

SOCIALIST WOMAN

NATIONAL PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WOMAN GROUPS

October—November 1971



WOMEN IN IRELAND · THE W.N.C.C.-an assessment ·

Brennons Strike-"UNION IN OR BOSS OUT."

NORTH AMERICA-The Women's Movement.

EASTERN EUROPE-How equal is equal ?

HISTORY-free maintenance for school children.

EDITORIAL

The last Editorial welcomed the opening of a political discussion within the Women's National Coordinating Committee. It now remains to be seen whether the WNCC Conference which is taking place in Skegness this month can develop this discussion in a fruitful manner into an ongoing debate which can contribute to developing perspectives for this embryo women's movement.

This discussion is naturally enough concentrating on very basic questions relating to the nature of the women's movement, what role it can play, what we see as its function, and how we think it ought to be structured. This editorial makes no attempt to answer these questions; hopefully the discussion at the Conference will give us all a better basis on which to discuss these problems. However we do seek to make a contribution to this discussion by briefly reviewing the past eighteen months, in order that we use our own experience as the basis of any analysis and perspectives which may develop.

To date, while there has not been much discussion, and less agreement, on the role and function of the movement, there has been an attempt to structure it through the loose federal structure of the WNCC. In tracing the history of this body we may perhaps draw some conclusions about the structure of the movement, and also look at how this reflects notions about its role and function.

BIRTH OF THE W.N.C.C.

The WNCC dates from the Ruskin Conference. On 27th February—1st March 1970 some women already involved in women's liberation groups called a conference at Ruskin College in Oxford. To the surprise of all, especially the organisers, between five and six hundred women, many of them already involved in local groups, arrived. It was made perfectly clear over this weekend that those present represented a wide variety of views and opinions on women's oppression and the women's movement. However, it was also obvious that women's liberation had been growing quietly and had potential for greater growth and also for turning this growth outward from discussion groups to active groups within an active women's liberation movement. The problem was (and still is) how to resolve this problem of the conflict between the need for unity in action and the divergence of opinion over even such things as whether the function of a group was to service the individual women and so could quite happily remain a discussion group, or whether action was a necessary complement to discussion, and so in fact the function of the group was to engage in outgoing activities and try and involve wider layers. In order to resolve this dilemma, a compromise was arrived at in the form of the WNCC, a loose federal structure whose function was as set out in the resolution passed at the end of the Ruskin weekend: to coordinate actions, ideas and news from all the women's groups. The coordinating meeting held at Sheffield on the 27th June 1970 adopted the Terms of Reference which have provided the basis for the functioning of the WNCC to the present.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

It would be worthwhile restating these Terms of Reference in order to compare the aims and objectives of those early WNCC's with the achievements of later WNCC's. * The terms of reference read as follows:

1. Open to all women's groups and organisations with two representatives each.
2. Independence and equality of all groups is recognised.
3. C.C. shall take necessary steps to disseminate information to promote better understanding of the viewpoints of various groups and their activities and facilitate towards unity and broadening of the women's liberation struggle.

4. Upholding the principle of democracy and equality, the C.C. shall take all decisions by mutual agreement.

5. No decision shall be binding on any group which does not agree with it.

6. To promote unity, step by step, the C.C. will help not only mutual discussion regarding the women's problems and role in society, but will positively encourage united action among them on issues about which there is agreement.

7. If a number of groups, by mutual agreement, decide to take united action on any issue, such a decision is not binding on others who are not a party to it.

8. Real coordination, to be effective, should not only be in words but also in deeds if a united women's liberation movement is to be achieved.

9. To promote the aims of women's liberation and to achieve better understanding of women's problems, the C.C. shall periodically organise national conferences and help local conferences of women.

ADDED—London, November 8th, 1970

1. No joint coordinating meeting can be called without prior consultations and agreement by all participant groups on time, place and form of meeting.

2. Publicity for any public meeting must state clearly the names of the groups organising the meeting.

3. Agreement must be reached between the groups on the question of inviting the press to meetings.

4. No reference to other groups, or to alleged "divisions" within Women's Liberation must be made in any interview with the press. Women should talk about their own work or about the position of women. We hammer out our differences between ourselves, not within the columns of the bourgeois press.

Any examination of these Terms of Reference requires two considerations: whether the aims embodied in these points have been achieved by the WNCC, or rather to what extent they have been achieved; and can any failure be accounted for in terms of the subjective factor, i.e. those people and groups which compose the WNCC, or the objective factor, i.e. the inadequacies of the Terms themselves.



Photo: Courtesy of Serena Wodham

THE RUSKIN CONFERENCE

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?

What then has the WNCC done? The answer is very brief: it has organised a national mobilisation on March 6th, it is at present organising a national conference, and it has with admirable regularity organised a two-monthly WNCC meeting. This leaves the question—what has not been done that could, within the Terms of Reference, have been done? Point 3 in the Terms of Reference, on the subject of disseminating

* *It is impossible to talk of the WNCC as something stable and permanent as it simply consists of a regular meeting to which each affiliated group is entitled to send two voting delegates. These delegates compose the WNCC.*

information, promoting better understanding between groups, and facilitating unity and broadening of the struggle, has been done, to the extent to which it has been done at all, by the Leamington Spa Information Centre. This is not a criticism of the Leamington group, but rather of the WNCC which defaults on one of its basic responsibilities so that it becomes necessary for one particular group to fill the breach. The WNCC does not even support the Information Centre (this is done by individual groups) and in fact some groups seem hostile to the existence of such a centre (without proposing an alternative).

Point 6 stresses the need for united action as a means to promote unity in a meaningful sense, but so far this has meant one national demonstration. Any attempts to introduce united actions meets the objection that all decisions have to be taken by mutual consent, i.e. have to be unanimous. Therefore, though groups are free to combine for such a purpose, it cannot be done at or through the WNCC, and so another meeting of interested groups would be necessary. Naturally enough this tends to obstruct such a move. Also, the fact that the WNCC is not prepared to sponsor any activity acts as a deterrent in the eyes of many groups. This makes nonsense of point 8, which points out the inadequacy of limiting coordination to "words" and stresses the necessity of coordination in deeds "if a united women's liberation movement is to be achieved". The failure to achieve unity in action explains why such a united movement has not been achieved. It also correctly points the way in which such a movement can be achieved.

The objective of point 9 has been taken more seriously, and a lot of effort has been put into organising the coming national conference, but it must be remembered that this conference should have taken place six months ago. The fact that it did not was a reflection of the inefficiency of the WNCC. Also, this point calls for support for local conferences. To date this has meant verbal support but little or no practical assistance, and so far the WNCC has not sponsored any such conferences, has taken no financial responsibility, and has made no effort to involve any number of groups in such an activity.

One result of this was seen at the last WNCC in Oxford where two proposals were put forward. These proposals, that the word "coordination" should be left out of the name, and that the sole function of the WNCC should be to organise an annual conference, and to this end should meet twice yearly, were simply logical adaptations to the real situation which exists. The "coordinating committee" does not in fact coordinate anything, and the only function which it performs which could not or has not been taken over by a local group is that of organising an annual conference.

Another reflection of the failure of the coordinating committee to fulfil its function is the fact that of 150-200 groups throughout the country, only about 40 are officially affiliated to the WNCC. The obvious reason for this is that the WNCC has no relevance for these groups, because it neither initiates activities, nor coordinates other groups' activities, nor acts as a valuable source of information. If the WNCC wants to attract these groups, it cannot do it simply through a massive recruiting drive; it must make itself relevant to these groups.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE FOUR CAMPAIGNS?

This leads on to perhaps the most important question of all. Can the blame for ineffectiveness of the WNCC be laid at the door of those participating in it, or does it reflect inadequacies in the Terms of Reference? Basically, the Terms of Reference are an attempt to square the circle; they recognise the need for united action and for transforming a collection of groups into a movement, but they allow so many loopholes in order not to infringe on the rights of individual groups that the whole thing becomes meaningless. Also one has to take into account the fact that these loopholes have been stressed in WNCC meetings out of all proportion to the positive factors included in the terms; in other words, groups or individuals have used these safeguards as excuses for inactivity. This is not to say that the WNCC should not safeguard the rights and interests of individual groups, but it must not allow these

considerations to paralyse the development towards an active movement. What is needed is a federal structure, loose enough to allow a variety of groups complete freedom of action and ideas, but organised enough to draw the various groups together into common activity. Whatever became of the four national campaigns? Surely there was agreement enough on these, since they managed to get adopted as the four basic demands of the movement, to structure some basic campaigns around them. If the WNCC does not want to put itself into the position of dictating to the groups affiliated to it, what is wrong with it taking an initiative on the basis of a majority decision and recommending to affiliated groups that they join in the action, or asking them to come in on it.

FURTHER FRAGMENTATION OR UNITY IN ACTION?

However this question is tackled, the fact remains that it is probably the most important task of the WNCC at the present time. Many groups which once took part in the WNCC do so no longer, and the longer the period of inactivity continues, the stronger this trend will grow, and instead of moving towards a united active movement, we will move towards a further fragmentation, and further away from unity or action. One of the aims of the movement has always been to break down the isolation of women into small single units as expressed through the family. Could not we start by trying to break down the isolation which exists within the movement itself? Until we can achieve this, we can achieve very little else.

