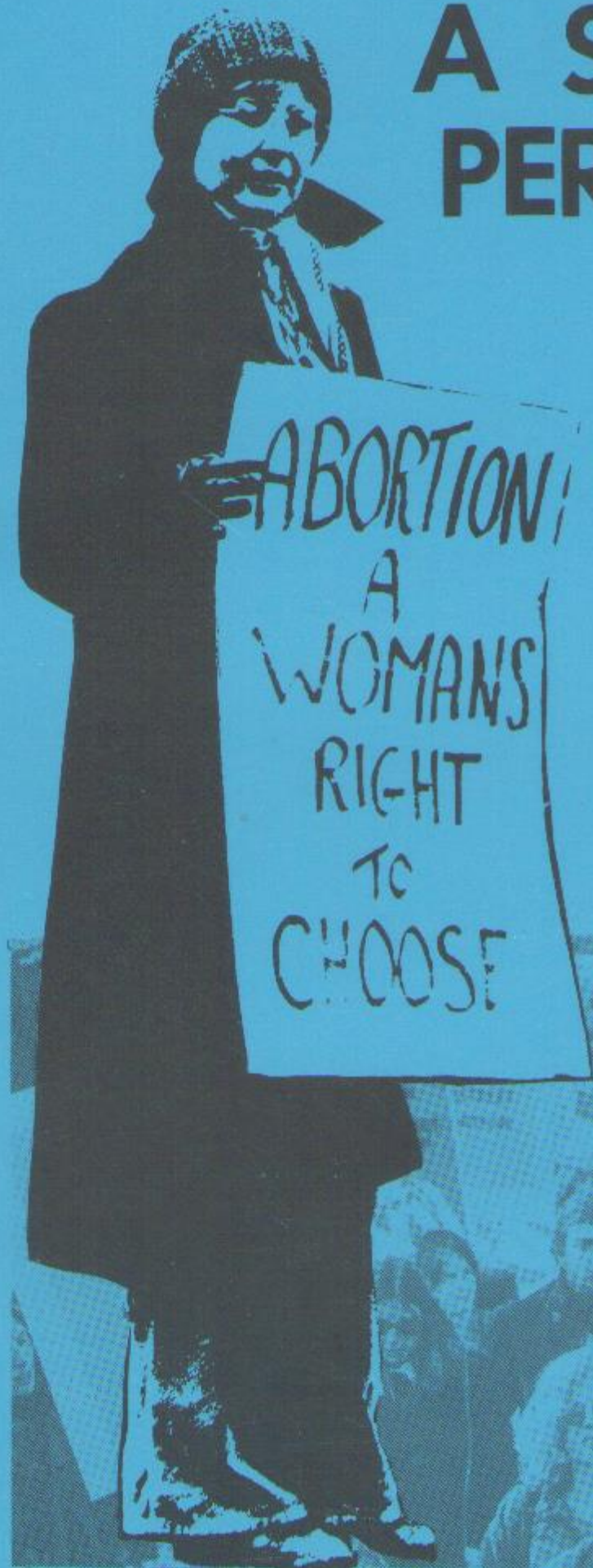


ABORTION RIGHTS - A SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE



25p

Foreword by Dr. Berry Beaumont



Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (M.F.L.)

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The National Abortion Campaign, set up in response to the White Bill threat, has played a leading role in drawing together all those prepared to take up the fight against restrictive abortion laws and for a woman's right to choose. Its successes have come from its ability to organise support around one of the most burning issues of the time — abortion — under the leadership of women from the women's movement and working class political organisations. Through the building of a mass campaign, united in actions which go beyond mere lobbying of MPs in Parliament, NAC has begun to develop the potential of working class people to determine the course of their lives through their own self-activity and organisation.

The publication of this Socialist Woman pamphlet is a timely reminder of the struggle still to be fought on the abortion question. The Select Committee which was examining James White's proposal has succeeded in restricting access to abortion. The increasingly scarce NHS abortion services even worse the already unsatisfactory provision of facilities. The Labour Government continues to ignore both the Labour Party conference decisions and needs of women and the working class as a whole, paving the way for further restrictions on the art labour of abortion. The women

Contributors include: Gill Crozier [Bristol], Gwyn Vorhaus [London], Dodie Wepler [London], Ann Jones [Canterbury], Liz Lawrence [Newcastle], and Ross Carter [Sheffield]

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Front Cover Photos: ANGELA PHILLIPS (I.F.L.)
CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

Foreword by Dr. Berry Beaumont



Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (I.F.L.)

William Benyon, MP for Buckingham and ex-Chief Whip for the Tories, has submitted yet another Private Members Bill to restrict women's right to abortion. It is now two years since the infamous James White Amendment Bill, which could have reduced legal abortions in this country by 80%, first saw the light of day. During those two years, tens of thousands of people — trade unionists, Labour Party members, or just ordinary working class women — have talked about, organised around and demonstrated for the safeguarding of the 1967 Abortion Act. Through this experience of fighting White's Bill, many have come to realise that the 1967 Act itself is inadequate for women's needs, and that what is necessary is to establish the right of women to choose whether to terminate an unwanted pregnancy. Only when women have won free abortion on demand, in law and in practice, will they be enabled to achieve full equality and independence. With yet another threat to this fundamental right of women these goals must be borne in mind more than ever.

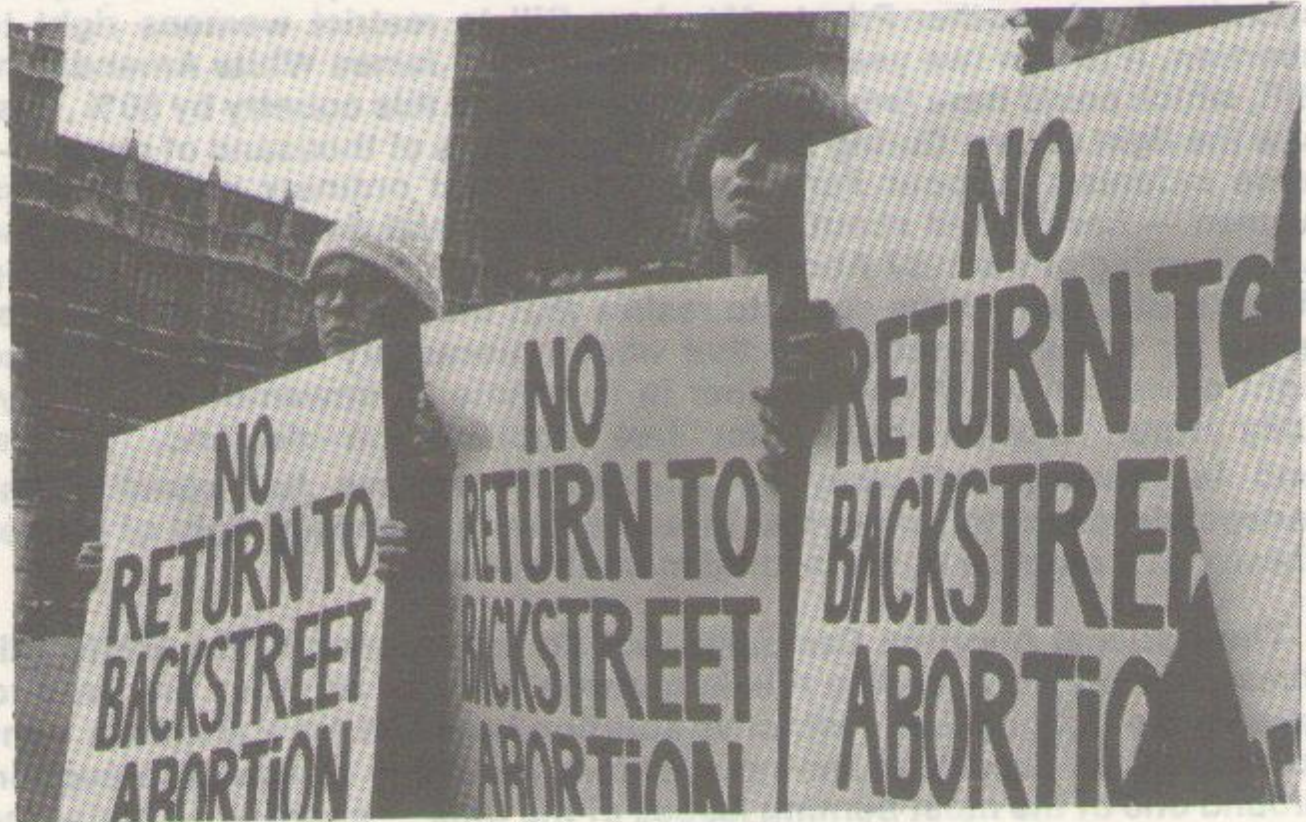
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Unless socialists who understand the importance of the abortion issue continue to campaign vigorously in the working class movement, we may yet see a return to the days of backstreet abortion. This pamphlet makes a welcome contribution to such a campaign.

Dr B. Beaumont
Honorary Sec., Socialist Medical Association, [personal capacity]

A Woman's Right to Choose



IN COUNTRIES all over the world, women are beginning to challenge their centuries-old oppression, with the growth of the women's liberation movement, and the organisation of campaigns to overcome the discrimination which women face. The struggle for control over their fertility has often been a key issue, for in no capitalist country do women have the right to regulate their reproduction as they wish through free contraception, abortion and sterilisation on demand. The reasons for this are found if we consider the nature of women's oppression under capitalist society.

