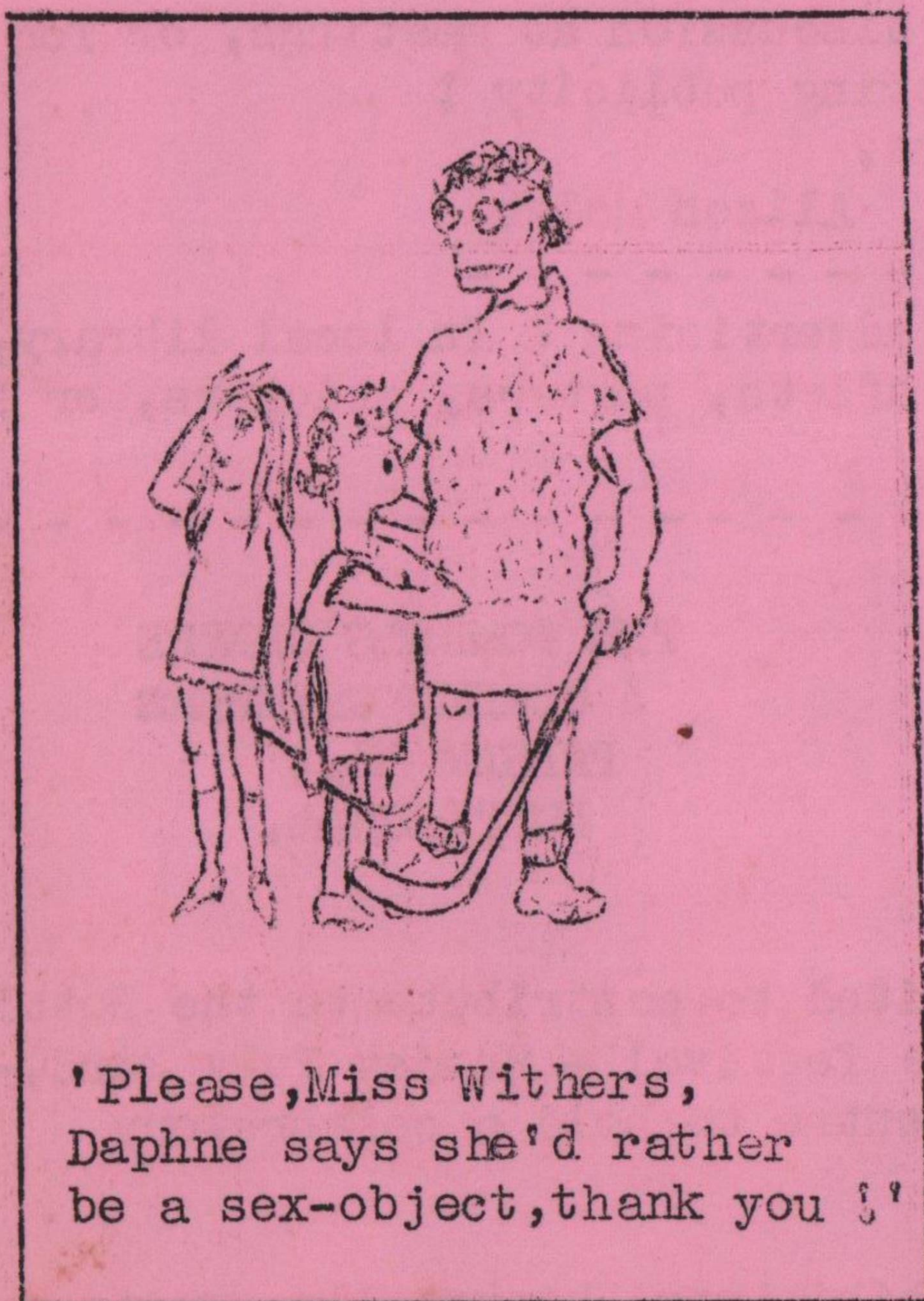


Libertarian Women's Network Newsheet. No. 5



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LETTERS

Plaistow,
London.

Dear sisters,

following the one-day East London Women's workshop, several women are now getting together to find premises to start up an East London Women's Centre. What goes on at the centre will depend on who is initially involved. Anyone with ideas, suggestions, and offers of help, please contact : Judy Wheeler, 10 Crescent Road, Plaistow, London E. 13.

yours,

Judy.

