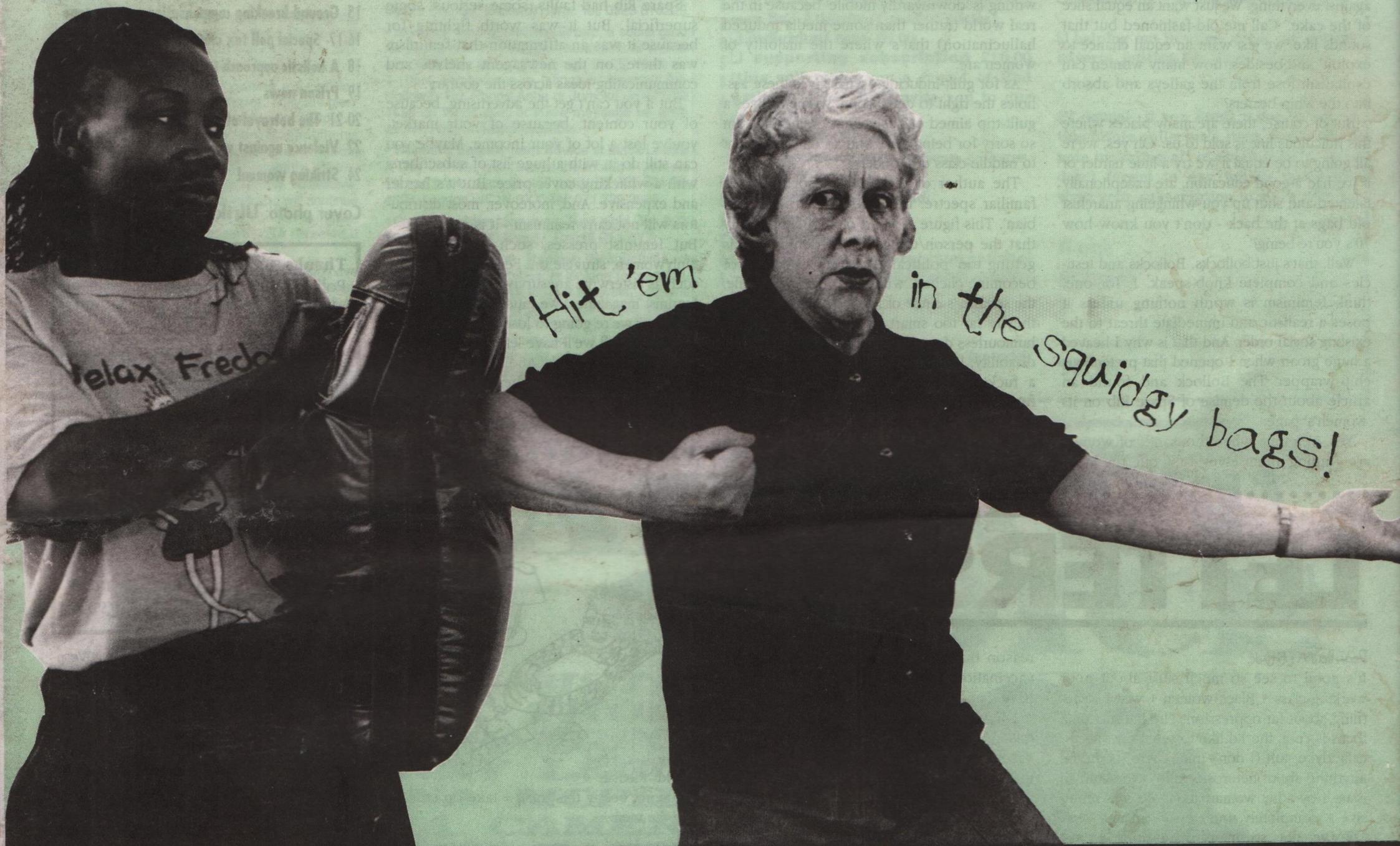


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Bad Attitude



★ Stoke Newington police in wigs ★ Striking women

★ Bikini Kill's Kathleen chats about riots, girls & cool things

★ Kiranjit Ahluwalia: "This law is no good for women"

News, gossip, rants & complete fiction



SPARE RANT

CONTENTS

Feminism is a powerful and disruptive idea. To my mind, the freedom and equality of all women would inevitably bring about the downfall of the capitalist system. Basically, a system that relies so heavily on the exploited labour (sexual and manual) of whole classes of people, just couldn't afford to lose the labour of its biggest group of serfs - women. And that is why I remain a little dubious of assimilationist politics proposed by some women. 'We're not against everything. We just want an equal slice of the cake.' Call me old-fashioned but that sounds like 'we just want an equal chance to exploit' and besides, how many women can capitalism lose from the galleys and absorb into the whip-bearers?

But of course, there are many places where this ridiculous line is sold to us: 'Oh yes, we're all going to be equal if we try a little harder or if we had a good education, are exceptionally talented and shut up you whingeing anarchist old bags at the back - don't you know how 70's you're being?'

Well, that's just bollocks. Bollocks and testicles and complete knob-speak. I, for one, think feminism is worth nothing unless it poses a realistic and immediate threat to the existing social order. And that is why I heaved a huge groan when I opened that pretentious chip-wrapper The Bollock and found an article about the demise of Spare Rib on its 'women's' page.

Yes, in a time when thousands of women are finding themselves first out the door

when it comes to redundancies (barely having had a chance to get the seat warm), when the majority of women are either in crap jobs or no jobs, when we're losing, bit by bit, every single fucking right we spent the last hundred years fighting for, when the reality for most women is one of being economically forced back to the home (and a man), THIS bunch of tossers are gloating that SR folded because it had a downwardly-mobile, guilt-inducing ethos.

Excuse me, but maybe most feminist writing is 'downwardly mobile' because in the real world (rather than some media induced hallucination) that's where the majority of women are.

As for guilt-inducing - what gives these assholes the right to deem some women's lives a guilt-trip aimed exclusively at them? Oh I am so sorry for being alive and an embarrassment to middle-class do-gooders.

The author of the article also used that familiar spectre: the 'one-legged black lesbian'. This figure is a sort of shorthand to say that the person/thing they're denigrating is getting too 'politically-correct', in danger of becoming cliched, without irony. Meanwhile, the speaker's circle of friends snigger politely: they're far too smart to fall into the mire of humourless dogma. Well fuck you. I don't find disability, lesbianism or being black funny or a fucking cliché. We're all human, not a fucking joke for uptight bastards who can't cope with their privilege but can't give it up.

And besides, when was the last time you read about a one-legged black lesbian? or any

disabled black lesbian? or a black lesbian? or a lesbian? in Spare Rib? in The Disgusting? anywhere? You see?

This revolting full-page of bile and insults, which probably earned the author more than the editors of Spare Rib earned in a month, is just the latest in a long line of similar rubbish that's been pouring out of this ridiculous, posturing 'Women's' page. This and others like it, are no more than political transvesticism. It is cocksucker feminism, performed totally for the male-gaze.

Spare Rib had faults, some serious, some superficial. But it was worth fighting for because it was an affirmation that feminism was there, on the newsagent shelves and communicating ideas across the country.

But if you can't get the advertising, because of your content, because of your market, you've lost a lot of your income. Maybe you can still do it; with a huge list of subscribers, with a whacking cover price. But it's harder and expensive. And, moreover, most distributors will not carry feminism - it is not sexy.

But feminist presses, such as Sheba and Onlywomen, struggle on. Feminist bookstores such as Sisterwrite are surviving. So are radical feminist magazines. We must protect what we have - or we're going to lose it.

And then all we'll have left is imitation feminism, the daddy's girls. And they'll survive the recession, not because their feminism was more to women's taste but because daddy paid for it all.

But who'll be left to say otherwise?

Marianne Haste

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Cover photo: Ulrike Preuss/Format

Thanks to: Susan, Heidi, Frances, Polly, Svenja, Sanja, Formal brilliant photo agency, Leveller graphics, 121 Bookshop and all contributors, subscribers + Bikini Kill for nearly doing a benefit!

Distributed by: Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN. Tel: 081 986 4854

Printed by: Goodhead Press, Chaucer International Estate, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon OX6 7QF.

Bad Attitude, 121 Railton Road, London SE24 0LR. Tel: 071 978 9057

LETTERS

Dear Bad Attitude.

It's good to see so much stuff about poor working-class + Black women + wow! something about fat oppression! The international focus is cool, tho I'd like to see more specifically dyke stuff (I don't think there should be anything about heterosexuality - the stuff in issue 1 by a het woman about sex was repulsive + completely unnecessary in my view. They've got so many magazines + just shouldn't be represented in terms of their hetness - struggles, oppression, valid identity stuff - yeah! but not stuff about fucking men. Disgusting!

I really hope it don't get too tiring 4 yas + there's enough of yas 2 do stuff. Thanks a lot, Dykely, Michele



Your article on vaccination was one of the most informative I've read. There is not too much support about for non-vaccinating parents. I visited a prospective doctor and told her I would not be vaccinating my 3 yr. old child. She explained that she would have to confide with the other GP's in the practise, to decide if I would be a liability, before accepting me. Apparently the practise needs a high percentage of their patients vaccinated before being paid. The yearly smear test falls into this system too. Is this the real

reason that the Doctors are pushing vaccination? She added that I would not have a choice if I was living in France!

I have a doctor now who didn't mention this percentage system and is not pushing vaccination. For the record she mentioned that there are cases of parent contracting Polio from their childrens nappies after the vaccinated child had passed the virus through. The live virus that was used would totally paralyse but the new dead virus that is used now would "only" partially paralyse.

P.S. I recommend a very good book by an american doctor, Robert Mendelsohn - 'How to raise a healthy child in spite of your Doctor'. Ballantine books.

Dear M/s

I was saddened by 'My girl Lollypop' (BA 2). What made me sad was the attitude that Sarah had towards the women she cruised. Men have from time immemorial been inconsiderate to women + to each other - but surely we do not want to copy them. Let us women continue to be tender + thoughtful + kind to each other. Let us enjoy our company secure in the knowledge that we have an unspoken agreement to treat each other considerately Womens support for each other is what enables us to survive in this man dom-



inated world. Please, let us not betray this trust, + take up cruising like the men.

Lis

Dear everyone at Bad Attitude.

I think you're doing great with the newspaper - it's just what we all need right now to keep informed and connected. Keep going for a very long time!

I thought you did a really excellent job of editing & producing the article that I wrote for the last issue on 'Jumma Women Fighting Back'. But I feel now, re-reading it, that in trying to tell other women about Jumma women's struggles and their inspirational strength and courage, I painted an over-optimistic picture.

-Yes, women in the Chittagong Hill Tracks ARE determined to keep on struggling: their lives depend on it. But they desperately need support in so many ways. You can do this by writing letters to the Bangladesh High Commission to protest the continuing war and to

the Foreign Office to question British government's role in that war.

Joyoti Grech
Bangladesh High Commission, Queens Gate, London SW7.
Foreign Office, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AH.

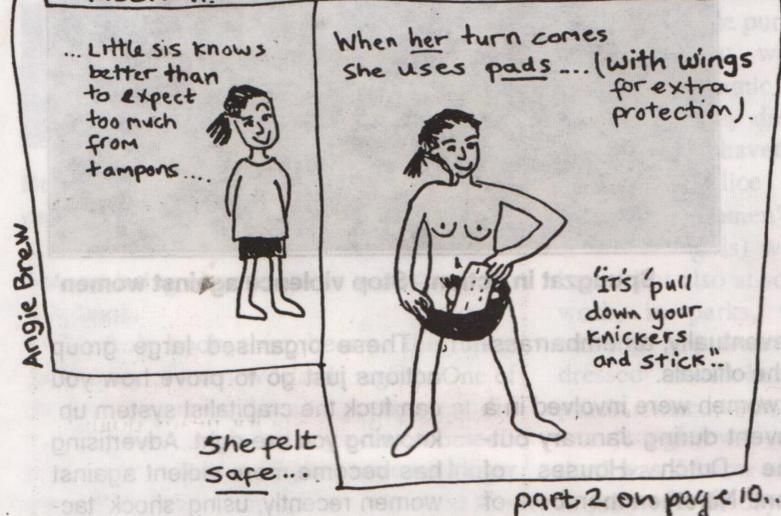
Dear Bad Attitude

Congratulations on your 1st two issues, they were excellent! Before, newspapers and newsreaders portrayed the world as boring, with too many wars, fights + poverty. But now for the 1st time theres a informative, easy to read and not too long magazine with it all in. For the first time in my life I am truly interested in the news. Not only are there news stories, but there are informal interviews, I especially liked the one with Carol (bus driver). It was fun, witty + very informative!!! What I would like to see in *Bad Attitude* is a penpal section/advice page/problem page! lots of love

JR

- We're trying to get an 'Auntie Attitude' column sorted out for the next issue, so send your problems in and we'll have a go!

Thanks for all these and other great letters - one of the perks of the job!



Angie Brew

part 2 on page 10...

Mixed race lesbians and gay men meet up

On March 27th 1993 the first ever conference for lesbians and gay men of mixed racial heritage was held in London. Approximately 40 lesbians and gay men attended the conference at Body Positive in Earls Court, London, where we held discussions and workshops during the day. It was very encouraging to see people from Manchester and Bristol as well as London turning up.

Matthew and Namita ran a media workshop where they showed a video they had produced specially for the day. It featured a compilation of clips of mixed race people in films (not exactly positive images!). This was followed by a discussion on the representation of people of mixed

racial heritage in the media.

In the 'biological racism' workshop Werner looked at the sort of pseudo-scientific ideas put out by anthropologists on 'ethnicity'. The workshop pinpointed the contradiction in the fact that there is no scientific basis for the idea of 'races', but that racism based on this idea is a very real problem in our society. A lot of the research referred to in this workshop was done by political activists campaigning against segregation in the USA in the sixties. Their aim was to disprove the racist theories of anthropologists. The group from this workshop hoped to go on and produce a booklist on the subject.

Our third workshop was a writing workshop run by Kamila; here people wrote and talked about when they were 'first made to feel different'. This then opened up into a wider discussion. We hope that some of the written work produced at his workshop will be published in our conference report.

In the afternoon Setareh ran a workshop using art and images to express ideas. People in this workshop looked at what had influenced them or formed their ideas, and their feelings about these. Themes that emerged from people's paintings and drawings were: religion, spirituality and duality. The discussions that followed led one participant to comment that "the dualism of mixed racial

heritage is a metaphor for becoming whole".

Clare ran a workshop on the role of mixed race communities in wider black history, looking at historical examples from South Africa, India and the US as well as from Britain. This sparked off a wider discussion on notions of black unity and inevitably about the terms we use to describe ourselves: black, people of colour, mixed race, mixed racial heritage and the ideas behind them. We also talked about the role of MOSAIC, the group of mixed race lesbians and gay men who had organised the conference. People were frustrated with meeting in a very insular way and wanted to put their ideas across into campaigns, newspapers, television and to the academic world, as well as to each other in day conferences such as this.

As we all met back at the end of the day everyone was buzzing with the discussions we'd been having during the day. People were full of good ideas for next year's conference and about how to make it bigger and better. Personally I was very proud to have been involved in organising the day and hope it is the first of many!

We rounded off a very successful day with a social at the WKD cafe/bar in Camden.

Clare Ramsaran

Contact **Mosaic** c/o Black Lesbian & Gay Centre, BM Box 4390, London WC1N 3XX.

Two new mags for disabled women

Boadicea

Boadicea is a new newsletter by and for disabled women in London and published by GLAD (Greater London Association of Disabled People). It was set up after GLAD's Disabled Women's Conference in June '92. Its ultimate aim is to create a disabled women's network within London.

Subscriptions: individuals £3/ year, £5/2 years, organisations £7/year, £12/2 years. Cheques to GLAD, address: 336 Brixton Road, London SW9 7AA. Available in large print and on tape.

DPP International

Disability, Pregnancy and Parenthood International is a forum for the exchange of information and experience. The first issue will be available in January '93, including articles on a gynaecology clinic for disabled women in Chicago, the first national conference of parents with disabilities held in the UK and a profile of the woman who runs the telephone helpline for ParentAbility.

Contact: Arrowhead Publications, 51 Thames Village, London W4 3UF, tel: 081 994 0896.

Naked aggression?

Women in the village of Aguid in the northern Philippines have taken the initiative in resisting so-called 'development' schemes which would destroy their communities and culture.

Central government had planned to 'drown' villages, burial sites and fields, by interfering with the Chico River and starting large-scale mining.

Faced with bulldozers, the women used a taboo against men viewing naked women. The women advanced

unclothed and the operators fled in panic. I wish a naked woman drew that much respect here!

Info from: **Counter Information**, Pigeonhole CI, c/o Forth Street, Edinburgh EH1, Scotland.

Abortion pretty much banned in Poland

For the first time since 1956, Polish women have been denied the right to abortion. A new law banning abortion was passed and approved in both houses of the Polish parliament by 30th January '93, this outlaws all abortions except: 1: when three doctors decide that pregnancy or childbirth would pose a severe threat to the woman's life or 2: in the case of rape (and whether a woman is raped or not is usually decided by other people, so even if a woman has been raped she may still have to have the child).

Amazingly, this law was viewed as 'liberal', as a total ban on all abortions was predicted, with three years imprisonment for women who underwent abortion and the same for the doctors involved. The passing of this law is

thanks to the hold the Catholic Church has over Poland. In 1988 the church created a proposal on the above lines and has used this as a basis for new drafts of the anti-abortion bill. The Catholic Church has even gone so far as to threaten to refuse a christian burial to anyone who objected to signing its anti-abortion petitions in 1991.

The church has also been working to outlaw sex education, family planning centres and contraceptives, organising groups of young men to buy out chemists of their stocks of contraceptives in order to destroy them.

Polish women fought back, setting up pro-choice groups and women's groups in response. Some thought optimistically that the anti-abortion bill would give rise to femi-

nism in Poland. It has even been pointed out that by ignoring the 1956 Abortion Law that is still on the Polish statute books, Poland is in breach of International Law. Unfortunately, Polish women seem too exhausted by the transition to the Western form of capitalism, with rising prices, unemployment, cuts in services, privatisation, nationalism and all that other crap to create mass opposition and only a hard core of activists persist.

Is there still a women's movement in this country? What's happening for women? Where? Why? How?

Find out in this month's issue.

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'Spitting mad!' at sexist ads

A group of women in Amsterdam have set up an activist group against sexist bill-poster advertising. The group is called "Spuugzat" which comes from the essential Dutch phrase, "Ik ben het spuugzat" roughly translated as "I'm spitting mad!"

Spuugzat use three levels of attack on advertising using misogynist and racist imagery. Direct action includes painting out the offensive poster or using graffiti to increase public awareness and anger. People will say that they ignore advertising, but as part of our everyday surroundings it does play a disgusting insidious way in which women especially, are perceived. Graffiti challenges this.

Spuugzat also make official complaints to the authorities responsible. And for the long term, Spuugzat are working with the authorities to change the actual codes and their wording. Standards should be made more specific on sexism and racism. Who decides what the vague terms "immoral" or "indecent" mean?

It all sprang into action on the 8th March 1992 when the occupation of the Reclame Code Commissie

(RCC) took place. About forty women from Amsterdam and further afield were brought together through a network of friends and associates to make their angry complaints heard. The RCC is the authority responsible for regulation and complaints, but they also make the ads themselves. Their annual report for 1991 states that only ten complaints were made on sexist grounds for that year, and they weren't accepted. Others aren't even acknowledged as viable for the statistics.

The obstacle course of bureaucracy means that by the time the case of an accepted complaint is heard, the bill-posters have already been up for several months. For example a poster for Mazda cars used shock tactics similar to Benetton styly. It used the image of a white woman who had been smashed in the eyes (not make-up), resulting in a bruise showing the range of vivid colours that Mazda cars come in. This advert was withdrawn after three months on the streets showing how possessing a Mazda car is as attractive as a battered woman.

As a result of the occupation of the RCC - a 'horror' story still

spoken of in the building, Spuugzat have managed to get meetings with them to discuss checking posters before they go out. This has been criticised as censorship, but as Spuugzat points out, this is a necessary guideline for television adverts.

The vague wording of the present guidelines means that 'people don't make complaints on sexist grounds' as the RCC chief secretary said during the occupation. However this just means that they aren't accepted as legitimate. A Christian group won a first appeal against 'Love' jeans on 'immoral' grounds. Their traditional values can be aligned better to the moral terms of the guidelines, although they were later defeated.

On the 25th November 1992 Spuugzat had another massive demonstration spraying graffiti stencils "Against Violence against Women". This was outside advertising agencies which especially use misogynist and racist imagery for shock value. An open daytime demonstration, thirteen were arrested and charged with 'public violence' (against the walls and pavements supposedly?) and kept for 50 hours. The case was dis-

missed eventually, an embarrassment to the officials.

Other women were involved in a similar event during January outside the Dutch Houses of Parliament. Nineteen members of the public were arrested including passers-by. Twelve were set free later that night, but the rest were held for 50 hours. Again, there was no charge and it wasn't even officially recorded.

These organised large group actions just go to prove how you can fuck the capitalist system up, knowing you are right. Advertising has become more violent against women recently, using 'shock' tactics of misogynist and racist imagery to catch attention. This is why the way in which we respond to advertising has to be aggressive as well because it is war.

Vanida



Spuugzat in action: 'Stop violence against women'

Zagreb women form centre for war victims

The Centre for Women War Victims has been formed in Zagreb by several feminist groups working against the "problems of violence in patriarchal and authoritarian society." Projects of the centre will include establishing self-help groups and mobile clinics in refugee camps, a telephone hotline, and refugees/ houses for women who have survived war violence and rape.