Female oppression originated during the transition from pre-class to class society, with the development of the patriarchal family. In order to protect private property and its inheritance from one generation to another, it was necessary to subjugate women as a sex via the family structure. The control of female sexuality, and its inevitable concomitant in those days — reproduction — was a feature of early class society which now

remains an important prop to the capitalist system. This is reflected in the existence today of abortion laws, as the visible instrument of this special characteristic of women's oppression. Twentieth century women in the most 'advanced' countries have the right to vote, choose a husband, work where they wish, travel alone, divorce, control their own finances etc. But they do not have the fundamental right to control their own bodies.

The control of female fertility was not taken away from women overnight. It involved a long and bloody struggle with the combined weight of the church and the state as the main protagonists. In the early years after its establishment, the church allowed abortion up to 'ensoulment' — following the somewhat whimsical pronouncement of Aristotle that male foetuses received a soul at 40 days and females at 80 days after conception. In 1440, Pope Gratian declared that: 'He is not a murderer who brings about

an abortion before the soul is in the body.' Church doctrine subsequently changed, abortion was outlawed and the church hardened its position to the final sanction in 1917 — excommunication of the woman and all her accomplices. Today Italy, home of the Vatican, condemns 2,000 women to death at the hands of backstreet abortionists. Many more millions of women have died over the centuries as the Church and the state used their representatives to initiate witch-hunts against women whose 'crimes' included practising abortion, giving advice on contraception, using drugs to aid delivery and other practices related to female reproduction. It took several hundred years to stamp out the knowledge, the medicines, customs and organisation of women healers, and to put the control of fertility into the hands of the state. Since then, the state has exercised this control through a combination of coercion and ideological conditioning.

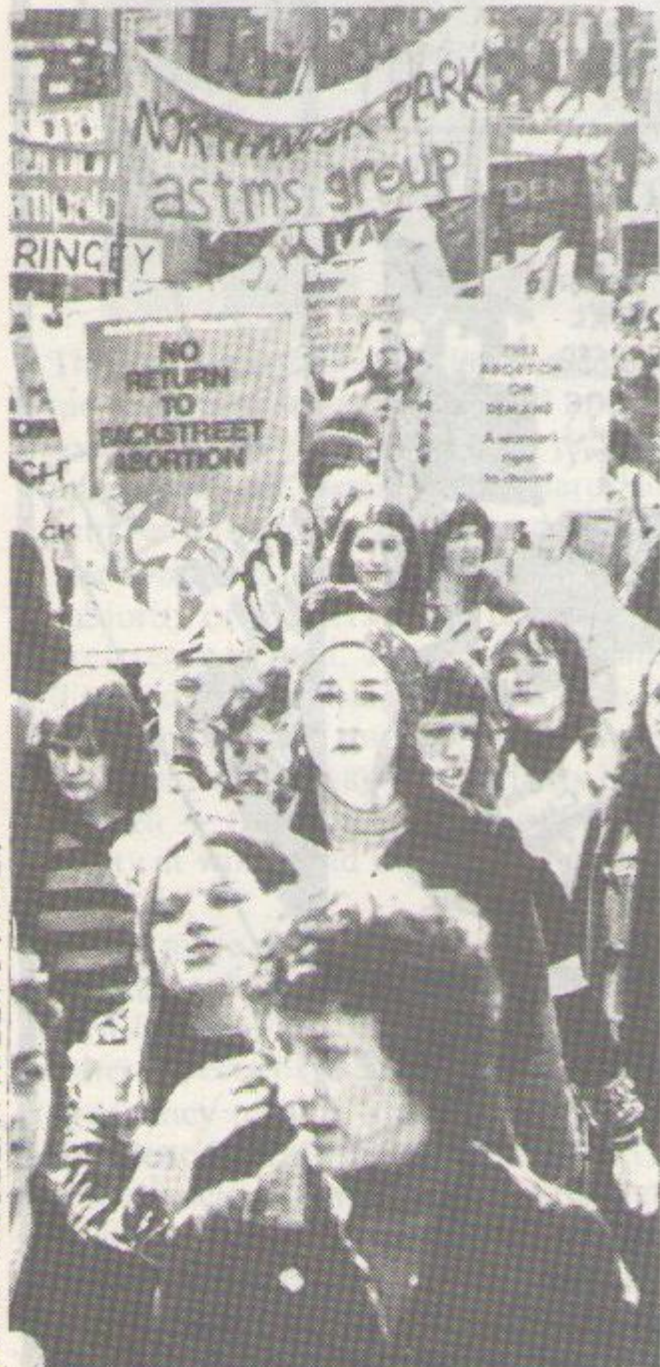


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The issue of control is central, because control is the cornerstone of class rule, through the agency of the state.

In some circumstances, the state will use this control to discourage pregnancy and childbirth when it is in the interests of the ruling class to do so. In Puerto Rico for example, the Government had a plan to expand tourism and develop a petrochemicals industry. The only obstacle standing in its way in developing this new source of profits for capitalism was that the regions needed were 'overpopulated'. The answer of course was to open up a contraception, abortion and sterilisation centres and try to persuade men and women to take advantage of them. The recent enforced sterilisation campaign in India is another example of attempts to manipulate the birth rate as a cover up for the failure of a capitalist system to prevent malnutrition and starvation in an 'overpopulated' country. Such manoeuvres have nothing in common with the demand for the right of **women** to control their fertility, even though the facilities may have been made available by the state.

Even when laws governing abortion are introduced or amended on more 'humanitarian' grounds, the state retains control. For example, the 1967 Abortion Act was one of the most 'liberal' laws of the time, but even then, there was never any doubt over who would control the decision on abortion. Two doctors must give their permission for abortion, based on medical, psychological and social considerations. And even these legal grounds for abortion are governed by the overriding assumption that the norm for a healthy, well-adjusted woman is motherhood. A woman must plead that she is somehow unfit for this role if she is to get an abortion under the Act. The role of women in class society is to bear and rear children within the confines of the family, and the ramifications of this predominating ideology are evident in the raw deal that women get in other fields of life — low pay, inferior education opportunities, jobs which emphasise their 'domesticated' nature and meagre nursery provision. The biological inevitability of women's reproductive processes is used to justify oppression in all spheres of life.

But women's 'biological' destiny as child bearers can now be partially altered with effective and safe contraception, and abortion which, if carried out in early pregnancy carries less risk than childbirth. For women the right to win this control over their fertility gives them the freedom as individuals to

begin to determine the course of their lives according to their own wishes, abilities and needs. Further advancement of women's independence will come with social provision for the rearing of children, giving women the right to choose in the wider sense of the term, if and when to have children. The ability of women to organise their own lives in this way is crucial not only from the standpoint of the liberation of individual women, but also if women are to play a full part in the struggle for their emancipation as an oppressed layer in society. This necessitates involvement in the working class movement, which is impossible if women remain

isolated within the home. Thus the demand for 'a woman's right to choose' threatens the basic social unit of organisation in class society, that is, the family. It also carries with it possibilities for strengthening the working class to overthrow the system by which they are oppressed. Women's right to control their bodies was usurped by the state in order to preserve the material and ideological props of class rule. The struggle to win back for women this right to control their own fertility cannot be won without taking on the state, the church, the medical profession, and many other representatives of a system of class rule.

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A JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARXIST GROUP SPRING 1970

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Abortion and the Cuts



This past year has seen slashing cuts in public expenditure by the Labour Government. Healey's axe has resulted in the crumbling of housing, education, health and social service provision, with promises of worse to come. These cuts result in unemployment, declining standards of health care and education, and much hardship for all working people and their families who depend on such services. Now it also becomes clear what 'Ladies first' really means — women, who form the majority of workers in the public sector will be hard hit and may well be laid off in preference to men. The burden of care for the young and the old, the sick and the disabled, is increasingly shifted onto the 'community' — in other words, women in the home. Family responsibilities are even harder to maintain as real wages fall. The cuts are eating away at the rights being fought for and defended by working class women — the right to work outside the home, the right to equal pay and opportunity at work, and the right to adequate provision of maternity leave and nursery facilities.

But more fundamental than winning these rights, by which women strive to overcome their oppression in capitalist society, is the right of a woman to control her own fertility, for this is the basic pre-requisite for women to be able to control all other aspects of their lives. Without freely available, safe and legal contraceptive, pregnancy testing, abortion and sterilisation facilities on demand, women will be unable to liberate themselves from the tyranny of unplanned pregnancy and play a full role in society. And it is in this respect, both directly and indirectly, that the effects on the working class of the cuts being carried out by the Labour Government can be most clearly seen.

Ever since its inception in 1948, the NHS has failed to provide adequately for all the health and fertility control needs of women, tending to concentrate only on those

NAC NEWS

Day of Evidence

Abortion Rights Tribunal

**JANUARY 29th
CENTRAL HALL WEST**



NAC NEWS

**STREET
ABORTIONS!**

OUR EVIDENCE COMES FROM THE PEOPLE WHO COUNT. IT IS BEING COLLECTED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY by all the groups sponsoring the tribunal: National Abortion Campaign groups, women's groups, affiliates of the Co-ordinating Committee to Defend the 1967 Act and many individuals.

They will all be coming to Central Hall to make their findings public. We want you to be there too.

Your evidence counts; it is your future which is at stake.

Your evidence counts!

