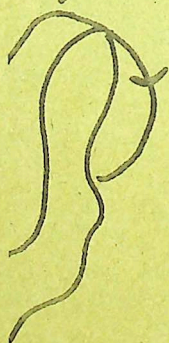
2. THAT NIGHT:-



SO THAT'S WHY I'M 25 AND  
HAVE HARDLY EVER  
BEEN OUT WITH  
A MAN. - BUT  
IS IT TOO LATE?

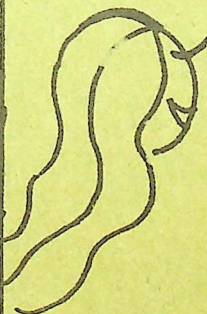


3. TODAY:-  
HAVE YOU SEEN JANE?



SHE'S TRANSFORMED, I'VE NEVER  
SEEN HER SO RADIANT!  
WHAT HAPPENED?

4. - SHE MARRIED  
A  
GORILLA.



WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP GROUPS.

(c - closed to new members )

<u>Name of Group</u>	<u>Meeting night</u>	<u>Person to contact.</u>	
ARCHWAY	N.19 (Wed)	Heather Hopkins	272-3158
c ARSENAL	N.5 (Mon)	Hermione Harris	359-0842
BATTERSEA	S.W.11 (Tues)	Di Macklin	720-4462
c BELSIZE LANE	N.W.3 (Mon)	Audrey Battersby	722-2784
BLACKHEATH	S.E.3 (Fri)	Rosemary Hayles	858-3604
BROMLEY	Kent (Thurs)	Catherine Hodges	460-6816
c CHALK FARM	N.W.3 (Mon)	Sheila/Claudia/Sue	485-9871
CHISWICK	(Wed)	Margaret Fox	560-0599
c CHRISTCHURCH	N.W.3 (Tues)	Hazelanne Lewis	794-4601
CROUCH END	N.8	Rosamund Baxter	348-2857
DARTMOUTH PARK	N.W.5 (Thurs)	Susan Jones	485-3896
c EALING	W.5 (Wed)	Debbie Gregory	468-0457
c EAST LONDON	E.9 (Tues)	Christine/Lesley	985-9451
FULHAM	S.W.5 (Thurs)	Jane Caplan	731-1145
GOSPEL OAK	N.W.3 (Thurs)	Val Charlton	267-1988
c HAMPSTEAD	N.W.3 (Tues)	Frances Robinson	794-8403
c HAVERSTOCK HILL	N.W.3 (Thurs)	Monica Foot	794-6908
HEATH MANSIONS	N.W.3 (Wed)	June Montgomery	435-5687
HIGHBURY	N.5 (Wed)	Janet Reel	226-1681
HOLLAND PARK	W.11 (Wed)	Lynne Davies	229-0894
HOLLOWAY	N.19 (Wed)	Alison Fell	272-1558
c HORNSEY	N.8 (Wed)	Rosamund Baxter	348-2857
ILFORD	Essex (Wed)	Sani Friedman	590-5954
KEATS GROVE	N.W.3 (Thurs)	Brekke Larsen	794-9251
KENTISH TOWN	N.W.5 (Mon)	Margaret Ford	485-0077
LADEROKE GROVE	W.10 (Wed)	Rosemary Deane	969-8748
MUSWELL HILL	N.10	Frenda Leys	883-3655
c NOTING HILL	W.8 (Wed)	Esther Ronay	937-6244
N.7	N.7 (Tues)	Jean Radford	609-0682
PARLIAMENT HILL	N.6	Jane Fowler	485-7730
PECKHAM RYE	S.E.15 (Thurs)	Anne Bahcheli	732-8685
PIMLICO	S.W.1 (Mon)	Sally Alexander	828-3735
PUTNEY	S.W.15 (Tues)	Babs Beardshaw	789-5604
RICHMOND	Surrey	Vanessa Gohar	948-0010
SOUTHGATE	N.14 (Wed)	Pat Nicholas	886-0759
ST. ALBANS	Herts (Mon)	Sue Rogers	St. Albans 50910
STRATFORD	E.15 (Tues)	Nell Myers	519-4464
STREATHAM	S.W.16 (Thurs)	Frances McKay	764-1594
c TUFNELL PARK	N.19 (Tues)	Sue Cowley	485-2868
TUFNELL PARK 2	N.W.5 (Mon/Tues)	Kathy Hoyland	485-7694
WANDSWORTH	S.W.18 (Mon)	Eileen Jarvis	870-0037
WATFORD	Herts (Thurs)	Beryl Weaver	Watford 32231
WEMBLEY	Midxx (Wed)	Sheila Taylor	997-3418

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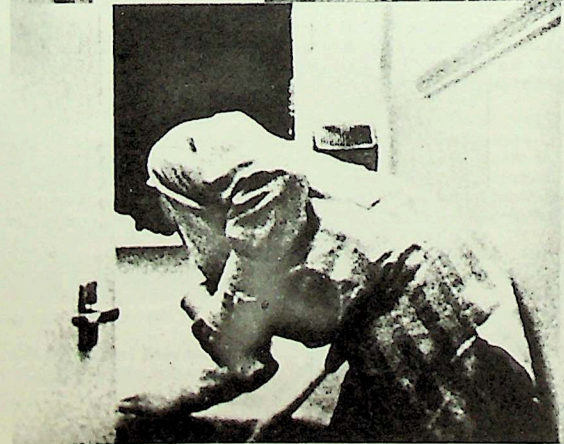
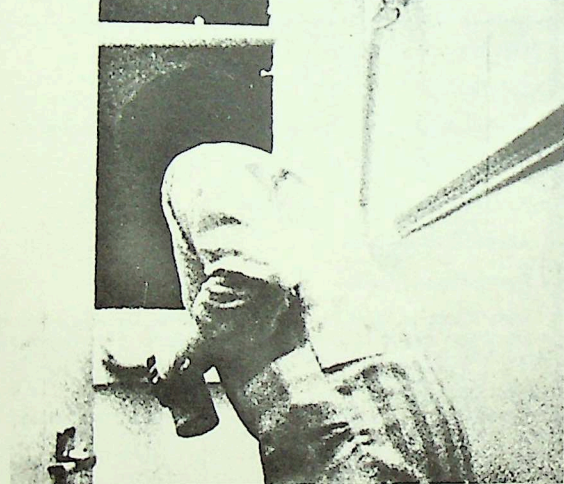
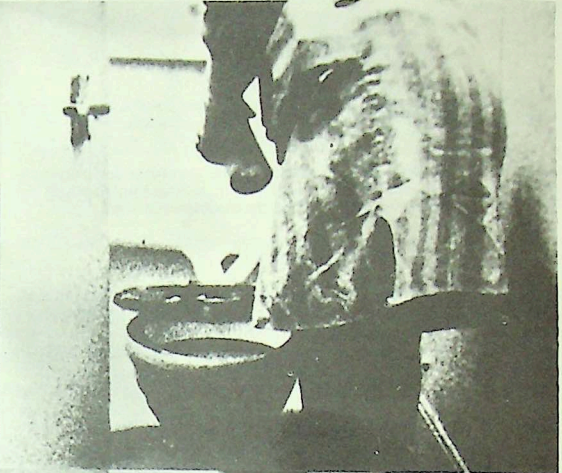
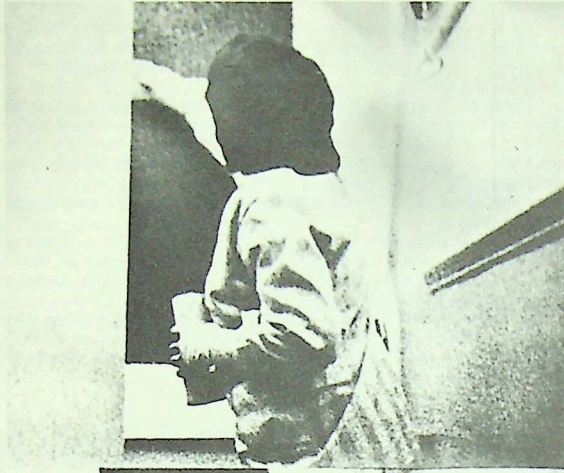
Special Interest Groups

FAMILY STUDY	(Thurs)	Ursula Bachtold	229-5988
MEDICAL GROUP	(Wed)	Caroline Smith	267-1217 (open to women with medical training)
PSYCHOTHERAPY GROUP	(Thurs)	Dinah Brooke	485-3722
STREET THEATRE GROUP		Dinah Brooke	485-3722

SUBSCRIBE TO  
SHREW - see over

# SHREW vol.3 no.9 DECEMBER 1971

# NIGHT CLEANERS



# NIGHT CLEANERS & womens liberation

The attempt to unionise the cleaners is the first involvement of the Workshop with women at work rather than at home. Most of the things we have tried to do have been in connection with women at home, nurseries, birth-control, trying to get crossings on roads.

## WHY BOTHER TO TRY AND UNIONISE WOMEN?

Some people are very critical of unions. They say they are bureaucratic and only concerned to improve wages. Also, the structure of unions tends to exclude women from the executive, so the particular interests of women are not considered.

We recognise that unions have many limitations, and that these limitations are most obvious in the case of women workers. However, to join a union is still the necessary first step if women are going to get better conditions at work.

## CHRONOLOGY

Leafletting started at the end of October 1970. International Socialist women leafletted until Xmas, and Women's Liberation started alongside them, and then were joined by Socialist Woman.

Arsenal, Pimlico, Peckham, Wandsworth and Notting Hill have been and are still involved.

- OCT: May Hobbs visits Dalston Group. Women's Liberation Workshop involved.
- NOV 3: Two women cleaners sacked from Board of Trade building (Sanctuary Buildings, Westminster) by Strand Cleaning Company. 11 women came out on strike demanding reinstatement, but the supervisor arrives with 6 new women.
- NOV 9: Cleaners in another Board of Trade building, Companies House, came out in support. An all night picket was held.
- NOV 10: The two women reinstated, but the picketers lost their jobs through a ploy of the cleaning company, which was to change the cleaning from night to evening, so that the women could not work.
- DEC 8: Industrial Relations Bill demonstration. Night cleaners (some of them women from Companies House) marched.
- JAN 8: May Hobbs speaks at Workshop meeting on the effect of the Industrial Relations Bill on cleaners.
- JAN 12: Industrial Relations demonstration at Hyde Park, attended by night cleaners. May Hobbs spoke at the picket at Albert Hall.
- FEB 12: Meeting with Bernadette Devlin at the Adam and Eve pub at Victoria, to persuade Irish night cleaners to join the Union. The meeting was swamped by television people.
- FEB 21: T.U.C. march attended by Women's Liberation and Night Cleaners' delegation.
- FEB 12: A meeting held during the cleaners' 1 a.m. break inside Cook's, Piccadilly, in which Jean Wright persuaded cleaners to join the Union.
- MAR 6: Women's Liberation March. May Hobbs speaks in Trafalgar Sq.
- MAR 8: Members of Women's Liberation involved in leafletting, and start meeting officials of the T&GWU.
- MAY 19: May Hobbs and leafletter go to a meeting at the Transport and General headquarters in an attempt to get more support for the Union.
- APR 11: May Videll, a cleaner in the Union, is sacked from Lutyens, Moorgate.
- APR 12: T&GWU take up the matter but can't negotiate because not enough Union support from the women.
- APR 15: Picket at Fleet Building in support of May Videll who was sacked for joining the Union.
- APR - 15 Union women at Lutyens were moved to other buildings, and deliberately dispersed.
- JUNE 15: Meeting at T&GWU headquarters at Gower St. attended by night cleaners, a TGWU official and leafletters. Film shown.
- JULY 10: Cleaners invited for tea at leafletter's house for film show and discussion.
- AUG 26: Meeting with May Hobbs and Shell-Mex cleaners.
- SEPT 14: Meeting with cleaners at leafletter's house to discuss demands for meeting with a Union official.
- OCT 6: Shell-Mex cleaners present written demands for higher wages and better conditions to W.J. Churchouse, TGWU District Officer, Region 1.

## WE NEED MORE LEAFLETTERS

The night cleaners joined the TGWU because most other people doing cleaning type jobs are in it. The night cleaners are in the Window Cleaners' branch. Their aim from the start was to have their own branch so that they could organise their own campaign. It has been difficult to get a Branch going, through ignorance of the complex bureaucracy of the Union, and because cleaners are so few in so many buildings.

By taking people's money for union dues we are committed to fighting for better wages and conditions through the TGWU. The Union say they need a 'strong membership' in order to negotiate with the cleaning contractors.

So we need as many people as possible as soon as possible to go to buildings where night cleaners are employed, talk to them, give them our own and TGWU leaflets and collect their dues if they want to become members.

There are hundreds of buildings that are cleaned at night; the largest employ between 30 and 50 cleaners, but most buildings only employ 8-12. 160 women have paid dues at one time or another, many for six months or more. Many have stopped because the union hasn't done anything for them. If we get a large simultaneous membership (concentrated in as few buildings as possible), the union will have to negotiate.

So this is a desperate plea for support before the cleaners who have been paying get disillusioned. The length and disparity of the campaign has also made it difficult for leafletters who have been going to buildings for a long time.

We know that some Womens Liberation groups have sent members to Night Cleaning meetings and we are sorry if contact with them has broken down, or if no-one seemed to be explaining clearly what was happening and what they could do.

## THE CLEANERS ACTION GROUP

# DEMAND

£18.75 per week wages.

Sick Pay.

Two weeks pay instead of notice or two weeks' notice in writing.

Holiday pay - one day for every month worked.

Adequate staffing on all buildings.

Adequate cover money.

Recognition of Union.

Night cleaners want more pay, but there are also other demands which relate to general conditions. Until we are stronger our best bet is through the Fair Wages resolution.

### LOCAL DEMANDS

Conditions vary from building to building. Direct bargaining, e.g. over ventilation, the length of breaks, could be effective, if there is support from other buildings cleaned by the same contractor.

### TRANSPORT

At present, many of the women travel long distances to work in London. Many live in south, east or north-east London and have to get to the City or the West End. In Lancaster the cleaners have won the right of free transport to work. Why not in London?

### CONTROL

Any increase in wages is nearly always accompanied by a reduction of the women employed on a building. So the women pay back their increase by doing more work. Cleaners should be able to see the contract, and the Union should be able to keep a check on the numbers employed to make sure the employers are not fiddling numbers.

### PROTECTION AND RESTRICTION

Women can't afford to be against protective legislation in general because at present women are doing two jobs. We should try to get protective legislation extended to men so that it can't be used as an excuse to pay women less.

At present, the difference between male and female rates in cleaning is justified on the grounds that women are not required to stretch to do high-level work.

### EQUIPMENT

Cleaning contractors should provide more equipment.



# CLEANING CONTRACTORS

MAKE A LOT OF MONEY OUT OF THE WORK  
THE CLEANERS ARE FORCED TO DO

Instead of employing cleaners directly, many large offices in the last few years have found it more convenient to contract the work out to cleaning companies. This means that the cleaning company promises in the contract to provide a certain number of women to clean so many inches of office space.

This contract is between the owner of the office and the cleaning contractor. The women cleaning don't know what it says. So there's nothing to stop the cleaning contractor from providing much fewer cleaners than he promised. This does in fact happen, and is rarely found out.

Night cleaning is invisible work. Who knows or cares what goes on? The owner of the office and all the office workers are tucked up in bed. So this and other fiddles pass unnoticed.

*"Why go to a contractor? The answer is "specialisation". If a man's business is manufacturing, he must devote his full energies to it. Concentration of force is an old military maxim and it applies in industry."*

*"Time spent on problems such as one's cleaning work force, recruiting it, organising and equipping it, is time diverted from the things in which the manufacturer or businessman is a specialist. His specialist time, effort and knowledge is being dissipated."*

— Contract Cleaners publication.



*"Well, what type of work can contract cleaners do? They clean anything and everything. Nothing is too complicated nor too dirty."*

— Contract Cleaners publication.

The industry has grown by leaps and bounds since the war. The really fast growth has been very recent, since 1965.

COMPANY	TURNOVER	PROFIT after tax
Industrial Contract Cleaners & subsids	1968: £ 850,891	£ 57,438
	1969: 1,843,383	111,573
Pritchard Cleaners & subsids	1968: 6,700,000	265,833
	1969: 10,900,000	373,761
Initial Services & subsids	1968: 21,880,538	1,546,749
	1969: 23,017,289	1,603,614

## PROFITS ARE GOING UP

The large firms make bigger profits than the smaller firms. They are able to extract more profit out of the work women do because they operate on a larger scale. The rate of exploitation in the big firms is thus higher.

Very little capital goes into equipment. The main cost for the employer is wages. So it is in the interests of the employers to keep the wages as low as possible.

Male full time cleaners earn double the women's wages — £20.98 (£9.62 is the average full time wage throughout the country — London rates are higher.) So it is in the interests of the employers to employ women.

Male part-time workers get the same rates as women. This is why night-cleaners, who are full-time workers, are nearly all women.

On one particular building, The Music Corporation of America in Mayfair, Office Cleaning Services have a contract which costs M.C.A. £132 per week.

The labour he employs consists of two women, who clean the whole building, five nights a week and whose combined wages amounts to £26.

## conditions OF WORK IN NIGHT CLEANING

### LONG HOURS

10 p.m. to 6 a.m. generally, with slight variations.

### LOW PAY

Most people get more money for doing night work. Not cleaners — they get less.

Pay is around £12, sometimes more, sometimes less. Wages vary from building to building. The same cleaning company can pay women different rates.

When tax, insurance and fares are subtracted, cleaners can be left with only about £6.

### NO SECURITY

Cleaners can be sacked without notice. Often they don't get holiday pay.

### HARD WORK

Cleaning is physically tiring. It can be very heavy work. Sometimes it's also dirty.

If someone is away you still have to clean the building. When you do someone else's work you don't get full pay, you get "cover money". This means you do twice the work for about 40p extra. So it is always in the interests of the employers to keep the buildings under-staffed.

### NO PROTECTION

The Factory Acts don't apply to cleaners. This means that there is no restriction on night work, that very young girls can work all night, that cleaners who are pregnant continue to work all night.

Also, if you have an accident at work it's very difficult to get compensation, as the cleaning contractors are likely to deny responsibility.

# THE CSU

ON CONTRACT CLEANING

Government cleaners who are still employed directly and are in the Civil Service Union get higher wages and have to clean less space, (1,000 square feet per cleaner, compared with 15,000 in contract cleaning).

Consequently, contract cleaning costs are 30% lower than direct cleaning; which means that government offices are gradually going over to contract cleaning. But the 30% saving is at the expense of the women cleaners.

*The Civil Service Union told the Prices and Income Board report:*

"The main reason for the difference in costs between direct cleaning and contract cleaning... is that contractors pay low wages and get poorer conditions than the government."

John Vickers, General Secretary of the Civil Service Union, says:

"In all my years in the Trade Union movement I've never come across conditions like those in the contract cleaning business. It's like something out of the nineteenth century."

*TUC Conference*

1968 Conference expressed strong disagreement with the Government's proposal to transfer one third of office cleaning in the Civil Service to private cleaning contractors.

In June 1968, representatives of the TUC General Council met the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Although they said they thought productivity and efficiency in cleaning could be improved, they said this should be done within the direct cleaning system by improving materials, equipment and training. They said more money would be saved in the long run this way. They questioned the government estimates and pointed out the low wages of contract cleaners, and they suggested a centralised cleaning force and incentive bonus scheme.

In correspondence later, the General Council asked if the reduction of one third could exclude offices in areas of high unemployment.

(from the report of the 39th annual conference of representatives of Trade Unions catering for women workers 1969.)

*The CSU Resolution*

The 1968 CSU motion calling on the government to make sure that cleaning contractors in the Civil Service should be restricted to firms paying the same rates as direct cleaning, and the General Council suggestion that the government should amend the Fair Wages Resolution, were rejected.

*The Fair Wages Resolution* was passed by Parliament in 1946, one of the first acts of Attlee's government.

It lays down that contractors to the Government, Local Authorities and all public utility undertakings, shall recognise the right of their employees to belong to a Trade Union, and also, in Civil Service jargon, says that the contractor shall pay wages not less than those paid by the best employer in the trade.

The government refused to amend the Fair Wages Resolution to cover contract cleaning in public buildings, but admitted (31.3.69) in principle that the wages paid in the Civil Service sector must be one of the factors taken into account.

Although the Civil Service Union have taken cases to the Industrial Court, so far the courts have said that direct cleaning rates cannot be compared with contract cleaning rates. This means that the level of wages in contract cleaning can be held down - which of course suits the cleaning contractors.

However, it does mean that cleaners employed by contractors can get their rates raised slightly by going to an Industrial Court through the Union. In this way they can get parity with other cleaners.

In 1971, for example, a firm called General Cleaners were ordered by the Industrial Court at Manchester to increase the rate they paid their workers from 24p to 27.5, to cover the actual hours worked on what they called a 'job and finish' basis.

*Suggestions to the PIB*

The Trade Unions involved (Transport and General Workers Union, General & Municipal Workers Union, National Union of Public Employees, Civil Service Union) said there should be a joint council of unions and employers and the Government should use its influence as a major customer to raise cleaners' rates.

The PIB report rejected these proposals as inflationary (!), but said one union should make a determined effort to unionise. The PIB also rejected the employers' suggestion that a Wages Council should be set up. These have not in the past improved the pay of low-paid workers.



CLEANING IS

## women's work

Many of the women are forced to work at night because there are no nursery facilities. This means cleaners often don't get much sleep. Over a long period this is bound to affect your health, because you are doing two jobs.

Many cleaners have a lot of children, and usually quite a few young children because this is when money is tightest in a family. All women have a very narrow choice in jobs, and women who go into cleaning for various reasons have even less choice.

*They are often unsupported*

The Prices and Incomes Board report published in Spring 1971 said that 1/4 of the women in their survey were the sole providers of their families.

*They are poor*

The PIB report said that about one fifth of the women they surveyed were from families with an income below £14 a week. More than 3% were living on the poverty line.

*They are often immigrant women*

Which means many jobs are closed to them. West Indian, African, Irish, Indian, Spanish, Cypriot women go into cleaning because they have little chance of getting other jobs. Even within cleaning they have less chance of being promoted. Have you ever met a coloured supervisor?

*Age*

There are women of all ages cleaning at night, from very young girls to old women with white hair. The PIB report found that the women in their survey tended to be under 40 (when the children are young) or over 60 (supplementing their pension).

We are not certain whether this is general.

*"Unskilled"*

Cleaning is sometimes regarded as unskilled work that anyone can do. In general the definition of "skilled" means privilege, and in the long run privileges only keep people divided.

But in the short term even it's wrong to say that cleaning is unskilled. Cleaners have their own kind of skill. But like many of the things women can do in our society it's not acknowledged.

*"Casual work"*

Night cleaners are sometimes called casual workers. This is completely WRONG. They are working a FULL WORKING WEEK.

Some people think that the cleaners only work for pin money. This is rubbish. People who think like that should try cleaning offices for a bit.

It is true that there are always women coming on for short periods, at Christmas or during a long strike, such as the Post Office strike, or when a man is off sick. But this is for the basic necessities.

However there is a large group of women who work for years and years in cleaning. Indeed after 12 or 15 years it gets so that you can't work in the day even though your children have grown up. Your body has adjusted to night work.

# victimization and militant action

Last April the Cleaners Action Group made representations to the Strand Cleaning Co., to meet and discuss the sacking of Mrs. May Videll, a West Indian night cleaner at Lutyens in Moorgate. When Strand refused, the CAG organized a picket outside Fleet Building, another Post Office building cleaned by Strand. The object being that picketing was effective only if people could see them and therefore they should picket a more obvious building during the day.

The second point was to inform the day workers and Post Office Union members so that they might get their own Unions to take up the matter with the management of their building and insist that the woman be re-instated, or at least that the Strand should negotiate with the Cleaners Union.

Also that the Post Office management should insist that the terms of the Government contract between themselves and the Strand, in which it is clearly said that no woman should be discouraged from being a member of a Union, should be strictly enforced or else the contract terminated.

This particular case was clearly one where a cleaner, who was known to be a member of the Union, was being victimised.

## MAY VIDELL SAYS NO TO THE GOV'NER

Here May Videll is interviewed by a member of Women's Liberation and the CAG, shortly after the picket.

Q: Why do you actually do night work?

A: Because of my children, you see, I cannot manage to work in a hospital full time, I had to see about one this morning, 7:30 to 1:00 for £10, which is a good salary for me, but 7:30 to 1:00 I can't manage because of my youngest child. The others are alright, they can look after themselves to go to school, but she, I cannot leave her here on her own.

Q: Aren't there any nurseries in this area?

A: No, well I tried two nurseries already and one told me "Full up", and the other, even though she had a vacancy, wouldn't grant me the favour because I'm not living in the district where I'm supposed to look for a nursery for her.

Q: What else do you have to do during the day besides get the children off to school?

A: Well, I have to take them to school, I have to come now and prepare something for them to eat because I cannot afford a full dinner money for four of them at school. I have to take them back to school and go collect them in the afternoon, do my housework, cook and wash.

Q: How much sleep do you get?

A: Well, two hours, when my husband is in, he's working in the afternoon, he helps me do a bit of cooking when he's in, but when he's not in, I'm not getting no rest.

Q: Can you get along like that or does it make you feel irritable and nervous?

A: If I don't get any rest I always feel nervous, 'cause my doctor has stopped me from my night job once, he told me I'm not getting enough rest with all these children. Even when I do rest, when I wake up I'm grumpy.

Q: What does your husband do?

A: He's a bus conductor.

Q: Would it be hard to get along on just his income?

A: Yes, it's very hard because now he's worse off 'cause there's not getting overtime on Transport.

Q: How much of the money goes for food and rent?

A: If I go to the market on Saturday morning with ten pounds, I'm not coming back with no change in my wallet. I still have to ask him for something to buy my paraffin, pay my milkman, I'm paying 17/6 for milk every week, I'm not getting no free milk.

Q: How much were you paid for night cleaning at Lutyens?

A: £13, but after you pay tax and insurance you come home with £10 and a couple shillings.

Q: During an eight hour night, did you get much time for breaks?

A: We were getting one break of an hour, 1:30 to 2:30.

Q: Was there a canteen?

A: No, you even have to bring your own glass.

Q: How did you come to join the Union, and what happened after that?

A: I didn't know much about the Union. It's Lucy who told me to join the Union. She phoned and told me if any Union women pass where I work, fill in the form and join the union.

So one night I saw a woman, she asked me if I want to join the union, I said yes and paid my money. Then Stan Arnold, one of the managers, said if anyone joins the union, they are going to get the sack. So I said to the girls on the building, Stan cannot tell us anything about the union, but the other girls were scared.

One night, when I went in and paid my union dues, I saw Stan had a book and was ticking all the girls who paid in the union. One refused to pay because she saw Stan and was scared. She asked me to pay for her.

So then when I was on my floor, Brian (another manager) came up to me and said "Are you finished?" I said yes I'm finished. He said, "No, you haven't finished yet, the building got a lot of work for you to do". I said I'm not doing anything else because I'm finished.

Then he picked up the carpet, passed his hand under the carpet and said "Look, you haven't finished here". I said yes I'm finished, do you have a Hoover? How do you expect me to clean the place? He said, "You can lick it up". I said no, you better lick it up because you're the manager and you're supposed to supply us with materials to clean the place. He said, "No I won't lick it up, you lick it up, you lick it up, you black bastard". I said, if I'm a black bastard then you're a white bastard. Then he said I'd have to be off the building, and I said I'm not going to be off until I get my card and my money. He insisted I have to leave the building, and he went off with the supervisor and the other man Stan.

I was afraid to go down with him and went to No. 6 floor. When I reached there, the other women asked me what happened. I said it's Brian who came to fight me, calling me all kinds of names and told me to leave the building.

Stan, Brian and Mary followed me right to the gates and Brian said "If you didn't go I would have to call the police for you". I was in such a hurry to leave the building that I left my umbrella, and when I went back for it, I didn't get it.

Q: Did they complain about your work before you joined the Union?

A: Never complained about my rooms, 'cause she herself, Mary, the supervisor, came on my floor and said to me she understood when I came on here, the seventh floor was very filthy, now it's the best floor on the building.

Q: Do you think it's a clear case of victimising people who join the Union?

A: Yes, I believe so, as long as they know you're in the Union, they try to push you around and give you the sack.

Q: What does your husband think about you getting involved in the Union?

A: Well, he don't mind because himself, he's a unionist too.

### FROM ONE OF OUR SYMPATHETIC TELEPHONISTS

The Immigration Bill will be passed in a few months. It will make legal the discrimination which black girls already suffer, and is aimed to weaken the union by dividing workers against themselves.

In the face of this attack, the solidarity which has already grown between cleaners will be even more essential. Nobody's job is safe where one woman can be sacked.

"In joining together in a union, cleaners have shown that they know that their real enemy is not other cleaners but the boss, and it is against him that we must unite."

— LONDON NIGHT CLEANER.



## LEAFLETTERS REPORT:

THE SHELL CENTRE

### ..waiting for action

Four of us from the Pimlico group and two from the Chiswick group began to leaflet the Shell buildings last June. The campaign had been under way since the previous November.

Membership of the T&GWU was building up slowly but we were still twenty or so short of the 50 needed before the night-cleaners could form their own branch within the Union. Shell was chosen as the next target because altogether 80 cleaners work in it: 65 on the 'upstream' building and 15 on the 'downstream'.

At first we were slightly nervous. Most of us felt embarrassingly middle-class. However, we were very encouraged to discover that the majority of the women stopped to speak to us, and several joined within the first month.

Two or three of the women who first joined have been mainly responsible for the others joining. We now have about 22 altogether in the union on the two buildings. Three dropped out the week after they first joined.

We have had two meetings with some of the cleaners in a cafe near the Shell buildings. We have also had a meeting in a pub with the T&GWU official. He has promised to write to Shell, to ask them for a room on the premises to hold a meeting with his union members. This, he hoped, will reveal Shell's attitude to the Union.

The two buildings have different contractors: Office Cleaning Services on the upstream building, and Pritchards on the downstream one. We were hoping that conditions on the two buildings would vary, so that this might provide the long-awaited opportunity for Union intervention. However, the two buildings do receive the same wages: £12, although conditions do vary a little.

