

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO



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## WOMENS RIGHT TO HAVE BETTER AND MORE NURSERIES!

Nurseries are a fundamental necessity in the struggle against women's oppression. Women are often forced to sacrifice their jobs to look after children. Part-time jobs are badly paid and very insecure and it is made difficult for a woman to take up a job again after she has had a child. A woman commonly doesn't want to be tied to the home as she becomes very isolated, it is often financially difficult and it is better for the child to be with other children.

Nursery facilities are most inadequate and the waiting lists are getting longer and longer. There are 12,000 children on priority waiting lists i.e. children under five in one-parent families, for day nurseries in England. This ~~figure does not~~ figure does not include the demand for places in those areas where no list exists because there are no day nurseries. Over 40% of women who are not in paid employment would ~~not~~ return to paid work if satisfactory child care arrangements could be made.

In the past facilities have been cut back unnoticed. Remember that there used to be twice as many nurseries in Britain shortly after the second world war. The recently announced cuts in expenditure are going to have a serious effect on nursery provision and women are going to suffer most of all. Women's unemployment is rising at twice the rate of men's, which means that women are being forced back into the home to take up their domestic role!

### The Working Women's Charter Wants:-

"Free, state-financed, community controlled child care facilities with flexible hours to suit all parents, to be available for all under-fives; the integration of day-care and educational facilities the provision of play facilities after school and during the school holidays for all children."

Several WWC groups have made the nursery campaign their primary campaign issue. Particularly in Lambeth and Hackney strong attempts have been made to take the question of nurseries into various trade unions to get active support for the fight for better nursery services. It was found that a lot of nursery workers had little or no union experience and they managed to force some unions to make a real effort to recruit them and get them involved in union activities. The charter groups carried out some local research into nursery workers' working conditions and found them understaffed, on low pay, and with too many children in several of the nurseries. The nursery workers took their complaints into their union and won a significant victory with support from the local charter group.

The nursery campaign must become an important battle for the Nottingham Charter group and be taken to the trade unions. It must also be included as a priority in the general campaign against cuts in public expenditure. The local WWC must build up a comprehensive picture of the conditions of nursery workers in the Nottm. area and where possible help to fight to improve them. We need to co-ordinate our activities with pressure groups for the under fives and the Nottm. branch of the National child care campaign (contact Margaret Purdey at 863894). This campaign has carried on for several years and some local research has been done. In this campaign, mainly unemployed, non-unionised mothers or parents came together to organise round the following main demand:- "That local authorities should provide free, flexible and community-controlled day care facilities for all children under the age of five years, together with the school-age children of working parents."

It is now time that the Trade Union Movement took the question of nurseries seriously! It is important to stress that if the Labour Party branches, the action groups and trade unions do not take up the issue of nursery provision effectively, they are weakening their own struggle. They are cutting off and isolating many women who could play a valuable and active role and are also allowing the situation of their children to deteriorate further.



THE WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER CAMPAIGN, HELD its first national conference in Coventry on April 10-11th. This conference was very important for it discussed the way forward for the Campaign and also amendments to the Charter. About 300 delegates went to the conference but unfortunately there was very few union representatives. Most of the conference was spent discussing amendments that were going to be put to the Charter and how this was to be done. There were two schools of thought on how amendments should be put (1) That the conference should decide on the amendments it wanted but rather than say right this is the new charter take the proposed amendments back into the labour movement to get debate going around them in an active and positive way and come back in a years time to get them finally ratified. The women arguing for this line did so because they thought it would stir up more activity and debate within unions etc, on the Charter rather than just presenting them with a Fait Accompli which they could either say no to or say yes in a paper stamp way. (2) That conference should amend the Charter and that it would be the new Charter henceforth. After much debate it was decided that the first way was probably better.

It was decided to set up a National structure for the campaign this would consist of :- (a). A national delegate conference every year to decide major policy of the Charter Campaign. The WWC will only be amended at this conference. (b). Between conferences, policy would be decided by a National Co-ordinating Group. This will meet every three months and where possible these meetings to be organised in the regions - open to all, but with two voting representatives from all organisations campaigning for women's rights with the Charter adopted as policy. (c). A secretariat to be elected from the floor of the conference to co-ordinate activity and carry out decisions made by conference. This secretariat to be based on one city and to be made up of 15 people with sub-committees on the following:

1. Publicity. 2. Solidarity 3. Finance. 4. Newspaper 5. SDA/EPA/Employment Protection Act. (d). Special conference may be convened by the National Co-ordinating Group or the Secretariat.

