

7387
B

Bad Attitude

★ Lesbians Talk Violent Relationships

Vi Subversa: "Just go for it!" ★
Emma Humphreys Free ★
Bad Fiction: Shred Your Supervisor! ★

★ Claiming What's Ours - Dolees Revolt!

★ Bananas in Beijing

★ Science Dicks Reproductive Wrongs

Plus: Sodomites & Man-Royals,
Mexico: Zapping the Multinationals,
Bras & Guitars,
Disabled Direct Action

Ireland,
Poland,
Afghanistan
Algeria:
fundamental-
ists beware!



I was disappointed by your refusal to print Lesley Dove's article on pro-life feminism. If I were editing a magazine, it would be open to anyone who had something worth saying. It seems that you can only justify your censorship in this case by trying to tell other women whether or not they count as feminists. Surely this is not what feminism is about.

You are not just refusing to let Ms Dove have her say. You are also closing your mind to children's rights campaigners who see abortion as a lethal form of ageism, to disabled women who have noticed the eugenic implications of abortion, to lesbians who are fed up with the way gay and abortion rights are often linked together when they are completely different, and to everyone who wonders why *Playboy* funds abortion rights groups. Worst of all, you are ignoring those women who

thought that abortion was their 'right' and are now suffering from the psychological effects of their decision. Many pro-abortionists deny this exists and assume their own reactions to apply to every woman.

Perhaps you can't deal with people arguing against abortion from the point of view of non-violence because you, sadly, don't believe in non-violence. The same issue (7) which contains your refusal to print Ms Dove's article also has an article on Mexican women which dismisses "pacifism" without discussing the issue of civil disobedience at all. "The image of a woman with a knife" is described as potentially 'empowering'...

Katherine A Gilchrist

PS: I enclose an SAE as I would appreciate knowing if you will print this letter. If you do, I'll buy a copy of that issue, if not, I won't. I don't mean to sound negative, it's a question of limited resources...

.....
Third, no one has ever said that having an abortion is a pleasant experience, or entirely without risks. But nor is pregnancy or childbirth for that matter! In fact, a frequent cause of psychological distress in connection with abortion is badgering by anti-abortion medicos and harassment by 'pro-lifers'.

As to whether we believe in non-violence - **TOO RIGHT WE DON'T**. However, we often support and print stuff by those who do, such as *Women in Black* or *Menwith Hill Peace Camp*. But these women are confronting the state, not seeking an extension of its powers in the name of non-violence, or whinging at others for not being non-violent enough.

If you'd like to contact Ramona and Ana of the EZLN, and have a word about how they

BA replies:

Hmm, speaking of scarce resources, did you know our printing costs average to £65 per page? So we do have to pick and choose what we print. Funny that your peculiar lobby have targeted our humble publication, for there are many wealthy, powerful publications that would love to print an article by a 'pro-life feminist'. It would be a gift. Have you tried the *Sun*?

Second, you have confused a broad pro-choice perspective as simply pro-abortion. Pro-choice means women should control their reproductive lives; it not only includes access to abortion and contraception, but also the right of women to have children. Of course, it can be argued that 'choice' is a liberal fiction under a class system and world-wide racism. But the article in question didn't address those issues.

Cover:

**Design by Susan Skill;
Photo by Brenda Prince (Format),
Women's band, Pride '94**

See back cover for subscription rates - YOU KNOW IT MAKES SENSE

Distributed by:

**Central Books, 99 Wallis Rd,
London E9 5LN
Tel: 0181 986 4854 (bookshops)
Thames News, 27-31 Webber St,
London SE1 8QW
Tel: 0171 928 6126 (newsagents)**

Printed by:

**East End Offset, Unit 7, Empson
Street, Bow, London E3.**

Credits:

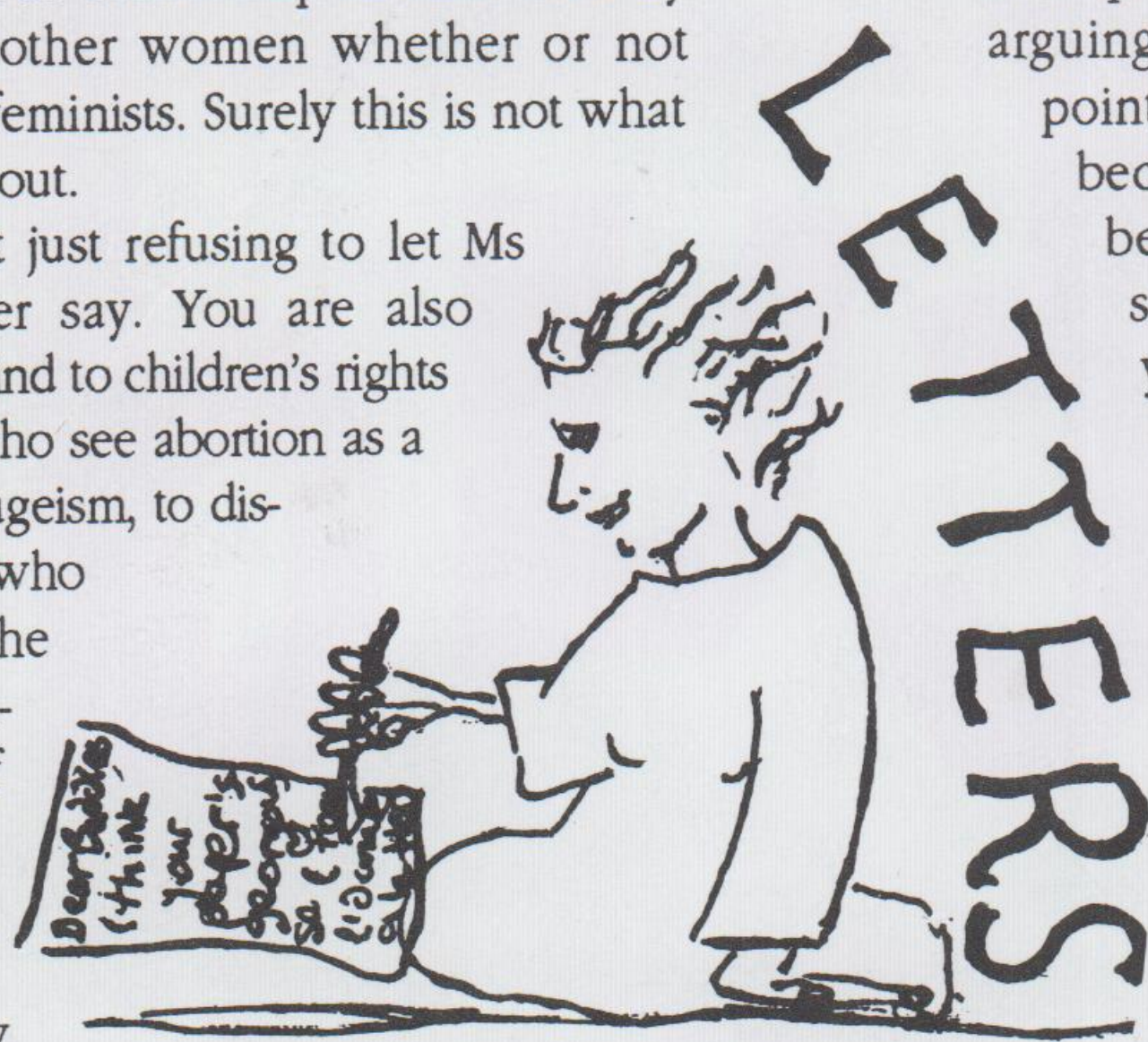
**Self-defense cartoons from Free To
Fight! An interactive self defense
project. Distributed by Revolver USA**

Thanks to:

**Susan, Format Photo Agency and
all our contributors and subscribers.**

Bad Attitude

**121 Railton Road, London SE24 0LR
Tel: 0171 978 9057/Fax: 071 326 0353**



Contents

- 3-5 News**
- 6 25 years of Off Our Backs & the Social Model of Disability**
- 7 Disabled direct action & Sellofield - Shut it!**
- 8 Happy Birthday to Vi Subversa**
- 9 Beijing Bollocks and Bananas**
- 10-11 Dolees in revolt - let's crush the Job Seekers' Allowance**
- 12-13 Abuse - sisters do it to each other... and how to stop it**
- 14 Beijing, Survivors Shout, Fur and Hippy Corner**
- 15 Crossing Genders with Patricia Powell**
- 16-17 Tome Reviews & Pulling no punches!**
- 18-19 Reproductive Wrongs**
- 20-21 Bad fiction - Gross Misconduct**
- 22 Toon Reviews**
- 23 Listings & Claimants (cont/d)**
- 24 Emma Humphreys Free (but many more to go!)**

can non-violently defeat a feudal land-owning system, the multi-nationals profiting from it, and the Mexican army, do give them a buzz on the Inter-net via ellokal@pangea.upc.es.

We're sure they'd REALLY love to hear from you!



Typical BA member?
(Reprinted from *Rebel Chicks '96* - see review)

Since Nigeria's independence, 34 years ago, the military has ruled this country for 24 years, leaving ten years to civilians. Hence most of our socio-political and economic problems had been blamed on the military which has ruled this country.

A presidential election was held on June 12 last year... however, the clear winner, Chief Abiola was annulled by the military, which provoked widespread resentment.

Early in the year, pro-democracy groups, labour leaders, students, and a section of the Nigerian press started calling for Chief Abiola to reclaim his mandate and declare himself-president of Nigeria. He was promptly arrested by the army and detained. The oil workers went on an indefinite strike, calling on the military to release Abiola and restore him to power. They were supported by pro-democracy

activists, labour leaders, students, market women and a section of the press. They organised public demonstrations to back up their support and this often ended up in violence... Between June and September, cars were off the roads because there was no fuel. People deserted the roads, banks, schools and business centres also were closed. There were food shortages and an outbreak of diseases.

In this town, typhoid broke out because of poor food and sanitation and many people died. The army began a clamp-down on all opposition groups, throwing their members into jail without a trial. Some newspapers were banned and many draconian decrees were promulgated.

On 2 October, our military dictatorship increased fuel prices by 400%. This further impounded our tense political situation and brought more hardships on us. Prices of food and essential goods rose by 500% and went beyond the reach of the common people. It is now a common sight seeing many women

and children feeding from the garbage dumps of the rich and the middle class.

On 4 September, at about 1:15 am, our (women's) Centre was attacked by armed robbers. My eldest daughter was the first to be woken from sleep by gun-shots... and swiftly escaped into the bush. We were thoroughly beaten, assaulted and searched, and all our donated clothing, shoes, books, sewing machines, small radio, and our money for food was stolen. As if that was not enough, three of our women were raped at gunpoint in front of our eyes. I was only saved from being raped by my menses and I believe my daughter could have been raped if she had not escaped. We all saw the doctor in the morning, who treated us for bruises, bodily... and genital wounds, as well as protecting the women against unwanted pregnancy.

Up till now we have not fully recovered from the trauma of that incident. Meanwhile we have nothing for our food and here it is like living in hell on earth.

I am appealing to you to send us any little help you can afford. Please try to beat mail thieves by putting the cheque money in the middle of a small book or magazine and send by air mail to us as book post or printed matter, for they are not interested in such postal items.

Hannah Edemikpong,
Box 185, Eket
Akwa Ibom
State,
Nigeria,
West
Africa

**If
you're hoping to see
BA issue 9,
turn to the
Back Page,
and home in on the
Volunteers
Ad.**

(Reprinted
from *Rebel
Worker*)

NESTLÉ INFILTRATORS

A group of 20 young women who came to the Beijing Women's Conference as 'youth guests' under the auspices of the Pan Pacific South-East Asian Women's Association, discovered on their arrival that their trip is being sponsored by Nestlé, the Swiss multinational which controls nearly half the global baby milk market. The women are lodged in style and in return have been

asked to seek out activities at the NGO Forum which are associated with breastfeeding and to convey the company's message: that Nestlé cares about babies' health. They were also asked to collect business

cards and pass them on to Nestlé. Representatives from the International Baby Food Action Network and the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action are attending the conference and their workshops highlight the problems posed by the activities of transnational companies.

Baby Milk Action

Clerical Killers...

The introduction of Europe's strictest anti-abortion code in Poland in 1993 has resulted in a tenfold increase in the number of babies found dead.

The new law, passed at the urging of the Polish Roman Catholic church, reduced abortions from over 100,000 a year to 786 last year. The few exceptions to the ban include cases of incest, rape or danger to the mother's health. However, last year one rape victim was denied an abortion and

ordered to put the child up for adoption. Polish women wanting abortions travel to the former Soviet Union, if they can afford it, though technology is often deficient. Poorer women go to still more dangerous backstreet clinics. The Catholic church also denounces the use of contraception. Great.

...More Clerical Killers

On May 12th this year the Irish Supreme Council ruled that the Abortion Information Bill (AIB) is constitutional. While the AIB allows Irish women to get information themselves about abortion in Britain, this ruling means that future changes in the abortion laws are effectively barred. It also frees up more doctors to refuse to give information, which means that rural women will be even more isolated, as views on abortion are more 'liberal' in the cities.

Pressure is continuing against the 1967 British abortion law, which still discriminates against Northern Irish women.

Red Pepper No 14, July 95

Afghanistan: Taliban Target Women

In Afghanistan, the militia are secluding women. Fundamentalists are seizing power while rival groups fight for control of the war-torn country. The Taliban, a new militia of young fundamentalist men, has seized power in some cities. Taliban tries to keep women in the areas it controls, such as the city of Kandahar, from going to work, and requires them to wear burkas, which cover most of the body. It also has tried to prevent them from going into stores, allowing them only to

make purchases from open-air stalls.

Two shopkeepers caught selling goods to women were jailed for three days. Who knows what indecent things women might do if they went into stores with male clerks?

Schools have been closed to girls. Unlike Iran's leaders, who at least have a right-wing perspective of the Koran, Taliban seems to be just making up the most restrictive ideas they can think of and claiming that they are in the Koran.

off our backs, april 95

ISRAEL: WORKERS' VICTORY

Dir-Hanna, Israel, 21/6/95: Arab women workers in a knitwear factory have won a major victory against their employers, a Tel Aviv industrial group.

Formerly paid less than the minimum wage, they have conducted a three-year struggle and four strikes to win a 30% pay rise, a five-day week and greatly improved working conditions. The 120 women, mainly young and single, were led by 23-year old seamstress Ataf El-Hatib. Their employers had situated the factory in the Arab village in the belief that such women, who have only recently started going out to work, would be easy fodder – got that wrong, eh?

Algeria:

Feminist murdered

A prominent Algerian feminist was killed in the northern Kabyl region, presumably by fundamentalist militants. Nabila Djahnine, an architect in her mid-thirties, had led a group called The City Woman. The fundamentalists have been engaged in guerrilla warfare ever since the government cancelled an election three years ago because it looked as if the fundamentalists would win it. At this point, the fundamentalist militants are attacking intellectuals, unveiled women, and other possible opponents.

oob, July 95

Another Algerian leading feminist is in danger of being assassinated in Algeria's

civil war. Khalida Messaoudi, founding member of the 'Independent Association for the Triumph of Women's Rights' is very well-known in Algeria for her outspoken opposition to both the government and Islamic Fundamentalists. She says that more than 80 people a day are being killed by fundamentalists and that "citizens are being killed....randomly, just for the purpose of terror...They kill women who oppose their views of how we should behave". Her first objective now, she says, is to stay alive – as a symbol as well as physically – and she's constantly on the move to survive.

Women's News, april/may, '95



'Knee to Groin: Swing Your Knee High and Fast'

NEWS BRIEFS

Deviant Registration

The legislature in Montana, USA is moving to pass measures that would make those convicted of crimes, including those done under their repressive sexual laws, register for life with the cops. Their laws criminalise any sexual contact between members of the same sex with punishment of up to 10 years prison and fines up to \$50,000.

Arm the Spirit

Against Slavery

The Chhatisgarh Women's Organisation (CWO) in Mdhya Pradesh, India, have been fighting for over a decade against bonded labour, which means slavery for whole families on the basis of debts that never get paid off. Bonded labour is officially abolished but without groups like the CWO there would be nobody doing anything about it. To be more effective in a large rural area, CWO are trying to get a jeep and an appeal has been launched by Friends of CWO. Contact 0171-837-7509.

Centre Crisis

The London Rape Crisis Centre has had its funding stopped after 19 years of vital work. The decision, by the London Borough Grants Committee, was taken without discussion or vote. The Centre intends to appeal against the decision, and is also trying to find 6,000 donors to covenant £10 a year to keep the place going. The Centre Appeal line for more info is 0171-916-5466.

Well Unfair State

Yes, the attack on single mothers and anyone not conforming to the HOLEY state of matrimony is going on across the Atlantic, too: The HR4 Welfare Bill proposes to cut state benefits to 'teen' mothers; there will be no benefits for any child born to someone already on welfare. Also, hand in hand with the anti-abortion, pro-'family' squad, the 'illegitimacy ratio' under HR4 will mean that individual states are given incentives to reduce abortions (ie, force many women in to unsafe, unmonitored abortions) and to reduce babies born to unmarried women.

oob, July 95

Equal Pay Victory

School dinner ladies in North Yorkshire have won a court battle with their local authority employer through the courts after privatisation cut their wages. Their wages had been reduced to less than that of male employees doing the same value work, but law lords agreed that the council could not use the excuse that they had to compete with private tenders. This decision could affect council workers nationwide.

Afghan Women Organise

Afghan women have been working to establish a women's organisation in Mazar Sharif. In another development 'Ijtemai Zanani Afghanistan' have released the first issue of *Afghan Woman*.

Shirkat Gab, Lahore, Pakistan

PALESTINIAN PRISONERS STRIKE AGAIN

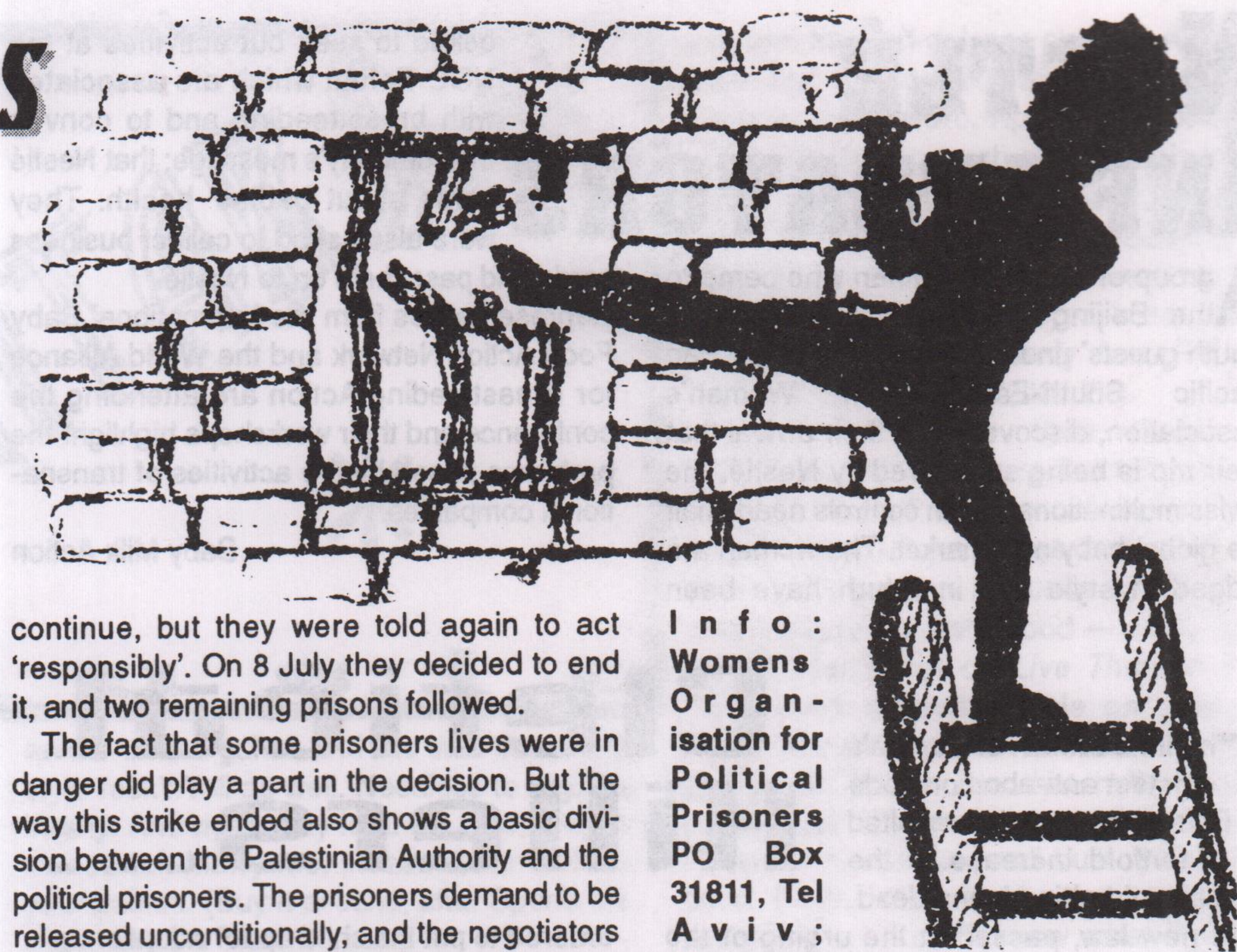
On July 1 Arafat and Rabin were meant to sign an 'Interim Agreement', where it looked as if the situation of the political prisoners in Israeli jails was going to be neglected once again. In order to remind both sides of their existence, the prisoners started an open-ended hunger strike, demanding an amnesty for all political prisoners. The strike was also meant to stimulate a mass movement to support the prisoners.

On 18 June political prisoners of three prisons went on strike, joined by the women in Hasharon on 20 June. All women in Hasharon took part, even the seriously ill. One woman told her lawyers: "We shall eat our next meal either at home or in the next world." The prisoners didn't want to negotiate about changes in prison conditions, but demanded the release of all political prisoners regardless of affiliation or length of sentence. The prisoners' movement does not differentiate as to whether prisoners come from outside or inside 'the green line' between Israel and the occupied territories.

Daily solidarity demonstrations, marches, and sit-ins in all the Palestinian towns were ignored by the Israeli media. Only the killing of three people in the course of a solidarity demonstration in Nablus made the TV news.

Israeli authorities tried to stop the strike through the Palestinian Authority: it was hinted that if the strike went on, the agreement would not be signed and no prisoners released. According to *News From Within* the majority of the PA opposed the strike.

On 7 July a PA delegation visited several prisons and convinced the prisoners to end the strike. The Hasharon women wanted to



continue, but they were told again to act 'responsibly'. On 8 July they decided to end it, and two remaining prisons followed.

The fact that some prisoners lives were in danger did play a part in the decision. But the way this strike ended also shows a basic division between the Palestinian Authority and the political prisoners. The prisoners demand to be released unconditionally, and the negotiators can't achieve this because of the context and character of the Palestinian/Israeli accords.

Info:
Womens
Organ-
isation for
Political
Prisoners
PO Box
31811, Tel
Aviv;
News
From Within, POB 31417, Jerusalem, Israel

The Alternative Information Centre (a radical group of Palestinians and Israeli Jews) has established a Women's Centre in Sa'ir village in cooperation with Hebron Women's Support Club and the Sa'ir Charitable Association.