If the Union could just achieve one small victory then we would have got our 'foot in the door', as the Union official Churchouse puts it, and a foot in the door with contractors is what the campaign urgently needs.

At the moment, women are still joining the Union at Shell, but the majority of them are very apprehensive and frightened that they will get the sack.

The supervisor on the downstream building is fairly encouraging, but the one on the upstream seems to delight in provoking the women she suspects. The attitude of the supervisor to the union can be very important; the two weeks that the Shell upstream supervisor was away was when we managed to hold the two meetings in a cafe.

At the moment we are waiting to hear the outcome of the union's letter to Shell. In the meantime we are going to show extracts from the night-cleaners film at one of our houses on a Sunday afternoon.

COOKS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & SCIENCE

### ..lost faith

Lucy first went out leafletting with May Hobbs and Fergus from International Socialists in November 1970. They went to Somerset House, Australia House and the I.T.V. Centre in Kingsway. The night caretakers were mostly friendly and told them when the cleaners came on duty.

She then went to Somerset House alone, but found this rather difficult as she could only talk to one or two women at once, and the others would hurry off into the building. However, those she spoke to about joining the Union were very keen, although some of the black women were afraid they might lose their jobs.

After this she went with Liz, as they could talk to many more women if there were two of them. After many weeks of leafletting and talking, they tried to persuade the cleaners to choose somebody to be the collector of their weekly subscriptions of 1/-, but this failed, as nobody wanted to take on the responsibility. So they decided to collect the money themselves each week.

Actually, there was only one building where 8 women joined in one evening, and one actually volunteered to collect the dues.

They made their two buildings for permanent collection Cook's building in Mayfair and the Department of Education & Science, which was nearby.

The D.E.S. was a building they leafletted consistently from November to July. There were about ten women here, about 7 of them black. The supervisor was very suspicious and hostile and constantly criticised the Union, telling the women they were wasting their money. Only the black women joined.

They made the mistake of giving the impression that the Union would obtain wage rises and improved conditions quite soon: indeed, this was what they believed at the beginning. They had never worked with Unions or been involved in any political action at all, and didn't realise the enormous amount of work and planning involved.

The women paid regularly for months; they were given the Cleaners' Voice newsletter and the Transport & General newspaper. The film people came along several times to interview them, much to the supervisor's resentment.

The Union refused to negotiate because there wasn't enough support ('enough being at least 50% unionisation in any building before they would negotiate for wages').

They gradually realised how powerless they were to help, what with combating union bureaucracy, hostility from supervisors and other white women, and the women's own ignorance of Union affairs. They felt they had deceived the cleaners because they hadn't explained that the struggle of unionisation might extend over years. At the beginning they hadn't understood this themselves; owing to the disproportionate amount of publicity the campaign had received, they were under the impression that success was near.

During the summer they went away; other people helped sporadically to collect the dues, but the women lost faith. They still see them from time to time, but they don't take their money any more.

SOMERSET HOUSE

### ..still paying

After the usual pattern of talking to cleaners as they went in every week, 8 women joined the Union after about two months. Two were more aware of their exploitation than others; they were not alarmed by their employers' knowing about their membership. The others were more wary, but they all talked to each other during tea-break. Some were friends anyway, and in the end all joined except 4 cleaners on the building.

The company supervisor was very rude about the women, and scornful of their right to better wages and conditions. You were really back in a mid-nineteenth-century situation; joining a union, to her, was some sort of a crime.

Opposite Somerset House is Bush House, with about 7 night cleaners. Several of them seemed interested, so we asked May Hobbs if she could talk to them and the Somerset House people.

In fact, only 2 came from Somerset House and 4 from Bush House. It seems general that night cleaners find it difficult to come to meetings; they lead busy and tiring lives. 5 women at Somerset House have 5 or 6 children. Also, many people are shy of "a meeting"; the word doesn't necessarily mean anything to them. Of course they are also aware of the companies' attitude to unions, and they don't want to lose their jobs or get victimised.

Of those who came to May's meeting from Bush House, two were white, two black. It came out later that the whites did not get on with the coloured women, and one white woman even said afterwards that she would not join if blacks were going to get higher wages. In the event, the white women did not join, but three black women did.

So women at Somerset House and Bush House have paid union dues for six months, and they have until now been keen that the union might achieve something. But it is clear that if nothing happens in the next couple of months they will get fed up, and who can blame them?

# ShrewNotes

A number of disadvantages are now apparent both with the production and the content of Shrew. For instance, three months have passed without an issue; we have not even sold out of the ones printed before that. This points to a distribution problem which itself reflects deeper problems to do with the magazine.

Since the new series began, two years ago, with the History group's double issue, Shrew has been intended to be both financially self-supporting and an additional source of income either to individual groups selling or to the Workshop account; it was meant to show the present state of activity of the Workshop to those within the movement as well as trying to provoke outside interest, and also to report on relevant events.

However, the magazine has tended to become an ever accumulating series of parallel statements about the group's present stage of consciousness. Although each issue has had a different emphasis, there is no evident continuity.

Shrew has been produced each month by a different group, who has been delegated its time on a rota system. Various hazards have disturbed this, such as a group who have been splitting or who have somehow evaded the advance warnings. Groups have even backed out some weeks after their two months' notice has been given, leaving a last minute save by another group, or, as recently, a gap.

A stronger Shrew Collective was formed earlier this year, when the ten or so group representatives who came regularly decided it would be more efficient if we committed ourselves to particular jobs, for a time; we broke the jobs into convening, finance, lay-out adviser, collecting general items for publishing, and three types of distribution; supplying shops, bulk orders and overseas orders. This group is a service group. We would emphasise that Shrew

cannot function without practical co-operation from the groups, many of whom, for example, refuse to distribute it personally; is this apathy because they don't identify with its content, or even on a smaller scale, with its name?

A number of people now feel that Shrew should be more topical; rather than relying on members to magically produce a lot of original material, perhaps a different local group or project group would best function more as an editorial board for each issue. This would allow the group to gain just as much practical experience without necessarily limiting the personal quality of the writing or relying on professional contributions. The present issue is an advance here, since it is produced by an action group, the Nightcleaners' Campaign.

So the collective has decided to project a new image of Shrew, which as a tabloid newspaper, will incorporate the previously rather ignored open pages; this open or collective area will include information on events (other than in the newsletter) book reviews--for which we are already being sent copies by publishers--films, demonstrations, meetings. The paper should also include pieces on theory. The possibility of advertising certain relevant items, such as shops which sell WL literature, is being looked into, since it would help finance Shrew. In order to broaden the readership it should present more communication within the Workshop; if it reported on the progress of campaigns and local activities, this would relate groups working on similar activities, perhaps increase mobilisation and inform others involved in different projects.

Any floundering of Shrew is bound to be symptomatic of problems in the Workshop, thus Shrew is important because it could act for Workshop as a unifying power. Carola Moon

## The Look of Shrew

In the new year Shrew will have a new look, and it seems a good time to write about its lay-out and general appearance.

Change is necessary, if Shrew is to be sold for a regular source of income for the movement. In the past Shrew has not made sufficient money, we don't even sell the 3,000 copies that are printed each month. Distribution must be increased and we won't increase sales, if we don't change Shrew's image, which at present is very much the school magazine image. We must be more professional.

The collective feels that in the past groups have never had a proper collective items page, so we will be extending this service i.e. news, book reviews, plays, films, demos etc. with the collective members contributing regularly, plus of course anyone else who cares to write in.

The new Shrew will be in a tabloid form (similar to the Women's newspaper, plus one colour). To sum up I've mentioned some important points that might be noted by groups doing Shrew.

- 1) To keep layout simple, so as it's not confusing to the eyes.
- 2) Select similar type faces throughout each issue.
- 3) Check that all pages are numbered in correct order, and that spacing is even.
- 4) Photographs, illustrations and cartoons should be set square, not falling off the pages, as has happened.
- 5) To have a list of contents on the front pages, very important from selling angle.
- 6) Design an eye-catching heading for the cover and use the same each time; in the past headings have been in a variety of positions, on the front. Very often hidden in shops, newsagents, etc.
- 7) With new readers in mind, try to keep articles from being inward looking, let's be more ready to appeal to all women.

It would be interesting to hear from groups who have done Shrew, what they think of the above comments.

Sue Murdoch  
Anne de Winter

Shrew Collective

## Abortion Workshop

Thirtyfive representatives of local groups attended the Abortion Workshop (9th October). Diane Munday of the Abortion Law Reform Association was the principal speaker. A doctor described current abortion methods, followed by two tape-recorded interviews; one with Harvey Karman (cannula method of "lunchtime" abortion) which was then commented on by Professor Huntingford, instrumental in introducing the technique in this country.

A close look at the 1967 Abortion Act, reveals that the element of choice for a doctor of any opinion is legally very wide, whereas a woman seeking an abortion is not so privileged. Since the Act the total number of abortions has risen steeply, although N.H.S. abortions accounted for only 53 percent of the total in the first quarter of 1971. An evident expansion of exploitation in the private sector where prices vary from £50 to £600.

More reliable pregnancy testing, sympathetic G.P.s; and early appointments at hospital out-patient clinics could drastically reduce the number of late abdominal hysterotomies, which in 1969 accounted for 22 percent of the total number of abortions performed.

An abortion is less costly for the State than a full-term pregnancy, but resources are not being re-allocated from the waning obstetric sector. In addition the medical profession as a whole, conservatively rejects or misapplies the proven, cheap, safe method of "lunch-time" abortion with the Karman Cannula; a painless out-patient procedure which reduces patient trauma to an absolute minimum and drastically economises on staff, equipment and operating time.

A salutary lesson for the Women's Liberation Movement which emerged from this conference, was that if our aims and demands are to be realized they must be based on a consideration of public opinion, medical opinion and practicalities.

The A.L.R.A. speaker hinted that our usefulness to date, had simply been that of an extremist left wing, which made A.L.R.A. proposals look moderate and reasonable by contrast - a poor way for us to effect change.

Repeatedly the point was made that political moderation and practical commonsense had been and would remain the best tools for making abortion more easily available. We heard the inside story of how the wording of the Present Act was haggled over and bartered for phrase by phrase in the basement of the Commons. It was also felt by the speaker that in the present climate of opinion, an open confrontation in Parliament could not improve the Act, but only damage and reduce it.

Then came the crunch - what are we to do? After one proposal to push liberal doctors until we made them into radical doctors (whatever that means), had been rejected three sensible proposals emerged.

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## The Meeting at Ealing Town Hall October 1971

At the meeting there were representatives from socialist women, the workshop and members of the public; about thirty of us sitting in a circular arrangement.

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I don't think the people who came to Ealing Town Hall to find out about W.L. were so

lucky. In fact they were very unlucky because they found themselves in the middle of an argument which would mean very little to any one who did not know a modicum about left-wing politics. Some of the audience obviously had some understanding of left-wing politics and several people left early from the audience.

The main theme of the meeting was should we spend time trying to liberate ourselves in our personal lives or should we go out trade-unionising working class women.

Debbie of Ealing W.L. Workshop: We want to explore what it means to be a woman. How do we want to behave? How do we want other people to behave? What is common to our oppression and what have women in common? We have a movement without leaders. Some people think this produces chaos but it works without a pre-ordained structure because each person is responsible for her own actions.

Thus the pattern is already changing. Why have the working classes put up with so much for so long? Why have women put up with so much for so long?

Debbie: We have been kept in society as it is because we have internalised our problems.

A man in the audience: Women in China and Eastern European countries have reforms. Women play a part in every part of society. They are doctors. Does this change women's attitudes?

Leonora of socialist women: Women are doctors but this is one of the less well paid jobs in those countries. The family structure still exists. Abortion is only just becoming available.

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People in the western world tend to live in isolated family units and this isolation particularly affects women who think of themselves in the context of the family unit.

Jan: She pushes her man back to work if he is on strike because if there is no money coming in that will effect her little family unit. She becomes a supporter of the status quo.

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Isolation reduces the chance of a person feeling This is my world, the quality of life around me in the outside world is my responsibility. Being in a W.L. group gives the individual more confidence to go out and do something about it. Eventually this may lead to grabbing the means of production.

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Again we felt the violence prevalent at the conference should not just be seen as violence against men - that in fact a larger part of it was violence against women. One of us pointed out that Fanon in his analysis of the colonized, and Reich in his analysis of the psychologically repressed, both commented that the oppressed are full of rage and frequently fight both amongst themselves and against themselves.

Though we felt the violence was amongst us women, we also felt that conferences should in future be closed to men, partly so that they do not act as scape-goats preventing us seeing the nature of our rage, and partly because one or two clearly do act in male-chauvinist, leadership ways towards the women in their groups.

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AT. by groups and individuals on the causes of women's oppression, the role and function of the W.L. movement.

1st day -

morning:- this was taken up with the presentation of papers in a plenary session, then discussion of them in smaller groups. Many groups felt that this was not the most important or necessary type of discussion, so by the afternoon many women criticised the structure of the conference and walked out of the plenary session to discuss on their own what they themselves wanted. evening:- in the plenary session again, it was proposed by the women who had split off earlier (about 1/2) that we change the structure of the conference for the following day i.e. meet in small groups in the morning to talk about various topics including one group on the problems arising from this conference and the future organisation of the national movement. In the afternoon, it was suggested that a plenary session be devoted to discussion of future national organisation. These proposals were accepted almost unanimously.

2nd day -

morning:- the subgroups met (groups of between 30 and 100 women) to discuss subjects including lesbianism, education, industry, the family, the role of the NCC, Information Service and national organisation etc.

afternoon:- plenary session. There was a disruption over the choice of chairwoman when Ellen Malos of Bristol, with overwhelming support from the women present, was elected to replace Chris Mackinnon of the Women's Liberation Front (London). The Union of Women (Hemel Hempstead) objected to a) this decision b) a resolution to ask one of their male members (considered by an overwhelming majority to be a disruptive element) to leave, and c) to the obvious feeling of the conference that the women present could take decisions despite not being a WNCC meeting. At this point they withdrew from the conference.

The session began with reports from the

sub-groups. Several proposals came from the sub-group which discussed the future organisation of the movement.

1st major decision:- was that this conference, being just as representative of the movement in Britain as the WNCC if not more so (there being about 70 groups represented, and about 30 of them affiliated to the WNCC) had the right to take decisions regarding the future of the W.L. movement in this country.

This was carried overwhelmingly.

Then proposals from the sub-group on organisation were combined with proposals from the floor.

- 1) That the Women's National Coordinating Committee shall be abolished.
- 2) That this conference decides that national meetings shall take place twice yearly only, one in the north and one in the south.
- 3) That regional groupings be encouraged and regional meetings arranged and that organisers for this be chosen/volunteer at this conference.
- 4) That the Leamington Women's Liberation Information Service shall be recognised as the central Information Service, but without power to make policy.

These resolutions were all passed quickly and excitedly, but it was already late in the afternoon and a large number of people had to leave by 4.30 p.m. so practical details were worked out hurriedly.

- 1) The question of regional groupings was partly clarified; that for London and the South-East, is to include all London groups, Brighton, Lewes, Guildford, Hemel Hempstead, Canterbury, Crawley, Canvey Island, Isle of Sheppey, N. Romford, Reading, St. Albans, Stevenage. The Arsenal branch of the Women's Liberation Workshop will act as co-ordinators.
- 2) The next national conference will be held in March. It will be organised through a

meeting on January 8th in Bristol, of regional representatives.

Suggestions are needed about where to hold the next national conference.

MISS RIVERS AND MISS BRIDGES by Geraldine Symons published by Macmillan at £1.50.

Perhaps one is always alarmed when a popular writer of children's books shows off, within the first few pages of a story, her full repertoire of dated words and phrases. Awfully, frightfully, scrumptious, golumptious are all these and so is a rather overdone awe and excitement for London and for actresses' clothes. Though these may fit our view of the era in which the story is set (Asquith's Edwardian London) it hardly accords with what we are told are the nonchalant airs and sophisticated tastes of the modern child.

But the book does touch on modern subjects. Police violence, protest demos, discriminatory legislation and prison conditions are amusingly woven into a delightful story of two school girls' attempts to strike blows for the suffragette cause.

Geraldine Symons' latest book is on the whole a success. It is not grippingly exciting but young readers may forgive this and enjoy the way it pokes fun at themselves, parents, adults and even idealism and narrowmindedness. For the Authoress's greatest quality is that she can catch facets of a child's mind or adult behaviour, describe them sympathetically and make children laugh at them. Indeed this quality of sympathetic fun-poking makes this book an excellent way of introducing children to the ideals of the Women's liberation movement.

Jenny Peel.

*'Shrew notes' is compiled by the 'Shrew' collective from contributions. Please send your contributions in to us: Shrew Collective, Women's Liberation Workshop, 12/13 Little Newport St, London WC2*



# THE "WOMAN QUESTION" and cleaners

## WHY IS IT HARD TO UNIONISE?

The cleaning contractors are completely opposed on the whole. They not only warn and threaten women but sack them on various pretexts, e.g. inefficiency, or go over to evening cleaning.

The night cleaners work in groups of 10 or even fewer, (although on very big buildings you can get 30 to 50 women employed). This makes it much harder for cleaners to organise than workers who are all concentrated together.

On the small buildings it's not too hard for the contractor to get other people in if the women complain or strike. The only hope on small buildings is to have support from women on other buildings cleaned by the same company. Help from the workers who work on buildings in the day time is an important extra help.

The isolation of cleaners is made worse by the fact that they have so little time. The only night they can come to a meeting is Friday or Saturday. This means that their husband or someone else has to be there to babysit.

We've tried meeting on Saturday afternoon with the children, in an area not too far from where people live. But cleaners are scattered in different parts of London, and there's no guarantee that the women working in a particular building can all get to a meeting in the same area. We've also tried a meeting in the centre of town, with transport laid on, and meetings in pubs near the buildings before work. The main problem about these has been that the cleaners have a lot of things to do before they go to work.

As with all women at work, the attitude to the Union is connected with the particular situation of women in society. Many cleaners are doubtful about the union because it doesn't have an immediate effect, and it can mean simply trouble and the loss of the bit of money they are getting at the moment.

The distrust we all have as women towards other women, and the fact that the area managers are men and can be superior towards women in ways that they couldn't be towards male workers, combined with the brainwashing women all receive to take things from men in authority, puts some women off unions.

Even at work too, cleaners are responsible for things at home and have to think about shopping and prices; some of the women are against unions because they hold them responsible for rising prices. Also, the women who have come on for a short time feel it's not worth joining a union.

There is nothing automatic about joining a union in their life, so the women who have kept on paying tend to get fed up when nothing happens, while a small minority really think about it a lot, and about the general position of women in society as a whole. But for us leafletters it is very hard sometimes to try and persuade women to keep on paying, because we know how much cleaners need every penny they earn.

On the other hand, there is nothing the cleaners can do without the first step of joining a union. But first steps take such an exhaustingly long time.

It's hard too to explain to people who have never been in a union before the limitations of a union. They say why bother to join at all? This is a difficulty which not only leafletters but cleaners who have become convinced about it have faced.

Cleaners are all nationalities, which splits things up more, although not as much as it could. We've found that it's more likely to be the supervisors who say things against black women. But because the work is in such small groups, black and white women often are quite close and friendly. No black supervisors though.

The supervisor works very close to the women; she is not a remote authority but a person who is either liked or disliked as a person. Supervisors vary in their attitude to the Union. They can be either bitterly opposed or really very strongly in support because they know what the set-up is in cleaning very well.

## WOMEN'S WORK

The only general characteristic of women's work is low pay. Historically, jobs which had been done by women in the home, after the growth of factories and large towns were seen as women's work.

Because women were also doing house-work and caring for families, and because of the way women are brought up to see the man as boss, they found it more difficult to organise to defend themselves.

So women, along with immigrant labour, are useful to employers to work at cheaper rates.

As machines and technology developed, jobs could be broken down into simple repetitive tasks. Often these became women's work.

Nowadays, along with the development of industry and very expensive machines, there is more and more paper work in offices, so jobs like cleaning have increased. In these jobs labour is the main item in the employer's costs, so it is particularly important to keep the wages low. Again, many labour-intensive jobs have become seen as women's work.

Because of the position of women in the society, both men and women have tended to accept this as somehow unalterable.

Because of the economic pressure on working-class men to be the main provider for the family, and because in capitalism ideas of manhood are confused with ideas of dominance and power which are bound up with cash, men often have a divided attitude. They recognise the need for solidarity at work, but also fear the competition of women and immigrant workers.

With women too, men often feel deep down that their manhood is threatened if women can do what they can do.

We have all been brainwashed since childhood into ideas about our own identities. Just as black people used to be taught that they were happy, smiling people who liked picking cotton and serving white people, women have been taught that they are only happy when they are submitting to men - husbands or employers - and that women are biologically suited to clean, cook, sew, type, serve, wait or handle the simplest process in a factory, but incapable of mending the machine if it goes wrong: men's work.

If you're black, working class and a woman, you lose out three times over.

## HOW CAN WE CHANGE THIS?

In Women's Liberation we often get depressed because the more you think about the position of women in society as a whole, the more you realise has to be done to get any real change. Obviously you can only start with small things, and it's easy to feel you're not getting anywhere.

What we have to realise when we feel like that is to remember that small changes can have much bigger effects than we expect. Remember the Ford's sewing machinists - they encouraged women who had never worked inside a car factory.

But also, as the saying goes "We may not have much but there's a lot of us", and once women start communicating hope, start wondering if things have to always go on as before, learn to trust other women and become confident and proud, all that careful brainwashing gets messed up.

Suddenly women won't take it any more.

It's so simple: when you really despair, or when you feel exasperated because we change things so slowly, keep talking to other women. Many of them are against Women's Liberation, but as you talk about their lives it strengthens you because everything they say helps you to remember why you joined Women's Liberation yourself.



# YOU WILL WIN



Jeff Katz

## Bernadette Devlin Speaks to Cleaners

My main purpose in coming here tonight is basically to support the attempt to organise the women cleaners for their own protection, and to explain why you should be in the Union.

### THE CHOICE

Now most people in various forms of work have a choice to make, and that's not so difficult as the women cleaners; their choice is whether to join an existing union in the particular factory or enterprise they work in. The union's already there, it's had experience, they know the strength of the union and their choice is: will I join it, or will I not join it?

In fact, the majority of workers will join the union because it's quite easy for them to see the strength of the organised group and the weakness of the individual.

Your problem is much more difficult, because even though you are a branch of the TGW, the attitude of the leaders will be essentially: you are women, first of all, and the fact that you're only night cleaners.

Now we had the same problem in Northern Ireland with a small country factory where 150 TGWU workers were made redundant. The shop steward went to London to meet Jack Jones, who said you're just a tiny little union, go away. They weren't scared off; they went back and said: look, there are 150 union members, 200 factory workers; our strength lies in having 200 union workers, that is, having the whole factory unionised before we go out.

They are now so well organised that they are prepared inside two months, on their own organised and united strength, to reopen the factory in their own name, without their employers. That is the basic strength of organised workers.

### INTIMIDATION

Most people in this country don't know what their rights are. Most people can be intimidated by somebody bigger than them, stronger than them or richer than them, coming down and saying: if you do such and such thing I'll take something from: if you join a union I'll fire you.

Now your response to that can be: alright, I won't join the union. And then next day you work 2, 3, 4, 5 hours and he's supposed to be paying you 10 shillings an hour, and he says I'll only pay you 8, shillings an hour. And you say that's not good enough, and he says if you don't take it I'll fire you. You can do nothing about that either. If you dye your hair, he can say I don't like it, I'll fire you.

### SELLING OUT

There are far too many of our people prepared to walk into a job where a union worker would be thrown out. If they fire somebody who's in the union, there are far too many women who'd be prepared to walk in and say: alright, I'll take her job. That's selling out your own class. You walk in and say: O.K. throw her out, it's for my benefit. And that's the kind of thing that keeps wages down.

As long as you're pitching yourselves against one another, as long as you say: O.K. the employer sets the rules of the game, you're fighting against yourselves, and he can continue to set the rules of the game.

### ONE WOMAN

He can say: O.K., as long as those people won't fight, we can keep the wages down. As long as they're not organised, they're just puny women coming to me one at a time, expecting me to worry about whether they've got kids or not, expecting me to worry about whether they can rear families on the money we give them or not. It's not my concern.

Now if you're cleaning in a large block at night, everybody knows the pressures that can be exerted on you. I know the pressures that employers are apt to use. They know that even union leaders don't take the time to explain the facts of any situation to us.

He's quite happy rearing his own family, but it takes exactly the same amount to feed his wealthy kids, they eat the same amount of bread, they need the same amount of clothing and the same amount of heat or they'll die, just like working-class kids, only he's got money to do it with and most of us don't have the money or else why would you bother to go out and clean large office blocks? We do it because we have to earn the money to live.

Now he dictates the money you get for doing it. He'll tell you what it's worth, tell you what your life is worth, he'll barter your kids, your family, for your night's work. And so long as you're just one tiny little woman, he's bigger than you, because he owns the block, the control of cleaning it, and essentially he owns you. You own nothing.

If you make a fuss about it, essentially what it boils down to is the fact that he also owns the law court. The laws are made for that kind of person, they're for employers. He owns the press, you start a fight, you'll be the 'professional agitator', the trouble-maker, who sets himself above his own value. Now, as individuals you can't fight them, but there is nothing stronger than the power of the organised working class.

### YOUR STRENGTH

Take the present Tory legislation going through Parliament, — the Industrial Relations Bill and the Immigration Bill. It's not to frighten women cleaners into thinking they'll have no money to send back to Ireland, or that they'll be deported if they're sacked and they lose their jobs, because they're in the Union. It's because the Tory government, the whole capitalist system, is afraid, not of strikes, not of unofficial strikes, not of closed shops; they're afraid of the organised working class which is represented in the rank and file of the Trade Union.

Your only strength is to stand up and say: right, I'm here, and I'm very small on my own, but who's in the same position I am? — every other night cleaner. And if every night cleaner is in the Union they can't do anything.

You take the power of the working class, just a section of it like the women cleaners, if the women cleaners were organised to such an extent that they were all in the union, just think what your protection would be. If someone fired you unjustly, he simply wouldn't get his place cleaned because every woman cleaner is in the Union, and no worker will take a fellow worker's job if she's been unjustly treated by her employer. So he goes along and tries to get scab labour.

### UNITE!

If you aren't strong enough on one office block, you say: right, none of the cleaners in none of them will work.

But you'll never have that kind of strength if everybody says: look, I think the union's good and May Hobbs is a fantastic woman and she can join the union, and 10%, 20% 30% of the night cleaners can join the union, but we won't do it, we won't take the risk, but we'll take the

benefits; if you say oh look, it's a hard life but I'm satisfied with it because I'm nothing, I'm nobody; the man, sitting up there, has an inborn right, because he is who he is, to walk all over me.

**DIGNITY**

You say: I'm a human being and I've got dignity. I work because I have to eat and live and keep my kids, but I sell my work at my price because I'm a human being not a slave, I'm not an animal, I'm not some lesser being to be bartered on the market.

And if you believe that, believe in the dignity of your own work, then you organise yourselves to make sure the employer appreciates the dignity of your work, that you're as good as he is, and you'll do his cleaning for proper payment. You won't do his cleaning because your role in life is to clean the houses of the rich, or to clean the office blocks of the powerful. It's a job like any other job, and you will get paid for it and treated like organised workers.

Unless you're organised, the night cleaners will never be treated with respect. Nobody's going to treat them with dignity, nobody's going to pay them holiday money, nobody's going to give them £16 a week. Nobody's going to see you get proper working conditions, as long as you say look, we'll put up with whatever you want to give us.

And you'll have to put up with that as long as you act as isolated individuals; the only strength is organising into the union, fighting within the Transport and General for a cleaners' branch.

**THE WINNING CARD**

If it's your union, where the members decide on the course of action, the question of fighting is the easiest one there is, because the question of losing just doesn't arise. You hold the final winning card: *you work!* Work makes the world go round, work produces money that produces wealth that produces power. If you don't work there's none of it.

Now we may be at the bottom end of the scale, but we're the people who keep it going, and it's time we realised it, whether we're night cleaners or workers in Fords Dagenham, or postmen. We are the people who are doing the work, making the profits that they are refusing to pay us even in wages.

The ultimate solution, I think, is that we control our own lives. But in the meantime we've got to start somewhere. You've got to start with the Union, not just join it yourself, but work in it, be active in it, ask every cleaner you meet if she's in the Union. If she isn't, say look, this is why you should be in it. Make it your business to see that every cleaner on your block is in the Union.

That way you'll be really strong; then you won't have to ask for just £16, you'll ask for what you want, what is your right, - and you'll get it, because *you work*.



WHY SHOULD OUTSIDERS IN WOMENS LIBERATION TRY TO

**Unionize Cleaners?**

The answer is simple: because without us it wouldn't get done. The cleaners can't leaflet themselves and go to work, because they are separated in different buildings. The Transport and General Workers' Union can't afford a full-time woman official. Mr. Churchhouse is already very busy. The Civil Service Union is keen to help but only covers cleaners in Government buildings.

We would like to get a fairly large group of cleaners who are ready to work at unionising others, so Jean and May don't have such a heavy load. This would be very helpful to leafletters because after a certain point it has to be cleaners convincing cleaners. But as yet this hasn't happened.

We thought at first we would be leafletting for a bit and then we would just drop out and leave it to the cleaners. As we've kept on we've realised what a big job we've taken on. Ideally, we would be unnecessary, but at the moment we are still in fact needed. If we dropped out simply because we thought it wrong for outsiders to be convincing cleaners to join, we would be leaving a lot of people in the lurch and putting back any chance of unionising in the future.

So we've decided to see the cleaners campaign as a long-term commitment.

Over the last year, the group who have been involved from the Workshop have learned a lot about the conditions of night work. I think we have learned enough to feel angry that anyone has to work like this and determined to change things. We have also made some friends we don't want to lose.

We keep seeing the connections between the position of women in the family and at work, and the need to transform both. We would like to hear from anybody with experience in organising in other kinds of womens work.

We have not achieved the main things we've asked for in the last year. However, the cleaning contractors have granted a few concessions on particular buildings, e.g. -

- one weeks notice
- Christmas bonus
- reduction of hours
- small pay increases.

They have already budgeted in their contracts for pay increases.

