

# WOMEN'S STRUGGLE

newsletter of the  
women's  
liberation  
national  
co-ordinating  
committee

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Michael  
Hannon  
1970

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(All articles are printed as submitted and are therefore the personal views of the group or individual concerned.)

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The next issue of 'WOMEN'S STRUGGLE' - Please send all articles to:  
S. Roberts, 83 Leigham Court Road, London S.W.16.

The next CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING will take place in London on 7th-8th November. The meeting will be organised by South London NJACWER.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTIONS of £1 per year, or orders for single copies, should be addressed to the publishers, Women's National Co-ordinating Committee, 3 Rona Road, London N.W.3.

# MINUTES OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE HELD ON SUNDAY 6th SEPTEMBER

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were read. Arising from these, it was decided to include a form for formal membership of the C.C. in each newsletter, the subscription being £1 per year.

Subscriptions were received from:

W.L.F.	Camden W.A.G.
London Soc. W.	Bristol W.A.G.
Nottingham Soc. W.	Merseyside W.L.M.
S. London NJACWER	

Jo O'Brien undertook to contact Lis Merrington and Juliet Mitchell to get together the transcriptions for the book on the Oxford conference, to be published by New Left Books. £45 for transcription costs has been paid to Juliet Mitchell.

A chapter will be added on subsequent developments of the Women's Liberation Movement, together with a list of the groups and their activities.

2. A box number for correspondence has not yet been obtained.
3. **Newsletter.** This will be limited to a maximum of 26 pages, any surplus contributors being carried forward to the next issue.

Individual articles, reports of group activities and a list of local groups and their meeting times will be included in the newsletter.

There was discussion about the possibilities for expanding the newsletter's circulation, both as a means of income and as publicity for the Women's Liberation Movement.

Financing the newsletter will be made easier if groups will order and pay in advance the number of copies of the newsletter they require.

The Women's Liberation Front, who produced the last issue, managed to do 500 copies for £13, excluding postage.

International subscription for the newsletter will be considered at the next meeting.

4. **Co-ordinating Committee meetings.** Jo O'Brien moved that articles be submitted to the next issue of the newsletter to continue the discussion initiated by Sheila Rowbotham as to the frequency and location of meetings of the C.C.
5. **Next conference.** The Women's Liberation Front proposed that an educational conference be held in the autumn. However, after some discussion, it was decided that there should be a national conference in London, possibly towards the end of February 1971, and international groups are to be invited.  
Proposals regarding date and agenda can be submitted to the next newsletter and C.C. meeting.
6. **Campaigns.** Merseyside W.L.M. proposed that a vital and basic campaign must be instituted with regard to equal pay and opportunities in the work situation. Leonara Lloyd will submit a paper on this subject to the next newsletter to give the opportunity for general group discussions before the next C.C. meeting.  
Meanwhile the C.C. will write and request that 2 observers attend the N.J.A.C.W.E.R. meeting on 18th September.
7. **Leaflet on broad aims and objectives of Women's Liberation Movement** – submissions are requested from all groups before the next C.C. meeting.  
The leaflet will also give information on local groups and their addresses.
8. **Fund raising and publicity.** Jo O'Brien will speak at public meetings on the American Movement.

Articles, particularly of personal experiences, for the press can be sent to Fiona Baker, Flat D, 1 Royal Crescent, London W.11, who will also submit the newsletter for revision.

It was agreed that the C.C. should select representatives for a panel discussion on T.V.

The issue of a national office is to be put on the agenda of the next C.C. meeting.

9. **Bernadette Devlin.** Camden W.A.G. agreed to write to the Home Secretary and the A.E.U. condemning the continued imprisonment of Bernadette Devlin, as agreed in the motion passed at the Sheffield meeting.
10. **Vietnamese women.** A film is now available showing conditions in Vietnam at war, and in particular the organisation of underground nurseries. Further details can be obtained from the Women's Liberation Front.
11. **Symbol – Designs** to be submitted to the next newsletter and C.C. meeting.
12. The next newsletter will be produced by South London N.J.A.C.W.E.R. who will also convene the next C.C. meeting, on the first weekend in November (7th-8th).

# **MINUTES OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE CAMPAIGN MEETING HELD ON SATURDAY 5th SEPTEMBER IN LIVERPOOL**

## **Campaign for Free Contraception and Abortion**

Toni Gorton of Socialist Woman, Nottingham, stated that their group had been in contact with the 'Abortion Law Reform Association', who agreed to keep the group up-to-date on issues arising and any subsequent changes in the law, as well as

exchanging relative literature and correspondence with each other. The subject of fund raising activities was brought up, and T. Gorton suggested that groups put on the Myrna Lamb play *What have you done for me lately*.

There was considerable discussion about the form and content of leaflets to be produced for the Abortion and Contraception Campaign.

It was agreed that a leaflet be produced with the following demands and that local groups could add more detailed information if they so wished.

'We demand that women have the right to choose whether or not to have a child.

'We demand that facilities are readily available to everyone under the National Health Service for:

Free contraception on demand, and

Free abortion on demand.'

There was a general discussion as to whether the above campaign should be mounted yet or whether we should not have a series of local or/and national demonstrations before mounting any particular campaign. Nothing was agreed, but it was generally felt that a national demonstration should take place sometime in the near future (November was suggested and rejected). It was suggested that members should be trained as delegates to speak on behalf of the movement. This training should include public speaking.

A member of South London N.J.A.C.W.E.R. stated that more use should be made of the Mass Media as 'Women's Groups' are currently fashionable, and therefore very newsworthy. It was felt that the flippant attitude of the Media towards us is likely to give us broader coverage than would otherwise be possible.

Discussion of campaign leaflets: Marge Ben-Tovim suggested that these should not be in the name of the C.C., but under the name of the particular campaign. Areas for distribution of leaflets were considered to be: factories, schools, shops, and universities.

In discussion of how to approach Local Authorities, it was suggested that local groups should formulate and send questionnaires on available facilities etc. to their particular Authority.

Any information thus received should be passed on to the Socialist Woman Group, 16 Ella Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham.

The agenda for the day was not strictly adhered to, as it was felt that general policy decisions made about the Abortion and Contraception campaign would also apply to other campaigns.