1 Lynnwood Place,
Maryfield,
Dundee.
Phone :Dundee 452063.

Dear sisters,

my main interest is in primary education - very reactionary in these parts, I am finding. I had some idea that schools had improved since twenty years ago ! Unfortunately I am the only mother in our group with a child at school, so far.

We are meeting every week in each others houses; we are mostly mums with under-fives; we have the use of typewriter and duplicator, but very little money. We plan a jumble sale to finance putting on a film on birth control, but this will have to be after the summer holiday now. We are trying to enlarge the group, and need to do some advertising. (*)

Could I hear from any mothers who are unhappy about their children at school ? It is not to be forgotten that schools - nursery schools too - are quite a force for propoganda to keep this society as it is !

How about a bit recommending relevant books and films ,eg. to take your possibly sympathetic man to, for discussion at meetings, or for friends who may have been put off by sniggering publicity !

yours,

Alison Malet

(*) does anyone know the best method of advertising ? In local library, Town Hall, Citizens Advice, or by leaflets, posters, stickers, or in local press ?

THE WOMEN'S CENTRE
3 COBDEN CHAMBERS
PELHAM ST.,
NOTTINGHAM.

Dear Sisters,

Nottingham W.L.G. has been invited to contribute to the Nottingham Festival in July and on the final day of the festival - Sunday July 23rd,- we have booked the market square in the city centre to hold a celebratory
..... WOMANS DAY.

In the morning we will have exhibitions, bookstalls, music and street theatre ; in the afternoon we are planning a National Womens Rally to which we have invited several prominent speakers, including Shirley Williams, Joyce Butler, Simone de Beauvoir, Germaine Greer, Evelyn Reed and others ; to

complete the day we hope to organise a closed women's meeting in the evening.

The aim is to organise a day in which all women feel they can take part and we are inviting representatives of womens organisations in the local area to participate in the co-ordinating committee and to make use of the day to publicise their own activities, ideas etc. Invitations will also be sent out to womens groups nationally and with publicity in the national press we hope to draw as many women as possible to Nottingham on that day - to demonstrate and debate their problems, ideas, hopes, etc. , in a truly mass action.

So come in festive spirit and in strength -

SISTERHOOD IS POWERFUL

Enquiries about accomodation to - Pam Ashley, 3 Sandfield Road,
Arnold,
Nottingham. Tel. Nott 267007

Genrral enquiries - telephone , Margaret Purdey, Nott.269197.

- written . The Women's Centre,
3 Cobden Chambers,
Pelham Street,
Nottingham.

PLUG plug PLUG plug

WOMEN'S DISCO at the Albion, Albion Rd., Newington Green,
London N.16. 14th July. 10p. GWLG.

* * * * *

"INSIDE STORY" Inside Story are offering 50% discount for orders of four or more - £1 buys 8 copies from Inside Story, 3 Belmont Road, London SW4. This seems to be a bloody good offer , as it's getting better & better.

* * * * *

HELP needed NOW

We have just heard that 2 unsupported mother claimants have formed a Housing Action Group withir the last week, because they are living in houses which the Council says is unfit for human habitation - the Council are going to re-house them eventually.*Vera's son Mark is 12 , and they want somewhere decent to live; Vera suffers from a condition made worse by damp, Mark has asthmatic bronchitis .

Please phone 852 8879 - and find out how you can help - because they will need it. Like the C.U's , Vera wants people with her, so that she never faces the Council alone.

EXTRA :*the GLC will not re-house Vera, because she is an unmarried mother .

HELP ! — NOW .

How the Gay Women's Liberation Group got off the ground.

The Gay Liberation Front, which united gay brothers and sisters, was started in the autumn of 1970. A tremendous feeling of solidarity and love between gay men and women was built up. It was good to see the traditional image of homosexual men hating lesbians and vice versa wiped out. It was good to become aware together of why we are treated as lepers in society, of why homosexuality is not touched in sex education, of why homosexuals are treated as sick people. We became aware that the very fact of being homosexual constituted a threat to the existing society, which for its existence needs the structure of breadwinning father, subordinate housewife-mother and children; authority and submissiveness, the state in a nucleus.

It became more and more apparent though that it was much more difficult for women to come to the meetings and to overcome their 'hang ups', than for our brothers. We realised that our struggle is a double one. Women have always been denied the right to assert themselves; one of the only places in which they have been able to voice themselves is in the home, in the kitchen, so that this has become their only security.