We have also publicised the conditions in the contract cleaning industry and gained support and sympathy. A film is being made as well.

Thanks to the members of the TGWU and the Civil Service Union who have helped - especially the Smithfield Market branch, and the Post Office Telecommunications members who got the Strand Cleaning Company blacked.

Cleaners have also been organising at Birmingham, Norwich, Lancaster and Manchester. This has been especially successful at Birmingham.

At Lancaster, cleaners striking for free transport (which they got) were supported by students.

**WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE INTERESTED**

**RING:**

- North London Jan & Liz 254 1986
- East London Lucy 521 2554
- South London Sally 828 0786
- West London Mary 589 7112

OR COME to any leafletting meeting. They are announced in the Newsletter, and will usually be on Friday evenings, because that is when cleaners can come because they don't work on Fridays

This "SHREW" has been done by members of the London Womens Liberation Night Cleaners Collective, with help from some of the London night cleaners.

Regular subscription ..... 75p

Sustaining subscription ... £2.00  
(obtain Shrew and help finance its production)

Annual contribution to running of Workshop .... £1.00

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W.L. Group . . . . .

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Phone No . . . . .

Please make all cheques or postal orders payable to:

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12-13 Little Newport Street  
London W.C.2.

ALEXANDRA PALACE	N8	(Thur)	Teresa Geake	340-2806
ARCHWAY	N19	(Mon)	Heather Hopkin	272-3158
ARSENAL	N5	(Tues)	Hermione Harris	359-0842
BALHAM	SW18	(Mon)	Tess Gill	675-
BATTERSEA	SW11	(Thur)	Helena Colombe	622-8071
BELSIZE LANE	NW3	(Tues)	Audrey Battersby	722-2784
BLACKHEATH	SE3	(Fri)	Jacky Moore	858-9829
BROMLEY	Kent	(Thur)	Catherine Hodges	460-6816
CHALK FARM	NW3	(Wed)	Sheila/Sue	485-9871
CHISWICK	W4	(Wed)	Margaret Fox	560-0599
CHRISTCHURCH	NW3	(Tues)	Hazelanne Lewis	794-4601
EALING I	W5	(Wed)	Debbie Gregory	568-0457
EALING II	W5	(Mon)	Pam Bingham	998-6350
EAST LONDON	E9	(Tues)	Christine/Lesley	985-9451
ENGLANDS LANE	NW3	(Wed)	Elaine Chambers	794-9222
FAMILY STUDY	W2	(Thur)	Ursula Bachtold	229-5988
FULHAM	SW6	(Tues)	Sonia Markham	736-2014
GOLDERS GREEN	NW4	(Mon)	Anne McBrayne	458-6614
GOSPEL OAK	NW3	(Thur)	Val Charlton	267-1988
HAMPSTEAD	NW3	(Tues)	Frances Robinson	794-8403
HAVERSTOCK HILL	NW3	(Thur)	Fanya Ainscow	455-7343
HIGHBURY	N5	(Wed)	Janet Ree	226-1681
HOLLAND PARK	W14	(Wed)	Margot Escombe	603-7927
HOLLOWAY	N19	(Mon)	Alison Fell	272-1558
HORNSEY	N8	(Wed)	Barbara Rock	340-3825
ILFORD	Essex	(Wed)	Sani Friedman	590-5954
KEATS GROVE	NW3	(Thur)	Brekke Larsen	794-9251
KENTISH TOWN	NW5	(Mon)	Margaret Ford	485-0077
LADBROKE GROVE	W10	(Wed)	Ann Rossiter	229-5384
MUSWELL HILL	N10	(Tues)	Brenda Leys	883-3655
NOTTING HILL	W8	(Wed)	Esther Ronay	937-6244
N.7.	N7	(Tues)	Jean Radford	609-0682
PARLIAMENT HILL	N6	(Thur)	Jane Fowler	485-7730
PECKHAM RYE	SE15	(Thur)	Anne Bahcheli	732-8685
PIMLICO	SW1	(Mon)	Sally Alexander	828-3735
PUTNEY	SW15	(Tues)	Babs Beardshaw	789-5604
RICHMOND	Surrey	(Wed)	Vanessa Gohar	948-0010
SOUTH END GREEN	NW3	(Mon)	Vicky Chick	794-7156
SOUTHGATE	N14	(Wed)	Pat Nicholas	886-0759
SHEPHERDS BUSH	W12	(Tues)	Deidre Brennan	603-9947
ST, ALBANS	Herts	(Mon)	Kate Gordon	St.A. 63677
STRATFORD	E15	(Fri)	Nell Myers	519-4464
STREATHAM	SW16	(Thur)	Sarah Marcus	764-6756
TUFNELL PARK I	N19	(Tues)	Sue Cowley	485-2868
TUFNELL PARK II	N19	(Tues)	Frances McLean	272-0759
WANDSWORTH	SW17	(Tues)	Ellie Sampson	672-1489
WATFORD	Herts	(Thur)	Beryl Weaver	Wat. 32231
WALWORTH	SE17		Joanna Haynes	701-5104
WIMBLEY	Midxx	(Wed)	Diana Reich	902-2213
FOUR CORNERS GROUP		(Wed)	Oonagh Lahr	883-5762
G.L.F. WOMEN		(Fri)	Gaby/Sara	985-4372
MEDICAL GROUP		(Wed)	Caroline Smith	267-1217
MEN'S LIBERATION GROUP		(Tues)	Matt Toby	328-2858
NIGHTCLEANERS' CAMPAIGN			May Hobbs	348-2817
PSYCHOLOGY GROUP		(Thur)	Dinah Brooke	485-4882
STREET THEATRE		(Fri)	Barbara Hickmott	223-1953
WOMEN IN MEDIA		(Mon)	Philippa Ingram	794-6908
WEST LONDON ACTION GROUP ON CONTRACEPTION		(Mon)	Peri Halpern	602-2199

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Laurence Ray  
1-3 Orchard Lane  
Stewkley  
Leighton Buzzard  
Bedfordshire

THE CLEANERS' ACTION GROUP FILM COLLECTIVE is in the process of completing a full-length documentary on the Night Cleaners' Campaign. Members of the collective have been actively involved in the CAG for over a year and have contributed much information for this issue of Shrew.

A SHORT CAMPAIGN FILM is ready now. It was made in order to help raise funds for cleaners in case of victimisation. If you can show it, fill out this form and send it to:

CLEANERS' ACTION GROUP FILM COLLECTIVE,  
15B CROMWELL ROAD,  
London S.W.7

Name.....  
Address.....  
.....(tel.no.).....  
When you want to show it.....  
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# SHREW

EACH ISSUE BY A DIFFERENT GROUP OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP VOL 4 NO 3 JUNE 1972

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## A Child is born\*

My son was born ten months after I stopped taking the pill. My decision to do this was perhaps irrational. I had always disliked the idea of the pill but accepted that it was the most reliable method of contraception. For months I had been dutifully swallowing a pill every night and for months I had been minutely inspecting my body for some reaction to it. I was almost pleased when I started getting headaches (probably due to worry), and began to put on weight (definitely due to overeating whilst I brooded on the fact the most infallible way not to become pregnant is to induce a state of pseudo pregnancy by chemicals.)

I had been prescribed the pill after being asked only a few questions on my past medical history, no physical examination. I was not warned of any dangers, nor was the actual make-up of the pill explained to me. After some months I read a book called "The Pill" which appeared to reach the conclusion that while the pill was safer than pregnancy, safer than smoking or riding a bus, it had also been known to make hair and/or teeth fall out, stomachs swell and blood to clot. That confirmed my fears, I stopped taking the pill. Until I could get another appointment at the F.P. clinic we used the rhythm method coupled with withdrawal. We both had an aversion to the sheath and had anyway become used to having sex at impromptu times and felt using a sheath would spoil this. After six weeks I realised that precautions were no longer necessary, I was pregnant.

For three months I resented this, finding it difficult to be radiant and the picture of prospective motherhood, which seemed to be expected of me, when I was continually being sick. I was also sick in the last six months, and in and after labour. But I found that nature cunningly made me tired in body and mind during this time and I was too exhausted to be resentful and became resigned. Indeed, towards the end I was positively placid and began to think of the foetus as a child and enjoyed feeling him move.

I had taken psychoprophylaxis lessons and coped with labour. The attitude of the staff was more difficult to cope with. Perhaps I was paranoid (most books on pregnancy endorse the theory that women in labour are incapable of being rational), but it seemed that my breathing exercises were regarded as a peculiar whim and my insistence on my husband being present as very odd indeed. The midwife found it hard to accept I could be in labour and not screaming out in pain. An hour before my son was born she was still telling me very patronisingly (without taking an internal), that it was not labour, (this was after twelve hours.) Minutes after he was born, nurses younger than myself were calling me "mother".

If I could go back in time until when I stopped taking the pill I would still stop. I love my child and do not resent him. What I do resent, however, is a society that expects him to be my sole concern for the next twenty years, a society which would think me unnatural if I want it otherwise and thinks of me as a "mother", someone only qualified to talk of nappies and babies' teething problems, to be bombarded with adverts which state that I can be a better mother/person if I use Oxo, (gives a meal man appeal), Shredded Wheat for the two men in my life, and give them Andrex to wipe their bums with (or should I do that

I'm in the  
Women's liberation workshop  
but I won't be able to  
make the meetings  
anymore.  
(sigh)



as well?). I resent a society that says that whilst my husband has to give me written permission to have a coil inserted, it is all right for me to take the dangers (however small) of the pill.

Perhaps women have gained sexual freedom with the pill but why not a similar type of pill for men. With more research this could be found but this will not be done whilst it is men giving out the grants for this type of work and men, in the main, doing it and whilst women accept that as well as pregnancy being their lot so is the risk of the pill. It is good that women can make the choice of children or not with the pill but in a relationship where neither partner, female or male, wishes for a child, the choice should also be - who takes the pill?

## CHILDBIRTH can be fun ?

Women have been giving birth to babies for a long time. And since it began, history has gorged itself on the gruesome stories of the pain and agony of childbirth. Mankind seems to have thrived on the notion that it is born through suffering. Unfortunately it has been the women who have done the suffering. Sympathetic words poured from doctors relatives and the rest about how it would "be over soon", but we continued to bear our children through "suffering". What a nice, healthy atmosphere in which to start a relationship with a child; as martyrs! And why would a woman enjoy sex, thinking that it could result in that "awful agony" again.

Women maintained a totally passive attitude towards pregnancy and childbirth and quietly turned themselves over to the doctors.

Then medical science advanced and the slow, world-wide liberation of women advanced. Through this emerged a new attitude towards childbirth, and a new method whereby women can now take an active part in the birth of their child. The advantages in this are tremendous. The fear, and most important, the pain of childbirth can be eliminated.

This method is known by various names: natural childbirth, painless childbirth and psychoprophylaxis. It is based on a system originating in Russia which is itself based on Pavlov's knowledge of conditioned reflexes. Psychoprophylaxis is a method of preparation for childbirth through an understanding of what is happening inside; and training to enable the woman to adapt her behaviour to the labour sensations. Through relaxation and controlled breathing learnt during pregnancy, the pain of giving birth can be removed. The woman is no longer a passive blob of sensations being stuffed with drugs to keep her quiet and kept in the dark about her condition. She is now an active participant in the birth of her child. A much better arrangement.

One would think that the medical profession would jump at the chance of working with women in labour who are capable of helping the birth, of not getting hysterical and of not needing loads of dulling drugs. But what actually happens?

The woman who knows what is happening and tries to participate is seen as a nuisance. We are often made to feel that what happens between our legs during our child's birth is none of our business. We are called "cheeky" like children are who try to assert their independence, if we wish to exchange the "wisdom" of medical secrecy and drugs for our own self confidence in our training. Doctors don't want to discuss the process of pregnancy and birth with us. Midwives don't want their privileged position of controlling a

birth jeopardized. And the general, unknowing population ridicules the woman who expects a painless and relaxed birth. It is incredible how little interest there is in removing the unhappiness from the birth process. That is, aside from special organisations such as The National Childbirth Trust. They are dedicated to changing people's attitudes towards childbirth. They run classes for training and preparation for the birth (among other things). The method can be and is successful. I speak from personal experience.

It is time that we insist on having a say in what is done with us in the terribly important moment of giving birth to a baby. It is not a good situation when women choose to have their babies at home because in hospital the father is totally excluded, because other children cannot visit their mother and because we are given little co-operation in trying to help ourselves. We must have all the benefits of modern medicine available in the hospital, plus an appreciation of our right as intelligent beings to have our children in as painless and relaxed a manner as possible.

Further information can be obtained from: The National Childbirth Trust, 9, Queensborough Terrace, London, W.2. Telephone no. 01-229-9319/9310



### Manchester \* \* \* \*

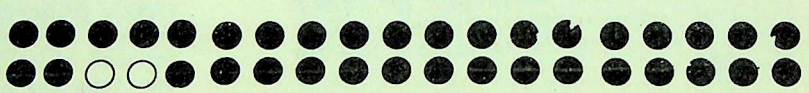
How many conferences must we have until we finally realize that Women's Conferences are for WOMEN! How many more hours must we waste at our conferences - which are already too few and far between - discussing whether or not men should be allowed to participate? Do we not spend enough time already worrying about our menfolk? While we utilise precious hours talking about them, we are not channelling our emotional and intellectual energies into women nor into the conferences.

The Women's Conference took place on the 25th-26th March in Manchester and was yet another example of how men can so easily divide us and throw us into very unsisterly confusion.

Unlike Skegness, the problem was not whether or not men should be allowed at the conference itself, but whether they should be allowed to the social which took place on the evening of the first day. The vote was in favour of allowing them in. However, like Skegness, there was the customary unpleasant, violent incident, (which was solely initiated by a man), at the social. The ensuing discussions on Sunday polarised those present into group 'for' and group 'against'. The women who were against the men being present at any part of the conference, including the social, seemed to be generally pro-women. The group of women who were in favour of men being present, however, were not in my opinion anti-women, but merely 'pro-people'. "Men are people too", they shouted, "and as such are part of the revolutionary struggle." There is little doubt that men are people too, but if they were part of the revolutionary struggle, why do they not let women work out their own analysis of their own oppression on their own? Are these women so oppressed that they cannot realise that it is their reluctance to be without their men that is part and parcel of their own oppression? There were many women at that conference who have cut themselves off from men. Must it be at a Women's Conference that they are forced to be in their presence?!

At future conferences, if there is one woman present who would like to be with her sisters for two days of the year and not be oppressed by the presence of any men surely we could respect that sister's wish and have a conference for women without men.

### A New Look At Contraception

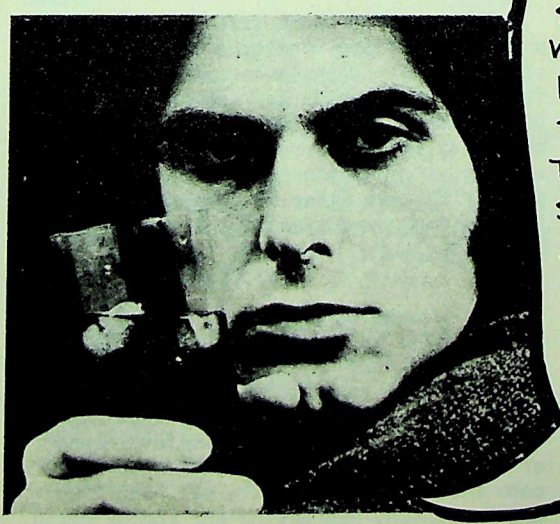


Contraception as we all know, is a relatively new concept. However, there appears to be one major oversight on the part of The Family Planning Associations, The British Medical Association and all the other various medical associations and enterprises throughout the country. All the available information, literature, advice etc. from all of these sources is severely limited. Nobody has ever considered that Homosexuality is the most efficient form of contraception.

No, I am not suggesting that all women should become Homosexual. Perish the thought! But I am seriously suggesting that young girls (and young boys for that matter) be informed that there are alternatives to the presently acceptable means of contraception.

Supplying pamphlets, advice, information etc. which include the alternative of Homosexuality as a form of birth control not only makes good sense in relation to contraception, but, if taken seriously, could help us to discover more about our own sexuality. We could learn more about loving our own bodies and may even undo some of the damage society has done our sexuality and relate sexually with much greater awareness.

Consider this: not only is there absolutely no risk of pregnancy, but also we would no longer be forced to worry about when our periods are due, taking our pills or using the necessary foams, caps and all those other tiresome devices. Think too of all the time, energy and money that would be saved. It is said that modern forms of contraception (i.e the pill) gives us women far greater freedom and liberation from unwanted pregnancies, but sexual liberation is not Women's Liberation as, in theory, the pill etc. allows us to explore our own sexuality, but in practise it means that we can explore our own sexuality only in relation to men, therefore they can screw without risk, thus allowing ourselves to be more exploited and more easily exploitable by men.



AFTER A WHILE I MADE HER STAND UP, BEND OVER; THEN I LET HER HAVE IT FROM THE REAR. SHE HAD A SMALL JUICY CUNT, WHICH FITTED ME LIKE A GLOVE. I BIT THE NAPE OF HER NECK, THE LOBES OF HER EARS, THE SENSITIVE SPOT ON HER SHOULDER AND AS I PULLED AWAY I LEFT THE MARK OF MY TEETH ON HER BEAUTIFUL ASS. NOT A WORD WAS SPOKEN.



## I Am Not Yet Liberated

When I joined the Movement I thought of myself as 'liberated'. I had always supposed I had recognised and resisted pressures upon me to be 'womanly', to conform to the stereotype. Now, after nearly a year in the Movement, I am beginning to realise how steeped I am, and always have been, in conditioned femininity.

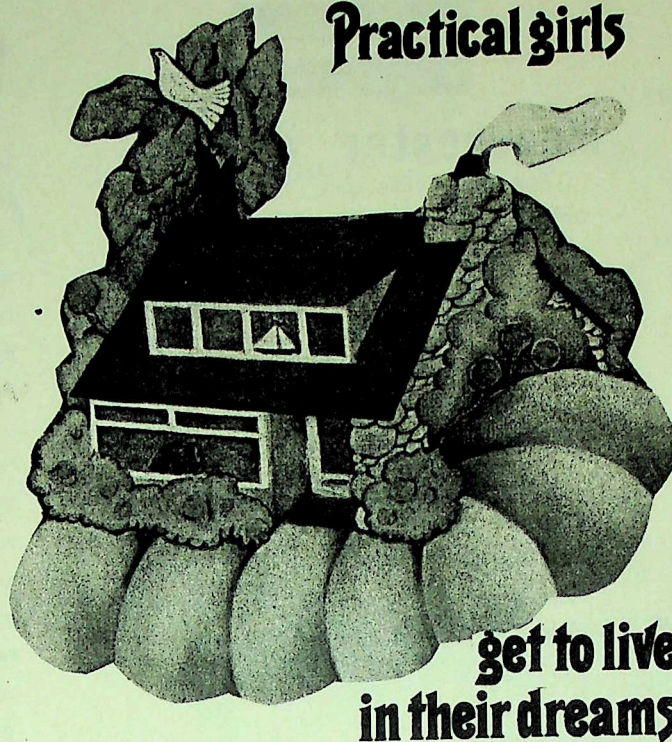
I remember one day when I was about fourteen or fifteen, looking in the mirror, and admitting that I was unattractive. At fourteen I was fat and spotty and I didn't like the colour of my hair or the shape of my face. I said to myself, with a feeling of tremendous honesty and desperate courage, 'I accept I'm unattractive-looking. So I determine here and now to stop hoping and fantasizing about boyfriends and marriage, and to devote myself single-mindedly to some career or other.'

Now the odd thing was that at that time, indeed all my life, I've tended to think of myself anyway as a career-orientated person. If anyone asked me about my future, my conscious picture of myself was of a person achieving success and fame in some field - I generally saw myself as an author. The occasional picture of an admired wife and mother did exist, too, but I believed it was very much second best to the author picture. But at the same time as holding these conscious beliefs about myself and my future role, I began, in my early teens, to fantasize about sex and boyfriends, all the conventional trappings of romance etc. And for various reasons, chiefly a restrictive parental outlook, none of these romantic things ever seemed to happen to me, although apparently they did to my schoolfriends. I suppose I expected fantastic boyfriends to drop out of the sky; and when they didn't, I blamed my looks. And I never noticed, when I 'fell back' on a career, what I was doing: seeing marriage, and a career, in fact as alternatives, and opting for what, without realising it, I had already been conditioned to feel was really second best. Consciously, a career was my first choice; unconsciously, I wanted to be a conventional wife and mother.

When I went to University I met, at last, a lot of men - men to whom I related splendidly as friends and colleagues. But I was constantly dissatisfied, because I wanted a man as an adorer - perhaps as a possession. I didn't have a 'boyfriend' in the accepted sense; and I still blamed my looks. I had a long, very warm, passionate affair with a woman: and for a while I mentally defined myself as a Lesbian - but rather by default, saying to myself, 'It doesn't bother women if I'm unattractive.' Now I've always liked to think of myself as a pretty logical person; but if so, I must have been suffering from the most blatantly blinkered conditioning to have believed that a man would bother about my looks and a woman wouldn't, and not to have noticed anything odd about assuming, still, that relationships with women were 'second best'.

When I met J. my relationship with him was immediately totally preoccupying. Fantastic! I'm in love! - just like people are supposed to be. Getting engaged was actually infinitely more significant to me than getting my degree, although I would not have admitted this at the time. I was involved in Union politics, and had an image of myself, which J. accepted, as an involved, active, aware person. I envisaged rather vaguely, an academic or professional

## Practical girls



**get to live  
in their dreams**

life; but all at the same time I got my greatest pleasure out of contemplating myself in my romantic situation with J. And it wasn't until I was inescapably caught in the 'wife and mother' role that this romantic side of me inevitably led to, that I noticed that there was even a conflict between these two images of myself - and that I'd sacrificed one for the other.

Being pregnant wasn't as fulfilling as the stereotypes suggest. These fulfilments it seemed, were reserved for people who had got married before getting pregnant, who were fairly economically secure, and whose husbands backed them in the belief that pregnancy was great. J. was alarmed by the prospect of a child, and repelled by my changing shape. But babies ought to be loved: by sheer will-power I made myself feel warm and happy towards the prospective child, while feeling acutely unhappy about myself. So after I'd had the baby I really did feel great. Look at Me - look what I've achieved! I've done it - I'm a mother!

But it soon wore off. The conventional picture of motherhood is surrounded by all sorts of materialistic accessories like beautiful prams, lovely baby-clothes - which we couldn't afford. I felt terribly inferior. And I knew no-one else in the area, so I felt bitterly lonely, isolated, too. But of course I felt I ought to be feeling fulfilled by wifehood and motherhood, so I also felt terribly inadequate and guilty. And, of course, it's easy, now, for me to recognize this process. I escaped from this drabness, sometimes, with lovers. Sometimes, I was happy, in the romantic role of 'being someone's mistress'.

But in a few years I found a new role, a new, satisfying, feminine definition of myself. J. began to become very successful and now I could bask in the thought of being the wife of a rising career man. A number of friends were reaching similar stages: we gave dinner parties, and competed with each other. We played at being 'the budding executive' and the 'elegant hostess wife.'

And because we were both happy (if only for a while) in our roles, and economically much more secure, J. and I began to develop a really good relationship - though we have only recently realised to what extent it was conditional upon the maintainance of these roles. But, conditional or not, conventional or not, there was real love and happiness, and having our second child, at home, together, was a high spot in this:

shared action, shared experience, shared joy. At this time I really did feel very fulfilled, very content in my role, which I saw very much as a 'Servicing' one, though I did vaguely suppose that one day the usefulness of that role would be exhausted - and back would come my old 'professional' picture of myself. I read a lot - I was engaged, sporadically, in working for an M.A. - and I thought of myself as being radical in outlook. 'Liberated', too: a very deep relationship began with another lover, (though again, initially, with me in a supporting role) and this time J. knew about it and accepted it.

And perhaps I could have gone on 'fitting in', like this forever; but for a variety of reasons I suddenly began to notice what was happening. One was that I read George Jackson's 'Soledad Brother', and for the first time I began to question a whole set of values which, with all my 'socialist' outlook, I had taken completely for granted. Another realisation came as I began to think more seriously about a 'career' again, as the children started to get older - and I began to see that it wasn't as easy, after two children and a gap of ten years, as if I had just graduated. And the final jolt was finding I was pregnant, and needing an abortion. The unfairness and the illogicality and the materialism of conventional priorities was brought home to me very forcibly as I went through the process of having an abortion; and it was this new awareness which impelled me, when I read about a Women's Liberation Group in an article in the local paper, to contact it and join it.

Since then - well, in some ways I may have been becoming more really liberated. Certainly there has been more equality and more mutual support in my relationships. But in other ways, and this is the whole point - in other ways I've simply been becoming increasingly aware of just how much of a stranglehold various aspects of the female stereotype have on me. Becoming conscious of this seems to have very little to do with being able to free myself from it. Despite my beliefs, despite my growing perceptions of society's demand for conformity, I am still at my happiest when I define myself in relation to my husband or my lover, rather than as an independent person in my own right. I struggle against it but I still feel insecure, incomplete, on my own.

When I started writing this I was puzzled as to why this depressing inability to liberate myself should persist, in spite of my efforts, in spite of my recognising the invalid premises my insecurity is based on. But as I've been putting down in black and white all the various stages at which I was unwittingly conforming to the conventional female image, I've begun to appreciate rather more how I really have had thirty years of practice, thirty years of establishing a habit, thirty years to get into society's mould - can I really wonder that a bare nine months hasn't succeeded in making a different, de-conditioned person of me?

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆  
 "Despite some splendid exceptions, women normally attain power by marriage, in bourgeois society..... The few women who held high positions were almost all wives of "senior comrades". Their influence was largely restricted to "women's and children's organizations," though most had qualified for power by long service to the cause."  
 MAD'S GREAT REVOLUTION (R. Elegant).  
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## FREEDOM IS CHOICE

About the only thing most people do agree upon in the world to-day is that there is no such thing called freedom and anybody who does believe in such a concept is being duped, doped and otherwise taken in by some very serious propoganda. I agree. And as freedom does not really exist there is no real definition of the concept. However, without a definition it is very hard to fight toward liberation as you may not be fighting effectively - you are fighting toward an unknown. I have found a definition which I think fits well and will try and illustrate - that freedom is Choice.

Before actually analyzing women's condition with reference to this statement we should look at a very general application.

In our society the only area where it seems we are given complete freedom to choose is how we spend our money. To this end more and more products are invented all the time for us to choose from and advertising runs rampant in trying to influence our choice; but it is our choice. To analyze more closely the actual quality of choice in this area, we see that the rich are more free. The more money you have the wider the choice on which to spend your money. The poor are tied - a working class wage often manages to provide only basic housing, food and clothing and you are then left choiceless, unfree.

If we look at the area of jobs, we find a different factor affecting choice. The more qualifications one has the more jobs one can apply for. Less well-educated people find themselves forced to accept jobs which are unpleasant or uninteresting and have no choice. Qualified people are freer.

If we take the government and decisions taken at that level concerning actions which influence us all, we see that our choice is very limited. We are given one choice at election time to vote for people to make decisions for us. From that stage we have no choice; there is very little we can do about specific pieces of legislation. They are imposed from above and as anyone who has written to their M.P. knows it is a perfectly futile business trying to influence any decision. In this area then, especially, we need more freedom, we need more choice and here the community-based and supported actions come in. You develop alternatives so that you can choose.

In the area of leisure I would say it is a cultural education which is the determining factor of your choosing. Children brought up in a varied environment develop a sense of curiosity about the things around them. Children brought up in institutions with limited stimuli become very withdrawn. The more novel and different things you are exposed to in childhood, the more interested you become, the more you want to learn. Although money does play an important part in your choice of leisure activities, as a great number have a price, your own interest, imagination and creativity strongly influence your number of alternatives. Knowledge of the availability of various materials or opportunities is a must, or the knowledge of how to go about discovering new activities. Most people's home environments are equipped simply with a television set and perhaps some books or magazines, but are quite barren of any other means of self-expression or entertainment. All other materials, subjects, special interest groups lie outside the home and you must be able to find them.

When you come to the choice of the

individual in his daily living, his relationships and actions, we run into philosophical and psychological ideas and theories. There is one side who say that man has no control over his own actions, never actually has a choice, (although he might think he has). Psychologists Eysenck and Skinner are strong in this point of view. Some religious groups believe that God is in control. The other side believe that humans are self-determining creatures, are quite capable of making decisions, seeing that their are choices. As this question seems so tied up in the whole query about the meaning of life, it's almost impossible to decide which is the correct point of view. The important thing here is to know what is happening by what things you are influenced in any given situation, to realize what you are, what you want, why you do things. The more aware you are about your motivations, the way your past experience influences your present responses, the more likely you are to see that there are situations where you do have a choice, that there are different ways of acting or responding - that you do have capacity for change and choice. Good old concept of know yourself. I really consider this important because we so often just flit along without really knowing why and blame things on the conditions around us or the people, when we really did have a choice if only we could be aware of it. This is one reason why I consider consciousness-raising groups so important because they really bring home things which we have always taken for granted to be just so, and seen in a different light, (with the help of other people's points of view) they are completely different and need re-thinking and maybe we do have some sort of choice about these things after all.

Now to specifically examine the conditions of women by the criterion of choice:

1. Choice of persons - because of cultural education women are taught to be passive. Because of this passivity we don't have to handle rejection on the scale that men do because we are always waiting to reciprocate, we never make the first move. This means it is harder to make a choice of people, you can choose who you want to reject but you cannot choose who you want to approach as it is so very hard to make that first move.

2. Choice of profession - traditional sexual and cultural education limit a lot of women to aspire to only one career, wife and mother. Many professions specify men only. Many fewer women go to university and attain the qualifications which allow wide choice of profession.

3. Choice of pregnancy - not enough adequate birth control, abortions and education to provide us with control over our pregnancies and our bodies. Women happen to be the child-bearers, this choice must be ours - it affects our freedom not men's.

4. Choice of leisure - no adequate playgrounds and other facilities for women who want a choice of things to do. With kids around you are limited to 100% childminding.

5. Choice of buying - back to the choice of what to spend your money on. Most women are economically dependent on men, no choice whatsoever about what to spend money on, because they don't have any money.