We would ask you and your organisations to see how your evidence could fit in:

- How is the 1967 Abortion Act implemented?
- What is the availability and facilities in your local area?
- What is the effect of the Act on the street?
- How is the Act enforced, on local general practitioners? Do you object to the local general practice?
- Should medical practitioners take a stand on abortion? Would you wish to be a part of it?
- How do you view the 1967 Act? Do you think it is the best in the constitution? Do you object to it?
- What is your view on the decision-making about

abortion from the doctor to the woman concerned be in the interests of women?

- Do people understand the nature of the Select Committee?
- Why can't day care abortion centres be set up across the country?
- What are the latest techniques and why aren't they used in the NHS?
- Is backstreet abortion on the increase? What personal experience do you have recently of this?
- Do your local churches take a stand on abortion? Do they work actively on the question?
- As a charitable abortion clinic or referral agency, what experience have you had with anti-abortionists?
- As a trade unionist, what stand has your

trade union taken, and has the union discussed it with its sponsored MPs?

FINALLY, WE WILL BE INVITING KEY SPEAKERS FROM VARIOUS SPECIALISED FIELDS TO GIVE BRIEF OUTLINES on these areas: new techniques, charitable clinics, international abortion movement, parliament, campaigning around the country, feminist attitudes, feasibility of day care centres within the NHS.

The latest films and slides will be on show; special exhibitions in side halls of techniques, literature and advice will be attractively designed to give special guidance on various aspects.

THE TRIBUNAL MOBILISING COMMITTEE meets regularly in London, and is open to all. Publicity material and further information is obtained from National Abortion Campaign.

Sponsors include:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Renee Short MP | The Co-ordinating Committee for the Defence of the 1967 Abortion Act (comprising 24 organisations) |
| Jo Richardson MP | National Abortion Campaign |
| Audrey Wise MP | |
| Lord Beaumont of Whilly | |
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aspects of women's health care that most directly serve the needs of a capitalist system; that is, healthy pregnancy and childbirth for the reproduction of the labour force. Only since July 1975, for example, has there been a free contraceptive service, and NHS sterilisations are limited to those in 'medical' need.

UNDERFINANCED

When the 1967 Abortion Act was introduced, no special arrangements were made in the already underfinanced and overstretched health service to ensure that women legally entitled to abortions could get them, with the result that in 1975, more than 50,000 British women paid out a total of over a quarter of a million pounds to pay for abortions unobtainable on the NHS. The lack of priority and funds given to the establishment of abortion facilities has been exacerbated by the reactionary attitudes of many anti-abortion doctors, who have the power to delay or refuse abortions to the women seeking their help, as well as using their influence on the administrative committees to block the development of local NHS abortion services.

The current economic crisis and the NHS cuts are a rubber-stamping of this former situation. Services for women are being hard hit, as evidence from all over the country shows. The proposed plans for out-patient clinics at the Charing Cross and Sheffield hospitals are being 'reviewed', and Oxfordshire Health Authority is considering a reduction in abortions as a money saver. Furthermore, the recent recommendations of the Select Committee stating the need for resuscitation equipment for late abortions limits such abortions to the few hospitals that have or can afford to buy such expensive equipment. Family Planning Clinics in the Midlands have waiting lists of up to three months, and in Buckinghamshire, sterilisations will now only be performed for grave medical reasons. All three hospitals run by women for women are threatened with closure, as are gynaecological wards in general hospitals. The so-called necessity for cuts also acts as a smokescreen for anti-abortion doctors to hide behind, who not only use cuts as a way of justifying their refusal to give abortions (which is based, in fact, on their own 'moral' judgements), but as the rationale for continuing to maintain the profitable private clinics where gynaecologists benefit from the despair of pregnant women refused abortions by the increasingly deficient NHS.

ASPECT

However, there is another aspect of the cutback in abortion facilities which has an ideological basis rather than an economic one. In fact, in strictly economic terms, it would make better sense to give women abortions instead of the state paying considerably more in the long run for the cost of pregnancy and childbirth. And it would certainly be cheaper to provide out-patient abortion clinics than the present in-patient treatment. But the overall strategy of the Labour Government at this time is a solution to the problems of the economy in the interests of the capitalist system, even though this cuts across the interests of the working class. And any measures which weaken the ability of the labour movement to resist these policies of the Government will increase the possibility of such a capitalist solution to the crisis. In this light, the effect of cuts in contraception and abortion facilities is to restrict women to their isolated place in the home where they act as a buffer for the other effects of the cuts. This isolation also reinforces the division that already exists in the workers movement between those who understand that the fight for women's rights is integral to the struggle for a better society for the whole working class, and those

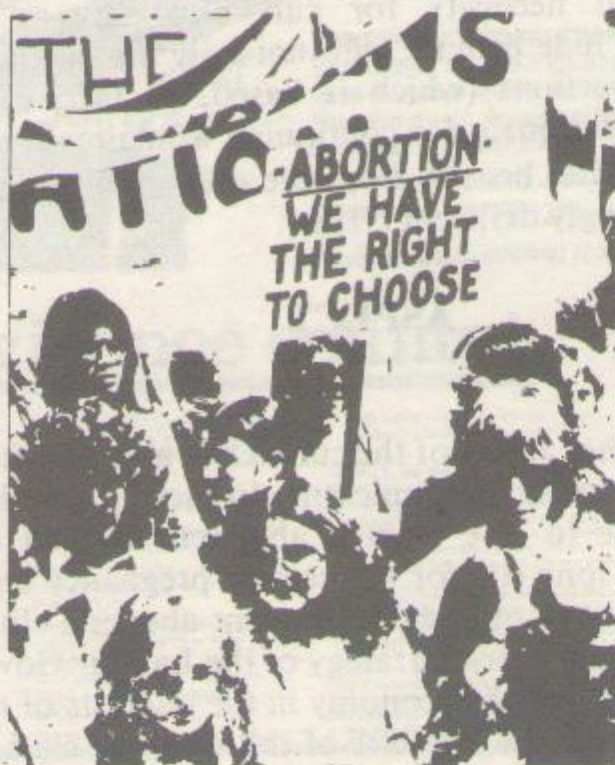
who are prepared to sell out the needs of women in order to protect themselves against the effects of the crisis. Any moves which deny women the right to control their bodies and their lives thus not only set back the struggle of women for liberation, but threaten the unity of the working class at a time when their living standards are under attack.

class at a time when their living standards are under attack.

It is hardly surprising then that the Labour Government has made no attempts to curb the restrictions on the Abortion Act which some MPs have manoeuvred through the James White Bill and the recent recommendations of the Select Committee. It is hardly surprising that in the DHSS document outlining which areas are to be cut the least in the NHS, abortion facilities are not even mentioned. For cuts in abortion facilities and restrictions in the law do not contradict the overall scheme of the Government's attacks on the working class. It is therefore necessary that the demands for a woman's right to control her fertility through contraception and abortion facilities freely available on the NHS be raised in all campaigns against the cuts.

Abortion: where we stand

15p



National Abortion Campaign

Pamphlets 15p each, from: NAC, 30 Camden Road, London NW1.

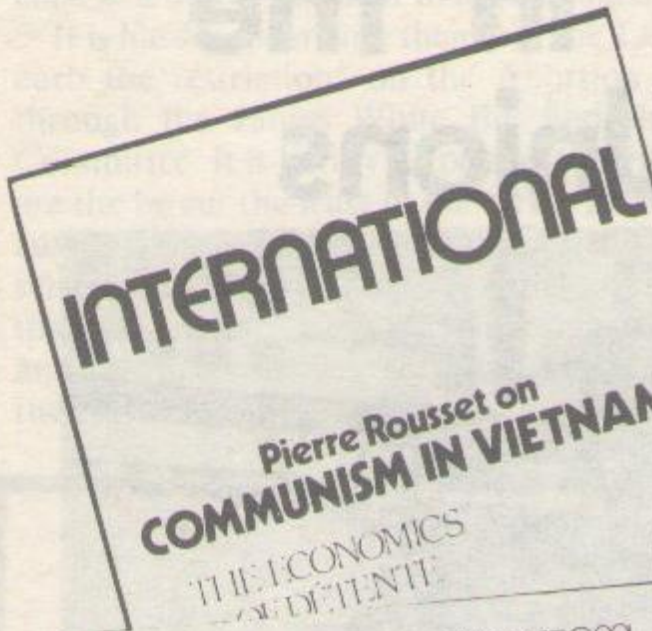
The Fight for Abortion in the Trade Unions



Over the past thirty years, the relationship between women, women's rights, and the trade union movement has undergone a marked change. The post-war capitalist boom, coupled with the development of labour saving devices in the home, and the selective transfer of women's family responsibilities to the welfare state, has encouraged and necessitated increasing numbers of women to go out to work outside the home. Of the 2.5 million increase in the working population between 1951 and 1971, 2.2 million were women. This is reflected in the growing proportion of women in trade unions — between 1962 and 1975, total membership of the TUC rose by over two million, two thirds of which was accounted for by women. Today, over 9 million women work in Britain, 35% of the total labour force, and just over one-quarter of the membership of the TUC. On paper, the trade union movement appears to have acknowledged certain rights for women — at the level of resolutions for equal pay for example, the TUC's record goes back nearly 100 years — in keeping with their increasing numerical strength in the workforce. But as the recent successful Trjco strike has demonstrated, actually **winning** these rights in practice is still dependent on the militant struggles of women workers.