They emphasise they are a "feminist, alternative, decentralised and non-government project to support women war victims." In the self-help groups and women's houses, decisions will be made by refugee and war-raped women themselves.

Those at the Centre intend to exclude any manipulation of the sufferings of these women - by bureaucracy or use as nationalist propaganda. The Centre will help women from other areas to establish similar groups.

Groups in Zagreb working with



the Centre include the Autonomous Women's House, the Anti-War Campaign of Croatia, the Informative-Documetary Women's Centre, Independent Alliance of Women, and Women's Lobby. Outside Zagreb they have links with the Dalmatian Committee of Solidarity (Split), Women's Initiative (Rijeka peace movement) Monika Hauser Initiative (Zenica), Women's Initiative (Sarajevo peace movement). Also with women's groups in Belgrade such as the SOS phone hotline for women and children facing violence (see issue 2).

There'll be more about the Centre for Women War Victims in future issues. The Centre and the Autonomous Women's House can be contacted at: Dordiceva 6 Flat 9, Croatia 41000 Zagreb, (38-41-433-659/ 38-41-434-189/ Fax 38 41 434 189)

War against women

Another women's march against rape and violence happened in London on 7th of March. It was called **Stop the War against Women** and was particularly concerned with rape and abuse of women in warfare.

Recent war events on the territory of ex-Yugoslavia have been highlighted by the British media, among them the issue of rape, from rather pathetic perspectives. But, rape in war is nothing new, it has been happening in past and present and everywhere, and it's been always against women. The British media's concern is not about women, but about fear, because the war is not safely far away in Africa and Asia.

Sian gave an excellent speech on behalf of Women's Aid to Former Yugoslavia. She pointed out that women are raped in all wars by all armies soldiers, including those of UN troops. Rape is not happening only in wars, it is the part of the culture of

male violence.

Women from four women's groups from Zagreb sent a letter stressing the dangers of dividing raped women by nation or political attitudes of men who raped them, and also dangers of playing with numbers, because whether 50 000 women have been raped or just one, rape is a war crime.

The speakers from Somalia, Palestine and Ireland spoke of women's suffering and struggle in their homelands and underlined again the ignorance which saturates the British media when/if informing from these regions.

The war in Bosnia is still going on with no hope of finishing soon. Meanwhile, raped women refugees have been "treated" in a terrible psychiatric hospital in Belgrade because SOS hotline and recently established Centre for Raped Women have no space to provide help other than telephone counselling. In Zagreb, a refuge for battered women exists, but the

women's groups mentioned before still need money, books, counselling training, medicines. What we can do here is help them as much as we can, but it is maybe more important to campaign and put pressure here, on British government and the United Nations to declare rape as a war crime, to bring rapists to an International Court and to change the immigration restrictions for women war refugees.

The demonstration ended in traditional way: by a minute of silence to remember raped and killed women, followed by a minute of noise to express our rage and determination to fight.

Women's Aid to Former Yugoslavia, 20 Tennyson Road, Portswood, Southampton SO2 1GW, tel: 0703 551 094

Women Against War Crime, Box 110, 190 Upper Street, London N1 1RQ, tel: 071 700 2800

In 1984 I was a contented housewife happy to support my family and to ensure that my washing was the whitest in our street!!

Things changed dramatically, when my husband came home and announced that he was "on strike" and that he had no intention of crossing a picket line. My only reaction was to worry about how we would pay our bills. Arthur Scargill came in for a lot of stick and I believed that it would be all over in a matter of weeks.

Suddenly, I began to watch all the political programmes and began to suspect that things were not quite as the media would have us believe, I began to meet other miners' wives and started to realise that we had a great deal to offer each other. This was the first time I had met any other people associated with my husband's pit (let alone his industry) as we lived in isolated communities and the society of the coalfields had changed over a period of time. I live in a small hamlet with about 60 dwellings, yet only six miners lived here, of course every home had a relative in the industry, but actual miners were scarce.

Useful ploys

The South Wales Women's Support Group was founded very early on in the strike. Our meetings and activities attracted women from all over the South Wales coalfield, Women from Celynen in the East met with women from Cynheidre in the West. A great boost has when the Greenham women came to support us, they understood our fight and we learned a number of useful ploys for dealing with the police. We had met, declared our stake in our husbands' jobs, our communities and our children's futures. Nothing could stop us now.

'Special rights' for Colorado queer bashers

In a November 1992 referendum in Colorado, 53% voted for a constitutional change that bars any gay rights legislation, even if individual cities want to pass it in the future.

This right-wing led campaign refuses "special rights", allowing discrimination against lesbians and gay men even in basic issues of housing and employment. With this legal endorsement anti-gay violence immediately tripled. Even heterosexuals have been assaulted for having pro-tolerance stickers on their cars. Some shops have signs in their windows saying "Homosexuals stay out".

In response to this disgusting piece of shit legislation and manic frenzy of homo/lesbophobia a boycott of Colorado has been called. Colorado sells mainly tourism and ski holidays, but also herbal teas, sports equipment and Coors beer.

Amendment 2 is a right-wing backlash to the gay rights ordinances Denver, Boulder and Aspen. Obviously people are angry with lesbians and gay men for not staying silent and invisible. Only a kick where it hurts (economy) will make this Hate State repeal Amendment 2.

Maybe some gay-friendly businesses are at risk with the boycott, but if hate legislation like this goes down without challenge, lesbians and gay men will live in constant fear.

Links made during the strike proved to be so strong that they have endured and developed. One group of people that we had spent little time considering before the strike, were the lesbian and gay community. I suppose we felt that their lives had nothing to do with us. Now we were the "Enemy Within" and all those groups who had tried to warn us about the attacks on them were now the groups who were giving us the greatest support.

Lesbians & gays - never raise an eyebrow

A number of walls and prejudices were toppled during 1984/85 and I can honestly say that there is now a valley in South Wales where a red van painted with the 'Lesbian and Gay Support the Miners' logo never raised an eyebrow. If anyone was foolish enough to remark on it, there were plenty of people who could and did correct them.

The eight years between 1985 and the current attacks on mining communities have been politically difficult. Lessons and strengths learned during that period have led the women along different paths, and through it all a loose network has operated within our valleys and NWAPC and SWWSG have provided the more active women with information and contacts.

October 1992 was payoff time. We had warned the public that the destruction of the British coal industry was the dearest wish of the Conservative Government and now Heseltine had played his last card. I was jubilant, now the public would have to acknowledge what had been happening to us, our children, the unemployed and homeless.

Like an old pair of slippers

It was like slipping on an old pair of worn slippers, the phone was ringing, old friends were back in daily contact and class struggle politics were back on the agenda. This culminated in a large rally to support the local pit Betws, named on the closure list. It was the largest demonstration that Ammanford has seen, but Betws Colliery is the only proper industry the area has.

One of the banners that marched with the South Wales NUM area was that of the re-formed Lesbian and Gay Support the Miners Group.

They had the loudest cheer as we all marched through the town. When anyone asked about the banner, people eagerly explained about their support in 1984 and that they were showing their support again. Contacts are made to extend onto others, our valley has had the benefit of contacts with lesbians and gay men, now other communities are on the same path and the ripples created are extending.

Pit Camps have been set up at a number of threatened collieries and the support that the women have had is fantastic. Once again the women are leading the way. During the strike we undertook direct action because our husbands would be sacked if they were prosecuted. In no time at all we were instigating actions and using all the strengths discovered within us.

Now the Boyd report has been published and as usual it is a whitewash, a cosmetic service to appease the Tory Backbenchers. It is what we expected, more lies and false promises from a government that places financial issues higher on their agenda than human beings.

The Boyd report was produced by a firm of

American engineering consultants appointed by Heseltine. In their latest report they said that the pits had only a "short-term future" "not in the hands of the coal board" - with the dire "modifications" in work practices and safety procedure that we can expect with privatisation.

Blocking their big fancy cars!

We organised a picket when the Boyd people came to Betws. We tied a rope across the gates and blocked the road when they arrived in their big fancy cars. They were stunned! They said to us "Ladies, this isn't nice". We confronted them and said they had to realise what they were doing, for they would be taking our community and everything we had from us.

Women are leading the way, if we have to place ourselves in the forefront we will. Our homes and communities are at stake and we'll defend them to the end.

The words of the song that we sang, wherever we gathered, sums it all up "WE ARE WOMEN WE ARE STRONG".

Sian James



Women's Pit Camps

The Women's Pit Camps welcome visits from all supporters. They also need donations and messages of support, so get in touch...and here's how:
Grimethorpe: 0831-666713, Barnsley, South Yorkshire
Houghton Main: 0226-757718, Barnsley, South Yorkshire
Parkside: 0850-747309, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside

photo: Joanne O'Brien/Format

Rufford: 0831-803546, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire
Markham Main: 0302-300709, Doncaster, South Yorkshire
Trentham: 0782-644467, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire
Vane Tempest: 0860 328568, Seaham, Co. Durham
More info from: National Miners' Support Network, 081-985-1905

CHILD SUPPORT ACT Don't Panic!

On 5th April the Child Support comes into full effect (see *Bad Attitude 1*). As you may have heard, this is a horrendous piece of law. The Child Support Agency (a new creation linked to the Department of Social Security - DSS) will now be able to force single parents (ie 97% women) to reveal the identity of the 'absent parent' so that they can claim maintenance from them. This will affect around one million families.

Single parents on benefit won't get any extra money from this; the treasury will keep all maintenance they succeed in getting. And the fact is that if single mothers aren't in touch with the biological father, it's usually because they don't want to be. The Act makes an exception for women and children at risk of "harm or undue distress", but this is unlikely to be broad enough: many single mothers may face harass-

ment or violence from ex-partners.

Especially vicious is the penalty for "unreasonably refusing to cooperate" - £8.80 per week deducted from (starvation rate) benefit for six months, followed by £4.40 for a year.

Even fathers on benefit will have to pay £2.25. And lesbian mothers who used self-insemination will face particular problems.

The law is a calculated piece of social control, trying to make women financially dependent on a man (rather than the state). It is also outrageously intrusive: because you're poor some bureaucrat can now demand information on your sex life and the parentage of your children.

But **don't panic!** If you don't want them to contact the father, these are some answers you can give:

- It was a one-night stand, you don't know his

name

- You don't know where he is or he's left the country
- It may cause risk of harm or undue distress
- You had more than one partner
- He's violent and may take it out on you or the children.

Be careful, because the Child Support Agency have powers to do a lot of snooping from any information they get.

Also, you can:

- Take a friend with you to DSS interviews (this is your right)
- Take notes or tape the interview
- Get the interviewer's name and report any threats made
- Use the Short Birth Certificate, which is free and doesn't name the father
- Tell people about this repressive law!

For more info, contact: Tottenham Claimants Union: 081 802 9804, or Single Parents Action Network: 0272 514231, or Campaign Against the Child Support Act: 071 837 7509. Or if you have problems you could go to a Citizens' Advice Bureau.

SEX TOURISM IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

PART OF THE PACKAGE FOR WHITE WESTERN SLIMEBAGS

"One of the very early episodes of Star Trek saw Captain Kirk and his crew on a distant planet peopled by a beautiful gentle race of people, where life was given over totally to pleasure. Kirk and Spock had a hard time on the philosophy front, trying to convince the aliens that there ought to be more to life than the pursuit of pleasure. Well for 'distant planet' read Thailand, the pleasure centre of the world." (from 'Go Places' 1989 brochure produced by Sunmed, who are part of Redwing Holidays Ltd, a major British tour operator part owned by British Airways).

Every year thousands of British men visit South East Asian countries to have the 'adventure holiday of a lifetime' during which they sexually use and abuse the women and children of these countries. Many of these men go through small companies like Stag Tours in Norwich but many more choose to go through mainstream tour operators like Sunmed.

How sex tours are sold

Brochures like 'Go Places' sell their holidays by exploiting racist, sexist and imperialist attitudes. In the above quote Thai people are likened to 'aliens' in a Star Trek episode. Their only role in life is to fulfil the pleasures of Western tourists! Other brochures refer to Thailand as a 'fabulous playground', or 'an exotic holiday playground for Europeans and Asians alike'. But whose playground and whose pleasure are we talking about? It may be playtime for Westerners but it's business for Thailand and other countries whose economies rely on tourism: the multi billion dollar tourist industry is Thailand's biggest foreign exchange earner.

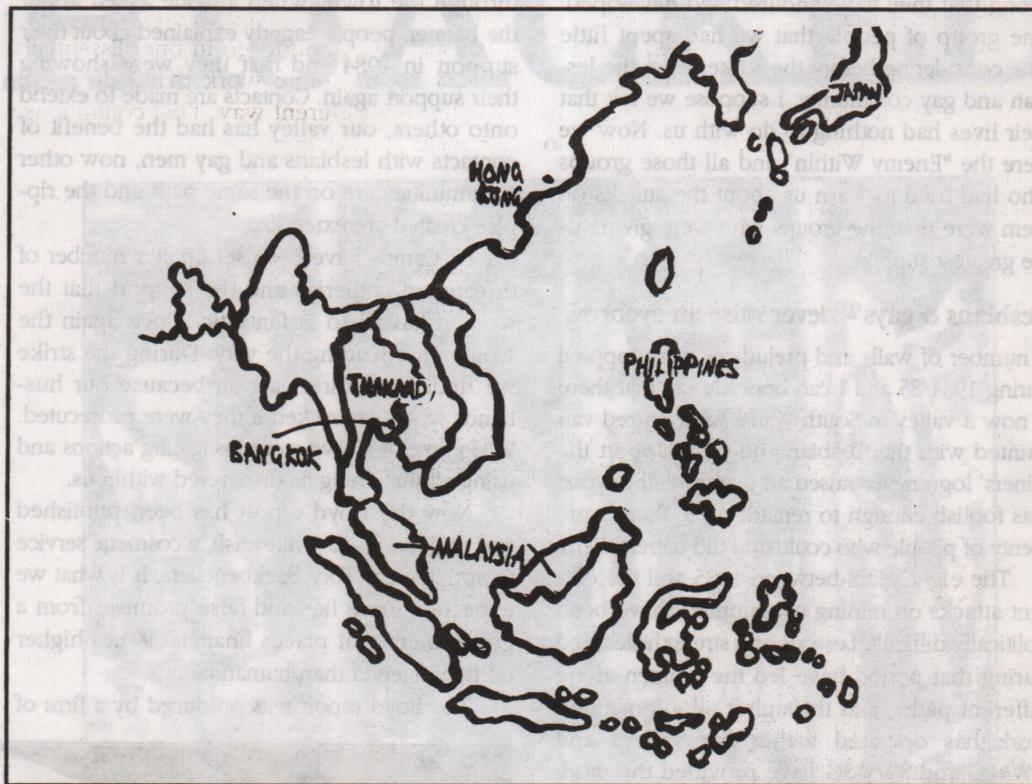


The western controlled World Bank and International Monetary Fund have forced 'development' plans onto countries such as Thailand and the Philippines, as part of their loan agreements, which encourage the development of industries like tourism (including sex tourism). This means that these countries have an economy that is dependent on the West.

Holiday brochures are quite openly selling 'sex' as part of the package. In 1989 Go Places sold Pattaya (Thailand) by saying, "If you can suck it, use it, feel it, taste it, abuse it, or see it then it's available in this resort that truly never sleeps. Pattaya is not for prudes..."

More recently and more subtly, 'Asean Explorer' produced by Thai Adventures (1993) advertised their holiday package 'catering for the single person' (ie men): "Undoubtedly you will find Pattaya the number one favourite with its paradise of entertainment and world famous nightlife...our British representative is available...to assist you with virtually all of your needs...ensuring you gain every ounce of pleasure and it goes without saying that our rates are based on single occupancy of double rooms to provide total privacy."

The image created of Asian women in these brochures is both racist and sexist. They are seen as 'exotic' and 'passive', and not like 'stropy' western women. That gives men



license to treat Asian women in what ever way they think fit, knowing that there will be no consequences for them after their holiday.

Militarism and imperialism

In the Philippines as well as sex tourism there has also been a growth in the sex industry around the US military bases - a legacy of the Vietnam war and US imperialism. The existence of military bases in South East Asian countries is a continuation of the assertion of 'First World' power and dominance over the 'Third World'. The Vietnam war saw the growth of 'rest and recreation' (R&R) centres for the soldiers or the bases. During the war, the US base at Olongapo, Subic Bay, became the busiest port in the Western Pacific. These military bases still have a huge sex industry. Currently in Olongapo, the 'hospitality' business employs about 15,000 women.

Some realities for women and children

Behind the tourism business is the reality of prostitution for women and children. Official Thai police figures estimated that in the late eighties there were 700,000 prostitutes throughout the country. Other recent estimates are as high as two million. For many Thai women prostitution is the only job available. Many other women and also children, are forced or sold into prostitution. According to the Women's Information Centre in Bangkok, in the small village of Baan Joom, Payao province, 90% of the girls go into prostitution after finishing their six years of compulsory education. In a recent Dispatches programme, there were thought to be villages in northern Thailand, the poorest and most depressed agricultural area, where all girls over the age of twelve had been sold into prostitution.

Violence, in all its forms, is used by pimps and male tourists to control women and children. It is also seen as an acceptable and normal part of male sexual pleasure. For one Filipina woman hired as a 'dancer' in Japan her initial 'performance' included

being raped on stage by many customers. In women's and children's accounts there are no end of examples of this kind.

For many South East Asian women prostitution is a death sentence. It is estimated that by the year 2000 as many as four million Thais will be HIV positive. Because of the rapid increase in women who are HIV positive, the agents recruiting for the sex industry are going for younger and younger girls, who they can sell as 'virgins'. Most of these girls will also become HIV positive and die from AIDS.

Women's activism

Some women have organised around the sex industry with campaigns against child prostitution criticising the treatment of women within the industry. Other groups have focussed on working with women to support and empower them. The Foundation For Women in Bangkok, amongst other activities, ran a campaign, aimed at rural girls, in 400 schools educating them of the dangers of being forced into prostitution.

In the Philippines GABRIELA (an umbrella organisation for many autonomous women's groups and projects) helped to set up Buklod, a community centre for hospitality workers in Olongapo. The centre offers skills training (including English), support and education on issues like AIDS. In Thailand similar work is being done by a group called EMPOWER (Education Means Protection of Women Engaged in Recreation).

Women have also organised internationally: the Norwegian Women's Front and the Women's Information Centre in Bangkok organised a joint campaign against the Scan-Thai Travellers' Club by demonstrating at both airports as men boarded and left the planes.

Women Against International Sex Trafficking (WAIST)

This article has been written by two women

who were part of a group in Norwich, WAIST. The group was set up in March 1989 to find out about sex tourism and the mail order bride business. We collected articles and brochures (sometimes using a male pseudonym). We also found out about other women's groups internationally and what they were doing. With this information we then ran workshops for women and school students about sex tourism. Our aim was to raise awareness and ultimately to challenge both men in this country who were going on sex tours, and the tourist industry which relies on racism and sexism.

We also tried to monitor a locally based sex tour operator, Stag Tours, and passed information onto the Women's Information Centre in Bangkok. In 1990 WAIST took part in a campaign to complain about the language used in the 'Go Places' brochure (see the quote at the beginning of this article). The group focussed on Thailand and the Philippines but we are aware that sex tourism is expanding in other Asian countries and in parts of Africa and South America.

Several women moved away and the group stopped being active at the end of 1991. We have passed all our information onto the Campaign Against Pornography who are trying to set up a similar group.



What you can do

- Contact CAP, join their group or set up a local group: Campaign Against Pornography, 11 Goodwin Street, London N4 Tel 071 263 1833.
- Find out what's happening in your area: watch the press, look at travel brochures, send off for sex tour brochures advertised in newspapers (use male pseudonyms), pass the information onto CAP.
- Fundraise for women's groups like GABRIELA, Foundation for Women.
- Lobby your MP to support a bill on Children in Prostitution and Pornography that is being fought for by the Eyes Campaign against Child Exploitation, PO Box 15, Northampton NN5 5QB, tel: 0604 534254. Their aim is to get the British Government committed to international action to tackle child prostitution and pornography, and to prosecute British men for their abuse of children in other countries.

Sue Street & Louise Murray

Another contact: The Freedom Project, PO Box 10, 3 Brunswick Shopping Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1N 1AF. Campaigning on the sex slave trade in women and children worldwide.

Meeting of Bad Attitudes with KATHLEEN HANNA - riot girl!

The silly boy music magazines have been having a wanking wild time the past few months with the uprisings of riot girls. Lots of pictures of young women, which sell, and then lots of slugging it off for over-hype. When in fact they are the spotty pimps that need to be squidged.

Kathleen Hanna is in a band called **Bikini Kill** which has had to deal with all these jealous boy crappings. She told Bad Attitude what she knew of the Riot Girl thing in the States. She wanted to make clear however, that she does not represent the 'law' on riot grrrlz (or even Bikini Kill's other band members). There is none.

BA: Tell us about riot girls then!

KH: I guess it (Riot Girl fanzine) was partly inspired because of these riots in Mount Pleasant, the area we lived in. It started because the police killed this African-american guy and all these people started rioting. This girl, Jen Smith (?) does a fanzine called Red Rover and she coined the phrase, originally 'Girl Riot'.

They decided to do this one page fanzine, with tricks to fool cops, how to get free copies from (photo)copy stores without paying, different little ideas. As a way to communicate with other women, because we didn't know any other women in DC. So I just put lets have a meeting! 'Girls/women do you wanna meet and talk about how we can support each other starting bands, starting zines, doing things!' And about 20 girls showed up. At that first meeting, girls were going, 'oh my god - this is the first time that I've ever been in a room with all-women!' The meetings just all became known as Riot Girl because it was associated with that zine.