6. Choice of divorce - no place or means to go. Women are economically dependent and have children to look after - they have to stick to marriages because there just aren't any alternatives. We need women's communes to give women the alternative choice - so that marriage is an active thing you are choosing, not being forced to stick to it.

7. Choice of individual - and choice of individual action. We are forced into roles, culturally, by education and by males present by jokes, stereotype remarks etc. We must break this so that we have the choice to do what we want.

It's the ability to choose in every situation that we're after. The chance to choose who we want to be and become who we really are.

## WOMEN & ABORTION



'Women and Abortion' shows just how deplorably the NHS is failing to provide us with a vital service - safe, simple and early abortion. Women are either paying up to £200, or having to wait for a NHS appointment, treated like criminals or children, abused and threatened, and finally if they're 'lucky' getting a hysterotomy at twenty weeks.

We want a radical change. Vacuum abortion using the Karman cannula is about as quick, cheap and straightforward, for both the doctor and the woman, as inserting an IUD. We want to see this done, not in overcrowded hospitals by overworked staff, but in Women's Centres in the community. We hope this will happen: after all, it's cheaper, quicker, more efficient, for the NHS as well as us. If the NHS won't do it, we'll make it happen by doing it ourselves.

'Women and Abortion' - From local abortion action groups or from: The WACC, 3, Belmont Road, SW4.

" A fortunate girl will have a mother who is happily in love with her father, and who also enjoys her maternal function, and who thus conveys, from the child's earliest days, that to be a woman who is loved by a man and who has children by him is the first and most important aim of feminine existence."

SEXUAL DEVIATION (Anthony Storr).

# \*zap! pow!\*

We, as women, know that we can compete equally with men intellectually and educationally, and therefore it follows that we should also have equal recognition socially and financially. The Women's Liberation Movement will eventually bring about total equality in all fields if we are determined enough to get it, except in the one sphere where we cannot equally compete: I feel that men will always reign supreme in the area of physical aggression.

Men surely are physically superior as a look at the athletic records will indicate. Although women are given the same opportunity and the same rigorous training, they still cannot jump as high, throw as far, run as fast or hit as hard. To realise this is not to contradict or invalidate the argument that women are not frail, and are quite capable of managing the so-called heavy 'mens' work'. As we all know, we need a lot of strength and endurance to manage the side of our ordinary, conventional 'female' roles that is so often conveniently forgotten by most male employers. But it is the extra power brought about by stature as well as strength, that can be used in physical violence that concerns me.

Already, under the present system where men have their precious 'superiority' over women, some men retain a complete hold over their wives purely by force. The fear of superior physical strength alone keeps many women in their places. Until recently I had been under the illusion that the scene where the husband locks the door and beats up his wife was fast-fading, although I had heard that it was still a hobby of some men when their team had lost at home. But I've realised in the last few months that the ancient art of wife-beating still exists, and is doing well in the most unexpected places.

The woman in one couple I have come to know has been severely beaten by the man on numerous occasions. He has blacked her eyes, broken her jaw, thrown her down the cellar steps and bruised nearly every inch of her body. All this has usually occurred in his frequent attempts to stop her leaving him. One time when she did get away, he knocked her out in the street (after dark of course!). This woman is so frightened that she feels the only way she can protect herself and her child is to stay with him and do as he says. She is terrified of informing the police, (even when pressed by them to prefer charges after an attempt to run her over which had resulted in her leaping over a garden wall to escape and breaking her wrist in the process), because she feels that some day he will catch up with her again and this dreadful, if unfounded fear keeps her obedient. She is also afraid for the other female member of her family should she leave him.

I grant that this maybe an extreme case, this man is obviously in need of treatment, but he's unlikely to get it and meanwhile he's making his point in the only way he knows how. What can Women's Liberation do for this woman? She is totally his captive because of his strength and brutality.

This form of oppression is being used behind many closed, so-called 'respectable' doors. It doesn't seem to be beyond many irate men to land one on a woman for some reason - usually sexual, possessive jeal-

ousy, knowing that this is his only way of asserting himself. This practise may range from the occasional, restraining clout two or three times a year in a 'happy' relationship to the other case I know of where the pleasant, young husband thumps his wife with monotonous regularity practically every night. (Presumably to be sure of her, or to make up for his own inadequacies by reassuring himself that he can, at least, rule over her.)

The point is that, as one girl put it to me: "What would be the good of fighting back? I know who would come off worse if it came to a boxing match." How, then, can we end this tyranny of physical violent dominance when men will continue to be born taller and stronger than we are? However liberated we may feel won't we still be prey to the heavy attacker in the park? The ordinary copper? The kind, fourteen stone driver who has his hand up your knickers before you've left the B127? Can we only arm ourselves with handbag sized pistols and spray-on acid aerosols as the Americans have done, and thus live alongside men in an equality that has to be based fundamentally on the security of weapons? It will not be much consolation to most women to feel that their new-found confidence in themselves as individuals relies on a balance of power that could easily be upset if her ammunition were stolen.



## Crèches

There was a creche in a house in Ilford for the weekend of the Manchester conference. There were about eight men, mostly from Men's Liberation, and eight or nine children. They went in the park, to the shops and visited a museum. People slept all together and food time was chaotic. Everyone had a really good time. The men felt that they had made greater contact with each other and the children were pleased and exhilarated by the weekend.

So we did not have to take children to Manchester or have any responsibility towards them for that weekend. We did not have to look after them on Saturday night and miss the Social or feel the need to visit the creche to make sure they were all right. As a result we were able to become more involved with the conference and enjoy the experience of a weekend away with other women.

We suggest that similar creches be set up by the men involved with each group in someone's house, leaving women free at a conference and perhaps solving the problems that men and a creche at a conference seem to produce. (Let us know what you think of this idea.)

## Women Graduates

Last Autumn I wrote, as a university lecturer concerned about employment for women graduates, to the fifty-nine firms on the University Appointments Board's job list for August 1971 which specified that men only need apply. This number represented over a quarter of the total, and in a year when graduate unemployment was headline news the prospects for women looked particularly bleak. The response rate was remarkably high - 95% - and three-quarters of these went to some length to assert that they had no prejudice against women even where this was blatantly untrue from the rest of the letter; this shows at least that some are aware that their prejudices are becoming socially unacceptable. But others see men and women as living in different worlds - take this aggressive non-reply from ICI Europa:

'The reason why we have specified males in this particular case is very simple, namely that it is males we wish to recruit for the vacancies in question.'

Does anyone imagine that passing laws against sex discrimination in employment will have the slightest impact on such attitudes?

Most firms did try to give some reason for their policy, and the most popular excuse, used by nearly half the respondents, was that the job and their conception of womanhood were incompatible. It is amazing what ethereal and fragile creatures some of these managers think we are. Cadbury-Schweppes earnestly replied for example:

'Our company doctor advises us that the type of lifting and carrying involved in this job would be unsuitable for female employees.'

Heinz similarly refuse to consider employing women as trainee managers because of the 'arduous and physically demanding' training period where they would have to carry a case of samples weighing 28lbs. Have none of these people ever seen a woman out shopping, coping with not only 28lbs. of Heinz and Cadbury-Schweppes products but two toddlers, a pushchair and public transport, while their trainee managers have a company car for their 'arduous and physically demanding' load?

An engineering firm says that the life of a sales rep. 'Can be very wearing and full of days and weeks even of disappointment.... would need a very strong personality and faith in herself to stand up to the life.... pretty good nerves and the will power to keep pressing on.... very grave doubts that any young lady would wish to take up these responsibilities under the conditions which apply.' Reading those words, it struck me that they might appropriately be printed on the application form for a marriage licence.

Some of the reasons given for a job's unsuitability for a woman were quite convincing - 'Having to crawl through fifteen-inch tunnels and climb 200ft. high distillation towers' wouldn't appeal to most of us, and one reply said

'Our laboratory deals entirely with pigments, mostly carbon blacks, and our laboratory staff are covered with a film of this dust at the end of the day.... there is only one shower....' The real issue seems to be not whether these jobs are fit for women but whether conditions like this should exist at all in a supposedly advanced technological society.

The problem of graduate employment is not restricted to women alone. Many of these jobs sound to be unstimulating if not downright unpleasant, and frustrating for someone who thinks they have

Continued page 8

# HOW TO HAVE A



**WELL-BEHAVED CHILD**

## A Plea for the end of Motherhood

There is a disturbing desire to cling onto the idea of pregnancy and motherhood as being an experience that is built into the life-style of being a woman despite much Women's Liberation talk of a woman isn't just a child-bearing machine. In our group practically every married person has more than one child, three people are at present pregnant, two have recently given birth. Then starts the whole thing of difficulties in getting out etc. It seems we just haven't escaped from the idea that living with a member of the opposite sex inevitably grows into the stereotype bourgeois/nuclear family, inescapable for fifteen or so years. There is no doubt that once children appear on the scene life is very much dominated by their needs and wants with only two adults around to cope, or should I more accurately say one person, as all the women are still the ones that stay at home.

What I am trying to say is that there seems to be very little change in the role women in the movement are playing in the family/couple situation. The automatic familybuilding still holds true. Other sorts of relationships minus children still cannot be contemplated. The women that are married or living together without children have been conversationally lumped together with so-called "single" people in our group, implying more the impoverished state of the relationship. Children are seen specifically as a necessary physical statement of a pair bond.

There is a very strong feeling of reward attached to child rearing, of creating an individual. In the modern vain it is, the 'free' child, but how free that child is, is debatable. Basically the mother is still forced to live a life fulfilled by children, worries about them when they are not around, is apprehensive when they are left with strangers. One member of the group sees having children as something of a challenge, a challenge surely implies something that has to be grappled with, moulded by. It is time we stopped seeing what would inevitably happen, that is, the person will eventually become an adult (for want of a better word) as being a result of our challenge. This can only repeat the possessive mother thing that we all know too well. I have made you in my own image straight or freak. Now, alternatively there is a desire to protect children from the straight society, but is our duty to 'protect'? The need to protect or mould, I'm not sure which, is compulsive however much the parents say they do not want to.

After all one of the basic fulfilments of parenthood at present is to be needed, it is not so easy to show your child that really you could be quite dispensable for a much greater part of the time, when the child is still at a very early age. Five year old children in a reception class show themselves capable of looking after themselves both emotionally and physically. Mothers stand at the door at 9.30 hoping their child will at least acknowledge their going; they don't, not without coaxing, it's much nicer to say Hello to friends.

The idea of childhood as a very special stage has become worse not better. Child centred theories have boomed, mothers and teachers alike have to tread carefully among the fragile pieces not to disturb. The school leaving age has been extended to keep childhood going. There has been an effective campaign to see that children are not seen as merely younger people but sentimentalized into "children", a race that has to be protected for a ridiculous number of years. Protected/repressed/belonging to mummy and daddy, a situation that is absolutely disastrous and generally reaches breaking point at a later date.

The structure of the nuclear family has seen to it that the mother clings to her children and vice-versa. This need to be gratified by them still remains, her world is built around them, whilst she stays at home all day. But we go on having children, repeating the cycle we were part of. However free the ideologies of the parents may be, the structure of the family doesn't change. The child's and mother's repression alike remain the same, both their freedoms are drastically curtailed.

The whole concept of motherhood and childhood has to be done away with, before anything will change. We must not make the mistake of believing that we are essentially any different, we cannot be, without those changes. We do not have to have children to know the reality of being a mother, we all had mothers ourselves to know we should not repeat the same mistake.

\*\*\*\*\*  
**RIGHT ON!**  
\*\*\*\*\*  
**ANGELA DAVIES**  
\*\*\*\*\*

## RANDOM THOUGHTS

### 1. Seen and Heard:

Could work/study groups:-  
industry  
contraception/abortion  
education  
medical/psychology  
claimants unions etc., keep us fed, quarter or half-yearly at lowest cost possible, with pamphlets, so there is a continuous programme of leaflet distribution going on all over the country, instead of, as has been happening, distribution at time of a demo, or post-demo or not at all. Distribution emphasis to be women therefore leaflets posted through doors. The leaflets should be direct and factual, not overloaded with traditional left jargon and phraseology. They could be carried about with us constantly for us to leave in waiting rooms, telephone kiosks and could be exhibited in shops that accept ads. Taken to playgroups and women's organisations and so on.

### 2. Women and Communication with Women:

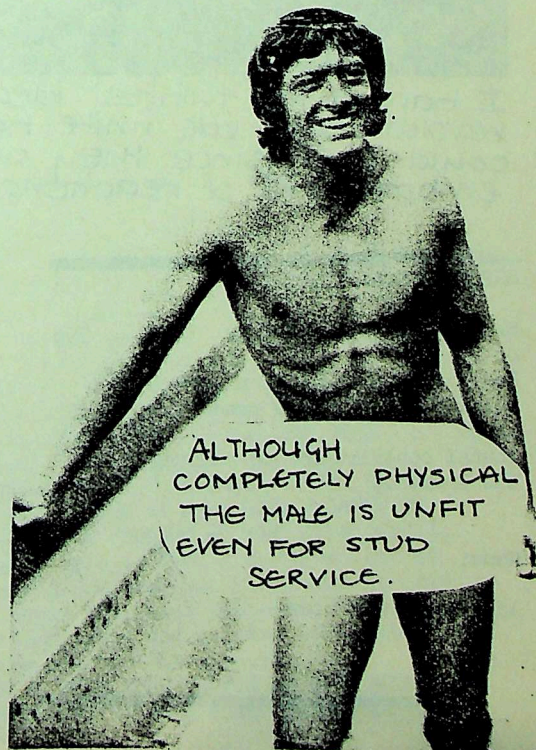
With constant distribution of information in mind, what do sisters think of this idea? Would it be feasible that when demands are formulated eg. the six demands raised by the Notting Hill Group at Manchester, we send out copies of those demands together with a questionnaire to find out what women think about them and what women want. This would give us useful information for our leafletting programme. It might help in preventing the formation of a female elite and help break down sectarian groups and borrowing of traditional left concepts. This would cost money but I'm sure we have the imagination necessary to overcome the practical problems. Worth a try? Respond please.

### 3. More Media:

Could women in television make it known to those connected with production of programmes such as: 'Man Alive', 'One Pair of Eyes' etc., that there are groups in existence that have a good deal of information available for use in such programmes. Some time ago I saw a programme about women on social security - claimants union representative and others were called to say their bit, but there were great gaps which we could have filled. A marvelous opportunity for direct consciousness raising as opposed to special Women's Lib. programmes that trivialize us and seldom get beyond emotional, sexist attitudes and arguments as entertainment! Plea:- We concentrate more on what is said than the way its being said. Content more important than articulation.  
P.S We need megaphone.  
What about a travelling information caravan?

### 4. Finally:

Re. the demand for wages for housework. How dare some women suggest that if you were paid for housework it would keep us in the house and glorify housework. Women are not such fools. From my point of view nothing will make me glorify housework or do more of it than is necessary. Bringing up children alone, a wage for housework would put an end to phonecalls to solicitors re. separation allowance, waiting in social security offices for benefits that are my right. This type of thing keeps women isolated and in the home. A wage would allow me to get out on the streets more, working for Women's Liberation.



**ALTHOUGH COMPLETELY PHYSICAL THE MALE IS UNFIT EVEN FOR STUD SERVICE.**

# Graduates contd..

spent years trying to train their minds with the idea of actually using them. A very frank reply from a small leather firm said, 'The whole area of graduate employment must be a nightmare at the moment. We are really suprised to have had about thirty applicants, some of whom have outstanding academic records and should be looking for higher things'

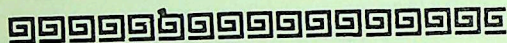
Even if woman achieve equality of opportunity in work, this does not mean we will all be living in Utopia. This correspondence showed that a number of well known stereotypes about women as workers are still rampant, but while it is important to try and correct these misconceptions, I hope we will not lose sight of the wider issues involved: What do we want to work for?

\*\*\*\*\*

"Women have to be put in their proper place before a man feels strong enough to deal with them; and the exaltation of his own sex combined with the denigration of the opposite sex is part of the process by which a boy emancipates himself from his mother and learns to take his place in the world of men."

Sexual Deviation (Anthony Storr).

\*\*\*\*\*



"Besides Chiang Ching was a woman. Disarmed by their own prejudices, the moderates refused to consider a female a serious threat."

MAD'S GREAT REVOLUTION (R. Elegant).



"Usually there is an attempt to create a phantasy woman of extreme seductiveness, a courtesan who will arouse the maximum desire. Such a phantasy figure exists in the minds of all men - the woman who is nothing but mistress, who makes no demands, and who exists solely that she may please her lover."  
SEXUAL DEVIATION (Anthony Storr).



### Enjoy being a girl

● Have you ever noticed that the majority of Women's Lib supporters do not appear to be married. It would therefore seem that these workers for women's rights are really only after equal pay, or to dominate the male through jealousy. As for me, I love being a woman, a housewife, a mother and above all a real wife to my husband. I love being provided for by him, having him hold my coat, pamper and cherish me and this is what Women's Lib would deprive me of. Surely a man is more burdened than a woman - he has to earn the daily bread until he is 65 - I had to work until I was 25 when I became pregnant. Now with two children at school I can virtually please myself. I suggest all who want equality go immediately to Red China or Russia and take a long look at what being equal means. Perhaps then they will see sense, return to good old England and buy a new bra.  
Dorothy Harris, Leeds

- Workshop Small Groups  
 ABBOTS LANGLEY Watford 32231 (Beryl Weaver)  
 ACTON 992-1337 (Josephine Delaney)  
 ARCHWAY 272-9578 (Betty Winyard)  
 c. ARSENAL 359-0842 (Hermione Harris)  
 BALHAM 673-0010 (Sue Murdoch)  
 c. BATTERSEA 822-8071 (Helena Colombe)  
 BATTERSEA PARK 622-1753 (Eve Muir)  
 c. BELSIZE LANE 722-2784 (Audrey Battersby)  
 BLACKHEATH 858-9829 (Jacky Moore)  
 BROMLEY 460-6816 (Catherine Hodges)  
 BRUNEL UNI. uxbridge 37905 (Diane Jackson)  
 CAMBERWELL 733-4864 (Kate Laing)  
 CAMDEN TOWN 485-4403 (Sheila Mullane)  
 c. CHALK FARM 624-2896 (Muriel Jackson)  
 CHISWICK 560-0599 (Margaret Fox)  
 DULWICH 670-5822 (Gail Cotton)  
 c. FALING 997-5074 (Sandy Heath)  
 EAST SHEEN 876-5561 (Caroline Charlton)  
 c. ENGLAND'S LANE 624-9963 (Jill Weissbort)  
Family Study 229-7908 (Rosamund Linell)  
 c. Feminists 435-6902 Carol Powell  
 FINCHLEY 346-2295 (Neilma Rowan)  
 W/N FINCHLEY 346-5006 (Sylvia Cohen)  
 FULHAM 736-2014 (Sonia Markham)  
 GOLDERS GREEN 203-0205 (Jenny Fisher)  
 GOSPEL OAK 485-7392 (Lesley Sladden)  
Gay Women's Lib. 837-4502 (Gillian)  
 HEATH GROUP 794-6398 (Ann Levy)  
 HIGHBURY FIELDS 226-7785 (Beryl Winter)  
 HOLLAND PARK 603-7927 (Margot Escombe)  
 HOLLYCROFT AVE. 435-4533 (Marjorie Sachs)  
 c. HORNSEY 340-5004 (Jenny Peel)  
 ILFORD 590-5954 (Sani Friedman)  
 c. ISLINGTON 226-7114 (Angie Plageron)  
 KEATS GROVE 794-9251 (Brekke Larsen)  
 KENSINGTON 937-8563 (Heather Connolly)  
 KENTISH TOWN 485-0077 (Margaret Ford)  
 c. KILBURN 452-1166 (Rona Richardson)  
 c. LADBROOK GROVE 727-9128 (Eva Lofstad)  
 c. NORTH KENSINGTON 727-0820 (Miranda)  
 c. NOTTING HILL 937-6244 (Esther Ronay)  
 PADDINGTON 229-5932 (Lisa Munks)  
 PECKHAM 703-3314 (Kay Hunt)  
 PIMLICO 828-3735 (Sally Alexander)  
 PUTNEY 622-0374 (Adrienne Weller)  
 RICHMOND 940-5843 (Chris Briddon)  
 c. Radical Feminists 348-3316 (Glenda)  
 ST. ALBANS st. Albans 63677 (Kate Gordon)  
 c. SHEPHERDS BUSH 603-9947 (Deirdre Brennan)  
 c. SOUTH END GREEN 722-7165 (Sheila Armstrong)  
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 STRATFORD 519-4464 (Nell Myers)  
 STREATHAM 637-6002 (Julia Devine)  
 WALTHAM FOREST Wm. Act. 520-7811 (A. Taylor)  
 WANDSWORTH 870-0690 (Lynne Burton)  
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 WEST HAMPSTEAD 435-2854 (Sue Honeyford)  
 WHITECHAPEL 254-1986 (Lesley Salter)  
 WIMBLEDON 540-9315 (Myra Brankin)  
Women's Centre 485-2868 (Sue Cowley)  
Action groups and Others:  
 ABORTION & CONTRACEPTION CAMPAIGN  
 622-2216 (Antonia Cannon)  
 CONTRACEPTION ACTION GROUP  
 995-9356 (Mary Buchanan)  
 MEDICAL GROUP 836-2369 (Maggie Eisner)  
 NIGHTCLEANERS COLLECTIVE 348-3594 (M. Hobbs)  
 POLITICAL STUDY 272-1558 (Alison Fell)  
 PSYCHOLOGY GROUP 622-5020 (Carola Moon)  
 PUBLICATIONS GROUP 229-4073 (J. Kazantzis)  
 SHREW COLLECTIVE 622-5020 (Carola Moon)  
 STREET THEATRE 485-4882 (Dinah Brooks)  
 WOMEN IN MEDIA 226-3982 (Serena Wadham)

- Some Non-Workshop Contacts:  
 CRICKLEWOOD NURSERY CAMPAIGN GROUP  
 794-9258 (Penny Sequerra)  
 FIELDWAY CRESENT (Highbury)  
 352-4294 (Elma van Dyk)  
 P.O.W. 889-6104 (Helen Lowe)  
 SIX POINT GROUP 723-9934 (Rose Morris)  
 SOCIALIST WOMAN 837-6954 (Leonora Lloyd)  
 GINGERBREAD 935-7886 (Unsupported Mothers)  
 MEN'S LIBERATION 554-9495 (Pip Clancey)

This issue of Shrew was produced by: Amanda, Ann, Carolyn, Charlotte, Hilda, Jane, Joan, Katie, Lyane, Linda, Linda, Madge, Marion, Maureen, Penny, Sue and Sani.

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I haven't the faintest idea what possible revolutionary role white heterosexual men could fulfil since they are the very embodiment of reactionary-vested interest power.

### NOTICES:

SATURDAY JUNE 17th:  
 ONE-DAY WOMEN'S MEETING at the London College of Furniture, 41 Commercial Rd., E.1.  
Women and the Community - Trade Unions, Housing, Welfare, Local Authorities. (Creche. Grub)  
 INTERIOR DECORATING? Why pay men to decorate your home? For the feminist touch phone: RLB Enterprises, Madge Dye, 985-4372

HAND PRINTED lino cut cards, ring: Lyane 989 9970

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# Shrew

Stratford  
10p



1888. Matchworkers on strike at Bryant and May in East London.

THIS ISSUE OF SHREW, on East London women, has been produced by the Stratford group of the Women's Liberation Workshop.

Our edition of SHREW describes the conditions in which women in this area have had to live in the past, and attempts to show the background of present day problems and struggles.

Limitations of space have prevented us from going into as much detail as we would have liked, and articles on such issues as female industrial militancy, the suffragettes and the changing family structure have been postponed until the end of the year, when we plan to publish a pamphlet which covers the territory more thoroughly.

The articles here make it clear

that although there has been much material improvement in conditions since the Nineteenth Century, this has been a relative improvement only. Social inequalities and discriminatory attitudes have changed hardly at all.

Relatively few women have found it possible to involve themselves in the struggle for change even with the help of well-intentioned male supporters with greater power and status. Today we know that change is possible and are beginning to take our struggle into our own hands.

Our group's basic activity is discussion, but members have played a small part in the local activities of the Tenants'

Association, Stratford Mothers in Action and the Birth Control Campaign. Recently we held a conference of East End women, which was an attempt to meet women from neighbouring areas to talk about our common problems and campaigns and discuss effective action.

Afterwards some of us got together and are searching for premises for an East London women's centre. We hope that this will be a place where groups and individuals can contact one another about common interests, where we can meet to sort out our problems and share experiences, and where we can involve ourselves in a practical way with local women's issues.

# WE CANNOT HAVE ANYTHING....

There is unemployment in the docks. Local industries are declining. Journalistic revelations of poverty and squalor in the East End have been followed by a pious editorial in the Times on the cost of progress. Ratepayers complain about the 'abuse of charity' by improvident scroungers, while earnest voluntary organisations pressurize local authorities who deny the existence of the problem. It is 1861...

That part of the West Ham Union which in 1972 has become Newham & Canning Town, was in 1861 suffering the worst effects of the transition from a rural to an industrial economy. The Union was outside the metropolitan boundary, and not subject to the city health regulations. This meant that oil-burners and gut-spinners, manufacturers of such noxious stuff as vitriol and lamp-black, were able to set up in business in the district, making unpleasant surroundings even worse. It was freely admitted that no-one would live there who didn't have to - and most members of the Board of Guardians responsible for the administration of the district lived in Stratford, a much better district.

At that time, men and women came from all over the country hoping to find work in East London. Employers at the docks and the iron works hired men when business was good, fired them when it was bad. The luckier women took in outwork, or did washing; many of their daughters went into service.

When there was no work, the alternatives were poor relief, charity or starvation. Outdoor relief was not generally available for the able-bodied unemployed. Instead, they were offered the workhouse - a prison-like institution where men, women and children were separated, so as not to be a bad influence upon one another - and so that there would be no chance of them breeding. Physical conditions in the workhouse were supposed to be worse than those endured by the lowest paid labourer outside. Not surprisingly, many people preferred to risk starvation rather than go inside.

Even when there was work to be had, wages were low, and in times of sickness there was often no money for food. At the best of times, nutritional standards were poor; it was not until 1875 that the Sale of Food and Drugs Act prevented the worst of such practices as adding lead to sweets and alum to bread. Contraception was unknown; women bore child after child. Families lived in tiny usually rented cottages, many with open sewers in the backyards. Dampness and overcrowding were common. Several households might share a water-tap, but water supplies were erratic, and not always drinkable. There were frequent epidemics of small-pox, cholera and typhoid. Streets went unpaved, and often unlit, though there were occasional attempts to improve those more publicly visible areas, at the demand of those few inhabitants sufficiently well-off to be property-owners and ratepayers. For years, a local clergyman had been trying to draw public attention to conditions in dockland and the

surrounding districts. In Spring 1861, the Guardians were newly indignant at allegations, published in the national press, that 'the poor are in urgent necessity; numbers of women approaching child-birth, almost without food'. A disbelieving ratepayer wrote 'if the distress really exists as it is represented, how is it we are living in its midst and know it not?' Witness after witness, most of them women, came forward to testify to a Parliamentary Enquiry of the Select Committee on Poor Relief, that the allegations were true. The examiners made it their business to enquire into the morals of the women and the drinking habits of their husbands. After all, the Guardians had pointed out that if the wife of a drunkard starves to death, that was the husband's fault and no-one else's responsibility.

The testimony of two of these women can speak for the many like them whose misery we can only guess at, whose voices were never heard. Sarah Morgan's husband, after trying and failing to find work, deserted her and the six children. She was pregnant with twins at the time. Although the two eldest children were out at work, she was forced to go into the workhouse with the others when the birth was due. The children caught a skin disease there. Then the eldest boy fell ill, and had to stop work. Sarah, herself ill, came out of the workhouse to nurse him, and her eldest daughter who was in service, had to come home to nurse her mother. Then the newborn twins and one of the other children died.

'All three lay dead in the house at the same time. We have pawned everything, even my eldest girl's clothes to live...I am very ill'. Sarah Morgan had had thirteen children, only six of whom had lived. Sarah Appleby was younger - 25 at the time of the enquiry - so had only four children, aged between three months and six years. The previous December, when her baby had been due, the whole family was still weak from the effects of the smallpox which they had had that summer. Her husband had hurt his foot in an accident at the docks; he could scarcely walk, and was unable to work.

'At the time of my confinement there was no food, nor fire, nor linen in the house till we got it from Mr Douglas (the clergyman). We have pawned everything'.

The relieving officer had refused to send a nurse to attend at the birth, saying that as her husband was at home, he could look after her.

'My husband made answer and said "It is not a pleasant thing for a man to have to do with a lying-in woman"; I have got three little things, and my other baby is not quite two years old now; it is quite a little thing, and what was I to do with them? I had them both on the bed at once'.

This bed, on which she gave birth was an old mattress, 'picked to pieces'. There were no sheets. A

neighbour came by to help her, and brought a little coal for the fire.

'The woman had an excellent confinement', said the relieving officer, 'she was well in a fortnight'.

Well enough, in fact, three weeks after the birth to walk several miles through the winter rain without proper shoes, to collect her poor relief. It was four months after this that she told the Enquiry 'I am still very weak and can hardly stand upright. I feel almost too weak to suckle my child'.

The Committee found that the West Ham Guardians were free from blame, and that most of the fault lay with the women themselves for having refused the workhouse, or for not having gone about applying for relief according to correct procedures. 'The rich as well as the poor, the high as well as the low, have their home difficulties, their sorrows and their discomforts; we cannot expect to have anything just as we would like'.

Many improvements did, however, begin to be made in public health provision in the following decades. But thirty-five years later, the Medical Officer of Health for West Ham was still able to record the deaths of thirty-one women from 'accidents of childbirth', and the deaths of forty-four children under the age of one year 'from starvation, want of breast milk'.

Although the borough has not yet got round to publishing its most recent figures, they would show no babies dying of starvation in Newham last year. Nor did any women die in childbirth (though the figure for death consequent to abortion are less easy to discover). Contraception becomes increasingly more available, though it is not yet free. Women no longer spend most of their adult lives in childbearing; the birth-rate has been declining steadily since the end of the 19th century. In 1896, children made up half the population of this area. The figure now is 1/3.