However, on other aspects of rights for women, the trade union movement has no tradition of debate or activity. The question of abortion is an outstanding example. One of the main reasons for this lies in the formation of the organised working class movement in Britain. There exists a divide between 'industrial' and 'political' issues, which is expressed in the organisational separation of the trade unions and the Labour Party. The trade union, in organising around industrial issues, have traditionally considered that 'social' issues such as abortion were outside their terrain. It has only been over the past year, with the obvious threat of the James White Bill, and the campaigns against it, led by women inside and outside the trade

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union movement, that the women's TUC and the TUC conferences were forced to discuss the issue, and call for free abortion on request on the NHS. Notwithstanding the TUC's official Charter for Women omits any mention of the right of women to control their fertility, and frames its demands in the context of allowing women to 'better fulfill their role in society as mothers and wives'. Thus the 9th aim states: 'Unions say employers must accept the need for women to work the hours which will enable them to meet their commitments as mothers or to assist them to care for their elderly dependents'. It is thus hardly surprising to reflect that since the passing of the abortion resolutions last year, the TUC leadership has done nothing to promote their demands, and even those individual unions which also supported abortion rights have limited their contribution to the campaign to lending the names of a few well-known bureaucrats to one or two NAC initiatives. Even at the base of the unions, despite the support of trade unions for the NAC campaign, abortion is still often considered as inappropriate to the purposes for which trade unions exist.

ROLE

It is the role of socialists, and particularly women socialists, to break their fellow trade unionists from this idea, for abortion is not primarily a 'moral' or 'social' question, it is a class issue and must be clearly understood as such. Why is it a class issue? Not only because, as some would say, that women are 50% of the working class, nor because working class women cannot afford to pay for private abortions on demand, nor even because women must have control over their fertility if they are to play a full role in trade union activities. Rather it is because the fight for free abortion on demand in the context of the fight for women's liberation cannot be a part of the class struggle. Women's fight for equality and liberation cannot be won within a capitalist society which both depends on and reinforces inequality and oppression. And only a unified fight against *all* aspects of capitalist society, involving *all* who are oppressed and exploited, can successfully destroy capitalism and create a new, socialist society. The working class are historically the only class which can bring this about, and their organisation and strength within the trade union movement provides an invaluable weapon for that fight. Particularly at this time when the Labour Government is putting the interests of capitalism before those of the working class, and carrying out attacks on all areas of working class life, divisions within the labour movement on questions such as that of abortion, weaken the ability of the working class to respond in a unified way. Our answer, as socialists, must be to involve the trade union movement in an active campaign for abortion rights on the basis of implementation of TUC and/or union policy on abortion.

CAMPAIGN

Such a campaign in the trade unions has two interlinked but separate aims. The first is to involve the union at a national level in the campaign, by resolutions to the executive and annual conference on abortion, and the demand for action to be taken by the leadership on such resolutions if they have already been passed. Such action would entail devoting financial and other resources to campaigning on abortion, in the union itself and through mobilising for the initiatives of other organisations. The forthcoming Day of Evidence on abortion called for by NAC is an obvious example. Additionally, those unions which sponsor Labour MPs should make it clear that they will not support any MPs who vote in Parliament against union policy for

abortion. The second aim is to draw in trade unionists at a local level, not only in order to be successful in putting demands on the national leadership, but to encourage the independent self activity of the labour movement, particularly women, around issues which vitally affect their lives. As well as passing resolutions, branches could organise speakers on the abortion question, not only to their own union meetings and workplaces, but to other unions and shop stewards committees in the area, the trades council and Labour Party, student unions, tenant organisations and other community groups in the locality. Local meetings, petitioning, pickets and demonstrations provide focuses of activity by which trade unionists to whom the question of abortion should be of particular concern — health workers, women, etc. — can be mobilised, and the issue of abortion be discussed and explained amongst wide sections of working class people.

FOREFRONT

In the forefront of such activities within the union should be women, not only because the fight for free abortion on demand is an integral part of the wider struggle for women's liberation, but also because unfortunately, many male trade unionists still hold attitudes about women which prevent them playing a full part in the labour movement. The only way to overcome these attitudes will be by women showing that they can organise a struggle as well as any man! But this means that women must be given positive encouragement to take the leadership of the campaign, facilities must be provided by the unions for care of the kids to enable women to participate in meetings and demonstrations. And women should meet independently of men if necessary to discuss amongst themselves and prepare what they want to say and demand in union meetings. This way, they'll give each other the collective courage and confidence to fight for their rights within the union.

By putting forward these ideas and waging a vigorous campaign on the question of abortion within the trade union movement, not only will the achievement of abortion on demand become within our grasp, but in the process we shall have taken forward the development of the potential of women to struggle for aspects of their liberation, and the political education of the whole working class on the relevance of women's liberation to the wider class struggle for socialism.

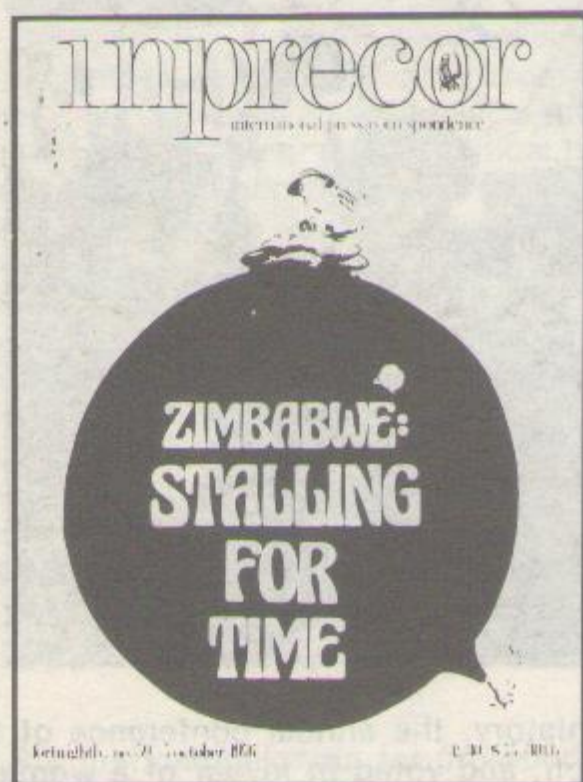


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The Labour Party and the Abortion Issue

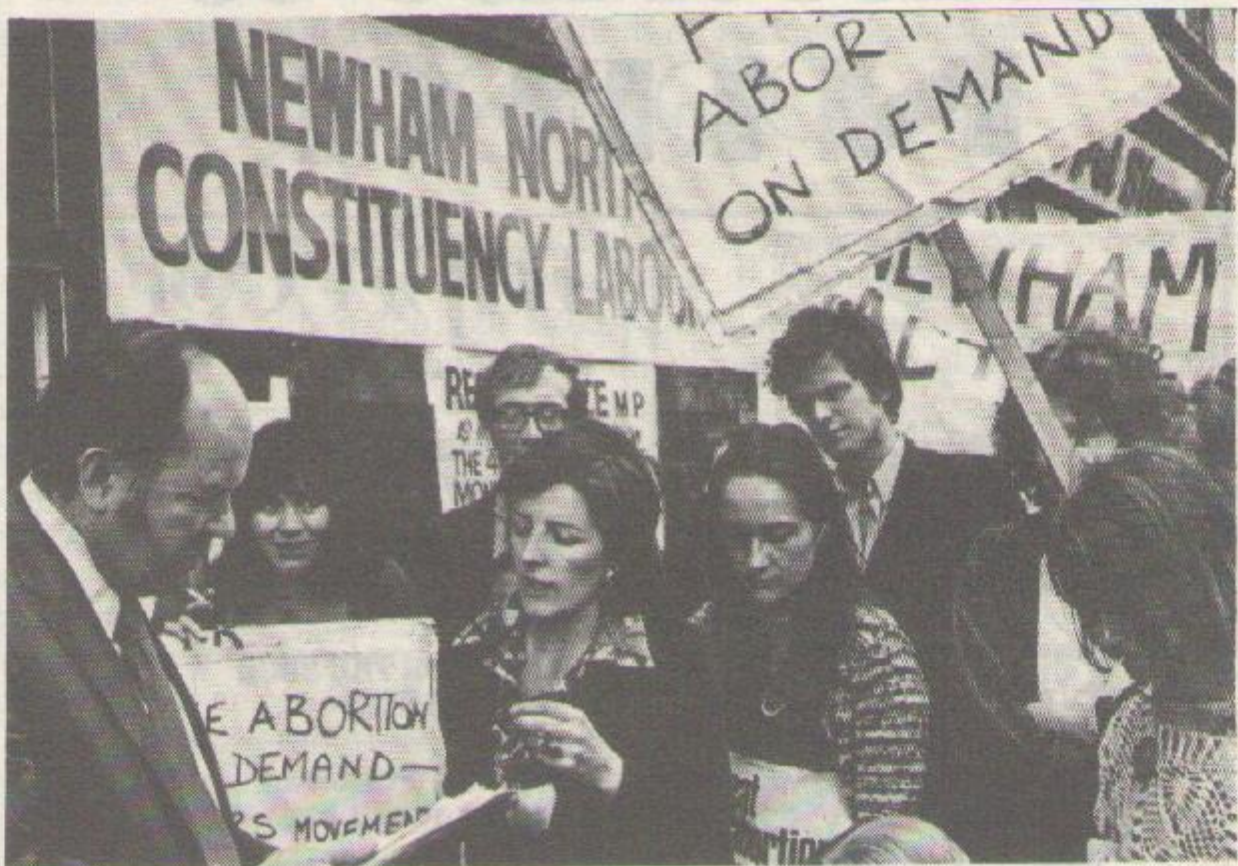


Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (I.F.L.)