Sa'ir, near Hebron, is known as a centre of resistance. The village of 20,000 has been the target of Israeli punishments: the phone lines were cut in 1982 and postal services stopped. Isolation and economic sanctions have resulted in an even more restrictive environment for local peasant women.

Though most girls have a high school education, there's no jobs outside the home and all social and cultural opportunities for women have drastically decreased since the decline of the Intifada. The Centre will feature

Sa'ir set for Women's Centre

income-generating projects and children's activities which will enable women to participate outside their homes, women's rights programmes, and social/cultural events.

Sa'ir Women's Centre still needs urgent financial support. Send donations marked 'Women's Centre' to
The AIC, PO Box 31417, Jerusalem, Israel

the time of the arrest to stop Wageeha contacting a lawyer, which has been extended to 4th October. This means family and friends can't to get information about her well-being.

Another activist, Ismat Abu-Sa', was arrested on 27th Sept under similar circumstances.

To demand their release, write to:
Yitzhak Rabin, Minister of Defence, Hakiya, Tel Aviv, Israel. Fax 972-3-6917915; **David Libai**, Minister of Justice, PO Box 1087, Jerusalem; **The Military Commander** of Central Region, PO Box 10482, Beit El. Fax 927-2-305707; **The Military Legal Adviser**, Beit El, West Bank. Fax 972-2-958948

Info from Women's Organisation for Political Prisoners (WOFPP)

Appeal for West Bank Activists

Wageeha Ahmad Hamics Karabesh, an activist in women's organisations on the West Bank and for the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners, was arrested in Ramallah on 13th September of this year. Her family was not told of the charges against her, or where she would be held, and an order was issued at

Filipina faces firing squad

A 16 year old Filipina maid could face a firing squad in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the murder of her Gulf Arab employer. In her first trial in June, Sarah Balabagan, pleaded self-defence, explaining that she stabbed him after he had raped her.

The court convicted her of manslaughter, jailed her for seven years, and awarded her compensation for the rape. The Philippine President intervened and persuaded the UAE head of state to order a retrial. The court

decided then that the earlier decision could not stand because the rape allegedly was not connected with the murder. She was then convicted of first degree murder and sentenced to death. The retrial also overturned the compensation award.

On 27 Sept a demo was held outside the UAE embassy. Many women's groups have taken up the case after seeing the news on the Internet. For info on further action contact **KALAYAAN, St Francis Centre, Pottery Lane, London W11 (0171-243-2942)**

Women in Palestine have broken a taboo and spoken out

against domestic violence at a conference entitled 'Women, Justice and Law' set up by Al-Haq, a Jerusalem-based human rights group. At a mock tribunal Asma Ibrahim displayed a bloodied skirt to her audience as she spoke of her violation by her father-in-law as he pulled her around by her hair for not producing a child yet.

However, Arafat's government and Islamic

leaders told the Palestinian delegation to the Sept 95 UN women's conference in Beijing to play down domestic violence and women's inequality issues, avoid discussions on extra-marital sex, homosexuality, and abortion and focus on Palestinian women's ordeals under Israeli occupation. Rawda Basir, a delegate, responded with "We reject such dictates."

Women's News april/may, '95



WOMENwith Hill moves near pub!

After many threats **Womenwith Hill Women's Peace Camp** was evicted 13 March 1995 under the Criminal Justice Act. Police and bailiffs turned up around 10am with three arrest vans, after setting up road blacks on the A59 to prevent press and supporters from getting through. The seven women present locked themselves to their caravans. They were, arrested and charged with obstructing the highway.

However, the camp has set up again just

down the road in the layby opposite the Black Bull pub, still on the A59. Their vehicles and caravans had been impounded, but new ones have since been donated. Thanks! Tents and equipment were salvaged, and even the flowerbed was transplanted. "Just remember this is our first eviction, and that Greenham had a history of 13 years of eviction" write the women.

Kate Witham has been charged with £21,000 damage to a radom, facing a Crown Court trial and possible prison sentence of a year or more. To support Kate's defense, visit the camp or get involved in shutting down the US spy base at Menwith Hill (see BA 7), phone 01585-329-313.

Women In Black

On 3-7 August the feminist, anti-militarist network Women in Black held their annual conference in Tresnjevaca, Serbia. Since 1992 these conferences have brought together women from different parts of ex-Yugoslavia - along with activists from other countries - to share info and debate strategies against war, nationalism and male violence.

A busload of Italian and Croatian women was repeatedly turned away at the Serbian border. But eventually women from Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Italy, Spain, Germany, UK, Israel, Belgium, USA, Poland and Hungary got to meet.

Meanwhile, the Croatian army was 'ethnically cleansing' the Krajina area of SW Croatia, giving the conference added urgency.

Workshops included 'Ethnic Cleansing,

Racism, and Xenophobia' 'Women's Experience of War', and a lesbian meeting 'Loving Women, Fighting War'. Many discussions focused on organising against the causes of war - patriarchy and nationalism - on the immediate need to support refugee women and children, and a look at the connections between nationalism and increasing homophobia and threats to abortion rights. 'Women and Militarism' challenged how the feminist movement often ignores how women are mobilised in support of militarist structures.

On the Saturday night, the women held a demonstration/vigil in nearby Subotica... followed by an inspiring internationalist piss-up!

Women in Black (Zene u crnom), Cetinjska 26a, 11000 Beograd, Serbia; tel/fax: **381-11-347 877. Info: *Off Our Backs* 10/95

In February '95 the Mexican Army stormed all the Zapatista zones (see interview with women Zapatista fighters, BA 7). Ana, a speaker from the Mexico City-based, *Amor y Rabia* (Love and Rage), told us about recent events.

Mexico: Zapping the Multinationals

The invasion was a response to demands by American investors such as Chase Manhattan Bank, who had made a \$50 million loan to stabilise the peso and pay themselves back. The President, the IMF, and the American government had agreed: the Mexican government must send the army into insurgent areas; honour obligations to foreign investors, and take a hard line against all social unrest. Multinationals meanwhile have expanded into Chiapas and other southern states, and control much more land.

Zapatista fighters together with many villagers retreated into the Lacandona jungle to prevent massacres and avoid direct confrontation. They were surrounded by the army without food, water, or medicine, facing a cholera epidemic. Activists throughout the country suffered repression. Many were accused of being Zapatista leaders.

The Zapatistas have been required to sign an agreement to stop being a subversive organisation and become a political party; to

disarm, and stay in three areas where they will receive amenities and be watched closely.

Insisting they were only delegates, the Zapatista negotiators said the agreement must be discussed by village assemblies. They considered it unacceptable; it would be

like locking themselves in concentration camps.

On the other hand, new occupations of land have occurred in other states. Peasants and land-workers have formed co-operatives, and in some coffee planta-

tions they've re-started production, selling directly to Europe.

Groups throughout Mexico have demonstrated against the repression, including a May Day romp which featured attacks on banks, McDonalds and Burger King, and almost burning the Presidential Palace doors.

Some Zap supporters took part in a creative bus 'hijacking' to the military headquarters. 30-40 people got on a bus, refused to pay, saying they were demonstrating against the military. They put on balaclavas and passed out leaflets; when they arrived at the barracks the two soldiers on guard ran for their lives, thinking these were Zapatistas. When they got out their spraycans to do graffiti other passengers asked for some to join in. They blocked traffic with the bus, later they were helped in this task when the army came and contributed their jeeps to the blockade. Then the activists disappeared.

Ana also gave us an update of women's actions in Mexico. With abortion illegal, pro-choice issues are a main focus. Many rural women perform abortions themselves because they have preserved traditional med-

icine. Feminist and anarchist groups also organise women's self-help workshops. Aided by US feminists, a Tijuana network of collectives teach women how to do menstrual extractions (an early abortion method). They



act on other health issues such as infant mortality and the lack of drinking water in villages.

Women's groups are also fighting the UN pilot programmes aimed at controlling reproduction. Many women have had their tubes tied during delivery without their knowledge. In indigenous areas forced sterilisation is common. When a woman is about to deliver, the government makes them sign a paper agreeing to sterilisation if they want any care.

While five demos were in progress on March 8, International Women's Day, Amor y Rabia women went to the headquarters of 'Pro-Vida', a group which opposes abortion, sex education, contraception, and safe sex campaigns. They destroyed the "very luxurious facade" of the building. Many neighbours watched and applauded from their balconies. Some came out to help.

Sheihla Agha Must Stay

Sheihla Agha is a 32 year old woman from Pakistan who is currently seeking asylum on the grounds that she no longer believes in Islam and fears persecution if she is forced to return to Pakistan. She has a nine year old daughter who also resides with her. Sheihla is challenging the fundamentalist laws of Pakistan and the racist laws of this country, which refuse to recognise her rights as a woman.

Sheihla rejected Islam a few years after her marriage in 1982, having questioned the religious and cultural traditions of her community as regards women.

She first came to Britain in 1990 as a visitor, but then made an application to stay here as a political refugee. She withdrew this in 1993 when she was deceived into

NEWS BRIEFS

US - Rape asylum

Earlier this year, the US immigration service issued guidelines stating that rape and domestic abuse are grounds for granting asylum to women from other countries. This was lobbied for by the Women's Refugees Project and other women's groups. Canada made the same recommendations law two years ago, and since then 200 women have been granted asylum. oob, July 95

E-Mail With a Difference

'Fe-Mail' is an electronic communication network of women activists, NGO's, and groups working in former Yugoslavia. This will restore communication links which were severed by the war, enabling women to coordinate activities, to share experiences and provide cost-effective access to international databanks and independent media.

Krub & Ruze, Zagreb, Croatia

Rotten Apple

The Gay Assembly of Valencia, Spain has called for a boycott and protest of Apple computers for their censorship of a CD-Rom game called Voyager because of its references to homosexuality, abortion and birth control.

Chirping for Cheesus

Lesbian Avengers stormed the offices of a group that 'cures' queers, releasing 1,000 crickets, unleashing a biblical plague of 'locusts' on the creepy Christian outfit, Exodus International. Exodus preys on gays and lesbians from religious backgrounds and has driven some to suicide. "There are lesbians here with bugs!" a Jesus-addled office worker screamed to the emergency service, while the hopping, crawling army spread across the floor.

the Blast, March/April 95

Schoolgirl sit-in

On 4 April, 100 girls at a Kieghley school in West Yorkshire staged a sit-in and defeated the headteacher's plans to charge 5p for toilet visits during lessons. HURRAH!!!

Counter-Info

returning to Pakistan by her husband.

In the same year Sheihla and her daughter managed to escape from a terrifying ordeal of abuse, violence and imprisonment by her husband and family. They came to Britain to lodge an asylum application on the grounds of her religious beliefs, as she feared that her community would kill her and her daughter if she was forced to go back.

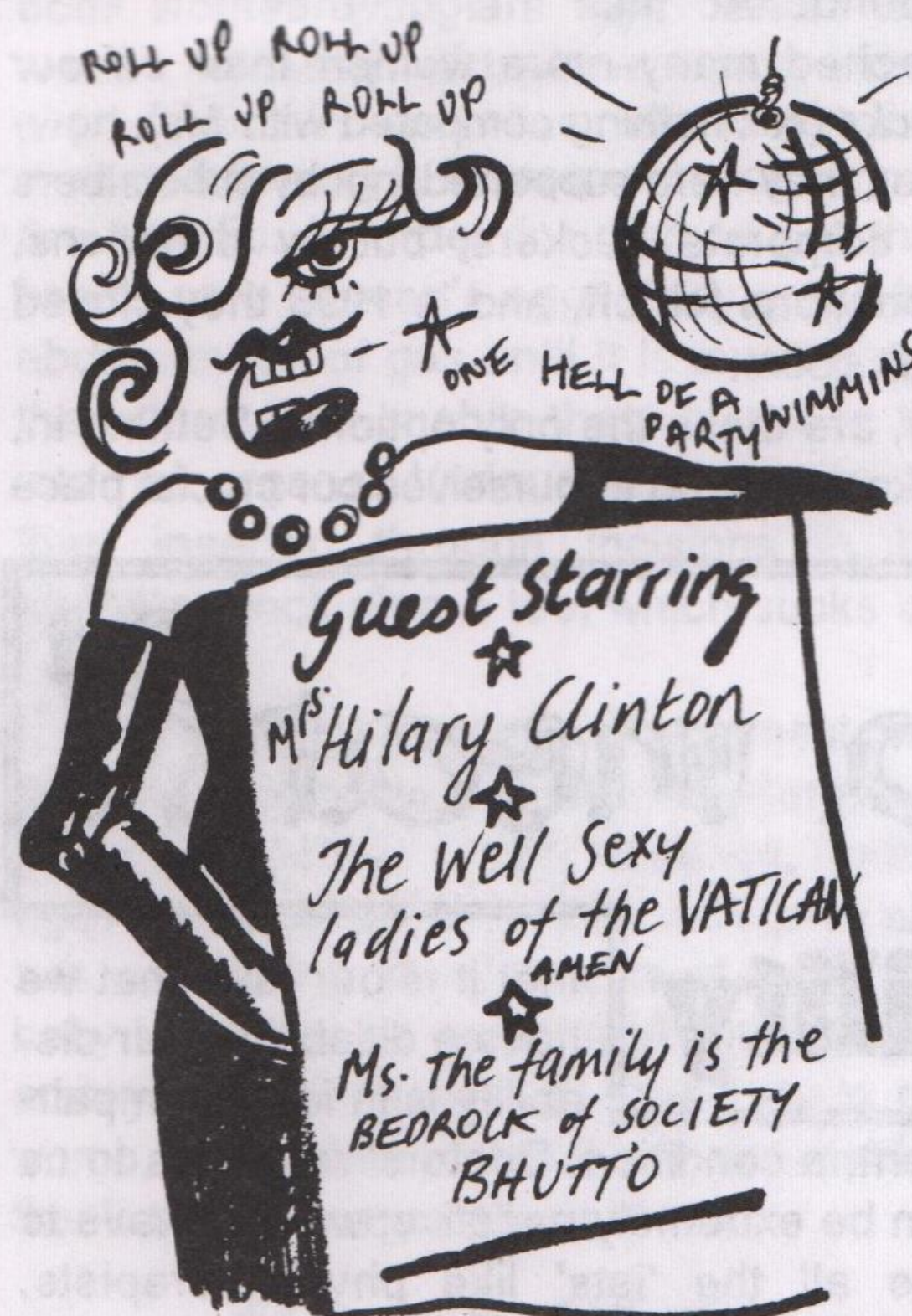
Her application was refused by the Home Office in May 1994, and her appeal date was in March 1995. This was adjourned, and a new date has been set for January 22nd 1996. Sheihla's supporters at Southall Black Sisters want the courtroom packed! Contact SBS at:

52 Norwood Rd,
Southall, Middx UB2 4DW,
0181-571-9595

ASIAN WOMEN WORKERS CONFERENCE

The Committee for Asian Women held a conference in June 95 to discuss the 'Impact of Industrial Restructuring on Women Workers in Asia'. They intended to discuss the impact of restructuring and plan strategies for confronting it. Women from India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. They looked at issues of inflation, unemployment and poverty; lack of benefits; sex segregation in jobs; and repression of any attempts to organise. The group planned approaches from writing story books and cartoons for use in grassroots organisation to holding future conferences and seminars.

Asian Women Workers Newsletter 7/95



"SEDITIONOUS CONSPIRACY"

There are now five Puerto Rican women prisoners in US jails serving virtual life sentences for 'seditious conspiracy', a charge that has been used almost exclusively against Puerto Rican activists. Most of these women (and some male comrades) have already spent thirteen years in prison for their political actions and have suffered psychological torture, sexual and physical abuse and constant surveillance by screws and the US state. Alejandrina Torres was held for years

under 24 hour a day video surveillance in the Lexington Control Unit (now shut down after a massive grassroots campaign). While the abuse continues and the US government refuses to acknowledge the political nature of the convictions, the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War continues to campaign for their release.

Contact: 112 N. California, Chicago, Illinois 60622 USA

Off our backs was started on the fly some 25 ago by a group of women, using money they'd collected to start a GI coffeehouse – this story is the stuff of legend

off our backs

NO SELL OUT!

rather than history, but I'll try to sort out some facts: in 1968, some women were collecting money to set up a coffeehouse with the purpose of inducing the men who attended not to join the military in Viet Nam, and to try to seduce away men who'd joined already.

The coffeehouse never materialised, and they were left with the money. After a couple of years of increasing irritation with the leftist movement, which was then, as it is now, male-centred and arrogant, they decided they'd like to found a newsjournal to compete with the *Guardian* {the *US Guardian* is not to be confused with our own lovable liberals – **BA**} and other leftist journals at the time, offering hip, witty, in-your-face coverage from a feminist perspective.

PREHISTORY

At the time, most of the women at *off our backs* were on welfare, or were supported by their husbands, so they could work full-time or more on writing, advertising, promotion, and production. The results were fabulous – our early issues were hard-line, breezy, staccato; the graphics and photos are stunning. Since then, we have evolved into what we are today – a more thoughtful, radical journal, with a bent towards the philosophical; focusing on interviews, reviews and the hammering out (particularly on our letters pages) of difficult feminist issues.

No one can work full-time any more; we pay one collective member a shockingly small salary to work 20-30 hours a week doing administrative and office work, and at least half of the pieces we run are produced by women outside the collective. Time and

energy are our enemies, but a burning conviction that our work is important carries us on, and the *off our backs* collective hasn't missed putting out an issue since February 1970. Some of them have been a few weeks late, as our readers will certainly remember; but they've always arrived eventually in your mailbox, lovingly drafted and crafted for you by other feminist women.

Since the beginning, we've had a policy: we don't compromise the contents of the paper for the sake of increased circulation. As a result, we have no major advertisers; almost all our revenue comes from subscribers and over-the-counter sales, and we're always, always on the edge. The pay-off to our constant scrimping and financial small-mindedness, though, is that we have total control over what we print. And, although we occasionally infuriate women by our choices, for the most part we're obviously fulfilling a need, because we have a core group of faithful readers, supplemented by a constant stream of new subscribers.

RAGS TO RICHES

Now, readers familiar with feminist publishing will have already noted (perhaps years ago) that we were founded about a year before *Ms*. I compare the two journals all the time; our beginnings were similar, but almost immediately *Ms* started to rise to prominence, while we remained in the background, in pretty much the same position we are now.

Soon *Ms* to many a mainstream mind, was feminism; its circulation was (by our standards) enormous. And now comes more legend: power, as we say, corrupts, and at its

worst, *Ms* was running cigarette advertisements and articles about cosmetics – but it was reaching feminists who otherwise wouldn't have known where to go for community. (I discovered it with joy myself during my freshman year, 1983; however, by 1984 I discovered *oob*.)

It then crumbled in upon itself and eventually arose – the phoenix *Ms*, ad-free and supported at a loss by a family of magazines (not, I'm told, out of any sense of feminist vocation on the part of the board of directors, but as a testing ground, to see what ideas are acceptable in more mainstream women's publications.)

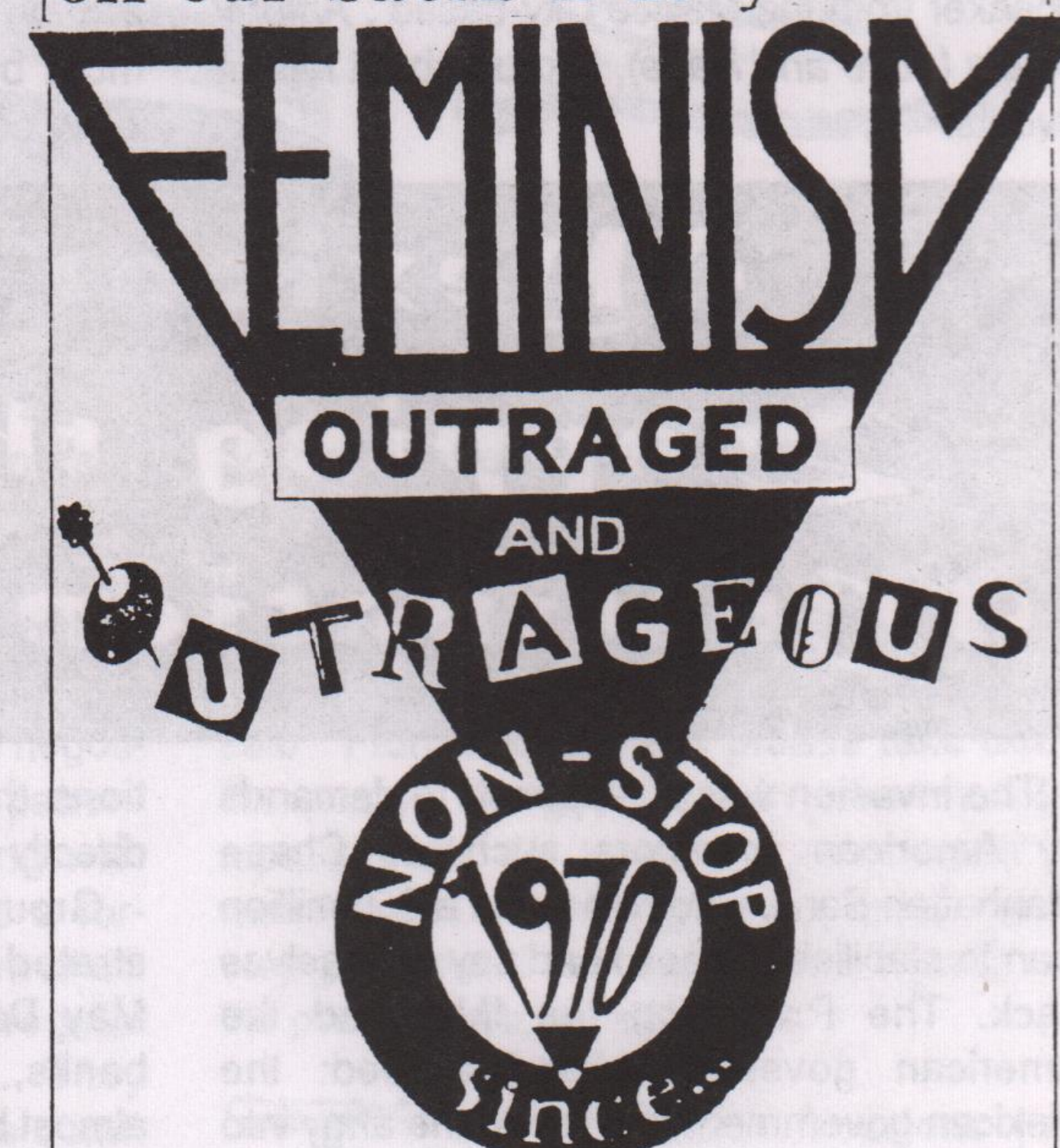
Still, look at *Ms* and look at us – 200,000 readers vs 5000. We may have the moral high ground, but I can't imagine they would have debated for several acrimonious months whether they should move to a damp basement apartment to save money. And, again, isolated, hungry women, looking for a publication that doesn't leave them feeling angry and invisible – they know where to turn.

DANGEROUS DONATIONS

A third journal, *New Directions for Women*, also started in the early 1970's; they took a middle ground. At their height they reached many more women than *off our backs* (still nothing compared with *Ms*); however, they were supported, not by subscribers or corporate backers, but by donations. Donations fell off, and in 1993 they closed their doors.