Conditions have, then, improved. But Newham's birthrate is still one of the highest in London - as it was seventy-five years ago. The still-birth rate in 1970 was 15.9 per 1000 live births - the highest in London. The national rate was 13.0 per 1000. The perinatal mortality rate was 29.0 per 1000 - again the highest in London, comparing badly with a national rate of 23.5. The commonest

single causes of infant mortality were prematurity and pneumonia; both of these can be linked with poor nutrition and poor living conditions on the part of the mother.

Unsupported mothers, are, more than most pregnant women, liable to suffer from miscarriages, stillbirths and post-natal complications. Young unmarried girls who become pregnant risk being taken into care - this happened to eight such girls in 1970. Older women on their own sometimes have their children taken from them when they are unable to cope financially - Social Security has to be fought for every penny.

Yes, there have been great improvements in the last hundred years. But they have not been enough. We should not wait patiently for things to get better. We must take the control of our lives out of the hands of doctors, local authorities, social workers, social

security officials and other more or less well-meaning people - and into our own hands. We need to fight to know more about our own bodies, and to have the means to use that knowledge ourselves, as part of transforming the society in which we live.

## Doorstep Life

A hundred years ago the East End was a very different place. It was smaller: Burdett Rd was new, and beyond it the fields were only just giving way to factories and the networks of main streets built to house their workers. Victoria Park was new, and around it streets of slightly posher houses were just going up, to be lived in by clerks and shopkeepers (perhaps with the occasional discreet lodger). Bow Common was still a common; and even further in there were sometimes gardens and open spaces. (In Whitechapel Road a hay market was still held regularly). In Stepney and Bethnal Green there was still room to breathe; but Shoreditch, Spitalfields, Whitechapel and the riverside parishes were packed with people, living mostly in cramped and sordid houses, some recently jerry-built, many old and dilapidated, most squalid and uncomfortable - bugridden, smelly, and hot in the summer, cold and damp in the winter, with bad drains and no 'mod cons'.

In such districts people spent more time outside than in the home: the children played in their own and neighbouring streets, each street corner had its knot of regulars (especially in the evenings), and even household chores were often done out of the house - sewing and mending which would be endless, on the doorstep, and washing clothes or peeling vegetables in the yard, to save carrying water from the only tap. 'Home' was little more than a base for most of its inmates. If there was a father he would spend the day at work or in search of it; older children who still lived at home would work during the day and go off with their friends in the evening; younger children would only stay in if their help was needed. Most homes were very split up, often with each room separately let; sometimes one room had to serve the whole family - one or two adults and any number of children - and in those circumstances 'home' was unlikely to provide much comfort or peace.

Steady work was hard to come by, and only the lucky few, skilled men in trades with no slack season, could hope for it. So even if there was a man in the family it was by no means sure from week to week that he could earn enough. So everyone in the household earned what they could. The children would pick up pennies on odd-jobs (often enough to buy their own food - fish and

chips, or shellfish or a pennyslab of pudding or bread and pickles)-and as soon as they could get regular work minding a baby or running errands, they'd be giving their mother a weekly contribution. They also helped at home, with the younger children for instance: the 'little mother' would often be responsible for a toddler brother or sister during the day, most of its waking hours; and where there was no elder sister a boy would take on the job. On washing day they helped with mangling and hanging out and folding and so on (girls were often kept at home from school for this). They ran errands going for a pennyworth of tea or jam or sugar, or queuing for a big cheap bag of yesterday's bread and buns; or scouring the neighbourhood and beyond for anything that would keep the fire going. Small wonder that the blessings of 'universal and compulsory' education were not widely appreciated, when brought in by the Education Act of 1870. Schooling was for many children something to be fitted in when jobs were scarce, especially in winter, when the streets were cold. After the Education Act, school attendance officers, and the police combined to hunt children under 13 into the schools all through the year, every day. Resistance was strongest, from parents and children, in the families where the children's economic contribution was the most difficult to do without.

Children over school age hardly counted as children: they were wage-earners and even when living at home they were usually pretty independent. They were paid lower rates than adults, especially at first, but there were more openings for them, most commonly as errand-boys or factory-girls. The 'openings' led nowhere (packing tea, for instance, or bundling matches); and once they wanted adult rates they would have to look elsewhere, and might find little choice.

But for girls especially, these years were the free-est they would have, a period when they could buy showy clothes (of the cheapest kind), go to the occasional music-hall, and saunter along with their friends in the evenings and on Sundays, enjoying a leisure that with babies and (probably) marriage would soon disappear. Sometimes they stayed at home, if there was room, and if their parents were adjusted to their independence; sometimes they set up in lodgings with a mate or two. (The social workers of the day were shocked by this and organised homes and hostels for working girls at a subsidised rate for cubicle and food. There was one in Hoxton, several in Bromley and Bow, but many girls must have been put off by the rules, which usually forbade late hours, absence without permission, male visitors, and even correspondence with males.) They had close friendships with other girls; two mates would try for work together; and if one fell ill or was in some crisis, the other would tell everyone at work and collect for her at the end of the day, standing at the works gate with her apron held open for the pennies they would all throw in as they left. (It was considered very mean not to contribute in such cases).

Their jobs seldom lasted long: bankruptcy or fire or death might put an employer out of business; change of season might mean there was less demand for the product (as with fizzy drinks in winter, or boots in summer, or any luxury products once the London season ended and the rich left for their country estates), or the raw materials might be available for only a

short period, as with fruit for jam; or a better job might turn up; or the foreman or woman might become intolerable. or a wage reduction might provoke a walk-out, when everyone would find other work. (Brief strikes, of one or two days, were quite common, and would mean a general turnover of hands rather than a long-drawn-out confrontation, since their wages made unions dues and the building up of strike funds pretty impossible.

Courting - at least in its early stages - was a communal affair. Many old people today still remember the 'monkey parade'. Main streets like Whitechapel High Street or Commercial Rd, in the evenings and especially on Saturdays, were like fairs, noisy and full of people. It was pay-day, best clothes were out of pawn; Sunday's dinner could be bought at the stalls along the street; there were singers and bands and stump orators, jugglers and acrobats and Punch-and-Judy and peep-shows. Young people would stroll up and down such streets, groups of boys and groups of girls, calling insults and jokes to each other, or making loud comments meant to be overheard. Out of these encounters small mixed groups would form, and eventually couples. Such couples might last only a few weeks, or months, or sometimes years. Marriage might be intended vaguely for some time, but often it would take place only when a child was expected, and not always then. (Funerals were taken more seriously than marriages, with processions and as much show as means allowed; marriages by comparison were scarcely noticed).

Married life meant problems. The two individual wages pooled were fine at first, but as the number of babies increased (and contraceptive knowledge was rudimentary or non-existent) the budget grew tighter. Juvenile jobs didn't pay enough, and anyway weren't open to a grown man, so the father would join the thousands of unskilled men competing for work in the docks, or the building trade, or transport, or the gas-works, and there were often not enough jobs to go round. So even if the father didn't go off looking for work elsewhere (or for an easier life on his own or with someone else), and even if he managed to avoid illness and accident, it was often the mother who held the household together, not only by her unpaid and unending work in the home but also by going out charring or washing or nursing, or even back to an old workplace if there was a rush job and they wanted extra hands, or by taking on work to do at home, washing or mangling or outwork.

Outwork was work given out from warehouses and factories to be done at home and brought back. Any manufacture whose basic materials were not costly (so





that little was risked in trusting them out of the factory), and which involved time rather than machinery and deftness rather than strength (so that children could help), lent itself to this method of production. It suited the manufacturer very well: he did not have to pay rent or lighting or heating for the premises where his work was done, and he could employ exactly as many or as few 'hands' as he had work for. Moreover, homeworkers could be fobbed off with lower rates - they took homework because they had to earn and couldn't leave home, so they would be afraid to risk losing the work to one of the many others in their position, and it was almost impossible for them to get together and stand out for a better rate. And if he also employed workshop hands, he could beat down their rates by threatening to give all the work out unless they accepted the same pay as outworkers. In the East End, outwork was commonest in the clothing trade, where cheap clothes of every kind would be cut out and sometimes machined at the warehouse or factory, and finished by homeworkers who collected bundles of work early in the week and brought back the completed garments on Thursday or Friday. When there was work, it always had to be done fast to meet the employer's deadline, which might mean stitching late into the night; while at other times there might be none, or very little, and so many women anxious to secure it that rates of pay could be cut further still.

The more a woman needed the work, the worse she'd be paid. Men's higher wages were 'justified' by their having families to support; women were supposed to be dependents and not breadwinners. But in fact many women were breadwinners, not only for themselves, but also for old or invalid parents, children, sick or unemployed husbands. Only half the women in London aged between 20 and 30 in 1871 were wives as opposed to spinsters or widows, and many of the rest must have been supporting at least themselves, and often others. It was those who were tied to the house by small children or an invalid needing constant care who were worst off, for they were entirely dependent on homework, and had no choice but to take whatever they could get. Anyone with a little more security - another breadwinner in the household, or a relation who could help tide her over - could refuse to take the lowest rates, and wait for something else to turn up, or could go out to find other work.

Although I've been talking about East London 100 years ago, people in East London today will certainly find some things familiar. Women are still paid less than men, they still do the most dreary, least satisfying jobs, they still have their burden doubled by household responsibilities, most grievously still if they are unsupported mothers. Homeworkers are as badly exploited now as then, and for the same reasons.

People talk about progress. Certainly improved medical care (and contraception) mean that most women are healthier and look younger and live longer than they used to. But there is more mental illness, more women have breakdowns.

Some 'improvements' are double-edged: better living conditions - more space, more equipment, T.V. - have cut women off from one another. ~~Washing~~ is the only part of housework still sometimes done communally, and leisure is often spent alone by the T.V. Flats don't have doorsteps. And smaller households (fewer children and no lodgers or even grandparents) can make for a very claustrophobic and oppressive relationship. The family 100 years ago was something larger and more fluid; the mother was the centre, with a huge weight of work and responsibility, but more people to share it with. Nowadays, too often, she either has a heavy load and little help with it, or with 2 or 3 children and no job she is expected to make the family her life, and becomes an emotional parasite on her husband and children.

## EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES!

ACCORDING to the latest East London census returns, 41 - 52% of married women between 25 and 40 years old go out to work. Many other women whose family commitments keep them at home, take in badly-paid outwork as did their mothers and grandmothers before them.

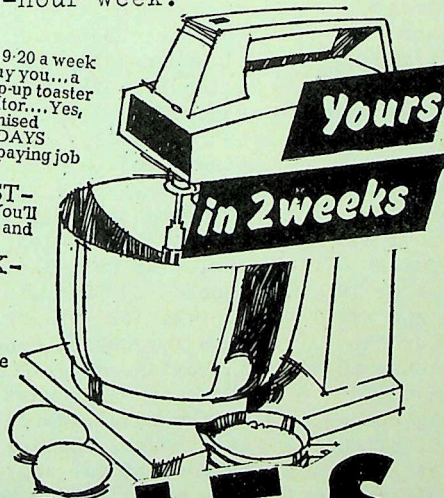
In recent advertisements for machinists, over half the jobs offered were for outworkers.

Many Stratford women work in light industry where they get low wages, unequal pay, insecurity - and a chance to get away from their families.

The "starlight shift" is the most popular with married women with children; time for a full day's housework, then off to an evening's work at a flat rate of maybe £5 which, with a fixed bonus, might reach over £8 for a 20-hour week.

Just think what £19.20 a week (after brief training) could buy you... a superb new food mixer, a pop-up toaster or even a new coffee percolator... Yes, yourself are just a FEW PAY DAYS AWAY - when you get a top-paying job at LESNEY!

**MAKE FRIENDS FAST-** Lesney is a happy company. You'll soon settle in, meet new faces and make many new friends.  
**FREE RIDE TO WORK-** Step aboard the Lesney bus - GET DRIVEN TO AND FROM WORK FREE!  
**GOOD FOOD AND CHEAP TOO!** Lesney have their own subsidised canteen.  
**CHOICE OF EASY HOURS** designed to suit you. Average earnings (including bonus) are 48p per hour after brief training... top rate 55p per hour. (Earnings shown right at average rate.)



# LADIES

Are you looking for a job which:-

- (a) PROVIDES YOU WITH INTERESTING WORK
- (b) ALLOWS YOU TO EARN GOOD MONEY
- (c) GIVES YOU PLEASANT SURROUNDINGS AND A FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

**HOUSEWIVES**  
**URGENTLY REQUIRED**

Unionisation is minimal. In one factory a woman and her husband (she on day shift, he on nights) got sacked for attempting to organize their co-workers and fight for better conditions. Later that same factory laid off the all-male night shift altogether; on the other shifts each woman was given an extra machine to tend, and the surplus women lost their jobs. For double the work the women remaining were paid 25% extra.

Yet that factory is the most popular with women locally; its rates are higher than the others, and the working conditions better - not to mention fringe benefits like a free bus ride to work, and a discount on plastic toys. Many married women still look on their earnings as "pin money" - a bit extra for luxuries and prefer their hours at the factory to being shut up at home. At least at work they get the chance to talk to other women.

Even though, in most places at least, conditions have improved since the days of the matchgirls, the basic exploitation remains the same.

## VICE GIRL TOLD: 'BE MORE CAREFUL'

A 23-YEAR-OLD East Ham woman admitted that she was a prostitute and that all other jobs were less attractive financially, a court heard last week.

Miss Katherine Davis, of Caulfield - road, appeared on remand at Marlborough-street Court. She had pleaded guilty to soliciting in the West End.

A woman probation officer told the court: "She frankly admits that she is a prostitute and that for her all other jobs are less attractive financially. She has no dependants and seems to be earning a reasonable amount."

The magistrate, Mr. St. John Harmsworth, imposed a fine of £1 on Miss Davis and told her: "You must be more careful in future."

**HAIRDRESSING - A SCHOOL-LEAVER** for apprenticeship, excellent opportunities, friendly salon, wages £5 p.w. Phone 550-7811

**Assistant Cook** Full-time. Basic rate of pay 40 hour 5 day week - Male £20.32; Female £17.40.

# WOMEN IN THE TENANTS' STRUGGLE

One of the most important fights facing council tenants nationally in October, will be the fight against the "Fair Rents Act", which over the next few years will double the rents of most council tenants. Tenants associations are being formed up and down the country to combat the Act. But, can tenants be successful? Can they take on the government and win?

It seems a formidable task - but tenants have done it before and won. In Glasgow in 1915, and in Bethnal Green in 1938. London, in 1938/39 was the scene of a series of rents strikes; one of the first of these took place on the Quinn Sq., estate.

Quinn Sq., was a block of 246 flats. There was one lavatory between two flats, one water tap between four families. The general state of repair was appalling. Steps and handrails were broken, ceilings were falling down, the walls were often damp and the sash cords broken. There were no cupboards for food or clothes and the fire-stoves were often broken and dangerous. The tenants, although not yet organised in a tenants' association, sent a deputation to the Public Health Committee. The committee visited the flats and ordered the landlord to carry out the necessary repairs.

Shortly after this success the landlord tried to evict a tenant for non-payment of rent. The tenants realised that they had won over repairs because they had stood together, and that in order to win the fight against eviction, they should stand together again. They formed a tenants' association on the estate. The association carried out investigations into the financial position of the flats. They discovered that the woman the landlord was trying to evict was living in one of the 90 controlled rent flats on the estate.

They also found out that the landlord was charging higher rent than the control laid down, in a total of 70 out of the 90 flats, covered by the control. This was - and still is - illegal. The landlord was forced to pay back the excess, and reduce the rents to the level determined by the control. But he was still getting away with charging much higher rents for the decontrolled flats, exercising his so-called 'right' to charge whatever rent he liked for 'his' property.

The Quinn Sq., tenants decided to challenge this 'right'. They worked out a scale of maximum rents. This was presented to a mass meeting of tenants and agreed upon. The scale was sent to the landlords agent.

The agent spent the next few days frantically rushing around the estate offering to reduce people's rents by 3d. or 4d. a week. None of the tenants would accept this, and at a meeting of all the tenants they decided to have a total rent strike.

Most of the organisation for this was carried out by the women on the estate. They made placards with slogans like "We refuse to pay high rents", "our landlord has made a huge fortune at our

expense", "Less rent, more repairs". The women paraded around the borough carrying the placards. Posters were pasted up around the estate and the neighbouring area. The estate agents office was picketed every day, all day by the women, and they held meetings every day, to keep people in touch with one another and the rent strike solid.

Every day they held public street meetings in other parts of the borough to explain to other people why they were on rent strike, and why they should receive the support of the rest of the borough. The rent collector tried to go round the estate several times with tales of "Mrs Next-door's" paid, why don't you!

He was followed round the estate by angry women and children, including "Mrs next-door" screaming that she hadn't paid up, that none of them had. After a few days of this treatment, he stopped going round. After two weeks the landlord gave in. He agreed to, recognise the tenants' association, carry out all the repairs, take no action against a tenant without first consulting the tenants' association, and he agreed to the tenants' scale of rents. By this, all rents were reduced, the average rent went down from 14 shillings a week to 10 shillings. The Quinn Square tenants challenged the landlord's 'right' to charge whatever he wants for his property, and they won.



Pickets on duty outside the Estate Office.

Other tenants in the East End followed their example later in 1938, when over 30 rent strikes took place against the 1938 Government Rent Act, most of these 30 were successful.

Again, it was the women who did most of the organising. They were, and still are, the ones who have to shuffle with the housekeeping to pay the extra rent, they are the ones to give up so-called luxuries like cigarettes or a new pair of stockings, and they will be the ones to fight back.



Washing up. This one tap has to provide for the needs of four families.

Photos from "Rent Strike Victory", pamphlet, LDCP

THE SIN OF OPPRESSION IS GREAT - BUT THE SIN OF SUBMISSION IS GREATER.



"I think I was born an anarchist, and events in my life just enabled me to realize that that was what I was".

THOSE words were delivered at the age of 96; the realization came much earlier, not so strangely either, perhaps, since Lillian Wolfe's first job was that of a civil servant working as a telegraphist in the Post Office. Although it was during those years that Lillian first became politically active, she recalls her political feelings as a child, living with her parents, three brothers and two sisters behind her father's jeweller's shop in the Edgware Rd, London. Her home, although far from luxurious, seemed very comfortable compared with those of some of the neighbouring families and Lillian well remembers her sympathy for the desperate and poverty-stricken families inhabiting the slums of the surrounding area. Back in the bad old days of 1885, whilst in Oxford Street one day, she saw a mob of men, on a hunger march, pour out of South Audley St and attack a nearby jewellers shop, smashing not only the window but the proprietor's son. Pacifist though she is, she recalls how very strongly her heart went out to those starving people.

That was when she was ten. About a year later, the last of the governesses in whose charge Lillian had always been left, left the family. Lillian's mother, never a very maternal person (especially towards Lillian), had always left her to the servants. The next two and a half years of Lillian's life were spent most unpleasantly amidst domestic chores. Of her mother Lillian says: "She must have been a very frustrated woman". She had married very young and had borne six children, but her real love was singing, and when Lillian was 13, her mother left the family to join an operatic company.

It would seem that her career was not a very successful one, since many years later, Lillian paid for her mother's return to England from South Africa, where she had "ended-up" as a home help. Up to the point of her mother's leaving, Lillian had received no formal education, and it was her eldest brother who determined that she should not face the world totally unprepared, paid for her to study at the Polytechnic where she later sat an examination enabling her to commence training as a telegraphist. Once an employee of the G.P.O., she made many friends who "had a good influence over my choice of literature and culture generally". This, however, was non-political until she joined the Civil Service Socialist Society.

Exactly when she first heard of socialism Lillian cannot remember, but it was as a suffragette and as a result of lobbying (which made her realise the unfairness of the society in which she lived, and exactly what a farce the British Parliamentary System really was, and still is, she maintains) that she became an anarchist. "Probably my first realization of the injustice of the system under which we live was when I noticed at an early age that those people who did most for the ease and comfort of others were the worst paid. For instance, the servants. If they were paid £18 per year they were considered very well paid. Of course they had their food the same as the family (in ours at any rate) and sleeping accommodation. One of my friends in the Suffragette Movement founded the Domestic Servants' Union and

things have been better for domestic servants ever since."

# LILLIAN WOLFE - Lifetime Resistance

The first definite anarchist action she can remember committing herself, was when she was asked to stand for election to the executive of the Civil Service Socialist Society in opposition to the executive officers who had discouraged people from attending meetings. For the next conference, she had printed a leaflet informing everyone exactly what was happening and expressing her views on those men who set themselves up as leaders; she ended by stating: "So, if you want to be led, please don't vote for me". They didn't!

It was through a fellow member of the Society that Lillian was introduced to the Suffragette Movement (and incidentally, to Vegetarianism). One of the telegraph service supervisors took her to a meeting of the Women's Freedom League, started by Mrs Desmond. This was in contrast to the Pankhurst's group which Lillian considered too authoritarian. Although unhappy at first about the methods of propaganda used by the Suffragettes, Lillian soon realized that it was the only way for the Movement to make itself understood.

In those days one of the main grouses was that women were classed with idiots and children, and Lillian says: "It was simply that the ideas of women were never asked for or represented in any way, and we knew that if they were, much that was wrong could be put right". Although this is still the cry of women today, Lillian feels that modern women just do not have a full appreciation of what was achieved by the suffragettes. Understandable, from a woman who today sees young women with many of the advantages that she in her youth had to fight so very hard for.

But, at the same time, it is not true that women have achieved equality and/or liberty, and until they do, they will continue to campaign.

Lillian recalls that there was no anti-male feeling as there is today amongst many groups of the Womens Liberation Movement, but one cannot help feeling that had the women's movement then been as much a threat to the establishment as it is now, there might have been just as much nastiness and antagonism on the part of men then as there is today. In an account which Lillian gave of an instance when she and a friend whilst addressing a crowd at Salisbury Market Place on the subject of female suffrage were jeered at and eventually forced to leave after having cabbages etc. thrown at them, one cannot help but be reminded of the experiences at some of the recent Womens Liberation conferences where, rather than cabbages and men's foul tongues, sisters had to face men's foul fists.

Perhaps one of the more laughable discriminations which Lillian suffered was when pregnant with her son. Wanting the best possible treatment, she applied to Queen Charlotte's Hospital, but was refused admission - not on the grounds that she was due to be an unmarried mother, but that she was an "unrepentant sinner" who intended to continue living with the child's father.

Lillian and a group of friends from the Socialist Society became very unpopular when it was discovered that they were anarchists; as a result, they broke away and started a paper called the "Voice of Labour". One friend, Mabel

Hope, a very able writer, was in touch with Tom Keell of Freedom Press, then situated in Fulham. Lillian had heard of him having bought a copy of FREEDOM at a suffragette rally in Trafalgar Sq. Tom Keell was invited along to one of the first publication meetings, and it was from that time that a great friendship and companionship evolved between the two of them, of which she says: "The happiest days of my life were the 20 years we had together until he died".

However, before that friendship developed Lillian and the others started a sort of commune called Marsh House, named after the former editor of FREEDOM. This was in Mecklenburg Street, WC, and cost £90 per year to rent. It proved very successful; each individual had her own room while sharing domestic chores and expenses. They ran weekly socials, etc. which brought in extra cash for FREEDOM. Lillian was still working for the GPO (she left in 1916) when the First World War broke out. When conscription began some of the men from Marsh House had tried to avoid the "call-up" by taking refuge in the Scottish mountains. At this time, Lillian and Tom wrote a very outspoken article about conscription and how to avoid it, for "The Voice of Labour". Very little about this piece appeared in the national press except for a report in the Daily Express. After this, they were aware of being watched by the police, and were very careful in all their movements. They later reprinted the article in the form of a leaflet, which they sent out with a signed letter giving details as to how it should be distributed. One was sent to Enrico Malatesta, a well-known anarchist whose mail was being closely watched by the police. This led to a summons against Lillian and Tom who, on being found guilty were sentenced to two and three months respectively. Tom was charged with printing the leaflet, Lillian with distributing it.

At this time Lillian was pregnant, and instead of being sent to prison was kept in hospital, of which she says, "I think it was meant to be kind, but I was not allowed to mix with the other prisoners, even on exercise in that ugly yard. It really amounted to solitary confinement and had a very bad effect on me. My thoughts kept going round and round and I could not sleep. I was afraid this might affect the baby, so I consented, two weeks before I was due for release, to pay the fine of £20. The last night I had sleeping pills, a night nurse, and very little sleep". The only other prisoner Lillian met was a young mother in the next cell who was made to clean Lillian's cell since the latter was pregnant. The only person she found really despicable during her stay in prison was the chaplain who she feels must have hated her for being an atheist. She recalls being absolutely terrified, and cast into fear and trembling, that she would be deported to Germany as the clergyman had shouted at her calling her a German (she was not German, but at the time spelt her name Woolf which is of



German derivation).

Most of the time life in prison was extremely boring, and Lillian remarks amusedly that she was even driven to reading the Bible at times, (this was always available). Food-wise she didn't have too many complaints since they tried to cater for her vegetarianism as far as possible. They gave her an apple a day which she always saved until the evening so that she would have something pleasant to look forward to throughout the day. The guards were always alarmed if she left any food, thinking that she was on hunger strike, as were so many suffragettes during their prison stays. Often when she returned to her cell after exercise she would find her possessions scattered after the cell had been searched. Of her prison sentence she says that the only effect it had on her attitude towards life and politics was to make her more strongly anarchist than before.

After her release from prison it was about a year or so before Lillian was able to work again, as her son was too young to be left, and by this time anyway she had resigned from the Post Office. As soon as little Tom was old enough to be looked after by friends, Lillian bought a health food store in Willesden, and later managed one on Ludgate Hill; later still, one in Cheltenham. After that she bought another in Stroud. However, most of her evenings and weekends were spent doing work for FREEDOM. When talking about this, Lillian made a point of saying that she always gave good value and never overcharged in her shops. For this reason she never felt like a capitalist and very much hopes nobody thinks of her as such. At this time, Lillian and Tom together with other friends were living in a commune called Whiteway Colony. Here each person or family set-up had their own dwelling place but came together at their leisure in the communal rooms. Everyone had a say in the running of the commune and was able to express her feelings at the monthly meetings where most of the important decisions were made by the community.

In 1943, officially retired, Lillian returned to London to help out at FREEDOM which was then operating from a large flat in Belsize Road. Here she worked and lived for a while until

forced to leave after the arrest of three comrades. That was in 1945. The next 22 years saw a further two moves for FREEDOM which finally settled in 1967 at their present address in Whitechapel, East London.

Throughout these many years, Lillian continued her work for FREEDOM, and it was only a few years ago that she finally left. However, it was certainly not for losing faith in the cause; she is still very much concerned about finding ways of making this planet a better place and has every sympathy for young people who, she says, "realize what a rotten world we live in and try to do something about it in their own way".

Lillian has always been a pacifist as well as an anarchist and a war resister. Naturally enough, some of the issues which she finds of most concern today are those of the oppressed peoples and nations, the solution to whose problems she feels will be found by way of a non-violent approach only.

At home, the more controversial issues which she feels most strongly about are Radical Alternatives to Prison and the Common Market (entry into which she is very much against).

Pacifist or not, there is one thing above all else which Lillian Wolfe cannot be accused of lacking, and that is fighting spirit. At 96 (and a half) she is still working. Each week she travels from Cheltenham to London to spend one and a half days at the NCCL and the same amount of time at War Resisters International, where we interviewed her one Wednesday morning. She is a woman who has devoted her life to her cause, and for this she has won my admiration. All that remains to be said is,

RIGHT ON, LILLIAN!

Mary Hanley  
Lillian Wolfe

NEWSPAPER RECORDER

# SHE WANTS TO BE A FIREMAN

PROBLEM SPOT

MARCH 30, 1972

PREPARING to leave school can be upsetting particularly if the schoolchild sees nothing very attractive about the adult world.  
Mrs. A. F. writes: "I'm terribly worried about my 14-year-old daughter, Fiona. She keeps saying she wants to be a fireman."  
"At first I thought she must be joking. But she seems quite serious. Naturally she can't become a fireman but she won't accept this."  
"The trouble must have started some months ago

when the house next to ours caught fire. Quite bravely Fiona carried one of the children to safety. "All the praise she got then seems to have gone to her head. Telling her not to be silly does no good. She just says 'if she has to look forward to life in a boring office she'd rather not leave school.'"  
JUST because Fiona can't be a fireman doesn't mean she has to work in an office. If she is prepared to move away from home there are lots of

outdoor and unusual jobs.  
Have a chat with her headmistress and the school's careers guidance officer. Also visit the Youth Employment Bureau and ask about unusual jobs.  
It seems to me Fiona may have decided to be a fireman just because it is out of the question. Probably she can see her life being mapped out for her in a cosy way she will hate. Don't pressure her into being what she isn't.  
My apologies to all those readers who have not received an answer to their problems yet. They will be getting a reply soon.

NOT long ago the Newham Recorder, one of East London's weekly newspapers, ran a sob-story with an unusual twist. The item concerned a brand-new nursery, council-run, which opened early in 1972 with places, theoretically, for 60 children. Unfortunately, shortage of nursing staff (standard ratio: one nurse per five kids) has meant that no more than 20 children can enjoy the benefits of a council day nursery- questionable though some of these may be.

This report, while omitting mention of the abominably low wages and conditions meted out to nursery nurses, lingered lovingly on the concern of the local authorities with the education and social environs of the under-fives. Council-lors, bless them, are agitated and distressed by the lack of nurseries, and over the next four years Newham Council plans to create places for 180 more children. At such a stunning pace, they might even meet the needs of eight per cent of the area's infants.

In that part of East London embraced by Newham's boundaries, the percentage of kids within the population has always been relatively high. And persons in "authority" have always made sure they were heard to bemoan the plight of little ones who had no place to play but the street, whose mothers - worn out in body and spirit - couldn't provide them in turn with physical and emotional nourishment.

The soulful lyric which councillors sing today is the same one employed by their fore-runners 75 years ago.

.....

A reporter from the Daily News, slumming round West Ham at the turn of the century, waxed poetic about its working class atmosphere: "that great city of the poor, lying a flat unlovely wilderness of mean streets..."