We realise that our solidarity is with women, that we have to fight together with our sisters in women's liberation for a self-determining position for women.

The only path open for the gay women was to form a separate women's liberation group with our homosexuality as a uniting factor.

WHAT WE ARE AIMING AT

1. We want to challenge the values of the system in which we find ourselves oppressed and therefore institutions like the family, the media, the education system, psychiatry, the law, religion, which are part of this.
2. We question the sexroles that people are socialised into in the family and the sexism arising from this. Gay women feel united with other women in their fight against the servicing role that women have been put into, eg. not only are women the slipperwarmers and food-defrosters at home, they are also the ones that hand the scalpel to the surgeon, they are never the surgeon; they are the ones who type the business letters, but never sign them.
3. Meanwhile we want to create a non-exploitative social scene by trying to organise discos and raise funds for a women's centre. Clubowners do exploit the fact that homosexuals feel they have to hide, to put up their prices.

COME AND HELP US ; ONLY TOGETHER CAN WE FIGHT OUR OPPRESSION -
- phone Women's Liberation Workshop (Flora) 01-437 6118

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NORTH LONDON GROUP - meets at the Albion, Albion Road,
(Newington Green), N.16.
Further information: write to Thermis,
C/o W.L. Workshop
SOUTH LONDON GROUP - write to Evelyn, C/o W.L. Workshop.

National Conference

A meeting to plan the next womens national conference was held in Birmingham, on June 3rd. There were women from the S.E., London, Midlands, S.W., N.E., and N.W. regions, plus Ellen Malos and Carolee Gerwin who were elected from the Manchester Conference to help in planning the next. Val Hart and Leonora Lloyd who had also been elected from the last conference, both sent apologies (two B'ham members were there instead of Val Hart.) We had papers on the organisation and structure of the conference from Carolee, Leonora and the Manchester Group. It was agreed to hold the next conference in LONDON, as Bristol couldn't manage it - the agreed date was OCTOBER 20th/21st/22nd - the anniversary of Skegness !

We spent a lot of time discussing the structure of the conference. We felt it was important to give all women a chance to air their views, to discuss theory and to plan specific actions. We felt the need for a conference that would stress co-operation and our joint strength rather than the conflicts and divisions between us.

organisation

- 1) We agreed that accomodation should be provided in a hall for women as there was a lot of disappointment about the way we were all split up at Manchester - it was also felt to be very important to cut the costs down as much as possible. Women with children, and heterosexual couples could be housed in private homes if this was required. We stressed the importance of providing all the facilities together so that we would waste as little time and energy as possible in travelling.
- 2) The creche will be organised along the lines agreed at Manchester (included over). One woman in London will take responsibility for it and will look for men who are committed to the idea to run it - possibly from Men's Liberation or Gay Liberation groups. It was suggested that local creches should be organised so that women would not have to take their children to London.
- 3) We agreed that we should charge one fee to cover everything : registration, accomodation and the social. This fee will depend on what we have to pay for the rooms hired in London. No-one will be admitted to the conference without a numbered ticket. Arrangements will be made for pre-registration and we hope that everyone who can will take advantage of this - the Manchester group pointed out that they hardly got into the meetings at all because of the time spent on registration and accomodation over the weekend. For this reason also we agreed that local groups should help with jobs over the weekend. We hope that the local groups will make arrangements about covering the costs of women who cannot afford the conference fee, so that there will be no need to turn anyone away at the door. We felt it would be easier for local groups to pool money in this way rather than try to organise it nationally.
- 4) No men will be admitted to the conference or the social as agreed at Manchester, but we will welcome their help with the crach.
- 5) Publicity for the conference should be dealt with at both a regional and a local level.

structure & content

We spent some time talking about why we wanted a conference and what we hoped to get out of it. We agreed that the main purposes were :- a) discussion and the sharing of ideas b) to enable us to join together and organise on a wider scale on issues that we thought needed it c) communications between groups d) to

strengthen our feelings of sisterhood and solidarity.

With these aims in mind we suggest the following agenda :-

Friday evening: registration and films.

Saturday - :9.30 - 10.30 :full session on the agenda for the weekend and to take descisions about press coverage and the media.

10.30 - 12.30 :workshops centering around Selma James' paper, 'Women, the Unions & Work- or what is not to be done'. It was agreed at Manchester that this paper and the six demands presented in it should be fully discussed at the next conference. We would like to suggest that each workshop should cover the whole subject, and taking into account the suggestions made by regions, should consider in their discussions the following questions :

- 1) whether the WL movement should make demands.
- 2) what is the position of WL on a) capitalism b) sexism and within that work, the family and children.

