

Socialist Woman

**Why women
should take**

WORKERS' CONTROL

***Equal pay struggle builds
up - Scottish TUC conference
- Canadian 'Drink-In'***

6d

WHY A SOCIALIST WOMENS COMMITTEE?

Anne Black, Nottingham Socialist Womens Committee

1968 proved a year in which the fight for women's rights received a much-needed shot in the arm. If we accept the challenge with militancy, 1969 should be a year of tremendous advance.

It is vital that the working class movement in Britain accept the question of women's status as a very real political issue and that it be acted upon with the same seriousness as any other aspect of the struggle. Women must organise themselves to develop a programme aimed at raising the consciousness of women and activating them to make concrete demands forcing the Left to assimilate them into its programme for the establishment of a just society based on the full utilisation of the abilities, talents and intelligence of both sexes.

This is a time of intense frustration for many women whose status has not changed since the suffragettes, for women are doubly oppressed, both on account of their sex and as workers. The oppressive nature of our society stems from the establishment of private property and the consequent development of the paternal, monogamous family. Previously, women had been equal partners in the responsibilities of community life, but with the development of capitalism were relegated to a means of production owned and controlled to one degree or another, by the male. They provide a large captive group easily exploitable in terms of working conditions, types of jobs and wages.

The combination of running a home and working brings home to married women the full extent of their exploitation, and the widespread inequalities in employment, in terms of opportunity, training and wages are burdens that rest equally heavily on the single woman, not to mention the single mother. Women must organise to remove the intellectual dominance of the male. To enter the world of political man without an identity results in an atmosphere of tolerance and patronage which does not advance our individuality and swamps our particular problems and demands.

We must demand: Complete rights over our own biological functions i.e. free access to birth control information and devices, abortion and a completely new attitude to marriage with a view to ending enforced cohabitation. We stress that the "family" is only meaningful if based on mutual consent, love and respect. Children must be the responsibility of the community which should provide free creches and nurseries, and legal paternity abolished. We must destroy the image of marriage as a career, petty domestic routine and constant preoccupation with small children are not fulfilling activities for any adult human being. We must demand full legal rights, such as the right to separate income tax returns, and we must demand equal pay for work of equal value. While women represent 1/3 of the labour force

SOCIALIST WOMAN

March-April, 1969

Vol. 1, No. 2

16 Ella Rd., West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5GW Business Manager: Anne Black

Pro-tem editorial board: Jo O'Brian, Ann Torode, Antonia Gorton, Marie Claire
Signed articles do not necessarily reflect editorial opinion.

Contents:			
Why a S.W.C.?	Page 1	Immigrant Women in Southall	Page 5
Equal Pay- The First Step	" 2	Equal Pay at Men's Expense?	" 7
Scottish Conference	" 3	Canadians "Drink-In"	" 9
Women & Workers Control	" 4	Allons Enfants	" 10
		Fight at Ford's	" 11

only 1 in ten receives equal pay. Opportunities for female apprenticeships are dismally low, in management only 5% of the total are women, and in science and technology only 2½%. We should demand full maternity leave, nurseries attached to the place of work and organise women workers to reject the concept of "two jobs". Unions must be forced to accept equal pay as an urgent need, requiring immediate industrial action.

Finally, we must examine and restate the role of women in history and reject the bourgeois propaganda that women have made no contribution. They can and will continue to do so in their roles as human beings. We must organise ourselves to make these demands real and pressing, educate ourselves and gain confidence in our ability to act. Socialist Women's Committees can and should be formed everywhere possible - with mutual co-operation and militancy. Organise should be our keyword.

EQUAL PAY - THE FIRST STEP by Sabina Roberts

As socialists - and as women - our contribution to the increasingly popular "equal rights" campaign should be slanted a particular way. Although we welcome all efforts to highlight our second-class status, we should be careful not to lean towards the old "feminist" clichés which confuse the "sexual" with the "social" (and thus fail to touch the great mass of working women). Surely this is the reason for the movement's lack of wide support in the past. What we have to stress today is the social nature of the problem: the strike by women workers at Fords and Renold's have surely shown us that this is the only perspective for mobilising women (those working women so often brushed aside as "apathetic") on a mass scale.