So, are these the only options? Settling in, acknowledging to ourselves our crucial place

Join the celebration!
off our backs is 25 years old



off our backs is America's foremost and longest running feminist news journal. To make sure you don't miss this very special year, take out a subscription (or two) and help us make the next 25 years even more momentous for women.

oob, 2337B 18th St NW, Wash. DC 20009

Overseas Subscription US\$30

Birthday Present Sub US\$40

Trial Sub (3 issues) US\$9

cheque must be on a US bank or international postal/money order.

UK subs: £16 – make cheques payable to A. Henry

Canada, Mexico US \$22 on US bank

in American politics and culture even when no one else acknowledges it – or selling out, giving over control to corporations but reaching so many, many more women?

Angela Johnson



The Charity Model

Many, but not all, impairments have their own organisation: for example, blind people can go to the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB); deaf people to the RNID; people with cerebral palsy to the Spastics Society (SCOPE); people with learning difficulties to Mencap; people with issues of mental health to Mind, and so on. No one can 'get help' from these organisations unless they have the medical impairment with which they work, providing information and advice.

Non-disabled people run charities

The other point is that almost all of these charities have non-disabled people running them. Also, many of these organisations raise money for a 'quick fix' such as a holiday by the seaside for disabled children. Happily this is changing, and it is certainly acknowledged that many of these charities provide education in their 'special' schools. There are now campaigns to get disabled children educated in mainstream schools with proper backup, and this has become known as inclusive education.

Lastly, the Charity Model shows us that by

Disabled? What d'ya mean?!

models of disability

This speech by Frances Blackwell was given to a conference made up of disabled older women (16/4/94) and is based on what is referred to as the Social Approach or Model of Disability, and the Disability Movement.

Disability Movement

The Race Relations Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, both passed in the 70's, and very recently, the reduction of the age of consent from 21 to 18 years for gay men, have been the results of specific 'movements'. Whilst those acts in themselves do not stop prejudice, black people, women and gay men can use the Acts to challenge discrimination.

Disabled people cannot do that, since we have no anti-discrimination laws, which is why many disabled women and men are fighting for such a law, and at this time we have had our Bill thrown out by the Government. So the Disability Movement is

built around campaigning in order to give disabled women and men choices and rights over their lives.

The Models of Disability

In the 70's some disabled people within an institution came up with the concept of 'models' of disability; firstly, they thought of the Medical Model, which is what we are used to in our everyday lives.

The Medical Model

This concentrates on the idea that when we are born with a disability or acquire a disability in later life, we become the focus of medical attention. Doctors prod us and diagnose what is 'wrong' with us and we become confused and isolated, for it is made out that we are a nuisance, that we cannot be cured,

that it is our fault that we have a disability. Our disability is in fact an impairment, a condition. Doctors' reactions to us can be extremely negative; we also have to see all the 'ists' like physiotherapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, and so on.

The other thing that happens is that everyone who comes into contact with us wants to know what is wrong with us in order to decide whether or not to give us aids and equipment, benefits, education, social service, etc (defined as the Administrative Model). We are therefore defined as a medical condition. And as we get older it can become frightening as too often we equate old age with even more impairment.

Those disabled people back in the 70's decided this was all wrong. They realised there was another model based on this one, which they called the Charity Model.

The Disabled People's Direct Action Network (DAN) held their latest National Action in Cardiff over three days from 30 March to 1 April, and brought the city to a standstill.

Disabled people from around the country descended on Cardiff to protest about inaccessible public transport and the lack of a government strategy to remedy this. Protests took place at Cardiff's Queen Street and Central Railway Stations, and at the Bus Station, succeeding in turning the City into one huge traffic jam! DAN believes that such direct action is the only way to bring their message home, both to the government and non-disabled people caught up in the protest. It gives people a taste of what it's like to be unable to travel with ease - something most people take for granted.

Thursday 30 March: Six disabled people were arrested at the end of an action at Cardiff Queen St. Station and charged with "obstructing a train" - well, they were handcuffed to it!

Friday 31 March: When DAN protesters arrived at Cardiff Central Station, police announced that "people in wheelchairs" were banned from entering, despite many disabled people having tickets to travel. Following this outrageous infringement of civil rights, disabled people blockaded the station doorway, which was as far as

the police would allow them to progress. Many had attempted to crawl in, leaving wheelchairs on the pavement.

Feelings were running high, and this action was followed by "catching a bus" DAN-style at a major road junction. By chaining themselves to three buses, DAN members brought traffic to a halt once again. Are disabled people powerful, or what!!

Saturday 1 April: With the numbers of protesters up to 150, DAN turned their attention to Cardiff's bus and coach station. They rendered it out of action by blocking the entrance and the exit. Two were arrested, but released within an hour when DAN members refused to clear a

road until they were freed.

These actions followed a few days after the first reading in Parliament of the government's Disability Discrimination Bill, a measure which fails to tackle the issue of public transport.

But while public transport remains inaccessible, disabled people are denied access to work, leisure, education, housing and public services. DAN will continue to focus their actions around transport until this changes.

DAN's next national action will take place at the NEC in Birmingham from 12-14 October, as the Public Transport Show will be taking place, attended by bus and coach operators from around the country.

DAN is a national network of disabled people and non-disabled allies, with contacts around the country. As well as two national actions per year, there are various local actions. DAN also produces a newsletter, and the best political T-shirts you've ever seen!!

To find out more take out a subscription to the newsletter, or make a donation.

DAN, 3 Crawley Rd, London N22 6AN (0181-889-1361 voice or minicom) or 24 Norwood Place, Leeds LS6 1DY (0113-274-6989)



Models of Disability, cont'd

raising money, charities use very negative images of us as disabled people. The movement is aiming to get these ideas changed too, especially the TV fundraising events such as Children in Need and Comic Relief.

The Administrative Model

This is based on the Medical and Charity models and relates to us defining our impairments in order to get benefits and an education.

The Social Model

Up to the 70's disabled women were seen as

having medical conditions, but we said No, what disables us is lack of access to buildings, to information and services, and very negative attitudes. In order for this to change, we need to be consulted and we need to be far more involved in organisations by getting on their management committees or insisting we

meet with officers from local councils so we can have an input in decision-making. And also, that people in authority over us need to be trained to approach us in a different way.

The other side of the Social Model is that most people think of

disabled people as being simply that. But in fact we are full of diversity: we are old, we are young, we are lesbian or gay, we are black, we come from many different ethnic minorities, we come from different classes, and from different religions, and most of us come from several diverse groups of people - some of us may be black older women or older lesbians, and so on.

From Boadicea 13 (Oct./Nov. '94) 336 Brixton Rd. London SW97AA



SELLAFIELD. shut it!

Since 1990 women have held a peace camp outside the Sellafield nuclear power plant, aiming to expose it as the centre of a destructive nuclear and military chain. They do actions such as entering the plant, leafleting offices, and sometimes doing damage. They have also held a number of blockades and demonstrations.

Sellafield was built by the Government in the early 50's to produce plutonium for British nuclear weapons. Plutonium is produced by 'reprocessing' spent uranium fuel from a nuclear reactor. Sellafield is primarily a reprocessing plant, taking used fuel from all the UK's nuclear power stations and from overseas, and making plutonium for nuclear weapons such as Trident. Over half the electricity generated at Sellafield is used on site in connection with reprocessing. 10p of every pound in our electricity bills goes towards subsidising these higher costs.

Nuclear waste remains radioactive for years - plus buildings and equipment also become contaminated. Sellafield is also notorious for radioactive emissions and pollution. Gases such as Krypton-85 are released into the air, and liquids discharged into the Irish Sea. Childhood leukemia in one nearby village is 14 times the national average. The cancer rate for all retired Sellafield workers is 30% above the national average; the handling of any nuclear material is a severe health hazard.

In 1957 a fire in the Windscale reactor core spread contamination across Europe, and in 1983 radioactive waste went into the sea causing a 40km stretch to be closed for nine months. Many more accidents go unreported or covered up.

It's been said that Sellafield is the main employer in the area. But Sellafield has swallowed most industrial grants available to the

region, actually preventing other employment. Radioactive pollution has destroyed many industries such as fishing and farming. Most local employees work on short-term contracts and are first to be made redundant.

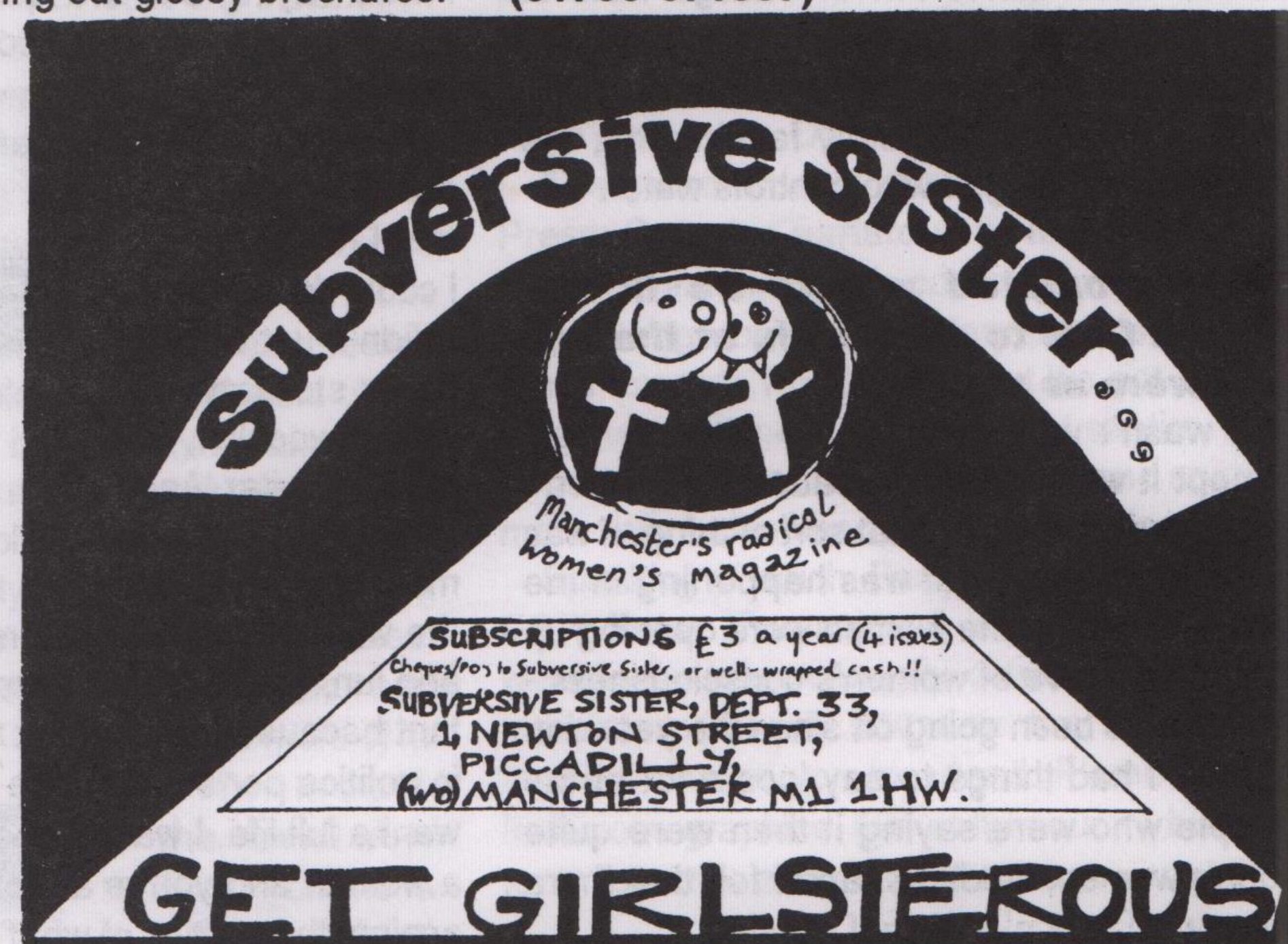
The nuclear industry spends millions on propaganda, spewing out glossy brochures.

Schools and community groups are targeted especially with bullshit presentations and coach trips to fancy "Visitors Centres". For this reason the women camped opposite the Sellafield Visitors Centre as a visible symbol of opposition for workers, visitors, and local people.

The camps

are held on the last full weekend of every other month. The next one will be 24-27 November 1995. If you'd like to get involved or just visit contact:

Kate or Rachel, Peace House, 5 New Road, Littlebrough Lincs OL15 8PJ (01706-371387)





Vi Subversa sang with the punk band, Poison Girls, formed in 1976. Vi is known for her powerful, low, gravelly voice; sharp anarchist/feminist lyrics, and a strong and flamboyant stage presence. She also stood out as a 42-year-old mother of two, expressing herself in an anarcho-punk scene still dominated by young men.

Poison Girls recorded four LP's - Hex, Where's the Pleasure, Chappaquiddick Bridge, and Songs of Praise. One early single, 'Persons Unknown' (1980) was produced to raise money for the defence of five anarchists charged with 'conspiracy to cause explosions'. All LP's and singles are now available on CD on Cooking Vinyl records.

But many of us remember Poison Girls most as a live band. They were part of many memorable nights out in the 80s, playing numerous benefits - for reproductive rights, women against pit closures, various defence campaigns. Vi is celebrating her 60th birthday with a Poison Girls reunion gig that is also an anti-CJA benefit. She took a break from rehearsals for a chat.

WHEN did the band split up and what have you been doing since?

Our last gig was November '89 in Zagreb. We'd been going for 13 years as Poison Girls. Vi Subversa was a very strong persona...and when that came to an end, I needed to find out who I still was apart from Vi Subversa.

I went back to college for a bit. I became a trainer for the Parent Network and that was funny - it was a continuum of Vi Subversa 'cos she always spoke as a parent; 'Jump Mama Jump' and 'Not your fuckin' mother'. I was training people to run a course for parents about communication skills, so that they listened to their children better.

After about five years I was still speaking as a mother even though my children were well grown-up, and living their own lives. So I felt it was about time to stop that too and really find out who I am, apart from this very responsible person which Vi was. I slowly pulled out of that.

Last January I went off to Spain, to have some fun in the sun, have a bit of space and I spend a lot of time on my own.

I've got interested in what's going on locally and the big issue out there is water. I wanted to do some gardening except that there's very little water. Rain isn't coming, so I've got into practical aspects of irrigation. That means using a very old system of irrigation which goes back to when the Moors were there. I'm in charge now of watering some orange trees and I water my own vegetable garden. The other bit is the politics of water. It's really fascinating, the whole power thing of who controls water.

What prompted you to be in the Poison Girls to start with, at the age you were as well?

It wasn't very much to do with my age, except it was difficult because you weren't supposed to be doing that sort of thing. It was more to do with what was happening in the mid 70s. A lot of the women were opening up to another wave of women's consciousness - I'm sure it's been going on since the year dot. I found I had things to say 'cos a lot of the people who were saying it then were quite young women, students, and I felt that there were whole chunks of stuff missing.

My son was playing the guitar loud... and if you can't beat 'em join 'em! I met people who were doing a thing for the Edinburgh Fringe who invited me to join. That's when I wrote my first songs. I was getting



encouragement from people who said 'Come on, this needs to be heard.' Richard, the other guitarist in Poison Girls encouraged me. He really liked not only what I was saying but the quality of my voice, which nobody'd ever recognised as interesting before.

I really got off on it, partly because I was doing something that I never thought I could do. I decided I didn't just want to be a stereotypical woman vocalist, so I learned guitar. And I really got off on making a noise and the whole thing became really sort of erotic and fun. Having a good time was very important because I don't think that I'm interested in politics per se but once you start saying 'I want a full life, I want a good time' and you're a woman and you're a mother, you come up against the politics of what's stopping you.

The other bit was more serious. I took on voluntarily being a channel for a lot of women's voices. I said some quite extreme things in some of the songs which were difficult to say. My son was hearing heavy stuff about men from me and that was hard to juggle, but I felt that these things needed saying. I wasn't going through the hell that some women were going through. I don't know if it was right or not, I became a channel for women's politics and I found some of it quite gruelling.

There were difficulties around it for both of my children. I was being a very strong role model for my daughter, but what did that mean in terms of her expectations and what she was growing into?

I never thought that I could be a channel for the radical separatist stuff that was going on strongly at the time, partly because I had a son - a lot of women had sons. And I wanted to work with men; these were the people around me in my life.

Did you get much feedback from women at the time?

Hardly any women came to gigs. The political punk peace movement that we worked in was mostly young boys, and gradually more women were coming in. I did get a lot of support, but there was also a lot of difficult stuff like 'why are you playing with men?' 'Why are you using rock music, which is cock rock?'

I was a young woman then, and I was interested in feminism, but I was also into rock'n'roll, and that was difficult! There was a basic hostility, this idea that proper women's music is all soft.

I was fielding that sort of stuff. It seemed quite clear that I responded to rock music and I picked up energy from it, and why not? But I respected that it was an issue.

A long time ago I read an interview in a music paper where you were having a go at the idea of youth culture. You said it was a way of packaging rebellion merely as a stage, as opposed to a fundamental rejection of capitalism and the state. I think that point needs repeating!

So how come you're still rebellious at 40-odd? It's about what other people say, do you listen to what people say? I still think that, I'm not going to be defined, thank you!

subversive at 60

What do you think about a lot of the new women's bands?

I'm a bit out of touch really. I did go to a couple of gigs a couple of years ago. And it seemed to me great, and it also seemed not particularly new - not any more than the women's movement itself is new or is new in

my lifetime. I'm delighted when I see women making a noise, having a good time, claiming some space, claiming some attention!

When I saw Bikini Kill at ULU, I had a good time, met people I hadn't seen in ages, bought a T-shirt! I was never a follower of bands. I listened to the Beatles, I liked the quality of the music and my kids liked it. I

used to breast feed them to various songs and rock them to sleep. I was living in the country and I didn't even go to much of the festivals. I'd never been particularly interested as a member of an audience.

What made you all get together and do this gig?

Ten years ago I was 50, and we had a really good event to celebrate

it. I thought it would be nice to have a party and invite some of those people back. I hadn't thought of playing or anything. Then I went to Spain. But meanwhile Cooking Vinyl wanted to bring out CDs of all our recorded stuff, because nothing that we've done was available anymore. Then it was, 'when should we do it?' 'oh, she'll be 60.'... it all just tumbled together.

Was it difficult tracking people down?

I just left it all to Richard. He did have trouble. He couldn't find Dave, who was our latest drummer and wrote a lot of the recent material. He disappeared. I think someone put an ad in Time Out, saying anyone who knew his whereabouts please get in touch, and they'll get a free boxed set. And two people rang up and said they found him!

The first rehearsal was very difficult. I came over three weeks ago and I've been rehearsing pretty well every day. I'm worried about my voice holding up, having not done it for nearly six years.

But, the magic bit that happens when you're actually playing together started quite soon, and it's great! I don't know what they've all been doing. We haven't had much time to talk, but it's working again, and I feel good!

Here's a more personal question. I've found a lot of material about menopause unsatisfying, even a lot of the feminist things that are supposed to be "positive". They're often based on this idea you're 'wise' by then. I'm really interested in what women's experiences are when they're doing unconventional things and perhaps not terribly 'wise'.

That's a huge question! Menopause for me was a bit like adolescence. Your body's changing a lot and you get feelings about the newness of what's happening to you. I don't think I ever felt very sure about anything. Even when I was in the 'normal' bit between puberty and menopause. I've always been open to change, I've been experimental with my life. I've always risen to challenges and enjoyed taking risks.

So I suppose changes to my body when I began to get older were just more of that. I think it was an issue not to identify with "Oh dear I'm getting old now and I've got to go find my rose-covered cottage!" What kept me going was the same as when I had a difficult adolescence - friends around me, lots of support, not expecting to know all the answers, being very committed to asking questions.

I've learned to let go of a lot of the things that wound me up when I was a young woman. Let go with joy, really, concern about my appearance. Though I'm still concerned about it, a lot of the hooks are out.

In September of this year thousands of women, along with UN government delegations gathered in Beijing, China for the Fourth World Conference on Women. Ann Khambatta examines the reality for women in China, and the contradictions of celebrating such a gathering.

China has a population of around 1,200 million. Twenty percent of the world's population live there, including the greatest concentration of women. The government wants to stabilise this population by the year 2000 and since 1979 birth control has been compulsory.

While known as the 'one couple - one child' policy, the reality is more complex. Birth control is governed by annual quotas for work or social units: schools, factories or villages. Permission must be sought to have children and the policy controls the age of marriage and number of children each couple may have. Urban couples can have one child, unless the first is disabled, rural couples can have a second child if the first is a girl. Abortion is mandatory for unmarried mothers.

A mixture of economic pressures and misogynist traditions ensure that families desire a healthy son. The introduction of this policy has resulted in wholesale infanticide, with disabled and girl children the majority of fatalities. Deputy prime minister Zou Jiahua believes 300 million births have been prevented since the beginning of this policy; 'prevention' includes a system of forcible abortions and sterilisation of women.

In 1993 Canada recognised this policy for the brutal and systematic attack on women that it is and decided it was grounds for granting women from China asylum.

Bastards' brutal birth policy

In order to "improve the quality of the population of the future", the Law for the Sanitary Care of Mothers and Children was introduced as from 1st June this year. Its object is to prevent the annual birth of nearly 400,000 children with disabilities which "can totally or partially prevent the victim from leading an independent life", according to Chen Minzkang, Minister of Health. The law will forbid the marriage of couples who have a possibility of transmitting genetic defects to their descendants. It is also expected to prevent the marriage of people diagnosed with mental illness.

During pregnancy, women will have to undergo rigorous medical checks, if any abnormalities or 'defects' are detected, they

Really, I actually feel stronger than I've done for a long time. I've dropped a lot of fear. And let go of a lot of rubbish. I wanted to go to Spain, somewhere out of London, I wanted to be in a country environment in touch with nature, with big mountains around me, I wanted to walk in the dark on uneven roads... and that's really important.

I discovered a self-balance that's new, and a calm that's new. I know what stage fright's about, but I don't feel quite so burdened by unnecessary fears, which is the woman I carried a lot. Partly because I was born in quite a difficult time. My childhood was in war. I

grew up without the support that a lot of young women get these days. We were still frightened of each other.

Do you have tips for any other older women who want to get into rock'n'roll and carry on living a rock'n'roll life?

The people you work with are a lot more important than the music or the musical ideas. If you've got the right people you'll find your music. If you've got the right people, you've got the spark and the solidity and the support, I think, go for it! Just do it!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **Rozanne & Amanda**

★ ★ **Beijing** ★ ★ **Bollocks!**

will be forced to have an abortion. A spokesman for the Ministry claimed that "the essence of the Chinese policy for achieving better births is completely different from the racist eugenics carried out by Adolf Hitler." As Hitler's policies also applied to those with disabilities, regardless of race, it's difficult to see in what way the Chinese law differs.

The State Family Planning Commission, the body responsible for the development of these policies, relies on All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) for their implementation. The ACWF has networks of branches on a national, municipal, village and neighbourhood level, and are responsible for monitoring the birth control system. Despite some progressive work, the ACWF's main purpose is to educate and mobilise its membership in support of state policies. Women dissatisfied with the aims of the ACWF can't just set up their own groups. Application must be made for formal approval and registration, and any

unregistered group is considered illegal.