The Nursery Campaign, as formulated by the Camden Women's Action Group, was generally endorsed with minor amendments as follows (see contents for complete script):—

1. That the Government provides *24 hour* nursery facilities.
2. Additional nurseries at places of work of either parent, and paid leave for *pregnant women* and nursing mothers.
3. No differentiation between the sexes of children *or staff* in either education or play facilities in nurseries.

On the weekend of these two meetings there was also an informal evening, with beer and music, at the Open Projects workshop on the Liverpool docks. At the beginning of this evening Jo O'Brien, a member of the Nottingham group and one of the editors of Socialist Woman, spoke of her recent tour of Women's Liberation groups in eastern Canada and the north-east of the United States. She confirmed that the size and public impact of the Women's Liberation movement in North America is already considerable. In some of the towns she visited, the groups were renting premises to use as a 'centre' and employing somebody full-time to do clerical work. In answer to a question, Jo said that this arrangement seemed to help ensure that all members knew what was going on and had a voice in decisions. Many groups placed emphasis on small 'consciousness raising' sessions, women new to the movement being helped to get these under way by more experienced members. It would be interesting (and Merseyside W.L.M., for one, would find it of practical help) to hear more about how in America they combine this very necessary self-education with effective action and the reaching of as many women as possible. Evidently our sisters in America, in spite of their coming together in the Women's Strike last August, are very

conscious of the problem of uniting such a broadly based and rapidly growing movement in action. Jo O'Brien encountered a strong feeling that the growth of an international movement will help to create this unity and enthusiasm about the contact which was being established with the British movement.

Jo's forceful talk and the searching questions she was asked brought home how, as the Women's Liberation movement grows in strength and scope, we are inevitably involved in debate over the causes of the oppression we all recognise and over the nature of the society we are struggling to create. Some of the groups she visited, notably in Chicago, were Marxist, but her impression of the majority was that they were 'anti-capitalist but not socialist' and 'reacting against the quality of life under capitalism'. These observations brought some strong reactions. What contact, some people wanted to know, was the North American movement making with the working-class women? With the exception of certain groups, virtually none, was the reply, although women (not men) from black and other minority groups are actively involved. A visitor from New York, active in Women's Liberation and in the Socialist Worker's Party, said that in America they face the difficulty of there being no Labour Movement, as we understand it, and of members of many unions being, unfortunately, far from radical in their political outlook — observations which made sense to those of us who have lived in America. As contacts grow — not only with America but with women from many countries — we shall clearly need considerable discussion of important issues like these. (Incidentally, an American sister complained during one of the discussion groups at the Sheffield conference that the movement in *this* country was not truly Socialist.)

What Jo O'Brien did feel to be a common feature of the groups she visited was a move towards rejecting the institution of the family. She was struck by the interest which men there are taking in Women's Liberation, many coming to meetings, as they put it, 'to learn'. On the streets of New York she'd found it commonplace for men to make scornful and aggressive sexual advances to women. In contrast, 10-20% of those joining the 30,000 strong Women's Liberation demonstration which she'd addressed there were men. One man she'd



questioned about his interest had said, 'Once women smash the chain we all form in society, that's the beginning of the great change.'

## IMPORTANT DEMAND BY WOMEN

Dorna Wright

As an older woman, I have waited all my life for equality in its fullest sense for women and hoped that some day a suffragette movement would have the pluck and initiative to fight, as women fought to vote. Indeed, women appear at last to be realising their position and making themselves heard.

It seems to me, however, that equal pay for equal work done by a woman instead of a man, though very important as a right, is not as necessary in raising the status of women as that they should have a *financial basis in marriage*, or, since many married women prefer to work outside the home while they have no children, a financial status as soon as they have to leave their outside work to become mothers.

Unfortunately, very many women suffer from being financially dependent on a husband who has turned out to be selfish and/or irresponsible. Many wives do not even know how much their husbands are earning. This is very hard to believe by those who are happily married and whose partners are as anxious as they are themselves, to have a happy home and family. My plea is that some assurance of financial stability can be given to cover all women. There are numerous cases of women who, as soon as they are tied by loved little ones, are in the degrading position of working 10-12 hours a day in the home, 365 days a year, whether in good health or bad, with barely enough to buy necessities, much less clothes and pleasures. Traditionally, a good proportion of husbands automatically take the view that as their wives receive no wages, they therefore do no work and are fortunate in being 'kept'.

If a wife stays with her husband while in this unhappy position (although nowadays, such a situation unhappily

leads on to divorce) there is no law or redress which says a man must maintain his wife and children as comfortably as he can afford. Even if she and her children are living on a mere pittance, while he possibly runs a car *for himself*, drinks and/or smokes heavily, or otherwise spends money, while his wife and family are underfed and badly shod, it is the one situation in which even the Welfare State cannot help, as assistance from the Ministry of Social Security is based on the man's income, irrespective of what he gives to his wife, and she can get no help.

A possible solution might be that there could be a Pay-As-You-Earn legislation, say, when a couple arrange to marry, a Government form is automatically issued shortly before the wedding, to be completed and signed by both parties, showing income of partners, place of employment, etc. to enable Government administration to be organised so that the employer (heavily burdened as he admittedly already is) could deduct the wife's allowance, which should be a fair percentage of her husband's income, from his pay at source, at least from the time she is to become a mother.

If this became common practice as with other payments such as Income Tax, S.E.T., National Health, etc. there could not be so many unfortunate girls feeling socially inferior to their husbands, and a certain dignity would be added to the position of motherhood.

Where, of course, a man's income was not sufficient to allow of a certain minimum standard of comfortable living, then perhaps the Ministry of Social Security could help by giving assistance in kind to the mother in the way of food or clothing vouchers, so that the wife and children would not suffer.

## CAMPAIGN FOR NURSERIES

Camden Women's Action Group believes that one of the first steps in Women's Liberation is the release of women from

total responsibility in childcare. Many women become aware of the degree of their oppression when they have children; they usually have to bring them up, until school age, with little or no assistance from the State or from the male parent. This can become a nightmare, particularly when they have several children. We believe that women have the right to *enjoy* bringing up their children, and to share with their husbands both the enjoyment *and* the work. They must be provided with every facility in order that they can, if they choose, work, educate themselves, and take an active part in the running of community and country.