Kathleen told us how the band helped distribute fanzines and encouraged other women to do their own zines...

And then we'd hear afterwards that riot girls had got together in that town!

Then this woman from *LA Weekly*, a really big free paper came up to DC. And I totally like, I kinda lied to her. I told her that there were ALL these riot girls everywhere and this HUGE thing is happening...! Which was like an idea I had in my head! And lo and behold - it happened. And they believed it! There's lots of girls meeting all over the place. And sometimes there are just two girls meeting in their bedroom. And now in England, Scotland and Wales, I've been sent all these fanzines!

Last summer we had a convention. We housed everybody and it was only \$7 for three days housing and events, which I'm really proud of! There was a show every night. And we had all day workshops on domestic violence and body image and racism and rape and some other stuff.

BA: It sounds like the *Wild Wimmin's Weekend* in 1990. It was a sort of conference or event - it was in a squat, an old housing benefit office. There were lots of workshops and events over three days. Everything was by donation and we ended up by making a profit, for the next one!

BA: Some of the workshops were about politics, but some were about massage and bicycles!

BA: Yeah, in Brixton, London there was this sorta dykey squat scene a few years ago. Riot girls is just a new name - women have always been organising.

KH: We had a women-only dance party. And then the next day we had this huge thing, lots

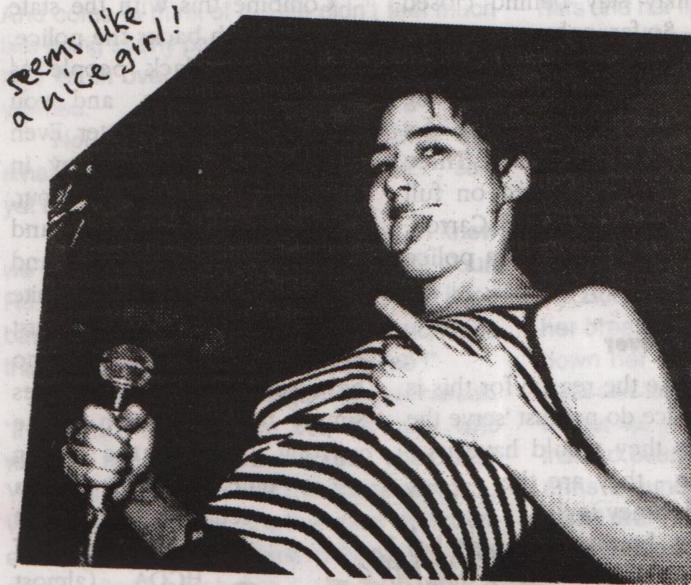
of bands, it was out in the park - a community space so a lot of people showed up for it....

Something that I've always thought is really cool about women only shows is that it makes women who have always been in bands with men form bands with each other. And then they get that experience, sorta encouraging them to be in a band, playing music with only women. Yeah! They see what that's like!

Also the whole idea of a woman teaching another woman to play an instrument is totally empowering. It's not only that you're giving someone something, but you're getting so much because you're being taken seriously!

BA: How did you get involved in politics and making music yourself?

KH: I was really like, super-into my relationships with men up until I was like 17 or 18. I was really fucked over by this guy, I gave him a lot of power and control over my life... and



I started thinking I can't give all this control... During that time my best friend was assaulted in our house by a stranger, usually it's someone you know. It really affected me. And like I had a lot of issues to do with sexual abuse and domestic violence that I hadn't grappled with... that happening just totally influenced my work in every way and I wasn't going to shut it out.

At this time, Kathleen got involved in a women-run exhibition and gig space and among other stuff, booked bands....

For the most part they were white men, and they were just boring as shit! I'd been in the scene since about 14 or 15 just cos I wanted to hang out with freaks! I'd go to these shows and I always felt just that I didn't get it! The music was entertaining or whatever but it didn't speak to me in anyway. Mecca Normal with Jean Smith and came to our space, and I was like - this is it! This woman singing songs like "Smile Baby" which is all about street harassment.

There were only a few bands which were cool, like Babes in Toyland and the Obitcheries (?) and I was like, I like what they're doing but what was missing was saying something between songs. Acknowledging feminism! Nobody was doing that, it seemed to me. And I thought, there's this band that has to exist! And so I started a band. It wasn't what I wanted but through that I met Tobi and Kathi. So we formed Bikini Kill.

By the time I was with the first band I was already working in a domestic violence shelter and that like totally influenced my work. Our first tour was like, the Domestic Violence tour! Then the Domestic Violence/Rape tour! We didn't have a record out or anything, no money, we were touring in a \$300 vehicle which broke down every place we went. And I'd just done this intensive intern-

ship at this refuge.

We had a lot of songs like gang rape and stuff, we'd go to towns and girls would hear it and afterward they'd tell me their stories. It was good because I had crisis counselling background. I kind of knew what to say. It was happening every town. A woman drove 6 hours one time to talk to me because she knew that I had worked in rape crisis place and she was afraid to go in one. Essentially, I'm doing the same work that I did at the shelter in a different way. That continuously happens on our tours.

On the 'death' of feminism'...

Obviously I was like involved in all this stuff, seeing feminism everyday in my life. Here were these men, and women too, deciding feminism was dead. In my head, I was on a mission to like, make feminism cool! For younger girls, and maybe that's fucked up - I don't really know, but I thought that there were all these turn-offs to feminism like if you're a feminist you're a man-hater, you look like this, you listen to the Indigo Girls and k.d. lang... A lot of younger punky girls thought that feminism wasn't their thing.

BA: Yeah, when I was about 20 I was really into punk and also considered myself a feminist. I was also thinking about sexuality but I didn't fit into the dyke scenes. If you were aggressive or loud, you were male-orientated, or being sarcastic was being unsisterly

and things like that.

BA: But that's why this riot girl thing is happening now because there is definitely this backlash.

KH: You can say that some women didn't want to get involved in feminism because what they associated it with, and a lot of that is lesbianism. What I worry about sometimes is that it's sort of like the young het girl's easy way out! And younger girls might say, well here's this cool movement which allows you to be heterosexual and like, wear dresses!

BA: -But then you could come back and also say that lesbians also wear dresses! **KH:** Yeah! **BA:** But it is gonna bring women who wouldn't necessarily have ever considered before going to women-only events. To enjoy it, so I think it's good!

BA: Why as a feminist or a dyke you're supposed to prove all the time is that you like men! I mean, why the fuck should you?? In a lot of the circumstances you would be quite justified!

KH: When they ask me that in interviews, if I hate all men, in one interview I said I hadn't

Well, one idea for applying the essence of riot girl (perfume or what?) to all girls is that we can organise amongst ourselves. It seems less segregated in big cities here than in the States? (I definitely see a few other Asian punky girls out at gigs) Where you don't have so specifically just like one 'cultural background' or one main musical influence. We can organise different events amalgamating lots of different music styles. Right now there's lots of mixed-up music going on, what with bhangra and ragga (Apache Indian), punk and funk (Lenny Kravitz), jazzy hip hop and punk (Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy). Boys. Boring. Grab a guitar girls!

Vanida

met them all yet(!) and another time, well, if all men ask stupid questions like you, then yes I do.

This brought up the subject of co-opting queer culture. Kathleen had "hung out" with Tribe 8 - San Francisco punky dyke band and been influenced by them. She asked herself if she'd been "co-opting" queer culture, but at the same time....

KH: ...that can be a bridge into something - it's like where at first you might be mimicking something and then you become it. That's what I think is a potentially really cool thing cos more people are getting involved then.

And another thing I'm trying to figure out, the punky scene's pretty much white while DC is 85% Black. The work I wanna do can be totally valid but at the same time if we don't question the fact that we're all white in a room, then how do we question the other forms of dominance in place? But then comes the issue of presupposing that your scene is the cool scene and there's not already scenes there!

We asked if criticisms that Riot Girl being just a middle-class thing was true, and ofcourse it isn't. This is just a typical male put-down of feminists, further invisibilising/alienating working-class girls and women.

Shut yer face, boys.
Riot, girls!

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RR, KW, VM.

All this talk of Riot Grrrl activism, you might forget there was any music involved. I'd advise against this. Bikini Kill has climbed straight into that special place of my favourite-ers.

Youth culture music can make feel old before your time. So I was sceptical and cautious. I didn't want to rush into too much enthusiasm. But still hopeful, I bought the Bikini Kill EP (on Kill Rock Stars label??) and to my surprise I was seriously moved by a couple of tracks: 'Suck my left one', about defiance of incest, and 'Blind', about women not having the words: "What did your world teach me? Nothing. How does it feel? It feels blind."

Then I got the LP Yeah Yeah Yeah Yeah (with Huggy Bear on the other side. On Cat Call records) and it was just fantastic. It's got a more consistent punky pace than the EP. Lovely play-as-you-learn riffs, catchy and excellent. Fine lyrics, the best girls'-stuff, fresh and angry (except I've been working so hard on BA that I can't remember them). It's nothing too smooth, nor is it the grungiest of grunge, just punky-noisy-tuneful. Well I feel like a ridiculous music journalist now, but do you get the picture?

Basically, I'm impressed. When they said, 'Riot Grrrl: this is for you' I didn't believe it, but now I'm thinking maybe it could be a bit true.

Katy

Give us an E,

On 2nd March '93 four people imprisoned on fitted-up drug possession charges were cleared on appeal, after extensive campaigning by Hackney Community Defence Association (HCDA). They are: Ida Oderinde, Rennie Kingsley, Dennis Tulloch and Everard Brown. (The case of Eula Carter was adjourned.) All four had been planted with drugs by Stoke Newington police in north London. All four are black; one woman and three men. They had been given sentences of between four and six years.

Moreover, these cases are just the tip of the iceberg. HCDA believes that since at least 1989 and probably before, around 13 police at Stoke Newington have been centrally involved in large-scale corruption in which they confiscated drugs from dealers in the area, sold them to their own protected street dealers and planted drugs to discredit anyone who appeared to stand in their way.

This little piggy went to market

HCDA has identified four elements of police organised crime:

- 1. Seizure of drugs and money from dealers on the streets.** Either no arrest is made, or dealers are released on bail and then return to the sta-

tion to find no charges are being made.

- 2. Supplying street-level dealers with drugs.** Police use the informer system to cover their relationships with dealers. They have even been known to wear wigs and disguises to protect themselves when working with dealers!

- 3. Running a protection from prosecution racket.** Dealers have had to pay police in order to escape arrest. Officers have tipped off their contacts when police operations have been ordered.

- 4. Planting drugs and fabrication evidence,** for instance by false allegations of violence. This has been done either to dealers who are an obstacle to the police's monopoly of the drugs market, or to people who they fear may know too much or who refuse to become informers.

HCDA knows of forty cases where victims have made allegations of wrong-doing by Stoke Newington police in drugs cases and there may be many more. But not a single officer has stood trial for their frame-ups. Corrupt cops continue to work in the same area and whilst some are transferred, others fill their places to continue the same activities.

It's not a fair cop

Scotland Yard is carrying out a corruption inquiry, Operation Jackpot, but this is not a criminal investigation and its findings may stay behind closed doors. So far, only one cop has been jailed - Roy Lewandowski is serving 18 months for stealing possessions from the house of a manslaughter victim. Three others are suspended on full pay and one, Gerrard Carroll, shot himself during the police inquiry.

Pigs in clover

Of course the reason for this is that police do not just 'serve the law' as they would have us believe - they are the law. Hackney is the poorest borough in England. Police have taken advantage of poverty and deprivation to exploit a ready drugs market. But unlike other people who take to dealing as a route out of dead-end-poverty, the police can do so without risks: they are immune. In court, their word is law except in the most ludicrous cases of fabrication. On the streets, in the cells, they

can do what they like. And even if they get caught, they will face an internal and not a criminal inquiry, as police protect their own.

Combine this with the state racism which backs the police, viewing all Black people as inherent criminals, and you have a recipe for disaster. Even in a borough like Hackney, in which 30% are people of colour, Black people are arrested and charged by all-white police and their cases heard in an all-white court, if "heard" is the word. Just like the many Irish people who have served vicious sentences simply for being Irish in the wrong place at the wrong time, they don't stand a chance. If it wasn't for the work of HCDA (almost never acknowledged by the media) these four people would still be in prison.



Here we reprint the account of Ida Oderinde, one of the four cleared last month, of the nightmare of her frame-up, conviction and false imprisonment. It is taken from the booklet *Fighting the Lawmen*, produced by HCDA.

Ida Oderinde's story

One day I was at my friend's house on The Line. She was a drugs dealer. I was sitting in the kitchen talking to her when the door bell rang. She went to the door and I could hear them talking in the hall. I heard a radio. I thought I was hearing things so I opened the kitchen door a little bit. I was shocked to see two detectives from Stoke Newington. One of them put his hand in his pocket and produced a plastic bag and handed it to my friend. Inside the bag was crack cocaine in half gramme rocks wrapped up in foil. I got frightened at this point. I opened the back door and ran out. And the officers saw me.

The frame-up

It must have been just after six in the evening

when I left my house leaving the children with the baby sitter. A short time later I drove past my house and saw quite a lot of men there. I got out of the car and walked towards them. I recognised them as police officers and one of them told me to go in the house.

My God! If you could have seen the place. They had messed up and searched the house. And found nothing. I asked them for the warrant that gave them the right to mash up my things. It was to search for stolen cheque books and cards.

They told me to go into the sitting room where my two boys and daughter, who was only five weeks old at the time, and my baby sitter were, with several police officers. Two of the officers left the room and said they were going to finish the search. I knew something was very wrong. I got up to see what

they were up to but they were going to cuff me, so I just sat there, helpless.

One of them walked back in with an ordinary carrier bag in his hand, behind him was the other one. We all knew the carrier bag did not belong in my house. My mind went at that moment; I was in a daze. I came back to reality when I heard my baby sitter ask where did he get it from, and he said in the old freezer where we kept our house keys. She called him a liar.

He opened the carrier bag and produced three self-sealing bags, three of which were empty and one was full to bursting. They asked me what it was and I told them I did not know, it was not mine, it was their own and they had planted it, wherever they had got it from.

At Stoke Newington police station, in the

charge room, the sergeant was sitting in his chair, behind his desk, typewriter in front of him and loads of papers on one side of him. On the other side of the desk were scales, cling film and a roll of foil which they had taken from my kitchen. There was also their bag with their drugs in it.

The sergeant took the self sealing bag out of the carrier bag and placed it on my own scales in front of me. It weighed 28 grammes. But, by the time we got to court they said it was 12 grammes.

I was interviewed that same evening and charged with possession of heroin with intent to supply. I was taken to Highbury Corner Magistrates Court the following morning. My solicitor and I were shocked that I was given unconditional bail.

The solicitors

When I got the police's statements I sat down and read them with my solicitor. When we had finished reading them I told him they were all lies and gave him details of the case. Before I had finished he said, "But that is not what they said happened." I told him I knew that, and I didn't exactly expect them to be truthful.

"With what they are saying, you are going to get convicted." Well, that put me off him. I decided not to tell him any more, I needed a new solicitor, or he'd be helping the police bury me alive, so I left his office.

I got myself a new solicitor. At first I thought he was alright. But as I went on talking, I got the feeling he didn't believe me. I didn't know what to do, but I knew I needed a solicitor.

On the day of my trial I got to court to find my barrister had been changed. The man that was standing in front of me, who was going to represent me, I had never seen before in my life. When we talked about my case in the canteen he said that my story was very heavy to put to the court.

At that point I screamed at him. I told him I'm not going to tell lies. I was very mad with him and he left me to calm down. Meanwhile, my solicitor told me he had changed my barrister because this one was better than the one I met before.

The court case

By the time the jury had been sworn in on the first day in court, I fell asleep. I was just too tired. I was suffering from depression and my daughter was keeping me awake at night because of her teething. The judge adjourned the case until the next day so I could get some sleep. But I could not sleep at home, I spent the whole night rocking my daughter and crying.

The next morning in court the officers were giving their evidence. I fell asleep again, but this time they let me get on with it. I woke up to find that they had finished for the day.

bobby



Ida Oderinde, Rennie Kingsley and Dennis Tulloch outside the appeal court after their convictions were quashed

The following morning I took in a flask full of black coffee. But it didn't work for long. I finished the whole flask and started feeling sleepy. The police basically kept to their story. But under cross examination they contradicted one another. One even asked to be cautioned by the Judge so that he couldn't say anything that would implicate himself!

After the police gave their evidence my eldest son and baby sitter went into the witness box. My drug dealer friend, who was on remand in Holloway at the time, had made a statement and wanted to give evidence on my behalf. She turned up at court on three days, but for some reason she was not called.

I gave evidence last. I told everything as it happened. Guess what? They didn't believe me, my baby sitter or my son. I was found guilty.

When the judge sentenced me to four years in prison he said he didn't believe a word I had said and he hoped my guilty conscience would kill me. Well, I was gobsmacked. I opened my mouth to abuse him, but nothing came out. I was in shock.

That was the court case. Now comes the battle in prison.

In prison

At the beginning I was still in shock. I wasn't myself, I was full of anger, hate, pain and frustration. I cried a lot. I couldn't eat or drink. I was very depressed and had headaches 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Things kept going round in my head. I knew I needed help but I didn't know where to start.

I was frightened of blue and white uniforms. I hated them all and was very angry with every one of them.

After about three weeks in Holloway a prison officer spoke to me. She said she remembered the day I was sentenced and she believed I was innocent. She told me that I should fight them, that there is corruption everywhere and I should not waste any time. I couldn't believe it coming from her. But it helped me a great deal, at last somebody believed me. There and then I decided I was going to fight the lawmen who had me locked up.

I booked some letters and spoke to my probation officer. He gave me even more confidence, he believed every word I said. I wrote a few letters that night - to my probation officer, to John Major, to my MP, and to Justice. I also wrote one to Scotland Yard.

I have seen many people planted by the police on Sandringham Road. I have seen many people battered, and I know many people are in prison for something they have not done. I just thought, poor man, poor woman, what they are going through must be horrible. Horrible is not the word. I am in that situation now, and my God it is so painful. I have feelings I cannot explain: anger, hate, frustration, pain, all mixed together, and at the same time I am terrified.

I cannot explain it, but I know it is so bad it is driving me mad. In fact, it very nearly did drive me mad for real. I was frightened that the police would come to plant me with drugs again. I became convinced that the prison officers were the police. When I heard their keys I would hide under my bed. They'd come into my cell and I'd refuse to come out, crying and screaming, "It's not mine. You put it there." They would ask me, "Put what where?" I'd tell them, "Drugs." The first time I did this the idiots put me in a straight jacket and turned my room upside down looking for drugs. That made me worse. I was frightened of them so I hid under my bed all the time.

I almost lost my sanity with the medication they gave me to calm me down. For months I was like a zombie. A friend of mine in prison brought me back to my senses by showing me pictures of my children. She told me I couldn't go mental, I had to think of my children.

It was early one morning in November 1991 when Scotland Yard came to visit me at

Cookham Wood prison. They took a full statement from me. They started with my personal details and went on to talk about what I knew about the police in Hackney and Stoke Newington. I told them about what I had seen at my friend's house on the Line.

I even told them about the time, one December, when Stoke Newington police raided her. Some of the drug squad officers told her about the raid and told her to get out of the country for a while. She had only been gone a couple of hours when they raided. Everybody on The Line was laughing at the police and calling them names. They got so angry they started beating people up. And, of course, somebody had to pay for it, so some guys got stitched up.

Everybody knew she was selling drugs. She did it in broad daylight, in front of Stoke Newington police officers.

I was with them for the whole day, we finished the statement just before 4.00pm. They believed what I told them, mainly because most of the things I told them they already knew. The Scotland Yard men told me they knew what was going on in Stoke Newington and they had been trying for years to prosecute some officers. But the officers had slipped through their hands due to lack of evidence and witnesses. I was asked if I would give evidence against the officers. "You bet your life I will," I replied.

The following day my probation officer phoned me. He told me that Scotland Yard

had contacted him to say that they believed me. The same officers had been involved for years, and Scotland Yard was conducting an investigation called Operation Jackpot.

First refusal of appeal

In December 1991 the Court of Appeal told me that I had been refused leave to appeal. I was back to square one, let down again by British justice. I know that the police officers are under investigation and they have been transferred to other stations. But that is not much good to me, unless they are suspended. I haven't got grounds for an appeal. I have been in prison for nine months now, and still waiting.

The whole thing has affected my children desperately. They find it hard to accept what has happened. Although I don't need convincing, my children keep telling me that they cleaned out the freezer when I was out that evening, looking for keys, and there was nothing there. They can't understand why the jury didn't believe us.

Ida served 13 months in prison and having won her appeal is now applying for leave from the Home Office to bring a civil action against the police.

Fighting the Lawmen is available, price £1, from HCDA, Colin Roach Centre, 10A Bradbury Street, Dalston, London N16 7JN, tel: 071 249 0193.

Bogus immigration laws BOG OFF!

The racist Asylum Bill is now law. As detailed in *Bad Attitude 1* it means that:

- No visitors to the UK have any rights of appeal if denied access.
- Refugees are criminalised by enforced fingerprints and photographs, even of children. This will be kept on file for 10 years, until having done time as a 'good citizen'.
- Local authorities are not legally required to house refugees - effectively made second class citizens. If they do, it must not be permanent or secure tenancy.
- Airlines will be heavily fined for bringing refugees without proper documentation. This basically means airline officials will act as immigration officers. This breaks the United Nations Convention on refugees which says that asylum seekers should not be penalised for arriving without proper papers.
- A new two tier appeal procedure which refuses supposedly "manifestly unfounded" cases any appeal chances. While someone with £300,000 can sail through Heathrow without being challenged no matter where s/he comes from.
- The one year ruling particularly affects women because wives have to stay with husbands for at least one year, even if he becomes physically threatening. Resulting

situations range from violence to effective prostitution.