In October 1975, for the first time in its history, the annual conference of the Labour Party discussed the issue of abortion, and voted in favour of a woman's right to free abortion on request on the NHS. Ironically, this came about through the attempts of a Glasgow Labour MP, James White, to introduce a private member's Amendment Bill restricting access to abortion earlier that year. The resulting controversy over the abortion issue within the Labour Party at all levels is still reverberating, and has exposed the inability of Labour to defend even the limited gains of the 1967 Abortion Act, let alone to 'help improve life for all the women of our country' as it claims in its manifesto.

When the White Bill passed its second reading, and was referred to a Select Committee in February 1975, the response of the constituency parties was overwhelmingly clear — the vast majority were in favour of abortion rights for women, and showed this feeling in the many resolutions sent to the NEC and Conference, and by their participation in the demonstrations and other activities organised by the National Abortion Campaign. However, the response of Labour representatives in Parliament was quite different. A total of 94 Labour MPs supported White's Bill at second reading, and even more (116) voted in favour of the reconvening of the Select Committee one year later, despite its obvious intent to restrict abortion. A special Parliamentary Labour Party meeting called prior to this vote had emphasised the dangers to the 67 Act of such a move, but was ignored by the Labour scabs, who were also flouting the democratically determined decisions of the Labour Party conference.

The need for supporters of women's abortion rights within the Labour Party to maintain activity on the abortion issue is still imperative. The 1976 conference saw the emergence of a Labour Life Committee, dedicated to overturn previous conference decisions, and to achieve a change in the law to restrict abortion. Many pro-abortionists do not yet realise the continuing threat to the 1967 Act, nor the consistent work which still needs to be done to ensure that the Labour Party, and its MPs, become truly responsive and responsible to, the interests of women and the workers movement. Labour members can also play an important part in building local campaigns which can involve other abortion supporters from a wide variety of working class organisations. Only by united and ongoing activity from all sections of the labour movement will it be possible to win abortion rights for women. The setting up of a Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, to co-ordinate such activity amongst Labour Party members is a welcome step along this road.

For further details about LARC write to T. Gorton, 73 Albion Road, London N16.

1977 CALENDAR

THE WOMAN'S DREADNOUGHT
Published by the East London Federation of the Suffragettes
 Edited by SYLVIA SPANGLING

Issue 11 SATURDAY JUNE 11th 1977 Price 10p (includes postage)

THE EAST END DEPUTATION TO THE PRIME MINISTER
Great Procession and Trafalgar Square Demonstration

VERBATEM REPORT

WOMEN MILITANTS:

SOCIALIST WOMAN
NATIONAL PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WOMAN GROUP

Women Fight Low Pay

Remember all our women in campaigns
Remember all our women over many fighting years
Remember all our women for their triumphs, and for their tears

1977 JANUARY	1977 FEBRUARY	1977 MARCH	1977 APRIL	1977 MAY	1977 JUNE
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The Anti Abortionists

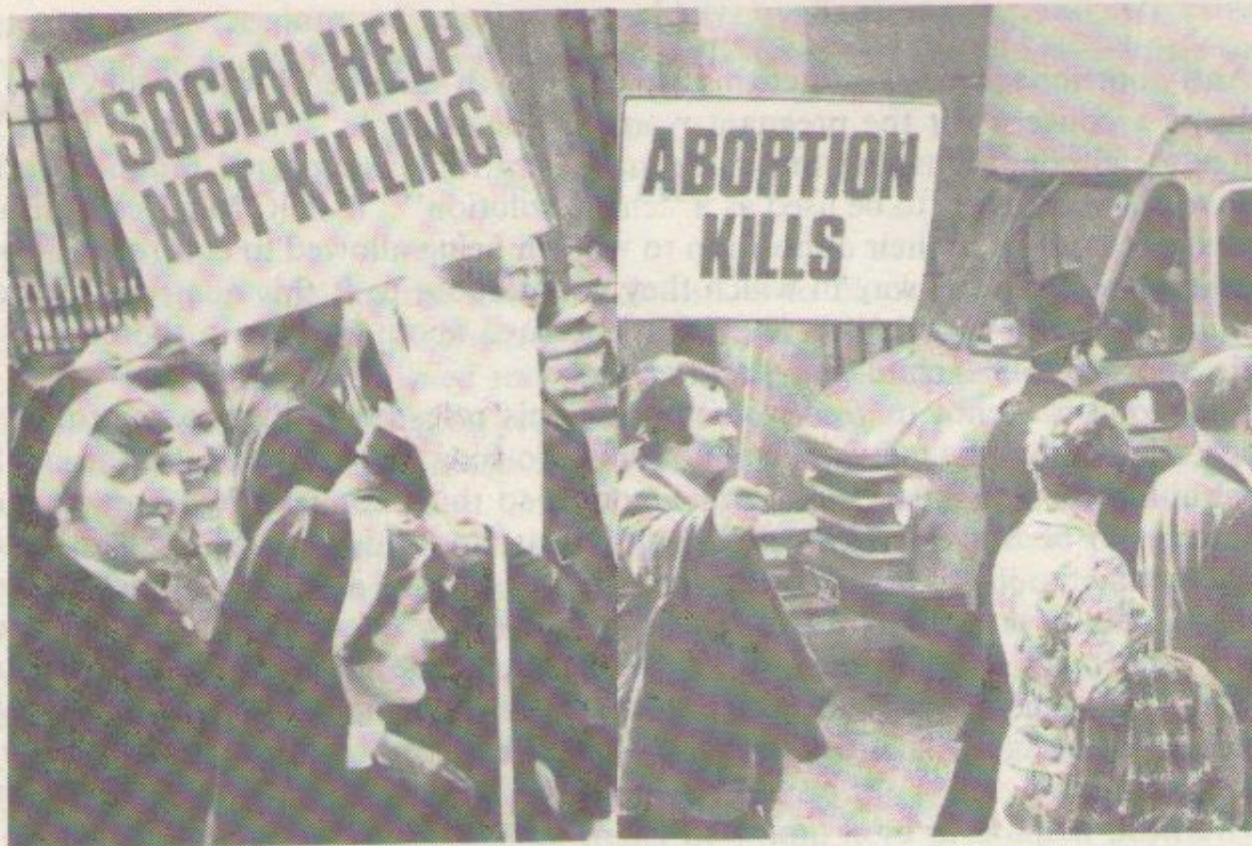


Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (I.F.L.)

The arguments and activities of the anti-abortionists are important for socialists to understand, and to counter with progressive alternatives. The seeming logic of the case of the anti-abortionists masks a multitude of inconsistencies and backward ideologies. Their starting point is a so-called concern for the rights of the foetus. Abortion is seen as 'murder' of an unborn child — an unborn child which has a right to life. But this concern for the right to life amongst anti-abortionists is far from universal. For example, the husband of the Marchioness of Salisbury (an executive member of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child — SPUC) has extensive financial and property interests in Rhodesia and South Africa, where indiscriminate murders of black people are increasingly common — as Soweto has shown. But SPUC keeps quiet about murdered blacks. The Roman Catholic Cardinal Cooke, subscriber to a faith noted for its opposition to abortion and the destruction of foetal life, stated that the war of aggression against the Vietnamese was 'just'. Thus it seems that, to the anti-abortionists, it is acceptable to destroy some lives, only certain lives are sacred.

What about the life of the unwillingly pregnant woman? Surely this is more important than the *potential* life of the foetus? For a foetus can only really be said to have a human life of equal importance to that of the woman when it exists independently, when it begins to develop an independent consciousness and enters into social relationships with other people.

God-given and magical phenomenon, although over the centuries the Church has been unable to make up its mind when exactly such 'life' begins in the womb. Current teaching is that this time is the moment of conception. As socialists we cannot accept this mystical and ever-changing explanation — for us life exists only in the real world. The established life of a woman faced with a decision about an unwanted pregnancy must — if she so chooses — take precedence over the potentially developing life within her. Only she has the right to decide whether the outcome of that pregnancy shall be another life which of necessity will impinge on hers.

COUNTER

Anti-abortionists may counter this argument with statements which, they say, do indicate a concern for the pregnant woman. For example, 'MPs should fight for better social conditions and more adequate help for unsupported families, rather than to allow abortion to be used as a "cheap solution".' (SPUC Manifesto). But it is obvious, both from their opposition to women being allowed to control their own fertility, and from the way in which they counterpose to it this question of social facilities that anti-abortionists are only concerned about women in the context of their imposed role as child bearers and rearers.

Their concern is not to *free* women from this role, but rather to reinforce the oppression within the family. Their policy on housing, for example, is to argue that local authorities ought to build larger houses so that families with three or more children can be housed. They also suggest that landlords be subsidised to induce them to take families. However, they have nothing to say about the homeless in our society. They are prepared to call for nursery facilities and educational opportunities for single women with kids, so as to enable them to keep their children and look after them, but are nowhere to be seen in the campaigns for *all* women with children to have such facilities so that they may be freed from the responsibility of child care:



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

The hypocrisy of their arguments was clearly reflected in the recent behaviour of the International Publishing Corporation, who carried an anti-abortion article in their magazine *Mother*. However, IPC did not seem particularly concerned about the 'mothers' in its employ — NATSOPA members are denied maternity or paternity leave, the new Magazine Division had been planned without a creche, and one woman was recently threatened with dismissal for missing work in order to look after a sick child!