It was also decided to produce a Charter Campaign newspaper for sale nationally in workplaces and localities and that this newspaper would be produced once every two months.

Other things decided on were to call a national mass rally at the beginning of December around the theme of 'One year on from the SDA - a rally for women's rights'. To campaign for support for the national conference on Cuts and Unemployment, called by the London 'women and the Cuts' conference, and to ensure that the question of women's right to work is a central debate at the conference. To actively support the day of action against unemployment on May 26th. To set up a working party to follow the progress of the suggested amendments to the Charter.

The Charter (with suggested amendments from the conference) will read as follows:-

#### MAIN DEMAND

1. For the right of women to work security of employment for part-time and casual workers.

2. The rate for the job, regardless of sex or race. For a national minimum wage. For this national minimum wage and all benefits and wages to be fully protected against inflation by automatic increases based on a working class cost of living index.

3. Equal opportunity of entry into occupations, in promotion and equal rights in defence of jobs, regardless of sex, age, race, marital status, sexual

#### POLICY

For the full integration of all women workers into a fight against unemployment.

Rates to be negotiated by Trade Unions.



orientation and hours worked.

4. Equal education and training for all occupations, regardless of sex, age, race, marital status, sexual orientation.

Compulsory provision of day release for 16-19 year olds in employment. Equal access to apprenticeships and positive discrimination in training for jobs where few women are presently employed.

5. Equality for women in working conditions and conditions of employment, without deterioration of previous conditions. Protective legislation to be extended where appropriate to cover men, and not to be used as grounds for discrimination against women. Part-time workers to receive the same benefits and protections as full time workers.

6. The removal of all legal and bureaucratic barriers to equality, regardless of sex marital status and sexual orientation with regard to tenancies, mortgages, pension schemes, taxation, passports, care, control and custody over children, social security payments, insurance and supplementary benefits and hire purchase agreements.

7. Free state-financed, community controlled child care facilities with flexible hours to suit all parents to be available for all under fives. The integration of day care and educational facilities. The provision of play facilities after school and during the school holidays for all children.

8. A minimum of 18 weeks paid pregnancy leave. Adequate paternity leave. The right for either parent to take a years childcare leave after birth, half of which to be paid. No dismissal during pregnancy, paternal or childcare leave. No loss of security, pension or promotion prospects. Paid leave

Employers to provide day release for first 3 years of employment undertaken after 16. Increased training and re-training provisions and grants for women returning to work. Occupational training to be a right for all unemployed persons.

The extension of beneficial protective legislation (providing special working conditions to women) to cover men, in order to provide better working conditions for both men and women. For improved health and safety at work. To oppose any move to allow women to work on jobs or with materials which might endanger their health.

For the integration of private child care facilities into the public sector. Where workplace nurseries exist, these should be under the control of the union, parents and nursery workers and should be open for use by the local community. The provision of childcare and educational facilities after school and in the school holidays. For the unionisation of childminders and their integration into a comprehensive public nursery system (with training and facilities provided). Adequate community provision for the elderly, physically and mentally handicapped.



to care for sick children or to deal with other family responsibilities to be given to men and women alike.

9. Birth control clinics to be extended to cover every locality For free and safe abortion, contraception, vasectomy and sterilisation on demand on the NHS.

10. Child benefits to be increased to £5 for each child now. Benefits to be protected against inflation and to be tax free, and non-deductible from social security supplementary and insurance benefits.

11. To campaign amongst women to take an active part in trade unions and political life and to push for any structural and organisational changes needed to achieve this. To campaign amongst trade union men so that these too may work to achieve these aims.

protection against inflation as in Clause 2.

- (a) Free membership and the right to participate in all union affairs for all unemployed and those absent from work due to family responsibilities.
- (b). Trade union meetings to be held in worktime to enable women with family responsibilities to attend. Where this is not possible creche facilities to be provided.
- (c). For a campaign in the trade unions to organise women workers.
- (d). For the right of women in trade unions and workplaces to meet together to discuss their problems and needs as women workers and as members of a trade union and to win support for their struggles and demands. This right to be extended to all oppressed groups.
- (e). For the adoption of policies of positive discrimination to enable women to fully participate on leading bodies in the trade unions.

Please note that the section of the above document which comes under the heading of POLICY is the way in which the Charter Campaign would like the points under MAIN POINTS to be extended/ more fully implemented but they are not binding on organisations which take up the Charter on the sections which come under MAIN POINTS are.