All of these refugee laws particularly affect poor Black women who have least money and power. Britain is leading the way in European discussion to 'harmonise' asylum policies and create a Fortress Europe. Legislation such as this is easily used to legitimate and further generate racism, resulting in physical attacks and deaths of refugee and Black communities in general. When in fact Britain has one of the strictest entrance and visa systems in force.

Seeing that most refugees are escaping economic and social crises in their countries of origin imposed by the West, to close the gates in their faces is all part of furthering institutionalised racism.

Seeking asylum is a right not a privilege!

For further information contact:
RAHCAR (Refugee Ad-hoc Committee for Asylum Rights), 365 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DB. Tel: 071 738 6408
JCWI (Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants), 115 Old Street, London EC1V 9JR. Advice line on: 071 251 8706
Immigration Law Practitioners Association can give you local contacts on 071 250 1671

Foetus Fetish

Operation Rescue are an anti-abortion (as well as anti-contraception and anti-sex) group known for its blockades and attacks on clinics in the US. During the last year there's been 50 chemical attacks on women's health clinics. This involves drilling holes in walls and doors to inject a chemical, usually butyric acid, which is released with harmful effects. On 4 Feb. a women's health centre in Venice, Florida was torched, and on 14 Feb. the entire office complex housing Reproductive Services in Corpus Christi, Texas was burned to the ground: there have been many other arson attacks in the past few years.

On 10 March Dr. David Gunn was murdered outside his clinic by an anti-abortion demonstrator. Though OR leader Randall Terry

disassociated the group from this particular attack, he added that the doctor was a "murderer" himself because he did abortions. Terry had been circulating "wanted posters" with this doctor's picture and phone number on it. OR have a policy of harassing both women who seek abortions and the doctors who perform them - following and threatening them, circulating pictures, phone numbers and other personal information.

Operation Rescue hacks were here late March/early April. NOT to see the Tower of London, the changing of the Guard, or to take a boat ride on the Thames, but to continue their work of harassing clinics, to make contact with UK anti-abortion groups and train them in their tactics. Apparently they think UK anti-abortionists are too

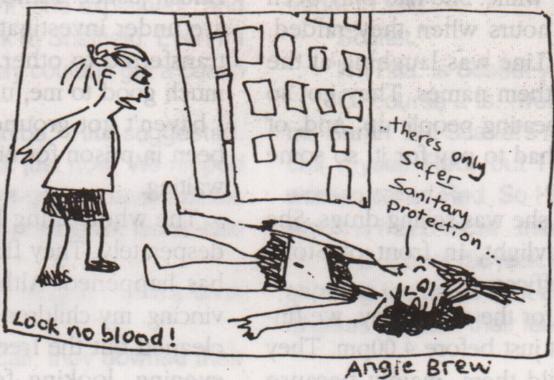
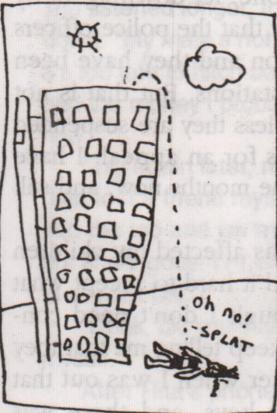
polite and too soft, badly in need of some coaching from the Rambos of foetus fetishism.

Their leader Don Trashman has since been deported, but other members and UK supporters are carrying on. In London pro-choice people were arrested when OR went to the International Family Planning Association. At demonstration in Birmingham they were outnumbered by pro-choice forces.

The OR's will eventually fly away home, but the problem of international right-wing backlash and its object - the control of women - remains with us. Anti-abortion groups are working together across national boundaries, will learn from each other and grow stronger. Which means we must do the same - and much much more!



BUT AS SHE FELL HER MUM'S WORDS CAME INTO HER HEAD. 'Always remember there's no such thing as SAFE sanitary protection...'



Angie Brew

Ram Family Must Stay Campaign

Southall Black Sisters are urgently requesting support in a campaign to gain asylum in Britain for Mr Bakshi and Mrs Surinder Ram and their 10 year old daughter. The initial application for asylum has been rejected and has now been referred back to the Home Office for further consideration.

The Ram family fled the Punjab, India, in 1989. Mr Ram resigned from the Indian Army after the storming of the Golden Temple in 1984 by the Indian Army, having been traumatised by the massacre he witnessed.

The Ram family was then caught up in the conflict between the Indian Government and Sikh militants that followed. Sikh militants harassed the Ram family, threatening vio-

lence and demanding money and information about the Indian Army. Mr Ram refused to co-operate. The Indian Army accused Mr Ram of harbouring Sikh militants. He was detained and interrogated twice. He was horrifically tortured and denied medical treatment.

Eventually, Mr and Mrs Ram and their youngest daughter were forced to flee to Britain, leaving their four older children behind with relatives.

According to the Indian Government, the situation in the Punjab is now stable. This is non-

sense: Amnesty International report that police and paramilitary forces routinely abuse human rights. Mr Ram will be extradited into an unchanged and dangerous situation, at risk of harassment, torture and death.

For further info, contact: Southall Black Sisters, 52 Norwood Rd, Southall, Middx UB2 4DW, Tel: 081 571 9595.

Women only B&B 'The Retreat' close to sea £12/15 per woman per night. Herne Bay, Kent. Tel: 0227 363740.

No such thing as 'mild' mutilation

At the beginning of October 1992 a conference was held in Leiden, The Netherlands which was to play an important role in the decision of the Dutch government concerning the legitimisation of a 'mild' form of genital mutilation. Amongst others gynaecologists, lawyers, sociologists, anthropologists and social workers took part in the conference. Unlike countries such as Sweden, Switzerland and England, The Netherlands has never explicitly forbidden any form of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Two white women were given the task by the Dutch Health Centre for Refugees (Centrum voor Gezondheidszorg Vluchtelingen) to do some research on the situation of Somali women in this country. They presented the result of their study and their advice concerning FGM at the above-mentioned conference: In the future the Dutch government should differentiate between 'mutilating' and

In February this year, Poline Nyaga, a Brent Councillor, put forward a motion to make female genital mutilation legal in the borough.

The move met with protest from many women and a successful campaign, highlighting the misguided and unpopular nature of the proposal, was organised by Forward International and Akina Mama wa Africa.

In the event, the motion was

not read; the council simply pushing it to the bottom of a long agenda until time ran out.

The unwillingness of the council to read the motion was in part the result of the strength of the campaign and the outcry it provoked and also an acknowledgement that FGM is illegal in Britain (under the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985). Info. from: **Forward International**, 071 379 6889.

'non-mutilating' forms of female circumcision. An example of this latter 'acceptable' practice would be what they call incision; a cut or prick in the clitoris or the fore-skin of the clitoris.

Their motivation was mainly based on the idea that the more severe forms of FGM could thus be avoided. Moreover, they claimed that as the operation would take place in sterile surroundings and be performed by a registered medical practitioner, some form of control can take place.

As a reaction to the above a number of Black and white women's organizations set up a project to collect signatures to protest against the possibility of legalizing any form of FGM.

The petition said "All these forms of physical interventions is the recognition of male domination and control over female sexuality. To be legalised in any way under the guise of 'respect' for cultural differences - 'violates the physical and

psychological integrity of every woman or girl, and her fundamental right to self-determination, as laid down in the Dutch constitution." This is "blatant contravention of the UN Charter on the Rights of the Child and the UN Women's Charter and is moreover, a moral blow for all those migrant women who are dedicated either here or in their country of origin, to the abolition of this degrading practice."

The petition collected around 6000 signatures. And as a result the Dutch government has now decided the FGM in any form, will not be tolerated.

Legislation to 'control' women and our bodies needing to contain the 'culture' of non-white others is sick and based on liberal fears. Despite government emphasis on legalising FGM as an issue for cultural respect, it's great that Black and white women saw past this attack on female sexuality and organised together successfully to oppose it.

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Lesbian activist murdered by fascists

To date, the press in this country has tended to treat fascism as some kind of huge joke. At the same time as reporting the harassment and actual murder of people of colour in Germany, they have simultaneously portrayed the perpetrators of this violence as cartoon figures. Similarly, as fascist attacks in this country increase - knifings of left-wing activists, destruction of anarchist premises and property, increased harassment of Asian, Black and Jewish communities - fascism is treated as a problem going on somewhere else. It's usually covered in the supplement section of the paper, with lots of exciting photos. It is not 'real' news, it's there with the travel, food and leisure features.

It isn't a joke. It's for real and it's on the rise. On Friday January 22 1993, Kerstin Winter was killed by a parcel bomb in Freiburg, Germany. She was a lesbian who was active in antifascist and autonomous groups. Her political background and the nature of the

murder suggest it was an attack by fascists.

600 to 700 people took part in a spontaneous demonstration in Freiburg to express their sorrow and anger. A continuous vigil is taking place in front of the house in which she was murdered. Another solidarity demonstration took place in Heidelberg.

For more information and solidarity statements contact: Radio Dreyeckland, tel.: 0049 761 31028, fax: 0049 761 31868. Info from **European Counter-Network**, 121 Railton Road, Brixton SE24.

The meaning of this and other fascist murders cannot be localised and rendered harmless. The consequences for anyone who is anti-fascist or a potential fascist target are serious. Don't be duped by the media white-wash, this is our problem, now.

One group working against fascism is Anti-Fascist Action, who can give info on other groups. Contact: **AFA**, BM 1734, London WC1N 3XX.

What's purple and frightening...?



Watch out, boys, there's a purple beret about! Purple Berets are a new group formed by women in Sonoma County, California, which aims to "provide a visible feminist force wherever women are threatened".

They are modeled on New York's Guardian Angels - supposedly a people's protective force in the underground (though said to hold dangerous prejudices). But the Purple Berets sound much better. And rather than doing street patrols, their main focus seems to be sitting in, very visibly, at court hearings of sexual

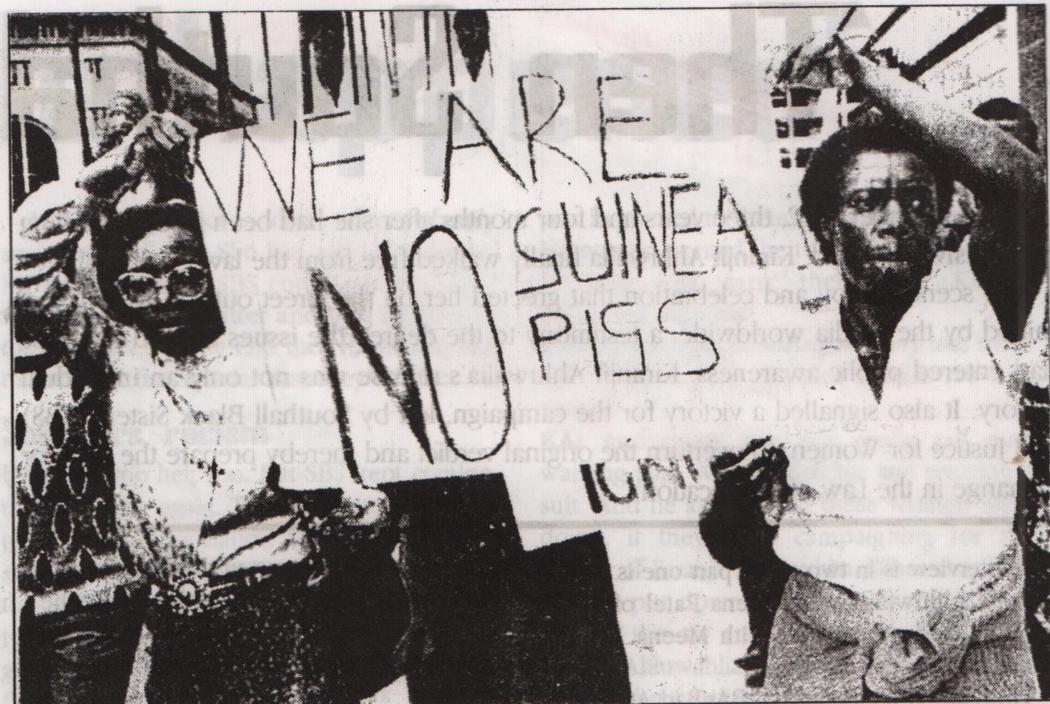
violence and rape cases. They hope to support women under attack and to at least bear witness to the actions of the legal system, though so far they believe they have also had a positive impact on the outcome of cases they have attended.

Their first public appearance was at the court case of a chiropodist, David Noles, who sexually assaulted a 17 year old client. The Purple Berets formed a whole row in court, providing a barrier between the abuser and his victim and clearly making Noles feel very uncomfortable. They have since appeared at all his court appearances and have worked successfully to bring the case to the media's attention.

They are also working to have a previous charge against him reopened, in which Noles lured a young Mexican woman from Mexico to his home with the promise of a job. She was then imprisoned and repeatedly raped by him. The obvious reason for this case having been dropped is that she is a woman of colour who doesn't speak English.

The Purple Berets are working on numerous other cases. And they seem to be drawing a lot of support, with more and more local women getting involved. Their view that a woman shouldn't have to face it alone is clearly a popular one - with women.

Contact: **Purple Berets**, PO Box 3064, Santa Rosa, CA 95402, USA.



Students from the University of Zimbabwe marching through the capital, Harare, in a protest against a white, Scottish-born doctor, Richard McGown, who carried out sicko (illegal) anaesthetic experiments on 500 people, mainly Black women, which resulted in five deaths. Info from *The Voice*, March 23.

Sisterhood and soggy quiche

A reader describes her refuge's International Women's Day outing

International Women's Day! With pride, excitement and infectious political fervour, workers spoke in the house meeting about 8th March. Posters and leaflets about events planned in The London Women's Centre were passed around as a possible way for us all to take part in the day's celebrations. A combination of curiosity and caught enthusiasm gave us the go-ahead. The trip was planned.

The literature was an eye-catching glossy purple, white and green affair, publicising a full programme and availability of a creche. We opted for the opening ceremony and show from 12.30 to 4pm. There was no mention of an entrance fee - we assumed a reasonable, accessible amount would be expected and booked in advance a number of creche places.

On 8th March the van, packed with women and children in celebratory mood, set off. Someone mentioned she had seen a misprint in City Limits saying it cost £25 to get in. We all laughed raucously at this absurdity. Someone else said she hoped this would not deter women from coming. But wait! Imagine the stunned silence of our group when the doorwoman actually had the affrontery to ask for £25 from waged women and £15 concessions. We were truly shocked by this brazen exclusion of women from the centre - especially on this day. After much skilful negotiation by one of the workers a more appropriate group donation was agreed on.

The events had already begun by the time we had leapt this first hurdle. The second hurdle was to steer the children towards the creche - five floors up! As Dr Greer had already started speaking we were forbidden to enter the theatre and banished to the cafe until a suitably unobtrusive moment arose. Finally, at the lunch break, we were allowed to join in and were ushered into the eating room. Those assertive enough to bully their way through the throng could feast their eyes - if fast enough their faces too - on a cold

buffet of various salads, soggy quiches, Spanish omelettes and other assorted vegi-blends. Others decided to opt for the smaller coffee line only to find that the flasks ran dry before their turn. We sought refuge in the smoking room and compared impressions so far. Nevertheless, with PMT (a positive mental attitude) we looked forward to the rest of the afternoon. Without detailing the bland and

dubious messages performers were emitting from the

stage - let me just say we were collectively deflated and disappointed. Jackie Kay (poet) was the only shooting star and she shone brilliantly. I've

since heard that things improved considerably later on.

Perhaps cocooned in our safe house we have nurtured radical sentiments now out of step with the women's movement. We left flaunting a thoroughly bad attitude and resolved to organise our own knees-up in a truly grass roots fashion.



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Then Southall Black Sisters ca

On 25 September 1992, three years and four months after she had been jailed for killing her abusive husband, Kiranjit Ahluwalia finally walked free from the law courts.

The scenes of joy and celebration that greeted her on the street outside were transmitted by the media worldwide; a testimony to the degree the issues around this case had entered public awareness. Kiranjit Ahluwalia's release was not only an individual victory. It also signalled a victory for the campaign, led by Southall Black Sisters (SBS) and Justice for Women, to overturn the original verdict and thereby prepare the way for a change in the Law of Provocation.

The interview is in two parts, part one is with Kiranjit Ahluwalia, with Meena Patel of SBS present, and part two is with Meena Patel, which will appear next issue.

Throughout the interview, BA=Bad Attitude, KA=Kiranjit Ahluwalia and MP=Meena Patel.

BA: Could you tell us a bit about yourself?

KA: I was born in the Punjab, in India. I lived there for 16 years, then I left to live in the Gujerat State, where I went to university. In 1977 I went to Canada.

BA: And you married your husband in 1979? What did you expect from marriage when you were younger?

KA: I expected it to be like my sisters' and my mother's and all my family's and their daughters'. I thought, one day I'm going to get married, I have to, I'm going to be a mother or housewife - just like an ordinary young girl. It wasn't in my mind that one day my husband would beat me like that. I never could have imagined that because I had never seen violence like that in my family.

I have two boys now and I don't mind if they decide to get married outside of caste. If I had daughters, I would tell them, 'Don't suffer like me, the way I suffered.' If they're not happy, they're free, from my side to get divorced...

Violent from the start

In the same week that we were married, my husband started beating me up. So I knew that he couldn't control his temper. I was very scared but I couldn't turn to my family, they would only worry about me. Anyway, what could they do? I was now married, I couldn't get divorced, they wouldn't have let me. It would be the biggest shame [she is referring to the code of *izzat* whereby a woman is the honour of the house]. So I hid it from them. But things were getting worse day by day.

BA: So how long was it before you said anything about it to your family?

KA: My family that was over here found out very soon. He would come with me to my sister's house and become angry and fight with me, with the children, even my sister but mostly with me. I used to be scared for myself and that's how my brother and sister knew.

But after two years, I took him to India. There I showed my injured leg to my brothers and told them I didn't want to live with this man, I wanted to get divorced. This was the first time, after two or three years...

They were really angry. They told him, 'Go back to England, she's not coming. She's staying here with us'. But my husband, in front of them, he apologised to me. He asked them for one more chance. And he admitted that he was very violent towards me.

And my brothers asked me to give him one more chance.

Inside me, I never trusted that man, because I knew many times in the last three years he'd done the same thing. He'd cried and apologised and then, after a few days, he'd hit me and shout at me again, finding any little excuse for an argument.

I said to my brothers, 'He's lying, don't trust him'. And my brothers said, 'It's OK, this time he's crying', because they'd never seen a big, young man cry like a baby in front of them before.

BA: At what point did you decide you had to resort to the law? You took out some injunctions...

KA: Yes. A few months after I came back from India, he started again. I had to be very strong. I fought for a few days in my heart. I thought, my family can do nothing, my husband's family, everyone, is helpless. Now I must start to fight back. I was living with my husband, I didn't know anyone... The first time I went to see a solicitor, I couldn't speak English, so with the help of my sister's friend, I found an Indian solicitor. I explained my situation and when he heard and saw my broken finger, he told me I should get divorced. I said no, let me get a court injunction. You see, I wanted to get a divorce but first I wanted a court injunction for my safety. Then in court, my husband apologised again, in front of my solicitor and his solicitor...

He said: Please don't let me be chucked out. I don't have anywhere else to live. My family, my brothers and sisters...if I'm divorced I'll lose my job, everything...

BA: Would his family have disowned him?

KA: Yes.

MP: But most men would have said that to try and stay within the home, even if their families would still accept them.

KA: You see, after three months of marriage he was fighting and arguing every day with his mother, with me, with his sister...the arguments got very bad, swearing, shouting, smashing furniture, breaking things. Every day, everyone was so scared of him. I was so scared I used to run to the toilet with fear. After three months, my father-in-law said to my husband, 'Give over the house-key and go. Get out'. That's why they wouldn't have him back.

BA: Can we go back to when you went to court? What happened then?

KA: Well I thought, this is it. He's broken promises he made to me, to my brother and to his family, but now, this is a court injunction and he's going to take it seriously. I'd never been involved in any legal things before and so I thought it was very serious.

The first time [in court], it was just a written report made in front of the solicitors. The second time I got a proper injunction.

BA: And did you have a power of arrest? [The courts will hand out injunctions, but without a power of arrest attached to the

injunction, you can call the police out about the injunction being infringed but they're unlikely to do anything about it.]

KA: No. He was still with me and he apologised to the judge and the judge said, 'If you beat your wife again, you can be arrested.'

BA: Did you feel protected by these injunctions?

KA: Yes, for the first few months. He stopped hitting me. After a few weeks he started shouting, but he didn't hit me. And then he started again.

I took out the first injunction in '81 and the second in '86.

No faith in courts

Now I don't have any faith in the courts. I spent three years four months in prison. The courts sent me to prison for life. If it wasn't for Southall Black Sisters I'd still be there. I saw so many other women who've been in violent domestic situations, they have children, the law

to happen to me? Indian men want young, virginal girls. I'm used by my husband - who's going to get married to me? I will be a burden to my family. And they would have to find another man to look after me and spend money because of the dowry system.

BA: So it wasn't just about your life but everyone else's?

KA: Yes.

BA: Did you meet a lot of women inside for the same thing?

KA: Yes, I met lots of women in prison, for all sorts of things. There were thirteen women who were serving life with me. All of them were very badly beaten by their partners. They had children. They cried for their families. They were from many different cultures. The violence is not happening in my culture alone.