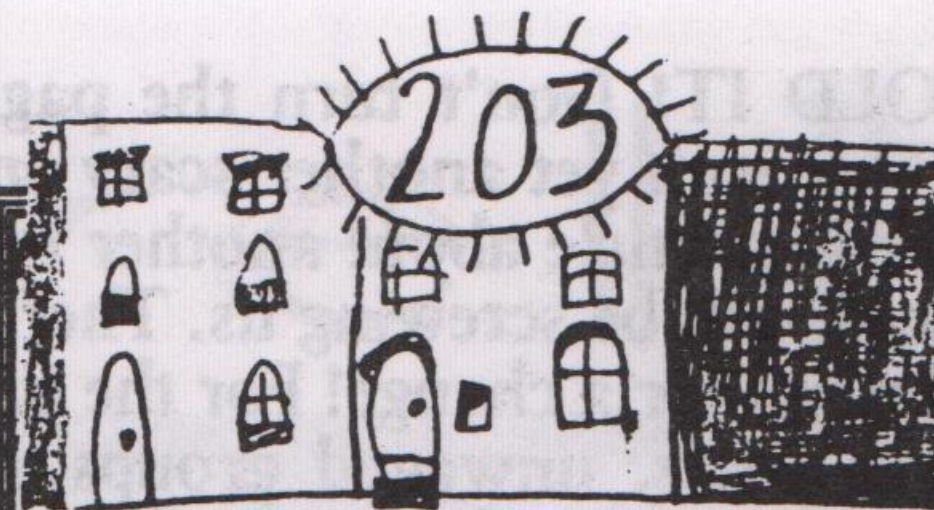
According to a recent Amnesty International report, "women from all walks of life have suffered serious human rights violations. many have been detained, restricted or harassed for exercising fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression and association." The Chinese government to this day regards the pro-democracy protests of June 1989 as "counter-revolutionary riots". Six years on the identity of those who were killed, including a number of women, remain unknown.

'Re-education through labour'

Official statistics are misleading and low, but they give some idea of the scale of state violence women face. In 1994 there were 8,000 women officially detained in 're-education through labour' camps. There are separate rehabilitation camps for women deemed prostitutes (this includes women who have sex outside marriage) where 560,000 women were held in 1991.

Tony Yi, the 27 year-old translator to dissident Wei Jingsheng, disappeared on April 5th, 1994, after telling foreign reporters of Wei's arrest. After over eight months in detention she was sentenced to two and a half years 're-education through labour'. Re-education requires no trial and is decided at the discretion of the police. Tong was sentenced for activities which "disturb public order", but are too minor to be prosecuted under Criminal Law. She was repeatedly beaten by inmates after complaining to the authorities about the long hours of forced labour. When she complained of her treatment she was again beaten by prisoners and her parents denied permission to visit.

In Chinese-occupied Tibet, Damchoe Pemoe, a trader in her mid-twenties and five months pregnant, was detained by police on suspicion of being a member of a pro-independence group. She miscarried a week after police forced her to remain standing for at least 12 hours and beat her with electric batons after she refused to reveal the



203 Hackney Road, E2; 0171-613 2970

**THE PREMISES
CO-OP CAFE**

- ★ DELICIOUS LUNCH SPECIALS
- ★ ALL-DAY BREAKFASTS
- ★ SUPER SOUPS
- ★ SANDWICHES, ROLLS
- ★ REAL COFFEE
- ★ VEGETARIAN AND VEGAN MEALS

open: 9.30am-8pm weekdays

names of Tibetan underground activists during interrogation.

Gyaltsen Kelsang died at the age of 24, one of five Tibetan women who have died in custody or shortly after their release, since 1991. All were in their early twenties, reportedly healthy on arrest, and were tortured and ill-treated in prison.

Gyaltsen Kelsang was arrested with 11 other Tibetan nuns in June 1993, accused of taking part in a pro-independence demonstration, she was sentenced to two years imprisonment. She was put to hard labour despite remaining weak from being badly beaten. Her health worsened, and in November 1994 she was taken to a police hospital, and then sent on medical parole. She died there in February of this year.

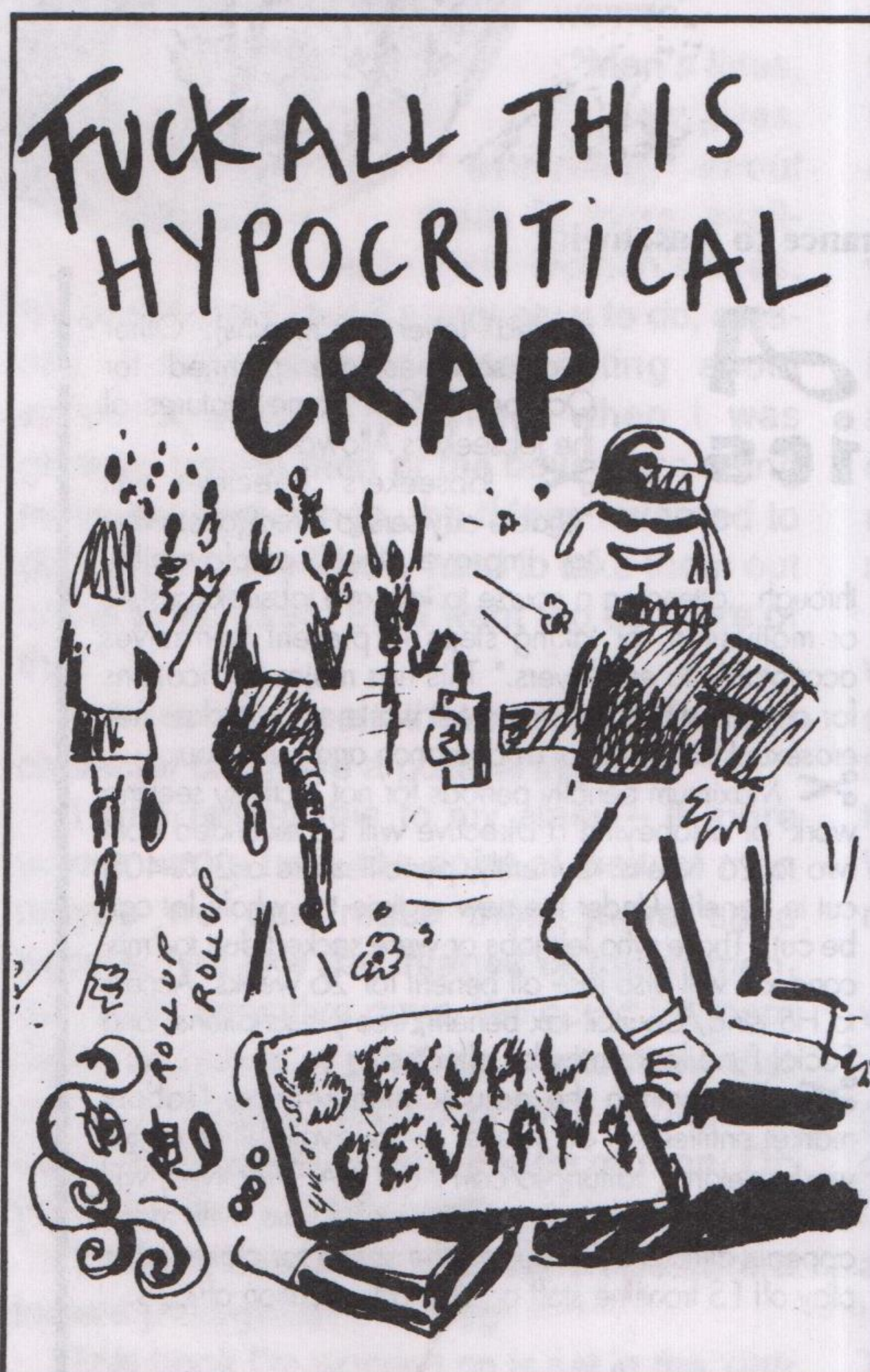
A really bad background

It is against this background that Beijing hosted the United National Fourth World Conference on Women (WCW). Running parallel to it was the Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Forum, open to individuals from NGO's across the world. When the decision to hold the conference in Beijing was announced in the early 90s, there were initial protests from some governments and NGOs, but the outcome was considered inevitable. Over the past two years women from hundreds of NGOs worldwide have travelled to numerous preparatory conferences in an attempt to influence the final document of the conference, 'The Platform for Action'; a document which will merely be a series of recommendations placing no legal obligations on UN governments.

Around 500 organisations were refused registration, including Tibetan groups, organisations from Taiwan (the Chinese government has never recognised Taiwan as an independent state) and some lesbian groups. Many believe their rejection has been influenced by the Chinese government and the Vatican. Thousands more were refused visas, despite having their registration granted. Of the 30,000 originally expected only 17,000 gained visas and were able to attend.

The only concerted international protest came earlier this year, when the Chinese Organising Committee (COC) (!!!) announced that the NGO Forum would be moved from its original venue next to the

[cont'd on page 14]



HOLD IT! Don't turn the page! This isn't yet another scary and depressing article about another way the state will be screwing us. There's good news for a change! For the first time in years, unwaged groups are beginning to mobilise nationally. Several conferences and meetings have taken place to act against the Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and the Incapacity Act. (see BA 7)

Over the years we've seen Restart, JobStart, ET, WEEP (no kidding!), and now we've got the JSA, the latest move to impose work discipline on the workless. But we haven't seen much large-scale resistance, despite the efforts of a few local unwaged groups.

But unwaged people have a long history of resisting poverty and forced labour. We occasionally hear about the National Unemployed Workers Movement of the 20s and 30s. Despite the attempts of the TUC to destroy them, they achieved significant success in protecting rates of benefit payments.

We hear even less of the more recent claimants unions and unwaged action groups in the 70's and 80's. When looking back, we're not about to take a little trip down memory lane for nostalgia's sake. We're seeking new ideas for the future from a suppressed history.

The first claimants union formed in Digbeth, Birmingham in 1969. At the time, there was very little accessible information on social security benefits. The group operated collectively. Individual claims and strategy was discussed by the whole group, with the intention of not creating an atmosphere of 'clients' and 'experts'.

Birmingham CU was able to force the DHSS to award lump sum payments. The CU received press publicity, published several pamphlets and newsletters. And so...the idea caught on. In 1970 Birmingham CU, along with several new unions from Brighton, Manchester, London, and North Staffs decided to affiliate as a national Federation of Claimants Unions. The Federation stood opposed to "the bureaucratic centralist structure of the trade union movement". CU's were politically non-aligned and successfully resisted attempts by various parties to dominate them.

As well as giving advice and support to people sorting out benefit and work hassles, claimants unions took initiative in protests, direct action, and creating autonomous space and resources. They participated in political struggles (if not political parties), and held a radical view of the welfare state and the capitalist system. The Federation's 1972 Leeds Agreement stressed that claimants are engaged in a class struggle to end the waged slavery system, which subsists on the creation of poverty and work to enrich the ruling classes.

SCUM and Rabbits

In the early/mid 80s claimants unions and other unwaged action groups mounted an effective campaign against the Specialist Claims Control Units (S.C.C.U. or SCUM to us) and the Department of Employment Regional Investigation Teams ("Rabbits"). Teams of "specialists" would descend on a local DHSS and go through the files to investigate claimants who they suspect of "fraud".

Targets included claimants under 25 or over 50 with redundancy or early retirement pay; self-employed/ with saleable off-the-cards skills; long-term unemployed; those signing on and off frequently; and those with domestic responsibilities.

Single mothers or any single woman suspected of "cohabitation" were also investi-

gated. Even before the CSA single mothers were fair game. They were subjected to interviews and visits by 'liable relative' officers, usually around morning or tea time with the aim of catching a man in the house. The system has always been set up to reinforce women's dependency on men; the DHSS stated that if married women must have a husband claim for them, "it is unfair to allow single women who live with men to claim benefit."

An Islington claimant harassed for cohabitation asked the Islington Action Group of the Unwaged (IAGOU) for support when the fraud officer came for tea. When he was greeted by a group with a tape recorder, he asked her 'don't you regard it a private matter?'

Uninvited Guests

The specialist "visits" were "welcomed" very vigorously by claimant groups and the CPSA. As the Oxford Claimants Union pointed out, the SCUM were only able to operate if they received cooperation from the local staff, and if claimants were unaware of their rights. Claimants unions and dissident dole workers kept track of SCUM and Rabbits throughout the country. Photos, license plate numbers, and other information were printed on leaflets and flyposted.

When the SCUM arrived in Bethnal Green, the local CU photographed them all. Within several days the photos were on 10,000 A4 leaflets and A3 posters widely distributed and flyposted. The CU hired a minibus and loud-hailer, setting out on a tour of the local estates broadcasting relevant information

Other times CU members followed and hassled the SCUM team as they walked through the streets of Stepney. "We must follow them as they move around town, and bully them as they try to bully us. We must give them no peace until they pack their bags and go home." (CU wallsheet) Bethnal Green CU was so successful at disrupting SCUM's visit that one

Claiming

claimant was taken to court for 'intimidation', but found not guilty.

And speaking of intimidation, the SCUM aimed to frighten people into ending claims, even when they didn't actually prosecute. Informing claimants fully of eligibility to claim more, CU's would accompany claimants on interviews. The rate of SCUM intimidation success plummeted with this back-up.

Most dole workers hated the SCUM. Often they walked out, refused to cooperate, 'lost' files, and generally made life difficult for them. Collaboration between claimants groups and dissident dole workers was vital to the effectiveness of these campaigns. This may be why the DSS now want every dole worker to be a "specialist" in harassment.

Nasty Nobs

Unwaged activists in Edinburgh are still successfully using these tactics. They leaflet around dole offices, offer to go to Restarts with claimants, and provide addresses that could be used as evidence of contacting employers. They regularly publish a "Scumbag of the month" feature, with the names and pictures of nasty DSS nobs. The results show in a high turnover and transference rate.

A "MayDay 88" pamphlet lists nearly 300 claimants unions and unwaged action groups. Not only did most cities and towns have a CU, most boroughs in large cities had one. Today the National Federation of Claimants Unions exists, but the number of active CU's is esti-

mated at six. The only other independent organisation is the Norwich-based National Union of Unemployed and Workers (NUUW).

What are the reasons for this decline in a widespread and active movement defending claimants?

Unwaged groups around the early 80's formed in the context of uprisings throughout the country, direct action campaigns such as Greenham; struggles of waged workers such as the 84/85 miners' strike. Relatively secure squats provided bases for many groups and activities. Economically and practically squats made life without working a lot easier.

Many of the scams and loopholes that made dolee life OK have been closed. Others still go on, but in the present

climate are these viable ways of long-term survival for many people?

Generally there was much more material and cultural support for living in a way that is not based around work. State strategy has consistently aimed to destroy this, along with other aspects of class struggle and challenges to male supremacy and the nuclear family.

Pick your poison

Claimants unions were formed to break down the isolation often faced by the unwaged, but they weren't always successful in moving beyond a certain milieu. This was compounded by the fact that anti-work politics sometimes ran the risk of becoming anti-worker politics, perhaps reflecting the occasional involvement of ex-students who later became yuppies after their stint on the dole. Trying to find work out of necessity doesn't mean 'selling out' anymore than signing on. It's a choice of poisons. (And speaking of poison, I'll take a break now to read some job adverts in this week's Voice!)

Which brings us to continuity problems...if unwaged activists get jobs do they just move on? Is the whole separation between waged and unwaged becoming irrelevant? Particularly when the DSS has been forcing many claimants onto low-paid, part-time work and schemes, employers as well as the DSS need to be targeted.

The State continues to foster a division between respectable working people and lumpen scrounger types, summed up with the invocation of the "taxpayer", a word which appears ad nauseum in connection with the JSA. This of course ignores that the unwaged do pay taxes through VAT - and ignores the massive public expense of paying bureaucratic shitebags and snoopers cushy salaries for harassing claimants. To overcome marginalisation, we need to always stress that the goal of benefit cuts is not only social control of the unemployed, but driving wages down and intensifying pressure on the employed.

So, it's no surprise that a recent survey



'Work makes free' - entrance to Auschwitz

The Job Seekers

Allowance is due to come in October 1996, replacing Unemployment Benefit and Income Support. Both Invalidity Benefit and Sickness Benefit are being replaced by Incapacity Benefit. Next year will see the merging of the DSS and the Job Centre into one unit, run by the DSS.

✂ The Employment Office staff will be formed into "Back To Work" (BTW) teams - trying to match claimants with jobs each time they sign on. This is "Active Signing". If you refuse the shitwork they offer, it's bye-bye benefit.

✂ The DSS will have its own doctors - with unofficial quotas - examining people for eligibility to receive Incapacity Benefit. Those who 'fail' their test will be forced onto the restrictive JSA regime - enough to do more damage to anyone's health!

✂ After the first six months of unemployment, benefit will be means-tested. For married women (and quite a few men) who are unemployed, but living with working partners, this could be disastrous.

✂ In Reading, the JSA is already here as a pilot scheme called SBR - Stricter Benefit Regime. BTW teams are already being set up, to target 'long-term unem-

JSA Basics

played' (over six months). Other pilot schemes are planned for October 1995. Some features of the Jobseekers Allowance:

✂ Jobseekers' Directives will "enable advisers to direct jobseekers to improve their employability

through...attending a course to improve jobseeking skills or motivation, or taking steps to present themselves acceptably to employers." This has major implications for anyone who does not meet white, middle-class heterosexual standards of appearance and behaviour.

✂ Maximum penalty periods for not 'actively seeking work' or disobeying a Directive will be extended from two to 26 weeks. Currently, penalties are a 20%-40% cut in benefit. Under the new regime the whole lot can be cut. Those who left jobs or were sacked due to "misconduct" will also lose all benefit for 26 weeks. Access to Housing/Council tax benefit, free prescriptions, and Social Fund loans may be affected.

✂ Dismantling the adjudication service. "Labour market entitlement decisions" (work availability, active work seeking, failure to carry out JSA Directives) will devolve to the frontline dole staff. This will make appeals difficult by 'reducing the scope for claimants to play off ES frontline staff against adjudication officers.

What's OURS

("Time Squeeze" by Demos) reports that stress, longer hours, exhaustion and a range of stress-related illnesses have risen among the employed. Britain is the only country in the EC where the working week is actually increasing! The working week here now averages 43.4 hours, one hour more than 10 years ago. 1/5 of manual workers work 50 hours or more. Also, the free time of women workers has decreased 10% since the mid-80s.

Then, there's the people remaining in jobs they've been wanting (or needing) to leave because they can't get full dole for six months. Under the new regulations, they won't get anything. The harassment of claimants affects every area of working life - leading to speed-ups, stress, longer hours, and strengthening bosses and workplace hierarchies.

Some activists have suggested that the TUC meant to destroy the independent claimants movement in the 80's when they set up their own Unemployed Workers Centres, and directed local union branches not to support independent groups. The present day National Combine of Unemployed Workers Centres have been aligned with Labour Party policies and a "Right to Work" strategy.

The Oxford CU writes that "We believe that the Combine of Unemployed Workers Centres is a hollow attempt to control the unemployed and prevent self-organisation. We believe that there is a need to build an independent movement to protect the interests of claimants and the unemployed, and to challenge increasingly punitive anti-claimant legislation."

The wrong sort

When unwaged people have used TUC and Council funded centres in their own way, they've often been shut down. This happened to a centre in Edinburgh (see BA 7) when Labour-controlled Lothian Council objected to the Centre being used by anti-Poll tax activists and others they didn't like. A long occupation, nasty eviction, and ongoing battle resulted. The Centre now operates in exile from a church basement. But the unwaged group is still active and determined to reopen the Centre. Meanwhile, the vicar's mum is receiving threats from the police.

There's always been differences among groups organising on unwaged issues about whether to fight for "the right to work" or for better conditions as unwaged. CU literature speaks of "The Right to Live" as opposed to "The Right to Work." Though individual members might seek work, claimants unions stand against the compulsion to work.

The Federation advocated a Guaranteed Minimum Income. This income would be enough to enjoy a satisfying life; it would not be means-tested, restricted, or linked in any way with work and productivity. Other unwaged groups didn't push for particular policies, just giving the DHSS a hard time... or perhaps the abolition of waged labour! Saying we're entitled to the means of surviving and thriving - even if we're not hauling ass for some boss - strikes at the work ethic and its part in sustaining the present social order.

There was at one time a real difference between being a group of "unwaged" and a group of "unemployed workers". To say "unwaged" recognises that "unemployed" people - and women especially - often work very hard. Looking after children, elders, sick friends and relatives are only a few examples (doing *Bad Attitude* is another!) "Wageless Women" groups formed in some unwaged centres to take on these issues. They campaigned against cohabitation laws, for nurseries; held exhibitions and organised a London & Southeast Wageless Women conference.

They pointed out that unwaged women are not all claimants, and are often overlooked in claimants' campaigns. Islington Wageless women criticised their local group for basing their activities around the dole office, which can exclude many who don't sign on as unemployed. This also applies to the increasing numbers of claimants forced onto schemes.

According to IAGOU: "The poverty of the dole is a tool to enforce work... So instead of joining the campaigns for jobs, where the unwaged were treated as the 'reserve army' of the labour movement, IAGOU struggled to improve their conditions as unwaged people." But IAGOU adds that "the struggle was meant to go beyond merely improving conditions; it was meant to strike at the basic poverty of our class... The resources of this world that we have created have been stolen from us, and we can only get the means to a decent survival by selling our labour power... The abolition of labour is the task before us..."

The West Midlands Campaign Against Social Security Cuts (Claimants Fightback 1985) argued that 'higher giro is not enough' and "defending the benefits system is not enough". They suggest that technological changes result in less need for "productive" work. If productive tools and technology is the result of all our accumulated labours - now that productive technology is developed to do repetitive tasks done by people, everyone is entitled to the "fruit" of that development.

This touches on whether "Full Employment" is realistic or desirable, on the nature of the welfare state (it may have devel-

oped in concession to class struggle, but it is also there to control the poor); on whether work within capitalism can be desirable in itself, not just as a means to an income. Some groups will oppose ET and Jobby Schemes on grounds they don't pay a decent wage - but even if they paid union rates should claimants still be compelled to on them? When "Full Employment" has existed, it's usually been tied to some form of compulsion - or a war economy.

This clinging to the myth of full employment reflects the fact that most of the left is still attached to the idea that something called "society" exists apart from the conflicting interests of rulers and ruled, and everyone should "contribute" to it.

One 1980 leaflet, "The Full-Employment Funnies" points out that most work is actually unproductive and useless. Jobs connected with advertising, banking, insurance, bureaucracy, armaments, sales, only service capital and the state. "Whatever necessary productive and creative work that remained to be done... would be organised and distributed equally by all of us, amongst ourselves. Technology could be further applied to lessen the few nasty jobs that remain to be done. But we will control it - it won't control us."

Ridiculous idea!! Can never happen! Pull the other one dear, it'll play "Orgasm Addict"! Well, the state's strategy of destroying any economic base of autonomy also has an ideological counterpart - banishing revolutionary

ideas, possibilities and visions to cloud-cuckoo land. In the changes that have been occurring within capitalism since the mid-70's, the ruling classes have been steadily chipping away at any notions of entitlement, freedom and collectivity on the part of the lower orders. As we struggle for basics in a period of reaction and grasp at individual solutions, often defeat appears to be "common sense". But defeat is not irreversible.

And just how practical is the present state of affairs anyway? Less money and worse working conditions for the waged, growing impoverishment for the unwaged, forced labour... workfare and the workhouse. On the other hand, the Labour/lefty idea of a benevolent state indefinitely pumping money into the public sector and giving us all very nice well paid jobs is not particularly realistic either. Oh yes - a veritable paradise composed of civil servants and social workers, plus a few happy tradespeople to service them, awaits us if we vote Labour. What more can we want? And what would the IMF want? Cuts are not a Tory invention; they began under the Callaghan Labour government at the request of the IMF.