We realise that we are raising enormous problems here but we felt that it should be specifically stated that these were the kind of problems that we needed to tackle together at the conference.

2.00 - 4.00 :full session on the workshops - whether we want to pose new demands for the womens movement .

4.30 - 6.30 :workshops on the problems of organising women around participation issues. We wanted to move from discussion of a possible re-structuring of demands to a session on ways in which we are working with women now at the local level, bearing in mind questions of both theory and strategy. The suggested workshops were:

1. contraception & abortion	2. child care
3. unsupported mothers	4. claimants unions
5. Fakenham	6. women in media
7. literature collective	8. women's collectives
9. education.	

We wanted these workshops to be useful both for specific planning of co-ordinated activities and to begin to make some assessments as to what effects we are having in the different areas.

6.30 on - films

9.00 - social

Sunday

9.30 -12.30 :session on Radical Feminism as agreed at Manchester. It was suggsted that there should be a paper on this, and that we should use it to start discussion in workshops.

2.30 - 4.30 : full session on 'The State of the Movement' and the organisation of the next conference. We hope that this session would be used to discuss the various possible methods of organising inter/nationally and regionally and for everyone to get some idea as to how regional organisation is working.

The question of Chairwomen was gone into at length. We felt that there should be three at all times and that the planning group should provide three for the opening session. Others would be nominated from the floor and agreed upon at this session. We would like groups to be thinking about who they would like. We agreed to three microphones - one stationary and two floating - so that everyone can get access. The overall responsibility for the conference would rest with the women appointed at Manchester and the planning group delegated by the regions. The organisational work will be done by the London groups.

The next planning meeting will be on Sat. Sept 9th at Bristol, and detail d arrangements about this will follow.

Catherine Hall

B'ham Women's Liberation Group.

CRECHES

- REQUIREMENTS AS APPROVED BY MANCHESTER CONFERENCE.