Laughter, tears, support

We used to give each other support. We would eat together, work together. We would listen to

INTERVIEW WITH KIRANJIT AHLUWALIA

doesn't care. They shouldn't be in prison. This law is no good for women. There are so many rape cases, so many young women being murdered or raped by their husbands or partners.

BA: But even going to a solicitor and get that initial contact with the law is quite difficult...

KA: Yes. I was living with my husband. I didn't have any friends. I didn't go out. That friend, she was my sister-in-law, my husband's elder sister. She was Gujerati. Her husband was very violent towards her and she got divorced. And one day, I was very scared, I cried and I said 'I need help'. Then she gave me the name and address of this solicitor. I explained to her a little of my situation. It was very difficult.

BA: Even women with a community and friends around them find it hard to speak of something like that...

KA: This was especially so with me. Apart from my husband's family, I knew no one else. But they were new to me, I wasn't free. I was scared to talk to his uncles and aunts in case the matter got to my mother-in-law. And in the end these my mother-in-law and my husband are going to beat me so badly.

I wasn't allowed to make any friends. I wasn't even allowed to talk to my family after I was married. He was completely isolating me. His family were very scared of him. My mother and father-in-law were very sympathetic, but never in front of him.

BA: Do you think there is anything anyone could have done to give you any support?

KA: If my culture was so free, I wouldn't have ended up in this situation. I cried in front of them, told them what was happening. They could have said, 'Leave him, get divorced. You can marry again, get a career, you can be free'.

The first thing on my mind when I thought about getting a divorce was the shame for my family. What would I do, the names I would be called because this is what happens in our community. And then I thought, what is going

each other. Sometimes we would cry on each others' shoulders. We would tell each other of the past. And sometimes we would laugh. We were human after all, we could not cry all the time. The officers were nice, they did listen to us and our problems.

There were some nasty young girls who called us murderers. But I spent three years there and they were mostly sympathetic.

After the *Dispatches* programme everyone was very sympathetic. One of the officers said, 'Hey, it's the TV star'. Somebody taped the programme and brought it in for me to autograph. I started to get letters of support. I never believed people would be so sympathetic. I got letters in English and though I could read them, I couldn't write back. So another lady who was serving life helped me write letters back. I got letters from other prisons. I got hundreds of letters.

BA: So were you expecting to be in for life?

KA: No. I thought, this is British Law, and I had a great respect for the law. I didn't even expect to have to go in the witness stand. I thought the law would understand. There were court injunctions, medical reports, eye-witnesses, family witnesses, friends. So the court would not need my testimony. But the court ignored everything. The prosecution said the violence wasn't very serious.

MP: They said it was 'just being knocked about'.

KA: They gave me a life sentence. When I heard that I thought, now I am going to die in prison. That day I lost my faith in God, in British law and justice. I thought, there is no law, there is no God.

Giggling jury

MP: But the jury was all male...

KA: Yes. I read out my testimony and inside I was crying and there was a man there who was laughing as I read.

Afterwards, when my family and I were sitting all very serious and I was crying, I told my solicitor, 'That man was giggling. How can he

ame and a miracle happened'

make a decision on my life?

They spent six hours making up their minds on the verdict and they couldn't reach a decision so the judge said, 'OK, stay in a hotel overnight and make a decision'. And that man stood up and said, 'Give us five minutes and we'll make up our minds'. They went back and came back in three minutes and said 'guilty of murder'.

How could they make that decision on my life? They couldn't decide in six hours and then they just decided in three minutes. And what did they know about domestic violence? They weren't educated... I'm sorry, I'm angry...

That's what we used to talk about in prison, the judges, the jury...

And men can say they are provoked, what about women? Ten, fifteen year history of violence. A woman was there who was seventy-two and she'd suffered thirty years and ended up stabbing him. That was Amelia Rossiter. She had arthritic problems, stomach prob-

lems, breathing problems. Sometimes she was so ill, she couldn't even come out of her cell to eat. And the law said this person was a danger to society. She would not hurt anyone. She was such a nice woman. She is free now, thank God. After an appeal. She was just like my mother.



lems, breathing problems. Sometimes she was so ill, she couldn't even come out of her cell to eat. And the law said this person was a danger to society. She would not hurt anyone. She was such a nice woman. She is free now, thank God. After an appeal. She was just like my mother.

BA: Do you think your case failed because of the jury system?

KA: Well, I think they didn't understand. I regretted not going into the witness box. I should have cried and let my emotion out. I should show them I am not a criminal. But I couldn't go. I was ill with fear. I didn't know what the prosecution was going to ask. Personal questions about my married life in front of my husband's family, how could I answer? I could not even talk in front of my elders. And none of them were Indian or Pakistani who would understand my culture or why I couldn't leave him.

MP: They wouldn't even allow us to give evidence about the cultural reasons why Kiranjit stayed with him.

KA: And I wasn't ready to stand as a witness. Nobody understood how depressed I still was. I wasn't well.

In every case, all those women in prison, they always ask, 'Why didn't you leave?' How

can they ask this? Not just me but all those women? How could I leave two children? Where was I to go? My husband would just find me and beat me up. [She did leave, twice, and each time was found by her husband.]

And there were so many problems: money problems, the children had to go to school... And they never ask men this...

MP: Yes, in most cases they say: Why didn't you just go upstairs, or walk into another room? But it's the whole accumulation of violence that brings women to this snapping point. It's not just about walking out - the men come after you.

BA: What was your relationship with your first trial solicitor?

KA: I didn't like him. He was English and my family found him. He never explained anything to me. I told him: 'I cannot speak English' and he said I spoke it very well, he could understand me. I tried to explain to him that I could not express my feelings and that if

I wanted to say anything, I had to think, find the word, translate it. Then I think that I'm saying it all wrong and I'm too shy to really express myself. I needed an interpreter, I needed Southall Black Sisters. They had offered to find me a solicitor, or to translate. But he said no.

In my original trial, the statement was only about thirty or fifty pages long. I had to sit alone in my room thinking in English. I spent hours and hours doing it. And on my retrial, there was a five hundred page statement. The difference!

When SBS did the appeal, I came out from my heart, my feeling came out. And it was in my own language. I gave my statement in Hindi and they translated. SBS gave me over a hundred visits in prison in two years. Honestly, that first statement, I can't believe it's my English...

BA: Did you trust Pragna and SBS at first?

KA: Yes. When I first met her, I had been in Holloway on remand for a few months. And the way she talked, she impressed me. I liked her. But I told her, 'I cannot ask for your help because I am fully dependent on my family. Go and see my family and tell them you are willing to do these things. If they say yes, come to me any time'.

And so Pragna got in touch with my family and they said, 'No. She has a good solicitor.' My family thought SBS could do nothing in what was a legal matter and that they had a top solicitor... In the end they found out that this was the first murder case they'd done.

Solicitors' racism

I was just too helpless. But SBS kept coming, time and time again. They wrote to the solicitors offering information and advice and the solicitors just said they knew it all. They said to me, 'They're homewreckers, they're going to ruin your good name in public, they're going to embarrass your family honour'.

BA: And they were white?

KA: Yes. And when I got my life sentence they said they couldn't find any grounds for an appeal. They closed my file completely and just left me. I was in shock. That same day, I wrote a letter to Pragna, told her what my solicitor said and said that if she wanted to come and help me, she now could. I couldn't see any way to go. And Pragna came...and a miracle happened.

I must tell you what impressed me when I first met the SBS solicitor. He asked me all about what I did in minute detail. He made me draw maps. He and Pragna brought my memory back.

But I used to give them a hard time. I'd say, 'Go away, why are you wasting your time? I'm never going to leave prison'.

BA: Did you realise how much support there was for you outside?

KA: Yes, but sometimes you just get so down. And when Sara [Thornton] lost her appeal, that was a shock. I thought oh my God, because hers was the stronger case. Even SBS would say, 'Oh well, her case is different'.

BA: I heard SBS speaking at a meeting and they said that Sara's campaign failed because the prosecution made out she flirted with other men and she was a bad woman.

KA: In Sara's case, her husband's family was very against her, in my case my husband's family supported me a lot. And in my culture, people understand why I couldn't leave or get divorced... Arranged marriage... There were a few points that made my case stronger than hers.

BA: So do you think that in Sara's case they were thinking, this is a romantic, western love marriage, she can just leave?

MP: That's what it was when you look at the courts. They were thinking, she's a white woman, there aren't any cultural restraints, why didn't she just walk out? But regardless of your cultural background, you can't just get up and go.

KA: When I think of my freedom now, I can hardly believe it. It's been six months and it still seems like a dream. People are so supportive.

MP: Even our cab driver was overwhelmed. We didn't tell him who it was, just told him to go and pick someone up...

Pride and celebration

KA: Yes, and he radioed his office and said, 'Today I am very proud because a very honourable lady is sitting in my car. Any time you have any problems, come to my house. I've got four daughters and if what happened to

you happened to them, I'd do what you did'. He was so excited, he told me how he used to help SBS carry their 'Free Kiranjit Ahluwalia' banners.

MP: My two most enduring memory was when the balloons were released outside the Law Courts...

KA: And there was one really tall man walking past, with a briefcase and wearing a suit. And he asked what these women were doing, if they were campaigning for the release of Kiranjit Ahluwalia. When they said yes, he put down his briefcase and put his arm in the air and started shouting, 'Free Kiranjit Ahluwalia, free Kiranjit Ahluwalia'.

I could not believe how many people there were in the court. I thought it was just going to be ten minutes to hear my plea. In the morning I told the prison officer that I didn't want to go. I had to get up at five in the morning for nothing.

MP: And the news coverage...

KA: Yes. My family in India and Canada phoned me and told me they'd seen it on the news. I had telegrams, flowers, chocolates.

BA: What were your expectations of prison?

KA: I was very scared. On my first night, I cried like a baby, I was shaking. I thought, they're going to lock me in a dark room, they're not going to free me, the prison officers are going to beat me so badly.

First of all they put me in the hospital wing - the muppet ward. And I thought, they must think I'm mad but I'm not mad. But it was because my hand was burnt and I was still very depressed. And whoever comes on a big charge, a murder charge, is put there for their safety. Because the other girls, if you're a child abuser or...

People outside prison have a very bad opinion of people in prison but for myself, I got more love and respect inside prison.

BA: Do you see any of the other prisoners now?

KA: Yes. Sometimes when I think of the women still inside, I cry. I saw Sara Thornton recently. I can't write but I saw her. I ring some of the prison officers...

BA: Do you think it's important for you to keep up that contact?

KA: Of course. When I was in prison, I got so much from the public support. I think if they got the same support, they too could get out.

BA: Do you ever feel like campaigning?

KA: Yes I do. At the moment, I have two little sons and I want to spend more time with them. But yes, I want to do more campaigning. I was at a demonstration in November [November Women's Action] and there were all these women screaming and shouting. And they were so proud - and they'd done so much to get my release... They were happy for me.

Playing a part for women

I'm writing a book now, so that finally I will be able to tell people about how I feel, how I felt, the way I couldn't before. And I'm doing all these interviews because it will put pressure on the law and help women. Some-times I find it quite difficult. It brings up the past and memories I'd like to forget. But I want to help women. At the end of my life, I want to have played my part.

cont. over

My Adoption

There's been so, so many different stories and reasons leading to how I was conceived. Various images, fantasies of my own, and ideas from both my families about how my life began in that woman's womb.

Quite naturally I pieced together my own some what romantic fantasy, but when I'm down, and feeling self destructive, I tell myself, no that woman was raped, my father's a rapist. Why is it, that I often thrive off the worst possible emotion, maybe because I see nothing good about being torn away from that woman at birth. I should be more willing to heal myself, but pain, that friend called pain seems to have always been there, so I take what seems more natural to bear.

As I day dream, I drift back to that sad, sad day when she gave me away, her decision to me is like cutting one's arm or leg off for no apparent reason. I must, oh but I must think of her youth, her anxiety and her grief that surrounded her. That large dominating husband persuading her to give me away or else that black baby in white skin would make him leave her alone with three other children.

Time and time again, I'm told how hard that decision must have been for her, I mean, what would you do, would you give up your home, husband and all financial support and keep your birthchild, that child that you've built mentally and physically, constructed in your womb woman! or would you give it away for adoption, oh adoption, unless it's happened to you, that word adoption is never really understood in its full context, it's like rape, or being black or being blind, you don't know unless you are this, or its happened to you.

I've had friends and family, people who I've known for years who have not once asked me, or commented on me being adopted. How odd, I mean, it's such a Vast subject, the roof to my head, and no one will speak about it. A friend once said to me, my pain is like grieving for a dead mother, and it is, for those unfortunate ones who never get to see their birth mother in their lifetime. Is this why friends and family never bring up the subject, are they afraid of digging up pain, in which case it should be spoken about, all the time, from baby to child to teenager to Adult, otherwise this pain may spread. Adoption should always be discussed, unanswered questions should always be answered, afterall we adopted people have a right to know how we began and why, that way there'll be no pain to bury.

I don't write this with one hand in a fist, and the other holding a spear, and me shouting "you better take special extra sensitive care when talking to adopted people or else" but simply to enlighten people into the emotions that can surround adopted people.

My experiences through being adopted are honestly never-ending. This to me is good and ofcourse bad. I could go on and on and on talking and writing about me and my adoption and I shall.....

Anonymous

For further information for those who have been directly affected by adoption, the **Post Adoption Centre** offers workshops and sensitive counselling: **Post Adoption Centre**, 8 Torriano Mews, Torriano Avenue, London NW5 2AZ. Tel: 071 284 0555



Ronald McBastard and the McLibel Two

I fought the Burger and the Burger will not Win: McLibel Two Take on the Evil Empire

The McDonald's clown gets more like Freddy Kruger in a scary, orange wig every day. Not content with selling crap at ludicrous prices, exploiting the unequal distribution of global wealth and slave driving a conscript workforce, McScum are now having a go at (further) curtailing free speech. We say - You can stick it between two buns and eat it McCapitalist Dogs!!

The libel laws in this country are stacked against the poor (Surprise me less.). So, when Jo-Anne Bloggs gets slagged in The Shite and decides to exercise her free-born right to sue them for an apology, or when she prints an article in her in her paper about 'sick' agony aunties and gets sued, she discovers it is, in fact, a free-born right to get completely fucked over. With no legal aid and libel cases taking years and costing thousands, she is basically forced to settle out of court. The courts are a glorious arena for multi-nationals, with the income of a small nation-state and establishment wankers to oppress anything that manages to raise its voice against them.



But to return to the McLibels: In 1985, London Greenpeace produced a leaflet called 'What is wrong with McDonald's' and began to distribute it to punters about to walk through those famous golden arches. McEvil were obviously appaled that their million dollars of advertising might be undermined by the A5 leaflets and those happy punters dissuaded from tucking into their vomit-inducing fare. Their answer was to issue a libel for defamation against seven anti-McDogburger protesters in 1990.

Throughout, the basic policy of McRatburger appears to have been less about presenting 'the truth' than dragging out the court hearings and the costs in order to economically prevent the defendants from seeing the case out. In the past, this has worked (The Guardian and Channel 4 have apologised in the face of this tactic,) but amazingly enough, two of

the initial seven - Helen Steel and Dave Morris - have decided to go for gold.

McPuke then opted for the 'bring it forward impossibly quickly so that there's no way they can get it all done in time on a shoe-string budget' approach. The McLibel Two now have until May to get all the necessary documentation together!

McDeath are also pushing for the trial, expected to be in October 1993, to be without a jury. For fuck's sake, if we're expected to eat the things, why aren't we fit to decide if they're edible!! What are they saying!!

As you can imagine, the McLibels need money and support. Please get in touch for info. There's much more than your appetite at stake!



Marianne Haste

P.S. When you get in touch, make sure you get hold of a copy of McNews; it has the best selection of McHorror stories I've ever seen. As well as old favourites like the McMouseBurger, it had a real corker about a McDisaffected Skiv who added a certain Mystery Ingredient to the root beer. Mmmm, so that's how it gets the special McTaste!

Info: **McLibel Support Campaign**, c/o London Greenpeace, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1
World Anti-McDonalds Day is October 16th

Continued from page 13

BA: I think you've done a lot.

KA: I haven't done anything yet. I haven't started.

MP: No, you've done a lot. You've opened people's ears and eyes about domestic violence, you've made the courts sit up and take note. Women in court now can use domestic violence more positively.

KA: I hope my case helps women in India. In India, thousands of women are burned alive.

MP: But the case is quite different in India. There isn't even a welfare state and the benefits you can get here. So it's doubly hard for women in India to just walk out because they know they aren't going to get any housing or any money.

BA: But it's getting worse over here... But there are successes. Let's be positive about this. There's you!!!

Kiranjit Ahluwalia now has to go and we say goodbyes and many thank-yous. We give Kiranjit some flowers. After Kiranjit leaves, Meena tells us that the first time her birthday came round in prison, Kiranjit was amazed because the other prisoners gave her presents and flowers - all the time she was married to her husband, her birthday was not celebrated.



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Rape: bringing it all up

Tania Berlow describes her experience as a survivor of childhood rape and her ground-breaking victory in claiming criminal injuries compensation many years after the abuse - when she had had time to begin her recovery.

I want to share my story with as many women as possible, a story which is no longer hard to tell. It was a lifetime of feeling embarrassed and ashamed and it was quite long enough that I suffered in silence. My road to recovery, which is still being journeyed, has not been easy. When you are given the message to keep quiet, it's awfully difficult to know how and when to let that screaming voice out.

It started like this: "I was attacked". It grew to "I was attacked when I was ten". It is now something like this "I WAS RAPED!"

I will not go into the gory details out of respect for the other survivors who will undoubtedly make up your readership. The details make me feel threatened and I would not force them on other women who are battling with their own memories.

schoolgirl crushed

I was abducted and raped three weeks after my tenth birthday. I remember every detail except how I felt at the time. It happened at Eastwood swimming baths in Glasgow by a man called William Mckirdy. He was caught and convicted in May 1978 to five years in jail. This was not his first offence (he was on probation at the time for a similar offence). It is very important to me that his name appears in print. If I could, I'd print the name of the judge who thought that this was an appropriate sentence for a child rapist. When he got out of jail, I still hadn't had my first school-girl crush...I probably hadn't even started my periods.

I was told to pick up and go on, but what was a child to do amidst all this fear, shame and ugliness? I started to die inside round about my tenth birthday. It has taken me fifteen years to reach this point. Three years ago, I'd rather have been diagnosed with some terrible disease than have people find out my horrible secret. I have come a long way.

When I was twenty, a close friend killed himself. I knew then that unless I sought help, I would not make it to my twenty-first birthday.

In three years I have been counselled by some wonderful women and have met some truly beautiful people who have given me their time, patience, friendship and trust. I have also painfully lost a few

'friends' along the way. For the last two years I have been a hotline counsellor and group facilitator in two separate rape crisis centres.

The most difficult part was that people didn't understand why I was "bringing all of this up" so many years later and they found it hard to believe that I could have hidden my pain so well (bulimia, cutting behaviour, suicidal plots and depression).

Push comes to shove, William Mckirdy

My parents said all the wrong things when push came to shove and I told them of my difficulties and that in order to heal I was dropping out of university. My parents never will be able to give me the support I want surrounding the rape. That has been difficult to accept, but our relationship is better now than it has been for many years. I do not blame them for not helping me at the time of the rape although I did have a lot of anger in the beginning of my healing. No, the guilt lies solely with William Mckirdy who ruined my childhood and the judicial system which regards women and children with so little worth. Did you know you could get put away for longer if you stole letters from a post box!

Quite apart from emotional pain, the healing process cost me a lot of therapists (aaah, the NHS) and lost wages, so I decided to claim criminal injuries compensation (Britain's answer to the fact that you can't file a civil suit).

I did this though letters from Israel and the USA to Glasgow via my lawyer. I requested a female judge to review my case, which had to pass a committee of one before it was even accepted owing to the time span that had passed. The allowed amount of time is three years. The judge had to decide if

The anger that came up was towards the establishment that I feel did not protect me properly, which could also negate my suffering and the truth of my pain.

Last week I was told that they had accepted my reasons for the ten year claim delay. I think this is somewhat of a legal precedent. I hope at least it will be the precedent for women all over Britain to claim for crimes committed against them in their childhood.

More for a broken nose...

Two days ago, I received the news

me enough... Do you realise that if I had been only physically hurt or mugged and received a broken nose, I would have been offered considerably more.

Nevertheless, this is a step forward for women in Britain and hopefully the rest of the world. What we need is for women legislators to work to change the laws and compensation amounts for sex crimes. To fight for the recognition in public circles, of the trauma of rape. Oh how I have wished and continue to wish that William Mckirdy had been a leg-breaking, nose-punching handbag thief instead of a child molester.

Not alone

If any of you survivors out there need help or information, please contact a Rape Crisis Centre. I did not come this far alone; I had help and support from three different countries and four different crisis centres. I know that I am not alone and therefore some of the money I will be donating back into the support systems that exist in Israel and LA. And to Strathclyde RCC who were my first contacts in the compensation case.

The rest of the money will go into my studies to be a midwife; something very important to me as a woman and a survivor. It is a beautiful way to make a difference and to teach women how to take control of their own bodies and birth experience.

My final passage is devoted to any survivors who may be reading. You got through the very worst, you survived. The healing is not easy but it is worth it. Good luck. ●

Remember...

When a boy says 'yes' he often means 'no thank you'



Angie Brew

my ten year delay in claiming compensation was warranted.