EDITORIAL BOARD, PRODUCTION & DISTRIBUTION:

Margaret Coulson, Linda Fryd, Joanna Griffiths, Leonora Lloyd, Pat Masters, Linda Smith, Felicity Trodd, Judith White.

LAYOUT: Jane Cullen

Signed articles do not necessarily represent editorial opinion.

Printed by F.I. Litho Ltd (T.U.), 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1
01-837 9987

CONTENTS

Editorial—the WNCC	2
Industrial School	4
News in Brief	4
Women on Strike—Brannans	5
The North American Women's Movement	7
U.S. Women Workers Defy Wage Freeze	9
Women in Ireland	10
Letters	12
Writing Women Back—SDF & the Free Maintenance Campaign	13
Reviews	14
Women in Eastern Europe	15
Socialist Woman Groups	19

INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

A weekend school on Women & Industry was held in London on 11th-12th September. It was organised for the WNCC by Socialist Woman, who are the convenors for the WNCC's "Industrial campaign", centred around the WNCC's demand for "Equal pay and job opportunities."

The "Industrial Campaign" school provided a good indication of the extent of the campaign and the attitude of the Women's Liberation movement towards it. Judging by the few practical experiences which we could draw upon, it became very apparent that the campaign has not yet been launched nationally. The poor attendance of W.L. groups at this school revealed the lack of interest which exists in the movement for the "Equal Pay and Job Opportunity" demand. On the whole however the school was a useful starting-point in initiating a discussion of the theory and practice of an industrial campaign.

The two main discussions were based on 'Why an Industrial Campaign' and the Strategy of an Industrial Campaign. Linda Smith's introduction to the first session centred around the objective situation of women workers and the immediate needs of the W.L.N. Certain factors such as a large majority of women working part-time in small units, and the hostile attitudes of trade unions, have contributed to women workers being the least organised section of the labour force with the consequences of low pay and bad conditions. At the same time, women workers still have a role to play in the home. The Industrial Campaign can provide a link between the contradictions of home and work. If the movement focused on this campaign, it would also focus on the central con-

tradictions of society which cause working-class women to be doubly oppressed. The general discussion centred round the question of women's right to work and a living wage and the implications of this in the present economic system. The sort of unions which women should join was discussed with general agreement on women participating in women's sections of established unions.

In 'Strategy for an Industrial Campaign' it became very clear that our involvement in this field has so far mainly been limited to the Cleaners' Campaigns and some work in the Post Office Strike. However, even this limited experience can give us a useful guide as to how to proceed with future action in this field. The local situation of any group of women workers has to be related to the current political and economic situation. Long-term and short-term aims need to be carefully thought out. There are immediate issues such as unemployment, equal pay and unionization around which action can be centred in launching a national campaign.

Other sessions such as the one on the Industrial Relations Bill and the Equal Pay Act, gave a great deal of factual information on which we can base our future theory and practice in industrial work.

Socialist Woman is hoping to produce the papers presented at the school as a "Socialist Woman Special".

-A member of Leicester Socialist Woman Group

NEWS IN BRIEF

MONTEVIDEO: On 30 July, 38 women members of the Tupamaros—the popular Uruguayan left-wing guerrilla organisation—escaped from jail through a tunnel into the city sewers. The mass escape left the maximum security prison almost empty; rumours circulated that the Minister of the Interior intended to resign. Guards discovered the escape when they changed shifts at dawn and found bunks padded with sheets and blankets. The escape was made despite security measures taken after an escape by 13 women guerrillas last year. At that time, the number of guards was doubled and floors were reinforced to prevent tunnelling.

* * * * *

DONEGAL: Fourteen girl workers at the Starlite Handbag factory at Fal Carrach are holding a sit-in and sleep-in, in protest against the closure of the factory. The factory, which was taken over by Starlite less than a year ago, has been declared bankrupt; the directors have left the area and some of the machinery was removed in the early hours of the morning. Meetings with officials have so far proved fruitless.

* * * * *

BURGOS: On 28 July, Franco's military prosecutor demanded 30 years jail for Basque nationalist Maria Teresa Arevalo, 21, charged with taking part in an armed robbery of £24,000 last year. Maria, who is a member of the Basque nationalist movement, the ETA, said she intended to "return the money to the people"—including the families of workers killed by police in clashes in Granada last July.

* * * * *

LONDON: Commander Mrs. Shirley Becke, head of the women's section in the Metropolitan Police, champions equality of opportunity for her "girls". "My girls do everything that is police duty," she says. The "girls" are in the Special Branch; two handle "drug" dogs; others ride police horses on patrol in London streets. Sisterhood is powerful for who?

* * * * *

LONDON: An unemployed nurse in North London was recently accused of trying to obtain £5 from a plain-clothes police sergeant in Soho. In court the nurse claimed she was not a prostitute and had no intention of sleeping with the police sergeant. The magistrate's comment: "I hope this will be your only lapse of this kind. This is a low-down swindle and if you had not picked on a police officer you might have defrauded a man with a pack of lies." H'mm.

WOMEN ON STRIKE

BRANNANS CLEATOR MOOR.

Women Smash Firm To Save Union

The following article arose out of a discussion between members of Lancaster Socialist Woman Group and the Brannans strikers during a picket.

In times when employers find it hard to keep their profit levels up, they try to economise by widespread redundancies of their workers. Traditional economists and politicians might expect that as a result of high unemployment, workers will be more afraid of losing their jobs and more afraid to go on strike. Employers think they can get away with more, disregard Union rights and do just as they please. It comes as rather a surprise to them if, as in the present time, the militancy and determination of workers increases when their rights as individuals and Trade Unionists are attacked. It is something the ruling class doesn't expect.

In a rather remote part of England, Cleator Moor in Cumberland, in a small thermometer factory, Brannans Ltd., just this has been happening. Because there are not many employers in this small town, they have been used to getting their own way, which includes allowing extremely bad conditions of work to exist. About ten years ago the workers at Brannans, most of whom are women, got unionised into the AEUW in order to get some control over these conditions. They are now involved in a struggle which means life or death for the Union and it is necessary to see what the workers there have to challenge in order to see why this fight is so important.

MERCURY POISONING

The manufacture of thermometers obviously involves some workers coming into close contact with mercury. But until recently these people had no protective clothing in their work so that the mercury would frequently run over their hands. This continued until one of the bosses got mercury poisoning; he couldn't write, he lost his teeth, his hair fell out and he was altogether a nervous wreck. In the meantime two workers have died from this illness. Since then, overalls and rubber gloves have been issued, but the glass cuts the rubber so the danger still exists. In addition there is the danger of mercury absorption; above a certain temperature mercury evaporates and can therefore be absorbed. The main symptom is a skin rash which several workers have suffered. It is criminal that such conditions still exist (there were 39 new cases of industrial illness reported in June 1971, most caused by metal poisoning—DEP Gazette, August 1971). At Brannans the Union has recently taken up the cases of the affected workers, and it is the only way in which such conditions can be fought. It is likely to win, and then what will it cost Mr. Brannan in money, time and reputation? It is much easier for him to try to smash the Union.

The present crisis began in March this year when Mr. Brannan proposed to put certain selected workers on monthly staff conditions while they would still be working with the tools of the trade, alongside their fellow workers. Some of these people were quite new, one was the son of a foreman, another a shop steward who hadn't even informed the membership! It was obviously favouritism by the management for its own ends and the Union warned Brannan that workers in the factory would object. But a few months later he went ahead with the scheme. Immediately the offers of promotion had been accepted by the individuals concerned, the Union discussed the matter again with Brannan and asked for proposals to resolve the problem. By 2nd June no proposals had been received, but a letter of intent was issued; so on 3rd June the workers refused to go into work. Brannan refused to discuss further with the Union, and even rejected an approach by the DEP Conciliation Officer. In view of the threat the Union posed and his disregard for the Union, this refusal is not very surprising.

STATE SUPPORT FOR BOSSES

Having thus taken up his position in direct opposition to the interests of the workers in his factory, Brannan then used every means available to him to strengthen it, which are many for someone with his connections and influence:—

1. He immediately began to advertise for new staff—he found about 70, 20 blacklegs, and new clerical and administrative staff of all levels, none of them of course in the Union.
2. He sent letters to the people on strike saying that their employment would be considered terminated if they did not return to work by the 21st June. He offered his support to those who would return to work and dissociate themselves from the Union. About 26 members returned to work, taken through the picket by staff and Brannan's cars.
3. He contacted Social Security to say that the factory was working normally and there was no strike on. The strikers could not then claim social security. When some of the male workers with families were driven through lack of money to seek employment at another factory, Zeals, Brannan told Zeals that these men were on strike and therefore could not be employed.
4. The police were called for non-existent "troubles"; they now usher the scabs and blacklegs in their cars out into the main road traffic, holding up the traffic on the main road to do so. They say they are unbiassed!
5. Brannan has got his side of the story published in the local newspapers but nothing has appeared from the strikers. What an advantage it is to have influence.
6. When the picketers had successfully prevented Union wagons entering the factory, Brannan was able to find employers in other firms to do his delivering. He used the facilities of the garage opposite his factory—in fact, any facilities of local firms where the workers did not prevent this happening.