Some have argued that rejection of work is based on Western conditions of abundance. In other parts of the world food and necessity production remain labour intensive. This is true. But this argument ignores the fact that people have to work so hard there precisely because of capitalist development. And the more profits capital makes here, the more there is to invest in enslaving people in the "3rd World." It is not a "natural" result of "underdevelopment".

One WEENSY step to world revolution!

The international capitalist division of labour - which developed under colonialism - denies most of the world's population access to resources, including access to labour-saving tools. It is this together with sexual subordination within the family that results in a life of backbreaking labour for most of the world's women. And basically, we've got the same institutions pushing us to work harder for less. Destablising them by resisting forced labour is one *weensy* step towards bringing an end to global repression and austerity.

Which brings us to our immediate goal; to sabotage the JSA and IA and make them totally unworkable. In April '95 a conference met in Oxford to discuss revitalising claimants' resistance. People held differing opinions on work, the welfare state, full employment and the meaning of life, but were confident about the possibilities of working together to form new networks advancing the interests of the unwaged.

Among possibilities discussed was revitalising the National Claimants Federation; also

.....
cont'd on page 23



Getting By

Unless you're sure you have a "valid" reason, do not refuse to apply for any job they offer you - because they'll do you. If you get as far as an interview, turn up - the Job Centre will check. BUT - get creative with your application form and interview.

✗ Cite a criminal record on the application form: if you don't have one, make it up (but don't get carried away)

If there's space to talk about yourself, your interests & activities, you can really go to town! If its an official Job Centre form, don't look like you're taking the piss, but make yourself somehow unacceptable as a future employee. (Use your imagination)

✗ Earnestly inquire about health & safety standards, about unionisation in the workforce, about Equal Opportunities. Say you'd like to work where there are lots of other gay people. If they think you're a potential troublemaker they'll run a mile.

✗ In the interview, be slightly crap. Under the circumstances you won't seem out of place coming across as stressed, not-on-the-ball, accident-prone, or a bit weird.

Eat a lot of garlic before interviews!

✗ Employers use the Job Centre to advertise low-paid jobs, for free. But they're frequently sent people who are unsuitable. You can discourage employers from using the Job Centre by being deliberately unsuitable. With the

JSA the number of unsuitable candidates for these jobs will increase.

✗ Your rejection letter can be used to get you out of trouble with the Job Centre in the future. Collect them!

If they offer you a part-time job you don't want, you can refuse if its less than 24 hours a week.

✗ If you're looking for work on the Job Centre racks, they can't force you to apply for any job you ask about.

✗ If you sign-on late, never tell them you were sick - they'll say you weren't available for work.

✗✗✗ Being unemployed now is like a full-time job; a very low-paid one. The government wants to keep all our idle hands occupied, no matter what, just so long as we're not putting time & energy into seizing back control of our lives. They're scared that one day, they may wake up to find our hands round their necks!
from Reading Anarchists Box A 30 Silver St. Reading

Lesbians Talk Violent Relationships, edited by Tracy Chandler and Joelle Taylor, is the first book published in this country dealing with violence and abuse in lesbian relationships. The only other known book on the subject is **Naming the Violence** (Kerry Lobel, editor), published 1986 in the USA. **Lesbians Talk** is long overdue. The book discusses abusive lesbian relationships from a feminist perspective in clear, down-to-earth language, and offers valuable information and resources (drawing attention to the fact there isn't enough of them!). Here you'll find women's personal survival stories, a debunking of myths and stereotypes, and a critical look at the response of the lesbian community to abuse. BA interviewed Tracy Chandler about the book, what we can do about lesbian abuse... and the possibilities for achieving a 'true state of gorgeousness'.

T: I am kind of nervous about talking about things. Just because this book has been done people think "oh you're an expert" and I'm not, this just happened to me, I've been in this situation.

When we've done talks I say: this is a discussion, therefore I am participating. I won't tell you what to do.

BA: How do you define abuse? Why do you prefer to use abuse to battering?

T: It is important to recognise that abuse is not just about battering. There is also an emotional side, a sexual side which is also a real biggie. Basically, it is about misuse of power in a relationship, whether it's a one night stand or a long term relationship. Exploiting, manipulating and that kind of stuff. When I talk about my own experience I also try to say that I also allowed that to happen, that we have responsibility to ourselves.

You see, it happened quietly in a way. You

get to know a

woman,

the next

minute

you are

isolated

from your

friends

because they

apparently all

fancy you, it's not

because they like

you as a friend.

Therefore you

shouldn't talk to them

any more. 'It's upsetting

me'. Then you are isolated and you rely on

your lover for everything. You end up losing

yourself. It is something that you do allow to

happen. It's easy enough for it to creep up. I

guess I was lucky because I had a friend who

made me look at myself as well as my lover;

to take responsibility and say "I've got to get

out of this. I don't deserve this. I deserve to

be treated much better than this."

CARING AND SHARING AND ALL THAT SHIT!

BA: What's the difference between abuse in lesbian relationships and in heterosexual relationships?

T: I don't think there's that much difference when someone is causing someone else pain. That's the same across the board. I think there's differences in that there is an expectation for men to be violent. I don't think many straight women are that surprised when they come across violent men.

But in the lesbian community, particularly, it just smashes your rose-tinted glasses. It smashed mine anyway. I just thought 'lesbians don't do this to each other, I should be safe in this community!' And then you find out you're

not safe, you're not safe anywhere really. And that's a bit depressing. It's really disillusioning.

At the same time it made me realistic... stopped this fantasy thing about caring and sharing and the rest of it! So that stopped me getting hurt in the future, I don't have such high expectations of lesbians. I'm not going to relate differently to people because of their sexuality and their gender. In my own experience I've had more shit off of lesbians than off of straight men.

LESBIAN REFUGES

BA: Violence against women in heterosexual relationships-

ships is explained in terms of men's power coming from patriarchy; society is set up so men have this power so they can beat women up and abuse them in any way. How do we explain violence among lesbians?

T: At the end of the day society is full of shit and we take on that shit just as much as everybody else. And it's unrealistic to think otherwise, though I used to, 'we're lesbians therefore none of this shit is going to happen.' But it does. (Rozanne starts singing: *Lesbian! Lesbian! Every woman can be a Lesbian!*)

It is really difficult when you see it happening to someone you care about. Just because we haven't discussed it in the community, we don't know how to deal with it. It's like learning from scratch with no guidelines at all. All you can do is be there for them. At one time I would have got defensive myself, that it was a reflection on me, 'why am I allowing myself to be abused?' There is no way or recipe on how to deal with these situations, except talking about it first. That's probably the hardest bit, then it gets easier.

Having a lesbian refuge sounds like a really good idea when there's a lot of homophobia about. But it would be easily identifiable because the network is so small, and then how do you know the women working at the refuge for a start aren't abusers? It's easier when it's a gender thing.

BA: I think in the book someone said that if you're a straight woman in an abusive relationship you can go to a women's refuge. But

if you're a lesbian in an abusive relationship your lover might be running the refuge.

T: Exactly! Because I've known of women who are abusers who are refuge workers.

BA: You talked about alcoholism and lesbians in the book as well.

T: Women who are abused made excuses for their lovers 'oh, she

w a s

drunk and she's not normally like that.' And abusers also use it as an excuse, 'oh it happens when I'm drunk, it's not the real me.' Julie Bindel explains it really well in the book: "I don't believe that alcohol is the cause of it, I think that is a pathetic argument. I do believe that it is a disinhibitor, and that can mean that some women get out of hand."

BA: Sometimes when people talk about alcohol and abuse there seems to be a temperance lecture lurking behind it - you should keep off the devil's brew! Like abuse is a by-product of alcohol-



holism or

drinking, which is rubbish.

T: And highly offensive to some women who are alcoholics.

BA: You've given a few talks. What reactions have you had?

T: They have all been really positive, much more positive than I expected. We tried to be really inclusive in the book, to include as many women and identities as possible so I expected some criticism from there.

BA: What, do you mean, about including women who practice S&M and not getting into the usual arguments for or against?

T: We were adamant that this book was going to be about everybody; as far as possible, anyone could go into a bookshop and pick it up off the shelf. They would see themselves

there and not be excluded. We're all

capable of being

hurt, and to say that

somebody who

identifies as an

SM dyke doesn't

qualify for

being abused

is absolute

bullshit.

We didn't

want to

take

sides

because the

arguments have

always been so...

BA: Boring! Or circular, they go back and forth.

T: I've known too many politically correct women who have been abusers and that drives me mental. And they're the ones making judgements right left and centre about other women, it's just ridiculous. It's not as if we put on our leaflets, 'SM dykes contribute wherever you are!' We just didn't say 'SM dykes, fuck off!' I expected criticism, but I think it's sad as well that women are still stuck in that old argument and not opening their minds up. I remember all those arguments in the 80's about leather jackets, it ignores the fact that a woman can be wearing Laura Ashley and still be a violent abuser or head fucker!

'LESBIAN FRIENDLY'?

BA: Once the book is out people are much more open to talk about abusive lesbian relationships.

T: Some papers, in the name of being 'lesbian friendly' didn't want to touch it, they just wanted to have positive side of lesbian style, trendy, lipstick lesbians and that sort of thing. Even, the gay press was like that for a while. We had lots of trouble trying to get publicity and to get people to contribute.

BA: Have you had any indication that abusive lesbian relationships have been taken up by the groups like Women's Aid or women's help lines?

T: We spoke to a woman from Women's Aid and she said that it wasn't included in their training. We also talked to Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, and they said that they will now include it in their training. We have sent leaflets out to all Woman's Aid groups. It would be simple because it doesn't have to be a whole separate set of training about lesbians, just include the fact that lesbians, as well as heterosexual women, experience abuse and violence.

BA: You said in one of your talks that anyone can write a book. How?

T: I can write fiction where you can get away with murder, but it's different when it comes to non-fiction! Joelle's really good at it, she puts things into language very well. My writing is sometimes how I speak, which is not really 'proper'!

If anyone has an idea there should be a book about something, they should go for it. All I did was describe my ideas, I said that I wanted to write a book about lesbian relationships because there isn't one and there needs to be one, and dashed it off to lots of publishers. They all wrote back saying no. Then I got letter from Scarlet saying that they would be interested.

At that stage I thought: God, they are taking me seriously. What am I gonna do? By that time I met Joelle... I read her stuff in *Lesbian London*, she writes really well so I decided to do it with her. We complemented each other and we're on the same wavelength.

I think, people who've got ideas should just do it. There's nothing to lose by writing to people and asking: 'what do you think about this?'

GET RID OF HER!

BA: What is your advice to women who are in abusive relationships?

T: What is yours?

BA: Get rid of her.

T: And that's coming from you thinking she's got to look after herself, she's got to get of that relationship.

BA: When I've been in relationships that were undermining - I wouldn't exactly call them abusive - I kept in them out of insecurity. I thought this person really does care for me and felt convinced that she'd be the only who would and if this relationship didn't work out for me I'd have nothing. If someone said to me, 'get rid of her, she's a bitch, you're much too good for her' and all those things which we've all heard, it doesn't sink in really because I'd still want to hang on to it in hope it gets better.

T: And your partner can also exploit that as well without you even realising, I know my partner did. She isolated me but I also isolated myself because I doubted what my friends said to me... this woman obviously loved me, which to me meant she saw everything about me and was really the one to judge me. It didn't matter about their opinions because they were all suspect. So it's really easy to get exploited that way. Now I avoid judgemental people.

But I would always say, 'get out of it'. I don't know anyone who is now in what I can see as an abusive relationship, but I think if I did I would tell them to get out and just be as blunt as possible. She may turn away from me, but at least I can let her know I'll always be there for her, and that she has the right to be treated with respect. We all come to our senses eventually, I did, as do many women. Honesty means taking risks. I woke up because my friend kept telling me, 'you deserve better than this, get out!'

PROTECTING OURSELVES

BA: What complications do lesbians face when children are involved?

T: They are often denied access by 'natural' mother. With the Children's Act there may be a chance, but it hasn't been tested for lesbian

relationships. Then you've got to deal with the homophobia of the judge, the magistrate... It's abusive using a child to get at somebody. It will happen more as more lesbians have children.

The children will be used, and the situation that lesbians who don't have any

recourse in the law, is going to be exploited. A man would have no trouble seeing his child in most cases. I think that's another illusion we have to confront: 'oh lesbian motherhood, it's really lovely, oh brilliant'

What shit! I'm not the only lesbian denied access to her daughter, and she's my daughter. And lesbians find that really difficult to deal with: 'you didn't give birth to her, you're not really her mother, so what're you getting so upset about?' It was only my real close friends who saw what I was going through and realised how painful it was. But the community response was 'you're not her mother'. But I was losing a child, it was a real loss.

With more lesbians having children, we really need to look at the downside, as well as the joys. This means showing our love by ensuring we protect ourselves. What is going to happen if and when relationship breaks down? Talk, women!

BA: Someone said that when we talk about lesbian visibility we should talk about the shitty side of being lesbians as well as being proud. That is a part of lesbian visibility as well, talking about abuse in the context about community responsibility.

T: It is much more helpful to say this shit comes along with it, than to say 'we'll be fine in the lesbian community, we all look after each other, we are all sisters' It's such a pile

of rubbish and it's silencing... 'these things don't happen in lesbian communities, it's my fault' It's not!

When we started talking about abuse to women, they say 'I had this once in a relationship,

walk. When I go out with dykes in the evening and I get dressed up and I start mincing like this, I am femme, glamorous and proud. It also emphasises my power, which some unimaginative dykes assume isn't there because of how I look. And I find butch dykes desirable, only problem is that well-mannered girls are so hard to come by!

BA: Is there anything else you'd like to add that you haven't had a chance to say in other interviews?

T: I think the only way lesbians can achieve a true state of gorgeousness is if we start confronting the shit, bring it out of the closet, and, after going through it because everyone likes to talk about their shit 'oh I had a pooh this morning, oh I haven't had a pooh for days, I feel terrible', flush it down the toilet. So that's my words of wisdom.

BA: A true state of gorgeousness!

T: It's true... untapped wealth, we really are. Gay boys have so much access to treasures and pleasures, Old Compton St, almost all Soho, clubs, pubs and poodle parlours.. What have we got? We have so much talent, skills, creativity... and nowhere to flaunt it. Call me an ol' fashioned anarchist, but a bite of the apple would be refreshing to a lot of hungry gals out there!

Rozanne & Sanja

Lesbians Talk Violent Relationships is published by Scarlet Press

Contacts:

Pain and Strength c/o London Women's Centre, Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2B 4AU

Survivors of Abusive Lesbian Relationships c/o West Hampstead Women's Centre, 55 Hemstal Rd, London NW6 (0171-328-7389)

Survivors of Lesbian Abuse Helpline (0171-328-7389) Thursdays 7 - 9 PM

Women Against Fundamentalism Journal 6 1995

Essential reading on women's struggles against religious fundamentalism and for sexual and political autonomy across the world

this issue

debate section on secularism

Tariq Modood defends the Church of England, Clara Connolly replies, Homi Bhabha rethinks secularism

other articles include

continuing debate on the meaning of fundamentalism, anti-racism in Britain, reclaiming secular education,

plus

the dangers posed by Christian fundamentalism, Palestinian feminists oppose family honour murders, Catholics for a Free Choice speak out, letters from Algeria and Turkey

reviews, news, campaigns & more

Price £3.60 Annual Subscription £7 (p&p inclusive) Affiliation £10 (unwaged), £15 (waged), £20 (organisation) UK only. Back issues of WAF5 also available.

Contact WAF

**129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7 7QG
tel: 0171 272 6563 fax: 0171 561 0191**

Beijing Bollocks, cont'd from pg. 9

conference site, to a small tourist centre 54 km away. This, coupled with the growing fears of customs and censorship checks at entry points to China and government censorship of the proposed daily NGO newspaper led to anxious faxes sent across the world. But the idea of forcing a boycott was fiercely resisted by many women's groups, large and small, and the new venue accepted after the announcement of so-called 'major concessions' by the US based NGO Forum representative. In actuality the new site was half built, with no venue adequate for a plenary session, no disabled access and security police storming sessions in attempts to confiscate materials.

Let'em go shopping!

The lead up to the conference will undoubtedly have provided some space for debate amongst Chinese women. However, their participation was severely restricted. The COC envisaged Chinese participation in the NGO Forum as comprising regional handicraft stalls and a 10-day shopping gala. All Chinese participants were chosen by the COC; those

attending could not be critical of the government or official policies. Women known to be dissidents were placed under surveillance, subject to intimidation or detained; this is now standard practice in the weeks before important national or international meetings. In the days preceding the event, hundreds of thousands of migrants and homeless people were cleared from the streets of Beijing. At no stage has been no public questioning of the impact of the event on local people.

Repression on an expense account

A statement explaining why the War Resisters International Women's Working Group would be boycotting the conference stated: "the conference will act as no more than an extremely expensive and cynical exercise legitimating the repressive regime in China and similar regimes elsewhere. The conference will not benefit women in China, and will most likely increase their suffering."

Prior to the conference, the opportunity to dynamically and critically discuss and analyse the relationship of women's movements internationally to the UN process has

been ignored. Instead, many women have opted to invest vital resources in the chance to be part of the biggest UN conference in this, its 50th anniversary year.

The UN was established at the end of World War II. Fifty years after the dismantling of the Nazi state, the summer of 1995 has witnessed thousands of women activists meeting to discuss women's rights in a country where women are routinely detained and tortured for their beliefs; where birth control results in infanticide and forced sterilisation; where the policy of eugenics is enshrined in the law and freedom of association is unknown. And they call this progress.

★ ★ ★ ★

BA Postscript: Beijing Bollocks has come and gone. Here are some highlights, and we're not talking about Hillary Clinton's hair!

Agents raided a Tibetan workshop 4 Sept, tried to confiscate a video but were met by fierce resistance. At other meetings participants asked to disperse, materials and equipment confiscated. Info in Chinese was removed from the lesbian tent.

Women in Black stood in protest against violence against women in war. The demo was disrupted by officials, but more than 1,000 women stood around the protesters to obstruct the agents.

The next day a large anti-nuclear demo took

place which included Korean and Japanese women protesting against Chinese nuclear testing as well as Asian Pacific women protesting French testing. Due to protest, there was no hassle this time. Other demonstrations included lesbians, Bosnian, Indian, Laotian, and Muslim women.

Given that the Chinese government hopes to eliminate people with disabilities completely, crap access was no surprise! Hundreds of women with disabilities attended. Their assigned tent was in a remote hilly, muddy area, moved after protest five days into the conference. Almost all workshops — including those about disability — were in buildings with no elevators or ramps. Chinese "volunteers" lifted wheelchairs as many as 100 steps. They were only available for brief intervals.

Perhaps the final word came from a coalition of women united against Structural Adjustment Programmes. These are managed by international financial institutions to service debts of "Third World" countries, resulting in the destruction of communal land access and food production, disease, massive poverty and starvation.

"We declare that this system...cannot be ended by the rulers of the world, who are themselves in the forefront of implementing World Bank Policies. It can only be ended by an international mass movement from below."

Info: National Women's Network

I joined the 3rd annual National March Against Child Sexual Abuse 9th September 1995. This was a day of visibility to highlight the prevalence of child abuse. Children marched with us, small bodies dwarfed by large, baggy T-shirts bearing one world - survivor. Children saw us.

The rally at Nelson's Column began by remembering and honouring those of us who have not survived, those who have died at the hands of their abusers, or through suicide. Though it is society's tradition to remember the dead with a minute's silence, that tradition held no place with us.

Silence is lethal. Silence gives abusers their power to beat and rape children, to penetrate their bodies and also their minds. Silence is the fear that controls and keeps families within their cloaks of respectability; silence binds those who may observe but do not want to see.

We remembered with a minute's total, goddam, hellraising, noise. With whistles,

SHOUT against family values

shouts, howls, we paid respect to the dead. As Lauren Wright Douglas said: "if every molested child, and every adult who was molested as a child were to cry out at exactly the same time... the sound of their rage would deafen the world."

The rally provided an open platform. It took courage to climb that platform and speak, but they did — male, female, black, Asian, white, Jewish — for survivors of childhood abuse are everywhere, across all cultures and societies. Mothers of survivors gave their voice. A nine year old child gave her experience of sexual abuse, and her hope that her abuser would be imprisoned. We shared a sense of pride

for that violated girl who had not been ushered and hushed into the dark corners of silence but empowered to march through London protesting her outrage.

The media did not hear or see us that day. We received

no news coverage. Children have been murdered and molested, taken from their bikes, their playing fields, their gardens. The media gave us their faces. But they have brought forth the lore that children are safest kept within their homes.

Yes, the streets, the parks, contain rapists and murderers. But the most dangerous place for children is the home, the so, so sacred family. Far more children are penetrated in the home by the hands, penises, weapons of

family members or trusted adults than by strangers.

Know of our existence, know what the reality of 'family values' can mean. When the government penalises single parents, when local councils cut funding to a refuge or voluntary helpline, know of our existence. Consider us as you read statistics of teenage pregnancies, think of how those girls just might have got pregnant. Think of us when the courts fail to sentence an abuser, understand how this shuts more children within their own private prison of silence. Know of our existence when you pass by the cold, homeless teenage runaway on the same streets where we marched that day.

Jody Virago

It takes one dumb animal to think of this ad!

I know I'm not the only woman to be disgusted at the way women's bodies are used to sell everything from cars to chocolate, but am I the only one to be offended by the use of both naked women and other profoundly sexist imagery used by anti-fur campaigners, such as Respect and PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)?

A couple of examples: Respect have one poster which shows a woman wearing a fur hat, a fox's corpse around her neck, and the slogan, 'One fur hat. Two spoilt bitches'. PETA on the other hand, are currently encouraging their supporters world-wide to strip off and carry banners proclaiming they would 'rather go naked than wear fur' (unsurprisingly, the vast majority of those taking up the invitation and thus appearing in their publicity seem to be female). Accompanying this campaign we find posters depicting several different 'supermodels' plus Kim Basinger, all 'stripping for the animals' (PETA's phrase).

Women are capable of doing (and actually do) a fuck of a lot more for animal rights than taking off their clothes — in these examples, and more, women are insulted in a way no man can be and portrayed as little more than sex objects. We do not have to take off our clothes to make a point or to further a cause — that is far from being the only power that women have.

Women who do wear fur are supporting a murderous and barbaric trade, but to target these women as 'bitches' or 'hookers' is inexcusable. There is no merit in liberating one oppressed group whilst reinforcing the oppression of another, I don't care how effective the campaign is. The rights of animals, women and other human beings are inseparable — the liberation of one cannot be achieved without the liberation of the others. It is in the interest of this patriarchal and capitalist society to deny these rights. Until such single-issue campaigns cease to ignore the wider issues, true

liberation whether it be of non human or human animals will remain as far off as ever, Animal rights? YES — but not by any means necessary.

If you want to get involved in anti-fur stuff in London, London Anti-Fur Campaign are picketing London fur shops regularly (they've already closed down a couple!). Info from 0171 281 5512.



Patricia Powell

Set in late 70's Jamaica, Patricia Powell's latest novel *A Small Gathering of Bones* describes the break-up of Nevin and Dale's relationship - meanwhile Dale's close friend and ex-lover Ian is stricken by a mysterious illness. It is a stark, vivid and emotional rendering of the gay community, the developing AIDS crisis and family conflict. Rozanne from BA had a chat with her about gay life in Jamaica and the USA, coming out, writing, and related topics.