Subsistence wages or unemployment set the environmental mood of the "unlovely wilderness". Childhood here was truly little more than a transitional phase; the bits of income that the kids could bring in through working must have been vital for parents to have consented, as they were doing in 1899, to situations like these:

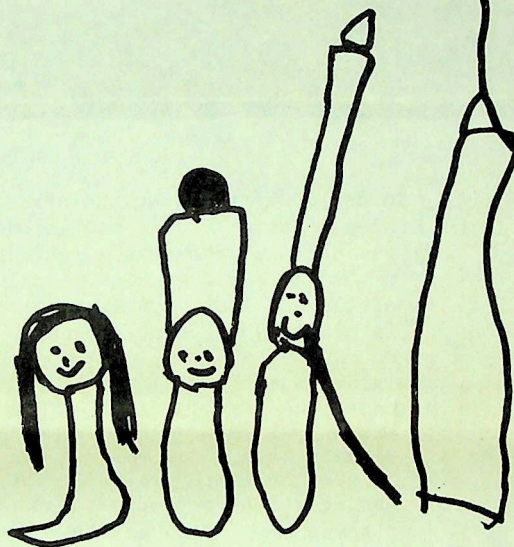
F.A., age 9, working 33 hours weekly for 6d. as a "nurse";  
J.D., age 9, working 34 hours weekly for 6½d. delivering bread;  
C.T., age 7, working 16 hours weekly for 6½d., baby minding;  
W.A., age 13, working 50 hours weekly for 2s. as a baker's boy.

Such statistics surely shocked the old West Ham Council and the local Board of Guardians as they do us today. The shock, however, was not great enough to prod them into action or into considering themselves responsible for the welfare of local children.

Not that the Council ignored kids; far from it. Minutes of their meetings, circa 1905, show the authorities ever-vigilant when it came to crowds of children "troubling and annoying" visitors during the opening of a local museum. And the Rate Payers Association (who remain unmellowed by the passing of time) called for action against the "large number of vagrant children...congregating on the steps of Custom House Railway Station to the very great annoyance of passengers".

The attitude of the authorities was then what it is today: that the "family" is responsible for the child - its life, its health, its welfare. (State schooling is not an assumption of community responsibility; rather, an attempt to ensure proper control of the nation's future labour force).

## CHILDREN



Perhaps this is unfair on some councillors. National legislation, such as the Infant Life Protection Act of 1897, touched off responses in people like Cllr. Thorne of West Ham (male) who in 1906 urged his council to declare in favour of state maintenance of children. He proposed a programme which called for immediate provision of at least one free meal per day to all school children; free medical advice and inspection for all children; efficient physical training within school hours; collation and publication of statistics on health and mortality of school kids.

A brave soul, Cllr. Thorne; although his proposals were effectively talked back into cosmic dust, he had the temerity to rise again in 1909 with the suggestion that the Borough allocate from its funds £1000 yearly for the feeding of school kids. The mayor promptly ruled that such a move would be illegal, and that was that.

.....

It was left to those organisations operating under charitable auspices to begin the slow uphill grind towards community responsibility for the care of children. (Where we are today in terms of this grind isn't easy to assess; Newham like many other Boroughs and counties has yet to witness what

will happen when women, acting from the vantage point of our own needs, make a collective fight.)

The number of "institutions" operating in the East End during the earlier decades of this century is impressive. Dr. Barnardo's, the League of Young Helpers, the Women's League of Service, and the National Women's Labour League were among them. In West Ham the pace and style of welfare activity seems to have been set by the Trinity Mission linked with Oxford University, and the Women's Settlement of Canning Town in South West Ham.

Legislation embodied in the Notification of Births Act, 1908, and the Children's Act of the same year, stirred the consciences of some sections of the middle class. New found awareness of what life was like for most people in areas such as East London brought into those areas a host of the concerned, a great number of them being women.

It is easy to be dismissive and cynical about the do-gooders of that pre-War period. The thing to remember is that they came to East London bearing concern, sympathy, and a wealth of affection and energy. Philanthropy, however, can only go so far.

The Women's Settlement in Canning Town was run by women for women. Operating on the strength of donated funds, its progress through the First World War, the Twenties and Thirties is marked by pleas to generous subscribers (located well outside the East End), and petitions to the council for grants needed to extend aspects of its work.

What did it do? The Settlement's Annual Report for the year 1915 gives an impressive run-down of services to the community, including an account of the Infant Welfare Centre and the School for Mothers:

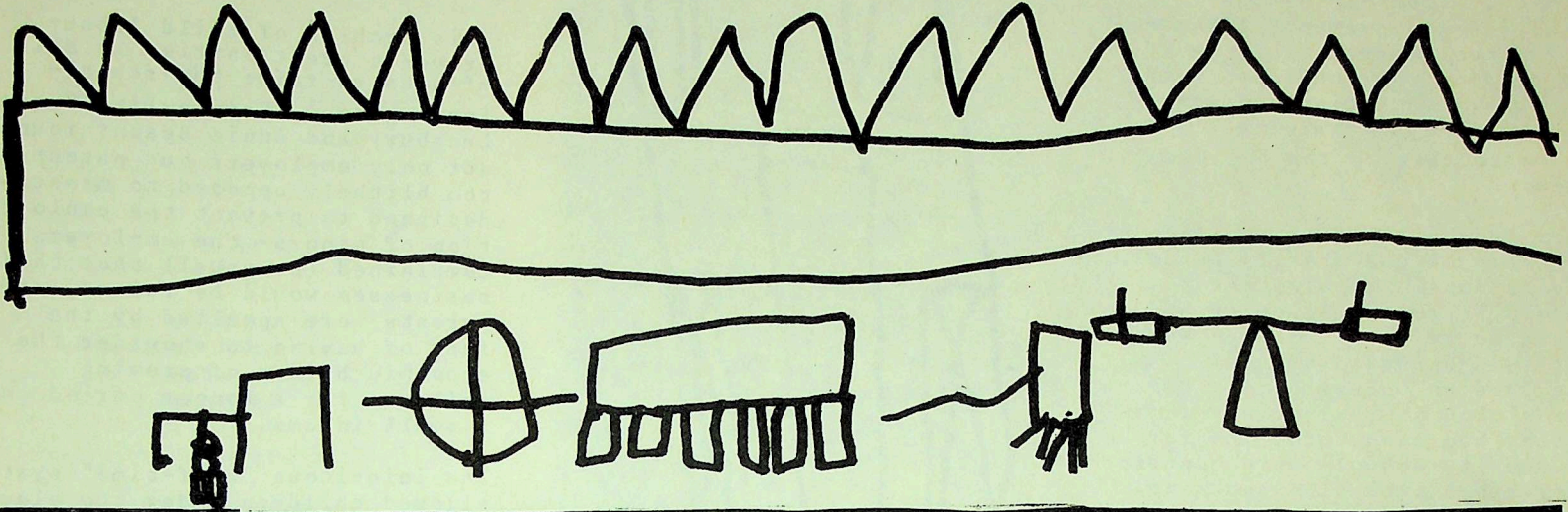
"On entering Lees Hall on a Tuesday or Thursday afternoon one is confronted by numerous prams, while the building seems to teem with mothers, most of them with a baby in arms and one or two toddlers clinging to their skirts. These little ones are transferred to the nursery...while mother is having lessons upstairs (note: lessons pure domestica). In the kitchen demonstrations of cookery are going on, and mothers..are..watching..preparations for a delicious stew made entirely of lentils and vegetable..quite as nourishing as a dish of meat..

"Classes are also held on pre-natal care..The Infant Consultation Day at the Medical Mission is as popular as ever....

"A small play centre has been started on two afternoons a week for children between ages 7-12; (they) learn.. simple lessons - quiet games, stories and reading. This winter, owing to the shortened school hours and darkened streets, it has seemed more than ever necessary to provide some amusement and recreation for at least a few of the children who otherwise have no playground but the streets."



# PARK



During the First World War a School For Mothers opened in Stratford, north of Canning Town, organised by the Trinity Mission and a voluntary committee. It wasn't long before the Mission was putting rightful pressure on the Council for a touch of financial aid. In 1916 the Council agreed to what appears to be their first contribution to community-based welfare operations: £150 to the Stratford Mothers' Welcome, another mother-and-infant centre.

Later that same year the Council, through the Public Health Committee, agreed to take "three rooms as offices at No. 7A West Ham Lane, with necessary furniture and nine Health Visitors (note order of priorities), presumably with some sort of welfare clinic in mind. Announcement of the "plan" brought a barrage of suggestions from the voluntary organisations, among them a request for an ante-natal clinic, and a plea that venereal disease among women be properly treated - the latter from the National Women's Labour League.

Encouraged by signs of Council participation in local welfare activities, representatives from the Women's Settlement, the Canning Town Cooperative Society and other groups petitioned the Public Health Committee in the spring of 1918 on the necessity of the provision of Day Nurseries in

South West Ham, where "mothers required by circumstance to work" could have their children cared for during their absence.

Piqued by suggestions that child-care should be a public concern, the Council appointed Lady Inspectors of Nuisances to make a house to house canvass of four districts in South West Ham in order that they might ascertain if the problem of inadequate care existed.

A rather thorough-going survey, which took in 3,860 houses, uncovered 838 women going out to work, 417 of them with children under school age. These children were either cared for by relatives, an elder sister, or themselves.

Since the Lady Inspectors went round during the day, they were unable to actually speak to those women who did go out to work; information was obtained from the above relatives or kids. On the strength of guess-work, the Inspectors came back to the Council with the news that probably only 113 of the 838 at work would avail themselves of a day nursery if such was provided. This kind of figure the Council could safely ignore, which is what they did, refusing to make any recommendations for action.

.....

The Maternity and Child Welfare Act came in in 1918, putting a much greater onus on local authorities to provide ante-natal and infant care. Or, at any rate, to provide more money for such care. In 1920 the total of £1000 was given to the local voluntary societies to aid them in their work in infant welfare.

In the mid-1920s substantial improvements were made in West Ham through the relatively new Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, which established free dental care for all under-fives as well as for all kids at school, and which supervised the distribution of free meals in the schools. In 1929 the Council Minutes note that seven voluntary maternity-infant associations were being contributed to, and consideration was being given to the provision of five council-run welfare centres.

So encouraging were the signs that by the end of 1930 the South West Ham Health Society felt they could safely discontinue their considerable voluntary work in the Borough. Not that they sat back; rather they looked forward to better things.

1972. Forty years on.

Newham, probably, is not much worse than too many other areas. The Annual Abstract of Greater London Statistics for 1970 credited the borough with six nurseries, full-time places for 105 kids, part-time places for 85.

The statistics for part-time nursery schooling put Newham a bit ahead of Hackney ( who at the same point in time catered for 55 kids ) and miles ahead of Tower Hamlets who then catered for none.

There are play groups as well, of course; they're not exactly spilling out on every street, but they're around: some in the welfare centres, some in people's homes or church halls. And there are private nurseries, where for £4 or £5 a week mothers can "leave" kids. But when it comes to the acceptance of children as people and general concern for their well-being in urban society, those limited sections of the community who worry are still waiting, and for what?

Council nurseries, run on present lines, can -like the private ones- do little more than cope with kids while mummy is out at work, doing something she doesn't enjoy to keep the system going. Indoctrination into proper role identification and the two-parent family norm is ever-present and powerful, even given that many of today's nursery schools and play groups don't keep the girls from the carpentry table or the boys from the pastry making.

Why are there so few of us, though, who care: Why should child care be only the province of female parents -and their "helpful" husbands - and other women who "like to work with kids" (modelling clay is satisfying too); it's ironic that at this point in the decay of our civilisation, when kids' problems are bemoaned by so many adults, there are so few adults ready to step in and look after them.

These are things to talk about and work around. To do so we need to make contact with people working in nurseries and play groups, headmistresses and -masters, health visitors, teachers, and with councillors as well. Our kids are theirs, too.

On a poster dated 1843, advertising a fund raising event for the voluntarily supported National School of St. George's in the East, it was stated that "3881 (children) have received benefit of education.. and been put out to service and otherwise so disposed of as to enable them to become useful members of society." The aim of the National School Movement, like the Charity School Movement before it, was to provide poor children with an elementary education and some kind of vocational training at little or no cost to the children's families.

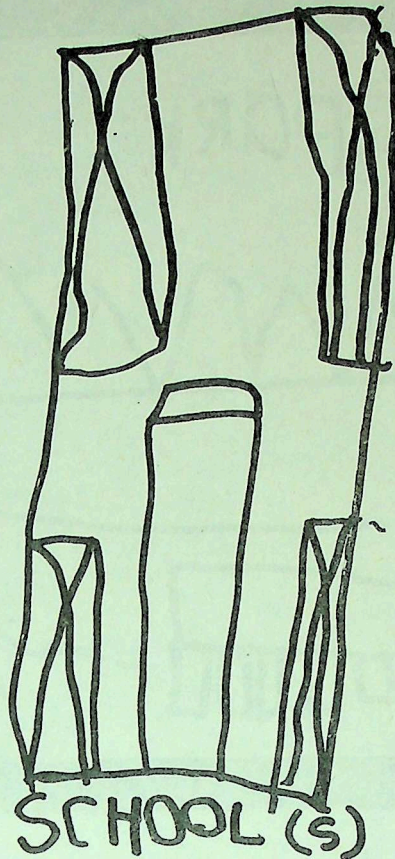
Whatever laudable motives guided the founders of the charity schools and the National Schools, they inevitably became training establishments where poor children were brought to a standard of semi-literacy and an understanding of their position in the society in which they had been born. As far as the charity schools were concerned their original intention had long since vanished and they had become fee-paying grammar schools by the middle of the last century, catering for the needs of middle-class families as there were left in East London.

In fact, by the 1880s and 1890s, so few members of the community could afford to pay grammar school fees for their children that some schools ran into serious financial trouble. The Coburn Grammar School, founded in 1701 for both boys and girls, only survived through amalgamation with the neighbouring Ratcliffe Charity School.

The evils of fee-paying education had been bitterly criticised by the Labour Movement since the days of the Chartists. Their attitude was that education was not a privilege to be paid for but the right of every child, whatever class, and that it should be free, secular and compulsory. In a poverty-stricken area, compulsory education which was also fee paying was bound in the short term to bring more hardship than benefits to a needy community, and it was for this reason that the Elementary Education Acts from 1870 onwards were so unpopular with working class people.

The 1870 Act itself provided for elementary schools financed in part by rates but the fees were between 1d. and 9d. per week per child. By far the most pressing problem area was East London where it was found that the number of children of school age was double that estimated. The newly-formed and directly elected London School Board set about an enormous building programme (some of the grim 3-storey buildings are still in use) and their regulations governing the qualifications of teachers led to the disappearance of many of the private schools in the area.

However, then as now, there was



conflict over what the aim of education ought to be. There was strong influence in favour of a simple, basic elementary education, combined with vocational training for the boys and the usual preparation for domestic life for the girls.

In 1887 there was a commission of enquiry into elementary education, at which a plasterer, Thomas Smyth, gave evidence as a representative of the various trades connected with the London Trades Council. At that time the trades unions, and in particular the Gasworkers Union, were militant in their demands for better educational opportunities for poor children.

Thomas Smyth himself managed several evening classes in London and was in touch with many teachers and educational administrators. He knew at first hand the crippling limitations imposed upon poor families in their efforts to continue their educations beyond the elementary stage, and he stated an eloquent argument for state-financed education before the Cross Commission. The members of the

Commission were very hostile and suspicious of Smyth's "communist" principles, and contradicted his opinions on the difficulties faced by the poor in trying to achieve higher education- but at Smyth said, "It would be next to expecting a boy from a London Board School to take wings as to advance by his own efforts to a University."

Some concession to the demands of people like Smyth was made in 1891 by the Free Education Act, but this merely abolished elementary schools fees, and did nothing to promote higher education among the working classes, still less to give education the enlightened and humane bias which

was the ideal visualised by the progressives. In fact the 1890s as a whole were a period of great depression and hardship, and the poor of East London were forced by circumstances to regard education for their children as a luxury when their labour was required to augment the family income.

This problem of child labour proved a great barrier in all efforts to raise the school-leaving age. People like George Lansbury and Annie Besant found not only employers but parents too blithely opposed to measures designed to prevent the exploitation of minors- the employers complained (as usual) that their businesses would be ruined, and parents were appalled by the fear of having to shoulder the economic burden of growing children for a longer period on a small income.

The iniquitous "half-time" system allowed children under the elementary school leaving age to work part-time, provided they had attained a certain standard or had been to school for a required number of years. This system was always ambiguous but always interpreted to give full benefit to the factory owners and businessmen who employed children for long hours at meagre wages, thus leaving them too

tired and undernourished to derive any benefit from the few hours they spent in school.

It was during the 1890s and early 1900s that the progressives in

educational administration itself had to cope with reactionary elements among their fellow administrators. The London School Board, which had such a lot of idealistic energy in 1870, was now dominated by Tories and churchmen, and there was great opposition to attempts to improve conditions in the schools.

The socialist Steward Headlam gave this account of a meeting at which plans for much-needed school buildings were being discussed: "So a dismal procession of clergy and local aristocracy come before them, the clergy beg for time to enable them to collect funds to enlarge or rebuild their often insanitary sectarian schools, and the landlords come to complain that the proposed site is shockingly close to the mansion of the Dowager Duchess of Pimlico, or to the residences of the aristocracy of Dalston and Tower Hamlets. To such complaints the Board lent a willing ear."

It was against this background of reaction, dogmatism and poverty that the educational liberals of the early Twentieth Century battled for a just and equal system of educational opportunities. Yet it is only in the last 20 years that comprehensive

education has been adopted and only this year that the school leaving age has been raised to 16. In keeping, perhaps, with popular demand, the comprehensives in East London provide more vocational training facilities than did the old secondary moderns. (The biggest moan among 15 and 16 year old school leavers in the past has always been that they never learn anything in school which is of value to them in their jobs).

For girls, education for their future occupations usually, if not always, means shorthand and typing and domestica. A brochure put out by the ILEA on secondary schools in East London in 1972 gives the following information on curricula:

"There are metalwork, woodwork and technical drawing for the boys, and cookery and needlework for the girls." (Cardinal Griffin R.C., Poplar; shortly to become a comprehensive.)

"Girls without academic aptitude will be offered more practical courses, including child development, extra needlework, catering and directed towards their future employment and responsibilities as wives, mothers and citizens." (Tower Hamlets Comprehensive School for girls; 1000 pupils, opened in 1963.)

So while the boys, whatever their "academic aptitude", are schooled for careers and jobs, the girls- in particular those who aren't suited to the academic rat race - are conditioned for the kitchen sink and the rewards of family life.

It isn't really so far from being "put out to service and otherwise disposed of", is it?



# NATIONAL CONFERENCE

At the last National Womens Conference in Manchester it was agreed to hold another national conference in the autumn. Four national co-ordinators chosen in Manchester and regional delegates chosen after the conference were given the responsibility for the next conference.

A meeting was held in Birmingham in early June to plan the conference. Minutes of this meeting are available from Val Hart, 80, Church Rd., Birmingham, 13. Included in the minutes are the reasons for the basic decisions which were taken about such things as accomodation, microphones and chairwomen, the creche money, etc. etc.

Because Bristol was unable to support the conference, it was agreed to hold the next National Womens Conference in London on October 20/21/22. Pre-registration will begin as soon as we find a venue. There will be one fee which will include all conference meetings, womens films



Domestic Economy School, teaching Housewifery, Cookery, Laundry

on Friday night and Saturday afternoon, the social, and creche and accomodation facilities. Depending on the cost of these things, it may also be possible to provide free food. Everyone attending meetings will need a numbered ticket.

The delegate meeting in Birmingham agreed on an agenda for the conference which will be presented for approval at the first session. It follows the recommendations made at Manchester. We have tried to create a balance of small workshops and large discussions and of considering theory and planning action. We took great care in reaching these decisions and we hope they will be approved by the conference.

Publicity for the conference is to be handled by each region. We also hope that each region will have a creche

for the weekend so that the London creche will not be over-strained.

In London, volunteers have come forward to take responsibility for the creche, the social, food and the film showings. They will be putting their own announcements in the Workshop Newsletter as soon as we have a venue. Most accomodation will be on the floor in the hall, but mixed couples and women with children who feel they need it will be put up in the homes of local women.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

It is urgent that we settle on a venue as soon as possible in order for everything else to proceed. The conference requires: one large room for 1,000 people, at least 10 smaller rooms holding 100 each, two rooms for the creche, one large room for sleeping a few hundred on the floor, and a room for the social. Ideally all these rooms should be in the same building.

It has been suggested that a disused school or theatre would be the most suitable. If one person from each local group could ring their council to inquire about such a place it would be a tremendous help. (it

does not matter if the services have been shut off as long as the connections are intact).

The Educational Letting Service (633 5615) has a list of schools available for hire in each area. WE MUST FIND A VENUE SOON. PLEASE HELP.

It was also decided at Birmingham to invite women from Womens Liberation Groups around the world to tell us about the movement in their country. The importance of a woman reporting on her whole country rather than just her local area was stressed. If you know of a woman you feel should be invited or the address of a Womens Centre which should be contacted, please send the name and address to me.

If you or your local group would like to co-ordinate accomodation in private houses please let me know.

Finally, we will need many people to help with registration at the actual conference.

If you have any ideas, suggestions or questions, please contact me:

Carolee Gerwin (National Co-ordinator)  
5, Caledonian Road,  
London, N.1.

This issue of SHREW was put together by  
Vera Amor, Norma Costello, Anna Davin, Maggie Falshaw, Amanda Forbes, Sandy Martin, Nell Myers, Angela SYLVESTER, Marion Taylor, Penny Waters, Judy Wheeler, and Jann.  
"Thank you" to the staff at the Stratford Reference Library for their advice and help in collecting material.



**PERIOD LATE? - HERBAL REMEDY**

List of Herbs:  
Mugwort, Tansy, Camomile,  
Southernwood, Pennyroyal,  
Rue.

Recipe:  
2 heaped tablespoonsful of each  
in at least two pints of water.  
Bring to the boil and simmer  
for one hour.

Dosage:  
Drink a cupful frequently  
immediately the monthly stops  
if possible, and certainly  
within five days of knowing  
about the stoppage. The herbs  
can be boiled up again.

Herb Suppliers:  
Potters (Herbal Supplies) Ltd.  
Douglas Works  
Leyland Mill Lane  
Wigan, Lancs.

Ask for the smallest pack.  
This is quite large and costs  
about £1.25 for the six packages  
with postage, but it should  
last a lifetime. It could, of  
course, be shared.

N.B. This recipe was given to us by  
a friend, but none of us has tried  
it yet - so we can't guarantee  
that it works.

**EATING  
PIZZA  
AND  
CHIP?**



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Workshop 1972.

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**EAST  
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 Women's Centre in East London? You can contact quality wholesalers,  
 10 Crescent Road, E. 13, for information.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP, 3 Shavers Place,  
off Piccadilly, London SW 1 /839-3918

Groups Open To New Members

- ACTON 992-1337 (Josephine)
- ARCHWAY 272-9578 (Betty); 348-4681 (Anne)
- BALHAM 673-0010 (Sue)
- BATTERSEA PARK 622-1753 (Eve)
- BLACKHEATH 852-4629 (Penny); 858-9829 (Jacky)
- BROMLEY 460-6816 (Catherine, Lorraine)
- CAMBERWELL 733-4864 (Kate); 703-3314 (Sue)
- CAMDEN TOWN 485-4403 (Sheila); 402-4565 (Maggie)
- CHILDBIRTH STUDY 485-7168 (Veronica)
- CHISWICK 994-9720 (Kat); 743-9841 (Maggie)
- DULWICH 733-8630 (Julia); 670-5822 (Gail)
- EAST SHEEN 876-5561 (Caroline)
- FINCHLEY 346-2295 (Neilma)
- W/N FINCHLEY 346-5006 (Sylvia)
- FULHAM 736-2014 (Sonia)
- GOSPEL OAK 485-7392 (Lesley); 485-6818 (Maevie)
- HEATH GROUP 794-6398 (Anne)
- HIGHBURY FIELDS 226-7785 (Beryl); 802-5127 (Liz)
- HOLLAND PARK 727-6576 (Abbie)
- HOLLYCROFT AVENUE 435-4533 (Marjorie)
- ILFORD 590-5954 (Sani); 989-9970 (Lyane)
- KEATS GROVE 794-9251 (Brekke)
- KENSINGTON 727-2497 (Hilary/Catherine)
- KENTISH TOWN 267-0626 (Kate); 485-0077 (Margaret)
- KINGS CROSS 444-8100 (Debbie)
- PADDINGTON 229-5932 (Lisa)
- PECKHAM 703-3314 (Kay)
- PIMLICO 828-3735 (Sally)
- PUTNEY 789-5604 (Babs, Alison, Adrenne)
- RICHMOND 788-5011 (Lorna, Zina); 940-5843 (Chris)
- SHEPHERDS BUSH 492-1804 (Sue)
- SOUTHGATE 882-0827 (Ute)
- S. CROYDON 688-4510 (Judy); 688-3616 (Melanie)
- STREATHAM 674-4739 (Margrit); 677-2667 (Hilary)
- TWICKENHAM 892-1770 (Janey)
- WANDSWORTH 870-0690 (Lynn); 874-5060 (Mary)
- WALTHAM FOREST 520-7811 (Angela)
- WATFORD 428-4074 (Rosemary)
- WEMBLEY 902-2213 (Diana)
- WIMBLEDON 540-9315 (Myra)

Groups Closed To New Members

- ARSENAL 359-0842 (Hermione)
- BELSIZE LANE 722-2784 (Audrey); 722-9805 (Liz)
- EALING 997-5074 (Sandy); 998-3733 (Mopsy)
- ENGLANDS LANE 624-9963 (Jill); 435-0887 (Ivis)
- FEMINISTS 435-6902 (Carol)
- HORNSEY 340-5004 (Jenny); 444-0803 (Judy)
- ISLINGTON 226-7114 (Angie)
- LADBROKE GROVE 727-6090 (Eve)
- N. KENSINGTON 727-0820 (Miranda)
- NOTTING HILL 937-6244 (Esther)
- RADICAL FEMINISTS 348-3316 (Glenda, Doreen, Chris)
- SHEPHERDS BUSH 603-9947 (Deirdre)
- SOUTH END GREEN 722-3518 (Mary)
- STRATFORD 519-4464 (Nell)

Action and Specialised Groups

- Womens Abortion & Contraception Campaign 402-5874  
(Kathy Jones); 622-8961 (Amanda Bennett)
- Arts Group 733-4864 (Kate)
- Contraception Action Group 995-9356 (Mary)
- Co-Counseling 735-5702 (Carol)
- Gay WL 253-9293 (Themis)
- Lit. Study 733-8630 (Julia)
- Family Study 229-7908 (Rosamund)
- Nightcleaners 348-3594 (May)
- Women In Media 226-3982 (Serena)
- Outworkers 607-6877 (Mary)
- Political Study -274-6950 (Fran)
- Shrew Collective 519-4464 (Nell)
- Street Theatre 485-4882 (Dinah)
- W. Hampstead Socialist Group 794-3042 (Sue)
- Talking to Schools Group 722-3518 (Mary)
- Notting Hill Womens Action Group 351-1519 (Lynne)

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# SHREW

VOL 4 NO 5 OCTOBER 1972

## WOMEN AND WORK

### EQUAL IS AS EQUAL DOES.

The Equal Pay Act comes into operation in 1975, The Act itself is very limited. Only women in jobs comparable to men's jobs are included. If you do work that men don't do, you are not covered by the Act. For this reason, many trade unionists say that it should be equal pay not for equal work, but for work of equal value. Changes in the law can help, but unless they are accompanied by militant shop floor action, they won't raise women's wages very much.

Action has raised not only the question of equal pay, but the many other aspects of inequality at work and at home. Women's militancy at work is never simply economic. It raises immediately other issues about the family, relations between the sexes, and democratic control at work and in the unions. This is why it is so important.

Even the limited measure of Equal Pay promised for 1975 is going to cost a lot. The original estimate of 5% on the wages bill is far too low. It is more likely to be around 17-18%.

Despite successful trade union struggles which have set women on the way to equal pay, employers are already trying to avoid paying or making sure the cost does not come out of their profits. This is what they do: they make sure men and women don't do the same work, eg. male shop-assistants get called management trainees. They introduce additional payments for length of service, level of output, or for 'merit'. Because of women's position in the family, these nearly always mean that women end up with less pay than men. All the jobs normally done by women are graded into the lowest category.

Employers use job evaluation against women workers. Various characteristics of the job get value points, eg. skill and strength are rated highly. But women's abilities like dexterity and speed are awarded very few points. Then the employer pretends that women have been 'scientifically' evaluated at low rates, and he pockets the extra profits.