As an employer in a society which is organised for the benefit of employers, Brannan was able to call on the support of different members of the ruling class and those parts of the State system such as the police and social security, all of which work in favour of the ruling class.

WOMEN LEAD 24-HOUR PICKETS

So the workers have been having a particularly hard job fighting against such an employer as Brannan, but during the seventeen weeks (at the time of writing) of their strike, their determination and militancy, mostly led and organised by women, is a tremendous example to Trade Unionists. They have had at least five strike meetings during this time, but their organisation is mainly centred around the picket. They began by picketing during the day; then when they realised that wagons who were turned away during the day were returning at night, the picket was extended to operate all 24 hours of the day. Of course, management can always find scab firms to deliver goods when a Union driver refuses, so the strikers' work had to be extended to blacking goods at their

place of production. A man who worked in the stores had a list of firms who Brannan dealt with, so each firm was systematically followed up and where possible goods were prevented from going to Brannans. The effect of this is encouraging to the picketers as fewer wagons arrive. In going round firms that deal with Brannans, the strikers have met other women like themselves who are militant and interested in Trade Unionism.

Their pickets are really effective—they show the scabs and blacklegs exactly what they think of them by challenging them in their lunch-

breaks and making it difficult for them to enter and leave the factory for work. A big crowd meets the scabs outside the factory every day with banners and slogans of solidarity. Despite the blackout on publicity that Mr. Brannan had made sure of for the strikers, they have received a lot of support from local workers and townspeople. Firstly, the local paper mill and another firm, Cellafield, supported them immediately—as soon as the dispute broke out, workers from these places joined the picket whenever they could. In addition many of the local people and some of the local councillors support them. They recently organised a mass public meeting on 15th September; a lot of local Trade Unionists came and were addressed by the Trade Union official and the local M.P. The M.P. offered to mediate in the dispute and this proposal was accepted by the meeting. But the offer was refused by Mr. Brannan. In this way the strikers received almost their first publicity; a seemingly reasonable means to ending the dispute was agreed to by the strikers and rejected by the management. This was reported in the local newspaper and gained support and publicity for the workers.

In addition to reaching out to Trade Unionists who could take industrial action to help them, the Brannans workers have contacted other workers who have been involved in struggles over Trade Union principles. At the Blackpool Trade Union Congress, delegates from Brannans met people from Storeys factory in Lancaster where a convenor was sacked for following Trade Union procedure over a demarcation dispute. Storeys strikers went to Cleator Moor picket and Brannans strikers came to meetings of Storeys strikers, thus making direct contacts and establishing concrete solidarity between the two groups of workers. Brannans strikers also welcomed members of Lancaster Socialist Woman Group who went to join their picket for a day and who were able to offer some means of publicity and gains of support from other members of their organisation.

"ALL BACK OR NONE"

The Brannans workers have made their case clear: "all back or none" is what they say. Many of the workers now employed in Brannans factory are non-Union people. If the strike is lost, Trade Unionism in Brannans is almost certainly smashed or very severely weakened; people employed there will have no effective way of controlling their conditions. But the Brannans strikers do not want to win in order to get their jobs back, since a) they would hate to return to work with the scabs, and b) they would not accept less than a 100% return to work and Brannan has already said he will not accept everyone back on any terms. So the fight

now is to force Brannans to close down, and all their organisation and work is directed to this end.

While the position of women at work is usually disadvantageous to them, i.e. they form a "reserve" labour force that can be drawn in and out of employment as required, and consequently their rates of pay and conditions etc. are poor, the example of Brannans women shows that in some respects it can be an advantage. Faced with an employer who even cheats them of their rights to claim social security, because they are not totally dependent on their working incomes, the pressure on them to give up the fight is less. The Brannans dispute shows once again that women can not only be unionised, but can give a lead in fighting for working class rights. If Brannans closed down, this would represent a victory for workers in Cleator Moor, for other employers will not dare to challenge the right to organise. Where a family income is totally dependent on a man's wage, it is very hard for him to fight to close down his firm. The women at Cleator Moor can achieve what is necessary—as a local councillor said, "We have to clear this man out of the area and replace him with a more reasonable employer." Brannans strike is a step towards the day when workers, men and women, will clear out all the employers and build a society organised for people instead of profit.

Nina Thomas

TEXT OF THE BRANNAN STRIKERS' APPEAL LEAFLET

Workers at Brannan Ltd., Cleator Moor, Cumberland, the majority of whom are women, have been on strike for 14 weeks over a dispute caused by management ...

On Thursday 3rd June, AUEW members withdrew their labour at the factory after management had selected certain workers to go on monthly staff conditions while continuing to work with the tools of the trade alongside other workers doing the same work who had not received the same consideration. Management have refused to discuss with Union representatives the position of workers who are put on staff. They have also ignored letters from our Union Official requesting meetings, to try to end this dispute.

We are all of the opinion that this dispute is ultimately an attempt to end union negotiating rights in Brannans, and it took a long time to get the union established in this factory ...

About eighteen months ago some of our members were diagnosed with mercury poisoning and the Factory Inspectorate gave Brannans three months to bring the factory up to a set standard of safety. The Union are fighting these cases. Both management and strikers recognise that without an active union these sorts of things will continue to exist. We are determined to force the management to capitulate.

We picket the factory from morning until night thus preventing about 99% of the vehicles entering the factory, otherwise only "blacklegs" and "scab labour" get in. In addition, we have contacted the Unions of firms that deliver to and from Brannans in order to get goods blacked. Strikers have been prevented from claiming social security, unless they declare themselves unemployed, by management's telling social security that production in the factory is normal. Therefore, our only source of income is strike pay. The press have refused to publicise our case, only that of Mr. Brannan.

... The strike has been long and there is no sign of an end to it. So we desperately need people to know what's going on, to help with publicising it, and offering their solidarity with us. Please send messages of moral and financial support to:

Sister Muriel Hillon, Shop Steward, 34 Greystone Place,
Cleator Moor, Cumberland.



Where unemployment is high, employers are ready to take advantage of lack of organisation among women workers to get away with bad conditions, as in this Yorkshire mill.



THE U.S. WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

[As pointed out in the article, the diversity of the North American movement makes a concise analysis an impossibility. Thus, I have taken random examples to give the British sisters the "feel" of the movement as I have experienced it.—H.W.]

The Civil Rights Movement which swept the United States in the early 1960s radicalised broad layers of students who, for the first time, began to raise basic questions about the nature of American society. For the women involved, this radicalisation meant questioning not only their status in society, but also their status within the movement. Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique* was published about this time, and although it did not provide a revolutionary analysis of women's oppression, it was the first widely circulated book to deal with the question.

During these years, the atmosphere in the movement was not exactly conducive to analysing the social condition of women. As Mariene Dixon points out: "Women had learned from 1964 to 1968 that to fight for or even to sympathise with women's liberation was a terrible price: what little credit a woman might have earned in one of the left organisations was wiped out in a storm of contempt and personal abuse."¹ For example, when women at the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) convention in 1964 presented a paper entitled "The Position of Women in SNCC", Stokely Carmichael replied: "The only position for a woman in SNCC is prone." The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) conference held the following year was even more abusive: discussions on women were hampered by catcalls and derogatory comments such as "All she needs is a good screw." By 1967, the situation in SDS remained essentially unaltered although women's oppression was now seen as a valid concern, at least rhetorically. In *New Left Notes* that year, an article was published petitioning movement men "to democratise SDS, to research and publish articles on the oppression of women, and to cede leadership to women."² The final sentence of the article reflects the ambivalence and the uncertainty of the women: "Fight male chauvinism—we love you."

By 1968, in spite of (and perhaps as a result of) the attitude displayed by most left organisations, autonomous women's liberation groups had

developed in many American cities. At the SDS National Council Meeting in 1968, two women submitted a paper entitled "Towards a Female Liberation Movement" in which they argued that movement women were "house niggers" who used the rhetoric of women's liberation only to advance themselves within the male-dominated organisations. They concluded that: "The only thing movement women can do is to leave SDS and help build an independent women's movement."³

CANADA

Within the Canadian left, the anti-women's liberation sentiment never reached the heights attained in the U.S., but the male chauvinism was just as potent. Although lip service was paid to the ideas of women's liberation, until 1968 no real attempts were made to organise women around their own oppression. One of the first women's groups to do so was started in Vancouver that same year. It shared the general characteristics displayed by most early North American groups. Firstly, its emergence coincided with an extensive politicisation on the campus. Secondly, the group originated as a caucus within the existing radical campus organization. To this organization, it presented a series of demands, including a demand for equal representation on the steering committee (reminiscent of the 1967 plea for democratization in SDS?). During this period activities were primarily directed towards educating the student population, but several confrontations with the University officials took place. At Simon Fraser University, for example, the occupation of the Administration's Board Room turned into a temporary day-care centre for the children of campus workers and students. The Administration would not get back its Board Room until women had a centre for their children! Ultimately this action resulted in the establishment of the first co-operatively run child care centre on Canadian campuses.