Patricia Powell was born in 1966 in Manchester, Jamaica, and emigrated to the USA when she was 16. She started writing at University when she was 20: "My first began as a short story in a creative writing class and it never stopped for two years. This became *Me Dying Trial*, about a Jamaican family that immigrates to the US. It features a mother and daughter relationship, with a gay son who is not accepted by the mother.

A Small Gathering began after the funeral of a friend who died of AIDS: "I was thinking about what his life would have been like if he'd been living in Jamaica during the '70s, what kind of community he could have had and how they would have responded to his illness. So it's mostly fiction but reconstructed, based on a few things that I remembered about people that I had known."

Patricia had problems getting published because she wrote in Jamaican patois: "Heinemann was the only publisher who would take it as it is. In the States they wanted me to keep the dialect in the dialogue only, but the narration would strictly be standard English. But people don't make those kinds of separations when they talk or think. I was really determined, because I was writing about particular people in a particular region. I was making a decision about preserving the language of those people and that was really important."

She has been back to Jamaica on several short visits. "When I was there two years ago they were revising their penal code. There was a lot of discussion about 'sodomy' and what constitutes rape. There was supposed to be a gay march - I don't know who organised it - and on the day of the march the road was full up with people with machetes. Based on that one can say the situation hasn't improved since the '70s. I guess one thing you can say that has come out of the newspaper coverage of that incident is that people are probably talking more about it, so it's not surrounded by total silence."

In the book gay men do have places to meet and some kind of social network. Did

something like that exist for lesbians?

"It's like anywhere - it's the male sexuality that matters and I knew of a couple of bars but I think they were bars for everybody. They were not specifically for women. There were lots of private parties... I don't know if there is specifically a lesbian community, a cohesive network of people who get together and do stuff."

But Patricia herself had a very positive experience coming out in Jamaica. "I was concerned, but I grew up in an environment where it was really sort of OK. I grew up with my great-aunt and she had a business. She knew lots of different people. I went to see a psychiatrist because I didn't understand myself, not because I was depressed or anything. And she was great. I remember she said 'Oh, that's wonderful, now just go and find yourself a girlfriend!' Which I did. I think I was very lucky!"

Writing from the point of view of a gay man is rare among women and particularly lesbian writers. But Patricia actually finds it easier to do than writing about women.

"Men's lives, their sex lives, everything about them is more available than women's lives."

It's unfortunate, but it's very easy to do, actually. I have a hard time writing about women's lives. I remember when I was growing up the men or the boys were doing more exciting things, the things I wanted to do. I have to work very hard to take them out of the roles I see. But I want to do more of that."

Patricia also feels that writing as a male character can have a political impact:

"I was telling this to my class - if more women write from the point of view of men maybe we can make them more sane people. Not like the images of tough men, but really sensitive guys. We could let them make decisions or put them in situations that are not really expected of men. I hope to begin to recreate a new image of men. Do you think that would work?"

Patricia's new book however will feature a female protagonist - in drag!

"This book I'm working on is set in the 19th

century. It's about the Chinese in Jamaica who immigrated right after slavery. It's also about a woman who lives in Jamaica as a man because they weren't allowing Chinese women in. She travels from China to Jamaica. I was thinking: how am I gonna get her on this boat with all these immigrants and all of these shipmen without them raping her and eating her up? I thought the only way I could do this is put her in men's clothing. So she sort of lives like that afterward... but it's like that with writing fiction about women set back in that period when there's so much sexual division. You don't want them to be in the same role as usual so there has to be a sort of cross-gendering."

What of the female characters in *A Small Gathering*? They seem to appear mainly as mothers and rejectors of gay men. Ian's sister is supportive, but she's there only in the end. And there were only a couple of references to lesbians in passing conversation - the story of a teacher who didn't get married and lived with her 'friend'. I wondered why we didn't hear more from them.

"I imagine I'll have many people say 'You have horrible mothers!' And Mrs. Kaysen is really a tough one. But she didn't like Ian, and she made no bones about it... I didn't want them to be the Mother, the ever-loving, ever-caring kind of Mother because they weren't. I knew many mothers who were mothers but they hated it, and they didn't necessarily like their kids...people were married, but they didn't necessarily like being married. I wanted to show perhaps - and I may or may not have been effective in doing that - that they're not necessarily into what they're doing. And readers don't always expect that from mothers."

I think Ian had a myth or fantasy about what he thinks a mother should have been; it could have been because of his personality; it could have been because he was very sick and he needed her more than ever. And it could have been because he came out very early and she rejected him. I think that he never let it go, and at some point you have to

I think about a character like Alexander who has a wife and he has boyfriends on the side. But no one really critiques that kind of hypocrisy, it's sort of OK. But Mrs. Kaysen's total rejection of her son is more of a problem. We reward men for things we don't always reward women for. It's just a double standard.

There are many married men in Jamaica who have boys on the side. And I think women do it as well. There was this really good article about it in an international book of gay writing, by Makeda Silvera, a Canadian-Jamaican writer, called "Sodomites and Man-Royals" - which are names given to lesbians. The family thing is not working. That's why so many people have these other

*On sodomites,
man-royals,
and crossing genders*

partners on the side.

At a reading a woman said to me, 'Don't you know that a lot of gay men are killed by their lovers?' And I knew what she was talking about, but I think it was a way of dismissing homophobia by saying you're the ones who kill each other. It's the same thing - the man who is openly gay, who rejects family stuff, is more likely to be killed by somebody who is too afraid to come out.

I don't know how a gay rights movement would start in Jamaica. Perhaps the book will contribute, and this scene of people lining up to kill gay pride marchers; perhaps this will start the dialogue. But it's just like everywhere. There are very homophobic people always pulling this religion thing. And there are people who are sort of supportive."

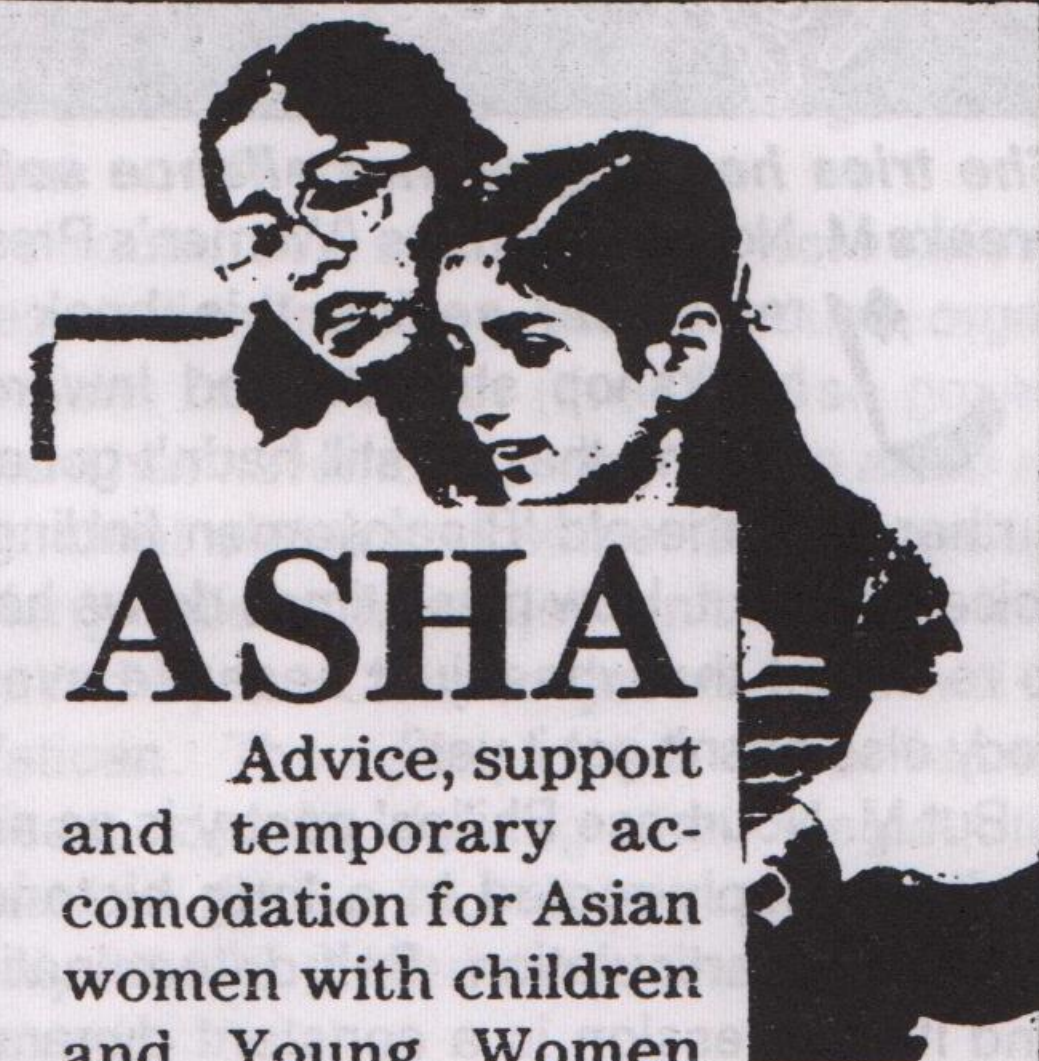
And we both noted that there has been a rise in the US of fundamentalist Christianity which promotes homophobia.

You know what I've just found out - and I don't know how much is accurate. In the States it used to be legal for a person to kill a gay man who came on to them! It was on the books that if you killed or assaulted that person it was fine, it was like self-defence! You know, men always talk like that: 'If he ever looked at me that way, I would just rip out my gun and BLAM-BLAM'. And it's only just been changed!"

How interesting, I said, particularly when it has never been OK for a woman to kill a guy who rapes her!

"Absolutely - she's the one who's on trial... And I wonder if there's a similar law for a woman who is accosted by a lesbian."

I knew of no such law myself, but suggested that if it exists anywhere, it just might be in the Criminal Justice Act! *



ASHA

Advice, support and temporary accommodation for Asian women with children and Young Women suffering from violence or threat of violence.

27 Santley St, London SW4 7QF.
071 737 5901 or 274 8854 (ansaphone).

BOOKS

Pearls of Passion: A Treasure of Lesbian Erotica ed. C. Allyson Lee & Makeda Silvera, Sister Vision Press, '95

The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writing by Asian and Pacific Islander Lesbian and Bisexual Women ed. Sharon Lim-Hung, Sister Vision Press '94

Resist! essays against a homophobic culture ed. Mona Oikawa, Dionne Falconer, & Ann Decter, Women's Press, '94

All distributed by Turnaround

These all seem like thoroughly worthwhile projects. I was particularly intrigued by the stern yellow, black and red cover of *Resist!*; I was looking forward to some hefty soul-stirring stuff about tackling the hetero-archy. Alas, it was not to be.

Pearls of Passion and *The Very Inside* were both produced by Sister Vision Press, a Canadian Black women and women of colour press whose catalogue I'd like to have a flick through, so impressed was I by these two books. Erotica is a tricky genre, particularly for the politically conscious lesbian world. What makes me wet in fantasy bears no resemblance to what I might choose to play at with real people. Similarly, the disconnected, image-driven text of sexually stimulating material can bear little resemblance to the coherent descriptive narrative of good storytelling. It seems we're left an uneasy choice between writing something sexually exciting and writing a good story. *Pearls of Passion* manages to offer both: 'badly' written sexy pieces, a few of which chuck political principles to the wall in favour of a good wet time

(although no hard-core S/M) and good narratives providing role models: realistic reflections of life. Even the poetry can be sexy! In erotic collections you usually just get quite nice poetry but Chystos' "We Pretended She was a Young Boy" really gets me going.

A word of warning. I think it's clear from the cover, which isn't splattered with labels saying 'women of colour only', that Sister Vision Press would like white women to spend all their money on these sweeties but when I recommended the book to a white friend she was nervous of exploiting black sexuality by enjoying our erotica. It's important for white women to acknowledge our sexiness with proper respect and I believe reading our writing can only promote this respect. You can always wrap the book in a copy of *Bad Attitude* when you take it to the till. Whatever, invest your money in us.

The only grumble I have about *Pearls of Passion* is that none of the artists are credited. I would particularly like to know who drew p. 75. Especially if it's a self-portrait.

Still n' all, the erotic poem I liked best was "in my sleep" by Indigo Chih-Lien Some from *Very Inside* - hilarious! as well as sexy. This is a wonderful book: a thick hefty treasure-trove of essays, stories, poetry and pictures by a particular group of women of colour. Lovingly, Ann Yuri Uyeda ("All at Once, All Together") records the set-backs and dissensions at the

to find collected the work of so many women from a supposedly small segment of the lesbian and bisexual women of colour community, honestly celebrating and questioning so many aspects of family, cultural loyalties and the endless hunt for the perfect girlfriend.

owed by our American sisters. Why, then, are these essays irritating instead of inspiring?

The editor's (very brief) introduction states "It is often presumed that theory is only produced by academics", leading us to hope for a book from grass-roots activists against het-

What Gets Me Wet

Enjoying these two magnificent collections makes the failure of *Resist!* all the more disappointing. The authors of this collection must be praised for giving voice to so many different sections of the community: black/white/jewish/able-bodied/disabled. It's also great to see Canadian women doing it for themselves, like us they are often over-shad-

erosexism. Yet a couple of these essays are so high-brow that even I felt intimidated by the language, and I'm starting a PhD soon! Secondly, these are mostly not essays about resistance at all but personal accounts of the suffering caused by homophobia. Some make me mutter "stop whining" and others, such as "pieces de resistance" by Sheila Gilholy and Barbara Findlay are moving but not a single one inspired me to resist the homophobia I encounter or offered me any new insight into the homophobic super-culture.

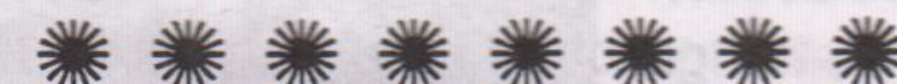
This is the more infuriating in that many of the essays mention areas of life where homophobia needs to be exposed and discussed: the medical profession, therapy, language, pornography/erotica, the family.

Well, gals. It just goes to show how important good editing is. And now I must go and lie down quietly for a minute with *Pearls of Passion*.

Anita Naoko Pilgrim



The Pearl of Passion on pg. 75!



APHRODITE

Sex Toys for the Discerning Women

- * Produced by women for women.
- * Packed with items to add sparkle to your sex life.
- * Ideas for that perfect present.
- * 3rd. successful year.

Send £2 (fully refundable on 1st. order) to APHRODITE, P.O. BOX 47, MANCHESTER. M21 8EJ.

1989 Asian Pacific Lesbian Network Retreat ('diversity is not divisive'). Donna Suyuko Tanigawa writes a passionate diatribe against Standard English. Ami R. Mattison's story starts "My lover has a lover hose lover is Alissa". The only thing this book lacks is a proper index. It's a real enlightenment

TRYING HER TONGUE

She tries her tongue, her silence softly breaks M. Nourbese Philips (Women's Press)

I remember seeing this book on bookshop shelves and inwardly sighing that we still hadn't got any further than the old 'Blackwomen finding a voice' chestnut. How many times do we have to re-invent the wheel just because everybody else hasn't got it yet?

But M. Nourbese Philips' poetry is as new as it is deeply-rooted in a long historical process of articulation. Self-determination and its expression is a constant dynamic. This poetry is creating a language to document it even as it moves forward. It is a language that draws on the spoken patterns and the way Black folk talk, that is also rooted in the poet's experience as a woman. She uses specific images from the Caribbean, from 'Stateside, England, Canada' to illustrate her search for her daughter around the world, ref-

erencing a Blackwoman's presence in the suburbs of the North, the cocoa hills of the woodlands and the sea that connects and divides everything.

Her poetry is both a statement of a self as Blackwoman and an act of linguistic transformation, wresting language from the tongue of the oppressor and using it as an instrument of revolution. Her poetry is an exploration of the nature and structure of language, towards a revolutionary understanding of it as a means of transformation. M. Nourbese Philips names 'language (as)... one of the most important sites of struggle'. Fulfilling a role she describes of the poet as 'teller' of the life of the tribe, she is reclaiming and integrating the experience of slavery in order to transcend it. This is poetry - communicating truth in the most beautiful way possible.

Jyoti Grech

Pulling no punches

I hear you snigger when I say 'Hump', Sue Napolito begins one of her poems in a low, 'Gothic' voice. "To be straight is to be good", she tells us, summing up with lovely irony a whole ethos of our society. In challenging this stricture, Sue is courageously vulnerable. She states how long she kept her body hidden in swathes of clothes, how long it took her to wear a swimming costume in public and to say the word 'hump'. She now asserts, 'This body is where I live my life.'

Sue's poetry is personal and political, a combination I find powerful. When a non-disabled person comments over her head, 'Hasn't she got a lovely smile?' Sue replies, 'I can curl my lip and snarl', throwing in for good measure that she 'has had hairy amputations for over twenty years'.

Sue is strong, clear and funny. She's a rabble-rouser who gently takes an audience by the scruff and somehow gets us chanting 'Break the Rules'. She's positive, witty and acute, a powerful performer who isn't afraid to tackle tender intimate personal issues.

Sue uses experiences from her own life and analyses them. Take her monologue about the struggle to fulfil her 'latest wild idea' - to bath independently. A salesman 'dripping with

sales patter' takes the bath (which won't fit through the front door) into her back garden. She has to put up with 'ho-ho jokes' about people passing on a Number 11 bus and him saying he wants to be a guest at the party when she finally gets in. However, Sue remarks dryly, 'It's important to be polite when you're disabled, you know.'

The non-disabled salesman is rude and invasive, asking, like so many others, for an explanation of her life story. However, Sue needs his information because the woman who usually lifts her in and out of the bath is pregnant (and Sue doesn't want her to have a miscarriage!)

The bath Sue needs costs £2000 (typical rip-off). She laments the age it takes to get an assessment by the Social Services and that if they decide it's not needed - 'after all, they're the experts' - Sue would be faced with trying to raise the money.

Sue delivers this monologue with so much irony and humour it is impossible for her audience not to laugh and yet the political points are delivered with serious impact. As Sue concludes, 'This is the sort of thing you have to put up with if you're disabled and want to take a bath.'

I could go on with more examples of Sue's punchy, ironic handling, her appropriate rhythm, intonation, accurate choice of words, metaphors, images, the way she takes you into the atmosphere of a scene in a couple of lines. Find out for yourselves by booking her for a performance and/or workshop.

Sue Napolitano can be contacted on 0161 881 4660, 14 Clovelly Rd, Chorlton, Manchester M21 2XW.

Alison Silverwood

(First published in *Disability Arts Magazine*)

A first in many ways, *Talking Black: Lesbians of African and Asian Descent Speak Out* (Valerie Mason-John, editor) looks at the facets of black lesbian experience in the UK. In BA 7 we described its publication as 'an important event for all women'. Well, the book was to become an event very soon, when journalist Megan Radclyffe slammed it in London listings mag *Time Out*. Her review did not actually contain any constructive criticism, but vociferously objected to black lesbians having a space or voice(es) of their own at all. This was deemed 'racist' and offensive to her as a white lesbian. Both white and black lesbians were angry that such reactionary rubbish was printed under the guise of criticism. After much discussion Lesbian Avengers held a demonstration at the TO offices. **Mrittika Datta** discusses some issues raised by the action.

Avenging "Talking Black"

In April's action at *Time Out*, the Lesbian Avengers protested against Megan Radclyffe's racist review of *Talking Black*. The protest attracted some curiosity from the media, the lesbian and gay community, and passers-by. It also brought to the foreground some crucial issues within the Avengers, who found themselves split in three: some named the review racist, some didn't, others were unsure; some wanted an action, some didn't, others were scared or confused. Presumably, all agreed black-white unity would be a nice thing. But on what terms?

That morning, an interviewer from GLR asked me about our attempt to censor *Time Out*. I shifted the focus to the review's conflating of black voices. Pushed further by the interviewer, I said that TO was censoring us under the guise of free speech.

Later, I thought about ways in which the talking space is often assumed to be continuous, whole, so that a provisional safe space is seen as oppressive to that whole. But the

"whole" itself is constructed, exclusive — that black people are overwhelmingly denied a voice there. I also thought about the familiar rush to label a challenge as "censorship" when its content becomes too relevant; the error in pretending that free speech ends with an initial statement and can't extend to the reply or the intervention.

When people wanted us to criticise the content of the review without shaking its right to appear in the first place, when they wanted balance and simultaneous existence, they were denying that TO's gay section ought to be a celebratory space for black (as much as for white) lesbians; they were also refusing to hear that racism and anti-racism aren't equivalent or parallel.

So, in what terms are black lesbians speaking? When we band with the Avengers (an overwhelmingly white group), when we demand to speak and be seen in the lesbian and gay, feminist or mainstream media, get

Never Mind the Bollocks: Women Rewrite Rock, Amy Raphael (Virago). A selection of women artists talk about their lives and music. It starts from the premise that punk first encouraged a lot of women to get into music by destroying the male muso's mystique, though Raphael also looks to a roll-call of influential women rockers.

Individual chapters are more or less interesting according to who is speaking, but I liked Courtney Love talking about the Jungian archetype of the mad-woman; it made sense to hear that Bjork was raised by hippies; and Gina Birch (of the Raincoats) was moving on the thrill of possibility which punk briefly ignited. The artists give their accounts as a monologue in answer to unseen questions, which is a bit mysterious. But all in all, fairly encouraging.

Katy

And here's a nice pic from the book of Debbie Smith and Sonya Aurora Madan of Echobelly.



ourselves commissioned by a press like Cassell to do the first or the second book by and about black lesbians...All these actions bring us slap-bang up against racism; issues start to be thrashed out. We grasp or present our black identities often with a pride that cuts itself off from the mainstream.

Often we're tired of the black/white duality created and defined from a white perspective

and aim to act out our blackness or our various identities irrespective of that angle and the demand for 'balance'. We create ourselves in images, familiar, perhaps shocking, that are interruptions into racism and beyond the parameters of its imagination. So do some white women. The question is, how can we find more and more ways to share all this work, discuss it, see it, flaunt it, enjoy it?



short

Parable of the Sower Octavia Butler (Women's Press) £6.99. The latest by one of the few black women writing in the white male domain of fantasy/science fiction. In 2024 Lauren lives in a walled community surrounded by violence. When the walls can no longer protect them, she sets off on foot along California's coastal highway, writing and teaching bits of philosophy that will be the basis of a new community.

The excerpts from Lauren's *Book of the Living* were a load of New Age mish-mash, and I was uneasy with some of the political and religious themes. But that was put aside in the face of Butler's powerful story-telling. Not as good as her previous work (*Kindred*, *Mind of my Mind*) but still an excellent read so long as you skip the quotations from Lauren's bible beginning each chapter!

Blackwater Kristin Eckman (Chatto, £8.99) A hefty thriller by a Swedish Barbara Vine, which concentrates on character and motivation as well as 'whodunnit'. Annie arrives with her daughter to meet her boyfriend at a commune in the middle of the Northern forests. He isn't there to meet her, and she finds instead a couple of corpses in a tent. Years later she sees who she believes to be the killer snogging with her grown-up daughter.

After an intriguing beginning the book later gets muddled and disjointed. but worth it for the atmosphere she conveys of rural Lapland

Bombay Talkie Ameena Weir (Serpents Tail, £9.99) Sabah flits among the Indian upper classes of London, Paris and New York. There's some extremely sharp segments — especially the opening bit where

Sabah dodges sidewalk harassment. But the book didn't hold together.