From victim to survivor

In my opinion it is inappropriate to expect a rape victim to claim compensation until she becomes a survivor. This can and does take years. In the USA Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome has entered into law policies in many states in regard to civil and criminal suits; especially when the victim was a child at the time of abuse. The statute of limitations is changing too in Britain. I was told that the chances of receiving an award were very slim, despite the fact that there had been a conviction. I wrote over an 18 month period. I told the board of my emotional problems; my psychologist wrote two assessments; I sent them a letter that I wrote to William Mckirdy and I even explained the difficulties my partner and I experience daily as a result of this rape. It took me a long time to face the possibility that they would reject my claim.

that I had been awarded a sum of money which was larger than the average pittance for sex crime compensation. I was awarded for general damages, which includes pain and suffering, but not expenses. I am currently battling inside with two thoughts: how wonderful for me and for British women, and how dare anyone offer me money for my "pain and suffering". No one could possibly offer

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The woman at the phone in the crowded pub looked like she was also taking a break from the riot - with her face slightly pink from sunburn, her denim jacket dusty, and a small cut on her forehead just beginning to scab over. "You have change for a quid?" she asked Rita. "I've got to ring my mum in Sheffield. Ta!"

"Hello mum!" she shouted into the receiver. "...yeah, in the news. I'm alright...No, don't worry...Talk about it later...I missed the coach back. I'll stop with a friend in London, it's OK. I might come back tomorrow."

Afterwards the young woman dialed again and listened. Her cheerful expression faded as she listened longer, then slammed the phone down. "My mate's not in!" she explained, "and it's too late to hitch back to Sheffield. Even if I had the money I probably couldn't get a coach now."

"Try again later, maybe." Rita suggested. "I've lost a friend myself just now. We nipped into the loo and we were gonna have a drink, but she's gone. I'm just ringing someone else to say I'm OK."

"Drink, did you say? I wouldn't mind a drink myself."

After Rita's phone call, they downed their lagers quickly, chatting between gulps. "You live in London? In Brixton? You must be used to this sort of thing, eh?"

"Suppose so," Rita said. "But in some ways, this reminds me of Stop the City."

"Stop the what?"

"Oh, it was a long time ago." Rita sighed. "People just gathered in the City, blockaded the streets, smashed windows and rich cars, that sort of thing. And there was a women's action, which didn't really happen. I brought my diaphragm to dispose of, I think I chucked it in a bank in the end - through the letter box because I couldn't fit anything in the case heavy enough to smash a window. We tried to shut down capitalism for the day, ha! ha!" She smiled broadly over her pint. "But it was nothing like this."

As they left the pub, the landlord shut the door again behind them and wished them good luck.

They emerged into a street filled with the kind of shocking quiet she was used to hearing after leaving a loud gig or party when no one else is about, and every footstep echoes. The running shouting mass of people they'd been part of was nowhere to be seen. Only then did Rita become aware of the shrill background chorus of burglar alarms ringing endlessly, echoing in the littered canyon of Regent St.

The streets were filled with the blue and golden light of dusk settling in, the hot humid day turning cool. The broken glass glittered on the pavement almost like jewels - much more beautiful than anything once behind the glass. Little pots and perfume bottles still stood behind one gaping window. But another had been cleared, with twisted shop window dummies strewn among the glass, sticks, and NO POLL TAX placards. Huge cracks seamed other windows, or intricate spider-web patterns where stones had hit but not broken. Then she saw the men wandering about, talking out the sides of their mouths into radios.

The only shop where she remembered actually buying anything was Top Shop. And nearly ten years ago she'd got done shoplifting there. She couldn't stop herself from smiling as

she surveyed the holes and cracks in that window. she realised that the woman next to her was smiling in just the same way. Their grins amplified each other as they looked from the window at each other.

Rita laughed. "What's your name anyway I forgot to ask!"

"Scarlet."

"I'm Rita. Is Scarlet your real name?"

"Of course it is...well, my parents named me Sarah. But Scarlet's me name. I was gonna call myself Red, but I met all these other women called Red. So I decided I was Scarlet, which is much more...intense."

And Scarlet did look very intense, her eyes showing the same light as the glittering shards of glass beneath their feet.

A huge convoy of riot police and empty vans rumbled down Oxford St. Boiler-suited and visored police hung out the van doors or walked along beside the vans. They wandered back in the direction of the pub to avoid them.

"We can make our way to Tottenham Court Road and get the tube. Oxford Circus looks closed," Rita suggested.

"I don't want to go now, do you?"

"When you're tired - well I'm tired now, anyway - its better to call it quits, and stay free to fight another day."

"There'll never be another day like this one." Scarlet said fiercely. "Nothing like it. I'd like to find another crowd, maybe there'll be looting."

"But it looks like Oxford St. is blocked anyway," Rita said. "Let's head back towards Trafalgar maybe, see what's happening, and get the tube if nothing is." But Rita had already decided to go home soon; her arms and legs were aching and she felt a soreness on her thigh.

"So how do we get there?" Scarlet asked.

"Uh...I'm not exactly sure," said Rita. "I've lived in London for years, but I still need my A-Z when I go up the West End."

Which she usually avoided; those shops with expensive but boring clothes, beady-eyed detectives, shit-disco playing on the PA. And the clubs: beefcake bouncers ready to kick the shit out of you, £2 half-pints of beer, the sort of people who

titter instead of laugh and blokes always in brand new leather jackets trying to pick you up. Then there's the fun of staggering towards Trafalgar Square and trying to find a Night Bus driver who won't look too closely at the outdated day pass found in the street. Though she'd have enough money these days for the bus back - enough for a taxi even! - the West End was still an alien world.

Glimpses of her world and the alien one clashing violently this afternoon keep flashing through her mind: combat in Trafalgar Square, throwing anything she could grab. Bricks, stones, placard sticks, a heavy serving ladle found just outside a restaurant, a high top

trainer found in the middle of the road. Even police barriers, they're too heavy to throw properly, but they do get in the way of the police horses... She remembered the triumphant shouts greeting the first flames coming out of the South African Embassy.

And just a few streets away, couples hob-nobbed in bistros, soft voices unheard behind the glass. Groups of tourists. A quick half in a pub, before they were hustled out by the landlord: "Drink up, drink up, the police are closing us down!"

The bistros were same as the last time she walked past, and tourists still out for some civilised entertainment filled the streets. And suddenly the real world invaded: "NO POLL TAX! NO POLL TAX!" A crowd suddenly appeared, and tourists got their cameras out! Rita joined the crowd where she spotted some friends she'd set out with earlier that afternoon. Seemed like years ago that they were innocently munching their chips outside the cafe near the Oval, greeting long lost friends, admiring women as jackets and jumpers came off in the sun...

The riot police charged; tourists scattered or got their cameras out. The couples in the bistros raised eyebrows. Running through the streets, Rita saw the young women in perky uniforms, staff of all the burger bars grinning and waving through the windows where they'd been locked in. "Have a nice day!" she imagined them saying. At Leicester Square she saw small figures dancing on top of stalled red busses. "To Regent St!" shouts went up, when the cops blocked them.

Was it all over now? Rita and scarlet wandered through the side streets off Regent St, along with other small groups and dazed-looking individuals. Eventually they ended up on Tottenham Court Rd., where they gazed longingly at the intact windows of shops selling stereos, computers and tools.

"NO POLL TAX! NO POLL TAX!" A small crowd followed by the familiar ranks of police came their way. A guy darted out of the group and greeted Rita. It took a couple minutes to realise he'd been a friend of hers back around 1985 or so. "Hello, you keeping alright the past five years? There's no point going up there. We're headed to Covent Garden...wanna come?" Scarlet nodded yes.

"Nah, I'm calling it a night." Rita told him.



"I'm just headed for the tube."

"You sure?" asked Scarlet.

"Yeah, look, there's only about 100 in that crowd, with about 400 police. Now's the time when they make most of their arrests, picking up stragglers and die-hards. It's prime hunting-time for the snatch-squads. You can go if you want...I'm gonna get something to eat and get home. You're welcome to come along."

"Oh...Ok, maybe you're right." But Scarlet cast longing glances at the departing crowd, now almost hidden by their police escort.

The tube was crowded, full of tense excited talk and conspiratorial whispers. At each stop more people got on with more stories to tell. "There were barricades and Porsches burning on Charing Cross Rd." - "Someone told me a woman took a whole bag of £100 sunglasses!" - "In a posh restaurant they all just ran and left their dinners behind. We threw their plates at the police!" - "There's a crowd headed back to storm Downing Street!" - Speculation about whether Downing St. will be stormable, will it be "just like in Romania"?

Customers sat in a row at the Indian take-away, watching the end of the news. Someone on the telly was smashing in a shop window and helping himself to a guitar. And cars were burning, streets barricaded. She had no idea all this had been happening at the time. Had it been going on when she was in the first pub? "...300 arrests, and about 100 more arrests have been made in the last hour." the grim-faced newsreader said.

"This is the worst rioting Central London has seen in decades," said the senior police officer on the telly, "we will use every means at

GIRLS

31st March was the 3rd anniversary of the anti-poll tax uprising in Trafalgar Square. In honour of this occasion we bring you some historical fiction, with even a heaving bosom or two!

our disposal to find the perpetrators who have not yet been arrested."

"...youths battled with police and went on a rampage through London's theatre and shopping district." Cut to a crowd advancing on the police, a bloke with a Mohican flailing with a huge stick.

"I ain't no 'youth', I'm a mature woman of 35", grumbled Rita.

"35? You kidding? I never thought you were that old!"

"Why not? Because I'd been rioting, or I'm not settled into whatever women my age are supposed to settle into. I suppose I don't have any wrinkles because I was prone to spots when I was young."

"Well, I'm 18, I'm still in school," Scarlet said, "but I'm finished this year. Then I leave home. Maybe I'll move to London."

"I thought you ere older!" Rita said.

"And why's that, eh? 'cause I've got better things to do than my homework?"

"Prawn Biriani, Vegetable Curry!"

With their boots off and their curries spread before them, they sat down ready to watch more news. The steaming food let loose the smell of spices through the room. Rita slowly ate. She couldn't remember ever tasting a curry as good as this one. Each tense muscle in her arms and shoulders relaxed and let go as the warm food filled her up.

As Scarlet also seemed to relax, she rested against Rita on the sofa. Scarlet's paleness contradicted her name. Hair as light as her skin, but darkened by a big stain of blood that Rita noticed for the first time now that Scarlet had her hat off. Some of the hair was caked with it. "Just a light head wound," Scarlet told Rita, noticing where she looked. "A bit messy at the time, but it's OK now. Washed with some vodka. Overproof stuff, would've killed any germs!"

They stopped talking as they concentrated on their food.

"So, are you gay?" Scarlet asked later. "I thought you might be, after looking at your books. I took a look when you were in the loo."

"The bookshelf reveals all. Are you?"

"Of course! I came out a year ago."

"Yeah, so what inspired that?"

Scarlet smiled fondly. "It was someone in the same anti-Poll Tax group. We went leafletting together, got pissed afterwards and... It was brilliant!"

Scarlet made it sound so easy. Rita remembered how long it took her to come out. The first woman she really liked was in the same Class War group. After months of hesitation and agonising, she went back to her boyfriend before much happened. Later Rita's would-have-been girlfriend regularly denounced lesbianism as a middle-class pursuit, and snogged with her boyfriend in the pub after meetings. Oh, it was awful! But even more fun had been in store for Rita when she left Class War and became a Revolutionary Feminist.

"Oh, that sounds good", Rita said, trying to keep a tinge of envy out of her voice.

"Well, it didn't last too long but it was OK when it ended. I joined a young lesbian group and met a lot of other women there, ...hey Rita is something wrong?"

"No, nothing's wrong. I'm just tired. I suppose I should ring up a friend...I'm supposed to be going to her birthday party tonight!"

"Maybe I'll try phoning my friend as well," Scarlet said, but didn't seem about to move. And come to think of it, Rita didn't feel much like going to any parties. A pleasant heaviness had taken over her body, she stretched and yawned.

"Not long ago shops were looted and smashed on the Tottenham Court Road..." said yet another grim-faced newsreader.

"Fuckin' shit!" Scarlet exclaimed. "I knew we should've hung about on Tottenham Court Rd. then. There we were, saying 'oh isn't it too bad we can't do any looting here, such nice things in that window, then we go home!'"

Rita felt a serious twinge of regret herself: 'the snatch squads'll be out, it's over, who wants to hang about to be nicked?' she'd said. Years of experience behind those words...! Well, isn't it strange how the voice of experience and expertise sometimes got proved wrong, often lubricated as it is by a pint or two! Must've been in the pub when Covent Garden got done. Or was she already on Regent St., she wondered.

The cat made herself at home on Rita's stomach, turning around in a circle many times before settling. Rita closed her eyes and drifted off a little, but something kept her still anchored in the conscious world - of flashing lights and glittering glass and a quiet room with the telly on and this woman sitting beside her. Rita stroked the cat.

When Scarlet reached over to stroke the cat as well, Rita watched the motion of her hand, fingers fanning out in the soft fur, slowly as if tasting the silkiness through her fingertips. The cat was falling asleep, and Rita felt she was heading that way too.

Scarlet shifted her weight, very slightly, her hand left an inch from Rita's breast. Scarlet didn't touch, but Rita imagined that the intention of touching must've stirred the molecules of air between the hand and the breast to do it for her. Rita opened her eyes and closed them again before they really met Scarlet's, looking straight at her.

She's not making a pass at me, is she? No...don't think so. She's a nice woman, but she's too young and what do we have in common? I'm too knackered for sex anyway, she thought, with a yawn and a long lovely stretch. "If you want to keep the telly on, that's OK. I'm so tired I'll sleep through anything." Rita mumbled.

"I'll just watch the end of the news," said Scarlet. She put her arm up behind Rita, her T-shirt slipping down off her other shoulder, showing a strong rounded upper arm.

Rita felt a hint of breath against her face, like a soft breeze it went through the fuzzy half-dreams that overtook her as she slowly sunk

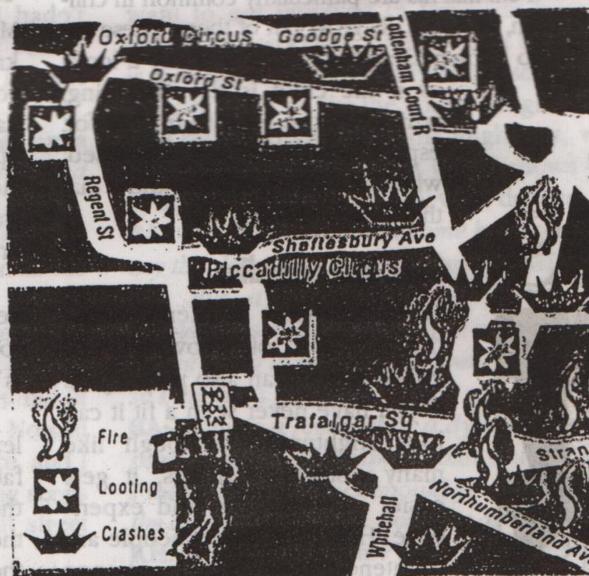
down into layers of sleep. And drifting up again towards the surface, crammed with colours and thoughts and a steady warmth.

It was when Scarlet moved her leg away that she woke up. She'd got used to it and missed it so much she had to move closer, much closer. Suddenly, she couldn't do without it. And suddenly, Scarlet's legs were twined with hers and her lips pressed as they passed down the side of her neck. The cat jumped off the bed with an outraged miouw.

They lay still for a while, just small touches here and there. Scarlet had a light, almost tentative touch. This was the first time Rita had been with a woman who had such small hands - she was usually attracted to larger women, wasn't she?

But how those small hands and fingers held her breasts, then darted everywhere. Up and down her thighs, taking and caressing flesh between them. Rita anticipated them moving further up, just as lightly - she was waiting. But instead Scarlet withdrew her hand and put her arms around her comfortably. But now Rita didn't want it to stop...she wrapped herself around Scarlet, pressed against her and ready to dissolve.

Scarlet slid her leg between hers. "Not so tired after all!" Scarlet murmured as she pressed her leg up between Rita's a little more, then relaxed it.



"I'm awake enough," said Rita as she shut her eyes. Colours of deep red and indigo brightened and exploded against the black background of her eyelids, as she felt the pressure against cunt and ass, delicate stroking then hard squeezing as hands glided down. Scarlet's breath came quick against her neck. Rita thought of the first really warm breeze of the year that blew in soft gusts, that made her want to take her clothes off so she could feel it all over.

The separation of undressing was a shock. But she was soon wrapped in warmth again as Scarlet put her arms around her from behind. She keenly felt the soft cushiony feeling of breasts against her back. Then light tickly little kisses covered her bare back - stopped, and began again, this time which such a slowness

that made her shiver as she anticipated the next kiss. Each one was slower and more than the last; she would have liked time to stop when it happened so it could go on longer. And she ached for next one, wanting it to be faster and harder. The lips moving up and down her spine were taking their own sweet time, until her skin was just about to leap off her wanting to be bit and sucked with abandon..

For a long time she hadn't been able to imagine what it could be like without having seperateness like two feet of air surrounding and cushioning the clear outlines of her body. But whoosh!! it was gone, gone just like the police barriers she'd casually shoved aside that day. Her heart and pulse were racing fast, fast as when she was running in the streets with the wealth and power of the West End shattered and burning behind her.

The sound of a knife hitting the cutting board woke her up. Rita opened her eyes and blinked, to find Scarlet sitting at the table without any clothes on, chopping onions. Scarlet smiled at Rita with teary-eyes through a veil of damp hair. With her hair just beginning to dry an fluff out over the shaved sides Scarlet looked even younger. "G'morning, thought I'd start an omelette."

Usually Rita was the one who cooked breakfast the morning after!

And if she'd been wondering what the hell she was doing with a woman half her age when she'd decided not to go out with anyone under 30 again, the smell of onions and garlic when Scarlet started frying them just about kicked those doubts in the head.

Rita got slowly out of bed, feeling a lot of bruises and aches and pains. But it was the pleasant kind of muscle ache, after exertion that's well spent. She quickly pulled on the clothes she'd worn the day before. She was about to offer Scarlet the use of the dressing gown, but decided not to because Scarlet seemed very comfortable the way she was.

"I'll go out and get the Sunday papers, and I'll get something nice to eat." Rita said as she quickly left the flat.

On the way she ran into friends with stacks of all the Sunday papers. Everyone was grinning and chatting away happily in the sun - it took a while to get to the newsagent.

She stood there looking at the newspapers for ages. So, when's it gonna happen, she wondered, the dreaded onset of PRD - Post-Riot Depression? Usually it descends after you've read the Sunday papers, cut out the pictures you liked and then remembered you've got to go to work tomorrow and one of your best friends is still in a police cell. But she felt fine this morning, really fine..

After deliberating and ignoring the sign which said "please don't open the newspapers and magazines", she bought all five Sunday papers for the pictures. When she got back Scarlet had dressed and almost finished cooking the omelette. With papers spread out before them they tucked into lunch. Scarlet was quiet for the first time as she read them. Then she rested her chin on her hand and looked dreamily out the window. "Hey Rita," she said, "I've got an idea, after breakfast maybe we could to up the West End and see if there's any more trouble today."

Rita was about to say it was a ridiculous idea, the place would be flooded with cops - but didn't. Instead she just laughed. Why not? It's a good day to go out anyway.

Rozanne

EPILEPSY A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Epilepsy is a poorly understood condition. This is partly because it is a somewhat generic term used to describe a wide range of blackouts and other conditions.

Epilepsy can also be a very frightening condition, both for the sufferers and their friends and family, and possibly even more so for someone who just happens to be there when someone is having a fit and doesn't know what is happening. Because of this, it can have a much greater effect on people's lives than is necessary. Obviously driving is not permitted and certain sports such as rock climbing and the like should be avoided. However, many epileptics know when they are going to have a fit and when potentially dangerous actions should be avoided. Everybody's circumstances are different and it is very difficult to generalise about what epileptics should and shouldn't do. Unfortunately many people do not trust this method and so many epileptics are unnecessarily banned from many things. This is particularly a problem with children, since it is much more likely to lead to psychological problems.

When I was at school, many of the teachers were worried about me having fits. This meant that I could get out of doing many things that I did not want to do, in my case mainly assembly and PE. A child can soon learn to get around people in this fashion and although missing the odd lesson isn't a problem, it can lead to difficulties as she gets older and realises that it isn't always so easy to avoid things.

I have been involved with epilepsy for over twenty years, but it was only recently that I saw my first grand mal fit. If it hadn't been at a British Epilepsy Association meeting, I might not have even realised what was happening. It didn't look anything like

what I expected, it did look rather like the sufferer was drunk. I have heard of people having fits being treated very badly, because people thought they were drunk, but I was still surprised.

Not stupid - epileptic

Because many of the drugs, and sometimes the condition itself, can make epileptics a bit dopey or slow, many people assume they are not particularly bright. This can be very frustrating and can affect many parts of life: work, social life and so on. People are less likely to take you seriously. I am a bit of a slow thinker at times and sometimes I can have great trouble having a conversation with more than one other person, because I am never quick enough to get in before the topic has changed and many people are a lot worse than me. This, again, can label you as thick or shy when in fact this is not the case at all. This is particularly a problem with children who can be very influenced by what they are told. However, many epileptics lack confidence and so are also particularly influenced by this.

Another problem is memory. Apparently epileptics are renowned for having bad memories, although this is not always the case. Sometimes memory is bad all the time, sometimes only at the time of a fit. Because a fit severely disorients you it is not uncommon for it to take a day to readjust. Smaller conversations had over the previous or next few days can be completely forgotten and this can be annoying for the people involved. It does seem, however, that epileptics are much more organised than average, possibly out of necessity to keep things rolling smoothly.

Petit mal fits are particularly common in children, who usually grow out of them. These are also known as absences and basically it looks as if the child is day dreaming, which she can get into trouble for, especially before it is diagnosed, when she may not even know that they are happening.