The anti-abortionists claim that abortion is often the only choice for women with unwanted pregnancies in difficult social circumstances. As socialists, we too defend the right of any woman to choose to continue with a pregnancy, whatever her situation. But unlike the compulsory motherhood lobby, we demand real freedom of choice — widely available, safe and effective contraception and abortion, *and* improved social conditions in which to bring up children.

STRATEGY

The present strategy of the anti-abortionists is to block access to legal, safe abortion both by changes to the law and restricted access to NHS facilities. In this they have already achieved some successes since the passing of the 67 Act. The blatant attacks on abortion represented by the James White Bill have been replaced by more subtle inroads into legal regulations, as illustrated by the recommendations of the Select Committee. The acceptance of some of these recommendations by a majority of MPs is in part due to the clever propaganda perpetrated by the anti-abortionists, who set themselves up as the true defenders of the spirit of the 67 Act (i.e. Parliament never intended women to get abortions for frivolous reasons), and protectors of women against the abuses of the private abortion sector. They make no mention of the fact that the real abuse of the 67 Act, and of women, is that many pregnant women who are legally entitled to abortions under the Act are unable to obtain them on the NHS. No doubt their supporters in the medical profession, many of whom hold prominent positions, bear some responsibility for that.

OPPONENTS

Outside of Parliament, opponents of abortion are mobilised in mass demonstrations, carefully organised with the co-operation of the church, who provide finance for coaches bringing supporters down straight after Sunday service. Fear and emotion are whipped up in schools, with lurid pictures of fetuses, films portraying abortion as a horrendous experience. The original acknowledgement on the film to the financial backers of this exercise — Glaxo, the baby food firm — has now been removed. Medical and statistical information about risks of abortion are distorted to further influence opinion against it. These anti-abortionists are not particularly convincing on the terrain of rational argument, but their sensationalism is brilliant!

Whilst we recognise that their propaganda has no basis in fact, it is important not to underestimate the effect of such well-organised campaigning during the present period of increasing economic and social upheaval. The strains are evidenced by the rapid rise in divorce rates, wife and child battering and depressive illness amongst women.

At a time when the traditional social relations and values of a capitalist system are under pressure, organisations like SPUC and LIFE can feed off the resulting

confusion and uncertainty. They claim that the problem is a crisis of 'morality' which, they say, can only be solved by reaffirming the 'sanctity of the family', a return to the previous 'stability' — in other words entrenching women back into a role which suits the needs of capitalism but reinforces their oppression. Thus anti-abortion organisations share a common ground with the Festival of Light brigade, Mary Whitehouse, and her cronies like Lord Longford. Because they successfully pose abortion as an issue which is above party and class they are able to draw support from all social classes on this basis. Their ideas are used to uphold the shackling of sexuality to reproduction, the sexual division of labour, and the maintenance of woman's role as a submissive servant in the home.

It's not surprising that some supporters of these reactionary ideas hold other extreme right-wing views. For example, although SPUC supporters are *not* fascists, it is interesting to see how readily the fascists have grasped the abortion issue in an attempt to make further gains in the support they have. In the last election, the day after SPUC produced posters with their slogan 'Vote for your Anti-Abortion Candidate' in the Preston area, posters of 'The National Front — Your Anti-Abortion Candidate' went up next to them. Similarly, Catholic Action, a grouping operating within the trade unions, takes a strong anti-abortion stance. In the fifties, this grouping was infamous for its fight in the Manchester docks to break the militant organisation of union activists, and their success in this had repercussions for many years after.

CLEAR

From this it should be clear therefore that our fight against the anti-abortionists must be waged at a *political* level, particularly within the labour movement. Counter-demonstrations against their mobilisations on the streets have a role to play, but they can only be really successfully built on the strength of consistent and painstaking explanation and organisation amongst working class people on the basis of an alternative perspective — that of a fight for women's rights, such as abortion. Only this perspective will really demonstrate the threat to working class unity which these opponents of abortion represent.

Abortion: An International Issue



It is somewhat ironical that in a year dubbed 'International Women's Year' by the United Nations, last year was marked by successive attacks on women's abortion rights by many capitalist states claiming to support this venture. The Labour Government in Britain has kept in tune with these retrogressive measures. It has refused to adopt a class position on abortion, allowing 'free' votes on Select Committee recommendations which have consistently called for restricting the right of 'foreign' women in need for abortions from utilising British facilities.

James White's infamous Private Members Bill in 1975 paved the way for the piecemeal restrictions since recommended by the Select Committee. The effect if his Bill would have been to ban all non-resident women from obtaining abortions in Britain. The First Report of the Select Committee called for powers to be given to the DHSS to take action to prevent any private clinics from treating a majority of 'foreign' women.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

The British working class has taken exemplary steps in previous instances where their brothers and sisters in other countries have been denied fundamental human rights. The Spanish Civil War, the Suez crisis, the Vietnamese Revolution, and the

more recent blacking campaign against the Chilean junta are a few of the many examples which spring to mind. The abortion issue is no different. These so-called 'foreigners' who use British facilities are none other than sisters from other countries confronted with unwanted pregnancies. They are forced, through the reactionary policies of their Governments which deny them basic democratic rights, to travel to Britain for the operation. In this way, these women try to avoid the horrors of backstreet abortion and the penalties that accompany it, under the repressive regimes in their own countries.

The recent explosion at the La Roche factory in Seveso, Italy showed very clearly how even the limited gains won in Britain have a direct bearing on the daily lives of women from other countries. In the case of Seveso, the dioxine fumes which escaped were potentially disastrous for the future children of the 400 pregnant women exposed to them. Despite a special clinic being set up to provide the women with abortions, only 25 eventually obtained the operation legally! Many doubtlessly resorted to backstreet abortions while a handful travelled to Britain in desperation. And yet even the limited aid offered these women when they arrived is now under attack by the anti-abortionists.

The struggle for abortion rights in Britain is not only important internationally because the material gains which are won here can be commonly shared by women from other countries. It is equally important to share the lessons learned in struggle — and the errors committed. In addition, the anti-abortionists are increasingly organised on an international scale. The way these groups have launched their fight, to tie women closer to the family through unwanted pregnancies, has amazing similarities. Not only is the same glossy literature churned out in every language imaginable, but the tactics employed are astoundingly parallel.

DOCTORS UNDER ATTACK

An important common element in the attack on abortion rights has been their persistent efforts to persecute doctors sympathetic to the needs of women. In Canada, Dr Morgentaler — a long-time campaigner for the right of women to decide — has been subjected to particularly severe treatment at the hands of the state. This has since included long periods of imprisonment. Despite the fact that several juries found him innocent of the charge of performing illegal abortions, the prosecution stated its commitment to keep trying him 'until a jury could be found that would convict him'. With the recent electoral victory of the Parti Quebecois, all charges against Dr Morgentaler have finally been lifted.

Dr Kenneth Edelin in America is another case of harassment of doctors committed to serving women's needs. Because this black doctor performed an abortion on a woman who was 24 weeks pregnant. Because of the 1973 US Supreme Court ruling, fetuses were considered to be 'human' after 20 weeks. Hence the charge of 'manslaughter' — of the foetus. The anti-abortionists, campaigning actively for Dr Edelin's conviction have formed a ready alliance with other reactionary forces, particularly the racists who are striving to prevent the implementation of the bussing laws in Boston.

Belgium is a more recent example, and its implications are just as severe. Following a raid in September 1974 on a hospital providing abortion facilities, four doctors were arrested including the well-known gynaecologist Dr Willy Peers. Under the most retrogressive laws existing in Europe (with sentences of 10-20 years for doctors and para-medicals involved in abortions), colleagues of Dr Willy Peers defiantly told newsmen they were collectively responsible for performing a total of 1,822 abortions since April 1973.

The important lesson from the nature of these attacks is to see how the anti-

abortionists have used every opening available. The campaign in America is instructive here. Because the US Supreme Court ruling included a time limit on abortion rights, it was **this** clause concerning viability which has become the focus of the campaign to harass and convict doctors; to intimidate doctors from performing often the most desperate cases of late abortion; and to whip up ideological hysteria associating the simple operation of abortion with 'murder'.

THE ROLE OF THE STATE

The case of Dr Morgentaler also demonstrates an important political point: the way in which the state aids and enforces the attacks of the anti-abortionists, in their efforts to restrict women's control over their own fertility and their own lives. The state does not act in accordance with any humanitarian motives or ideals. It takes measures which serve the specific needs of the ruling class. In many underdeveloped countries, the state acts against women's rights to choose not by preventing birth control, but by imposing it on an unwilling population. It is thus no accident that some of the strongest advocates for restricting women's abortion rights — like Leo Abse in this country — are also those who argue for imposing restrictions on child-bearing, for women deemed undesirable, such as poor and black women. It is these women who are forced to submit to unwanted abortions, often accompanied by compulsory sterilisations.

In underdeveloped countries the role of the state is particularly blatant.