Of course, we must conduct struggles and propaganda against discrimination in all aspects of our lives - whether it be in education, at the home or in work. But as socialists who see this discrimination stemming from a class society - it is our job to seize on those concrete demands which will integrate our struggle, as women, into the general struggle of the labour movement. This must not be done artificially - but we should be wary of stressing those "welfare" demands (e.g. greater facilities for working mothers, free abortion, etc.) which often skirt the social problem and lead back into the middle-class circles of yesterday. For this reason, the demand for "equal pay" (raised in the last issue of Socialist Woman) becomes central. Let us be frank, however, and say that this demand was raised for us in a direct way by the magnificent struggles of the Ford seamstresses and Renold's workers - and last, but not least, the fight by London conductresses for equal sick pay and pension schemes. Then we realise that there are over 8 million women workers in the country, the majority of which receive not much more than half the man's equivalent wage, we realise how important the issue! It is one of immediate and democratic appeal, affecting a large section of traditionally oppressed women, and one which brings them into conflict not with "men" (that old abstraction!) but with the existing social system. Such a demand - backed up with others such as greater training facilities, equal benefits and opportunities - provides an immediate bridge between women's particular demands and the larger struggle of the labour movement. (It unites them, for example, in the struggle against the 'Incomes Policy').

There are other reasons of course, why this issue assumes the importance it does at this time. We may all remember how Mrs. Castle - that great ex-veteran of our fight for equal rights! solved the threatened engineering strike last year. She obtained a settlement partly by separating men from women workers and throwing the latter to the wolves. If equal pay had been a reality at that time, or if a wide enough struggle had been initiated to achieve it, she would never have been able to get away with what she did. (Before the settlement, men were earning on average,

9/6 an hour and women 5/4...) In other words, then, the fight for equal rights in industry can only achieve a greater sense of unity in the long term between men and women workers and offers less chance to the employers to split them (besides of course, being a decisive step forward against female discrimination economically)

We must not, however, be naive enough to expect that the fight in the factory and office will not rub reactionary trade unionists up the wrong way. Unfortunately, it will - and has. The reception given London conductresses last year in their struggle to achieve equal benefits and the right to go driving, was abominable: after all, it was the militant 'Reps (who refused to concede their demands (even though the T&GWU is officially in favour of equal rights!)) But we must fight this prejudice - and it is pure prejudice of the kind employers love to see! - because we are not only fighting for equality for women but for greater industrial democracy as well.

Finally, as Audrey Wise wrote in the last issue, equal pay by itself is obviously NOT enough: it does nothing in itself to change the basic problems of men and women as cogs in an impersonal machine designed to produce profit for a privileged few. But it CAN be a beginning, it CAN mobilise what are called the "apolitical" working woman in a struggle which leads her to question the very nature of a society which degrades and exploits all working people and doubly degrades and doubly exploits her. This has been shown to us by the initiative of such working women which has given the campaign the beginning of a mass basis and away from the select middle-class few.

SCOTTISH EQUAL PAY CONFERENCE from Margaret Coulson

550 delegates from 22 Unions and 10 Trades Councils attended a very successful conference on Equal Pay in Glasgow on March 22; it was organised by the Scottish TUC. The conference was preceded by a demonstration in Glasgow arranged by a local committee of NJACCWER and calling for equal pay and rights for women. The mood of the conference was militant with the views and demands voiced from the floor often outstripping those from the platform. Speakers included Marie Patterson, Miss E.C. Kent (Clerical and Salaried Staff Assoc.), Joan O'Connell (DATA) Miss R. Stephen. Joan O'Connell set the struggle in a wider perspective, referring to historical and international developments; and to the social and economic exploitation of women, comparing their position to that of black workers. But the most rousing speeches came during the discussion periods, to which Agnes MacClean (AEF) made the first - and very forceful - contribution. She was able to point to the success of militant action; in her work they had been able to achieve averages in engineering of £17 -£19 with higher rates being negotiated. She pointed out that discrimination against women started at a very early age; often there seemed to be more public concern about the rights of animals than of women. The importance of a militant movement, clear in its objectives, was frequently stressed; of getting more women involved in Trade Unions; of involving more men - the Press had tried to show this to be a war between the sexes - but the fight was with the employers for decent conditions for all (like retirement at 60 for men and women), and against prevailing social attitudes. The resolution put to the meeting called on the Government to ratify the ILO Convention (100), to take legislative action to assist the establishment of equal pay for work of equal value: and asked that a deputation from the Woman's Advisory Committee meet Barbara Castle so that the views of the Conference could be made known to the Government. Many delegates would have supported a stronger resolution, but an addendum was put asking (STUC General Council) that two representatives from the meeting should join any deputation, and it was unanimously agreed that Agnes MacClean and Margaret Fennick (Jute Flax & Allied Trades) should be the representatives.