In Nottingham we have been going ahead with arrangements for the Day School on womens rights (May 22nd see enclosed leaflet for more details) We are also in the process of producing a further local Charter bulletin. There is going to be a lot of work needed around the charter in the coming year and on May 12th we are holding a special meeting on what needs to be done in Nottingham. Anyone who wishes to become involved in the campaign or would just like to know more about are welcome to our meetings on May 12th and May 26th at the womens centre, 8.00pm. OR contact Jnae Browne 47304.

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## TRADE UNION SUPPORT FOR THE CHARTER.

The W.W.C. has been passed by 12 national unions, ATTI, NUJ, NALGO, AUEW (TASS), SCS, CPSA, ABAS, EQUITY, Musicians Union, ACTT, NSMM, NUS, as well as 63 branches of other Unions, 35 Trades Councils and 85 other orgs including CLP's, Womens Groups, tenants associations. The Charter was put to the TUC and rejected, but by only 2/3 of delegates, which shows that considerable support has been achieved inside the Unions for the Charter.

What has been lacking, however, is ACTIVE support for the demands of the Charter. We have faced this problem before - it was in the 1830's that the TUC passed a resolution supporting equal pay for women, but its record in support of struggles for equal pay has been very weak because that resolution was not interpreted as a commitment to fight for equal pay.

Some unions have been taking the Charter more seriously. Some have supported strike action over equal pay. ASTMS in Oxford University Press in Neasdon have taken strike action over maternity leave for one of their members, perhaps the first action of its kind. AUEW (TASS) have used a method of job evaluation to show what the rate for 'women only' jobs would have been if men had been doing them - a technique which could have wide application in the struggle for equal pay. Some unions have formed womens committees eg NALGO which provides an opportunity for women who are concerned, to organise and to make concrete proposals to the Union about what needs to be done, and to use facilities of the unions for research and debate.

In ASTMS, particularly in the East Midlands Area, Womens Workshops have been organised, where women members of the Unions can have discussions relating more specifically to their situation at work and in the Union. It is an essential basis for a really effective fight to change womens situation that we caucus as women workers in preparation for the struggle inside the union for support, and against the employers and the Government for our demands. Many women workers take little interest in their trade unions - for good reason because so often the activities and priorities of that union do not relate to the situation of women workers. If we want, as we do, women workers to take the trade union movement more seriously then the T.U. movement must take up womens problems. A good start might be to call meetings, (at times that suit mothers and wives, with creche provision for their children if necessary), at which women could come and discuss their own particular situations and how the unions could provide a basis for organising to change that. Of course the Working Womens Charter Campaign would be very happy to send speakers to such meetings but in addition we would like to see womens caucuses as a regular feature of any trade union organisation to provide the stimulus and organisation to combat the years of passivity of most women workers and the lack of interest that TU's have taken in our problems.

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## NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN.

Despite the efforts of NAC and considerable T.U. support for abortion on request, the situation regarding the availability of abortion is deteriorating with cuts in hospital services and a tightening up of the 1967 Abortion Act when certain recommendations of the Select Committee (which discussed the James White Amendment Bill) were implemented without any new legislation going through, for example the time limit has been reduced from 28 weeks to 20.

In Nottingham we are trying to get maximum local support for abortion as a ~~w~~womens right, and hope to focus the Campaign on local contraception and abortion facilities. We are also joining the national activities designed to prevent the reactionary anti-abortion legislation which is likely to be presented to parliament next session from getting through.

In the autumn NAC is hoping to stage a tribunal to put the Government, the Church and the medical profession on 'trial' in order to make an assessment of the abortion situation that will be based on specific evidence from the Labour movement, Community Health Councils, Womens Groups, individuals etc. We hope to be supported in this by women and men who have experience in the health service, or as consumers trying to obtain abortion. This will be our alternative to the Parliamentary Select Committee that we are boycotting because it has a 9 to 5 anti-abortion bias and does not have any potential as a demo-



static structure with which NAC could operate.  
For information, speakers contact:- Mary Bonnelly 42808, or Rachel Adams 43081.

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#### LONDON WOMEN AND THE CUTS CONFERENCE.

"The social expenditure cutbacks made by the Labour Government have particularly severe consequences for women. The cutbacks in nurseries, hospitals, old peoples homes, housing, transport and schools have had the effect of making it difficult for women to work thus reinforcing the sexual division of labour and have created redundancies in areas which are staffed largely by female labour. It has also had the effect of reinforcing the hold of the family; forcing women back into the home where they take the brunt of the economic crisis while the government redirect state revenue to private industry."