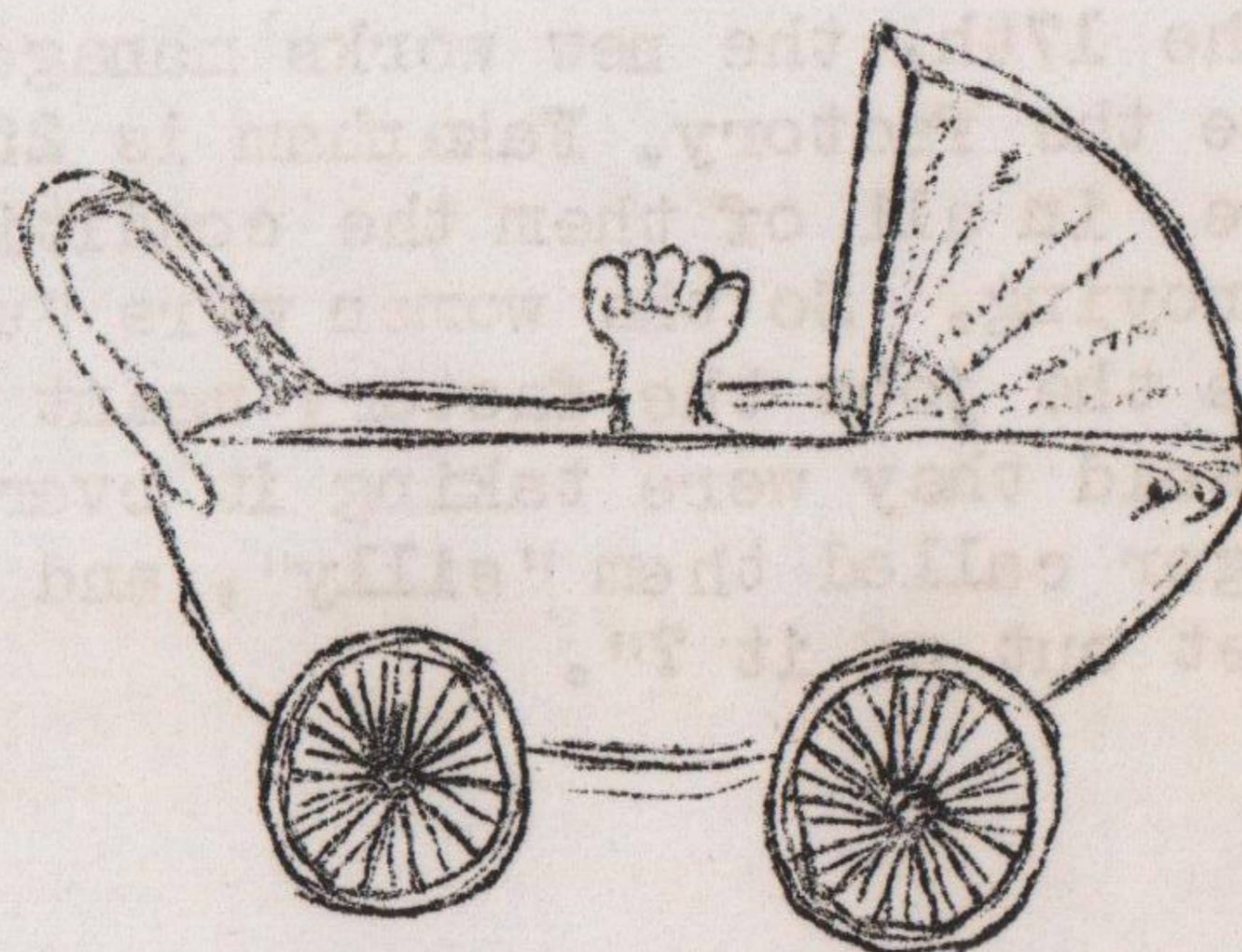


- 1: the place : should be convenient; close to lavatories; large enough to allow room to play; should have a door that shuts firmly.
- 2: people to run it : One person to be in over-all charge. In addition a rota of helpers. A ratio of at least 1 adult per 3 children under the age of 2yrs, and 1 adult per 6 children over that age, are needed.
- 3: toys & activities : these should be provided for all age groups. We would also like possibly a separation in different rooms between older & younger children, because the younger children tend to get overwhelmed & trampled on.
- 4: a quiet room : where younger children can sleep in proper cots.
- 5: a register chart at the door : with names of children in the creche, names of mothers, and where mothers can be found if possible. The children should have name labels on. Names of children taken away from the creche should be indicated on the chart.
- 6: food : hot meals should be obtainable for the children. Facilities should be provided for preparing food for babies, warming bottles etc. Drink & biscuits & fruit should be provided during creche hours, between meals.
- 7: other equipment & facilities : tissues, floor rags, towels, a place to change nappies.

* * * * *

- REQUIREMENTS FOR MOTHERS

- 1: mothers should notify the organisers in advance of the no. of children they are bringing, and what age they are,
- 2: mothers should register at the creche & leave notes on when children need to sleep, bottles, nappies etc. They should also indicate what time they are going to collect them.
- 3: mothers should be responsible for providing special food, nappies & bottles.
- 4: mothers should be responsible for feeding their own children at mealtimes.



JAMAICAN WOMEN

The following is extracted from 'NEWS & LETTERS', an American Paper -

Kingston, Jamaica - I am a female worker employed by the Colonial Shirt Factory in Kingston. The working conditions at this factory are very bad. We workers are treated like slaves. In order to take home a mere ten dollars per week one has to slave for 50 hours, including overtime.

We are constantly being watched, even when we go to the toilet, and on leaving the factory at the end of the day's work, our handbags are searched. When we started to work our plant manager told us that if any of us made efforts to join a union or form one, he would dismiss the whole working force in the factory even if it took one year to train new people. Also he would see to it that we were refused employment in the rest of the garment industry in Jamaica.

We are treated like school children. We are not permitted to talk when we are working. Once we were out of work and were passing the time by talking to each other. For this we were given one week suspension each. Once some sisters approached the manager and asked for a five cent increase. He told them that if they couldn't accept the 15cents per dozen pieces they could leave.

The trimmers on average can earn six dollars per week but 50 cents is deducted weekly for the trimming scissors, which are rented to them by the company.

These are typical of some of the conditions we Jamaican women have to undergo. Foreign companies are sucking our blood and the government supports them by doing nothing.

The Sexton Story

I went to an IS meeting this week, where Edna gave the full story of the occupation to date. This is taken from my notes. It is as accurate as possible, but not verbatim, and I will apologise for any mistakes I may make, now. (ros)

On March 17th, this year, the receiver was called in to Sextons Son & Everard, to wind it up. At the main Norwich works, the action group threatened to take over the factory. The 45 women working at the Fakenham branch heard nothing from the main factory, except second hand. They were not even told of the big meeting, which voted unanimously for the take over.