The Crooked Line, Ismat Chughtai (Heinemann, £6.99) First published in 1944. A rebellious young woman grows up in a large Muslim Indian household in the 1920s. The book evokes a neglected, angry childhood. Best is the picture of young (unfulfilled) lesbian passion when Shamman enters boarding school. It puts the classic English chronicles of schoolgirl lust like *Olivia* in the shade! But the ups and mostly downs of Shamman's marriage to a British major lost my interest.

Little Tenement on the Volga, CS Walton (Claudia Press £5.99) CS (aka Claudia) lived for a year in a tenement in the formerly closed military city of Samara, far from trendy circles in Moscow or Petrograd. In the remains of a Soviet economy 'built by female labour', former Communists grow rich by selling off public resources, women do three jobs and cope with poverty and alcoholic husbands.

CS describes her tenement as 'a microcosm of provincial Russia'. She draws pessimistic conclusions; growing disillusionment with capitalism and the West is taking a right-wing religious form in the absence of any alternative.

Catnap, Gillian Slovo (Virago, £5.99) P.I. Kate Baier is back, and boy, is she depressed! Grieving

over her dead lover, unsure of what to do next, Kate returns to London to tie up some loose ends. But threats and violence greet her on her old stomping ground, and soon she's getting into all sorts of trouble along the old 30 route... from Chelsea, to Kings Cross, to Hackney.

I find a bit of angst and hesitation more interesting than continual cleverness, which Kate was prone to in earlier books. But she isn't so fucked up now that she can't enjoy a good nosh. Yes, we still get treated to some racy dining details; how can you write a feminist detective novel without at least one instance? I still remember Kate's avocado and proscuitto samy in *Morbid Symptoms*.

The Loves of Faustyna, Nina Fitzpatrick (Fifth Estate, £5.99) 'In the autumn of 1967 a cloud in the shape of human buttocks appeared over Krakow...' With an opening like this how could you go wrong? Life as a Jewish single mother in Poland — 'the Ireland of the East' — is not easy, but Faustyna takes it on with guts and humour. This fast funny account of her sexual and political adventures through the days of Solidarity, martial law, internment and exile can be read in 45 minutes. Enjoyable as it was, I wish the author had made more of it.

Menmouth the Devil Ann Rice, (Chatto & Windus, £16.99)

Another installment (rumoured to be the last) of Rice's multi-volumed blood-sucking saga. Here the Vampire Lestat is being pursued by Mr. D. himself, who turns out to be the ultimate social worker from hell. Though I was hoping for more appearances from the female vampires, it's entertaining stuff. Best when God and the Devil carry on like a couple of quarrelsome old queens: 'Angels aren't perfect, you know', 'Don't come back to heaven unless you're invited — and make sure you dress properly. I don't want a feather out of place!'

The question that needs answering in the end: who got to keep the cat?

Occupational Therapy (News From Everywhere, £1.00) The University College Hospital strikes and occupations of 1992/3/4. In BA 5 we published an account of the occupation of wards at UCH: here's an update at last. UCH was the first occupation of a hospital against closure since 1985; we thought there'd be more. Oh well.

Everywoman's Almanac 1996, Women's Press, Canada (Turnaround) New diary centres on sexuality, with contributions from a broad range of women. Very promising but tends towards worthiness. But it's got some nice pictures and offers excellent sentiments such as "We all need to slow down and spend more time fucking and less time working."

Speaking of which, **Rebel Chicks '96 Diary** ECW Press (Turnaround) is just what you'd want to be seen casually consulting at that unwanted shit job interview the "Claimant Advisor" forced you to attend. Flamboyant, lascivious graphics, lots of humour — but no room for notes and phone numbers.

Rozanne

'uns

issue 8 • autumn 1995

access to birth control but this should be on an informed basis and certainly not at the expense of other health care. But the very idea of seeking to reduce population in developing countries whilst flagrantly overconsuming in the North can be nothing but obscene – it is a well-quoted fact that the average child in the North consumes twenty

times

as much as an average child in the South. Surely the problem is more one of blatant overconsumption in the North rather than too many babies being born in the South? And talk of ever rising fertility rates in that part of the world simply does not hold up under scrutiny. The number of children per woman has fallen virtually world-wide, in some areas it has halved! The UN's own figures testify that in East Asia, for example, where women were giving birth to over five children each thirty years ago, they are now bearing around two (on average)!

Population planning for the ruling class!

Organisations such as the IPPF (International Planned Parenthood Federation) and Population Concern would have us believe that the most important thing those in the West can do is to provide women in the 'developing' world with access to contraception and safe abortion. Apparently the cause of the poverty and hardship in these countries is simply a matter of introducing family planning. Perhaps the population policies should be concentrated in the North!

Somehow I don't think that a fall in the number of babies being born is going to stop. Somehow I don't think that a fall in the number of babies being born is going to stop massive exploitation of people by multinational corporations, give people back their land on which to grow food to feed themselves, rather than being forced to grow coffee, sugar, bananas or tobacco for the West or necessarily improve the infant mortality rate of those children still being born. (Perhaps I'm missing something?)

Lives of black and working class people (especially women) are worth nothing when compared with those of white, middle-class men and this value judgement is transparent in the very concept of a population control policy. It may be of more than passing interest to note that the IPPF has links with the British Eugenics Society – they shared an office when the IPPF was first set up. Population policies have been used again and again as a potent racist and classist tool – in the 1970s there was mass sterilisation of Australian Aboriginal women, there have been similar campaigns against Native American women and in South Africa black women were targeted in various ways, whilst white procreation and immigration was encouraged, black women factory workers had the stark choice of contraceptive injections or the sack, schoolgirls either submitted to the same treatment or lost the right to sit their exams, and as in many countries women were sterilised and fitted with IUDs without either their consent or knowledge. This amounts to nothing less than

genocide. On a massive scale. The way in which women are experimented upon by pharmaceutical companies, and the way in which their bodies are tampered with without their consent or often knowledge as to the consequences bears a striking resemblance to the way in which women are experimented upon in the field of reproductive technology. This in turn is paralleled by the way in which men experiment on animals in this area of 'science'.

Female animals such as cows and pigs routinely undergo artificial insemination, as well as having embryos fertilised outside their

wombs very painful procedures carried out without anaesthetic. I wonder how many women who advocate the freedom, etc, which the wonders of reproductive technology has bestowed upon women are truly aware of the facts concerning the actual treatment undergone by female infertility patients and its experimental nature?

The history of the development of reproductive technology is one of wholesale abuse and assault of women. From the first woman to be artificially inseminated against her will (read: *raped*) around a century ago, to the countless women who had their eggs stolen from them whilst undergoing gynaecological surgery, to women in more recent years who have been experimented on and deceived by 'scientists' in their quest for fame and fortune – *herstory* makes damning reading.

The physical procedures experienced by both women who are egg donors and women following IVF treatment programmes are horrific. In order for men to get their women following IVF treatment programmes are horrific. In order for men to get their hands on a woman's eggs, they pump her abdomen full of gas until it is much bigger than normal to enable them to get at her internal organs. Various instruments are then inserted through incisions in her abdomen including a tool which sucks out her eggs.

The woman undergoing IVF treatment must cope with repeated surgery, long-term hormone treatment to control ovulation, trauma again repeated to the ovaries and uterus and has only a very small chance of carrying a baby to term at the end of it all – only 18% of embryos are implanted successfully in the womb, and of these 50-60% are non-viable – that is the pregnancy does not last.

Womb-bin?

In all the regulations concerning procedures such as IVF, many guidelines are concerned with the safeguarding of the embryo – according to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill (1990), the guiding principles although including a 'respect to human life at all stages' mentions nothing which safeguards the welfare of the woman undergoing fertility treatment. Much is made of the embryo, whereas the woman appears not to exist – does this embryo exist independently of any other being? From the way in which scientists involved in this area talk, you could be forgiven for thinking that they created the

egg cells themselves, planted them in an artificial womb and were themselves in charge of the gestation period. The woman exists only as the sum of isolated body parts – womb, ovary, egg cell.

Many women go into IVF treatment without knowing the full facts, without knowing how unlikely it is that they will actually emerge with a child at the end of the treatment – it is not uncommon for women to have embryos implanted in their wombs five times, to go through all that stress and trauma and surgery that many times and still not manage to have a baby. The medical establishment are very careful to keep their failure rate under wraps.

This aside, IVF is often used on women who have no reproductive problems but whose male partner has sperm which is defective in some way. As fertilisation is carried out by doctors in a petri dish these men are able to have their own biological offspring.

freedom's Just Another Word...

Some 'feminists' talk about reproductive technology giving women new choices – this presupposes that women are really free to choose. There is an immense amount of pressure on women to have children in our society. From when we are very small girls we are socialised and prepared for our future role as mothers, women who choose not to conform to this ideal are looked upon as being strange and unnatural – childfree women often being described as 'desperate'. In such a climate how can any woman really make a 'free' choice? How do we know how we would choose if these pressures were not brought upon us and if we would choose if these pressures were not brought upon us and if we lived in a society which was supportive of a woman's right to be both a mother and a person in her own right, or not to bear children at all – a society which took the needs of both women and children seriously?

The advent of reproductive technology poses a great danger to women. It puts yet more pressure on women to be mothers, to exhaust all possibilities before admitting defeat. It puts power into the hands of the western largely white male medical establishment, and ultimately into the hands of the State. And this is exactly what they want, a chance to take control over the process of the creation of life, and the potential effects of this technology are terrifying.

Scientists are working on producing artificial

wombs, so that they can control the birth process from start to finish. And once such power is in the hands and the artificial wombs of these white men, what next? It has already been suggested by some that in the future selective sterilisation is the answer, that people of certain ethnic and class backgrounds should be 'encouraged' not to reproduce themselves but to use donated sperm or eggs with 'better' genetic material. In a world where many cultures only value women for their ability to bear children, what would such a society mean for us?

I read a lot while researching this article – books, articles etc. and used some info from: *The Mother Machine* by Gena Corea (Women's Press, 1985) *Population and Reproductive Rights: Feminist Perspectives from the South* by Sonia Correa (Zed Books, 1994) *Idols to Incubators: Reproduction Theory Through The Ages* by Julia Stonehouse (Scarlet Press, 1994) and info from Third World First, 217 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1XG (01865 245678)

Trouble & Strife

Issue 31 Summer 1995

- Feminism and spirituality
- Christian fundamentalism & violence against women
- 'False Memory Syndrome'
- Anorexia

and more...

Subs for one year (2 issues):

Britain & Ireland	£8.50
Supporting Sub	£25.00
Unwaged Sub	£6.50
Institutions: Inland	£25.00
Overseas	£35.00
Surface Mail	
Worldwide	£10.00
Airmail Worldwide	£13.00
Subscribers outside the UK, please pay by International Money Order.	

Change your Life!

Subscribe to

Women's News

Ireland's Feminist Magazine



Fun, serious, good looking, with news on the state of the movement in Ireland and worldwide, as well as cartoons, creative writing, events and contacts... Out every two months, read throughout Ireland, Britain and further afield, it's a breath of fresh air for feminists, lesbians, 'straight' women, mothers, young women... Can you be without it?

If you would like to subscribe, then fill in the form below and send, with a cheque, to:
Women's News 29 Donegall St, Belfast BT1 2FG

Rates (for 2 years):

N. Ireland & Britain: £10unwaged / £14waged / £18groups
S. Ireland: IR£11unwaged / IR£16waged / IR£18groups
Europe: £12unwaged / £18waged / £22groups
Overseas: £24individuals / £28groups

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

GROSS

BAD FICTION

First I'll tell you about myself," said Edwina, "I think it is important for you to know." Edwina was my supervisor, or 'support person' as it was called in the project, a new drop-in centre for women with learning difficulties in north-west London. Pause.

"I am a lesbian." Significant look. I nodded, waiting for more. But she just sat there, beginning to look disapproving. What is this about? So I'm a dyke too. I told them at the interview. What was I supposed to do? Jump up, hug her and say "We're all sisters!"?

I'm employed to do publicity, make contacts and get more women involved. I've done it before, but there's another language to be learned, and I'm not talking about English. I'm a 'Development Worker' and I'm employed by a 'Management Committee' which consists of women with and without learning difficulties.

I'd actually been looking forward to my first supervision. In the month I'd been working, I'd been left to figure everything out for myself. So far I'd managed to get through a year of correspondence, and furnish one room in our empty building. Not bad, but I knew there was more. Will I get some support at last from this support person?

Edwina asked if I'd ever been supervised. I tell her that I used to do it at the women's health centre in Romania. I was in the group that started it. I recruited and trained new volunteers. Oh, she says, and goes on. "Well, in this country we do it like this..."

I looked across at her. The smoothness of her movements and the studied softness of her voice made me nervous. She had very pale blue eyes that took in everything. Her skin showed no signs of ever having any spots.

For the first time I'm getting paid good money. In the two years I've been in England I've only been paid for cafe and cleaning work, but suddenly here I am in this fancy job in a women's organisation with a huge grant from the council. And I can't help thinking that a tenth of it would be enough to open at least three women's centres in Romania.

How I dreaded the interview! I was fresh from a harrowing interrogation with another women's group, where no one reacted, laughed or responded to anything I said – just a row of tight-lipped poker-faces. What's wrong with these people? Do all women's groups in this country behave this way? Perhaps I'd better stick to my current career as the stropier sort of waitress.

But here, half the panel members were women with learning difficulties. Every time I talked bullshit or used heavy words, they just fell asleep. One of them snored very loudly. So then I just talked about something more concrete. If folks behaved this sensibly at the interview, I thought, that's a very good sign.

After I was offered the job, I was told that they were fascinated with me, with my politics, with the way I talked with them in clear language, and the way I dealt directly with

misunderstandings. So, I will try to deal directly

with this one. If me and Edwina don't seem to be getting on, perhaps we'll communicate better in a more relaxed setting.

"Any more questions?" Edwina asked as she packed her things away, leaving a list of things for me to do.

"Not really," I said as I looked it over. "Do you fancy going for a drink after this, or maybe another time if you're busy?"

"A drink? No, I don't think so." Edwina looked at me as if I'd just suggested she get dressed up in rubber and perform oral sex. "I really must go." She was halfway out the door. "Please remember to turn the lights out when you leave." I was left feeling embarrassed...and when did I ever leave the lights on?

wasn't, and she always

had time to talk.

I was amazed with the women – with their stubbornness to get the Centre on its feet, for knowing what is right for them and not negotiating it, and for taking the piss out of patronising right-on gits. I enjoyed working with them also because I didn't feel like a foreigner and my accent wasn't a problem at all.

But then there were the regular Management Committee meetings... They never started till Edwina arrived. She dominated them, even though she was ever-so-quiet. She never raised her voice because she knew she didn't need to. She got heard and listened to any time she opened her mouth. Her questions were all of the same

type: "We agree with this, don't we?" And everyone did.

Kate, Alice and the other women with learning difficulties were quiet and subdued at these meetings. They agreed to anything Edwina proposed. Everything we'd done in the office during the week was somehow forgotten. Then, they'd come back the next day and go on as usual. I didn't understand what was going on, and I asked them a few times...

"Edwina? Oh, Edwina... she makes me

feel very small," Kate once said.

Edwina made me feel small too. In she'd come every so often, breezing through the office like a queen making a royal inspection of the stables. It reminded me too much of visits by Party officials at school, when we had to stand in rows and recite poetry on the glories of Ceausescu. Except some of us kids would secretly take the piss later, but no one even thought of taking the piss out of Edwina.

She'd toss her head back, with its precisely cut hair which never seemed to grow. "Oh Florika," she'd say... "I've brought some posters. Don't you think it's time we put something on the walls here, this place looks so bare, doesn't it?"

"Thanks for bringing them in," I told her,

then had a look. They were slightly grey; very boring, right-on posters. More than half of them had men on them, so I decided to put up the ones with women and one with a group of people with learning difficulties.

A few days later at the MC meeting Edwina said: "Florika, could you please take down that poster. The guy in it is in prison now for rape, and WE don't want him on our wall!". It wasn't until I was sitting on the tube, feeling very guilty, that I realised that she'd given me the poster just a few days ago.

The supervision sessions just seemed to make things worse. Edwina always came with piles of papers, lists of things to do; she never asked any questions. She kept telling me to do these things called 'Development Plans'. When I bring one, she puts it in her briefcase and that's the last I hear of it. Then, next time she asks me to do a new one. Another development plan? What was wrong with the last one? I'd ask. I really wanted to know how it could be improved. She wouldn't say anything concrete, but started with: "In this country we do it this way". And I shut up, listen to her and do everything she says.

When a new worker, Jill, arrived, I thought that things would get better. Very soon she was also pissed off. She was meant to sort out the art and relaxation room, get videos, audiobooks and music in... very hard to do when the Centre didn't even have a bank account. And none of the MC members seemed bothered about it, or offered any help.

I found her friendly and easy to talk with. She seemed to live more like I did, and knew what it was like not to have money and security. She'd been involved in direct action and a few different women's groups.

She once worked in a women's centre and got sacked – someone had their hands in the grant money and Jill found out. So they accused her of doing it!

"Be careful," she said. "Feminists make the worst bosses. Just get on with things!" So we made plans to clear up the mess and do just that.

And I decided the supervisions would have to change. Had I been assertive enough and clear about what I need? Fuck that, it was never my problem before, so why should it be now?! Next time I will tell Edwina that I don't get enough support, and ask her what she expects from me.

What happens in supervision is entirely up to you," said Edwina. Yes, it's all been my fault that she talked all the time – I didn't bring anything up. Then she added: "In this country we..." It clicked: she's a boss and disagreement is not allowed. But she thinks that SHE's my boss, and I don't. I'm working on behalf of the women with learning difficulties, and she's meant to support me in this. But call her a 'support person', call her any nice right-on thing you can think of, she's just

Supervisor Shredder!



"The supervisor used to give us a hard time, always hanging over our shoulders telling us to hurry up."

"Now, our problems are solved!"

Shredded Supervisors Don't Talk!

Surety Shredding, Inc.

No, I won't let her get me down. After all, it is the women with learning difficulties – Alice, Shamilla and Kate – who are most important. They're the ones who've been here every day. They spoke about being forced to spend time at day centres where they were patronised and bored. They wanted to be here instead.

Everyone had responsibilities. Kate was treasurer; Shamilla learned how to answer the phone, insisting that people speak and spell their names and phone numbers slowly so she can write them down.

Every job in the Centre was shared by a woman with learning difficulties and one without. So Alice was my other supervisor and she was just brilliant. She used to tell me what was good in what I did, and what

a fucking boss.

A week later when I came in the phone was already ringing. It was Edwina. With an ice cold voice she informed me that the MC had concerns about my work. Edwina and Robin, another MC member, wanted to meet with me to discuss the concerns. "Please bring a list of everything you have done and a list of your strengths and weaknesses." And then she asked me to bring... another development plan!

"Alice, did you know anything about this review?"

"What's that?"

"Edwina and the management committee say they're concerned about my work. She and Robin want to meet me to talk about it."

"No one told me about that!" Panic filled Alice's voice. "Don't go, Florika, please, don't go. I don't want them to sack you, I want you to stay here!"

"It's only a review, Alice. It doesn't mean they'll sack me." She calmed down, and we talked a lot about the MC, about responsibilities and supervising. "Edwina scares me," she said. "We're supposed to work together,

MC, the women asked me to type up a written version of their agenda because: "They won't take any notice of ours if it's just in pictures." Only Kate looked a bit worried. She came to me.

"Florika, I will never again talk to Edwina. She is not good."

"Why don't you tell her that? We're a collective here, all of us make mistakes. Nothing will change if you don't tell her what bothers you." I said, not really believing in that liberal crap.

"But, I can only talk to her if you stay at the meeting. To support us."

"Kate, this is meant to be an MC meeting without workers. I will just hand in my letter and go. But you'll stay, and you can talk to Edwina. Look how many of you there are! And you ARE strong women, remember that."

Edwina, I've got a letter for the management committee. I want a reply to it before I have a review."

"What does the letter say?"

I took a deep breath and tried to sum it up. "First, six MC members, including my supervisor, knew nothing about the concerns about

I joined her laughter, though I was feeling increasingly sad and depressed. "Jill, I always thought I had no illusions about things over here. But I remember when we read the first feminist books brought into Romania – just some old ones from America and a few from Britain. They came with a shipment of condoms. I suppose we did associate women's resistance with the West – we weren't getting any information about women's movements in say, India or Africa – and we dreamed about what it would be like to have this huge movement of women around us. Think of what could be done where there's been a women's movement for years, where there's support – and money."

"Yes, just think of it," said Jill. "Jobs for a few girls, corruption and power-mongering...ha, ha."

"Yeah, at least with a normal boss you know where they are and you are. They are the enemy. No calling them 'support people'. Maybe I'm a naïve foreigner after all to be so shocked by our feminist bosses."

"But Florika, you don't have to be from Romania to feel that way! It's fucking disgusting to see everything you've fought for

Social Services nob's trembling in her path.

I spoke with Jill on the phone twice just after I was suspended and she sounded very supportive. After that I kept leaving messages on her answer phone. She never rang back.

Jill shared my feelings, she knew the score. How was Edwina able to do this to her, and to me? How could she be so much in control, with her soft voice and slimey ways? And then I remembered moments when Edwina seemed to lose control, and with it came a nagging, uneasy feeling of having seen it before...

But how could I forget it? It was December 1989 and I was still in Romania. When it happened I didn't see much, I was standing so far back. What I remember most were the people around me and the way we talked with each other. As if nothing we were doing before mattered anymore, and there was nothing left to be afraid of.

But the close-up was shown over and over on TV later. There was Ceausescu on his balcony addressing his loyal subjects. He's the great dictator, no one questions him. But then

MISCONDUCT

but she tells me nothing. Sometimes she shouts."

I froze, and remembered Edwina holding Kate's upper arm tightly, her face just an inch away from Kate's, hissing through her teeth...You must come to a meeting. Kate looked terrified, but quiet. And she came.

"She scares me too," said Shamilla.

"We shouldn't be scared. That's what happens at the Day Centre. Not here," said Alice.

"Is there something you can do about it, to stop being scared?" I asked.

"Yes... we'll make our own plan for the meeting, and tell them that things aren't right and what we want changed!"

I also decided I wasn't going to be a good girl and bring any "list of strengths and weaknesses". Their whole procedure stunk, and I decided to write a letter questioning them on it. We all had our work cut out for us.

My review with Edwina and Robin was scheduled just before the next MC meeting. That morning Shamilla, Kate, Alice and some friends of theirs were already in the office when I arrived. Shamilla was showing them an agenda in pictures. Their loud excited discussion was punctuated by laughter as each added her own pictures.

"Why aren't we paid for working here? I want to be paid!" Alice demanded.

"I want our own agenda for every meeting. I never understand anything Edwina and the others talk about. I want to talk about us – women with learning difficulties – this is OUR centre!" Jane said.

"I think we should have our own meetings, so we can decide things in our own way. I don't need Edwina to tell me what I want. DO I?" Shamilla almost fell off the chair laughing.

As I was finishing up my own letter to the

my work, or this meeting. And why is Robin coming? She's never been involved with my supervision. If anyone else comes, it should be Alice."

Edwina moved closer to the edge of her chair, her fingers clenched themselves into fists. "Does it mean you're refusing a review?"

"No, I just want my questions answered first."