This is part of the resolution passed by the London Women and the Cuts conference held on February 28th, where over 200 delegates from many different organisations met to discuss the affect of the cuts in social expenditure on women, and to begin to centralise the struggle against the cutbacks of the present government. Many different aspects of the cuts were raised and discussed and it was shown again and again how the attacks on the living standards are hitting women particularly severely, in their roles as domestic labourers, as public sector workers and as consumers of the deteriorating social services. Womens unemployment is rising at twice the rate of mens - since 1974 it has risen at a rate of 106% compared to 50% among men. This shows how necessary it is to fight the sort of attitude that women only work for pin money anyway and so it doesn't matter if they are the first to go, particularly when women are often the sole wage earners. It also shows the need for adequate nursery facilities, in London a recent survey showed that boroughs only provide day nurseries for 1 1/2% of under fives. It is well known that there were 453 borough nurseries in Britain in 1970 - compared with 903 in 1949. One area where the cuts are hitting women particularly hard is the health service. As health workers women have always been used as a supply of cheap labour, (they make up over 70% of the people employed in the NHS). Now the cutbacks in the health service are meaning not only that women are losing jobs (eg, many student nurses are unable to find jobs when they qualify), but also that the burden of looking after the old, the sick and the young is falling increasingly on women. 120 hospitals in London alone will be closing shortly - including Elizabeth Garret Anderson which is one of the few hospitals entirely staffed by women and run for women. Cuts in staffing levels apart from unemployment will mean a heavier burden on already overworked staff. A womans right to control her own fertility is also being threatened by cuts and closure - a waiting lists for contraceptive services are as long as 3 months and plans for out patient abortion units such as one for Charing Cross hospital are being pruned.

The conference recognised the need for a strong fight back against the present attacks. It called for an immediate injection of funds into the social services and for the extension of the social services based on a workers plan to include free state nurseries, free and safe contraception and abortion on the NHS and an expansion of all forms of education to ensure equal education and training opportunities for all women. The right to work for both women and men and the need for a sliding scale of all wages, benefits and social spending to protect living standards against inflation were some of the other demands incorporated into the resolution.

Specifically, the conference called for national and local enquiries by workers' organisations and consumers of social services, into the organisation of public services and for Working Womens' Charter groups to be fully represented on all campaigns against the cuts and unemployment to take up the particular needs of women in these struggles. A Sub-Committee has been set up by the London WWC to monitor and oversee the campaign against cuts and how these affect women.

Finally, the conference called for a national conference on women, the cuts and unemployment to prepare for a national fightback against attacks on women and the whole working class.

This proposal was ~~xxxx~~ passed by the National Working Womens Charter Conference in April and the building of this should become an important



focus for extending the fight against the cuts, and for highlighting the particular needs of women in this struggle.

\* Between 1972 and 1977 capital spending will have been reduced by 28% and the wages bill is next in line for attack.

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THIS NEWSLETTER HAS BEEN PRODUCED BY THE NOTTINGHAM WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER CAMPAIGN.

WE MEET EVERY FOURTH WEDNESDAY IN THE MONTH AT THE WOMEN'S CENTRE, 26 NEWCASTLE CHAMBERS? ANGEL ROW? NOTTINGHAM. ANYBODY INTERESTED IN JOINING THE CAMPAIGN OR WHO WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN ARE WELCOME TO COME ALONG TO OUR MEETINGS.

APART FROM OUR MEETINGS AND PRODUCING THIS NEWSLETTER MOST OF OUR ENERGY RECENTLY HAS BEEN SPENT ON HELPING ORGANISE THE ONE DAY SCHOOL ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS WHICH IS BEING HELD AT THE TEACHERS CENTRE? CRAMNER ST. (SAT. 22nd MAY. 10.30 to 5.00).

AFTER THE DAY-SCHOOL WE HOPE TO DISCUSS AND PLAN OUR ACTIVITIES IN NOTTINGHAM.

WE WOULD LIKE ALL UNIONS (EVEN THOSE WHO HAVE HAD CHARTER SPEAKERS BEFORE) IN THE NOTTINGHAM AREA TO INVITE A SPEAKER FROM THE CHARTER CAMPAIGN TO SPEAK TO THEM ABOUT THE CHARTER AS THERE HAVE BEEN MANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CHARTER CAMPAIGN. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT UNIONS TAKE UP THE FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN AN ACTIVE WAY.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, SPEAKERS PLEASE CONTACT JANE BROWNE 47304. or CHAR STANIER 76410, or WRITE c/o THE WOMEN'S CENTRE. 26 NEWCASTLE CHAMBERS ANGEL ROW.