The workers were given their notice - a week, fortnight or month. Then they heard that a bid was being made for the main factory, by a Speculator living in Miami, who proposed to take all assets, and no liabilities. This was when the union first made its appearance; the speculator was hailed as a saviour of 200 jobs, even though 570 would be lost.

On the 17th, the new works manager at Fakenham tried to pay everyone off, and close the factory. Fakenham is 25 miles from Norwich; there are few factories there, in all of them the conditions are poor, wages low, and the work soul-destroying. So the women were "up against the wall" - they didn't want to lose the jobs the factory meant to the town. They simply refused to go, and said they were taking it over - 20 of them. The newly-promoted works manager called them "silly", and wanted to know "what you think you're going to get out of it?".

The weekend was quiet, with as yet no reaction from the owners. The women stayed in the factory all the time ; on Friday night they slept on bare-boards ! On Saturday the press arrived , took photos, and sat around waiting for something to happen. On Sunday the women started making plans. This was when they put up the barricades, and brought in supplies for the reaction which they expected on the Monday .

On the Monday, the electricity men arrived, as expected. They said they wanted to get in to read the meter - which they had read 2 weeks before. NO ONE was allowed in . The only worry was that the electricity could be cut off from the outside - but TV crews kept an eye out for this. The men from the Union (The National Union of Footwear ,Leather and Amalgamated Trades) arrived, and asked to come in. They were refused. Since the union wouldn't talk "in public", a deputation of 10 women met them elsewhere . The Union tried its best to scare them into giving up - they went on about the legal aspects - electricity being stolen;machines being withheld from the reciever; they were tresspassing, etc etc. "You're being silly. Go home to cook your children's meals." etc etc. The women needed moral & financial support ; they knew they wouldn't get strike pay. They had hoped for better than this.

wk

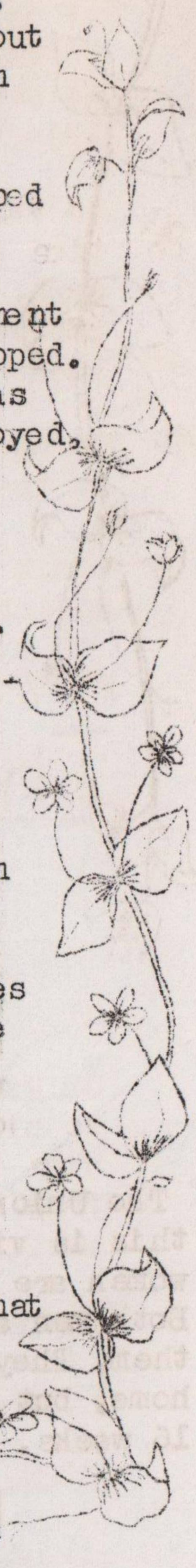
In the end the Union paid them £1.35/ They originally recieved unemployment benefit. Then it was stopped. Then they were allowed it again, then stopped. After being on & off agin, the unemployment benefit was stopped , and has never been on again - they say they haven't proved that they are unemployed.