In November of 1968 the entire Administration building was occupied by students and following the arrest of 150 students, attempts were made to move off campus to broaden the base of support

for the student cause. For a variety of reasons, women students were able to establish a base (admittedly not a stable one) in the community much more easily than men. In most campuses where radicalization had occurred, this same kind of turn was made. At the beginning of 1969, Women's Caucus as the Vancouver group was called, accepted the offer of an office in the Labour Temple (the headquarters of the Vancouver Trade and Labour Council). With this move off campus, the women began to experience many of the same problems which every women's group is grappling with today. The stabilization and growth of the movement compelled women (often for the first time) to develop and elaborate political strategies. Not surprisingly, different approaches emerged and the diversity of the movement today reflects this.

GROUPS

In North America the movement is composed of a variety of groups including gay women, revolutionary socialists, radical feminists, left liberals, etc. Organizationally, groups may be based either on a specific project or may be formed around a common programme, in which case projects initiated will have a more short-term character. Prominent examples of the former type of organization include WITCH (Women's International Conspiracy from Hell), a group well known for its guerrilla-theatre-type actions such as the placing of a hex on the New York Stock Exchange, causing a significant downward movement in share prices; the New York Food Conspiracy, established earlier this year to provide inexpensive nutritional food for poor people; and the Toronto Women's Clinic, initiated so that women were (and are) able to receive accurate and skilful medical advice and treatment. It is important to note that most groups centred around projects share the same outlook, but that political considerations are not paramount in determining membership. Examples taken from the Vancouver situation of the latter type of group include Women's Liberation Alliance (initiated by the Canadian section of the Fourth International upon their expulsion from the Women's Caucus) and Women's Liberation (a revolutionary socialist group which criticized and then left Women's Caucus). It is this type of group which provides the most relevant lessons for revolutionaries and thus I shall examine more closely the problems which such groups have confronted.

HOW TO BUILD A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

One of the primary problems facing these groups is how to build a revolutionary movement. While some revolutionary tendencies have argued that a mass movement can be built around single-issue campaigns, others have criticized this approach for being "piecemeal" and "dishonest" in the sense that political slogans, etc are reduced (often opportunistically) to the lowest common denominator and thus, while broader layers of women may be attracted, they definitely will not be educated in revolutionary political ideals. That is, emphasis on a single aspect of women's oppression, such as abortion, has tended to restrict the scope of the group's perspective and consequently the slogans and analyses have assumed reformist dimensions. Yet other women, such as the Leila Khaled Collective in Toronto, have re-assessed the whole ideal of attempting to recruit great numbers and published a paper last year arguing "a smaller group with a high level of political consciousness and collectivity is the correct way to do revolutionary organizing. By exemplary action and public propaganda this group can more effectively raise the political consciousness of the people".⁴

Although sectarian attitudes have been a characteristic of the North American women's movement, there is also a strong tendency which feels that it is politically healthy for women to be involved at different levels even if their early activity is no more than writing letters to Congressmen and Members of Parliament. Thus, it is reasoned, it is not the concern of revolutionaries to dispute the methods utilized by other groups, but it is their task to provide a strong socialist leadership to direct the "letter writers" once they discover that the "legitimate" government bodies are not responsive to women's needs.

WOMEN & THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT

Another major question with which the North American movement has had to deal has been the question of autonomous women's organizations versus organizing women from within a larger revolution-

nary groups. The trend in North America is clearly away from membership within male-dominated groups. Supporters of this trend argue that women should at present be primarily concerned with working with other women and that due to a whole series of reasons (male-chauvinism, competitiveness, etc) the conditions within revolutionary organization are least conducive to organizing women. Women have too spent too much time fighting these forces in the past—to the extent that they themselves have suffered politically. Of course, it is important not to forget about the struggle against the chauvinism in the left: however, these women would argue, this is best done from a position of strength, not one of weakness. Therefore, a strong women's group working on a project with other revolutionary organizations would deal with the chauvinism which occurred in day-to-day activities as a group. Of course this does not deal with the contradictions between organizing with a view to build a political party (Leninist) to give leadership to the revolution and organizing on the basis of sex. Most women have responded to this dilemma by providing healthy criticisms of marxist theory on the "women question" and it is true that to date, neither marxist methodology nor theoretical debate has offered a great deal to understanding the complexities of women's oppression. Certainly a basis was established in Engel's work on the family, but an extension and even a revision of certain of his ideas are due.

PROBLEMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

There are a myriad of other problems which groups across the continent are experiencing. In the States, the racism of the white movement is continually under critical discussion. In Canada, the chauvinism of the English-speaking women vis-a-vis the Quebecoise has yet to be dealt with in a national way. In addition, the racism displayed against native sisters has not been settled. One of the most crucial tensions at present, however, exists between the American and Canadian movements, reflecting the economic relationship between the two countries: Canada is virtually an economic and cultural satellite of the U.S. Often the American sisters have been unable to break out of the national chauvinism generated by U.S. imperialism, and have been insensitive to the specifics of the Canadian situation.

The most exciting aspect of the North American movement has been the tremendous ingenuity developed by each group to reach women. One example is the New York group who, posing as secretaries, rode up and down in the lifts of a huge office building during a day and enumerated common grievances of office workers. For instance, they commented in rather loud voices that they were refusing to address the boss by his surname as long as he referred to them as "love," "girl", etc. Sympathetic office workers in the lift immediately entered these discussions and thus contacts for future organizing were made!

Another exciting and integral aspect of the movement has been the high degree of sisterhood which has developed. It has been difficult to develop and one of the major mechanisms utilized to reduce traditional competitive feelings between women has been an extensive use of criticism—self-criticism sessions. The development of negative leadership in the women's movement (that is, leadership styles and skills which have been learned in the male-dominated movement) has therefore been under close scrutiny. For the first time, women are proud to be women and enjoy being with each other. A wide variety of groups have been established where women can not only have fun together, but where they can acquire skills denied them: in California for example, the Uppity Women's Motorcycle Groups took apart an entire motorcycle and learned together how to rebuild it. Women participants in karate and judo classes are still other examples.

The development of an alternate life style has played a prominent role in the movement. This has often involved the establishment of living collectives where women live together, using their house as a place for other women, in nuclear family situations, to visit, to read in the women's libraries, or to bring their children to play with the children in the house. Meetings, films, and social gatherings are conveniently based in the living collective. It is important to note, however, that these collectives are not posed as final answers to the problems which women face, but simply as bases from which women can move to organize more effectively. Many collectives have been prolem-ridden (not surprising, considering the socialisation to be overcome) and have collapsed. However an ideal collective certainly has a great

deal to offer the women involved.

In summary, the problems confronting the women's liberation movement in the U.S. and in Canada are numerous. The level of commitment and the strength of the membership are two important indications that these problems will be overcome. The crucial point is that women in other countries must learn from the North American example and try to avoid their errors. If this occurs, the birth of an international revolutionary women's movement is that much closer!

Hazel Watkins

U.S. Women Workers Defy Wage Freeze

Following are excerpts from an article in the September issue of *The Southern Patriot*, a U.S. paper.

The four-month old strike by women members of International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) Local 174 against Alliance Manufacturing a subsidiary of North American Philips, aims at winning a contract including wage raises, seniority rights, and a grievance procedure.

SHENANDOAH, Virginia: Three hundred women who have been on strike here since June 2 received a telegram from President Nixon recently, asking them to go back to work in support of his wage freeze.

"I hope every worker in the country goes on strike against the wage freeze," was the response. "Can you imagine what that would be like - if everybody went on strike?" ...

Like so many people in Appalachia, (the women) used to think industry would solve the problems of chronic unemployment and poverty in their community. So, 10 years ago, local people raised \$57,000 in door-to-door donations, to encourage the company to locate here. ...

Now one man, who donated \$100, says he only hopes that someone will blow the Alliance company off the face of the earth. ...

Alliance made a policy of hiring mostly women, since they could get away with paying them half as much as men. The wage scales reflect this policy. The starting wage here is \$1.60 an hour and the top wage, \$1.76. At Alliance's other plant, in Ohio, the average wage is \$3.10. ...

"We didn't want this strike, but we had no other choice. We didn't have any choice because they didn't give us any You either take what we offer or leave it." ...

The company lawyer, George Gardner, drove by the picket line the first day "with the window rolled down and a big smile on his face, and he gets an egg in his face. And he rolls that window up real fast, you know, and his car is plastered with eggs and rotten tomatoes. ...

FOOTNOTES.

1. Marlene Dixon, *Where Are We Going?* in *RADICAL AMERICA*, Issue on Women, February 1970, p.27.
2. Marcia Salo and Kathy McAfee, *The Caucus Race and A Long Tale*, in *LEVIATHAN*, (Women Unite Issue), May 1970, p.16
3. *Ibid.* p.16
4. A Paper From the Leila Khaled Collective, p.8.