During the last war, when the Government needed women workers, there was no shortage of nurseries and other facilities; since then the number of nurseries has decreased by 85%. This does not even cater adequately for the needs of *single* parents who have to work, and has resulted in exorbitantly priced and dubiously run private nurseries and illicit child-minders. 94% of children under five have no hope of nursery accommodation. We consider this situation to be both desperate and urgent, and ask you to support this campaign in which we are making the following demands:

1. *That the Government provides 24 hour facilities for all under-fives. If necessary, these could be incorporated into primary schools.*
2. *Additional nurseries at the place of work of either parent, and paid leave for nursing mothers.*
3. *No differentiation between the sexes of children or staff in either education or play facilities in nurseries.*
4. *Free Government-provided launderettes and canteens to help release women from the bondage of housework.*
5. *The implementation of the 1944 Education Act.*

#### **Some suggestions for campaign activities**

1. *Contact Trade Unions and attempt to enlist their support.*
2. *Contact any persons or organisations who can give authoritative advice or information to support our claims. Contact universities for any surveys or research material which might be relevant.*
3. *Contact local councils and health authorities and visitors for*

*help in establishing the extent of the necessity and demand for nurseries.*

4. *Establish a working relationship between ourselves and other bodies interested in this problem.*
5. *Establish a committee of people who have authoritative knowledge of the subject and possible influence in useful quarters.*
6. *Petition M.P.s with these demands.*
7. *Contact all newspapers for articles on the subject.*
8. *Contact any person(s) working in the mass media with the possibility of getting programmes or articles in support of the campaign.*
9. *Poster campaign. The C.W.A.G. will produce posters which could be distributed by any group supporting this campaign.*

Camden Women's Action Group, c/o Anne Greenwood,  
98 Camden Road, London N.W.1.

## COMMENTS ON THE SHEFFIELD CONFERENCE

### Sheffield Group

#### Women's Liberation and the Press

Ann Howard

We really didn't think too much about the press when planning the conference — no great debate about whether to admit them or not — no press statement — I suppose we thought if we didn't bother with them they wouldn't bother with us. However, as the Black Liberation Conference was being held at the university too, some of the local reporters were around. A woman from the local paper attended the Sunday meeting in a 'private capacity' as she told me afterwards. Perhaps we should have noticed her and given her an interview (which she tried unsuccessfully to get from one of the Sheffield group) because the conference report next day in the *Morning Telegraph* was headed 'Liberated women go off sex, say group'. Over half the story was devoted to this one item and the rest

of the report concerned the abortion campaign, the criticism of the organisation of the conference — 'not organised well enough to provide a creche to keep children out of the way of speakers'. It's significant that once again the bourgeois press is only interested in the sexual aspect of women's liberation.

The local press has written one or two articles about women's liberation but they've always been about America or London groups, just gossip really about crazy happenings and wild females. When they discovered it was happening in Sheffield too they were a bit nonplussed and didn't know how to treat us. Eventually a woman journalist extracted some details about our group from me, and these turned up at the end of a column dealing with the fact that men in the north were more coddled than their southern counterparts — thus women's liberation would be less acceptable up here!

I feel our brief encounter with the bourgeois press proves that the interest in our movement is purely to gain information that can be sensationalised at will. Unless we write articles ourselves it is not worth giving any information because even the simplest facts seem capable of distortion.

**Conference — 2nd day: Discussion group on Sexuality and Marriage**  
**Angela Marrit**

It is difficult to present a very coherent picture, as the discussion was very rambling and I did not take notes as I find this difficult. My contributions, or written pieces, seemed to me to be terribly verbose and I did not use them. Basically, I wanted to attack the Freudian idea of woman as a 'man with something missing', and the idea of the 'superior' vaginal orgasm which is supposed to replace the inferior, immature clitoral one during the course of the woman's sex life. This idea still prevails in many books on sex technique which are fairly widely read, as well as in the works of psychiatrists. Also the idea that women should be passive and masochistic: 'Pain cannot always be spared the woman and, if not too intense, may favour that erotogenic, masochistic attitude which should be that of women in the sex act.' Marie Bonaparte, *Female Sexuality*.

We discussed 'role-playing' in sex, and how men are 'conditioned' as well as women. It is difficult to know to what extent. Men may dislike always being aggressive and many women dislike always being passive. If they (women) do not achieve their 'mature' orgasm, they may become disheartened and think that they are frigid.

At one point in the discussion it was felt by several members that the men who were present should be requested to leave. We all agreed that, if their presence was inhibiting for even one or two women, it was better that they should leave.

One member said that since joining Women's Liberation she had felt less sexy. Was this due to a rejection of passivity, or to a new truthfulness? Do women lie about their sexual feelings? We did not find an answer to this.

We were interrupted several times by people with requests to attend a 'plenary session'. Most of us felt reluctant to leave the discussion as it seemed to be going so well. We were beginning to feel at ease and to trust each other, therefore we decided to bolt the door against further interruptions.

Our discussion progressed to different ways of living — in fact this topic was being discussed by another group — as a solution to some problems, i.e. isolation in a nuclear family. The difficulties of setting up even a small commune are very great.

At this point we returned to the big meeting and one of us 'reported back'. I felt there was a great feeling of solidarity from the discussion in which we had all participated. We felt strongly that the groups should develop naturally, without pressure to 'build the party'. Old-style politics and jargon will not encourage women to come along to our local meetings, especially if they are very isolated, have family problems, and regard 'politics' as an alien activity. We must *help* with their ordinary real life problems and discuss things which are relevant to them.

#### Saturday. The Opening Session

Jenny Woodley

For me the form of the first session of the conference on Saturday was sterile and completely non-productive. When

the conference was in the planning stage we should have asked ourselves the question: What are we trying to achieve in having a session of this nature?

1. Was it to bring people together? If so then we succeeded in seating a large number of people in one room, certainly, but in such a way that any communication between them was practically impossible. The physical arrangement of the room saw to that.
2. To educate ourselves through listening to a paper read by someone who has made a study of a particular subject? Educationally this method is unsound. Most people do not learn in a situation which requires them, for the most part, to be passive. They find it difficult to assimilate information which they cannot have the opportunity of reading for themselves, are too easily distracted by the reader's speech mannerisms, noises around the room, etc.
3. To propagate ideas? Most of the objections in 2. also apply here. People's ideas are rarely forthcoming in a situation which, because of its formality, deters all but the most confident speakers.