****There will be a meeting on Sunday 20th April at 2.45 in the Trades Council Club 81, Carlton Place, Glasgow, to set up a Glasgow branch of NJACCWER. *****

WHY WOMEN WORKERS SHOULD TAKE "WORKERS CONTROL"

by Margaret Coulson

How often have you had to waste time at work because things have been stupidly organised, have had to look busy when there was nothing to do - or had to carry out meaningless tasks because there was no real work? And how often have you seen materials needlessly wasted? or badly mismanaged? How often have you been frustrated and exhausted by unreasonable conditions at work? And you've thought that you could tell them how to run things in a more sensible and humane way...

But who determines how work shall be arranged, and evaluated, the conditions in which it takes place? In industry today such decision taking tends to be far removed from the actual work situation, often justified as the "objective" and "scientific" advice of experts. Most women could make useful contributions to such decisions where they work; perhaps with the resurgence of the movement for women's rights increasing numbers will come to feel that they could and should do so. But in the system under which we're employed workers aren't expected to be able to contribute in this way - workers, and especially women are encouraged to believe that they've neither the ability or the right to determine or control their work situation.

One important contribution of the movement for workers control is in rejecting these defeatist beliefs. This movement has grown rapidly over the past five or six years and at the conference in Sheffield on March 29 -30 about 1000 delegates are expected to attend. In the context of current industrial and technological changes the campaign for workers control is of vital importance: - to defend workers rights against both government and employers (incomes policy, the government white paper In Place of Strife and the Ford dispute of the early part of March all illustrate this need very dearly); and to extend these rights; and to develop longer term alternatives to the present system.

Growing interest in the workers control movement has been most significant in the most advanced industrial sectors. Just as it was women from this sector who sparked off the most recent developments in the movement for women's rights - the sewing machinists at Fords fighting for the recognition of their skill.

But the majority of women are not employed in this sector. Over 62% of women work in establishments of less than 100 employees; about 3/4 of them are not in unions; and of course the majority of them receive very low rates of pay - either because they do not get equal pay for equal work (about 3 million women) or because they work in jobs traditionally classified as "womens work" and poorly paid irrespective of the skills involved (about another 3 million women).

In industries which rely mainly on female labour women have to safeguard and extend their rights at work and the perspectives of the workers control campaign have a direct relevance in spite of the particular difficulties outlined above. The more general demands - for equality of pay and work, for decent conditions and reasonable hours, for adequate provisions for children while their parents work, for equal opportunities and legal rights - must draw ideas from the workers control movement too. And the common inequalities which women share enable them to unite across the traditional industrial union boundaries; the NJACWER already indicates the possibilities of such unity.

It's now 80 years since the TUC passed its first resolution on equal pay, but if women remain largely unorganised and inactive the rate of progress over the next 80 years seems unlikely to speed up. One important factor in extending the campaign for women's rights (not just in work but in all spheres) is to emphasise that

they are rights. If it would cost between £600 and £1000 million to give equal pay for equal work now, then this is the extent to which women are currently subsidising the profits of their employers (and of course the subsidy is greater than this because of the poor rates of pay for "womens work"). And the right to decent conditions - if men employed on London transport buses get sick pay after one years employment, then this is the right of women employees also (not five years later as is now the case). As the demand for, and the right of women to work extends so the needs of children must be recognised and proper nursery and nursery school and after school provisions made. The demand for such provision is basic to the extension of women's rights in work and in society.

At home a woman may have more scope to arrange housework herself - but probably its automatically assumed to be her job, and an unpaid one... (and she may have to suffer for her husband's frustrations with his own work too).

In so many ways we know that women are exploited to a greater extent than any male worker, and we must develop the struggle for our rights on all possible fronts in recognition of this. Women in our society tend to be taught that they must control themselves rather than seek to control their environment. A socialist women's campaign must counter such teaching; the ideas of the workers control movement have a double significance for us here.

IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN SOUTHALL

by Leonora Lloyd

In the last ten - fifteen years Southall and Acton (now both part of the London Borough of Ealing) have experienced an influx of strangers. In each case, they could not, on the whole, speak English. They tended to keep in their national groups with their own cultures. But only Southall has got into the news. Why? Because Southall's were "dark strangers", whilst Acton's were mainly Hungarians and Poles.

The Indians who came to Southall were burdened with many difficulties. Often still in debt due to the expenses of their journey, they were forced into the lowest paid jobs and the highest-cost housing in the slummiest areas. Originally they went to areas where jobs were available, but later the very fact that friends were already in the district drew more newcomers to it. On arriving in a strange inhospitable country, where no-one offers to help you, it was only natural to want to join friends.

Many of the immigrants came from small villages in India and had never seen a big city before starting on their journey. They are expected to send money home, on top of all their other financial difficulties, so it is no wonder that many of their homes contain only the bare necessities. I have been in Indian homes where coats are worn indoors during winter and fires lit only in the coldest weather.

Because they are living in areas which were "going down" even before the immigrants arrive, the children tend to go to slum schools. Ealing Borough operates a bussing system for immigrant children, so the mothers have the task of getting their children ready at an unearthly hour for a school bus, knowing they will not be back till late - even the 5 years olds.

Few of the women speak English, but many are keen to learn and attend classes. (How many English women tried to learn the languages of the countries their husbands ruled in our colonial past?) Their lack of English and industrial skills means they will take the worst paid jobs. As they must pay for the care of their children

out of their money it is not surprising that children are often "cared-for" in miserable conditions.

West Indians are not so plentiful in Southall and, of course, they arrive speaking English and with a background of British culture and tradition. However, this must make the rejections and insults they suffer, even worse.

The women tend to take shift work. This is reflected in my local playgroup, which has a policy of taking 50% immigrants, but has at times found it difficult to get enough. This is because the mothers cannot get along at the right times. A West Indian mother who worked nights was always worried in case she fell asleep and couldn't fetch her child at the end of the morning session. Yet this child, compelled to keep quiet while mother slept, needed the playgroup desperately.

Immigrant children tend to be overly quiet to begin with, then they "run wild" for a few weeks. This is a reflection of the conditions at home. But once they're settled they learn English at a fantastic rate.

It is difficult for a white woman to really imagine what it is like to live with the sort of prejudice that abounds in Southall. A friend of mine from Ceylon, where she was a teacher, an attractive and well-educated woman by any standards, was in tears when she told me some of her experiences: how landladies slammed doors in her face, shop assistants ignore her, etc. Once, in Woolworths, a young girl, told to "Serve that lady, please" said to my friend's face "What lady, where?". She said that she arrived in Britain believing herself the equal of anyone, but sometimes now she feels she must be inferior. She is married to an English man, who cannot always appreciate how sometimes she comes home hating white people in general - this must affect their personal relationship.

This is in contrast to my Guyanese neighbour, who was already married when she came to Britain. Her husband did all the room hunting and so took all the hard knocks. Her biggest worry is her young children: they come home from school with things they have heard, but not understood, repeated from white children who have in turn learnt from their parents. How is a parent to instil personal pride and a sense of personal worth under these conditions?

Immigrants have brought new foods, fashions and culture to our town. Problems have arisen with their coming, but largely created by white people. A few years ago the race question split the local Labour party and led to the expulsion of two Labour councillors, who now represent the "Residents Association" (definition of a resident: white.) The National Front has also contested elections - unsuccessfully. The local paper is a racist rag, which always emphasises the nationality of any immigrant wrongdoer. The Indian Workers Association itself is split.

These problems cannot be solved by social workers or politicians, but only by the workers of all races uniting against their common enemies.

MORE HOLLOWAYS?

A California college professor has said that future prisons should be re-organised to make room for larger numbers of women inmates. He claims that more American women will turn to serious crime in their drive for independence and equal status. Professor Gilbert Geis said one of the signs was already coming from the juvenile courts where only four times as many boys as girls were charged with crimes, compared with a ratio of eight to one for men and women in adult courts.

WILL EQUAL PAY BE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE MEN WORKERS?

Pat Jordan, International Marxist Group

(N.B. The following article was written primarily in answer to a letter which appeared in BLACK DWARF arguing that women would only gain equal pay at the expense of the men. SOCIALIST WOMAN felt that it should be answered in these pages.)