"That evening there were at least 25 state troopers for about 80 girls. They was afraid. They know we're a bunch of women, but they better watch us. We believe in what we're doing and we are going to fight for it." ...

The company quickly got an injunction limiting the number of pickets to three. ... More than 25 (strikers) in all have been arrested. ...

The women have made gate collections at plants up and down the Shenandoah Valley. Members of UE locals in nearby Waynesboro and Staunton contributed to the IUE local's strike fund. ...

And when the women put up a picket line outside Alliance's Ohio plant, more than 85 percent of the workers honored it and closed the plant down.

Students and workers from other plants, and the University of Virginia, have joined the picket lines. ...

The only drop in support has been from the strikers' own union. ... The IUE undercut the strike by coming to an agreement with the company that the women would no longer picket and shut down the parent plant in Ohio. ...

But the strike has picked up momentum in the last few weeks, as the women resumed mass picketing outside the plant. ... "We feel that the next few weeks will make or break the strike," said local treasurer Mable Breeden.

CEYLON



Prema Manamperu, one of the many women members of the JVP (Ceylonese revolutionary organisation) raped and killed by "socialist" Mrs. Bandaranaike's police & army.

The next issue of *SOCIALIST WOMAN* will carry full background information on the situation in Ceylon.

Rosemary Sales has recently returned from Derry.

Rose Curry, I.R.A. Section Leader, and Gerard O'Hare, a Republican volunteer, were killed accidentally while engaged in the struggle against British Imperialism in Ireland.

Rose Curry is the first woman freedom fighter to die in Ireland in the present wave of fighting. Her death was honoured by a gun salute fired by female and male volunteers.

This symbolises the role which women have achieved in the struggle for national liberation in Ireland.

The attempt to prop up the sectarian Unionist regime by introducing internment, indefinite imprisonment without trial, has been a fiasco. This was justified as a move against 'terrorist gunmen', the final solution to violence in the North. But the violence on both sides has escalated since internment. It has served merely to clarify the role of the British Army in Ireland and to polarise the Irish population.

Internment was a clear attempt to deprive the Catholics of their political leadership, and to crush the civil rights and republican movements. The majority of those arrested were those not actively engaged in armed struggle, but those who could give that struggle political direction. The only success has not been military, but in silencing some republican and civil rights speakers.

Among those arrested were a blind man and a four year old child. The only Protestant detained was a civil rights supporter. Much has been written of the brutal treatment meted out to detainees by the British Army - of the sacks over the head, the gauntlet running over broken glass, the beatings, etc. It is important to realise that this is not being done merely by a few psychopaths (though there are many of these in the British Army, over eager to carry out orders), but that the tortures are part of a determined policy to gain information, carried out with the co-operation of the British Army, the Special Branch and the R.U.C.

Maudling himself admitted this policy when he stated that more information would be learned as more people were detained.

An article in the 'Irish Times' by Michael Maguire, a recently released detainee, shows how this policy operates. Intensively interrogated for 40 hours by Scotland Yard, the R.U.C. and the British Army, he was tortured physically and mentally to near breaking point. He was offered bribes for information, one being £100 to entice a friend to go to Belfast from London so that he could be interned.

No women have yet been interned, though there have been hints that this might be coming. T.E. Utley, the 'Daily Telegraph's' pro-Unionist leader writer, who has strong financial ties with the Stormont government, has written of I.R.A. 'gun-women' - part of the process of softening up British public opinion for the

WOMEN IN



internment of women.

The weeks following internment have seen an escalation of the struggle by the nationalist minority on all fronts.

Internment has led to a strengthening of determination to resist oppression. For the mass of the Catholic population it has been the final stage in revealing the role of the British army in Ireland.

They now no longer look to that regime for a solution. The rent and rates strike called by the Civil Rights Association is more than 90% effective in all Catholic areas in the North. Originally called as a protest against internment, the CrA is now making demands which transcend the civil rights stage - the demand for the "dismantling of the entire Orange-Unionist system of administration, symbolised in Stormont". The significance of this is that the mass of the Catholic population now deny the legitimacy of

IRELAND



Death of ROSE CURRY— Freedom Fighter.

An IRA salute party consisting of two girls and two boys fires a volley in Abercorn Street, Belfast, during the funeral of Rose Curry and Gerald O'Hare, on 27th September.

the Stormont government and are in active defiance of it.

Women play the leading role in this part of the campaign. It is they who control the family budget and can determine whether the rent is paid. The passive resistance campaign has involved the participation of practically every housewife in the main nationalist areas in the North.

In Derry, barricades prevent the British army of occupation from entering the area freely, while road signs have been taken down by local people to confuse outsiders. Hatred of the British army now embraces all sections of the population. The housewives of Derry who welcomed the British soldiers with cups of tea now know why the army is in Ireland. The only cups of tea the soldiers now get are thrown in their faces. Women and children stand continually at the barricades hurling jeers and

insults at the troops.

This treatment has been known to reduce a soldier to tears, in spite of the protection of all the many secret weapons introduced into the British armoury to "solve the I.R.A. problem". It can however provoke attack, with rubber bullets, like the one which struck a pregnant woman in the stomach on September 26th.

The behaviour of Irish women towards the array has been disapproved of by the British press, who prefer the image of a people openly welcoming its army of occupation. The most viciously racist attack has come from Anne Edwards in the "Sunday Express" who entitled her piece, "Where Women are like Hellcats". In it she criticises the unwomanly behaviour of Derry women in involving themselves in politics. She has received protests for describing Derry women as "British".

The armed struggle, led by the I.R.A., is actively or passively supported by the majority of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland. The myth of the I.R.A. as a gang of armed terrorists unconnected with the majority of the population has been strained to the utmost recently, with the escalation of the bombing and shooting campaign by people working from inside and with the support of the Catholic communities.

Women have up to now played an important but largely supportive role in the armed struggle. They have helped to protect their communities against army attack, their most publicised activity being their warning given to the I.R.A. fighters by clanging dustbin lids.

Women have led some of the most militant sit-ins and marches on army positions, in support of the men interned. The Women's Action Group, organised by the Provisional wing of the I.R.A., led a march on the home of the Catholic Bishop in the Belfast area to protest against his attack on the I.R.A.

But the death of Rose Curry demonstrates that women are coming into the struggle on more equal basis. This symbolises the role which women have achieved in the struggle for national liberation in Ireland. Her funeral was attended by thousands of women, with dozens of girls marching behind the cortege with wreaths. Some of the women in the crowd demanded that British soldiers on the streets bow their heads as her coffin went by.

The entrance of women into the struggle marks a turning point in the battle for national self determination. It is when the struggle has become truly a mass movement that historically women have played an equal role in that struggle - as in the NLF in Vietnam or the FLN in Algeria. What this shows is that the vast majority of the Irish population is determined to struggle for national liberation.

As long as British soldiers are in Ireland to prevent them from gaining that freedom, more Republican soldiers like Rose Curry will be killed, more innocent Irish men, women and children will die at the hands of the British army, and more British soldiers will come home in coffins.

As socialists we must support the right of self-determination for which the Irish people are fighting, and demand the complete and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

We must show our solidarity with the Irish struggle by supporting the demonstration on October 31st called by the Anti-Internment League, supported by the Irish Solidarity Campaign and most Republican and Civil Rights Groups.

The demonstration is demanding the withdrawal of British troops and the release of all internees. We must do everything in our power to ensure the maximum support for this demonstration.

ALL OUT ON OCTOBER 31st!

—Rosemary Sales

LETTERS

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES ...

Asking 12-14-year-old working-class children in West Paddington to write about how they see each of the sexes in a variety of situations, you get some of the following:

Pairs

- "Men eat a lot and women cook"
- "Men are bosses and women are lackeys and serfs"
- "Men are strong and women are weak"
- "Men are working hard and women are sharing the home and part-time"
- "Men make love and women don't do nothing"
- "Men are handsome and women wear wigs"
- "Women are nagging, rude, showoffs, etc.
EXCEPT for my mother"

The Church

"The men in my church do the collections and they can become bishop and priests. Women only sit there and watch them they can only be nuns"

In Employment

- "Men go to work and women do the cooking and washing up"
- "The men get driving business, Building and women get mending shops assisting baby-sitters mothers"
- "Men go out to work and sometime women go out to work but most women do the housework"
- "Men go to the pub and do things like hanging up the wallpaper"

In the Family

- "So (me) of the (men) gamble, smoke, go to dance hall. The women stay and work by doing the washing, cooking, springcleaning"
- "The men in My family Does Nothing the woman Works"

DEMONSTRATION, 31st OCTOBER, meets SPEAKERS CORNER, Hyde Park, London, 3 p.m. Other details to be publicised.

For wider coverage on Ireland, read:

IRISH CITIZEN—Paper of the Irish Solidarity Campaign. Essential reading for coverage & analysis of struggle in Ireland and news of solidarity activities throughout Britain.

Obtainable from: Gil Galvin, 37 Gordon Mansions, Torrington Place, London W.C.1. 5p per issue.

"The woman does all the washing up and the cooking, iron, washing"
"Women get breakfast early"

And in the Future?