I could see that her knuckles were white. For a moment something I didn't recognise at first clouded her blue eyes. Anger and total unbelieving shock. I've seen that look on someone's face before. Where?

"We will set the review for another date." Everyone took out their diaries and waited, pens poised. Edwina's hand trembled as she started turning pages.

"We could set the date after my questions are answered."

"Go out then, and come back in ten minutes. You'll get your answers." It was raining outside.

"You might need more than ten minutes, I want it in writing."

"OK, come back in two hours." Two hours outside in this weather? "No, Edwina, I won't. I'll leave now, so you can discuss my letter."

I was getting ready to go when Kate started to cry. I turned to her and told her not to cry but to try and talk. Edwina wouldn't look at me, or let me talk to Kate. With a dismissive flip of her fingertips she said: "We'll sort it out! You just go!"

So Jill and me set off in her old Skoda. "Well, Jill, I remember what you said. 'Feminists make the worst bosses'. Too right! Sometimes I forget that. Perhaps I'm still new to a country where there are feminist bosses."

Jill laughed. "Yes, one of the great gifts of the West, no doubt."

used against you. All the ideas and words that came out of decades of struggle twisted, serving the greed of power hungry wankers. If you dare bring up anything about working conditions, or take the goals of a group too seriously, then you're out."

"Do you think I'll be out then? You know, I won't be able to get the dole if I get sacked."

"No, I don't see it happening, not yet anyway. You were great, Florika," she reassured me. That was the best thing anyone had told me since I started the job, I thought, getting out of the car at the tube station. I kept going over that last conversation with Edwina. How angry and full of hate she was. For what? I had tried to do my job, believing in everything the project is meant to do. But only once I questioned her, and she trembled with an anger and disbelief that could almost be fear.

When had I seen that same look in someone's eyes? It was the look of someone in the seat of power and the seat is getting hot, but they're trying to pretend it isn't.

That night I got a phone call telling me I was suspended...no reason was given why. A month later I received a brief letter: I was sacked for gross misconduct, accused of being threatening and shouting at Kate, Alice and Shamilla. They were too frightened to speak to me, I was told, and I was not to contact them.

What would it be like now at work? Are they quiet and frightened again? And yes, Edwina must still be the queen who has the

someone shouts and another person boos, and more shouts – it's not happening really, is it? He tries to continue but the sporadic jeers turn into a roar. Old Nicolae trembled the same way that Edwina did.

I started feeling better.

Later, women kept coming to me talking about similar experiences; finding out about a fraud, or a missing van, or being denied sick leave. Their misconducts were the same as mine: asking questions. And our bosses were the same. Listening to them changed my confusion and depression into anger.

I went on fighting, and won! It was pure pleasure seeing Edwina squirm at the Appeal. Oh, she and her followers first looked smug and pleased with themselves. But as the time went by, me and my rep used their lies against them, laughed at their stupid statements: "Well, yes, Alice was supposed to be Florika's other supervisor, but we decided it was still early. Empowering the women with learning difficulties is our long-term goal, you know."

Oh yeah, and we lived in 'socialism' for 50 years waiting for communism to arrive.

Just remember that look on Edwina's face... and the look on Ceausescu's face. If we got rid of *him*, shifting people like Edwina should be easy. As petty and insignificant they may seem, they still have the power to destroy lives – and movements. There are lots of Edwina's around. And they have money! Go and get them, girls!



by
Chitsa Kalashnikova

Elastica, *Elastica* (LP on Deceptive, UK). Once upon a time I could have written a reasonable review of this: not a bad record, etc. But now I am emotionally scarred by Britpop hype and I hate it all. It's all so 90s: all these bands just so grateful to be there, so busy being nice and marketable. Have they no guts, not a single rebellious atom in their bodies?

Red Aunts, *No. 1 Chicken* (LP on Epitaph, USA). 'Fourteen songs, 23 minutes', they advertise on the back. sounds good to me. Four women from the USA, like L7 but faster, which is no bad thing.

They must have listened to a lot of heavy metal but don't quite play it, keeping on the punk-grunge side of rock. They shout and curse, they batter their guitars till they cry for mercy, they are fierce and appealing. But are there any real stand-out songs? Mm, maybe not or maybe the title track just qualifies. Recommended for grrrl rockers — to psych yourself up before you go to get your next piercing.

Babes in Toyland, *Nemesisters* (LP on Reprise, USA). I dunno, I was trying to do positive reviews or not at all, but part of me is crying out to say: is there a need in the world for this LP? 4th or 5th one from this American grunge three-some. But why? it's too fucking slow. Why doesn't it pick itself up and do something? Slow, slow, slow. OK, get a grip. 'Drivin' is actually driving — strong, relentless, a good heavy sound. And their cover of 'We Are Family' is likable too — not a million miles from the original. but still a great idea for the likes of you and me to listen to. These songs I would actually play to other humans. But the rest... And why do American bands smile in photos? Yuck! Stop it!

* BRAS And GUITARS *

b a d m u s i c

The Trashwomen, *Deep Space* (LP on Pin Up, Germany). Most assuredly the nation is waiting with baited breath for news of the next Trashwomen release. Well, most



Red Aunts

assuredly it is not, but in a better world it would be. Another helping of speedy retro surf music and this time I can report that they are wearing tight black PVC outfits. I love this band so much it's hard merely to review them. This is 60s-sounding stuff with a punky attitude, part instrumental, a hint of the Cramps, plenty of

reverb on the guitar, and this time some old-style rock'n'roll as well. Needless to say, it's trashy. And rigorously lo-fi. Oh God, they're wonderful. Marry me, please. Let me have your babies. (Buy it second, after Spend the Night with the Trashwomen.)

Pussy Power, *Theme* (single on Radar, UK) Great stuff. Imagine Sonic Youth doing an oh-so-cool rap over a super-controlled buzz and wah-wah guitar track. A hint of 60s psychedelia, but very modern too. Plus the lyrics are a feminist rant about street harassment. And the two B-tracks are faster than the A-side, a rare virtue. Gripping, wonderful, my favourite thing this issue.

Teen Angels, *Teen Dream* (single on Subpop, USA) Proper punk. A mid-paced thrash bash, with vocals by the most hoarse and raucous female singer ever, Kelly Canary, formerly of the legendary (in a parallel universe) **Dickless**. There's enough tune to carry it through and I like it.

And now for something quite different. **Free to Fight — An interactive self-defence project** (double LP & booklet). Songs by N. American women's indie bands on the theme of sexual violence, interspersed with successful self-defence stories and instruction. Profits to be used to fund a

tour and free self-defence classes. A brilliant plan and nothing like anything I've ever come across before. Appears to include a racial mix, unlike much of the music in this genre. Musically I wasn't overwhelmed: a little gentle for my taste. My favourite is the ditty 'Target Practice', which reminds you where to hit the fuckers: 'eyes, knees, groin, throat'. Contact c/o Candy Ass, PO Box 42382, Portland, OR 97242 USA.

Solar Race, *Not Here* (single on Silverstone, UK). With these last two I am dipping my toes in the ocean of female-fronted bands. Why pick just these two? Well: with this one it's because it sounds a lot like Hole and because it's really good — easily equal to the best songs on *Live Through This*. They even supported Hole on their last British tour (they're from Manchester). Post-grunge, in that it has that hell-and-back sound but it also a solid rock song. Passionate, raucous, well-built. Singer/guitarist Eilidh is obviously bothered about something — I don't know what it is, but that's fine.

Shriek, *Girl Meets Girl* (single on Deceptive, UK) And this one gets in for the lesbian lyrics. Indie pop in a similar vein to Elastica, but a little more emphasis on the guitar. Scottish band, female singer/guitarist. Sing-along stuff, with that catchy 'girl meets girl' line in the chorus. A must-have for those millions of indie-dykes.

And now for something for you to read. **Slapper** (fanzine), issue 4. Well, I thought this was hugely entertaining. Not for the third-rate boy rockers interviewed therein, but for the psychotic attitude prevailing throughout, as lascivious adoration of these unworthy objects threatens to turn on a knife-edge into violent spite.

Hotels reviewed for the potential groupie include assessments of their smell. And they put more effort into reviewing vomit than records. (I mention these things in praise.) However, a fellow Baddie says, no — not enough irony here for the horror of fan-dom. Also, points deducted for lesbophobia. (£2 payable to J. Knight, from Slapper, c/o Real Time, 16-18 Ramillies St, London W1V 1DL)

Katy

For
15 million
women,
the real curse
is 17.5% VAT.

If you want the government to remove tax from sanitary products then do something about it.
Pick up our next issue.

Don't get mad, get

Every woman
MAGAZINE

Available Every month

LISTIES

* **An Axe to Grind** Bradford area lesbian news-sheet - info on events, & groups. More women needed! Contact c/o Bradford Resource Centre, 17-21 Chapel Street, Bradford BD1.
* **Inhibition** new women's mag contains articles, cartoons, poetry & art. £1 cheque/PO payable to K Richards; 25p sae to Kairen, Inhibition, 7 John St, Creswell, Worksop, Notts S80 4DF.
* **Radio Venus** Bradford women's radio station broadcasting for ten days this autumn needs DJs, reporters, presenters, techies, etc. They run training days - you don't need previous experience. Contact Venus FM, c/o

Bradford Community Broadcasting, 2 Forster Square, Bradford, West Yorks. BD11 1DQ. Donations needed!

* **RDN — Raging Dyke Newsletter** Raging Radical Dyke Separatist newsletter for Lesbians Only! RDN, 36 Magdalen Street, Norwich, NR5 8QH

* **National Lesbian Archive and Information Centre** relaunched and relocated to the Glasgow Women's Library and will be open 5 days a week.

* **URGENT** Housing Management Consultant needed for women's co-op, to advise on management, maintenance & finance: 4 Walls Co-op Housing Association, c/o 85 Claremount Street, Glasgow G3 7SW. Tel 0141 221 110, Fax 0141 226 4409.

* **Outlines** bi-monthly newsletter produced by Queer Scribes, Liverpool's lesbian, gay & bisexual writing group. Sample and info: Joe Lavelle, Queer Scribes, PO Box 11, Liverpool, L69 1SN.

* **Spunk Press** (means something else in Scandinavian!) independent publishing project, collects anarchist, alternative and underground materials, makes them available free of charge... On Internet, costs nothing to publish material. E-mail: spunk-info-request@lysator.liu.se or at Electronic

Anarchist Archive, Box A Arjuna, 12 Mill Road, Cambridge CB1 2ND, UK.

* **The Legal Defence & Monitoring Group** (LDMG) is an independent group which monitors police actions on demos and unconditionally support any demonstrator arrested or hurt by police. If you want to help, or need legal back up contact LDMG, c/o BM Box Haven, London WC1 3XX.

* **The Albert Kennedy Trust**, a charity for homeless lesbian and gay teenagers has launched a campaign to set up an advice centre and office in London. Contact Box 13, 209 Lower Richmond Street, London SW15 1HJ, (0181 780 5505).

* **Outspoken and lively Asian anarcho-punk** (26), into Riot Grrrl, Fun-Da-Mental, Emma Goldman, Noam Chomsky, horror movies and Angela Carter. Write to Nazneen Khan, c/o Bad Attitude, 121 Railton Road, London SE24 0LR.

* **The Bisexual Resource Guide** resource for bisexuals in the US and beyond, containing listings of more than 1400 bi and les-bi-gay groups in 22 countries, a bibliography, safer sex info, and more. Info: Bisexual Resource Center, PO Box 639, Cambridge MA 02140 USA.

* **Artificial Insemination** I am doing a dissertation on donor and self-insemination, and would like to gather info from women who have experience of it, including parenting issues. Contact Kathy Almack, 68 Ewart Road, Nottingham NG7 6HF.

★ **GALOP** (Gay London Policing Ltd) offers confidential advice/assistance on dealing with police to lesbians and gay men subject to police harassment, domestic/sexual violence, verbal/physical abuse, or any kind of homophobic violence. (0171 233 0854, Mon-Thurs 5-8pm, Wed 2-4pm.)

★ **Anarchist Book Fair** Sat 21 Oct., Conway Hall,

Wild Rose - Cornwall Women's Holidays.

Small group - up to 8 women. Gentle or energetic walks. Also writing, drumming, singing, wildlife walks, massage, pot luck. Lovely vegetarian food & log fires. Brochure from: Sheila (01752) 822609.

Red Lion Sq. London WC1 — Subversive lit, posters, pizza, beer, cupsa tea... Meet us Baddies, get BA 8 hot off the presses, those back issues you missed, brilliant book bargains, and say hello! Accessible venue.

★ **Gutter Girls** subversive mag with news, rants, cartoons, and fun for all Fund-raises for other women's groups such as Sellafeld camp, refuges, survivors group, rape crisis with gigs, cabarets. Contact c/o Single Step, 78A Penny St, Lancaster.

★ **Jungle, rap, reggae, ragga,, techno**, and all sorts of dance music — we want reviewers for *Bad Attitude*. No payment except review copies and instant fame. Drop us a line at BA if interested.

★ **Banna Lesbian Housing Co-op** spaces available now. Gardens, secure tenancy, low rent. Contact Banna c/o Nott'm Women's centre, 30 Chaucer St, Nott'm, NG1 5LP.

★ **GLAD Women in Residential Care Project** aims to empower disabled women in residential care. Women who would like to participate. contact Angela Smith, GLAD, 336 Brixton Rd, London SW9 7AA. (0171-274-0107 voice/minicom)

★ **McDonald's Workers Fighting McWage Slavery**, Day of Solidarity 12 Oct. Contact c/o Colin Roach Centre, 56 Clarence Rd., London E5 (0181-533-7111)



Claimants - cont'd from pg.11

forming more local solidarity or community defence groups similar to those active during the anti-Poll Tax movement (a few are still active). The idea of non-aligned "community-based resistance" appealed to many because it can include working and non-working people.

Proposed action ranged from the militant to the theatrical. Put up adverts in Job Centres for weird jobs - clown, perhaps? - then people can dress 'appropriately' when they come in. Compile lists of shit employers that use job

centres, boycotting and disrupting schemes and courses such as the one week Job Plan and four week Worklink course. Edinburgh Unwaged Centre published a leaflet with some tips on this; sometimes people were able to get away with attending only 1 1/2 mornings.

Other ideas involved demonstrations, days of action, leafletting dole offices offering advice and support. Linking the CJA and the JSA was also suggested, which Edinburgh activists have done in connection with the evic-

tion of their centre. Another idea was to bring anti-discrimination laws against race or sex-specific Job-Seekers Directives (ie, cut off those dreads, shave those legs, stop being so camp). It could make the new regime very expensive ...

Since the April conference Oxford CU has received many inquiries from people wanting to join or start up new claimants unions. The next conference took place 31 July with a focus on ACTION. JSA pilot schemes will be spawned in various cities (possibly Brighton or Exeter) this Oct. A regime has already been in place in Reading. Disruption of these schemes

will affect how the JSA will be adopted. Recently a scheme was abandoned in Hackney, London when dole workers threatened strike action. Workers in other cities have declared against the JSA. Last year in Sheffield 400 CPSA members staged a protest which cancelled a visit by Portillo to the Employment Service headquarters. So let's go for it!

★ C.K.

Info: *Unwaged Fightback: A History of Islington Action Group of the Unwaged 1980-86, Capitalism, Poverty, and the Claimants Unions* (Steve Leapman), CU pamphlets and newsletters. Thanks to Pat & friends from Oxford CU.

Aberdeen FIN, 174 Deeside Gardens, Mannofield, Aberdeen AB1 7PX

Bradford 1 in 12 Club, 21-23 Albion St. Bradford BD1 2L1 (01274-734-160)

Brighton Claimants Union c/o Brighton Unemployed Centre, Prior House, 6 Tilbury Place, Brighton BN2 2GY

Bristol Housing Action Movement, PO Box 56, Greenleaf Bookshop, 82 Colston St. Bristol

Campaign Against the Child Support Act Edinburgh CACSA: PO Box 87 EH1 3UJ London CACSA: PO Box 297 NW6 5QU (0171-837-7507)

CW Leicester, PO Box 320, Leicester LE1 5WS

Edinburgh Unwaged and Unemployed Workers Centre, c/o Peace & Justice Centre, St. Johns Church, Princes St. Edinburgh EH2 (0131-557-5846)

Flying Post, PO Box 185, Exeter EX4 4EW

Haringey Solidarity Group, Box 2474, London N8 OHW

Incapacity Action PO Box 9, 136-138 Kingsland High St. London E8

N.U.U. & W. 27 Milton Rd East, Lowestoft, NR32 1NT

Newham & District Claimants Union Durning Hall, Earlham Gove, London E7

Claimant Contacts

Oxford Unemployed Workers & Claimants Union East Oxford Community Centre, Princes St. Oxford OX4 1HU

Plymouth Claimants Union PO Box 21, Plymouth PL1 1QS

South London Box JSA, 121 Railton Rd, London SE24 0LR

Reading Claimants Union c/o Info Shop, 26 Silver St, Reading RG1

Somerset Community Defence Campaign 4 Gordon Terrace, Bridgewater TA6 5JP

Sussex Autonomous Students, c/o Students

Union; University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9RH

Tameside TUC, 21 Gout Avenue, Marple SK6 7JR (0161-427-6997)

Tottenham Claimants Union 72 West Green Rd. London, N15 (0181-802-9804)

Westfield Association 6 South Baffin St. Dundee DD4 6SW (01382-454-213)

Direct Action Network 3 Crawley Rd. London N22 (0181-889-1361)

These are mostly groups that attended the Oxford conference. We haven't included TUC/Unemployed Workers Centres - send to Oxford CU for a list of these. They've also got a good flyer on setting up new CUs.

Red Pepper

One year's
subscription
£26.85
(&20 concs)

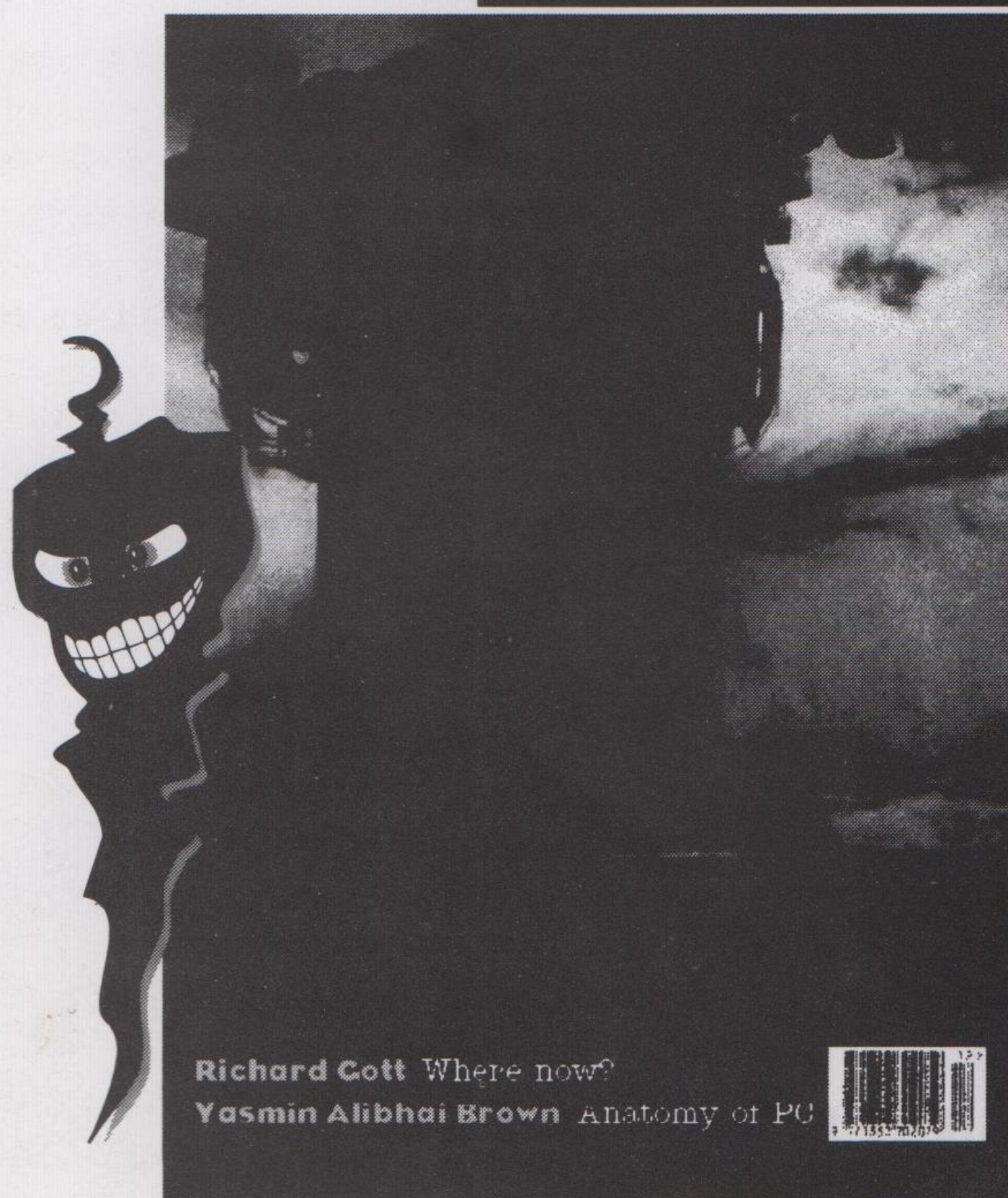
August Issue OUT NOW!

with

● Christopher Hitchens on the Tories

- Hit and run left
- Greenpeace: behind the scenes
- Yasmin Alibhai Brown on political correctness
- Richard Gott on the New Right

SPECIAL OFFER -
Red Pepper June Issue
ON FOOD available for
£1.25 (incl post)



Richard Gott Where now?
Yasmin Alibhai Brown Anatomy of PU



3 FREE ISSUES WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE BY DIRECT DEBIT*

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

DIRECT DEBIT

Bank _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Account holder _____

Account no ____ / ____ / ____ / ____ / ____ / ____

Sort code ____ / ____ / ____

Signed _____ Date _____

Banks may decline to pay direct debits from some kinds of accounts. Originators ID No 974090. Originators Ref:

CASH

I enclose a cheque/postal order for £26.85/£20.00 (concs) payable to **Red Pepper**

*NB FREE issues offer open to Direct Debit subscribers only

Direct Debit subscribers will receive **FREE** copies of the next three issues of **Red Pepper** plus your choice of free gift. You are under no obligation to continue with **Red Pepper** after the three magazines have been delivered. You may cancel by writing to **Red Pepper** within seven days of receiving the third issue and no money will have changed hands. If you want to continue you need do nothing. Your account will be debited annually until cancelled.

Direct Debit subscribers will receive **FREE** copies of the next three issues of **Red Pepper** plus your choice of free gift if you decide to continue with your subscription. You are under no obligation to continue with **Red Pepper** after the three magazines have been delivered. You may cancel by writing to **Red Pepper** within seven days of receiving the third issue and no money will have changed hands. If you want to continue you need do nothing. Your account will be debited annually until cancelled.

Choice of **FREE** gift* (cross one box only)

- ☐ Red Pepper T-shirt or
☐ Billy Bragg CD: ☐ Don't try this at home ☐ Back to basics
☐ Victim of geography

* Free gift will be sent on payment of first year's subscription

Please return this form to: **Red Pepper**,
3 Gunthorpe Street, London, E1 7RP.

BA8/95