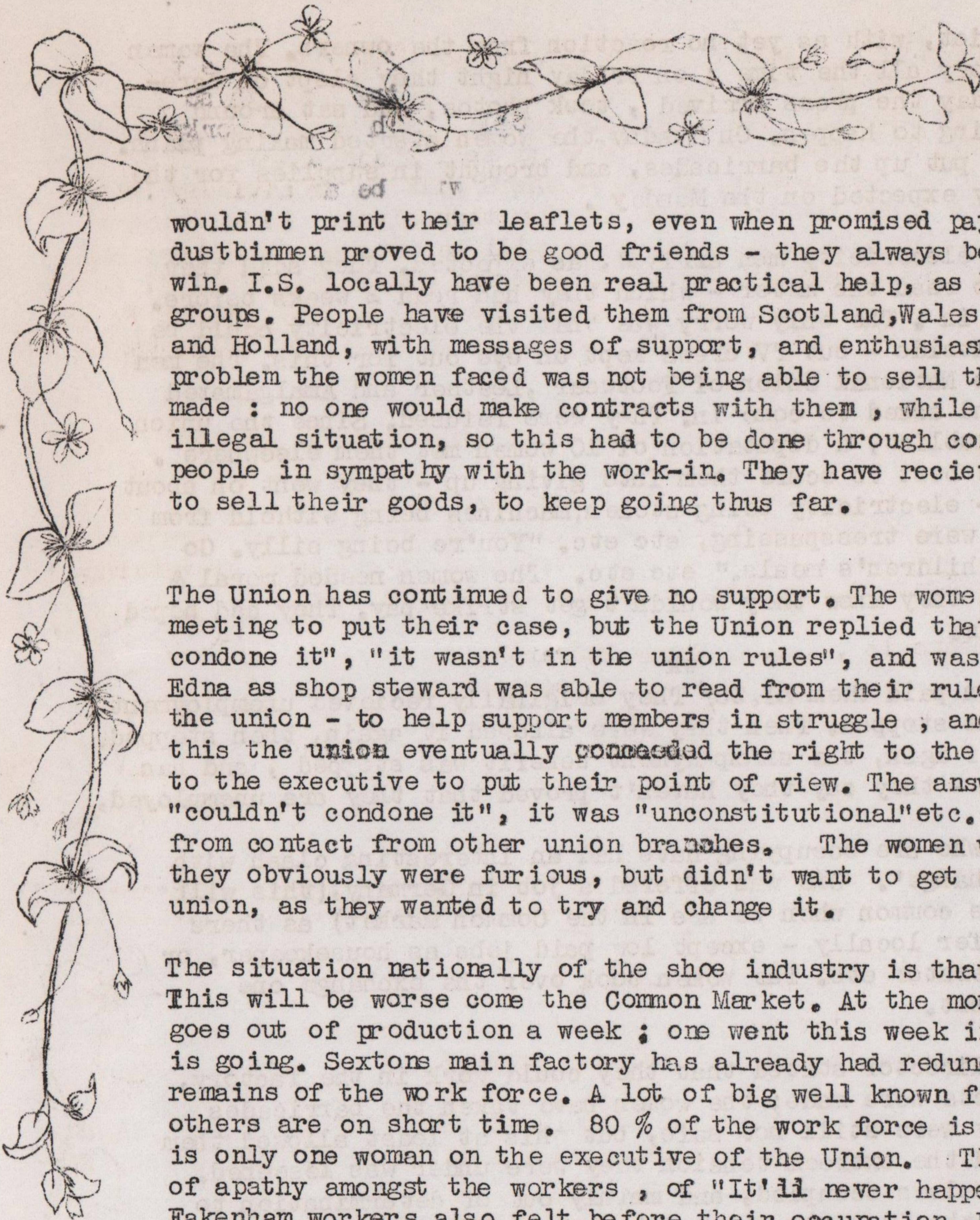
The ten women left who are occupying have had an interesting clash with the 'employment exchange'. One was offered a job in Germany,(this will become more and more common when we are in the Common Market) as there was so little to offer locally - except low paid jobs as housekeeper, or knitting machine operator etc. The women took over the exchange one afternoon , in protest.

Since the managing director stated that they could work in the factory, providing no contracts were made; the women have taken the barricades down. They knew they were still not safe, but this at least allowed them to unwind a bit, and the extreem tension they were under was lessened. Partly to keep themselves occupied, and mainly out of determination to keep going and win, the 10 women started to make things out of the pieces of leather left in the workshop bins. The money from sales went into the kitty, for their struggle and for raw materials - leather, buckles etc. At first the things were simple -shoulder bags, cushions etc, but now they are getting more ambitious ,making clothes . They have found new skills , and the realisation that it isn't only men that can do things, and that they had a lot more in themselves than they ever suspected.

They needed support, and found it from unexpected quarters, and found that some people they expected support from didn't give it. The local Tory M.P. stated that "Nobody has the right to work"! The press and T.V. have on the whole given

good coverage, but reportage has been extremely frivolous at times - they like to call it "the petticoat revolution". Although what they have said has usually been correct, it is what they leave out that has altered the case. The local papers have been very anti, as has been local reaction generally. Perhaps because it is a country town , inward-looking and isolated , the women have been physically avioded by local people - who must have spent a fortune by ducking into shops ! Some of the local feeling is against them as women who are not behaving in the subservient way expected ! The local printing works





wouldn't print their leaflets, even when promised payment. The dustbinnen proved to be good friends - they always believed they would win. I.S. locally have been real practical help, as have womens lib groups. People have visited them from Scotland, Wales, Germany, France and Holland, with messages of support, and enthusiasm. The main problem the women faced was not being able to sell the goods they made : no one would make contracts with them, while they were in an illegal situation, so this had to be done through contacts made with people in sympathy with the work-in. They have recieved enough support to sell their goods, to keep going thus far.