In India, for example, four states have introduced compulsory sterilisation bills. In line with other draconian measures of the Indira Gandhi regime, the policy is to utilise state power to force Indians to comply with the needs of the ruling class. India records 50 births per minute. The Government has therefore decided that, rather than questioning the fundamental economic structures of Indian society, which are at the root of, and perpetuate the problems of poverty and appalling living standards, it will solve its problems by forcing people to have fewer children!

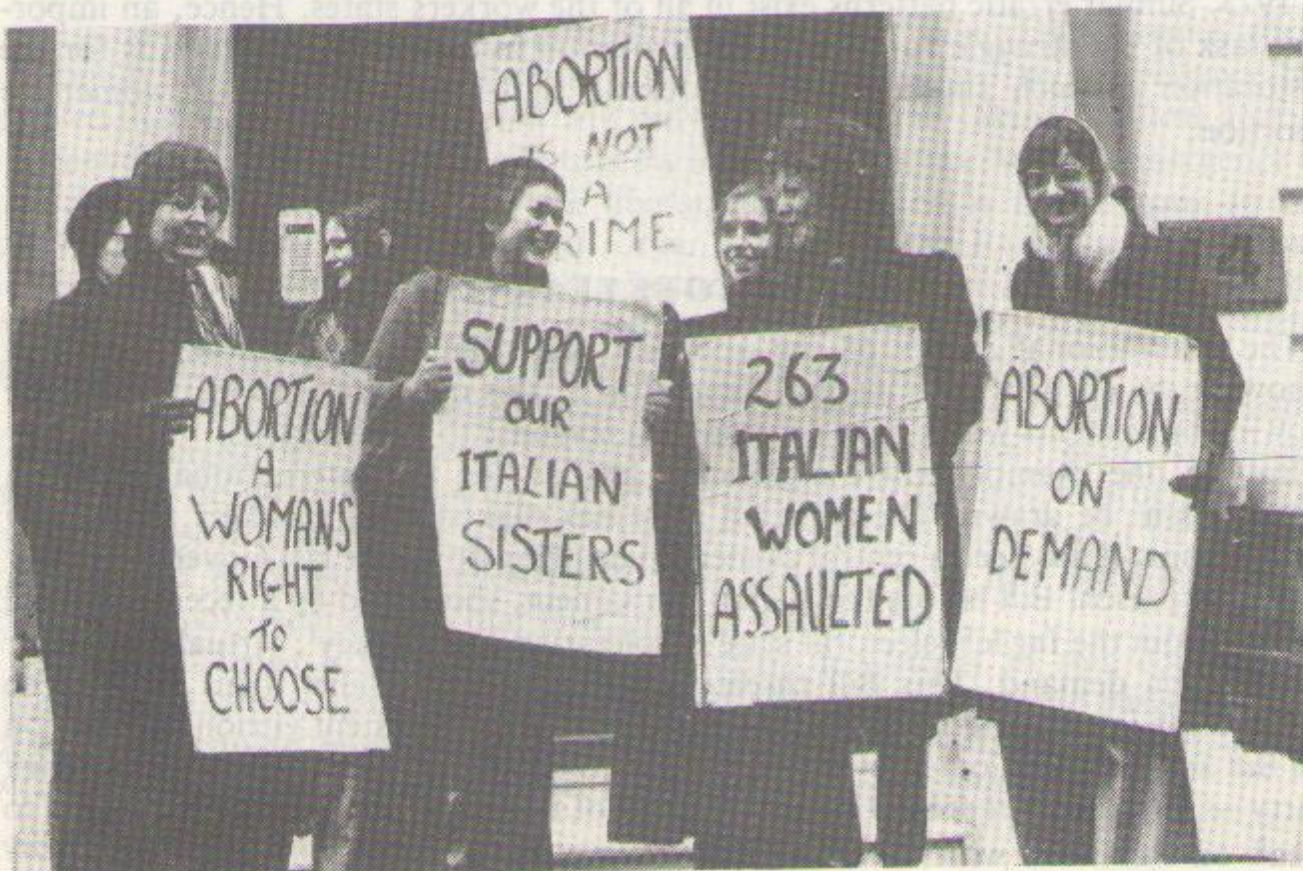


Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (Report)

Incentives to carry out this policy directed at state employees include not only consumer goods like radios, but in some cases if a government official 'persuades' 500 people to be sterilised, he or she will receive a car as a reward. In Delhi if teachers do not provide five people for sterilisation, their salaries are stopped and their chances of promotion denied. Civil servants with three children must be sterilised themselves or lose their pay and free housing.

It is not surprising under these circumstances that birth control advocates have been murdered, and that riots have developed when the forces of the state have tried to quell the growing movement against this programme. Although the sterilisation policy in India is directed against men at this stage, in a very direct way the right of women to choose whether and when to have children is affected insofar as women are being forced to restrict their family size. Besides, if it was deemed that female sterilisation was a simpler medical operation, it would be women's bodies that would be tampered with in the interests of the state.

The struggle against state interference in this decision is an international one, extending to the deformed workers states. The gains of the Russian Revolution — when abortion was made available on demand — were eradicated with the Stalinisation of the Soviet Union. It was in 1936, the year of mass terror, that Stalin imposed reactionary legislation making abortion a criminal offence, except for compelling medical and eugenic reasons. It was during this period when the family was placed on a pedestal and measures introduced to encourage motherhood. It is clear that the preservation and exaltation of the family helped to consolidate the bureaucracy in these states. The over-riding concern of the bureaucracy was, and continues to be, to protect its own interests, against those of the working class (and thus against those of women).

Nevertheless, precisely in order to preserve itself, steps were taken by the Krushchev regime in the fifties, to secure it a base of popular support. Part of these measures included more liberal laws on abortion. However, the next decade was once again marked by retrogressive moves on this front. In 1966 Rumanian women were only allowed abortions on strict medical grounds, in cases of rape or incest. Bulgarian state restrictions followed two years later, with Hungary stepping in line in 1973. Similar erratic patterns exist in all of the workers states. Hence, an important task of the struggle for a political revolution in these workers states is for the restoration of such fundamental democratic rights as the right of women to abortion.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

The international aspect of the abortion issue cannot be reduced simply to 'knowing thy enemies'. An integral dimension of this question is to learn from the growing movements which have developed in response to these attacks.

Italy is one example where significant lessons for the international abortion struggle can be drawn. The abortion issue has shaken Italian society to its very foundations. It has been a central element in bringing down the last Government last year. The present Bill before the Italian Parliament, sponsored by a recently elected Deputy from the far left electoral slate 'Proletarian Democracy', virtually calls for abortion on demand. This Bill threatens to become a similar focus for a deep polarisation in crisis-ridden Italy. The Pope has made consistent vitriolic attacks on the Bill and has been joined by a host of reactionary forces. The Italian Communist Party — supposedly representing the interests of the working class — has refused to break on this issue with the allies it is attempting to forge with the supposedly 'progressive' elements of the bourgeoisie in its strategic march towards the 'historic

compromise'. It has aligned itself with the raging anti-feminists, branding the Bill as a 'social fascist' measure.

Until Parliament makes a decision on this Bill, abortion remains a 'crime against the race', according to the fascist laws still on the statutes. The health facilities in Italy are all but crumbling under the impact of the severe economic crisis. It is not unusual for hospitals to close down with only a few hours notice to patients, who are transferred home regardless of the precarious state of their health; for supplies to be utterly depleted because hospitals have no finances through Government funds to pay for them; and for such vital facilities as lighting and heating to be stopped for similar economic reasons.

In this situation, even if the present Bill is passed by Parliament, it is clear that the legal battle is barely the first step in achieving women's abortion rights and facilities. The women's movement has set up **consultoris** in many major Italian cities in this situation. There are self-help centres which provide immediate aid on all aspects of women's health. These centres have demonstrated the need for the working class to take into their own hands the fight for adequate health facilities — to exercise control over the quality and quantity of these facilities so that they serve the interests of the entire working class. At the same time, the **consultaris** have not neglected the crucial struggle to demand the state itself provides these facilities. The present Bill first emerged from discussions amongst women active in the **consultaris** for example. It is becoming increasingly clear that to take the struggle for abortion forward in Italy, the very basis of Italian society must be challenged. Solutions to abortion cannot exist outside of a fundamental re-structuring of society, that destroys the profit-motivated dynamic of capitalist society.

It is no accident that the abortion issue has been an important stimulus for a nationally co-ordinated autonomous women's movement in Italy. Experience has proved that victories on this front will only come through taking political actions independent of the state and the bourgeois forces that support it. The emergence of the autonomous movement for the liberation of women is a testimony to the political weakness of the traditional organisations of the Italian working class, including the Communist Party. It marks the development of a movement capable of giving leadership, of confronting the backwardness of the workers movement, and taking actions necessary to win victories on the abortion front.

In summary, the international dimension of the abortion issue cannot be **limited** to an exchange of experiences in the fight for women's abortion rights, as essential as this may be. It must entail the active development of a practical programme of mutual support in the living struggle. The fight against the new threat to abortion rights posed by William Benyon's Abortion (Amendment) Bill gives the British pro-choice movement a particular international responsibility.

If this challenge is taken up by the abortion movement in this country, its international impact cannot be underestimated. Only then will a solid basis be laid to develop a genuine international mass resistance to the reactionary assault on women's choice on abortion which we are witnessing on a world scale today.

