

HOUSEWIVES IN DIALOGUE - WHAT IT'S ABOUT

It is axiomatic that "To bring housewives together is the first step in putting into dialogue those members of society whom housewives care for, service and support."

This slogan indicates the underlying motivation of our project. Our work is to bring together women of different races, nationalities, ages and social backgrounds in a neighborhood where it is needed and its effectiveness can be measured.

We have been functioning in Southern Camden, an inner city area in economic decline. There is a high concentration of ethnic groups - Bangladesh, Chinese and Italian; an unusually high proportion of elderly persons, mainly women, and of disabled persons (mainly in the older age group), of students and single women. The number of single mothers in the borough as a whole is twice the national average (one in five families, compared to one in ten). All these groups are the most hard hit by low wages, the loss of unskilled employment, overcrowding, homelessness and institutionalised accommodation, and with the least prospects of moving elsewhere. There is also a significant shifting English population. The Council is planning for economic revival, but redevelopment plans to improve the environment and offer a wider variety of employment have meant that many families have had to leave homes of long standing and that new families of skilled workers have been moving in.

We have seen how women take the brunt of an economic recession such as we are experiencing in Britain. Unemployment, inflation, cutbacks in social services, the racial abuse faced in the workplace and the school mean demoralised, frustrated husbands, depressed or aggressive and very often bored children, for whom the wife and mother is expected to be the mainstay of emotional protection and stability in an otherwise hostile environment. Economic pressures give rise to antagonisms, accentuated in time of crisis between different sections of the working community, Black vs white, blue-collar vs white-collar workers, qualified vs unskilled, employed vs unemployed. Women often bear this hardship and extra work alone.

A priority for us is to break down the acute isolation of immigrant women, but they are not the only women who suffer social isolation. As the old communities are torn down and women are forced to pull up roots and move to newer estates and tower blocks or other parts of the country, English women also suffer displacement and loss of practical help and emotional support from relatives and neighbours, an experience that immigrant women know so well.

The isolation of the full-time housewife, particularly unsupported mothers (often housebound by small children) and widowed pensioners, is universally acknowledged; all too often it is taken for granted that little can be done to relieve it. The resulting demoralisation and depression are widely treated by tranquilisers in the absence of more positive and lasting self-help activity. Reinforcing this isolation and often its cause, is women's poverty, which is only recently being officially recognised. At the same time women suffer from a low opinion of themselves and consequent lack of confidence, as well as from society's low opinion of those who are 'just a housewife'. Isolation and financial insecurity on the one hand, low self-esteem and social standing on the other, hold women back from making their full contribution known and felt. In tackling the isolation, the basis is laid for women themselves to alter their identity and see their own possibilities.

These possibilities have gone some way to being realities at our Women's Centre in Camden. Despite racial, linguistic and cultural obstacles women have more in common--cooking, budgeting and caring for a family; facing similar crises and sharing similar hopes for the future--than they have differences. The motivation to turn to each other for support, advice and confirmation of their rights and thus break their isolation can be stronger than the deterrent of racial myths. We have found that the degree to which women are able to do this has been a direct effect on how integrated a mixed community will be. If an Asian woman is being harassed by youths on her estate, the parents' social distance from their children's victim is an encouragement. Our experience has been that the existence of a Women's Centre, which is a natural stop-in for local women, has given women the opportunity to draw immediate attention to such problems and the mothers' social and personal commitment to disciplining their children is more readily stimulated.

The fact that Asian women are in some contact with non-immigrant women means that their children are also more respected by--and thus protected from--their peers. It is widely understood but rarely stated that when a mother is in difficulties, so are the children. We have noticed that a lonely mother often means lonely children deprived of social stimulus and detrimental to their long-term development and attitudes.

Positively, when mothers of different ethnic backgrounds are brought together, children grow up in another tradition, and the cycle of racial mistrust and antagonism is broken. In turn men are more open to understanding the specific problems of their immigrant colleagues at work, and themselves to see

how much they have in common with each other when their wives and children introduce that pattern in the family. Although it is basic to community relations, this potential of women, traditionally seen as the most backward section of society, has been virtually untapped.

Our chief instrument of dialogue is the Women's Centre. It puts a wide spectrum of women in touch with each other. In any one week as many as seventy to eighty women may be in touch with us in one way or another for advice, information and a chat; schoolgirls and teachers for materials and discussion for their syllabus; health visitors and social workers to find out what after-care we can offer their clients beyond their more narrow terms of reference; elderly women and housewives with children at school, who have some spare time to participate in the daily running of the centre; we offer students a temporary placement as part of their course; women meeting in groups to work on a project or a problem being faced by one particular woman, or the community as a whole--e.g. the effects of redevelopment and how it can be geared to reconcile the multiple needs of an area from the needs of children to the goals of the Local Authority; or drafting a brief on how particular aspects of a proposed or existing legislation will affect different sections of women.