What happened on Saturday was not, I suppose, really surprising in the circumstances; following each paper a few people made set speeches, some bearing very little relation to the subject of the paper, there was a great deal of criticism of the two main speakers, for failing to mention writers which some people felt should have been mentioned or, as in the case of the second speaker, for the way in which she actually read her paper (a peculiarly negative and bitchy attitude I thought). In all about fifteen people spoke — most of them several times — while the other eighty or so of us sat by watching and, if they felt as I did, wondering what on earth they (the ones who spoke) could possibly be getting out of it all and why we (the onlookers) didn't just quietly slip away and leave them to it.

Perhaps we had this session because organisations, particularly political ones, have always held conferences where there is a platform and people make speeches or read papers, and we haven't yet shaken off the feeling that this is the correct way to go about things if we want to be taken seriously as an organisation. In retrospect I don't think the Saturday session was a total failure. We in the Sheffield group learned a

great deal from the experience of organising our first conference, and in the group meetings which followed, when we discussed our own impressions and the criticisms made by other groups, everyone was agreed on the importance in any future action of thorough discussion before the event so that we all had a clear idea of precisely what we were trying to achieve.

### Meanderings

Romola Guiton

Unlike many others who came, I felt a great sinking of the stomach as the conference approached; mainly, I suppose, because I didn't feel we knew what we wanted a conference for. On the Saturday afternoon it seemed to promise that it would leave the same depressing after-taste left by so many other big meetings queueing backwards in my memory. In a way, though, this was worse, because what has seemed so optimistic to me about the Women's Movement in the last year, is that it had broken with the structural forms of traditional left-wing politics and was trying to work out completely new forms of political activity, based on the idea of all in a group coming to take part in group activity and decisions, in striking contrast to the set-up in most groups trying to change this society, which mirror not only the relationship in society between men and women, but also that between authority and those who are led: the Saturday session was set up in such a way that, however brilliant the speakers, it could never have led to a conference of those people there on the ideas raised. The best that could have been hoped for would be a lively debate from those in (or around!) the movement who specialise in star appearances.

That is why the Sunday was so much of a relief to me. I was in a group (on sex and marriage) which began to be able to discuss in fairly honest terms, and in real terms of experience which seem to me to be the only basis for attempting to understand and change anything. It was only a beginning: most of us took some time to get over feeling nervous about speaking at all, never mind saying anything which might reveal anything of ourselves. It wasn't helped by interruptions by people trying to persuade us to leave the discussion altogether to have a joint session, just when the discussion became interesting. One of the really encouraging things was that the group felt that it was



becoming useful and important enough to continue it, when we were faced with a sudden instruction (!) to join the others in the hall to report on what had hardly yet begun to be a discussion.

*A footnote.* Sad that what was intended to be an exchange of ideas and experiences between those groups living close enough together to envisage perhaps working together on some activities should have had to devote the short time allowed to explaining yet again why most people in those groups thought that their priorities were in local group work – but marvellous (and very unusual) the way that so many people were part of that discussion. In September perhaps we can have that meeting of the groups – I want to know what the other groups in our region have been doing and how they did it.

### Criticisms of Conference Organisation

Rose Pearson

We asked the groups to write in and tell us of any criticisms that they had or suggestions for improvements in future conferences. No one has written but several criticisms were made at the time which have all (we hope) been included in the following piece.

The main criticism was the lack of a creche – and in this we are inexcusably guilty. Several of our own group have young children, and all are victims of the limitations imposed upon women by their role as mothers, as manifested at all levels, from the abandoning of an interesting career, to the nasty looks when one takes one's children into a restaurant or library. We have in fact discussed the role of women in the nuclear family in our group a great deal, and while we don't all agree on the question of the family itself, we are all emphatic that women must be freed from the most crippling and isolating aspects of motherhood. But we still didn't provide a creche, the nominal reason being that the men weren't falling over themselves with delight at the prospect. However, on reflection, we are sure that this could have been done with only a little discussion and persuasion. Our apologies to the women who were unable to attend because

of this — some of whom wrote letters which should really have prompted us — and to those whose participation in the conference was limited.

On Sunday the conference passed a resolution that all future Women's Liberation Conferences should provide a creche.

Other glaring organisational faults emerged — mainly due to the fact that too many details were planned hurriedly and late. For a start — what was originally intended as a conference of the Northern groups mushroomed, via the co-ordinating committee, into a kind of mini-Oxford Conference. The awful thing was that many essentials, such as *where* we were holding the sessions, had not been solidly arranged, and by this time the date had been circulated.

People found loose time on their hands. On Sunday we met from twelve to four and nothing was provided for Sunday morning. Again, all eating places in Sheffield are closed on Sunday morning, including the Union, and there was nowhere to buy even a cup of tea near the conference. So those who didn't have breakfast were really hungry by four. We suggest that in future a lot of goings on, as colourful as possible, should be provided, and people's basic need for fuel be catered for in some way. These, especially the former, *need organising very well in advance*.

Finally, policy should be clear and made clear to those who attend, beforehand, on such questions as, are men to participate? is there a creche? is the conference to have any sessions devoted to particular sections (like the Northern groups meeting on Sunday p.m.)?

We have found that in trying to form a different kind of left-wing movement, we must open up the form of the Conference. It should not be a vehicle for the already articulate and brave to discuss, whilst the more shy and uncertain listen. Thus, discussion groups are probably better to open a conference, and plenary sessions should follow on, involving a wide number of group members. Our culture inhibits most women from pushing themselves forward and expressing their views — many are unsure and feel that their views will sound naive and stupid, so conferences must be structured to offset this. We must not be a movement of leaders and led, vocal and silent, active and

passive. Our own movement must at all stages fight this conception of women.

## REMARKS ON THE DISCUSSION ON SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE

Josephine Robinson, Liverpool

Very little was said about social attitudes towards sexuality and the sexual positions of men and women. What was said tended to be more on an intellectual level than on one that ordinary working class people could understand and relate themselves to.