The Union has continued to give no support. The women went to a branch meeting to put their case, but the Union replied that they "couldn't condone it", "it wasn't in the union rules", and was "unconstitutional". Edna as shop steward was able to read from their rule book the aim of the union - to help support members in struggle, and embarrassed by this the union eventually conceded the right to the women to write to the executive to put their point of view. The answer they "couldn't condone it", it was "unconstitutional" etc. They were blocked from contact from other union branches. The women were stuck here - they obviously were furious, but didn't want to get chucked out of the union, as they wanted to try and change it.

The situation nationally of the shoe industry is that it is on the edge. This will be worse come the Common Market. At the moment one factory goes out of production a week ; one went this week in Norwich, another is going. Sextons main factory has already had redundancies in the remains of the work force. A lot of big well known firms have gone, and others are on short time. 80 % of the work force is of women, but there is only one woman on the executive of the Union. There is a feeling of apathy amongst the workers, of "It'll never happen here", which the Fakenham workers also felt before their occupation. Even the workers who remain in the main branch close their minds to attempts to tell them about the Fakenham battle & victory. As Edna said, "How do you wake them up - you can leaflet, and talk, but if they do not want to listen, how do you make them ?".

The Unions are controlled by the men. The most militant section is the clippers - this is virtually men only. There has not been a strike since 1926. Until the women are helped at home, they cannot be free to take part in Union activities. Both men and women have to be educated. The women now realise what they have in them. They have learnt a lesson - they always assumed that their place was in the home, but now home work is shared, their families have been behind them for the 16 weeks.

now

This struggle to keep the Fakenham jobs was a bitter necessity. The women were not just fighting for "pin money"; some of their husbands were earning £12 a week. The jobs also had to be saved for the youngsters of the town, 90% of young people leave Norfolk, the women didn't want them to loose the chance of a skilled job.

Edna, Nancy and the others now have a chance of keeping the factory going under their common ownership. A sympathetic labour M.P. suggested they get in touch with

the Scott-Bader Foundation , a co-operative venture to give factories to their workers. Negotiations have started, and everything is going through so far. The girls will own the factory with 2 private people. Each person working there will be a shareholder, but no-one will be able to sell their share, and if they leave, it will go to the new person. At first there will be an advisory board, but the women want to learn how to run it all for themselves. As at present, they will help each other with the work; there will be no sweated labour, and no piece work, one against another. They will appoint directors, who will be accountable to them all, but everyone will work, there'll be "no sitting in the boardroom". New people will have the thing explained to them, and would be helped to fit in. Everyone will get equal pay.

At the moment, there are contracts proposed, which they hope to conclude. They know the need to have "several strings to their bow" - unlike the previous management. They know that the system won't let them go the whole way ; that they will be up against competition from capitalist firms; that the buyers will be out for what they can get , but they are determined to get over everything, now that their determination has shown them how far they can get.

The Address of Fakenhams is Nancy McGrarth,
Sextons Occupation,
Fakenham,
Norfolk.



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Production No:5 .

150 copies of this issue was produced. We omitted the address list again, as there was so much to go in. It will be included in No.6.

YIPPIE !! We are out of dept ! Money in since last issue totals £7.01 , thanks to Anne, Peggy, Alison, Celia, Maryline, Maggie, Gillian, Judy, Mike & Ros. (The debit to date was £7.77½.)

But we haven't covered the cost of this issue -£5.77. So that's what I'm owed.

The cost per copy works out at 3p , of which 2½p is postage.

.....
.....
No:6

No.6 will be produced in 3 weeks time, on the weekend of 29th, & 30th July. Will anyone offer to produce it, as we may be in the throes of moving ??

Ros,
68 Chingford Rd,
Walthamstow,
London E.17.

ADDRESS - ADDITIONS

- Kensington Claimants Union : 59 Guelph St., Liverpool 7.
- Maggie Woolley : 100 Janefield St., Glasgow, G31 4BX
- Alison Malet : 1 Lynnewood Place, Maryfield, Dundee. Tel:Dundee 452063.