Non-Marxists can perhaps be forgiven for supporting the argument that the winning of equal pay would lead to a reduction in men's pay. However, anyone with any knowledge of Marxist economics will know that this argument is a rehash of Lassalle's famous IRON LAW OF WAGES.

Lassalle formulated it like this:

"The Iron economic law which under present-day conditions, under the domination of supply and demand, determines the wages of labour, is this: that the average wage always remains reduced to the necessary subsistence which is required by a people according to its habits, for the maintenance of existence and reproduction." (Gesammelte Reden u. Schriften, III, S.58)

Put another way this implies that there is, under capitalism, a given wage level which is basically unalterable. Therefore attempts to increase it are in the long run useless (the capitalist will manipulate prices or increase unemployment to take back what has been won). Taken to its logical conclusion, this means that all trade union struggles are a diversion and a waste of time. Lassalle, himself, drew this conclusion.

Engels had this to say about the subject:

"....our people have allowed the Lassalleian 'Iron law of wages' to be foisted upon them, and this is based on a quite antiquated economic view, namely, that the worker only receives on average the minimum of the labour wage, because.... there are always too many workers. Now Marx has proved in detail in CAPITAL that the laws regulating wages are very complicated, that sometimes one predominates and sometimes another, according to circumstances, that therefore they are in no sense iron but on the contrary very elastic, and that the thing can by no means be dismissed in a few words, as Lassalle imagines...."
(Letter to Bebel, 18-23 March 1875)

Marx also savaged the concept of the Iron Law of Wages in his CRITIQUE OF THE GOTHA PROGRAMME.

Opponents of equal pay for women argue, just like Lassalle, that because there is only a given fund for wages any increase in women's wages is bound to be at the expense of men's. They do not seem to realise the far-reaching implications of such an argument.

Why stop at women? If this argument were correct it would be short-sighted for any section of the working class to try to increase its lot. If this were the case any section of workers which is underpaid would also only be able to increase its wages at the expense of other sections of the class. We should tell the agricultural

workers don't try to get higher wages. Even the Ford's strikers would have to be told to go back to work. To pose the argument like this is to show how ridiculous and reactionary it is. It is quite worthy of Enoch Powell (and similar in essence to some Tory utterances on trade unions).

We are tempted to think that the proponents of this point of view hide a certain anti-feminism behind this "economic" viewpoint.

It could be argued that the question of women's wages is different because of the large number involved. This no-wise gets round the objections because one could also argue that trade unionists form a very large number of workers as opposed to unorganised workers. But be that as it may: how is the iron law of wages supposed to operate? Would the capitalist recoup all the extra wages that he was paying by increasing prices? If one concedes this argument then one is back at the position of opposing all struggles for increased wages because the capitalist will always increase prices. The actual fact is that the capitalist cannot increase prices at will and there is no known economic law which enables the capitalist to put prices when women's wages go up but not when men's go up. In this sense economics does not discriminate against women.

Actually, the struggle for all wage increases is a struggle over the rate of exploitation (or in Marxist terms, the rate of surplus value). Marx analysed in great detail the way the class struggle affected the rate of exploitation and demonstrated beyond all doubt that whilst trade union struggle could not do away with exploitation (only revolution can do that) it could reduce it.

Women should struggle for equal pay with all their might. By so doing they are, in economic terms, struggling to reduce their rate of exploitation. The only people who will suffer by a militant fight for equal pay are the capitalists. If they try to recoup their losses by attacking the standards of men workers, it is up to the men workers to fight back. Let no talk of the iron law of wages deter any section of the working class from struggle, least of all the doubly-exploited women workers.

COMMON MARKET: The little difference

Equal pay is far from being a reality in the Common Market. The average hourly wage of a woman is inferior to that of a man: the 'little difference' is 1 franc in Italy, 1.04 francs in France, 1.82 francs in Belgium, 1.92 francs in Germany, 2.28 francs in Holland, and 2.60 francs in Luxembourg (1 franc = 1/8). Yet, in these six countries, there are more women than men. The majority of those who work are between 14 years old and 25 years old - why? An answer may be found in the fact that certain firms (in Italy, in particular) state in the contract of their female employees that they will have to give up their jobs when they marry.

PIECENWORKERS WIN EQUAL PAY: from The Morning Star, 10/3/69

Leamington: Equal pay rights with men have been won by a section of 20 women on piecework rates at Industrial Mouldings, a plastics plant here. At the centre of the women's fight was Denny Mathews, a plant convener and chairman of The City Equal Pay Campaign Committee. Before he and a woman shop steward began to pressure the management, women were timed on a piecework rate agreed with a rate

(cont)

fixer in the normal way, but men automatically received a third more.