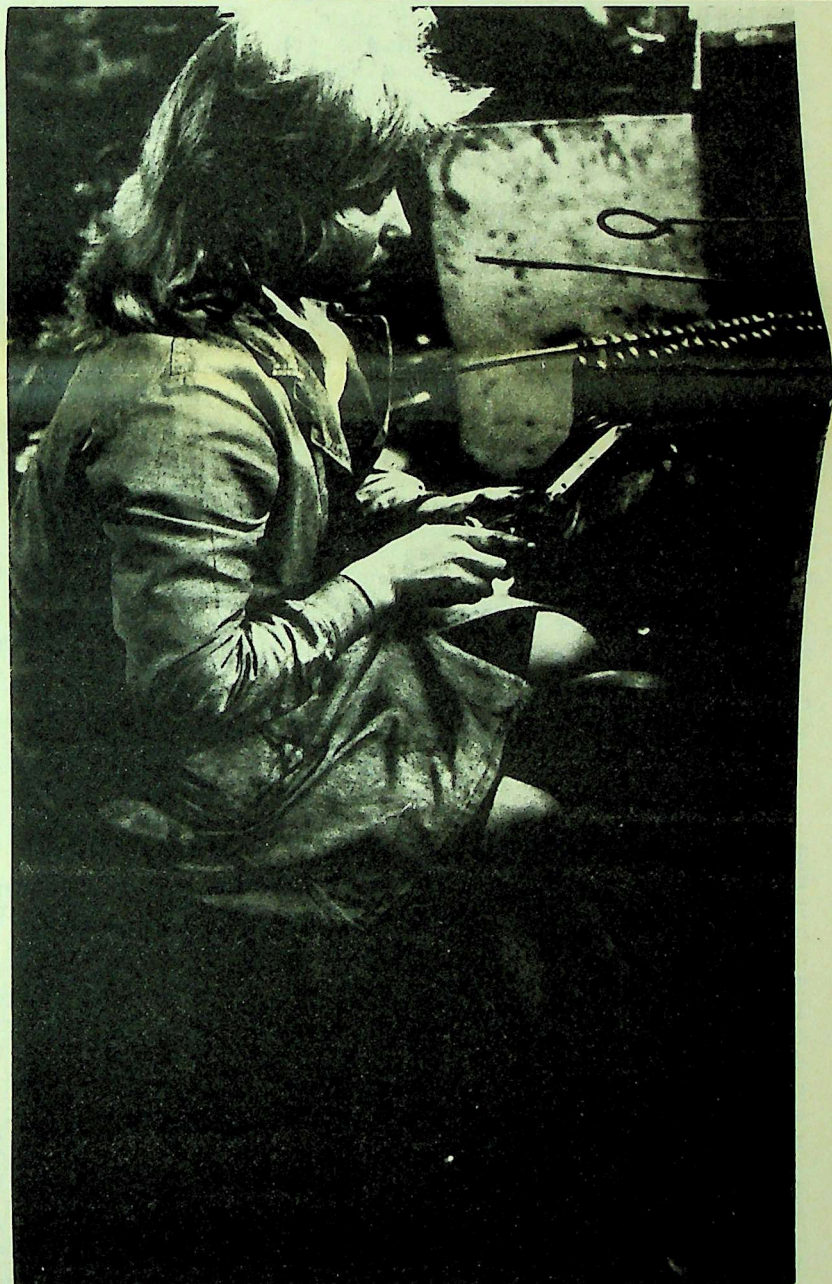
### NIGHT LIGHT ROBBERY.

Employers are also trying to get more work out of women and keep the machines running continuously. They say 'no equal pay without night work'. Night work for both men and women upsets family life and sexual relations. Protection for women alone can be used as an excuse to pay women less. So we should try to extend existing legislation to men. If existing protections were removed from women they would still get low pay. In jobs now which are not covered by the Factory Acts, like night cleaning, women work at night because of lack of nursery facilities and continue to be paid low wages.

Employers have also tried to make shift work a condition of equal pay. Women often work the twilight shift because there is no-one to look after the children until their husband gets back. This means men and women hardly see one another. The women on shift work are counted often as part-time workers and get very low wages. The only way out is to struggle against shift work for both men and women.

### EMPLOYERS ON THE FIDDLE.

In Spring 71, the Employers' Federation produced a confidential document on ways of dodging equal pay. They say equal pay will have to be paid for 'within the firm'



In particular, the domestic male unskilled rate must be kept as low as possible to avoid unnecessarily increasing the costs of equal pay'. Other 'unnecessary costs' are to be eliminated by simply stopping employing women if they can no longer be used as cheap labour. On August 1st at a meeting with trade union leaders, Tory minister Maurice Macmillan told them: 'I foresee immense inflationary problems if I were to implement the discretionary powers under the Equal Pay Act and impose a compulsory target of 90% of male earnings for female workers by the end of 1973'. (Socialist Worker, 26 August 72)

# MOTHER HOODWINKED

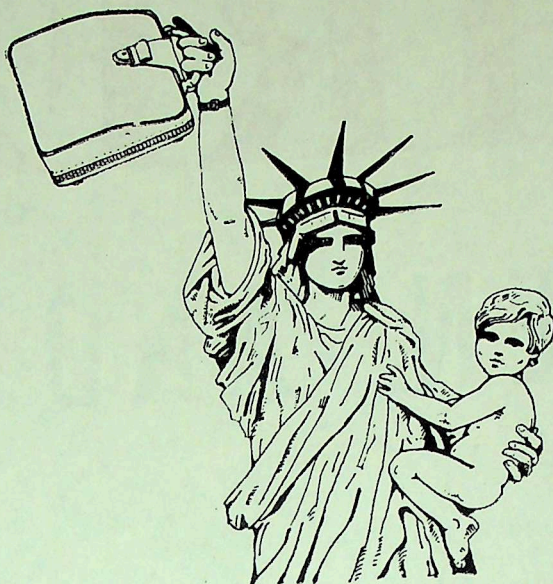
What would a child do without a mother? The way things exist at the moment, children are often pretty much on their own if daily Mum-support is removed. Dad is probably away winning the bread somewhere, although there is maybe Gran or a sister close by who doesn't mind. So, if Mum wants to work, whether to earn some essential or extra pounds to obtain mental and social stimulation or to achieve something for herself as an individual, she has problems, and more if her kids are small. There is the practical side—who is going to look after them—the day-nursery (if there is one), play-school, baby-minder or tolerant relative? Will they be happy/safe/given attention/well-fed? Can they be collected at the right time? and so on. There are the ideological problems—maternal deprivation and neglect wags its accusing finger and points at the way ahead. Are you prepared to take the responsibility for what your kid grows into? You know what they'll say—if any of them go off the rails, they'll blame you going off each day and leaving them. Bowlby may have changed his mind later and written qualifiers, but his original statements still permeate everywhere; "It appears that there is a very strong case indeed for believing that prolonged separation of a child from its mother (or mother substitute) during the first five years of life stands foremost among the causes of delinquent character development and persistent misbehaviour." (Bowlby 1947)

Such statements equally influence those levels of administration where conditions for working mothers could be facilitated. The change necessarily has to come from below, or it may be found that an industry's responsibility for child care may derive from its need for women workers, rather than being concerned with the welfare of the children themselves.

## RESEARCH

The importance of the mother-child bond has given research in both psychology and sociology a lot of scope, and studies can be quoted over the length of the last 20 years. They have shown that what they can at least consistently do is contradict one another, and, by so doing, provide selective ammunition for both sides of the argument, and leave the road ever open for "essential further research".

If the evidence from such studies is looked at, it is also apparent that mother-attachment and its implications dominate the focal point. The assumption of this as the crucial relationship is never questioned. This is not unreasonable since Mum is usually there in her individual home with her child, both relating intensely to one another. There are relatively few studies of the effects of father-deprivation. Perhaps if Dad were found to be as essential as Mum, then this could seriously disrupt the social and work scene, which of course would not do.



In a similar tradition-enforcing way researchers take up their subject "working mums", impose current deprivation ideologies on the study, and surprisingly come up with what they first thought of. There is an infinite number of differences between families which makes it well nigh impossible to compare the kids of one with lots of others. This has forced, for example, American researchers Siegal and Haas to say that as far as the effects on the child, husband-wife relations etc. are concerned, "maternal employment per se is not a very significant variable". They also sensibly suggest a more individual level for study, as it is the way that a woman relates herself ideologically to work and motherhood that seems to be most important.

Research findings (Yarrow 1961) showing that effects on childrearing are more positive if a mother is satisfied rather than dissatisfied, regardless of whether she is working or not, seem to make much more sense than a bundle of generalisations about delinquency etc. Considering some of the contradictions that many kids have to grow up under in our society, it is amazing that there are so many 'non-delinquent' ones!

## SUBSTITUTE CARE

I have perhaps been a little harsh on some people who have been quite honest about their inconclusive results. Yudkin and Holme (1963), for instance, find few differences between children of working or non-working mums, but stress that problems arise when there is a lack of substitute care, suggesting the provision of more creche facilities etc. However, what they and a few people question is substitute care itself. The very words used preclude looking at things differently. "Substitute" is always a temporary replacement for the one crucial person—Mum. This does provide a very necessary rationale for non-working mums, but also sows the seeds of guilt and self-criticism in many working mums who have ensured that their children are well-looked after. If conditions could be organised such that care was always there, and "substitute" was unnecessary, then mothers could be free to exert their individual choice as to how much they wish to involve themselves in motherhood.

Fathers should also have the opportunities for involvement with their children. It is oddly unquestioned that many fathers may appear predominantly in a state of physical exhaustion to their families! Many married women with families are being encouraged to return to work, but little provision is made for their children. If we are going to make demands for such provision, we must ensure that these do not just end up as nurseries situated in mum's place of work and staffed entirely by women. We should also bear in mind the range of differences which may occur, especially over different social classes. These include the various motives for working, methods of substitute care normally used, selection of jobs available offering different facilities, attitudes to working mothers etc.

## NO REAL EVIDENCE

To sum up then, there is no real evidence to show that working mums deprive their kids by their absence per se, it is our society which denies any responsibility for helping them out of the problems produced by that society. By making it so difficult so difficult and expensive for 'substitute' care to be found, and by showing a total lack of flexibility and consideration for people's needs. Work must be arranged around the needs of people, and not people arranged to suit the running of business and industry. Then perhaps men and women could enjoy children more and equally, and each other as well.

Sue.

## Women or children first?



"... the fact is that it is the masculine code, it is the society developed by the males and in their interest, that has established women's situation in a form that is at present a source of torment for both sexes". Simone de Beauvoir.

The dilemma that children present for at least some women who want to work is that though the effect of children may be to keep her household, exhausted, bored and frustrated, children themselves are interesting. Initially, the Women's liberation movement rightly concentrated on the situation of women. Work is important to many of us — it represents an escape from a feeling of what Simone de Beauvoir calls immanence, the life of subjection to given conditions, into transcendence, the expansion of present existence into an open future. Work partly does this for us because it allows us to participate in the economic

world. It does not necessarily do it because our work is important or interesting in its own right. Yet children, in the right conditions, can excite us, and involve us in the world. This, if it is true at all, is true for men and women. In reasonable conditions at least some adults enjoy being with children and would like to spend more time with them without being a) deprived of work totally and b) regarded as peripheral in this activity. Somehow children's needs and ours must be connected.

We don't want to support an emotionally claustrophobic family form - this is to the benefit of no one. But from our own experience and others we have talked to, a good life with children would include work for both parents, parents spending time with children both separately and together, children spending time with other adults, other children, with and without their parents. The pleasure of children includes not only being with them but also observing their relationships with the other parent or other adults and children, without being oneself involved in the relationship.

Ideas concerning care of children beg a lot of questions. Many questions haven't been answered, partly because myth, habit and ideology so often dominate our relationships. Perhaps we can't answer them until we have lived differently with children. Do we believe in educating children towards intense one-to-one relationships as well as wider responses? Do we want to establish one-to-one relationships at all? How much do we value continuity in child care? What forms of 'family' might avoid aspects of authoritarianism between parents and children? The demands suggested here envisage close contact for children with both parents as well as a wider community of those interested in child care, without the necessity of giving up other work completely. Can work and children be included in people's lives if they choose? If they can, it seems to us it would be of benefit to all. Including men into child care without reducing their earnings would place child rearing into a separate category from other activities done in the house and emphasise its importance. By including other adults into our children's lives, the family could become less isolated. This isolation of course varies according to class and economic situations, but in general the family is treated as an isolated unit.

Communes are much discussed but little defined. Is biological parenthood totally irrelevant or partially? It is perfectly possible to love and be intensely interested in a child not born to one, but for intense interest to be maintained it seems likely that fairly continual involvement is required (not necessarily constant involvement). Should we, or would we, learn to feel no special need to be with an ill child just because it was born to us? Few people at present live in groups which test these situations, so there is little evidence on them. If the following suggestions still emphasise parent/child relationships it is because we think at present no other alternative presents itself clearly. But to emphasise them is not to deny that we must avoid ex-

clusive possessive relationships with our children. These suggestions are of course tentative. They would apply to the first five years of a child's life (a period when, as John Holt says, children, at least in our society, do most of their learning). If fully satisfied, they would require considerable reorganisation of work structures and attitudes.

- 1) In order to include men and women equally in child care and to allow them to work and spend time with their children, work hours should be shortened in such a way that they can both be with their children, alone and together. This means a shorter working day with full pay and including an overlapping no-work period for parents.
- 2) Tax concessions for those with children under five, and also for those who want to participate in child care. This allows people with or without children of their own to care for them with some financial relief for foregoing earned income.

The situation of children in industrial capitalist society is one of considerable deprivation and exploitation. The frustrations and boredom associated with the care of children exist often because women are with them too much, for too long and with too many boring things to do at the same time. Children suffer as much as women from this situation, and men too observe how excluded they are from children's lives. Children often suffer from having too few men and adults other than their parents as important people in their lives. The suggestions made should in no way be thought to be alternatives to the demands for more nursery schools. They simply represent another approach to the problems of being allowed our love and enjoyment of each other.

We must alter the social and economic institutions that deprive us of participation in our society and variety and closeness in our relationships.

Ursula and Jean

## Housework

Should we demand wages for housework?

Wages for housework is an idea which many people find attractive. But is it a workable one and, more important, is it really going to improve our situation?

Pay for housework implies that housework must radically change its nature since wages can only occur as part of the wider economic system in which work is exchanged for money rather than simply to get something done. Housewives, like other workers, would come under the control of an employer who would set their conditions of work - that is what wages in our economic system means.

Although, like much other service work, housework is an essential prerequisite to the productive system, it does not produce wealth directly. The only foreseeable employer is therefore the state, which already maintains other work, such as teaching or sewage disposal, also recognised as necessary to society. Of course it is likely to operate through a local agency, possibly attached to a local authority department. But, like other employers, the state will expect payment to be according to some measure of work done. Would it be on the basis of hours per week, favouring full time



A 'Genalex' electric washing machine and wringer, manufactured in 1937. For many housewives washing-day had lost its horrors

housewives (usually the better off ones) against those who also have another job? Or on the basis of standards, with an inspectorate to check how many meals were cooked or floors washed? Should pay vary according to the number of children & should single people be remunerated for doing their own housework?

These questions illustrate not merely the practical difficulties of establishing a fair system but also the contrast between normal standards of employment & housework as we know it. Gone would be its real advantages over most paid work - flexibility, lack of supervision, & especially the sense of doing things that seem useful and necessary in one's own judgement. The drudgery however, would remain. Thus housework would be just another low prestige & menial female job, & one which moreover, is hardly likely to be well paid.

The only alternative to wage employment with all its implications is the social security system. This would mean a regular payment on a system akin to that for children's allowances. But this would clearly be just another welfare hand-out, without the status & significance of a wage.

Either way the system would have to be financed out of increased general taxation. Although there would seem to be more money coming into the house with an extra income, in real terms the family's buying power might not go up at all. This would not necessarily prevent employers from using this as a reason for cutting down on wage increases.

While we have seen that wages would imply a change for the worse in housework as a job, it also avoids beneficial changes. The demand as suggested at present assumes that housework would continue to be done as now, by women working independently in each home, each with its quota of two or three children. But we need rather think of demands that will break down the loneliness and severe isolation felt by so many housewives, and that will give children the benefits of care shared with other children and adults. We need to break the ascriptive tie between women and housework so that this work will be done by both men and women. And, above all, together with the claimants unions, we should be demanding that everyone has a right to a reasonable income, a demand that points to the distortions in our social system and points to much more radical changes. Miriam

# WOMEN & TRADE UNIONS

Selma James' pamphlet "Women, the unions and Work" has aroused considerable controversy in the movement. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the first document that discusses the problem of the relationship of the women's movement and industrial action in a new light.

The pamphlet is divided into two main parts, the first deals with the relationship between women's work and trade unionist struggle, the second is a series of demands which the movement should adopt. Unfortunately the two parts are unrelated and there seems to be little logical connection or continuity between them; some of the demands are perfectly acceptable and have in fact already been adopted by the movement, others are unrealistic and idealist; wages for housework, a demand which has been widely discussed, is examined elsewhere in this issue. I shall here deal with the main part of the article, i.e. the discussion of the value of the trade union movement for women's lib.

Her basic position is that women's lib should have nothing to do with trade unions because, by their very nature, they are co-optive organisations which serve the interests of capitalism by making reformist and not revolutionary demands, and because they deal with productive work and nothing else.

Her arguments against trade unions always imply that trade unions should be revolutionary organisations and that they are in practice dangerous sell-outs because they mediate between Capital and Labour instead of going for an all-out fight against capitalism. They fragment the working class by limiting the struggle to the production point and thus ignoring social struggles. Her arguments are also a wholesale condemnation of the Left's general agreement about the importance of trade unionism.

I believe that a lot of her points are based on the misunderstanding of the different roles of trade unions and political 'party' type organisations. Selma James fails to differentiate the two and blames the former for not being the latter. Marxists have never claimed that trade unions were revolutionary organisations, they are merely broad-based organisations whose aims are to protect workers and to try and improve their conditions, i.e. limit their exploitation. The job of bringing about a revolution is that of a 'party' or similar form of organisation.

It is therefore true that by their nature trade unions can only act as protective and reformist organisations in capitalism. I believe that to go on and say that they work against the long-term interests of the working class by fighting for short-term reformist demands instead of leading the struggle against capitalism on a total basis is a very interesting suggestion which needs further discussion, but it raises the following problem: what is a revolutionary demand, and what is a reformist one? Is a demand that can't be met necessarily revolutionary? The reduction of the two roles 'party' and trade union to one leads to confusion, because the two are different, and unions, however limited their gains, at least gain something. I would like to explain here that I do not accept the traditional 'leninist' definition of the party, and that in my view, the nature and form of a satisfactory revolutionary organisation is a major problem.

Selma James also makes many points relating specifically to why women should not be involved with trade unions. Trade Unions have a very negative attitude towards women's struggles, they have helped maintain unequal rates of pay, they never organise the struggle for equal pay, they support grading, they are not interested in recruiting women. These are objections to the position unions take towards women in

their usual field of action: production. She has more serious objections: basically that trade unions ignore most struggles in which women have a prominent part, that is social struggles like housewives' support in strikes, shoppers' organisations. Unions ignore work, like housework, which does not produce wages. She says women are never unemployed because we always work even when we are not paid. This is true, but work is different from labour and unemployment refers to absence of wage-labour, not necessarily of work. Labour is work that produces surplus value, housework doesn't, this means that a struggle against housework is totally different in nature from one against wage-labour. Struggles against wage-labour are necessarily anti-capitalist, struggles against non-productive work are not necessarily so. A worker's wages are the cost of his maintenance and reproduction (i.e. his wife and children). Social struggles are essential to revolution, but we haven't yet found how they can be most effective or how they relate to struggle at the point of production.

Selma James ends her article with some examples of cases where dissatisfied women have fought back, 'rebelled' as she puts it. It is true that dissatisfaction and rebellion are widespread; this is an encouraging sign. Unfortunately, dissatisfaction and rebellion have never been enough to bring about a revolution and what we need now is analysis and revolutionary strategy.

Throughout her pamphlet, Selma James refers to a much longer and extremely interesting article by Mariarosa Dalla Costa (in *Radical America*, 72). This contains a detailed discussion of the role and nature of women's social struggles and their relationship to struggles at the point of production. This is essential reading for those of us who are interested in isolating the role of social struggles within a wider revolutionary framework.

Helene

## outworkers

The N.7. Group is doing a study in North London on women doing outwork - work done at home for small scale businesses. So far they have found: "The outworkers we interviewed make belts, millinery, dresses, and cushions, card thread, sew braid onto uniforms and wire batteries. Earnings and hours worked are extremely varied, depending on the type of work and the speed at which it is done. The women always work on a piece work basis. Rates of pay are generally low, training minimal, and there is no guarantee of regular work. The low pay is resented, but at the same time the majority interviewed were proud to be contributing towards the household budget. Most of them found the work boring but lacked the confidence and opportunity to try for anything more skilled or varied. Many would like to work outside in a factory but cannot because of children. In a great many cases outwork is a temporary situation in the whole working history of women with children. Unlike the nightworkers, outworkers never come together to work: they remain truly isolated within their families."



# Equal pay

35.9 % of the total labour force is women (figs. for March 1971) and these form 38% of the total industrial workforce.

Women get the lowest paid jobs in industry, eg. wages as a whole rose 37.2 % between 1963 and 1970, whereas in the textile industry, one employing a high proportion of female labour (46.7%), wages only rose by 19.8 %.

On average, women's earnings are half those of men (April 1971), and this is not to be accounted for by differences in hours worked since hourly rates show that in many industries women's rates lag well behind the men's.

## is not enough

Women not only get lower basic rates, they get lower bonus payments and less in fringe benefits.

### NATIONAL INSURANCE

Married women get less benefits than single women (nearly £2 less). If a full N.I. contribution is not paid (expensive when compared with total wage) and the minimum option taken of 4p for industrial injuries, then she is completely denied any rights to pensions, maternity leave and benefits, unemployment benefit, etc.

Male workers are forced by employers to make up their pay by doing overtime. Hours spent working have thus gone up since the end of the war. Railwaymen, for example, have to work a 7 day week to keep a family.

Women do less in overtime, and their legal working week is shorter. This is because of the work they do in the family and the sexual division of labour which makes housework women's work. This increases the differences between male and female rates of pay.

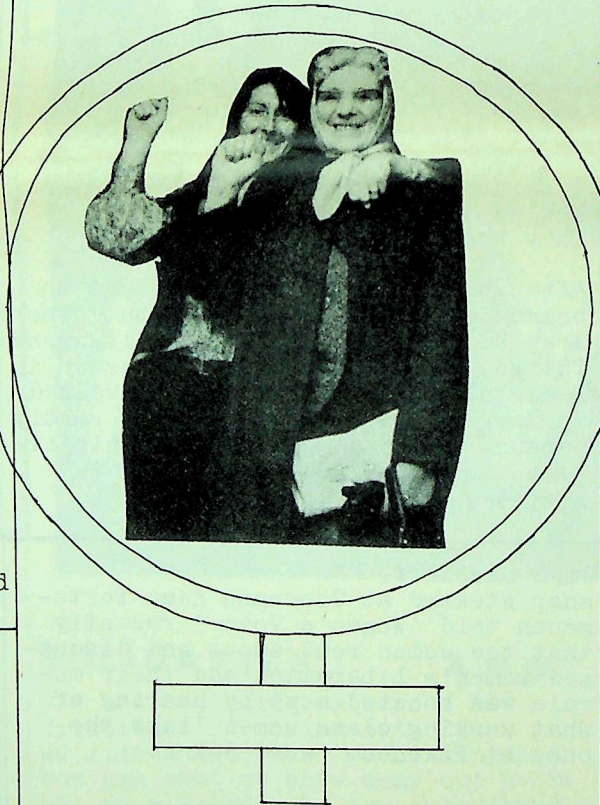
When there is unemployment, women can be used as cheap labour. Vacancies for women workers cuts the wages bill, and the family is forced to live on less.

## § LUCY §

is the mother of a member of the Arsenal group. She has been in the Workshop for 2 years, & active in the Nightcleaners Campaign & the Walthamstow Contraception Campaign.

All the work that I did was lousy in some respect. Although all this work was sometime ago, I'm sure things haven't changed much - they're still doing it, which makes it worse. This was 40 years ago, a job that I had in the Civil Service, and of course, women's work as usual, it was very very monotonous. We sat glued to our desks, typing, typing, typing, all day long. You were never allowed to get up and talk - every minute had to be accounted for. There was a horrible supervisor who kept everybody under her thumb, and you had to do so many lines an hour - just like a machine. But it was amazing how the women there got used to it, like they do with all these lousy jobs. But I just couldn't stick it, so I left.

Then I got married, and of course found that when you've got children you're in a terribly awkward position as regards getting jobs. I had a husband who drank, and if he knew I was earning he would've deducted my wages off the housekeeping. I had to get a few hours work and know that the money was mine. The only job really available was cleaning. In those days (1950's) we were given 1s 9d an hour, and we had to clean a whole home from top to bottom in 3 hours. I don't think its any different now - they still have to work terribly hard. That's a thing we want to wipe out, don't we, that women with children have to do that kind of work. The snag then was of course that there were no labour-saving devices. You were lucky if you got a Hoover. Everything was done on your hands and knees. You had to polish the floor, a whole parquet flooring, on your hands and knees. Then polishing the furniture, scrubbing the stairs, no minute mops or anything like that. Then there were coal fires - You had to lug the coal from the bunkers in all weathers, and clean the fire-places out. Very heavy work, and the woman of the house would walk round watching you as you did it all, the corners you know.



You really worked very hard for which you got the princely sum of 6 shillings for a morning's work. You'd often stay after your 3 hours, doing extra jobs, you know she'd say, you don't mind washing the breakfast things do you? They'd leave everything for you to do. There were so many women in those days looking for jobs in schoolhours, and also in my particular case, and I don't suppose I was the only one, had a husband who if he knew I was working, wouldn't give me any money.

After that I got a job cleaning in a hospital from 7 am to 3 pm, for about £3 a week. This was more hours than private cleaning, and it still didn't work out that I had to record it for income tax. That was another thing I had to avoid, because you had to put

your money on your husband's income tax form in those days. We had to go down on our hands and knees and scrub the landings, the stone stairs, the toilets; at lunchtime wash all the dirty plates and then scrub the kitchen out. You had a 10 minute break timed by the sisters of the wards. The women who worked there were mostly women with kids. They knew those women were glad of the money. You never said anything because there were plenty of other women to take your place. How I got home afterwards I really don't know. But I thought £3 was a fortune.

Then I went ironing ties, when I was very very desperate. We owed the rent. I could go mornings, and it fitted into schoolhours. I was so desperate with my drunken husband giving me no housekeeping. There's always a board outside this place - Ironers wanted, Machinists wanted. You know jolly well it's terrible work, when the board is permanently advertising. So I went in. He could not get hold of me quick enough, although he was very disheartened to think that I didn't have any experience. Anyway, so I stood at this very high ironing board every day from 8 - 1pm. All the other women were machining, and folding, and we ironed. They never stopped. When they brought us a cup of tea round we still went on ironing and drunk it standing at the board. We never sat down for 4 hours, which was all wrong really, that chap should've been prosecuted. I shouldn't be surprised if they're still doing it to this day. Of course they can get away with it, they're down these side-streets, hundreds of them, these sweat shops, no better than Dickens' time, I'm sure. All women with kids, needing the money. You're glad of 10 bob to have your shoes mended. I used to come home with my right arm feeling as if it was withered. All day long, you can imagine, it took me a couple of hours to recover the use of my arm. Well, one day, he called me into his office, and said - you're not pulling your weight. I was absolutely staggered. I never stopped working, nobody was allowed to talk, he'd give you a black look if you said a word. I couldn't believe it. He said - you only do 150 an hour, and the other girls do 240. Now, 150 an hour, that means 2 a minute, just you try it, you have a go! But the other women had been doing it for years, they were very deft. I was livid. When I think what I would've said to him now, now I am a "liberated woman"! I'm dying to go past there now and throw a brick at his office, and talk to all the poor devils still at their benches. I think I'll have to do that. He was a little piggy-eyed man, he looked what he was. Outside there were 2 Rolls Royces, and he had a huge beautiful mansion in its own grounds. When you think, those people go in, and see what they're making out of you. It's dreadful. Of course, no union at all. That's what's needed The Sweaters' Union. If the poor devils tried that, they'd sack them all. Well, I walked out, and never went back.

What I think is so dreadful is you still know it's going on. Nobody on God's earth would put up with that sort of work except women with little children. No man would do it.

Lucy

1968

# Lil Bilocca

## HOPES FADE FOR 40 CREW WIVES DEMAND

### TRAWLER SAFETY CODE

fishermen's wives  
fight profits  
and  
Death

The two ships, which sailed from Hull on Jan. 10, are now feared lost, each with 20 men on board.

Faint signals were picked up in Icelandic waters, where the trawlers are missing, during Wednesday night. But coastguards think they may have been an automatic alarm signal set off accidentally in another ship in the area.

Now the trawlermen's wives, led by Mrs. Lilian Bilocca, a fish-house worker, are collecting signatures for a petition urging greater safety aboard the ships which sail for the Arctic fishing grounds in search of haddock and cod. The petition, which so far has 2,000 names, will be sent to the Government.

# Hull trawlers

# and

## FORD SEWING MACHINISTS.

Over 1,000 sewing machinists at Fords Dagenham came out in the summer of '68 for the right to work the machines which were graded at a higher rate and reserved for men although the women had to be able to pass a test to prove they could operate them before they were taken on. Grading is one of the forms of discrimination against women which keeps pay below men's.

The men at Fords came out in support of the women and Fords came to a standstill. The women's militancy erupted against the police on picket duty and caused upheavals in the inner workings of union meetings at Fords. Rose Boland who emerged as spokeswoman hardly saw her family while the strike was on. She said she thought young women in the South were no longer ready to take things their mothers had put up with.

# Equal pay

The press adopted a patronising jocularly towards the 'petticoat strike'. Women, even women strikers, were always good for a laugh.

Fords tried to offer equal pay on condition women worked the night shift. But the women rejected this because of their home life. They finally won 97½% of the male rate, but they still have not won the right of access to the highest paid grades. The latest Fords wages agreement has frozen pay and grading so the women's position is at a full stop.

The success of the sewing machinists in bringing Fords to a standstill and taking the men with them made many women feel that it was possible to act and change things which had seemed unalterable.

1970

## Leeds rag trade strikers stop 50 factories

Spring 1970. Clothing workers in Leeds, mainly women brought factories to a halt. They were opposing an agreement made by the union in October '69 with the employers to give men 5d an hour more and women only 4d. The unofficial strike spread from Leeds into South Yorkshire and the North East.

The union did not expect resistance. They were negotiating in the context of a declining industry in which trade unionism faced the problems of a low paid immigrant and female labour force which is not usually very militant, and wages councils secure a minimum wage but make unofficial action difficult.

However Leeds union branches 1, 2 and 3 were very critical - especially the male well organised cutters - who felt the discrimination against women was unfair. They said, 'Give them the bob!'

Gertie Roche, a clothing worker in Leeds and active in the union described the militancy which exploded apparently out of nowhere. The Colliers people had arranged a meeting with the trade union officials. They demanded they should come out and talk to the workers. When they tried to say 'Go back' she says, 'It were just one sea of faces. It were just pandemonium. They were howled down, the union officials. They hadn't a cat's chance.'

After the strike more women went to branch meetings than before but others dropped away muddled and disillusioned. The women in the clothing industry in Leeds had never been deeply involved in large numbers in the union, partly because of their family responsibilities, partly because of the men's attitudes.

