



CHARLOTTE DESPARD: 1844-1939 SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, SINN FEINER.

"The history of the twentieth century will show the rise of two great movements—Women and Labour."

Born into a wealthy middle class family, Charlotte French, at 26 married more wealth. For the next twenty years she and her husband became a 'radical' couple, talking politics, living rich-sort of trendy lefties of the 1880's. In 1890, when her husband died she was left economically independent and emotionally free to kick out the contradictions in her life and politics. She left the 15 acre mansion and the 'dozen indoor servants', and went to Battersea. Her 'good works' transformed into Radical activism, and for the next 50 years she was involved in the fight for Labour, Women and the independence of Ireland.

In 1902 she was involved in the Independent Labour Party.

A committed feminist she broke with the Pankhursts in 1907 and together with other women formed the Women's Freedom League— "Our cause is not only votes for Women, but the binding together of all womanhood with human rights". They were committed to direct action and supporting women workers in trades disputes and strikes. This organisation was finally disbanded in 1961, the longest lived of all those Women's groups set up at the beginning of the century. During WW1 whilst some suffragettes were supporting the government's war—the League together with the East London Federation stuck to their politics and continued to hold their anti-war line. They organised with working women on a practical basis to cope with the unemployment and shortages as well as fighting the government's curfew on women

In 1920, at the height of the 'Black and Tan' terror in Ireland Despard finally broke with her brother, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and used her position to denounce the British as murderers.

From then until her death she lived mainly in Belfast working with Sinn Fein, opposing partition and the Stormont 'government'. She died in 1939 bankrupt, having spent her life and her wealth for the advancement of her beliefs. Big deal. It's what women do all the time, though the vast majority of us don't have that much to start with. However, Despard, through her wealth and status, is the visible face of the vast movement of women's political fury and resistance of that time.

### IN THE PIPELINE...

As a result of several women's disappointment in the anarchists-feminists conferences which have taken place, a conference for anarchist women is being organised in Leeds. The aim is to have a weekend event of workshops & videos, covering in-depth topics on women's anarchist & struggles, & what's happening today.

The event isn't to be until May 1988, but we'd like to hear from any woman who can, or knows of, women who would be able & willing to provide entertainment on the Friday &/or Saturday night. Any ideas for workshops & women willing to research & initiate these workshops, would also be appreciated. Please contact:

**RESISTER**  
C/O WOMEN'S CENTRE,  
229 WOODHOUSE LANE,  
LEEDS.

(send any letters to this address too)

## RESISTER BENEFIT DISCO

A plea to all women who read RESISTER---come & let your hair down at the Checkpoint disco, Bradford, Dec. 3rd, 8 til late. Only 50p, & all proceeds go to keeping your favorite women only paper alive & kicking!!!!!!



## PERIODS before PROFITS

Periods can be a real pain, literally and otherwise. Most women experience menstruation 300 times in their lives and we are something of a captive market when it comes to sanitary protection. Two main companies dominate the market - Southalls and Tampax. They sell 80% of towels and tampons in this country, and as it's been estimated that women spend an average £400 in a lifetime on sanitary protection, they are making a lot of profit. Not to mention the VAT at 15% we have to fork out as well. But there are alternatives to forking out endlessly for your tampons every month:

1. Diaphragms - as well as being a contraceptive, they can also collect blood. They hold a lot more than towels or tampons and are re-usable. Use KY jelly to lubricate for insertion. Simply rinse and re-insert as necessary. The only drawback with this method is if in your in a public bog and have to leave the cubicle to use the sink!
2. Menstrual extraction - uses the Karmen Cannula method, gets it over in ten minutes instead of five days. Can be slightly painful. This method is still illegal in this country as it could technically be an illegal abortion. If anyone knows any more info on this please send it in.
3. Natural sponges - soft and don't irritate the vagina. Sponges with small holes absorb more, and a piece of strong string needs to be tied to one end. Wash with warm water and soap, squeeze out and re-insert. One sponge should last several periods. At end of period they should be boiled to sterilize. Some environmentalists are now saying that sponges shouldn't be used because they absorb sea pollution. The choice is yours.
4. Make your own - this is what all women did before periods were commercialised. The best material is terry towelling (like nappies). Stitch it into towel shape, several layers thick and sew a loop made of tape onto each end. You will need an old-fashioned 'belt' to hold them in place. They also need to be sterilised. A dozen towels should last a very long time.
5. Steal your sanitary protection and rip them off instead.

## THE MYTHS OF PREGNANCY

When we think of pregnant women, we conjure up images of rosy cheeked, healthy looking, happy women, proud & protective of their ever growing bump. But is this yet another image that a patriarchal society has indoctrinated us with; is pregnancy such a healthy state to be in; & if not, why are there so many uproars about 'unsafe' contraceptive methods, yet no voice is heard challenging the risks of pregnancy.