"Most men and women want to have a film-stars' life and want to change their luck."

Q.E.D.

— J.L.M.

FASHION FOR SOCIALISTS?

As you may or may not know, MORNING STAR carries a fashion column. I felt that this was inconsistent especially as it features the products of expensive fashion houses. I therefore wrote to them as follows:

"Comrades, I believe that one of the aims of Socialism is the abolition of status. The fashion world would find it hard to exist in the absence of status for it depends on people expressing their insecurity through the buying of clothes. Socialism, hopefully, would remove this insecurity by the abolition of status through public ownership and workers control. It is odd therefore that the MORNING STAR carries a fashion column.

"Fashion makes large profits through planned wastage, the same fashions being repeated every so often. The clientele come from the capitalist classes, the only people who have enough to pay the outrageously inflated prices. The Paris Fashion Houses exist as a luxury industry for the very rich. Surely, therefore, they are among the first enemies of Socialism. Please don't defile your pages with such trash!"

I posted this letter on the 29th August and I have still not had a reply. Yours,
Paula Strickland.

WRITING WOMEN BACK: SDF & THE FREE MAINTENANCE CAMPAIGN

Free school meals—hungry children—unemployment and families in poverty—all these are issues very close to us today. But they are not new, because our society has always had these problems and been unable to do anything about them in any meaningful way. The only advances have been made, not because of the efforts of a few good men, as the history books would have us believe, but on the one hand because of the efforts of the organised working class, and on the other because of the needs of capitalism. Thus, all the efforts made by philanthropists to do away with the evil of child labour would have come to nothing if industry did not need educated workers more than the inefficient efforts of half-starved, exhausted children, and if there had not been developed machines and techniques to do the work better.

THE FAMILY & THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Of course, socialists have always made propaganda on these issues and tried to draw lessons from them. Thus, one of the problems that arose as a result of ending child-labour was the question of how already impoverished parents were supposed to support their children and provide for them through their years of compulsory schooling. The changes in the function of the family that had come about with the industrial revolution emphasised these problems. No longer was the family an economic unit, with every member contributing to the family's keep, from the toddlers onwards. Instead, the man was supposed to earn enough to support them all, and it is true that throughout the period after the Industrial Revolution, right through to our own day, the majority of women with young children have not taken paid employment. (There were areas, notably in the textile and pottery industries, where large numbers of such women worked, but even so less than 50%). Of course, there has never been a time, except perhaps for a few years after the Second World War, when the spectre of unemployment did not haunt the majority of working men, and even in times of full employment the family man with an average wage has

had a hard time making ends meet. But our society persists in the opinion that it is the individual family's responsibility to support the children, and even the introduction of "free" education and other welfare services have not changed this basic fact. (Of course, in reality, it is the taxes paid by the workers that pay for all the "free" services—a very good piece of research published in *New Society* showed that there has been a fairly good redistribution of income through taxation within the working class, but not between the classes).

It is this role of the family (for more explanation, see last issue of *Socialist Woman*) that makes its maintenance so important to capitalist society at its present stage of development, and which must be attacked by socialists, who see the welfare and maintenance of the next generation as the role of society as a whole. It is not true to say, as many feminists such as Kate Millett in *Sexual Politics* have said, that socialists have neglected this question. In fact, as we shall be examining further in future issues, revolutionary socialists have always recognised the importance of developing campaigns around women and the family, even if until recently they somewhat neglected the question of theory. But, for example, the question of woman suffrage was hotly debated in the Marxist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and led to splits in some cases, which does not suggest that it was considered of no importance. One of the organisations where woman suffrage was hotly debated was the Social Democratic Federation, later to become one of the founding sections of the British Communist Party in 1920.

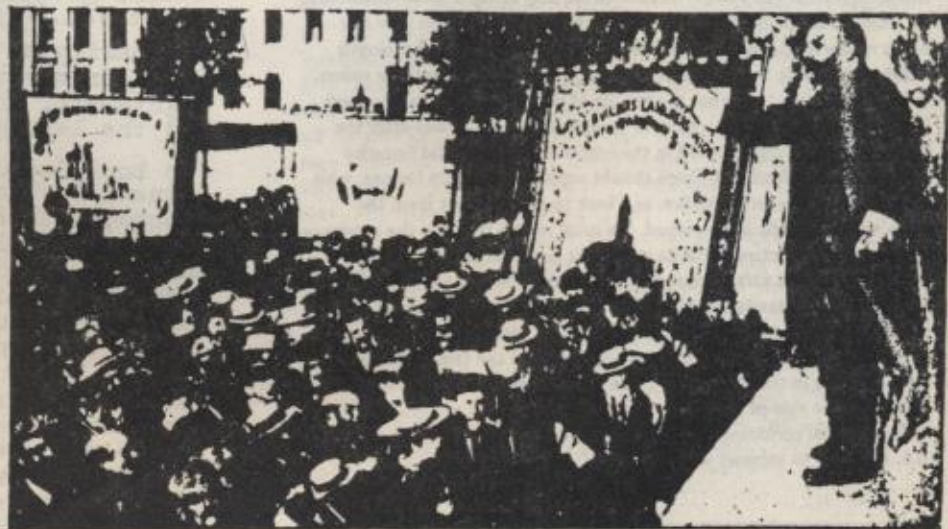
"FREE MAINTENANCE FOR SCHOOL-CHILDREN"

The SDF was also interested in the role of the family, both as an economic unit and as it particularly affected women. Over some 21 years or so, they conducted a campaign around the question of Free Maintenance for School-children. This was done on several levels. Thus, they appealed to common-sense on the questionable wisdom of

"To talk of Free Maintenance destroying family life ... is to talk of destroying something which is practically non-existent and which is to a great extent impossible under modern conditions. Even such family life as does exist is mainly harmful and not beneficial to those children who 'enjoy' it."

From *The Daily Mirror*, August 30, 1904

FOR STARVING SCHOOL CHILDREN.



Mr. H. M. Hyndman, the leader of the Socialists in London, addressing the demonstration in favour of State maintenance for school children in Trafalgar-square on Sunday afternoon.

REVIEWS

spending money on educating children literally too hungry to learn. They appealed to trade unionists by tying it up with the burning issues of the day, such as unemployment. In this last campaign, they wanted to make it clear that unemployment should not be seen as a personal affliction, brought on by the personal weaknesses and shortcomings of the unemployed men, but as an inherent part of the capitalist misorganisation of society, and one which that society should take responsibility for and seek to relieve. If jobs could not be provided, then the jobless should not be made to suffer.

The SDF recognised that the family was bound up with capitalist society and that its ultimate destruction depended on the destruction of capitalist society. H. Quelch wrote in *The Social Democrat* of 15th October 1904:

"It would be absurd to suppose that the fundamental conditions of bourgeois society could be uprooted and yet the superstructure of that society remain intact in all its forms. Nevertheless, scientific Socialists, who accept the materialist conception of history and the theory of evolution as applied to human society, direct their attention mainly to the economic conditions, knowing full well that, as they change, other conditions must necessarily be modified. ... On the other hand, we are not prepared to withhold our support from any necessary work in consequence of any false sentiment of reverence, nor to refuse to accept such modifications of social relations as may be made necessary by changing economic conditions, simply for fear that those modifications may impair some sacred bourgeois institution ...

"To talk of Free Maintenance destroying family life, therefore, is to talk of destroying something which is practically non-existent and which is to a great extent impossible under modern conditions. Even such family life as does exist is mainly harmful and not beneficial to those children who 'enjoy' it."

On August 28th 1904, the SDF held a demonstration in Trafalgar Square on the subject of Free Maintenance. They wanted free meals for all school-children at once, followed by the provision of free clothing and free housing for working-class families. Among the speakers were Hyndman, Quelch, and two women, Mrs. Bridge-Adams and Mrs. Despard. Many trade union banners were to be seen.

THE FAMILY & THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

Now, sixty-seven years later, we are seeing again the conditions against which the SDF fought coming into being again; unemployment, attacks on the welfare system, etc. Still the families of workers are housed in slums, one family to a room or two. In seeking to fight these conditions, we must do as the SDF did, and call on the trade unions to take the brunt of the fight. Only the organised working class has the strength required to tackle the task. And women, in and out of the trade union movement, know best what the results of poverty and unemployment are; they are the ones who have to "make ends meet", even after the ends have all but disappeared in the corridors of the Social Security office. Socialist Women Groups should support Claimants Unions, who are trying to help such families, and seek to gain support from the trade unions for the unemployed. We must realise that it is the *existence of the family structure*, with its economic responsibilities, which is being *upheld*—not attacked, as the Communist Party says, confusing an attack on living standards, which is actually designed to push all its original responsibilities *back* onto the family, with an attack on the superstructure. (It is, of course, no accident that the family is seen as the basic unit in today's Russia). The early Communists were much clearer on the role of the family. Like them, we must recognise that it is the material conditions we have to change, so the need for a family (i.e. the need to support women and children) disappears.

Leonora Lloyd.

"FAMILY GUIDE TO THE LAW"—Readers Digest, £5.50.