Now women will receive the same rate adding up by August to a £2 a week rise. On average it will mean that a piecework price of 2s 10½d as at present will rise this month to 3s 3d, in May to 3s 7d and on August 2 it will be 3s 11d.

Mrs. Pauline Walters, secretary of the women's campaign committee, was enthusiastically optimistic. "This is a real break-through and we shall certainly use it as a lever both in other sections of the factory and other plants in the town," she said. "The most important thing we have learned is that success is almost entirely due to the pressure that can be exerted from within the factory. Outside help from the union has been of little if any significance.

It has also confirmed that individual trade union branch resolutions, welcome as they are, are not enough. It has been the all-city formation of our campaign committee that gave the needed boost to fight for our rights, and this first victory will give us extra encouragement," she said.

CANADIAN SOCIALIST WOMEN STAGE "DRINK-IN" by Penny Simpson

Reprinted from Young Socialist Forum (Canada) March 1969

It makes you burn every time you think about it: there is only one place in Quebec you can sit down to a cheap meal and a draught of beer - in a tavern - but you can't, because you are a woman. Even if you can't stand beer, it makes you burn.

It makes you think of all the rotten laws against women that add up to "women are stupid, irresponsible and infantile, no matter how old they are". And to add insult to injury, they tell you you can't even hold a beer.

Oh, you are allowed to go to bars, where you can dole out your wages (2/3 that of a man) or you can mooch off the badly paid guy you go around with, at the rate of 60¢ a bottle. A pint of draught costs 30¢ in a tavern. What is more likely to happen is that you will stay home and he will go to the tavern.

We asked the government to open the taverns to women. They said nobody had ever asked before. But the Montreal Star revealed that taverns were integrated up to the end of the depression, until the Church demanded that women be pushed out, and of course the reactionary government promptly complied.

We decided that we would do more than just ask to be let in. We launched "Operation Drink-In", an invasion of the biggest, most prestigious tavern in town - Le Gobelet.

The Montreal Star attacked us in editorials, cartoons, and articles on four days running. La Presse printed our leaflet on its front page and announced that this was the invitation of the Ligue des Jeunes Socialistes to all women to come and get their rights. Tavernkeepers wittered in interviews about prostitutes, and the manager of Le Gobelet declared that he might serve us apple pie and coffee, but no beer.

When we arrived, marching with our banners, slogans and red flags, with even more men LSJers than women, it was clear that everyone in the tavern had been arguing for hours. One group of men poured out the door with improvised signs advising that we should go home to our dishes. But others were shouting encouragement.

Cops stood around nervously: the whole thing had become so popular that they couldn't stop us. The tavern-keeper was nervous too: he was facing a \$300.00 fine.

We elbowed through the crowd at the door into the linked arms of the waiters trying to push us back. We blared "Taverne Libre! Taverne Libre! Les tavernes aux femmes: les femmes aux tavernes!" on our bullhorn and shoved back. Men were climbing on their chairs yelling, ringing the cow bells docking the walls, defiantly waving their mugs of beer at us. We pushed harder. Young men we had never seen before reached out their hands to us, pulled us in under the waiters' arms and gave us their beer.

Bronda Zannis, chairman of the YS/LJS, climbed onto a table top, mug in hand, to explain, "Where can we women go if we want a good beer and some cheap food? We women earn less money for doing the same work as men. Then we are forced to pay more for beer and food. Men can go to the tavern if they want to get away from the home, but we have no place to go."

Forced out by police threats, we held a rally on the doorstep to explain why we were there, why the tavern is a burning injustice, why it is a symbol of all the institutionalised discrimination against women, and why we are sick and tired of a system that uses one half of humanity against the other. The action ended with the thought that it was only the first of a full-scale war on discrimination against women in Quebec.

(Editorial note: There are still pubs in Britain which refuse to serve women and even more infuriating (if that's possible) will refuse to sell women customers a pint! - half pints being more ladylike or something... Give you any ideas?)

ALLONS ENFANTS... from Marie Claire

"Give me a million healthy babies..." (General de Gaulle, 1946)

Is it vital for France that women should have more children? The birth rate has gone down since 1963 (18.1 births per 1,000 inhabitants in 1963, 16.8 in 1967). The right-wing press solemnly expresses its "disnay" and, in order to encourage the French to procreate, the government has recently promised a rise in the children's allowance.