Men are openly encouraged to 'sow their wild oats' before marriage. Their virility is measured by the number of women they've laid — a man would be thought queer or odd if still a virgin on his wedding day!

Women are taught the exact opposite. Their virginity is 'sacred' to be kept for one man on her wedding night — the white gown a public symbol of her 'purity'. If she were to indulge in pre-marital relationships as freely as men are encouraged to, she could then expect to be labelled 'a cheap tart', 'a slut' or 'an easy lay'.

Thus we have a sexually free and experienced male and a sexually restricted and inexperienced female who are expected to have a successful, intimate, sexual relationship with each other!

Women allow themselves to be sexually oppressed in order to be socially accepted. This conditioning is even more effective because of the risk of unwanted pregnancy. Eliminate that risk and the above conditioning would eventually prove ineffective, for women would surely then ask why it is 'moral' for a man to have pre-marital relationships and immoral for a woman.

Once women have equal sexual freedom they would then surely demand equal social freedom; neither would they be quite so eager to get married so quickly.

Therefore I feel that one of our most important demands as a Women's Liberation Movement should be for *contraceptive*

*advice and devices to be made freely available for all at no cost.*

1. The Government could well afford to make free contraceptives for all. It would save a vast fortune in Maternity grants, Maternity allowances, Family allowances, Educational fees and grants, National Health Service fees and Social Security benefits for unmarried mothers and their children. This money could be spent on Free Abortion Clinics, and more creches, nursery schools and supervised playgroups, and Social and Further Education facilities.
2. There would be less demand for abortion. (Perhaps it is the overwhelming demand for abortion that is causing the public outcry. A great percentage of the medical and nursing profession are afraid that they couldn't cope with the present demand, and those willing to do abortions afraid that they would have no time for anything else).
3. The distressingly high rate of illegitimacy and unmarried mothers would be greatly reduced and eventually almost non-existent.
4. The population would be lowered; therefore the standard of living higher.
5. Every couple would be able to plan their families effectively, and every child would be a wanted child and not an 'accident' or a 'mistake'.

## PROBLEMS OF THE REFORMED ABORTION ACT

by a London Consultant

The last two years have seen an eightfold increase in the number of pregnancies legally terminated. This followed the introduction of new legislation which had the effect of liberalising the old laws. Following this increase in the numbers of patients involved, several groups of problems present themselves. Before dealing with these let us state the new situation about abortion.

Since the new Act of Parliament, by statute law a physician and a colleague may, in good faith, recommend a termination of pregnancy. Briefly, four groups of indications are that:

- a) *the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated;*
- b) *the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated;*
- c) *the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the existing child(ren) of the family of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated;*
- d) *there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.*

The termination may be performed by either of the two doctors recommending or by a third doctor who is prepared to act on the others' opinion. Provision is also made for the exceedingly rare situation when an acute emergency happens and the doctor is single-handed. Here he can, in good faith, recommend and perform the action by himself, but only the first indication of those listed above can be used.

The problems that follow the new act may be conveniently considered in four groups:-

### 1. Ethical problems

In the 1967 Act, provision is made for those who cannot recommend or perform abortions for reasons of conscience. It is considered advisable for such doctors who cannot deal with these problems themselves to get their patients seen by colleagues holding different views. This can lead to difficulties. The interpretation of the conscience clause has led to a large geographical variation in the availability of abortions to patients in the National Health Service and has aroused much medico-political passion. In the much smaller, but more publicised, private sector, the law has resulted in patients travelling some distance from their homes to visit gynaecologists of known liberal views, and some doubt has been cast publicly on the probity of such men. Certainly a small amount of improper interpretation of the Act goes on by a few gynaecologists. Unfortunately, so long as one group of

human beings look after another group, human failings are bound to come to the fore on occasions. This is rare but well publicised.

## **2. Practical problems**

The effects of the new laws have been felt for two years and the number of abortions is already estimated as an eight-fold increase and still rising (we cannot be exact for, although the current figures are known, there are no precise records of abortions before the Act). This has meant extra use of beds, medical and nursing personnel and operating theatre time. All this has been added to the existing work load and in places has severely strained facilities. Waiting lists for admission to hospital for treatment of other gynaecological conditions have lengthened in some areas, for the decision of termination of pregnancy has a built-in time limitation and these cases must be treated promptly. Occasionally once this decision has been taken, a patient cannot be brought into hospital until after 12-14 weeks and so an abdominal procedure is required. These problems are magnified by the variable interpretation of the Act, which means that some hospital areas have a higher demand rate for they are known to be liberal in their ideas and may be neighbours of others who are more constructive in their interpretation of the law.

## **3. Legal problems**

The new act codified previous practice in Britain. For years, humane doctors have terminated pregnancies when they felt it was required. The new law has some good points but like all codes is rigid and some doctors may feel that an individual patient's needs might fall outside the code. Further it relies largely on the interpretation of the phrase 'in good faith'. This, in law, has a slightly different connotation from everyday usage and undoubtedly this is going to be the nub of any legal cases which are going to come in the next year or so.

## **4. Medical problems**

Every treatment has problems of side effects; the best

treatments have the least. Considering the aftermath of termination of pregnancy, two main problems intrude. The first is the largely unassessed problem of the psychological upset and guilt feelings that may follow abortion. It is hard to assess this impartially but undoubtedly a few women are made psychologically worse by termination of their pregnancy. Careful assessment before the abortion may help to screen these patients but the science is an inexact one.

The other major problem is that of mechanical damage to the uterus which might affect future pregnancies. The neck of the uterus may be over-stretched and so lead to weak muscle later on. Further, if an abdominal operation is performed, the uterine muscle itself may be left scarred and so weakened. Both of these problems are foremost in the minds of those who look after such patients.

*These are a few of the problems. Many of us in gynaecology feel that they will settle or be settled in the next few years and that the ultimate good to the community and to society will outweigh them.*

**'A SURVEY OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT' by Audrey Hunt**  
A book review by Maggie Andrews

If you want a junior non-manual job then it's good to be female.

If you want training as an apprentice you had better book your sex-change now.

Don't choose a Welsh husband if you want to work outside your own four walls; Yorkshire men, as we have all been told, are best in this as in other respects.

Did you know that one in ten women wants to change her job?