Ever since the Pill was introduced in 1962, women have voiced their opinions, & asked many questions as to the safety of using such drugs on their bodies—& rightly so. But why hasn't the same amount

of questioning, lobbying & challenging taken place, concerning the safety of pregnancy?

All that the Pill does, is mimic the state of pregnancy—to a less potent degree. By that I mean, when we become pregnant, massive hormonal changes take place. These chemicals prevent further ovulation (egg production) & also produce conditions within the reproductive system which prevent any other fertilised eggs from implanting into the womb. Thus, when we are pregnant, we not only create a healthy environment for the growing embryo, but we also prevent other pregnancies from occurring.

The Pill too, with its synthetic forms of the same hormones, prevents pregnancy by either preventing implantation (eg. the progesterone only Pill—or mini pill), or by preventing ovulation, or both (eg. oestrogen combined pill—the most commonly used). These two types of pills contain the same chemicals which are responsible for many of the changes in pregnancy—progesterone & oestrogen, but the Pill contains a much SMALLER quantity than is present in pregnant women, yet we do not worry about the health risks involved when considering pregnancy, as we do when considering going on the Pill. We do not try & talk other women out of becoming pregnant on health grounds, as we might do women thinking about the Pill as a form of contraceptive.

The Pill has many minor side effects, including; breakthrough bleeding, irregular &/or delayed periods; weight gain & fluid retention; nausea & vomiting; dryness of the vagina; loss of libido; change in hair growth; pigmentation of the skin; acne; contact lens trouble; hot flushes; infection of the vagina (thrush); increased vaginal discharge; breast engorgement & tenderness; anaemia.

The Pill may also have many serious side effects: thrombosis of the veins (blood-clots); coronary thrombosis (heart attack); cerebral thrombosis (stroke); high blood pressure; diabetes; preeclampsia; severe headaches; depression; some cancers.

These side effects are caused by the same hormones which are present during pregnancy, but in pregnancy, they are present in much LARGER amounts. And not only do pregnant women have to cope with these possible hormonal side effects, but the physical ones too.

So we see that the same side effects of pregnancy may also include: breakthrough bleeding; weight gain & fluid retention etc.—right through to depression & some cancers. But, in addition there are other minor side effects such as heartburn, breathlessness, exhaustion, immobility, swelling of the ankles, backache, & many more serious side effects.

Because there is a massive 40% increase in the amount of work the heart has to do, much more rest is required & cardiac disease is a possibility; in turn this means that the lungs must work at twice their normal capacity; the blood volume is increased by 30%, so pregnant women are prone to anaemia due to the dilution of the red blood cells—this can mean too little oxygen getting to the foetus, & fatigue for the woman; pregnancy also causes an increase in blood pressure, a high blood pressure not only causes strain on the woman's kidneys, but it too can reduce oxygen to the foetus; the risk of cystitis also increases during pregnancy, as does cervical erosion (ulcers on the cervix)

7% of women having their first baby, & 3% of those having subsequent babies, suffer from preeclampsia (high blood pressure, swollen ankles, protein in urine), the danger of which is that it may develop into eclampsia, which is responsible for 1/3 of all maternal deaths. 1 in 20 women who develop eclampsia die, & 1 in 5 of their babies die.

REPRINTED FROM 'OPEN ROAD'

# Herbal Abortifacants

It is not the intent of this article to dispense medical advice or to prescribe the use of herbs as a form of treatment. There are many experts in the field with widely varying views. In the event you use this information without your doctor's approval, you are prescribing for yourself, which is your right, but the publisher assumes no responsibility.

This information is culled from 20 books on herbal remedies and from talks with herbalists and women in the States and Europe. It is not all that exists on abortifacants but the most persistent.

Any use of these herbs must be done in a careful way. Read the article thoroughly, be cautious. These herbs can be very potent. Do not use them in larger quantities or more often than specified. All work best in the first month of pregnancy or as soon as pregnancy is suspected. The herbs usually work approximately 40% to 45% of the time.

These methods are best used in a situation where you can have access to a mechanical abortion as a backup. Complications are possible with any miscarriage. There is the danger of an incomplete miscarriage or hemorrhaging. It is also possible that an herbal concoction which does not produce the intended miscarriage still damages the fetus.

1. This method is the best tried and proven. It is easily available and cheap with no known side effects: Vitamin C. Dosage is 6 grams for 3 days. It should be taken in small quantities, i.e.: 2 grams 3 times a day for 3 days. Vitamin C can be taken immediately after unprotected intercourse to prevent fertilization or as soon as pregnancy is suspected. It seems to work best if taken when, or just after, period is due but it has been effective into the first month of pregnancy. Basically the sooner it's taken the better.