While no socialist expects justice from an unjust society, and the fabric of the law itself is designed to preserve an unequal distribution of property and power, radical lawyers have been trying to demystify the law, so that its fundamental precepts are exposed, and at the same time to change their own status and role. Some barristers and solicitors, concerned at being members of a professional elite which automatically sets them apart from the proletariat, are considering ways of putting the law into the hands of workers and tenants, blacks and left activists by explaining to them how the law deals with the kind of problems they face, and how they might conduct their own defence in court and before tribunals.

In part, the aim is to help to create a feeling of confidence in dealing with the police, magistrates, and judges - as well as with the legal profession itself - and towards this end some help has come from - of all people - the Reader's Digest, which has published the "Family Guide to the Law". It costs £5.50 from book shops or £4.50 direct from the Reader's Digest, 7-10 Old Bailey (very appropriate!) London EC4, but the Digest has always been plagued by nasty people who order books under a false name and never pay for them.

The Book is edited by Michael Zander, reader in law at the LSE and a long-standing opponent of the restrictive practises in the business. He says:

"Primarily we wanted to explain the basic legal framework, what an individual's rights are, and how he can use a lawyer and the legal system to best advantage."

The book deals in part with the kind of situation which, although everyday occurrences, frequently go unremedied because the individual is not aware of his rights: the tenant who leaves when he receives a notice to quit, not realising that eviction is unlawful without a county court order; the consumer who finds that an item he has just bought is defective but fails to return it to the shop and demands his money back, as he may well be entitled to do under the Misrepresentation Act of 1967: the worker who forgoes his entitlement to redundancy pay by unconditionally accepting an alternative job when then turns out to be unsatisfactory.

(Continued on p. 18)

WOMEN IN E. EUROPE

INTRODUCTION

The position of women in the Eastern Europe workers states, of which the following document gives us a picture, reflects the economic contradictions and political problems that these countries have faced and continue to face. It must be seen in the perspective of the general distortions which have resulted from over-centralised bureaucratic management in the countries of the Soviet economic bloc. The writer's introductory statement is misleading; it is true that the political regimes in these countries have no more effected the liberation of women than capitalist regimes, but this should not imply that they are a kind of capitalism. For such a statement would be incorrect.

In the immediate post-war period workers in some of these countries gained a limited degree of democratic control over the means of production and productive processes. Since the Communist Parties' "take-over" of these countries in this period, such control as existed was rapidly lost and political power appropriated by the Communist Parties which were already bureaucratically organised. This was because they came under the economic and political control of the Soviet Communist regime, which was consolidating its own economic bloc in opposition to the Western Marshall programme. The Stalinist C.P. of the Soviet Union was anti-revolutionary, viz its policies in relation to China and Yugoslavia at that time, and its ideology of "Socialism in one country" was designed to protect and safeguard its own existence.

As a result of bureaucratised central control severe distortions became apparent in the economics of these countries. In Czechoslovakia, the most industrially advanced, the proportion of reinvestment in heavy industry increased from 37% in 1948, to 44.5% in 1965 to 47% in 1966. The rigid policy of the pro-Soviet C.P. was concentration on heavy industry at any price. Light industry consequently suffered, with very little resources allocated to it for development. These industries of course, as we see, are where there is a high proportion of women workers. Czechoslovakia could not provide



Tatiana Konkina, Russian engineering student, training at Elektrostal Heavy Engineering Works near Moscow. Russia's high proportion of women engineers is a positive achievement, but the real changes are yet to be made. [Photo: Soviet Weekly]

oil, metallurgy and power for the rest of the Soviet bloc without her own standard of living declining. This is what was happening in the years preceding 1968. In 1948, two-thirds of the national income was spent on providing for people's needs, e.g. consumer goods and social services; this declined to only one-half by 1966. The period of "liberalisation" from about 1966 in Czechoslovakia saw the proposal of radical new economic reforms and the growth of a new workers' movement, both encouraged by the relaxation of political control. As we know, the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968 prevented any further developments of the workers' movement which was posing the possibility of a political revolution. Centralised management and tight political control was with great difficulty reestablished. But the economic crisis, which had stimulated the period of liberalisation still had to be dealt with. The only way in which the bureaucracy could and still can stimulate the economy is by increasing incentives to the middle layers of the bureaucracy, i.e. the managers, scientific workers etc, to "make industry profitable". A manager is thus encouraged to streamline his workforce and economise on the use of materials and machinery.

It follows from this that women, as we

know from our own experience, are pushed out of the work-force when there are economies to be made. Hence the unemployment of women at the present time. There is still a shortage of consumer goods because of the inability of the bureaucracy to deal with the allocation of resources, there is an increasing differential between workers' and managers' wages which increases social inequality, and, most important of all, the power and control of managers is increased at the expense of the workers. It is also not surprising to find that social facilities such as nurseries and creches are totally inadequate since this is hardly likely to come very high on the list of priorities of the managing bureaucratic elite.

In addition to the economic crises, the political and ideological crisis of Stalinism must be recognised. Especially since 1968 the majority of people in Czechoslovakia do not believe what the newspapers say; they tend to think the opposite. Hence the effect of a "call" from the Communist Party to women to take office can be predicted. In itself the invasion of Czechoslovakia has aggravated the tensions of Stalinism beyond the borders of that country. The workers of Poland and Hungary have not forgotten their own treatment in 1956. The Soviet Union's own apologetic reason for the invasion, the threat of restoration of capitalism, in itself raises the question, how after twenty years of communism is the threat of counter revolution so imminent that it needs a military invasion to neutralise the counter-revolutionary forces? The effect of communism must indeed be poor! This was of course not the reason for the



Women canning crabs on board a Russian factory ship.

invasion of Czechoslovakia, as I indicated before, but these ideological contradictions are faced by the working people in the countries of Eastern Europe all the time.

This helps us to understand the context in which the oppression of our sisters in East Europe exists. We can see that this oppression is a political oppression by a usurping bureaucracy, in which women have the responsibilities for their children and home, for which enough social provisions have not been made by the present regime. The workers can only organise their society for the benefit of everyone when they have regained political control from the bureaucrats. Perhaps the potential for this is greater than we imagine; but the practical difficulties are enormous. The experience of Czechoslovakia shows us that the political revolution cannot succeed in one country alone. It must spread, in particular to the Soviet Union where there are very small signs that this is beginning. We must develop a greater understanding of the nature of the oppression of our sisters in the East European workers states in order to work towards a revolutionary movement which can liberate working people.

I do not know of any dictum more appropriate to describe the situation of women in Eastern Europe than that of Marx: "Capitalism has not torn the woman from the hearth and has not thrown her into social activity in order to proceed with her emancipation, but to exploit her more savagely than man." For the fifties have seen in most of these countries - we exclude here the Soviet Union - a pressure developed to force women out of their homes into wage labour - a drive parallel to forced collectivization carried out at the same time. Under the slogan of "equal rights" women suddenly got the same right as far as hard work was concerned, without regard to their "home" duties, to child bearing and education and with smaller salaries than men holding the same or similar positions.

At present women represent 40% of the labour force in Poland, 43% in Bulgaria, 46.2% in Czechoslovakia, 40% in Hungary, 48% in East Germany. Entire industries are feminized to an unusually high degree - mostly light industries like textiles, show production, food processing etc. By coincidence, these industries have suffered most by the policy of preferring heavy industry with the consequence that they have the most

obsolete machinery which in turn demands from the women far more hard work than men have to perform. A woman delegate at the recent congress of the Czechoslovak C.P. told the congress:

"The machinery in our textile enterprise is 70% obsolete. Consumer industry in our district has two-thirds obsolete machinery." Bulgarian research has also shown that, with the exception of mining, industries with greatest percentage of sickness are those in which women prevail: hosiery mills, tobacco industry, shoe and synthetic rubber production.

In spite of their numbers, however, women seldom advance to higher posts. In Poland, most branches of the metal industry are entirely - or to a very high degree - feminised, but women represent only 0.6% of the foremen! Hungarian experience, but also that of other countries, shows lower wage earnings for women holding the same occupations as men do.

Poland is the only country within the socialist bloc that has official unemployment records. According to recent data, 85,000 women are looking for work, while there are only 22,000 vacancies. The plan for 1971-1975 as proposed under Gomulka (it has been greatly changed since) has foreseen no employment for about a quarter of a million girls coming out of school during this period. (In the Warsaw region alone there were 9,000 women waiting to be employed at the end of last May with no provision for the 18,000-19,000 school-leavers scheduled to come out of school in July/August.

The relief creches and kindergartens to provide for employed mothers are insufficient. In Poland again, only 15% of those applying for vacant places for children were satisfied. In Hungary the situation is better: 40% of applications for creches and 50% of those for kindergarten were satisfied.

As far as working conditions are concerned, there is a lot to be desired. While in Czechoslovakia night-work for women is prohibited, there is no hope for such a measure in Hungary for the next decade. Poland is preparing some measures limiting the night-work of women. Recently, a Polish newspaper complained that in the south-eastern part of the country women having finished their shift on Saturday night are left without transport facilities. They either have to wait 5-7 hours for the next bus or have to go by foot quite a few kilometres before reaching home.