The Social Survey is a mine of information on all aspects of women working. The survey was done in 1965 and could be considered out of date, but it is the most recent and is likely to be the last for at least four years.

There are no startling revelations but plenty of corroboration for points Women's Liberation want to put over. The basic fact that two-thirds of the labour force are women, yet most of these are in turgid jobs at 5/- an hour. The wages before deduction are £6 per week because part-time work is all that most women can physically manage with a husband, children and a house to look after. Even working part-time, most women found that they had no time for relaxation. Education was the greatest barrier for women in obtaining better jobs. Only one in six had passed any exam at all and this was usually English.

The image of the fickle women changing jobs with the seasons is firmly quashed, but the fact that women give up work at the first sign of a baby is proved. No reasons are given but it would be surprising if they had been offered leave with pay.

Audrey Hunt gives a very concise resume of her survey of 10,000 homes, and one of the points she brings out is that the present system of older female relatives looking after children will not be possible in future when all the Grans, that's us, are working. If we want to liberate our daughters we have to push Local Authorities into providing more nurseries.

Volume II contains a staggering amount of tables from which the survey was made up. So if you have a burning desire to know how many 'regular casuals' are working in the 16 to 19-year-old group compared with the 60 to 64 group; or if you want to know how many 16 to 19-year-olds feel that they are too old to work — then this volume will provide hours of reading for you.

Don't buy the survey. Volume I costs 32/- and the tables cost £3. *The Picton Library, Liverpool, has both in its Commercial Section, reference R.331.40942 Gov.*



## A BRIEF GUIDE TO SOME AMERICAN AND CANADIAN WOMEN'S GROUPS

Jo O'Brien

### Minneapolis

*Twin Cities Female Liberation Group, Box 14061, University Station, Minneapolis, Minnesota.*

Began as a Women's Counselling Service in October 1969. Concerned with advice on abortion, maternity care, etc. Also established to confront the Medical establishment.

Setting up small groups for new women to relate to.

Has its own office and newsletter, two full-time workers, one of whom is supported by the group.

Many other groups also use the office. There are monthly meetings of the general groups geared to the running of the newsletter and office.

### New York

*Women's Liberation Centre of New York, 36 West 22nd Street, New York.*

A centre used by many groups in New York for meetings, etc.

*Red Stockings, c/o Stacey Seigle, 60 West 87th Street, Apartment 5R, New York.*

Small consciousness-raising groups.

### Cleveland

*Women's Fraction, Socialist Workers' Party, 2921 Prospect, Cleveland 44115, Ohio.*

Running a twenty-six-year-old woman for State Governor with an emphasis on the need for Women's Liberation.

### Philadelphia

*Women's Liberation Centre, 928 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.*

Newly-opened centre. Used by various groups for meetings. General meetings to discuss running of centre, and campaigns in which all groups might want to participate. Karate classes.

## Chicago

*Chicago Women's Union, 2875 Westcerm Chicago, Illinois.*

All groups in Chicago are members of the Union. Has a platform, which was originally mandatory, but is no longer. Meeting of all groups once a month. The groups meet once a week. At the general monthly meeting the women break up into sub-groups to discuss specific issues, e.g. how to set up a contraception clinic. The general meeting can have from 80 to 200 women. A Steering Committee convenes union meetings, and the committee has one person from each group.

The Centre runs an underground abortion service. It also has a Speakers Bureau Service. Each person in it is assigned to a particular issue. The Centre has its own radio programme between 12 pm and 5 am. It also produces a monthly newsletter which contains articles and analyses.

## Baltimore

*Wild Cat Women, P.O. Box 4729, Baltimore, Maryland.*

Distributes a paper, *Wild Cat*, once a month, and a large leaflet, *Wild Cat Woman*, once a fortnight. The articles are centred on industrial issues. The women try to be industrial based, and in particular work in shops.

## Detroit

*Detroit Women's Liberation Coalition, c/o 1443 Bewick, Detroit, Michigan.*

Broad-based coalition of groups, having difficulty in staying together.

*MSU Women's Liberation, Student Services Building, Room 329, East Lansing, Michigan.*

Student Women's Liberation group.

## Cincinnati

*Cincinnati Women's Liberation, c/o Ellen Faulkner, 266 Klotter Avenue, Cincinnati.*

Small consciousness-raising groups. Have done a lot of speaking at High Schools, Universities, on TV, etc., and groups did expand in numbers. But there has been a failure to consolidate this expansion and the numbers are now diminished.

## Boston

*Boston Women's Centre, c/o 295 Huntington Avenue, Room 307, Boston, Massachusetts.*

A new centre with offices and a speaker's hall. Used by all the groups.

## Toronto

*Toronto New Feminists, 67 Huntley Street, Toronto 5, Ontario.*

Centred on consciousness-raising. At present not attempting to recruit new women.

*Toronto Women's Liberation, c/o 433 Queen Street West (Queen & Spadina), Toronto.*

A large, growing group, action-based. Has already established groups amongst High School girls.

*See future issue of Socialist Woman for a full account of Jo O'Brien's American Tour.*

## WHAT EMPHASIS FOR WOMEN'S LIBERATION?

Leonora Lloyd

For some time I have been worried about the direction which WNCC is taking. We seem to be continually skirting round the fundamental issues, to the extent that the campaigns already initiated have to be extended, somewhat artificially at times, to cover these issues.

The most important issue, I believe, is woman in the work situation and all that arises from it. A campaign should be initiated around two central demands: a) economic independence of women, and b) socialisation of child care and housework. These are surely so fundamental and all the rest flows from it. Women cannot have economic independence without equality in the work situation and this means they must have equality in education, etc. But they cannot take part in work at all unless they are free from undesired child-bearing and time-consuming child-care and housework. Hence the other three campaigns fall naturally into a *unified whole*.

Why have we been skirting around this issue? Because of a history of justifiable antagonism to NJACWER and specific demands for equal pay etc. smack of 'collaborating' with NJACWER; because of open hostility by some women (especially at Ruskin) to working-class women, with whom they cannot, it seems, connect; because of worry that the movement will become 'economist'.