Appendix: Collection of letters on Abortion to Socialist Woman

Over the past months SOCIALIST WOMAN has received a great deal of correspondence on the abortion issue. We take the opportunity of printing this pamphlet to compile a selection of these letters which highlight important aspects of the struggle for women's right to abortion.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND NAC

Dear Socialist Woman,

The setting up of the National Abortion Campaign last year was very significant for those of us in the women's movement, because it was the first major campaign to be launched around one of the demands of the movement, i.e. free abortion on demand. Although it was the James White Bill, of course, which was the initial impetus for setting up NAC, I think that the women's movement had laid the basis for the support which NAC was able to get very rapidly, culminating in the June 21st demonstration in 1975. Many women in the movement joined NAC, and the 1975 Women's Liberation Conference voted overwhelmingly in support of NAC.

However, since then, I think it's fair to say that there have been many disagreements and criticisms of NAC, e.g. its orientation to the labour movement, the linking up of the abortion issue to other issues like cuts, etc. Many women feel the movement felt that it had lost its perspective of women's liberation, and that the work of NAC was in fact neglecting the other five demands of the women's liberation movement. They also felt the way the campaign was organised was alien to the movement, although the policy of women only on the Steering Committee (except in special circumstances) does recognise the importance of women leading the campaign.

I want to say to sisters who hold these views — these are reasons for continuing to work in NAC, and bringing to it our feminist view point. We have an important contribution to make, particularly on the wide implications of a woman's right to choose — on questions such as the control over our bodies and our sexuality. NAC provides the opportunity to raise these discussions with women who are involved in NAC but may not have had any previous experience in the women's liberation movement.

Esther Sarega.

BLACK WOMEN

Dear Socialist Woman,

Although I believe that the slogan 'Free Abortion on demand' and the need to campaign for this is a fundamental, world wide issue facing women of all countries, I think that the struggle for abortion rights for black women differs in certain respects to that for white women. Black women in our society are oppressed on two counts — as women and as blacks — and this should be understood and taken into account by those in abortion campaigns such as NAC.

The oppression that our black sisters face as women is often more intense because of their racial status. The majority of black women in this country work in menial, low paid occupations with poor trade union organisation, and even where unionisation is relatively strong, the labour movement is not renowned for adequately representing and fighting for the specific needs of black workers. So at a time like now with rising unemployment and cuts, black workers are often the first to lose their jobs, and this is **supported** by the TUC, for example, who have endorsed circulars sent out to certain hospital groups calling for whites to be given preference for job vacancies. Black women, therefore doubly oppressed, have the least chance of all black workers of maintaining the right to work.

Black women also suffer extra problems within the home and family situation. Inadequate nursery facilities for example hit particularly hard, since not only is their pay very low, but having emigrated to this country, many black women have no relatives to fulfil the need for child care which the state fails to provide. Consequently, they have either to farm out their kids to the often inadequate care of child minders, or, amongst West Indians especially, have to send their children back home until such a time as they can afford to look after them here. All the more important then is the need for black women to have control over their fertility through free contraception and abortion on demand.

An additional area of oppression for black women is their sexual exploitation, which has occurred both in their home countries under imperialist domination, and in Britain itself. Under conditions of slavery, black women were mated like cattle, and used as breeders for more cheap, or rather free, labour. More recently, programmes of contraceptive 'experiments', and forced sterilisation have continued to prevent them from having control over their bodies, as in Puerto Rico, and amongst Bolivian and Uruguayan Indians. Nearer home, the policies of Keith Joseph and his like would have women in the lower social classes (particularly blacks in other words) given unlimited abortions in order to prevent them over-running the country with their 'undesirable' offspring. And there are also many well authenticated instances of black women being forced to agree to be sterilised as the only condition whereby they would be given an abortion.

In NAC, we have tended to overlook the particular situation of black women, and whilst we might implicitly understand the need for **all** women to have the right to abortion when **they** want it, we have done little in practice to campaign for this. Within the campaign, I feel we should bring out these different aspects, and start to draw the links for example between the positions of the National Front on abortion and on immigrants, between such organisations and SPUC, and the similarities between Keith Joseph and the population control lobby. These groups not only represent a threat to women's rights, but to working class unity on all fronts at a time when only a united struggle can win any advances for women and men, whatever their colour.

GILL CROZIER

STUDENTS:

EDUCATE, ORGANISE

AND AGITATE!

Dear Socialist Woman,

As a student, I am very concerned about the development, or rather, lack of development of the abortion campaign within the student movement. Although the NUS was one of the first organisations to offer support to NAC early last year, subsequent activity around the question of abortion by the NUS leadership has been limited to inviting NAC speakers to conference, and mobilising for NAC demonstrations. And most of this work has been carried out by women in college groups or the NUS Women's Campaign.

Of course it's obvious that women should be in the forefront of such a campaign within the NUS, but the danger of isolation is equally obvious. It is fairly common to hear remarks like 'What has the abortion campaign got to do with men?' This is a reflection of the very low level of understanding of the wider questions of women's liberation amongst students, both men and women. Given the relatively free sexual and social environment of student life, there should be a certain ideological sensitivity on the questions of women's oppression which can be highlighted in a practical way — for example, around NUS policy and its implementation against sexism in entertainments. For this to happen, it is essential that the debate moves out of the women's groups and NAC groups and into the student movement as a whole.

One way of doing this would be through making a concerted effort to draw the student *unions* into *activity* around the question of abortion, linking this with the Day of Evidence on Abortion organised by NAC for January 1977. Some of the questions for which answers might be needed are:

- * are there any women doctors working in the student health centre?
- * is contraception freely and safely available?
- * what is the attitude of local GPs and gynaecologists to abortion?
- * if abortions aren't available on the NHS, does the student union give financial assistance for abortions?
- * has the question of abortion been raised on local cuts committees, trades councils, in the local Labour Party Young Socialists Group, etc.?

Campaigning for these questions about abortion provisions on a material level can lay the basis for extending the understanding and activity of students on the abortion issue.

As a mass organisation, the NUS should be able to make an important contribution to the Tribunal, and to the fight for the liberation of women. But in order to do that, women already involved in the campaign must integrate the discussions and struggles into the whole student movement.

Pam Holmes [Canterbury].

WOMEN'S SEXUALITY: NOT ONLY ABOUT PROCREATION!

Dear Socialist Woman,

As lesbians who have been actively involved in the abortion campaign, we are often asked 'What on earth has abortion got to do with lesbians?' In fact the slogan 'A woman's right to choose' is not just about the choice of having or not having children. It also raises the question of 'choice' about our own sexuality. The very notion of contraception and abortion represents a rejection of the idea that sexuality is for procreation only, particularly female sexuality. It is because the role of women as bearers and rearers of children is so important in a capitalist society that the idea of heterosexuality as the 'norm' is upheld, in the law and through ideology. Thus it is no coincidence that both abortion and homosexuality are the subject of attacks from various right wing layers in society, since they both represent a challenge to the traditional way in which women are regarded.

Let's face it, the capitalist system needs women to be first and foremost a wife and mother, socially and economically dependent on a man. Then we will look after the male worker, produce children (more workers for the future) and pass on the ideas about women's role which we've accepted and which are necessary for maintaining the status quo — and all for free! And when it is necessary for us to go out to work, the fact that we have children and there are no nursery facilities justifies low pay, lack of opportunities and easy shunting us back into the home when our labour is no longer needed. The family in our society means the control of women's lives by the state and by men.

So, in the same way as when we demand abortions, living as and defending lesbians is a rejection of this family role. We are demanding control over our bodies, our fertility, and our sexuality. As a result, we are demanding control over our lives! That's why it is important for everyone involved in the fight for abortion to also support the struggle of lesbians against their oppression, and for lesbians in abortion campaigns to explain this relationship. After all, the solution to both these questions can only be won by the achievement of a socialist society within which women and men are freed from the confines of the traditional family.

Jane Eane

WOMEN'S SEXUALITY:

NOT ONLY ABOUT

ESPRESSO

AND AGITATE

Dear Socialist Women,

As lesbians who have been active in the abortion campaign, we are often asked 'What on earth has abortion got to do with feminism? In fact the slogan 'A woman's right to choose' is not just about the choice of having or not having children. It also raises the question of choice about our own sexuality. The very notion of contraception and abortion represents a rejection of the idea that sexuality is for procreation only, particularly female sexuality. It is because the role of women as bearers and rearers of children is so important in a capitalist society that the idea of heterosexuality as the norm is upheld. In the law and through ideology there is no coincidence that both abortion and homosexuality are the subject of stigma from various quarters in society since they both represent a challenge to the traditional way in which women are regarded. In fact if the capitalist system needs women to be first and foremost a wife and mother, society and economically dependent on a man (then we will look after the male worker, produce children (more workers for the future) and pass on the ideas about women's lives which we consider and which are necessary for maintaining the status quo — and all for free! And when it is necessary for us to go out to work, the fact that we have children and there are no nursery facilities justifies low pay, lack of opportunities and easy shunting us back into the home when our labour is no longer needed. The family in our society means the control of women's lives by the state and by men. All inputs to tomorrow's labour are so, in the same way as when we demand abortions, living as and demanding lesbians is a rejection of this family role. We are demanding control over our bodies, our fertility and our sexuality. As a result, we are demanding control over our lives. That's why it is important for everyone involved in the fight for abortion to also support the struggle of lesbians against their oppression, and for lesbians in similar positions to explain this relationship. After all, the solution to both these questions can only be found in the achievement of a socialist society, within which women and men are freed from the control of the traditional family, freed

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**Socialist
Woman**

pamphlet