After they leave their workplace, they have a "second shift" at home. In

Poland, home and wage labour of an employed woman takes between 15 and 17 hours of the day. 30% of these women leave their home in the morning without having breakfast - there is no time for it. In Hungary, an employed woman needs about 30 hours for her housework weekly. No wonder - queues have not disappeared in Eastern Europe since the last war. A reader complained recently in a Czechoslovak paper: her town, a district capital in Northern Bohemia with about 14,000 inhabitants, has only two shops of children's textiles. Babies' goods are delivered twice a month. Battles are then fought in front of the shop. "I get underwear for my seven-year-old daughter rarely," says the reader. Another one writes: "I have to spend 90 minutes buying food alone." A Slovak woman living in a regional capital of 40,000 inhabitants: "Services are insufficient, creches and kindergartens are bottlenecks. There is, however, not a single woman either on the district or the regional administrative council. We have had enough of flowers and flattering words at the March 8th celebrations (International Women's Day celebrated throughout the Soviet bloc). That is not enough."

It is significant after a quarter of a century of "socialism" to hear these words.

The Communist Parties, anxious to have women's support for their exploiting policies, are now pressing for a greater participation of women in public offices. However, their own example is striking: the different committees of the recent Congress of the Czechoslovak C.P. has had between one-ninth and one-fifth women delegates only. There is not a single woman in either the Czechoslovak, Polish or Rumanian governments.

This bird's eye view gives a rather fragmentary picture of the problem. But it proves sufficiently that far from giving equal rights to women, the so-called "socialist" states have put in many respects a greater burden on them than capitalism has, and continue to exploit them still more.

(From the News & Letters Women's Liberation Committee).

For more information on "socialism" in Russia and the East European states, read:

- Leon Trotsky: THE REVOLUTION BETRAYED (£1.25)
THE CLASS NATURE OF THE SOVIET STATE
IN DEFENCE OF MARXISM (£1.05) (20p)
STALINISM AND BOLSHEVISM (15p)
MANIFESTO OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST PARTY
OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA (4p)
Dave Ridell: IS THE SOVIET UNION STATE CAPITALIST?
(3p)

Zander says it is the first book he has been involved with which is not critical of the law and does not make proposals for change. The book accepts the law as it is, but as such it explains in simple terms how the law operates in England and Wales. (It does not apply to Scotland). It is the first law book to include a description of the terms and immediate implications of the Industrial Relations Act and of the Immigration Bill, although a few amendments have been made to the latter since the book went to press.

The book does not restrict itself simply to statutes and precedents, but covers court procedure, the powers of the police how to complain against solicitors and the police, and also deals with such matters as social security benefits and tax, which are outside the immediate scope of the law. Apart from anything else, it is a useful handbook for Claimants Union operators.

Hilary Brazen

Film Review: "DIARY OF A MAD HOUSEWIFE"

Tina is the wife of a very successful and snobish New York lawyer, who is also one of the biggest male chauvinists ever to be portrayed as such on the screen. Usually, the behaviour of men towards women is so much taken for granted that the (usually) male presenters of film would never dream of criticising it. Tina's life is ruled, on the one hand, by her husband's demands - that she make more of herself, that she stop showing him up, that she gives a great party to impress the people who really matter, that she brings their daughters up right, etc. ad nauseam - and on the other hand, by the trappings of her husband's success - the endless gadgets, even the servants.

In an effort to escape from the impossible demands of her life, Tina falls into another trap and has an affair with another variety of male chauvinist, who sees women only as sex objects and has evolved a technique of getting them flocking into his bed. Only someone as desperate as Tina - and as innocent - would not have recognised his ploys for the polished technique they were.

Where this film scores so magnificently is in the way in which one can instantly identify with the heroine. One may not have actually met a prize boor-cum-nag-cum-compulsive talker like Tina's husband or one of the world's all time gifts to women, like George, although most of us

will recognise elements of one or the other in some man we know; but what is instantly recognisable is Tina's reaction. The dialogue is superb. One just knows that it is exactly what one would have said in the same situation - or would have liked to have said. And it is all done with such humour and truth that one is always kept interested. Some moments of the film are so shocking, i.e. they shock one's susceptibilities, that the audience gasp, mainly at moments when the cool cheek of one of the two men hits home a little too hard. (It was mostly the men who were gasping). Personally, I found lover-boy more true to life than the husband, but an American girl who saw the film with me found the husband more typical of American men.

Tina is not one of America's under-privileged women - in fact, part of her trouble is that she is overprivileged. But she is of the stuff of which the women's liberation movement in the States is largely made, and our understanding of that movement and its weaknesses may be increased by seeing this film. Tina does not break out of her prison; the film keeps very close to the book right up to the end and neither of the two endings resolves her problems. The film does not set out to be an analysis of the problems of American society and so cannot give an answer, but within the context of what it seeks to do, the film is highly successful and highly enjoyable and much recommended. Do take a man along with you, he might even learn something!

Nora Vange

In the last issue, we published a poem on "Working Wives" by a DATA member (without permission, for which we apologise). The author of the poem, Mrs. Jennifer McIntosh, sends us the following piece on a related subject, which also appeared in the DATA Journal:

EQUALITY?

Who does not wish to lead a life
of happiness without the strife?
If we're content, we just stagnate,
but when provoked—retaliate.

Some want more cash, and some their rights:
A million reasons for our fights;
To air one's views and have your say,
A union's meeting's the finest way.

Equal Pay is all the rage—
They're more concerned about their wage;
But EQUAL RIGHTS is what I crave,
Within the law, to spend or save.

He wants a car, and one he gets,
but YOU keep working to pay the debts!!!
What use more money, when you find
YOU cannot spend it—till your husband's signed?

Socialist Woman Groups

BIRMINGHAM: Phyllis Tinsley, 102 Arden Grove, Edgbaston.

BRISTOL: Viv Prior, 7 Ravenswood Road, Redland, Bristol 6.

***CANTERBURY:** Liz Lawrence, Darwin College, University of Kent.

CARDIFF: Susan Lukes, 92 Llandaff Road, Canton.

***COVENTRY:** Joyce Rifkin, 27 Paynes Lane.

***EDINBURGH (area):** Anne McLellan, 5 Victoria Place, Bo'ness, West Lothian.

GLASGOW: Shelley Charlesworth, 61 Fergus Drive, Glasgow NW.

HULL: c/o N. O'Neill, 71 Park Avenue.

LANCASTER: Margaret Coulson, 35 West Road.

LEICESTER: Jean Holman, 7 College Street.

LONDON (North & Central): Pat Masters, c/o 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1 (Ring 01-340 7031 daytime, or Jackie Hayman, 01-607 3553 evenings).

LONDON (West): Leonora Lloyd, 40 Inverness Road, Southall, Middx. (01-574 7407)

MANCHESTER: Sheila Cohen, 43 Brantingham Road, Whalley Range, Manchester 16.

***NORWICH:** Fiona Fredenburgh, 199b Unthank Road.

***NOTTINGHAM:** Sue Lee, 8 Derby Grove, Lenton.

OXFORD: Heather White, 181 Divinity Road.

***PRESTON:** Kath Ryde, 246 Leyland Road, Penwortham, Preston.

***ROTHERHAM:** Jane Mole, 351 Cantelow Road.

***STAFFORD:** c/o M. Martin, 19 Lovatt Street.

***YORK:** Julia Baldasara, 1 Longfield Terrace (off Bootham).

*If you are interested in forming a group in this area, please write to the address given.

SOCIALIST WOMAN SPECIALS

Women & Vietnam—2p.

An illustrated broadsheet.

The Nightcleaners Campaign—15p

Describes the campaign, the work cleaners do, the contracting companies and the union, and draws lessons for the women's liberation movement.

ALSO:

Booklist for Women's Liberation—10p

The only complete bibliography available in this country.

Women Unite! poster (red & yellow)—25p (including postage)

Bulk orders (10 or more)—15p each.

All orders should include 3p (for one item) for p&p. Or, better still, a large stamped addressed envelope.

Discount given on bulk orders (10 or more). No postage charged on orders over £1.

SPECIAL NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

Subscribers will automatically receive any 2p broadsheet we produce with the following issue of *Socialist Woman*. They will also get any other Specials they order post-free.

—From: **SOCIALIST WOMAN, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.**

N.B. Books mentioned on page 17 are all available from:

RED BOOKS, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.

Also full stock of literature by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, etc. Revolutionary theory & practice—the Labour Movement—Women's Liberation—Ireland—the Black struggle—Economics, History, etc.

Send s.a.e. for catalogue.

THE NIGHTCLEANERS CAMPAIGN



15p

a **socialist woman special**

Please send me *Socialist Woman* for the next year. I enclose 48p, which includes postage & packing (for overseas rates see below).

Name

Address

Occupation

Send to: **SOCIALIST WOMAN SUBS.,
182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.**

Sub. Rates: Britain 48p; overseas 60p (\$1.60); per year (6 issues).
Single copies: Britain 8p; overseas 10p (26c.)

Write for airmail rates.



Whilst shopping...



S.