I have argued elsewhere that unless women are economically free our whole programme cannot be achieved. Imagine asking a working-class woman to forego marriage in our present-day, chauvinist, capitalist society. How could she visualise looking after herself and her children? Or must she deny herself the company of adult men and of children? No, we must direct our campaign at the fundamental basis of the family — economic dependence and the tying of women to one man and the home. So we must attack on these lines and I would suggest as demands:-

- 1) *Unconditional right to work for all adults.*
- 2) *The right to do all jobs open to men and women.*
- 3) *Complete equality of pay, promotion, etc.*
- 4) *Full pay during maternity and nursing, with no loss of status, etc.*

The other campaigns then follow naturally.

We must work towards a situation in which all men and women work, but for the much shorter hours that would then be possible if all work, all would take care of the children, and the housework would be completely reorganised.

Of course, this is not possible under capitalism, but *we*

*must make the demands* and put forward the ideas, so as to educate women into the realisation of their position.

I have only covered a very few points, because this is only meant to *start* discussion, not to dominate it. If we want to free women, then we must strike at the roots of their slavery – economic dependence, from which flows emotional dependence.

## A REPLY TO SHEILA ROWBOTHAM

Sabina Roberts, South London NJACWER

In the last Co-ordinating Committee Bulletin, Sheila Rowbotham outlined – in a brief and perfunctory way – the stage our movement is at and how she sees it developing. I think Sheila is right to pose her ideas now because, as she says, we are ‘small, new, no common theory’ etc., and we all want to move beyond this stage.

The question is simply, how? How do we move out and involve large sections of women in our movement? Whilst we believe that Sheila was right to pose her ideas, we think the answers she came up with would get us nowhere. In fact, we in South London NJACWER believe that if they were carried out – the movement would be carried back to the old fragmented stage it was in before the CC was formed to co-ordinate our work and make us a viable concern.

How else are we to understand her rejection of the idea of a national office? (Perhaps the movement isn’t *yet* at a stage where it is financially sound to set up a national office, but we should certainly keep this in mind. We need a centre where information and addresses can be kept; we need a centre where any woman in the movement can feel free to go and spend a couple of hours to put in some work; and we need a centre to deal with the administrative work involved in organising campaigns.) And how else are we to understand her suggestion of less frequent bulletins and CC meetings? Of counterposing local to ‘grandiose’ (national?) campaigns? What seems implicit in Sheila’s article is to lessen the amount of co-ordination between us and to return to the idea of ‘everyone doing their own thing’. She implies that we have to learn to ‘walk’ before we can ‘run’.

Of course we are not against local groups running their own

activities. But what we have to get very clear is how do we see these local groups, which have many differences among themselves, being able to co-operate in a movement that will involve masses of women – and that surely is the aim of us all? In our opinion, Sheila's method is not the correct method. That way lies insularity and the little 'talk-shops' which the CC was established to overcome! It will not lead to a building of the movement – it will probably lead to its demoralisation.

In our opinion, the way to bring sections of women towards us is not by perpetuating geographical or political differences – but by building national campaigns which show these women that a movement *exists* and is *fighting* for those demands which concern them, such as abortion, child care facilities, etc. That is why we in South London NJACWER wholeheartedly supported the setting up of the CC, as a big step towards creating that maximum unity of the groups. Only such unity is going to draw masses of women towards us – local talk-shops won't. And we want masses – the more the better should be our motto.

Of course the different groups have differing concepts of approaches and objectives of women's liberation. In that respect it is true that we have 'no common theory'. But does Sheila expect us to sit back and do nothing but wait for that common theory to appear? No . . . what we can – and must – do is to achieve the maximum amount of unity on those concrete issues such as abortion and child care, etc. and turn those demands into ACTION which will win the support of thousands of women. These women aren't at the moment concerned with the intricacies of women's liberation, but they ARE concerned with whether they can get free contraception or free abortion on demand, or a nursery place for their child whilst they go out to work. If we don't want to turn into a 'talk-shop' then we have to get involved with these women.

Sheila might not think we are ready for this. We think that we have to build on the positive step we took in setting up the CC. In fact, if the CC groups don't get involved in these mass actions very soon people will become demoralised by seeing they're not going anywhere and leave the movement.

One final point. Only very recently we have seen the big upsurge of women in America. Those huge demonstrations were made up by groups like all, with all their differences, but were united on concrete issues which they demonstrated upon in UNITY. Is Sheila against that? We can be sure that that demonstration will attract thousands more women to the movement than if every individual group had 'done its own thing' in its own time.

Now that we've come so far and reached a certain unity, let's not retreat. We believe that if we put this unity into action on the campaigns agreed upon, then we will really see our movement grow.

## BRISTOL CONTRACEPTION AND ABORTION CAMPAIGN

Dear Merseyside Group,

Hope this is not too late. I have been unwell etc. You may remember that the Bristol Woman's Action Group was supposed to send you a draft for newcomers in the movement, called the Introductory Leaflet for Newcomers. As yet we are dissatisfied with our several versions so this will have to be left until the next newsletter. However, enclosed is the outline for a leaflet which we intend to use in our Free Contraception/Abortion campaign here in Bristol. We will pass these around during our demo. and various other places. Perhaps other groups would like to use it.

Beverly Skinner

P.S. We still have about 400 copies of the second issue of our mag. *Enough*. The price is 2/- plus 6d postage.

DO YOU THINK ABORTION IS WICKED?

YES?

THEN YOU PREFER:

1. Unwanted babies
2. Dangerous backstreet abortions

3. Overpopulation
4. Misery and poverty

BUT

NO-ONE REALLY WANTS AN ABORTION.  
SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

1. Provide free contraception for all
2. Make sure everyone knows where to get it
3. And as a last resort, abortion on demand.  
But remember — abortion is contraception  
three months too late.

*Printed and published by Woman's Liberation, etc.*

## COMMENTS ON THE MEDIA

Fiona Baker

At the last Co-ordinating Committee meeting in Liverpool, the subject of the Media was raised — and various aspects of its use, financial and for the purpose of simply distributing ideas and information, were discussed.