The 3 day treatment can be repeated, but there is no known information on how often it can be repeated safely. Because no one really understands how or why it works, we limit it to two trials. It usually takes 2 1/2 to 3 days after the first dosage to work. Wait 4 or 5 days from the last day taken before repeating if there is no blood after 3 days. Blood flow is slow at first. There may be some cramps. It may not work for women who take doses of Vitamin C regularly. NOTE: It should not be taken by women with kidney problems as it puts stress on the kidneys in the elimination process.

2. An alternative to Vitamin C which may be used together with it (more effective) is purely—fresh only, in the vagina. Change every 24 hours but it should work (if it's going to) within 12 to 15 hours after insertion. It may get smelly or hard to take out, but it is not dangerous. Method: Take fresh parsley (a handful), wrap it lightly in gauze and roll like a tampon. A string can be sewn on to make removal easier. Insert overnight preferably. This can be repeated without danger but usually works quickly if it's going to.

3. These are the most common herbal abortifacants, in decreasing order of effectiveness:

**Black Cohosh**—causes uterine contractions  
**Blue Cohosh**—stimulates contractions and helps to slough off uterine lining  
**Penny Royal**—stimulates release of oxytocin in the brain which is the hormone which induces contractions  
**Mugwort, Ginger, Yarrow**—helps to slough off lining of the uterus  
**Saffron, Rue, Cotton Root Bark**—stimulates contractions  
**Tansy, Southernwood, Squaw Vine, Golden Ragwort**—stimulates contractions

Any of these can be taken individually or in combination and may cause contractions and subsequent bleeding. They are most effective in combination. They are called 'emmenagogues' but have a different function in the body. That's why it's best to combine them, eg. one to slough off, one to stimulate contractions and one to tone etc. The general recipe for any of these is an infusion (tea) of one teaspoon herb per cup of boiling water.

Sleep 20 minutes. Drink one cup of tea 4 times a day for 5 days.

A recipe that has worked best for women in Montreal, and has also been used in San Francisco and New York is:  
 1 tablespoon Penny Royal (fresh not oil)  
 1 tablespoon Blue Cohosh  
 1 tablespoon Yarrow  
 1 tablespoon Rue

Boil 3 cups of water. Add Blue Cohosh. Allow to simmer 10 minutes. Add other herbs. Remove from flame and allow to steep 30 minutes. Drink 1 cup every 4 hours for up to 5 days.

or (not together and is less effective):  
**Saffron**—1 gram per litre of water. Steep 30 minutes. Makes 8 portions. Drink 1 portion every 2 hours for 1 day. Period may appear at the end of the day. If not do not repeat.  
 or American Indian recipe: Penny Royal and Brewers Yeast — 1 teaspoon Penny Royal per cup of boiling water. Sleep 20 minutes. Add Brewers Yeast. Drink 1 cup every 4 hours for 4 days.

The first recipe is the best. The others have worked, but not as consistently. The herbs are potent. What may work for one woman may not work for another. If a woman starts to feel sick, she should stop taking the tea. Some cramps and any normal premenstrual feelings and aches are not dangerous, but feeling 'sick' is not okay. If the herbs are going to work, they usually do so after the first try. Two dosage periods are okay for all

the recipes except for the Saffron, but the dosages are not recommended more than twice

and then only in the early stages, up to 8 weeks. (The herbs have worked for some women a bit later, this depends on the woman.)  
 NOTE: If any of these herbal remedies are unpalatable, any mint teas may be added to the recipe. Do not add more water, just the mint. Women should eat very lightly when taking the teas—vegetables and tea. Oil of herbs is much more potent and concentrated than dried or fresh herbs. All of these recipes are for dried herbs. Do not substitute oils for fresh.

"If I suspected I was pregnant, I would start with the Vitamin C, and then go on to the herbal concoction. I would do the Saffron last, and probably not try any of it after 8 weeks, unless I was sure of getting a mechanical abortion if the herbal abortion didn't work. I'd do the Vitamin C and the herbal recipe twice before the Saffron, and then I'd give up in favour of a medical abortion. I'd do everything I could to get an appointment for a mechanical abortion, even if I was trying the herbal recipe. The appointment can always be cancelled. Keep in mind that these herbs, if they work to induce abortion, could also be potentially damaging to the fetus. Only use these herbs if you are sure of having options other than continuing the pregnancy if they don't work."



## ABORTION BILL

Liberal MP & catholic David Alton, introduced a private members Bill on October 27th '87-a Bill which proposes to reduce the limit for a legal abortion from 28wks to 18. Since then, the media has widely publicised his case, & if it gets through, it will mean disaster for women seeking abortions.