The statistics quoted may indeed impress the man in the street. But the statisticians in charge of the I.N.E.D. (Institut National d'Etudes Demographiques - National Institute of Demographic Studies) who provided the government with the above quoted figures refuse to be bullied into the government's "more babies" propaganda. They reckon that a span of 3 years is not enough to give a proper basis for an analysis of the demographic situation and that anyway other pieces of information should be taken into account. In 1966, they had already published a report stating that "the way people planned their family according to their economic situation, education and religion should be analysed". They deplored that in France the information on how and why French people used birth control was so badly developed. This report was not commented on by the government. It was better to forget it (implying that, the less people were told about "these things" the more children they were likely to have). As for the "means of encouraging birth" which were suggested in the second part of the report, it seems that the government took notice of one only: the raising of the children's allowance.

There are now 1,800,000 mothers who work. From 1954 to 1962 the number of working mothers with one child has increased by 18%, while the number of working mothers with 2 or 3 children has increased by 36%. And yet convenient working hours have not been arranged for them. There are 65 children in an average form of an infant school in the industrial north of France. And in Paris one child is admitted into a kindergarden for every 150 who apply. Improvements of these various points had been suggested by the I.N.E.D. in order to help increase - reasonably - the birth rate, as well as a rationalisation of the housing policy, a reorganisation of the income tax system etc.... Nothing has been done, and over these last two years things have grown worse if possible. No wonder the I.N.E.D. now refuses to support the government's frantic birth policy. It is very doubtful as well that French women will be prepared to rethink their family planning because of a few francs' increase in children's allowance. (And the "million healthy babies" who were born as a result of the last vast birth campaign in the late forties recently clearly expressed their views of what they thought of the present and future offered to them twenty years after.)

THE EQUAL PAY FIGHT AT FORD'S

by Fred Blake

Reprinted from Tribune, 21/2/69

(Fred Blake is an organiser for the National Union of Vehicle Builders and secretary of the National Joint Action Campaign for Women's Equal Rights)

The issue of equal pay is not something which has arisen overnight, nor is it, at Ford's, an automatic follow-on from the sewing machinists' strike last year. This whole campaign has been the result of hard work and planning by the National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights, which was set up last year and is now responsible for the strong renewed activity now taking place.

The committee is fully conscious of the difficulties connected with the introduction of "complete equality" because of the existence of protective legislation for women workers. It also accepts that women have far more domestic commitments, which means that serious consideration will always have to be given to the fact that they cannot work outside accepted normal working hours.

I believe that too much emphasis is placed on women workers losing all protective measures if equal pay is awarded. Most abnormal working conditions are the result of bad planning and inefficient management. In some cases there can be a rearrangement of the labour force, with a small volunteer group of workers covering essential work outside the normal working shift.

National agreements between employers and trade unions are negotiated with the particular needs of the industry concerned in mind. The coal-mining industry, for example, is mainly geared to male workers, whereas the catering industry is predominantly manned by women workers, and many women already work night shifts in canteens or buffets.

If it is argued that, for women to receive equality, they must accept all that goes with it, does this mean they cannot retire at 60 years of age, or will those employers who insist on their women employees accepting abnormal working conditions also accept their male employees retiring at 60?

According to certain press reports I am the leader of a militant group opposed to Ford women receiving equal pay without the conditions of night-work etc. This is

incorrect. I want the system of collective bargaining to continue to operate between management and trade unions.

Where national agreements are drawn up to meet the requirements of a certain industry, to remove protective legislation for workers would only allow industry to become more and more inefficient and give workers less leisure hours with their families. If there is a strong case for women or men to work abnormal hours, let it be freely negotiated.

I do not think the Ford Motor Company has a strong case for trying to enforce conditions with an equal pay award. The sewing machinists, for instance, can stockpile large quantities of car seat-covers during the normal day-shift working hours.

The only problem which could arise during night-shift hours is a torn seat-cover or an emergency change in the interior colour scheme of one or two cars. Such situations are already adequately covered by two or three male sewing machinists on night-shift. They do not receive higher grading rates but only night-shift premiums to compensate them.