As I am employed as a feature writer by IPC quite a few questions were directed at me, and since Liverpool I have been working with Valerie Charlton (of Camden group) on this. Last Saturday we had a small meeting with Jo O'Brien, Lois Graessle and Kate Bruder (of Women's Workshop) to discuss what steps could be taken *now* to establish:

- a) *contacts in the media and other professions*
- b) *ways in which we could keep certain members of the press — particularly women writers in magazines and women reporters informed briefly of the Movement's activities and whereabouts.*

The subject is on the agenda for the next Co-ordinating Committee meeting in London on 7th and 8th November, when I hope I shall be able to fill in some details — especially about rates for interviews, articles, etc., and also when any ideas from other groups can be contributed.

For the moment there are several ways in which we can



start to organise this now.

1. If a list of addresses, names, and a brief description of particular groups' activities could be sent to selected members of the press, this would safeguard the angle and manner in which main features on the Movement were written (as they no doubt will be written in the next six months). Therefore if any groups are willing to be included on this press release could they send their names, addresses, and, if they choose to do so, a description of their activities to me — or have their response, if negative, ready at the next meeting.

2. If we could compile a directory of contacts — ranging from solicitors to writers and artists, doctors and any women working in a profession — which would be available for general reference, this would prove invaluable when it came to making the right approaches to the Media and obtaining advice on medical services, research or legal matters. If you have any contacts at all — whether local or national — could you send their names to me (with their permission) so that I can have a rough list available for everybody at the next meeting.

3. Suggestions for making other contacts: Local radio (the new ones are Manchester, Newcastle, Teesside, Southampton, Chatham, Blackburn, Derby, Hull, Bristol, Oxford, Birmingham and London), Local press (women's page), Local artists and Art Colleges (for poster work, etc.). It would be valuable if we could have some measure of their response at the next meeting.

4. As a side-issue. Valerie Charlton and I are trying to gather together women artists in London for specific projects such as exhibitions of work (on Women's Liberation themes), and forums for writers, poets, etc. Any interested artists, painters and sculptresses should contact Valerie at Chippenham House 210 Cambridge Road, London N.W.6. Tel: 01-328 7404. (Valerie is also working with Monica Sjoö of Bristol on this). If there are any interested poets, dramatists, writers and actresses able to meet regularly in London could they contact me.

Meanwhile — any ideas on the above would be appreciated.

Please contact me at Flat D, 1 Royal Crescent, London W.11.  
Tel: 01-602 1858.

- Birmingham:** Birmingham Women's Liberation, c/o Catherine Hall, 6 South Prospect Road, Moseley, Birmingham 13. (021-449 0684)
- Bradford:** I.S. Angela Kornreich, 199a Manningham Lane, Bradford 8.
- Bristol:** Bristol Women's Action Group, Janet Parham, 8 Crofton Park, Bristol 8.
- Canterbury:** Women's Liberation Group, Evelyne Shortland, Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury.
- Coventry:** Coventry Women's Liberation Group, 53 Paul Stacey House, Hillfields, Coventry.  
Civil Rights for Women and Children of Broken Families, 72 Roseberry Avenue, Bell Green, Coventry.
- Essex & Colchester:** Women's Liberation Group, 32 Parkwood Avenue, Wivenhoe, Colchester.
- Exeter:** Exeter Women, Jana Mintoff, Hadon, Berkshire.
- Harrow:** Women's Liberation Group, G. Simms, 56 Salisbury Rd, Harrow.
- Hemel Hempstead:** W.E.R.C., Bryanne Kirk, 28 Hillfield Road, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire.
- Hull:** Women's Rights Group, Carol Lewis, 10 Newgate Street, Cottingham, HU16 4DT.
- Keele:** Women's Liberation, Students Union, Keele University, Newcastle, Staffordshire.
- Leeds:** Women's Liberation Group, Sue Strutt, 146 Otley Road, Leeds 16.
- London:** Camden Women's Action Group, 3 Rona Road, London N.W.3.  
Gingerbread Group, 5 Walden House, 32 Marylebone High St., W.1.  
I.M.G., Women's Caucus, 182 Pentonville Road, London N.1.  
N. London NJACWER, Marion Tarbuck, 16a Holmdale Rd., N.W.6.  
S. London NJACWER, Connie Harris, 27 Thursley House, S.W.2.  
Mothers in Action, 25 Milton Road, London N.6.  
Women's Liberation Front, 58 Lisburne Lane, London N.W.3.  
Women's Liberation Workshop, 154 Barnsbury Road, N.1.  
I.S. Women, 18 Dickenson Road, London N.8.  
Socialist Woman, 40 Inverness Road, Southall, Middlesex.  
Peckham Rye WLW, 23 Brookstone Court, London S.E.15.
- Manchester:** Women's Liberation Group, 15 Chandos Rd., Manchester M21 1SS.
- Merseyside:** Women's Liberation Movement, 53 Sandown Lane, Liverpool 15.
- Nottingham:** Socialist Woman, 16 Ella Rd., W. Bridgeford, Nottingham NG2 5GW.
- Sheffield:** Women's Liberation Group, 136 Broomspring Lane, Sheffield 10.
- Stafford:** Y.S., 43 Fairoak Avenue, Parkside, Stafford.
- York:** Women's Liberation Group, Derwent College, Univeristy of York, Heslington, York.

**Billingham:** Judith Barnes, 46 Kennedy Gardens, Billingham, Tees-side.  
**Birmingham:** Ann Griffiths, 32 Arthur Road, Birmingham 24.  
**Cambridge:** Denise Riley, New Hall, Cambridge.  
**Doncaster:** Maureen Douglas, 16 Abbeyfield Road, Duscroft, Doncaster.  
**London:** Helen Barnes, 15 Lambourn Road, Clapham, London S.W.4.  
Jane Grant, 29 Grosvenor Avenue, London N.5.  
Birigit Rithber, 3 Grooms Hill Grove, Greenwich.  
**Oxford:** Ruth Gilbert, 49 Portland Road, Oxford.  
**Reading:** Sara Lewis, 159 Whitley Wood Road, Reading.  
**Salford:** Janet Harris, 96 Doveleys Road, Salford M6 8QW.

A Booklist of Women's Liberation:

Price: 1s. 6d. Available from:

London Socialist Woman,  
182 Pentonville Road, London N1.

The second issue of 'ENOUGH'  
published by:

Bristol Women's Action Group  
now available at 2s. 0d. from:  
8 Clifton Park, Bristol 8.

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