This interchange permits individual problems to be identified not as individual weaknesses but as the product of social handicaps which other women are facing or have overcome. The fears of either the host or the immigrant community are confronted in the process of solving problems by group activity. The Centre has been of service to women facing all sorts of particular problems--enrolling children in school when the mother does not speak English, lost pension books, filling official forms, obtaining state benefits which they are not receiving because of language barriers to information or being afraid to ask; going to hospital to have a baby when one doesn't speak English; women who fear losing or have lost custody of their children; women who face or have faced violence in the home or street--they seek help to protect themselves and their children, to go to court, to obtain compensation; families in housing difficulties, especially immigrants and single mothers with small children.

The Centre by trial and error has developed certain basic guidelines for operating.

1. It is a Women's Centre. Although men are not excluded, only women regularly use it. Thus women whose cultural backgrounds prohibit them from meeting strange men feel comfortable about coming in. Husbands, male relatives,

friends don't feel undermined and therefore don't stand in the way of communication.

2. The centre's primary function is to provide Social Services which the Local Authority cannot provide. The first of these is women with time to listen and talk. Women have to feel that it is their place and that they can be more than visitors. The centre has never looked like a government office; and we leave it entirely to the woman what she tells us about herself--beginning with her name.
3. The centre's personnel which is by now culturally varied, has become known and trusted. The commitment of the immigrant and non-immigrant women who form the core of HID has deep personal roots. Several women come from the Third World or less industrialised parts of Europe. They have themselves faced the problems of adapting to life in London and are also aware of how the culture, skills and resources of immigrant women become submerged in the context of a new country. The women also share women's experiences as single mother, nurse, teacher, factory worker, typist, waitress and community worker, young women and older women with grown children. We came together to meet a social need which we diagnosed from our own individual needs. This in turn makes possible a developing relationship between women of many different races, nationalities, ages and social backgrounds. Women feel free to express exactly what it is they want and know they can use the centre and its skills and information as a base for organising anything from a street fair to a campaign to press for facilities and their rights.
4. Nor is the centre a women's centre in what some people may think of as a "feminist" sense. There is no pregnancy testing, no pressure to conform to an "emancipated" mould. The women who come to H.I.D. for assistance or to participate meet other women like themselves.

The Process of Involvement

Beginning with the premise that an ongoing and deepening relationship is dependent first on what is the membership of H.I.D., the next problem was to work out how new women were to be involved in decision making, themselves handling particular matters and giving effective mutual support. It is our experience that it is not easy for participatory democracy to really work, and that mechanisms such as voting are not the only index of genuine participation. Most people, especially women, have little sense of their own ability to redress grievances and recreate a social climate nearer to their

ideals. The task of the Centre has been to uncover abilities and talents, and encourage their application in the person's own life and relations. Women who get this confidence in their own abilities are then able to assume that others also have untapped abilities and can help them to bring those abilities into play. Once women see themselves pass through the rocky road from suspicion of others ethnically different, to appreciating their contribution towards satisfying joint needs, these women are eager to help the same transition in others. This is the dialogue which is at the heart of our viability and effectiveness.

Therefore involvement does not mean that everyone works on everything. A newcomer is not burdened by too many meetings and decisions: women have to be economical with their time, energy, fares and phone money. The core decides overall policy and provides scope for individual women and small groups--not called committees as this puts women off--to handle a matter and daily activities; more experienced members always being on hand to consult and give encouragement. This gives new women the chance to test their own ideas and talents by seeing a project or problem through to the end and in the process making use of skills and previous experiences among women who use the Centre and locating resources in the community which will serve their purpose. As her own confidence and sense of independence and interdependence with other women increases, so she is able to instil self-confidence in others. The result of this method is that the core steadily increases, enriched in skills and experienced women, without the group being overtaken by external forces.

Our ultimate accountability is to the women in the community. Does the work grow--women coming in for help or calling on our services to further their initiatives? That is the test. Our most recent piece of work has united many women in a common cause. Three immigrant women's organisations asked us to co-ordinate their initiative to win back their rights to Child Benefits. This included a meeting in the House of Commons on Mothers' Day, March 1978, attended by many immigrant women and men, of different nationalities, English women and men, representatives of concerned trade unions and welfare organisations.