What Alton, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child & other anti-abortionists fail to grasp, is that the age of the foetus should not be the issue, what should matter, is what a woman wants to put her body through. She should have the right to decide whether to continue the pregnancy or not, whether she be 3wks or 30wks pregnant. The time limit should be irrelevant. However, Alton does not see it this way - all he knows is that some babies which are born at 28wks can survive, therefore women should not be allowed to abort their foetus at this point. The fact is, that in the future, we'll be able to keep babies alive that were born at 18wks - so what then, do we reduce abortion restrictions to 8wks?

If it wasn't for the fact that women find it hard to find sympathetic doctors; that administrative delays exist; that abortion facilities are totally inadequate; then abortions over the 18wk mark would practically be wiped out anyway. Most women in fact have abortions before 12wks, this means the treatment is much less complicated & so less dangerous & less likely to cause side effects. Those aborting later on in pregnancy, are doing so mainly for health reasons, i.e. a 16wk amniocentesis test has shown the baby to be 'abnormal' in some way - it is these women who will bear the brunt of Alton's Bill if it is passed.

What we should be fighting for is free abortion on demand, with sympathetic doctors & a society that does not fill women with guilt for choosing to terminate a pregnancy - let alone real sex education & accessible birth control. Women have enough to cope with without being forced into the hands of back street abortionists.

## FRAUD SQUADS!

The government is stepping up action against people who work and sign on at the same time. Last year, 350,000 cases of so-called fraud were heard, including 30 women who were being hired by a firm of contract cleaners in Wetherby, & were all fined. The govt. reckon they save £40 million by charging claimants.

The increasing number of DHSS fraud squads will be especially checking up on hotels and caterers, taxi firms, cleaning companies and despatch riders - 100 despatch riders have been done recently. If you need any advice concerning fraud squads, then get in touch with Leeds Claimants' Union, 158, Hyde Park Road, LS6, tel. 753160.

## COOKERY CORNER!

1. Take a large plastic bottle - those 2 litre beer bottles are ideal. Fill half and half with petrol and diesel or petrol and paraffin. Cap it. Wrap around it a rag soaked in same mixture. When rag ignites, it will melt the bottle, sending the contents blazing everywhere. Good for starting a fire but not to throw. For a timer use a cigarette and matchbook - this will give you about 15 minutes. Tuck cig filter end into matchbook and place on combustible material. Light cig. It will burn down, igniting matches.

2. For this you need one of those fire extinguishers that contain water. The top unscrews, exposing the inner mechanism, which looks like a large version of a soda siphon. Now just pour the water out and refill with whatever you fancy. E.g. paint for banks, oil for roads, petrol for refilling your pocket lighter... Just screw the top back on and away you go.

# a private view

**GRAEAE**  
THEATRE COMPANY  
— Womens Company —

Very few people (20? 25?) attended Graeae Women's Theatre production in Bradford recently, which probably shows the lack of interest in issues related to disability. (Graeae is a company of disabled actors and actresses).

Everyone who wasn't there missed a good play. I've found with Graeae productions that there's so much going on in them, you only pick up a fraction of the messages they're giving out.

The 4 actresses were disabled, but the play didn't just deal with that, because disabled women are involved with much more. It was a play about art, about the relationships between women and men, and particularly about the relationships between women and other women. The latter relationships were shown to be much more honest and caring than the former.

There were plenty of 'serious' points to think about, but the play was also really funny in places - the women were trying to substitute a valuable sculpture in an art gallery for a copy. One of them hid the fake up her jumper, pretending to be pregnant, while the others provided a decoy - quite easy when you're in a wheelchair!

I found it interesting that art was one of the subjects of the play, related to feminism, to disability, and to so-called "ability" at art. So many people are put off art because they've been told they weren't good at it at school, whereas there are many ways that everyone can participate in the arts, including visual arts, whatever their experience or ability. Doing something that you are happy with, rather than for the approval of others, is more important, and this was one of the messages of the play.

GRAEAE entertains, educates and challenges the assumption that disability means inability. In taking the centre stage GRAEAE redefines ability!

GRAEAE Britain's first professional theatre company of disabled performers has been operating for seven years. GRAEAE has drawn public and critical acclaim for its presentation of disability issues to a wide audience of disabled and able bodied people, winning the British Theatre Association's Special Drama Award in 1984.

As well as a national touring company Graeae has a Theatre in Education team; is running an Arts Appreciation course for disabled young people in London and is organising a drama training course for 8861 Guirds for

Graeae tour with their productions from time to time, so look out for them, because I strongly recommend that you go & see them.