Fear and prejudice

Most of these problems occur through lack of knowledge of epilepsy. Fear can also play a part. If you have never seen a fit it can look frightening, although like many distressing things, it gets easier with practice and experience. However, when people are frightened they can do strange things and it is necessary to give them reassurance.

Although conscious prejudice against epilepsy has substantially reduced, there is much more happening at the unconscious level. This is harder to sort out. It is essential to remember that each epileptic is an individual and just because their reactions are slow they are not necessarily less intelligent than you. Most important, I think, is the treatment of children. Epileptic children shouldn't be treated as if they are different. Children should have as normal a life as possible, despite feelings that they should be more protected.

A severe fit can be very dra-

matic. The first thing that happens is that the muscles contract. This causes the person to give an, often agonising, scream and then fall to the floor. By then they have probably lost consciousness. Nothing happens for a little while, which means that people's initial assumption may be that it was a stroke or a heart attack. The tremors then start, these can be from a mere vibration, to very severe, arms and legs everywhere and nobody able to go anywhere near.

How to react

When this stage has finished the epileptic will either go to sleep or start to come around. If she goes to sleep it is, where possible, best to let her sleep. This will reduce the chances of a severe headache and confusion when she comes round. Some epileptics are completely lucid when they come round, others can be very confused, not knowing where they are or who the people around them are. All that can be done at this stage is to give them reassurance and in time, often in minutes, they will start to realise what is happening. However, a little dizziness and loss of memory is not uncommon for a day or two afterwards.

Basically very little can be done for someone having a fit. There is no need to call an ambulance unless they are coming out of one fit and going straight into another. All you can do is try to make sure they don't injure themselves and make them as comfortable as possible, also remember to check that nobody walks off with their personal belongings and they have no children with them who may get lost in all the excitement.

Causes and cures

Many things can trigger off fits. Most people know about strobe lights and there has been some discussion recently about computer games. This is known as photosensitive epilepsy. It can also be brought on by televisions or flashing lights in other circumstances, such as between the trees when you are driving.

Certain allergies can cause fits: wet paints, certain medicines and certain E numbers in foods are particularly common, but the trigger is often different in each individual.

Vitamin and mineral deficiencies can also lead to fits. This is a particularly common factor, because many of the anticonvulsants, the pill, and many other drugs, will deplete the vitamin and mineral levels in the body so, theoretically at least, they can cause more fits than they cure. Vitamin and mineral supplements are also useful in reducing the many side effects of the anticonvulsants.

Many epileptics had a difficult birth. Also it is not uncommon for epilepsy to begin after an accident. The vertebrae at the top of the neck are often slightly misplaced and correction of this can lead to a complete cure. Also, there may be excessive pressure on the brain and manipulation of the bones of the skull can help relieve this pressure and hence lead to a cure.

Stress is a common factor in epilepsy. This is a particular problem, since epilepsy can obviously lead to stress. It is important that as much as possible is done to control this aspect. There are many books and courses on this subject and it is just a case of finding which method is best for each individual.

Hypnotherapy is not always recommended for epilepsy since it can bring on a fit. However this is generally only the case if the fits are very frequent and even if it does bring on a fit it shouldn't make the condition any worse in the long run and may help it.

Conventional treatment for epilepsy is improving. However most of the drugs have side effects. The aim of conventional medicine is to stop the fits, whereas the aim of the patient is generally to feel better, and if this involves having a few more fits than otherwise then so be it. Some people find that conventional medicine stops the fits completely and they are quite happy with this. Others feel it does very little for them and therefore decide they must find a better treatment.

PMS

In women, epilepsy usually seems to occur at period or ovulation times and I believe no research has been done into this. It can often be treated as another symptom of premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) is known to have a noticeable effect on both epilepsy and PMS. Processed sugar is a relatively new product and our bodies find it difficult to handle. We are made to take in sugar requirements through carbohydrate which is then converted slowly into sugar. Processed sugar (including raw cane sugar) causes a sudden increase in blood sugar levels, followed by a sudden fall. The pancreas, which keeps the level of sugar stable, finds this very hard work and at times just gives up, which is when diabetes can occur.

First of all cut down on your sugar intake as much as possible. If you get cravings for sugar this proves that you do have a problem in this area and therefore it is even more important to do this. It can be difficult, but the result is well worthwhile, although you may be rather tired for a week or two. There are things that can be done to help without having to cut sugar intake or to make life easier if you do. Brewer's yeast provides B vitamins and chromium and various other nutrients that may help the condition. Zinc, chromium and pancreatin supplements can also help. Eat regularly, about every three hours - this doesn't have to be very much, but it mustn't be sweet. Avoid flour products which are not wholemeal and eat only wholegrain rice. Avoid dried fruits, bananas, alcohol and coffee.

The least you should do if you think you suffer from low blood sugar is to eat frequently and try some brewer's yeast, which is one of the cheapest nutritional supplements around. Going on the pill and pregnancy can also increase or decrease the volume of fits.

Generally, there is a lot still to be learnt about epilepsy, by the medical profession, by the general public and by epileptics themselves. There is a great deal that can be done to help the lives of both epileptics and their friends and families but effort and understanding is necessary to achieve this.

I will soon be having a book on using alternative treatment for epilepsy published, £7.50 from the address below. I am continuing research and would be very interested in being contacted by anyone interested in this subject for any reason. Contact me at 46 Caistor Park Road, Stratford, London E15 3PT.

Caroline Thomas

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Palestine prisoners update

A delegation has visited Hasharon Prison to see if the agreements reached after the hunger strike of Palestinian prisoners (see *Bad Attitude* 1 and 2) were being implemented. Prisoners are now allowed to visit friends in their cells five days a week, but only if they're in the same wing. Most cells now have TV or radios, supplied by their families.

But windows in most of the cells are still not repaired. The demands for a female doctor and nurse have not been met, and the sewing machine and clothes dryer won by the prisoners have not been working. Prisoners see this as intentional, for whenever the authorities agree under pressure to supply an appliance that makes life easier, they supply it in very bad condition. Soon it breaks down and the authorities blame the prisoners for carelessness.

A new commanding officer in Hasharon had been confiscating letters and magazines he decided were suspicious. Among them were letters and stamps sent in to prisoners from the Women's Organisation for Political Prisoners (WOFPP)- he didn't think Jewish women

should be writing to Palestinian women!

After complaints and meetings between prisoner representatives and the prison director, the commanding officer agreed to pass on the post, books and newspapers now arrive regularly, but letters are delayed for 10 days to a month, and sometimes confiscated. Outgoing letters are also delayed.

The prisoners and WOFPP ask that people write to the following addresses in support of their demand for a female doctor and nurse.

- Haim Ramon, Minister of Health, P.O.B. 1176, Jerusalem 91010. Fax: 972-2-787662
- Arieh Bibi, Commissioner of Prisons, Israeli Prison Service, 5 Histadrut St. Jerusalem 94230. Fax: 972-2-249804
- Abraham Harari, Director of Hasharon Prison POB 7, Even Yehuda 400550, Fax: 972-53-694239.
- Dr. Yacov Zigelbaum, head of the medical dept. of the Israeli Prison Service POB 81 Ramle. Fax: 972-8-226559.

Info from: **WOFPP**, PO Box 31811 Tel Aviv Israel They also publish a monthly newsletter and prisoners list.



ABC—SUPPORT CLASS STRUGGLE PRISONERS

The Anarchist Black Cross aims at practical solidarity with prisoners. We support anarchists, revolutionaries and people locked up for resistance to capitalism. We support people framed up by the police. We support prisoners organising and resisting on the inside. We also recognise that most prisoners are inside because of struggling to survive in our exploitative society. We welcome contact from prisoners, their relatives and anyone interested in our work. We actively support people through letters, publicity, pickets and some material aid - when we can afford it!

It has to be said at the moment that most of the prisoners we are in contact with are men. Partly this is down to the larger male prison population, but also prisoners mostly get in touch from hearing about us from other cons, ie by informal networks. So far we have not made many contacts in women's prisons, but we feel we urgently need to balance this. Any prisoners, ex-prisoners or supporters who think we might be able to help someone inside, please get in touch.

Contact: London ABC, 121 Railton Rd, London SE24 0LR.

Shawnee Unit - controlling women

After the April '92 uprising at Lexington (Kentucky, USA) Federal Women's Prison, (see *Bad Attitude* 1) some of the participants were transferred to the Shawnee control unit at Marianna, Florida. Laura Whitehorn, one of the Lexington prisoners - and long-term political prisoners Silvia Baraldini, Marilyn Buck, Susan Rosenberg - have written an account of life at the control unit and analysing the political role of these units.

"In May 1992 a...mobilisation against control units took place, on the 20th anniversary of the Attica Rebellion. The first control unit was also built 20 years ago, as part of wave of repression carried out by the government against the upsurge of revolutionary and progressive movements in that period..." The focus was on brutal conditions in the control units, how racism determines who is in these units, and their use as tools of political repression. As a former warden of Marion has stated: "The purpose of Marion control unit is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and in society at large."

But there's been no attention paid to women and women's control units such as Shawnee, according to the writers.

Shawnee Unit was opened August 1988, after the small group isolation experiment at Lexington High Security Unit (HSU) was shut down after a national campaign. "The political and security mission of Shawnee is the same as that of the HSU: to control, isolate and neutralise women who, for various reasons, pose either a political, escape, or disruption threat. Neutralisation insures that the women imprisoned here will never leave prison with the full capacity to function. Central to the mission is the understanding that Washington can decide at any point to transfer any woman political prisoner or POW here...It also serves to control over all women in BOP (Bureau of Prisons) prisons; in less than 24 hours, twelve women who were targeted as leadership of the

recent demonstration by women at Lexington against police violence were transferred here."

Comfortable & attractive?

From the outside Shawnee appears comfortable and attractive. But the women there live in a "psychological assaultive environment". The unit is set up as a small triangle with a small yard. "Within this severely limited space, women are under constant scrutiny and observation. In the unit, cameras and listening devices (installed in every cell) insure constant surveillance and control of even the most intimate conversation. Lockdown is not necessary because there is nowhere to go, and individuals can be observed and controlled better while having the illusion of some mobility... Shawnee is like being in a suffocating cocoon." Recently the fences around the yard - the only place where a prisoner can catch a glimpse of the outside world - were covered with green cloth.

"The intense physical limitations are compounded by a total lack of educational training or recreational programs. At a time when such programs are being expanded at other women's prisons, here, at the end of the line, women are not worthy of even the pretence of rehabilitation. The geographical location of Shawnee makes contact with family and community an almost impossible task. Gradually, women here begin to lose their ability to relate to the outside world." They become "women who resist less, demand less, and see each other as fierce competitors for the few privileges allowed..."

Small comforts, such as personal clothing, have become the mechanism through which cooperation and collaboration are obtained. The latest wrinkle is the institution of 'privileged housing' - the arbitrary designation of a limited number of cells on the upper tier as a reward for acceptable behaviour...The unit is in a constant state of uproar over the daily moves

that enforce the fall from privileged status."

The high proportion of women of colour in the unit reflect the "permanent conflict between black people and those in power." Since the LA riots in May 1992 an unprecedented number of black women have been put in the hole or singled out for "discipline". A strict segregationist policy determines who gets which jobs.

About 40 prisoners work for UNICOR at their Automated Data Processing (ADP) factory. They work twelve hours a day and five more hours on Saturday. With no other jobs, the need for funds, lack of family support, and the expense of living in Shawnee, women are pushed into UNICOR, into intense competition and into acceptance of their exploitation.

'Dangerous' women

The writers say that violence against women prisoners is increasing, citing physical attacks by male guards at Lexington, and a similar incident at Shawnee. "Women in prison are at the very bottom. The misogyny and contempt for women in the society as a whole are compounded by the way the prison system is organised to exploit and utilise women's oppression. The BOP characterises some women as 'dangerous' and 'terrorist' (having gone beyond the acceptable bounds of acceptable female behaviour in the US) making them the target of particularised repression, scorn, and hatred. To be classified maximum security is to be seen as less than human..."

"All women's prisons operate based on the all-pervasive threat of sexual assault and the dehumanising invasion of privacy...In the control unit, there is absolutely no privacy; windows in cell doors (which cannot be covered), patrolling of the unit by male guards, and the presence of the bathrooms in the cells guarantee this...in the past year alone, there have been three major internal investigations of sexual harassment and misconduct by male

officers - including rape."

Unlike other women's prisons, the average age of women at Shawnee is 37. Nearly everyone is doing more than 15 years, more than ten are serving life without parole. Menopause is the main health issue facing women in the unit: "refusal to recognise and treat the symptoms of menopause becomes a cruel means of punishment and an attack on the integrity of one's personality." And recently, two women who suffered strokes were denied treatment in a hospital.

A new administration has now ended a selective tolerance of lesbian relationships in the prison and lesbians are targets of harassment and discrimination.

State cosmetics

The Lexington HSU experiment "failed because of the personal and political resistance of those inside and outside the walls. But this defeat did not deter the BOP from its stated goals. It just drove them to hide them cosmetically behind a veneer of new paint and the momentary elimination of the most notorious abuses." A new control unit similar to Shawnee is due to be opened in North Carolina in 1994.

Silvia Baraldini, Marilyn Buck, Susan Rosenberg, and Laura Whitehorn call on the prisoner rights movement to take women prisoners - and control units as they are used against women - seriously and make them central in anti-prison campaign.

Women In Prison is a campaigning group supporting women prisoners. They work with other groups such as the Women Prisoners Resource Centre, the Female Prisoners Welfare Project and Grupo Amiga. For more info: Women In Prison, 3B Aberdeen Studios, 22 Highbury Grove, London N5 2EA. tel: 226 5879.

REVOLUTION HIJACKED

the betrayal of women in Iran

My original intention in writing this article was to let out my anger at people in this country. I've lived here for seventeen years now and for much of this time I've felt nothing but pity from people. Pity in the way of "it must be terrible over there", "good thing you're here". Pity as opposed to sympathy. Pity as opposed to understanding. Pity that puts others down. Pity that leads to superiority. "It's bad over here, but at least it's not *that* bad". So, I wanted to write something positive about Iran. No - more than that - I wanted to describe heaven on earth for you. I wanted to tell you about the breathtaking landscape, the sun and the snow, the indigenous peoples, the gorgeous tribal clothes, the wild flowers, the rivers, the exotic fruit, the slow pace of living, the constant flow of food, the open arms that greet you wherever you go and more...

But I can't. I can't tell you about all of that now for my mind is filled with nothing but outrage. What's more pressing on my mind is what is really happening in this paradise that I know exists.

Exactly 14 years ago this month, there was a revolution in Iran which promised to change people's lives for the better, as all revolutions do. Revolutionary fervour had caught on and everywhere you went there were groups of people engaged in dialogue, discussing exciting ideas and new proposals for change. I say people because women were also 'out there' politically. Amongst these people were many radical groups who for the first time in many years saw an opportunity to bring about real social change. The previous regime had been a repressive one - Iran was becoming more and more Westernised and this brought many problems with it. And the Shah's secret service (the SAVAK) was notorious internationally for its ruthless disregard of human life.

'Figurehead' - it figures

Ayatollah Khomeini who had been in exile for many years returned to Iran to lead the revolution. He promised that he would just be a figure-head, someone to bring people together. He also promised free thought, which meant a tolerance of all viewpoints. In this way, he found support from all sections of Iranian society and the Revolution became the people's revolution. The middle classes joined the mass of the population in demonstrations and direct action to bring about

change. Unsurprisingly, what eventually happened was far from this idyllic scenario.

To begin with, although many women, young women in particular, joined in the radical 'intellectual' debates that were taking place and wanted a piece of the action, women's issues soon got relegated to the bottom of the list of (men's) priorities. Women's liberation ideology was seen as a side issue that unnecessarily detracted attention away from the 'real' war - class war.

To make matters worse, soon after Khomeini self-appointed himself as "spiritual leader", he was exposed for the liar that he was; a core group of Islamic fundamentalists, led by Khomeini, basically hijacked the revolution. Young men, boys even, were given arms, dressed up and given authority to become vanguard's of (Khomeini's) revolution. [Bad Attitude has also been informed that the British state backed Khomeini and aided his rise to power.]

Khomeini was tapping into the people's religious beliefs and it became the duty of these guards to **enforce** an Islamic way of life. He also took full advantage of nationalistic feelings of a nation that had been domi-



Demonstration in London, '84, for the 120,000 political prisoners held by the Khomeini regime photo: Melanie Friend/Format

nated by the West since the War and began an anti-imperialist crusade. Arrests and public executions became a daily routine. Anyone suspected of having been a Shah supporter had their house raided, was arrested, imprisoned and in many instances shot. Soon anyone suspected of having left-wing connections was also arrested, imprisoned, tortured, repeatedly raped and killed.

The picture I want to paint for you, then, is one of bloodshed. No more illusions about democratic change, and for the radicals, no more illusions about whose revolution it really was. Some radical activists escaped from the country, others went into hiding. If you were known, the chances were you were dead.

Authority over women

The effect of all of this on women in Iran is yet another story. If I tell you a little about what happened, you may get some idea of life for women at this time. Islam (according to the Qoran) brings with it these ideas:

- "Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them".

- "If any of your women commit fornication, call in four witnesses from among yourselves against them; if they testify to their guilt confine them to their houses till death overtakes them or till Allah finds another way for them".

- "If two men among you commit indecency punish them both. If they repent and mend their ways, let them be. Allah is forgiving and merciful".

- "Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because Allah has guarded them. As for those from whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. Allah is high, supreme".

- "A male shall inherit twice as much as a female".

- "You shall inherit half of your wives' estate if they die childless. If they leave children, a quarter of their estate shall be yours."

- "Your wives shall inherit one quarter of your estate if you die childless. If you leave children, one eighth of your estate shall be theirs".

Men can have up to four wives and as many half-wives (*siqqe*) as they choose. These are quick marriages that aren't registered with the State and it's basically the means by which men are allowed to have as many sexual partners as they choose. Some women have begun to use this to their advantage though - while prostitution is illegal, you can earn money by becoming a *siqqe* and then getting a quick divorce.

The Qoran also makes it clear that there are two basic duties that a wife has. She must always seek permission from her husband before leaving the house. And she must always be prepared to meet with her husband's sexual desires. Always. (To be fair, though, I must mention that throughout the Qoran it also stresses that men must be kind and gentle to their women and treat them with respect. But I can't really see how that squares up with the rest. Can you?)

Expect rape

So perhaps from this very brief description, you get the picture. A woman's place is in the home, with her man. She mustn't ever leave the house without his permission. If he allows her to leave the house, she must dress in a decent way. She must obey him and expect to be raped or else she can be beaten. I'm paraphrasing, but in all crudity, that's what it amounts to.

Please note, I'm in no way suggesting that all Muslim men are megalomaniac bastards who rape and beat their wives - not all men abuse their power in this way. And I'm not suggesting that every one in Iran is tolerant of



Demonstration for people executed by Khomeini's regime, London '84 photo: Melanie Friend/Format

dress in a western way. He believed that veiling was a sign of being "backward". So, for example, just before the Revolution you could quite easily walk down the streets of Tehran (the capital city) and not see any veiled women. Quite the contrary, there would be many women dressed in what would here be termed a "provocative" way - mini skirts, shorts, halter-necks (it *was* the 70s!!), tight skirts, tight everything. It was this group of women who were most severely affected by the new dress code and who very bravely tried to fight the imposition. But they weren't successful.

Women's lives policed

The government appointed revolutionary women guards whose sole purpose in life was to ensure that women adhered to the Islamic code, both in the way they dressed and the way they behaved. In effect, we had a police force that patrolled women's lives. So women (and girls) were not only policed at

women being abused. But it's there, in the holy book.

This holy book, then, became the ruling philosophy of the new Islamic regime. One of the first things that the new government did was to pass a resolution regarding women's dress code in public. Women were no longer allowed to dress as they chose. A woman was only allowed to appear in public (or in her own home if there were men besides her husband present) if she covered all parts of her body except for her hands and her face. This affected women in Iran in different ways. Women from ethnic minorities who lived in rural areas (like the Turks, the Kurds or the Baluchis) basically carried on wearing what they had always worn anyway. Most working class women also carried on wearing what they had always worn - traditional clothes of their region or veils when in public.

This left the middle class women and those other women who had rejected veiling. As I mentioned earlier, the Shah had been trying to modernise and westernise Iranian society and part of this was encouraging women to

home, but also at school, college, university, work, in parks, while shopping, while existing. Any woman who was "immodestly dressed" could be fined, flogged, sent to prison, stoned to death or shot, depending on who "caught" you or how severe the "deviation" was. I know of a woman who was sent to prison for 28 days for wearing see-through tights. Another woman had acid thrown in her face for wearing make-up. Women's eyes were slashed with razors for wearing eyeshadow or mascara.

It wasn't just about dress though. No woman was allowed to be unaccompanied in the presence of a man who wasn't her husband or close relative. You could no longer go out and have lunch with your male friends or get a lift in their car. You couldn't be seen talking with men in public (in case you were secretly plotting to go to bed with them). Schools became all-girls or all-boys schools. Girls were only allowed to be taught by women teachers. Women nurses could no longer work with male patients. Girls could no longer play in the street alongside boys

(immodest behaviour). Women couldn't ride bikes (immodest behaviour) or go jogging (immodest behaviour), walk round smiling (immodest behaviour) or laugh too loudly (immodest behaviour). One of the funniest consequences of all of this was that parts of the sea were partitioned! Women on one side, men on the other.

I've said all this in the past tense because things have changed a little. The women guards have now been disbanded and the police are now a lot more relaxed about "deviancies". For example, you do now see women wearing make up in public. This may sound trivial but it's not. Women have paid with their blood for this right.