## TAILORS & GARMENT

### REDUNDANT.

In June - 4 months after the strike 40 male cutters got the sack from Colliers. They got their redundancy pay of £1,000 but they faced the prospect of never being able to use their skill in the industry again. It was 1,000 quid for a lifetime's labour. But the women wouldn't defend them. It seemed a fantastic amount to the women, as far as they could see the men were doing alright for themselves. Many of the women had only just learned how much more the men got than themselves. At Colliers in 1970 the men were earning £25-30 a week, the women only £11-12 sometimes less.

### DECEMBER 1970

Bakers' Union rejected increase of 40s for men and 30s for women. They claimed 60s for women but settled for 35s.

1972

Women shoe workers took over and ran their factory for 17 weeks in the small Norfolk town of Fakenham. The women were given notice to quit when the factory was to be closed down last Spring. 15 decided to occupy although they had never been involved in militant industrial action before and were very uncertain what would happen.

### June Marriner

shop steward at Goodmans near Portsmouth told 'Woman's Voice' recently that the women read about and discussed women's Liberation and their morale was boosted most by hearing of what working class women 'like the ones at Fakenham' were doing.

The women at Fakenham still need support. Orders for goods should be sent to Fakenham Enterprises,

Norwich  
road,  
Fakenham,  
Norfolk.

### JUNE 1972

150 workers at Briant Colour Printing occupy their factory to save their jobs. There are 30 women workers at Briants. 'We are not behind the men, we are with them'.

# cleaners

### AUGUST 1972.

Women working at Goodmans Loudspeakers, part of the Thorn empire, in Hampshire won an equal cost of living rise. The management offered £2 for the women, £2.75 for semi-skilled men and £3 for skilled men. A mass meeting voted to try for £3 for every one. Most of the 600 workers at Goodmans had never been on strike before. Only 100 of them were in a Union (AUEW) when the strike started. This went up to 350.

The women picketed 24 hours a day. Support came from nearby factories, and from Fisher Bendix, near Liverpool, where there was an occupation.



**1969**  
one last push

**BUS WOMEN.**

Bus conductresses were the first group of women to win equal pay in Britain. But this left them with other kinds of inequality.

In November 1968, the Central Bus Station Conference turned down by a 2-1 majority a resolution from South- all bus garage calling for women drivers.

The following January 25 women bus conductresses lobbied the next conference of the T&G for the right to drive buses. But the delegates voted 35-33 against allowing the women into the meeting. The women occupied the building in the lunch break.

After the occupation the men were quite often personally hostile to the women involved.

**BUSES.**

In June 69 many of the buswomen were on the demonstration for equal pay in Trafalgar Square. The women complained not only about the introduction of one man buses and lack of promotion opportunities but also because they had to work longer than the men to get bonuses and fringe benefits.

ONE MUG BUSES.



EQUAL PAY.

November 1969. Merseyside women workers at English Electric fight for equal pay.

December 1969. 200 women workers at CAV Lucas factories Acton North London held a 24 hour stoppage in support of equal pay, and against discrimination in the grading of jobs.

**Women struggle**

YOU WILL HAVE TO FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS. SO START NOW.

SHUTTLECOCKS

**1971**

Women at a shuttlecock factory in Sandwich, East Kent. basic rate was £6. On top of that they got a bonus for every 50oz of feathers.

The women stayed out for 8 weeks and their solidarity was strong.

MARCH 1971.

Nurses win 8½% rise.

**telephonists**

It's the young girls who can least afford it who are out.

SUMMER 1971.

Women's rates in the Industrial civil service increased to 90% of male rate.

THERMOMETERS.

Cleator Moor in Cumberland: a small town and Brannon's thermometer factory is the main place of employment. For more than a year now, workers at Brannon's have been involved in a struggle for their jobs and for the right to join a union.



Marie, shop steward at the Empire State building, with a member of the Trades Council who was picketing with the cleaners.

**STRIKE**



Lizzie hears of the victory at the Empire State building.

**SOLIDARITY AND**

"In the beginning we were a bit frightened of coming out, like, we didn't know what would happen, but now that we have come out we're all so pleased--the way everything is going ahead for us, you know. I think everybody should really pick up courage, to do that, to come out and see for themselves. We have proved something ourselves now. I mean we're getting somewhere which is a good thing. Myself, I would like to go places and tell people, let them know what we benefit by coming out on strike."

**SISTERHOOD**

Empire State building  
Fulham cleaners came out at the end of July 1972 for a £3 rise on their basic rate of £12.50 for 40 hours of night work. The numbers of women on the building had also been reduced so they were doing more work.  
The C.S.U. made the strike official.

Support came from many trade union branches, members of the C.P., I.S. as well as Women's Liberation and the Claimants' Union. Exhibition workers and building workers came out on the picket and the workers inside the Admiralty helped. Dustbinmen, telephone engineers, canteen delivery men, including the man who delivers the beer for the bar, boycotted the building. After a long struggle the cleaning contractor gave in to their demands and recognized the union.

Admiralty came out a week after the Fulham strike was made official, but the contractor changed from night to day cleaning.  
Home Office Horseferry Road came out in the second week of August after the supervisor was sacked. They were successful in getting her reinstated, but the contractor refused to pay some of them. They did not get union backing but they finally got their money by going with May Hobbs to the union office.



# Black Women And Work

"Black women in this society are the oppressed of the oppressed. We are exploited as workers, oppressed as black people, and as women."

The black sister who wrote this sums up the basis of black women's oppression in Britain - their class, their colour and their sex. In the field of work, this triple exploitation results in black women forming a flexible pool of cheap, largely unskilled labour. It is difficult to separate out the relative importance of these three factors. The working life of any woman is determined by a combination of the state of the labour market, discrimination against women, and her own personal situation. The black woman has the added factor of her colour. Numerous studies have shown how racial discrimination operates in employment. On the other hand, too many of these have concentrated on "prejudice" of employers and "attitudes" of workers. Employment is seen in these terms, rather than looking at the relation between immigrant labour and the needs of the British economy in different sectors and in different periods of time.

Very little has been written about black women and work from any standpoint. This may be partly because women are not thought of primarily as "workers", but as "wives" and "mothers". This is especially true for the black woman. The stereotyped Western image of her is one of sexuality and the maternal role.

## WEST INDIAN WOMEN.

For the West Indian woman, reality is different. While about half of British women are in employment, two-thirds of West Indian women work. At the same time, studies show that a high proportion are solely responsible for their families. Patterns are now changing, and girls especially those brought up in England are marrying earlier. But many West Indian women are family heads or unsupported mothers living on Supplementary Benefits. Added to this, many women are sending money to relatives at home.

A recent survey in Paddington found that 50% of West Indian mothers with young children were working, as compared with 18% of white women. As the number of day nurseries has declined since the war, childcare is a constant problem. The registration of baby-minders might have improved standards, but has cut down on the number of places available.



Because of their family situation, West Indian women often have to take on shift-work, or jobs such as night cleaning. "Outwork" is another possibility for women with children to

look after, besides economic exploitation, this type of work adds the frustrations of being perpetually tied to her home.



## ASIAN WOMEN.

Traditionally, the place of Asian women was very much in the home, with the husband providing for the family. In 1969, only 42 Asian women came to Britain as voucher holders in their own right. The other 4½ thousand came as dependents! However the 1966 sample census says that one-third of Asian women of working age are in paid employment. Now these figures include an unknown number of white children born in India. But it also may be that living in Britain is having more effect on the status of Asian women than on women from the West Indies where there is a tradition of industrial as well as rural work for women. This possible change is reflected in the Punjabi "folk-songs" sung in Midland pubs, about everyday life. In some, girls sing about the loneliness of staying at home, without friends and relatives around as at home, and with her husband away all the time working long hours and on night-shift. But others paint a different picture:

"Don't bawl your nonsense at me!  
Go and do the cooking yourself!  
And mind how you talk to me  
I go out to work as well as you!"

## BLACK WOMEN AND THE LABOUR MARKET.

The classification of women as "dependents" is therefore only accurate for the time of entry into Britain. Later, many of them work. In this they differ from men. From the late fifties inducements and direct recruitment at home, the manipulation of the voucher system controlling immigration in terms of level and type of skill, and increasingly restrictive legislation, have directly tailored immigration to Britain's economic needs, first in a time of expansion, now in a period of stagnation and unemployment. Women tend to respond more indirectly to economic pressures. Once here, and being largely unskilled, they drop into jobs where more expensive white labour is not so readily available.

Or advantage is taken of the potential they offer for cheap labour, such as in the engineering industry, by "de-skilling", where processes are broken down into simplified operations, and black women are taken on at a lower rate.

## EMPLOYMENT.

The overall employment of first-generation immigrant women is very similar to that of all British women - in clerical, sales and service jobs and in light industry. The engineering and clothing industries require a large unskilled or semi-skilled workforce. The percentage of the immigrant working women employed in these is more than double that of white women. The differences are even more exaggerated in the Midlands where fewer black women are skilled. For example, in the clerical sector, which employs a quarter of all British women, 8% of West Indian women are employed. In the Midlands this drops to 2.5%. Another quarter of working women are in services. Black women are slightly fewer, but are often used for the most unpleasant jobs - cleaning, washing-up, laundry work.

## COLOUR PREJUDICE.

In any explanation of the black women's position, one factor alone is not enough. For instance, a class analysis alone takes no account of discrimination, for which there is overwhelming evidence in surveys like the P.E.P. report, and in the everyday experience of the black worker. But in most cases it is hard to isolate out "colour" in a simple way. It seems that prejudice is the most significant and most easily recognized where employers can afford it. In the sales sector where 13% of all women work, only 1% of West Indian women get jobs. For Asian women, it is 7% - which probably reflects both the factor of class, as more Asians have family businesses and shops, and the fact of lighter skin-colour.

Where white labour is not so easily available, the supposed sensibilities of the public are overlooked. The transport sector, still recruiting in the West Indies, employs a similar proportion of black labour as of white.

## NURSING.

The clearest example of this is in nursing. The medical services also recruit abroad, and while black girls wait to come here for training, English hospitals are desperately short of low-level nurses to staff the wards. While a quarter of British nurses are trained in teaching hospitals, only 4% of black women are. Further, black nurses themselves say they are discouraged from taking the S.R.N. exams. This means that they remain as S.E.N. in geriatric hospitals and on the general wards, with less chance of reaching the higher professional grades, or going into lucrative private agency work.

In some hospitals, 80% of the nurses are black. Because of the shortage, exceptions have been made to the immigration procedure. Category 'B' vouchers, for skilled immigrants, are now limited to the teaching and medical professions. Also, while other foreign students now have to leave Britain once their course is finished, this is overlooked in the case of nurses.

FUTURE PROSPECTS.

It is unlikely that a great many women will emigrate to England in the future. The majority of men have already brought their wives and families to join them. But, most important, the 1971 Immigration Act will effectively stop women coming in. Mass unskilled labour is no longer needed in Britain, instead, in line with other E.E.C. countries, Britain wants to attract temporary labour and avoid settlers with families. As a worker, the woman from the Third World will gain entry only if she is a 'patrial' or has the skills needed here; as a dependent, only if she is the wife of a 'patrial'. And this is still the woman's main status, for under the Act, a woman may be expelled if her husband is deported, but if a wife is expelled, her husband may stay.

Most of the figures I have given are for true immigrants, they do not include children born in Britain. It is too early to say how far their prospects remain the same as their parents'. But it is already clear that there are more unemployed black school-leavers than white, although they have the same education. This suggests that colour prejudice itself may become increasingly important in maintaining differences between black and white workers as other factors even out. But still, discrimination alone cannot account for exploitation. Sexism, class oppression, the kinds of labour needed in the economy - each reinforce the other in a vicious circle that affects all women, but continues to hit the black woman hardest.

Hermione.

## FRANK CASS

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# TEACHERS



In the 1840s there was a fear that teaching would become a secular profession for the lower orders impelled by personal ambition rather than religious calling. Pupil-teaching (for someone who was attached to a certified teacher) was not a middle-class occupation. The barrier set up against the entrance of working class kids into teaching in England came when pupil-teaching died out in 1907 and kids were given grants to stay on at school provided they went to training college. This meant that wage earning was postponed until, possibly, the age of 21, and consequently there was a great decline in working class teachers.

Many working class girls went into pupil-teaching for reasons given in 1856: "The openings for females are but few. The girls in our schools have generally to choose between domestic science, dressmaking, or some occupation which we may denominate factory work. Now it is evident, that for them an occupation which secures an immediate income, averaging £15 per annum for 5 years, with a prospect of from £60-£100 afterwards, will be preferred to any of the other alternatives, especially when greater respectability and less restraint will also be secured".

In "Lark Rise to Candleford", Flora Thompson describes the teacher as someone who is definitely not yet of the same standing as the local doctor, vicar or lawyer, and has to eat, when invited to "the big house" with her pupils, with them in the servants' hall. However, she may be poor, but she was honest and respectable, both necessary qualities for the heroines of many novels who were cast as teachers or governesses. Wanda Neff in "Victorian Working Women" writes: "The meek young woman who served the intellectual needs of the Victorian household was the direct descendant of an almost unbroken line of ignorant servants who began as nurses to the girls in the households and then advanced to the responsibility of

adviser and confidential friend". The governess did not disappear with industrial development-it had become the respectable thing for middle class households to have one. But it was rare to find a woman who would be a governess by choice

Middle class ladies, once trained as schoolteachers, would be "admirably adapted for the wives of gentlemen and none, or but very few, would ever remain in schools for the poor". Thus the English Journal of Education in 1858 objected to a scheme to encourage middle class young ladies to go to training college. Later, one of the fights in the N.U.T. was to make teaching a 'profession' and get rid of the "alarming increase in uncertified and untrained female teachers". There were of course virtually no secondary schools for girls (comparable that is to boys' Grammar schools) anyway, until the 1870s when Miss Beale and Miss Buss pioneered the field.

The percentage of women of all classes in teaching increased from 53% in 1869 to 75% in 1899. It was becoming more difficult to get boys to be apprenticed to teachers, as their parents were finding more lucrative markets for their sons' services in shops, offices and factories. That teaching was low-paid and female-dominated at the bottom was no coincidence. The opening of office jobs to girls at the turn of the century started a decline in the teaching force too. (In 1895-6 there were 6,674 boy pupil-teachers and 24,948 girl pupil-teachers).

There was a post second world war shortage of teachers, but better maintenance and training grants meant that by 1955 there was a "phenomenal rush" to join the teaching profession there were more qualified applicants than training college places. In his book "The Schoolteachers" written specially for the N.U.T., A. Tropp is prepared to conclude smugly that: "Teaching with its short hours, long holidays and opportunities for part-time work is the most convenient occupation for middle class women who are married, and a teacher training is perhaps the most profitable investment for a girl whose aspirations include marriage and motherhood".

In the past, the schools have, almost unwittingly, been moulding half the population to be second class citizens. To change this heritage will involve a social revolution. **NICE GIRLS**

The largest percentage of girls going to Colleges of Education come from Direct Grant and Grammar schools (1969-1970). 16% Grammar and 17% Direct Grant and for boys its 4.4% and 2.9%. More women than men are under 21 on their initial teacher training course but almost twice as many men as women are in the 21-25 age group (they even up after 25). This shows that more women go straight from school to teacher training, and men cannot or don't want to use their first training, and go into teacher training later.

### STUDENTS ADMITTED TO COURSES OF INITIAL TRAINING.

TYPE OF COURSE	WOMEN	MEN
Post-grad.	4,110	3,452
Specialist (Art/ Technical centres etc.)	1,063	1,392
General	26,681	9,821
Total	31,854	14,665

## TOP TEACHING POSTS

The other side of the picture appeared in the Times Educational Supplement (28.7.72.) on the dearth of women in top jobs in education:

"Male prejudice and deep-rooted belief in women's inferiority still exist on a larger scale than most would admit, and complementary to this is a gross underestimation by women of their own capabilities. The schools have to take a measure of the blame. How many teachers, male and female, do not spend quite so much time encouraging a girl to do CSE in Maths or get a third A level which might win her a university place as they do a boy, because they see her future as a wife and mother before anything else? How many careers teachers tell girls about jobs which might fit in with having a family as though these are the only jobs to which they should aspire? The explanation of the lack of women in top jobs in education is simply that class teaching does fit in well with running a family and with society's attitudes of 'suitable work for women', while being a vice-chancellor or even head of a large mixed comprehensive school does not. Schools should make a clear start towards changing this by helping girls to think of themselves as people with potential which should be developed in their own right, instead of always looking to a future in which they take second place to a man and two children".

In fact, a motion to the T.U.C. Women's Conference in 1971 to change sexual discrimination in teaching and textbooks was passed. This means that it goes to the constituent unions, the educational committee of the T.U.C., & to the Schools Council, which gives information to schools. And there it stops. Managers and governors of schools are supposed to control the curriculum, but in practice the heads do, and the N.U.T. supports their right to do this as most of the executive is composed of heads. (The N.U.T. has affiliated to it the Association of Teachers of Domestic Science, and the Association of Teachers of Technical Institutions. Out of 43 on the N.U.T. executive, 6 are women. N.U.T. membership breaks down like this:

	MEN	WOMEN
PRIMARY	26,066	99,651
SECONDARY	29,284	33,348
TOTAL	112,344	204,347

The rest are in F.E., approved schools special schools etc.)

There are no women university vice-chancellors, registrars, principals of Agricultural Colleges or Polytechnics, heads of university departments of education. 3% of heads of Further Education establishments are women and 5% of heads of mixed comprehensive schools.

## SALARIES

### AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY OF CERTIFIED TEACHERS

	WOMEN	MEN
1855	£61	£90
1914	£103	£147
1918	£128	£180

It was not until after 1900 that various sectional organisations of women teachers spring up for the purpose of levelling up the status of women to that of men teachers or of capturing the N.U.T. for the suffrage movement.

Among these were the "National Federation of Women Teachers" and the "LCC Mistresses' Union" which acted as pressure groups inside the N.U.T., and the "Womens' Social and Political Union" which campaigned outside the N.U.T. Equal Pay was finally added to the aims of the N.U.T. in 1919. (The T.U.C. had called for equal pay in 1888!) Equal Pay was finally approved for teachers in 1959.

The total number of men in primary schools is 40,792. Their average salary is £1848.

The total number of women in primary schools is 121,410. Their average salary is £1514.

For secondary schools, the number of men is 95,328—average salary £1896, the number of women is 68,524—average salary £1640. The largest number of women in both primary and secondary schools are in the £1000-£1249 wage bracket. For men it's the £1750-£1999 wage bracket.

Equal Pay exists, but women tend not to reach the upper end of the scale because they don't stay on or get responsibility posts equal to men. Patterson and Armstrong in "An Employer's Guide to Equal Pay" (1972) write:

"Women teachers are comparatively uneconomical to train, but comparatively cheap once they are in service. About  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the non-graduate women who go into teaching in any given year will have left 6 years later, whereas for men the wastage is only about  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Put another way, in 1966-7 almost  $\frac{1}{4}$  of women teachers aged 25-29 left the schools compared with less than one tenth of the men. There is a small difference between the cost of training a woman teacher as opposed to training a man because more men become science teachers and use expensive laboratory equipment; but compared with that for the men investment return for training women teachers is decidedly poor. On the other hand women are cheaper to employ because so many of them leave before they have reached the end of the 12 years incremental salary scale."

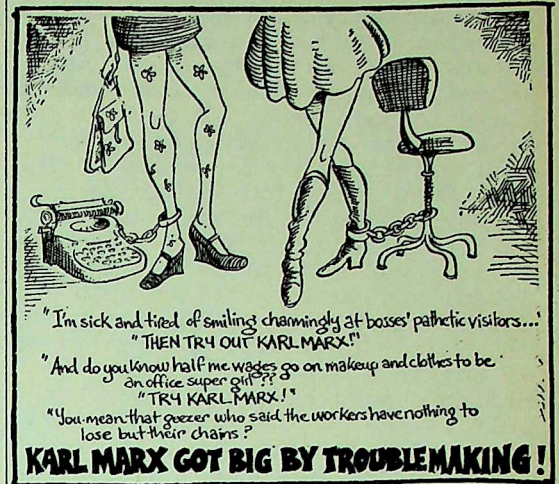
This statement raises a lot of questions which are applicable to other fields of women's work.

Teachers are in a peculiar position. Legally, and supposedly morally in charge of other people's kids, they are expected to hand on an accepted morality and ways of knowing and doing things. (It is made quite obvious to you if you overstep the bounds). Having often gone straight from school to University/Training College and back into school again for unclear reasons (but with many previous years incidental training for this job) women (and men) teachers go on handing on the accepted beliefs. Although it is clear what you are up against ideologically, you are working in a strangely insidious, often inexplicit and isolated environment which doesn't end when school ends, and doesn't produce anything tangible. Teachers are supposed to convey ideas and skills. They must do this, and know which side they are on.

Caroline.



## The Secretary



Secretary. An enquiry into the Female Ghetto by Mary Kathleen Benet. Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1972.

This book is an extremely valuable study of the nature, history, and future prospects of the career for which many women today are destined. The author describes the office as a female ghetto in which women, as well as carrying out the most menial, dead-end and badly paid work, also are required to play their "real life" sex role of taking care of the male boss, flattering his ego, and serving as an ornament and status symbol in his office. For most girls, there is no escape from secretarial drudgery, the higher echelons in offices being exclusively male domains.

Secretarial work, like factory work before it, was revolutionised by the introduction of modern machinery. In the first half of the last century, the invention of motor-driven machinery, for example in cotton-spinning and weaving, dispensed with muscular power and permitted the exploitation of female and child labour. By harnessing the labour power of these sections of the "surplus population", the industrial capitalists were able to break down the resistance of men to the introduction of machinery, whilst gaining a more pliant, docile and cheap labour force.

The introduction of the sewing machine in the 1840's caused women to enter on a large scale into tailoring shirtmaking, and shoemaking. In the 1880's, women began to be displaced from these jobs by male Jewish immigrants, a new source of "cheap labour" but the male worker has always had greater mobility, so that soon women were back in these sweated trades.

Before the invention of the typewriter in the early 1870's the office was all male. Working class women laboured in factories or domestic service, and "genteel" female occupations like teaching or governessing were desperately scarce. With the new office technology, new categories of work opened up which required skills like typing and shorthand which men were slow and reluctant to learn. Women seized the opportunity to enter into skilled and respectable employment. Subsequent inventions such as the telephone, adding machine, calculating machine, cash and credit registers, book-keeping machines, duplicating, dictating, folding and stamping machines have permitted women to invade every aspect of the lower levels of office work.

The most recent technology, the computer, has greatly increased the female proportion of the labour force in insurance companies, most women being employed as keypunch operators, a monotonous job requiring little skill and education. Because these operators are removed from front offices, a higher proportion of girls in this department are black in the United States. Computer programming, a skilled job requiring expensive training, of course tends to be male,

Similarly, with the invention of television, women were able to enter into radio broadcasting while the men moved up into the newer and more prestigious medium.

The opening up of secretarial work to women offered a unique opportunity to lower middle class girls to achieve independence and comparatively interesting employment. The women who went into it tended to hold progressive views with regard to socialism and women's rights. Marjory Benet describes the decline of their aspirations. Secretarial work became devalued because of being exclusively female. There was no possibility of it leading to the more responsible jobs held by men. The introduction of the typing pool (made possible by the dictating machine) resulted in new levels of monotony and exploitation, and removed whatever glamour such work might have had.



HE WAS TOO FRESH.  
A TYPEWRITER BRINGS A CHARGE OF ASSAULT AGAINST HER EMPLOYER.

Marjory Benet discusses the difficulties of unionising white-collar workers and particularly female office workers, who tend to be apathetic and anyway are likely to be victimised by employers for joining a union. Women's Liberation has not had much success in reaching these women, who have become accustomed to denigrating their work and looking for (often delusory) satisfactions outside it.

It is extremely important that the movement should reach these women who constitute the largest proportion of the female work force. Unionisation is essential for secretaries to gain improved work conditions and better pay. But it is even more important to remove the sex barrier in office jobs. Men and women should have equal access to secretarial and executive positions. This could only be achieved by changing the sexist nature of conditioning and education.

Marjory Benet suggests that in a properly organised system of production, secretarial work could be to a large extent eliminated, with an actual gain in efficiency. Typing should be taught to boys as well as girls, so that in offices each person could do their own secretarial work, thus liberating women from such subservient jobs.

Gay

## WOMEN IN THE PAST

There have been very few books about the conditions of women's work in the past, and fewer still have been written recently. This makes the reprints Cass have been doing of Alice Clark's 'Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century', Wanda F. Neff's 'Victorian Working Women', Ivy Pinchbeck's 'Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850' especially welcome, though paperback editions to follow would be even better. The three books were originally published in 1919, 1929, and 1930 respectively. The long delay before their reappearance is yet another small sign of the feminist silence which preceded the late '60s. Our past remains obscure and neglected.

Alice Clark says in her introduction that she has only examined a fraction of the material. In the heady days of 1919 she obviously expected others to take up where she stopped. Her 'fraction', though, is enough to show the contrast between the seventeenth century and our own time.

The whole scope of female production was much wider then. For example, widows carried on printing and carpentry businesses and were admitted into guilds in many other 'male' trades. Some trades were protected for women, and men were not allowed in them. Old words which exist now only as surnames indicate women's trades! Webster was a woman weaver, 'brewster' a woman brewer. In the countryside the farmer's wife had very extensive tasks. Wifely duties included haymaking, winnowing, shearing, loading hay and corn, spinning, marketing, brewing, washing, wringing, 'and in time of need to help her husbande to fyll the mucke wayne or donge carte.'

The leisure of upper class women was not characteristic of the early seventeenth century. Alice Clark quotes a wedding sermon in which a good wife is compared to a merchant ship. 'She bringeth her food from afar'. It was not just the dowry from her father, but her productive capacity. Men did not at this stage see marriage as a serious economic 'burden', according to Alice Clark. A woman was a 'meet-help', a 'yoke-fellow'. A good wife helped a man to prosper. 'She bringeth in with her hands, for she putteth her hands to the wheel... If she be too high to stain her hands with bodily labour, yet she bringeth in with her eye, for, she overseeth the ways of her Household.'

The idea of a man supporting his wife was completely strange. Alice Clark says:

'The idea of individual property in wages had hardly arisen, for prevailing habits of thought still regarded the earnings of father, mother, and children as the joint property of the family, though controlled by the father'.

Patriarchal authority was thus based on the economic and sexual control of the man as the head of the family. He owned his wife's productive capacity, but because the wife was an essential factor in the family economy she had certain powers in both household and work place.

The development of capitalism and changes in the sexual division of labour and the organisation of production confined the rich women to decorative leisure and forced the poor women into the unprotected trades and later into the factories and sweat shops of the 19th century.

Wanda Neff describes the desperate frustration of the Victorian idle woman. She uses literary as well as historical evidence and quotes Thackeray as asking 'of what else have young ladies to think but husbands?'. Leisure became the mark of gentility for the new middle-classes. Charlotte Brontë was unusual in thinking there was no more respectable character than an unmarried woman who makes her own way through life'. The exclusion of middle-class women from production left them socially helpless and completely dependent on men, hence the emphasis of the early feminist movement.

But working class women were never excluded from production. Instead they faced a double exploitation and their situation in the family prevented them from organising as effectively as the men. The early effects of the industrial revolution exposed both men and women workers to the most brutal conditions. Ivy Pinchbeck shows how the employers were quick to see they could drive the women and children harder than the men. She traces the varying effects of industrialisation on different kinds of women's work, and examines the attitudes of contemporaries to female factory work.

Her book ends on an optimistic note. She assumes that the emancipation of women will be a gradual and steady progression. Forty years later we are a little more suspicious.

It is evident that the penetration of capital has transformed women's production in the past and that automation will continue this transformation. It is less clear that a competitive society in which work is organized for the creation of private profit, and the producers used for their owners' gain, can ever create the basis for the liberation of women or of men for that matter. Nonetheless, all three books are relevant to our attempt to understand the economic position of women in modern capitalism and the possibilities of change.

Sheila.

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# CONFERENCE

The National Women's Conference will be held in London on November 3/4/5. Registration forms are available from BM-LIBERATION, LONDON, WC1V6XX (post-box)

The conference has been planned by the regional delegates, the national co-ordinators chosen at Manchester, and the London women who have volunteered to take responsibility for various aspects of the conference. We have tried very hard to avoid the problems of the Manchester conference and to foresee any new difficulties that might arise. We represent you and we have tried to plan a conference that will suit you. We hope that you will organise the next conference and correct the mistakes we make this time. One day we will have an open conference free to all women.

If you still want to help with the work for this conference contact c/o BM-LIBERATION:

- Registration: Carolee  
 Bookstall-Gay Socialist Women: Gillian and Julia 837 4502  
 Creche: Islington Group Angie 226 7114  
 Accommodation: Ealing and Acton Groups Elise 579 1693. Josephine 992 1337  
 Social: Women's Collective  
 Music Workshop: Frankie 998 8234  
 Films: Archway Group, Alene 794 6827  
 Food: Penny 485 1476  
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Carolee

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## GROUPS TO BE STARTED

- GREENWICH - 692 0052 (Celia)

## OTHER GROUPS

- ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PETITION CAMPAIGN, Watford Womens Liberation Group, 148, Bushey Mill Lane, Watford, Herts. Tel: 428 4074 (Rosemary)  
 WOMENS ABORTION & CONTRACEPTION CAMPAIGN, c/o South London Womens Centre, 14, Radnor Terrace, S.W.8. 622 8495 or 802 6364 (Madi)  
 ARTS GROUP S. LONDON - 733 4864 (Kate)  
 CO-COUNSELLING - 735 5702 (Carol)  
 FAMILY STUDY - 229 7908 (Rosamund)  
 LITERATURE STUDY (S. LONDON) - 733 8630 (Julia)  
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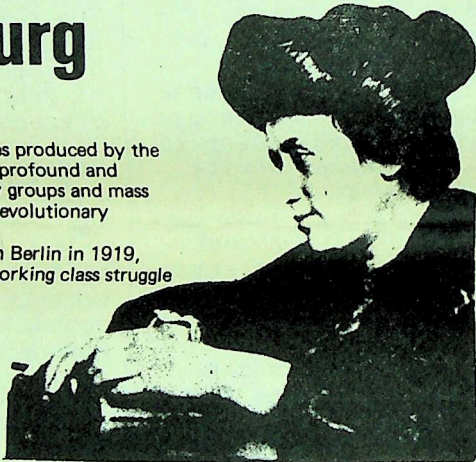
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