The firm is aware that its manpower requirements do not have to include women doing night work on shift systems. This is just another red herring to delay the implementation of equal pay in its establishments. This is a repeat of the tactics operated by the management in the sewing machinists' claim for their proper grading of "skilled workers" in the wage structure.

Vauxhalls have had equal pay for their women employees for a number of years, based on 92% plus 8% for special allowances, with no conditions attached. My own union, the National Union of Vehicle Builders, has an agreement under the United Kingdom Wages Board for the Vehicle Industry where women's rates are the same as male labourers, and sewing machinists at Burlington, Blackpool, are receiving the full male rate. There was no question here that legislation had to be altered to make such awards.

The International Labour Organisation does not propose any alteration to any country's legislation for the introduction of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value under its Convention 100.

ILO (article 2) states: "This principle may be applied by means of:

- (a) national laws or regulations;
- (b) legally established or recognised machinery for wage determination,
- (c) collective agreements between employers and workers.
- (d) a combination of these various means.

In its 1964 election manifesto the Labour Party promised the "right to equal pay," yet in 1967 the ILO in Geneva was informed that the British Government was unable to ratify the ILO Convention on equal pay. Who's fooling who?

UNDERCOVER AGENT - One of the losers of the Miss Winter Bikini contest in Canada, didn't really expect to win. Patricia Conacher, a student at the University of Toronto, walked onto the outdoor platform in 10-degree weather sporting a fur coat, like all the other contestants. But when she threw aside the coat she revealed - not a bikini, but a dress and a sign that read: "I have a mind." She was supported by a picket line from the Women's Liberation Movement who were protesting the fact that women should have to display their bodies in public in order to win the first prize, a \$300 scholarship.

SOCIALIST WOMAN

Subscribe now to SOCIALIST WOMAN, the next issues will contain news of the Equal Rights struggle; The Pill and Men - The Pill for Men; Women in Cuba; Book Reviews; Why Women Work; Women in Education; Black Women in Britain; Single woman and her dependents; Women and The Law; Local meetings.

Make cheques and/or postal orders payable to SOCIALIST WOMAN

Single issue: 6d, post 4d; subscription 4/- for 6 issues. Special rates for bulk orders.

Issued bi-monthly; order from:

SOCIALIST WOMAN, 16, Ella Rd., West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG 2 5 GW

National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Equal Rights
76 Rainham Road, Rainham, Essex. RM13 7RL.

WOMEN WORKERS



Demand action on 'EQUAL PAY NOW'

We call upon the whole of our vast organisation throughout Britain to move into 'ACTION NOW' Our administration build-up is now complete — we have 35 corresponding Secretaries in every area throughout the country — with millions of supporters in all walks of life.

Local Conferences are being held everywhere from the North to the South — moving towards the 30,000 strong Trafalgar Square Rally on 18th May 1969 from 1-3 p.m.

Help to organise local conferences — attend your trade union branches — move resolutions of support for our Campaign.

Attend meeting at House of Commons in Room 14 on 1st May 1969 at 7.30 p.m. and ask your M.P.'s what they are prepared to do in 1969 on the question of equal remuneration for work of equal value.

Write to your local M.P. — tell them to write to us — pledging their support in the House of Commons.

We need your active help NOW

make Trafalgar Square Rally on 18th May 1969.

A "VICTORY CELEBRATION" NOW

Demand Equal Pay in your industry NOW

Demand Leadership from your T.U. Executive NOW

Demand industrial action in your factory NOW

Demand removal of sex discrimination NOW

Demand end to 8 million women on slave wages NOW

Demand implementation of N.J.A.C.C. Charter NOW

SOCIALIST WOMEN'S COMMITTEES

We have had a very good response to the first issue of Socialist Woman — having to print another 500. Many women have written in, interested in forming SWC's in their own areas. Although not all with the same name, there are groups with the same purpose in universities and towns right through the U.K. We will be very happy to give assistance to these groups and invite our readers to contact us for information. SW now has supporters & subscribers in London, Newcastle, Manchester, Cornwall, Devon, Liverpool, Sheffield, Cheshire, Glasgow, Reading, Essex, Birmingham, Oxford, Bristol, Derry, N.I., Leicester, and Loughborough. A woman's committee was formed at the recent Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation Conference. At least three Black Women's groups have been formed. Make sure that we have your group's address and programme. Let's get together and organise! One of the best ways of meeting other activists in your area is by selling Socialist Woman. Why not order a few on sale or return?