But not a lot else has changed. Abortion is still illegal (though still practised). Contraceptives have only recently been allowed into the country. The only sexuality is heterosexuality. Girls are brought up for one reason and one reason alone - to find a husband and bear children. Rape in marriage is still not illegal. Women have a lot less employment opportunities than men and are paid unequal rates. It's a man's world.

But then where isn't?

I said at the beginning of this article that I was angry at women in this country patronising me about the situation in Iran. Read over the last paragraph. It could well be Ireland.

Or Italy. Or some states in America. The social control of women has taken on a visible form in Iran but similar situations have arisen here in the West. The only difference is some men have learnt to pay lip-service to the ideas of women's liberation and we have tokenistic laws that supposedly make us more "advanced" but we all know they're inadequate, ineffective and not backed up by much needed action. There is no real commitment to change.

We've never had it so good

The veil is now a symbol of oppression. It's a daily reminder that certain others (men) want to control your life. This leads to action and reaction, not passive acceptance. It leads to a

realization and a consciousness that many women in the West just don't have. We're duped most of the time - we're bought off by all the trappings of capitalism. Adverts, magazines, politicians, men (and some women) tell us we've never had it so good, that we're in a post-feminist era. Well, we know we're not. We know from our daily experience that we still need to fight our ground, that our rights can be taken away from us by state laws.

I have said some horrific things about the Revolution in Iran and I hope that the 'women as victims' image is not all that this article leaves you with. Remember this instead. Women are strong everywhere. Remember also that women's struggle, *our* struggle, is one that crosses national boundaries and cuts across different faiths and cultures. Don't fall for the myths portrayed by the media of so-called Third World countries. Think for yourself. Don't get caught up in the dominant ideology that is borne of imperialist values. Don't divide and rule.

One brilliant book about the Iranian revolution is *The Siege of Azadi Square*, by Manny Shirazi. From the perspectives of several different women she traces the unfolding of events, from initial optimism, to the reactionary outcome and aftermath. Definitely recommended. (Women's Press.) - BA

I suppose you want me to be assertive well I'm not going to be OK

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For a happy Kurdish New Year, end Turkish genocide

On 16 March Kurdish women and children demonstrated all over Europe to bring attention to the genocidal policies of the Turkish government. The demonstrations included 600 people in London and 13,000 in Bonn.

In particular they were protesting for the free celebration of Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, which is on 21st March. Last year during Newroz, Turkish troops opened fire on unarmed demonstrators, killing over 100 people, including 19 women and 15 children, and injuring 250 people. They had been told they would be allowed to celebrate in peace.

Kurdistan is an area covering parts of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, in which people have their own Kurdish cultural identity, but

which has not been allowed recognition as a nation. Newroz is a political issue because the Turkish state is trying to wipe out Kurdish people, both by actual murder and by banning any visible Kurdish identity. For instance, it is illegal to speak Kurdish in public places. This policy, in operation since early this century, is called 'Turkification': Turkish citizens are supposed to hold equal rights, as long as they don't claim any separate identity. An armed struggle has been fought since 1984 by the nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

In October '91 a new government came to power in Turkey promising liberalisation. Reform laws were passed - but these have no effect in Kurdistan because the area is in a

state of emergency! During '92 in Turkish Kurdistan, 600 civilians were killed; five towns and cities came under intense army bombardment; 300 villages were emptied and their inhabitants made homeless and landless under the Turkish state policy of "population control", and 20,000 people were arrested.

As in all war situations, rape and sexual abuse of women is used systematically as a weapon of repression.

The demonstrations this year may have been successful: Newroz passed off peacefully.

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Violence against women in the six counties

Women in the six counties of Northern Ireland live in communities brutalised by over 20 years of war, often in abject poverty, and facing sexual violence not only from individual men, but from the state and paramilitaries.

Strip searching of Irish women on remand is routine and frequent - Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer were strip searched over 400 times whilst on remand.

Strip searching was not used against convicted women prisoners until last year. On 2nd March 1992, a mass strip search was carried out at Maghaberry Prison. It lasted from 10.15am until after 9pm. 21 Republican women prisoners were strip searched, one at a time. They could hear each other screaming. Male and female prison officers in riot gear forced their way into cells, dragged women into another cell and forcibly undressed and searched them. Some women were hit with batons; all suffered physical and psychological injuries.

Nothing was found.

Strip searches have no security value - they are part of the harassment and torture of women prisoners practiced by the British state.

Home raids by British State forces are used to intimidate women in nationalist communities. There are thousands of raids each year - 600 in Derry alone in three days in December 1990. During most raids women are in the house alone or with their children. Often the British army and RUC are not in uniform. Instead they wear dark clothes, sometimes hoods, giving them the appearance of loyalist murder gangs.

Most raids start between 3am and 5am, usually with the door being broken down with a sledgehammer. Ten or twelve armed men then burst into the house, smashing furniture and drilling up floors and walls. Maximum damage is inflicted. Women and children are often held in different rooms, sometimes at gunpoint. Women are frequently subjected to a barrage of sexual threats. The psychological effects on women and children are long lasting and since homes are raided repeatedly, the effect is cumulative.

Women, particularly in nationalist communities, are also subjected to sexual harass-

ment and assault by the army and RUC. In June 1989 Geraldine Skillen was stopped and asked her name which she gave correctly. She was then arrested for giving false information and thrown into a landrover where she was sexually assaulted by three RUC men. Sexual threats were made throughout. She struggled to get free and was charged and later convicted of assault and disorderly conduct. Geraldine pressed counter charges which lead to further harassment - her house was raided, she was beaten in the back of a landrover, her five year old daughter was searched by armed officers, a soldier put a gun against her neck and said "I'd love to blow your head off."

Geraldine Skillen's experience is not unusual. This kind of harassment, sanctioned by the British government, is happening all the time.

However it is not just the state - paramilitary organisations also carry out violent attacks against women.

On Sunday 8th November 1992, ten hooded men burst into the Belfast home of Donna Wilson. They beat her to death with pickaxes and baseball bats. Virtually every bone in her body was broken. Donna Wilson was working as a prostitute. The police believe she was killed by a loyalist paramilitary punishment squad, fighting for control of sex rackets.

Women in intimate relationships with paramilitaries can be particularly vulnerable to violence. They are often watched if the man is in prison and may be beaten up if they are considered to be disloyal or unfaithful. If they are suffering domestic violence, it can be very hard to escape. There are few places to go; it is difficult to leave without causing suspicion because the communities are close-knit, other people are often frightened to help. Women who have escaped have told of the way guns were used as part of the domestic violence - Russian roulette, pistol whipping, guns shoved into women's vaginas.

The extent of violence against women is immense. But women are fighting back and supporting each other - through rape crisis centres, women's refuges, women's centres, campaigning groups. Women in Britain can help by financially supporting these groups.

Women here can also help by educating themselves and publicising the truth about the six counties.

State and paramilitary violence against women in the six counties will not stop until the British withdraw. Support Irish women in their struggle against imperialism and against all forms of sexual violence.

Hilary

Contact: **Women in the Troops Out Movement**, PO Box 2803, London N5 1TN, tel: 071 609 1743

Women & Ireland Network, c/o PO Box 104, Sheffield 1.

PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT It's a crime



Did you know: in Britain you can be held for up to seven days without being charged or brought before a court. You can be excluded from Northern Ireland or Great Britain for a minimum of three years - with no evidence against you needed.

The law which allows this is the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), a state power designed primarily for use against Irish people. Since its introduction in 1974, over 7,000 people have been held - 87% released without charge. Between 1986 and 1990, an average of 86,000 (mainly Irish) people per year were detained for up to an hour under the Act.

One person to suffer attack under the PTA is Kate Magee. It began on 14th April '92, following the killing of an army recruiting officer, Sergeant Newman, by the INLA the day before. The media, acting as judge and jury and assuming the full right to fuck up people's lives, named one of Kate's brothers as wanted in relation to the shooting. The police went wild, with a series of armed raids amongst the Irish community in Britain.

Armed siege

Kate was arrested at gunpoint after an armed siege of her road and house. She was held and interrogated for nine days (six days under the PTA and three days under ordinary law). She was allowed virtually no contact with the outside world. Only after six days was she allowed a short phone call to check on her children - as long as she did not reveal her whereabouts.

On the ninth day she faced two charges:

No contraception cutbacks!

The government is planning to save money on the NHS by cutting the range of contraceptive pills available on prescription (see BA 2). This would mean that GPs and Family Planning Clinics would be allowed to prescribe only cheap (and often nasty) versions, instead of the brand which suits an individual woman best.

It's a stupid way of trying to save money. Whereas it costs around £25 a year for one woman's contraception, an abortion costs £250 and an NHS birth costs £1,200. Spot the logic!

The National Abortion Campaign is producing postcards for women to send to their MPs in protest. Contact: **NAC**, The Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London E8 3DL, tel: 071 923 4976. They'll be grateful for any contributions towards cost and postage.

one under the PTA: "failure to disclose information", and one under ordinary law: "impeding the arrest or prosecution of person or persons unknown".

Isolation

Kate was then taken to the notorious Durham prison. Phone calls to relatives were allowed for the first time, but again on condition she did not reveal where she was being held. Extensive enquiries for her whereabouts met a wall of silence, only lifted after 16 days.

Her court appearances were given absurd melodrama, by having Kate handcuffed, with heavily armed police present. Her case was thereby made to seem unreasonably serious. After 66 days in prison, the prosecution dropped the major criminal charge, leaving the PTA charge of withholding information. Kate was finally granted bail, under harsh conditions. She arrived home to find her house had been ransacked and wrecked by the police 'search'.

Strip searching = rape

Furthermore, throughout her imprisonment Kate was constantly subjected to strip searches. This is a form of rape cynically used in Britain to try to psychologically destroy Irish women held on politically-related charges.

Rant

All this goes to show that there is no more justice for Irish people in Britain now than there ever was. This is the result of Britain's 800 year history of imperialism in Ireland: when oppressed people fight back in any way they are criminalised as a group.

A campaign has been launched in support of Kate Magee. It calls for the charges against her to be dropped. Also for the scrapping of the PTA and an end to strip searching. The campaign suggests writing letters of concern about Kate's case to:

•The DPP, 4-12 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AZ •Home Secretary, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AZ •Irish Embassy, 17 Grosvenor Place, London.

Please send a copy to the campaign as well. Contact: **Kate Magee Support Group**, PO Box 158, Derby DE1 9NB.

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Events & listings (in no particular order)

• **Feminist Library faces closure!** This would be a disaster: the library is a brilliant & unique resource - 10,000 books, 1,500 journals & 10,000 pamphlets! First Southwark Council put their rent up from £1 to £12,000, saying they could probably get a grant. Now they're saying they haven't got the money but this is known to be untrue.

Write to the council leader, Sally Keeble, or Ian Wingfield, chair of Southwark's Policy & Performance Cttee at: Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5. Tel: 071 525 5000. For more info, contact Feminist Library: 071 928 7789. It's at: Westminster Bridge Rd, London SE1. Open Tues 11am-8pm & Sat & Sun 2pm-5pm.

• **Mrs Parvatiben Patel** died in hospital on 2nd Feb '93 having suffered fatal hammer blows to the head. Her husband, Bhikubhai Patel, was to appear for a committal hearing on 10th March. The hearing was adjourned until 7th April pending medical and psychiatric reports.

Newham Asian Women's Project is campaigning for her to be remembered in the fight against domestic violence. Contact: NAWP, PO Box 225, London E7 9AA. Tel: 081 552 5524.

• The London Dungeon is opening a £1 million 'extravaganza' on **Jack the Ripper**. They are glorifying this misogynistic killer, making the murder of 5 women into a tourist attraction. Meanwhile his victims usually go nameless. They were: Mary Ann Nichols, Annie Chapman, Elizabeth Stride, Catherine Eddowes & Mary Jane Kelly. **ReSisters**, an anonymous group, have taken and will continue to take direct action against the London Dungeon 'by whatever means necessary'. (BA received a press release to say this.)

• **Pain & Strength** is a group of lesbians who have left abusive relationships with other women, speaking out. Break the taboo! Don't stay a victim - survive & move on! Contact: Pain & Strength, c/o Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC1.

• **Harrow & Brent Lesbian and Gay Group** meets Mon 8.30-11pm. Tenterton Sports & Social club, Preston Rd, Wembley. Call Anne 081 422 5880,

Geraldine 081 951 1755, Keith 081 903 9803 or write: HBLGG, 16 Green Park Court, 226 Bridgewater Rd, Wembley, Middx HA0 1YF.

Harrow Lesbian Group meets 1st Weds of each month in South Harrow area. Contact Anne or Geraldine as above.

• **Amma Mawu** has declared 2nd August '93 to be the beginning of the end of patriarchy (though you could say that happened some time ago). They are calling for women to take direct action on this subject & will soon publish a newsletter & list of contacts. Amma Mawu, c/o Bristol Women's Centre, The Basement, 82 Colston St, Bristol BS1 5BB.

• **Act-Up London** now meets every Weds at 7.30 at the Jan Rebane Centre, 12-14 Thornton St, Brixton, London SW9. Full disabled access. Creche available at 24 hours notice. Contact: 071 262 3121 or write: Act-Up, BM Box, 2995, London WC1N 3XX.

• **Wicked Women's Poetry** - workshop with Jan Sellers, Sat 8th May 10.30-4pm. £16/£9/£3 concs. Watford Women's Centre, Church St (opposite St Mary's Church), Watford, Herts. Tel: 0923 816229.

• **Islington Young Lesbian Group**, a social group for young women (lesbians, bisexuals or women who think they just might be) age 16-25, Weds eve 7-10pm somewhere in Islington. Nearest tube Holloway Rd. Phone Anna or Jumoké on 071 700 4658 on Weds eve, or leave message on ansa-phone. Access details available.

• **Women's Employment Advice** at Black Lesbian & Gay Centre, last Tues of the month 4.30-6pm. Please book in advance if poss! BLGC, BM Box 4390, London WC1N 3XX. Tel: 071 732 3885.

• **Cardiff Lesbian Line** every Tues night. Tel: 0222 374051. CLLC, PO Box 87, Cardiff CF1 3YZ.

• **Body Memories: Radical Perspectives on Childhood Sexual Abuse**, is looking for contributions: articles, artwork, critical analysis, personal stories "and yes, poetry". Topics might include: kid's rights, connections to other abuses & oppressions, international perspectives & news items. "We are not just looking for a road to recovery, but also a road to revolution". Write to: PO Box, 14941, Berkeley, CA 94701, USA.

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STRIKING WOMEN!

Watch out...time is running out!

★ The strike over the sacking of 340 workers continues at Timex in Dundee, Scotland. On 29 January the workers went on strike when management tried to impose 110 redundancies, a one year wage freeze, a 10% cut in pensions, benefits, and canteen subsidies. On 17 February the Timex Corporation sacked all 340 production workers, including 17 workers who had been crossing the picket lines.

The sacked workers are mainly women doing circuitry for IBM computers and cookers. Dundee has a long history of activism by woman workers, dating back to when jute mills were the main employment there. In Timex itself there's been a number of strikes and at least one occupation.

As with many other conflicts, the changes resulting in the Timex strike were some years in the making. Four years ago Timex - like other American multinationals introduced a two-tier wage system, where new workers were taken on at £105 instead of the normal £114. The next thing they did was build a huge 12 foot security fence around the plant. Said a worker to *The Scotsman*: "We were told it was because of defense work. In fact it

was to keep us out - when they provoked a conflict." (This strategy backfired when the company had to cut a hole in the fence so scabs could enter when the entrance was blocked) Now the new workers taken on to replace the strikers receive £90 - £24 less than the original workforce. The Timex workers see all this as part of a long-term strategy to erode pay and conditions.

On 20 March 6000-7000 supporters marched through Dundee. On 22 March the workers held a mass picket which blockaded the road - with women in front keeping the scabs' bus from entering the plant for two hours. 16 were arrested in the proverbial "scuffles". On another picket, scab busses were delayed for an hour after glue had been squeezed into the factory gate locks. Supporters from all over Scotland have come to these actions.

Campbell Christie, general secretary of the Scottish TUC, went on telly condemning the direct action of the picketers. Another AEEU leader Gavin Laird sent threatening letters to Timex workers telling them that their actions "must be wholly within the civil and criminal law." If they were arrested or seen doing

anything naughty, they could be expelled from the union, resulting in the withdrawal of strike benefit and the loss of any right to complain of unfair dismissal.

Christie and co. have said they don't want "outsiders" on the pickets, but many Timex workers are actually asking for *more* support outside the factory gates. Workers from National Cash Registers have been coming to pickets at the end of their shifts. Links have been made with Women Against Pit Closures, and a Timex Workers Support Group has been formed by members of the local Unwaged Group. Meanwhile, Monday mass pickets continue, with busses coming from Edinburgh and Glasgow. Workers also hold a daily picket usually involving 200.

Other Scottish workers fear that defeat at Timex would give other employers the go-ahead to launch similar attacks on their jobs and working conditions. Of course, the importance of this struggle extends beyond Scotland. As Marlene, a 48 year old Timex worker told *The Scotsman*: "Every boss in the country is sitting on the edge of his chair to see what's going to happen here..."

Said another striker: "Time is running out for people like them..."

Contact: Timex Strike Committee, c/o AEEU Office, 2 Union St, Dundee (0382-22406)

A note to American readers: Timex world headquarters is in Connecticut. Go for it!



A few suggestions for Timex on the picket line

Threats end Cathay Pacific strike

★ The strike of Cathay Pacific flight attendants in Hong Kong (see *Bad Attitude 2*) ended recently when the women were forced back to work by threats from the bosses. The strike had been a turning point in countering the image of the air hostess as a pretty, subservient woman who just wants a chance to travel.

Union rights laws are negligible in the British colony, but apparently the government is reviewing the situation as a result of the strike.

Management drive over busworkers in breakneck speed for privatisation

★ Busworkers in London voted on 10th March to start a series of one day strikes demanding a freeze to the cut throat plans for privatisation.

However, strike action is now perhaps too late to change the new pay and conditions which are planned for late April.

Busworkers have been bullied into a tight corner by the bosses and left there by the ineffective unions.

First of all, months ago, in preparation for privatisation and foreseeing 'trouble' ahead, management sent out threatening letters to individual workers' home addresses. These outlined two alternatives: to accept changes unconditionally by the date specified and receive your lump sum compensation, or if you hadn't accepted by the date specified you'd get no compensation and have to sign a new contract unconditionally anyway.

Also included in the 'deal' was that you couldn't go on strike. If you refused to sign a contract and to give up your right to strike you would be sacked. As a result, at the busworkers conference on Feb 18th it was resolved not to challenge the threats then, en masse, but to sign the letters. The decision for strike action was kept for later. Too late and too little.

Changes for busworkers include:

- Most workers stand to lose financially, varying from garage to garage, approximately £40 - £80 a week.
- 2 and 1/2 hours to 5hrs have been put onto the average working week.

- A cut in the payment of unsocial hours
- A major cut in pensionable pay.

The government and London bus management want to make London's red bus network profitable before planned privatisation in 1994. No other European capital city runs its transport for profit making. When the Greater London Council was abolished, control of London Transport was handed over to London Buses Ltd.

The workforce and the routes were broken up into 10 subsidiary companies. This was the start to breaking up of union organisation. This means that if workers in one area support the action in any of the others it's counted as 'secondary' action and against the anti-trade union laws.

London fares are already twice as high as in other major European cities. There are proposed cuts in concessionary travel passes and a 25% cut in services before privatisation. Obviously, less profitable run routes will be cut, and fares will rise even more.

It seems that privatisation is driving at top speed not stopping for the public or the bus drivers.

Write and complain to the Managing Director of London Buses Ltd, Clive Hodson at 55 Broadway, London SW1H 0BD.

Or if you work in transport you can write to **Transport Worker Network** who are working to unite transport workers throughout the country for better organisation than the bureaucratic unions. Their address is: PO Box 73, Norwich, NR1 2EB.

Burnsall bosses, why don't you just give up?

★ The strike of mainly Asian women at Burnsall Ltd, west Midlands, is still going strong. The women have been on strike since 15th June last year at the small metal finishing company, over issues of pay and conditions (see *Bad Attitude 1*). Pay is derisory, long overtime compulsory, conditions appalling and management seems to specialise in acts of arbitrary tyranny.

However, the strike has stayed solid, with the women very determined to maintain it. On 12th February a very successful benefit raised over £6,000!

53 cases of Burnsall workers are now waiting to go to industrial tribunal. One case has already been won, that of a woman denied sick pay. However, the strikers are disappointed that the GMB is also taking up the case of a white male worker, sacked for refusing to do overtime, as racial discrimination. No other cases from the mainly Black workforce have been pursued on racial grounds. It's a bit sick, given that the reason for the strike is the exploitation of Black women's labour in this country.

Harassment of strikers is routine. Scuffles on the picket line between strikers and scabs are leapt upon gleefully by the police. One woman shop steward's house was raided by the police after an incident in which she was attacked by scabs. Others have been bound over to keep the peace and thereby prevented from returning to the picket line - whilst scabs are back at work the next day.

There are rumours now that Jaguar and Rover will stop getting supplies from Burnsall, a great achievement by the strikers. The owner may possibly sell up and close the factory down, but he also owns another factory down the road, so action would continue to be directed there.

There will be a large picket on 2nd April in support of the miners' and railway workers' strikes. There are also plans for a picket at the Motor Show. A coach goes up from London every Friday and the strikers badly need support! You can also ask for speakers from the strike. Contact: London Support Cttee, c/o 205 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1, tel: 071 713 7907 or GMB: 021 550 4888.