Whatever anyone else's views of the more sensational ways to counter racism, e.g. demonstrations, women and children who are the most affected do not, on the whole, choose this form of 'direct action' to express their dissatisfaction. It is therefore important for women of whatever race to

publicly express their concern about race relations in other ways. Otherwise women will be accused of indifference. The preparation of the meeting above and the meeting itself was one such occasion. The daily work of H.I.D. is not so sensational, but it is a continuous expression against racism. By enabling the most silent and vulnerable to expose it as it affects them, they are enabled to participate publicly in resisting it with the support of those in a stronger position. In this way the Women's Centre becomes a local point of reference on such issues for every section in the community. Even the local press becomes involved in extending the dialogue; its reports are influenced by how many women of different races are working together and view things.

Poly Law Review

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COMMENT

- The notorious decision of one judge, that solicitors acted at their peril in taking instructions from a wife rather than her husband, illustrates clearly that the Sex Discrimination Act has not affected the administration of the law.*
- Whether as lawyers, magistrates, judges or jurors, women are under-represented in the law's machinery. Only about 5% of solicitors and 8% of barristers are women and, as the Equal Opportunities Commissions pointed out in its evidence to the Royal Commission on Legal Services, women trying to enter the law continue to face both prejudice and structural discrimination.*
- Despite the extension of jury service to everyone aged between 18 and 65 on the electoral register, women seem to be more likely to be excused jury service than men. In Birmingham, as Baldwin and McGonville's study reveals, court officers at one court were instructed to summon twice as many men as women for jury service.*
- On the receiving end of the law, too, women get a worse deal. It is well known that far fewer women than men are sent to prison. Nonetheless, women defendants are more likely than men to be remanded in custody awaiting trial. A disturbingly high proportion of all remanded defendants are eventually given non-custodial sentences: but the proportion is even higher for women than it is for men. Of those sentenced to prison after conviction, the women prisoners are more likely than men to be first offenders, and tend to have committed less serious offences. Judicial leniency towards women offenders is indeed a myth.*
- There have, of course, been important changes in the law which have particularly affected women: notably, the Rape Act (providing anonymity for the victim and some restrictions on cross-examination about her past sexual activity) and the Domestic Violence Act, both of which laws NCCL helped to draft. A recent decision has shown that husbands cannot mortgage a home, even when it is only in the husband's name, without regard to the wife's rights.*
- But the badly-needed creation of the family court system has, of course, been indefinitely postponed. And many judges continue to show themselves hostile to complaints of sex discrimination or assertions of equal rights. Equality before the law will not become a reality until women achieve equality with men in the institutions through which the law is administered.*

Patricia Hewitt
General Secretary
National Council for Civil Liberation

PLR interviews Maureen Colquhoun MP

by Pat Wynn Davies and
Dave Browning
students at the PCL
School of Law

As far as one can divide off certain areas of women's rights, for example, abortion, lesbianism, welfare, etc. which do you see as the most important at the moment, and why?

We would particularly like to discuss abortion and prostitution with you. If we have time perhaps we could also look into the rights of homosexual couples to have or raise children.

Well I think all women's rights are important. I would not isolate any situation as more important than any other.

On abortion

Do you see the latest Abortion Amendment Bill as a serious threat to the limited rights which women were given under the '67 Act?

Yes, I do. It is just part of the erosion turning this country from well to sick. We are in a sick right-wing phase and everyone in the House is being disgracefully hypocritical. A Member might say: personally, I support opposition to the Amendment but my constituents do not. Public people must be above this kind of thinking. I support a woman's right to choose and I make this no secret in my constituency, although many people, particularly the Catholics in the local party, are against me. There are a lot of difficulties in standing up and being counted. Democracy is all about the right of people to vote you in or vote against you. There is a lot of hypocrisy on abortion from people especially in Roman Catholic constituencies. It is a tragedy for women that men never have to have babies and they have always voted how they think they ought to vote. This is typical of the state of politics at the moment.

One of the points which supporters of the Amendment Bill emphasise is that many women are pressurised into having abortions which they might otherwise not have. I am referring to their claim that advisory centres which are financially linked to clinics are more interested in increasing their business in abortions than in giving genuine unbiased advice. Do you think these criticisms are justified?

There is no justification at all. No woman wants to have an abortion — she is often forced to have one by her situation, she should have the freedom to choose. We should also work to enable one-parent families to keep together and we do not hear anything of that. Women are supposed to be baby

producing machines not human beings at all. This kind of thing is spoken by the same people who support all kinds of capitalist ventures and would not mind making fortunes if they had money invested in the clinics.

Have anti-abortionists overdramatised the abuse of the Act as far as the making of large amounts of money is concerned?

A great deal of money is being made out of people's misfortunes. I don't know if this is true of abortion or not. Such allegations come only from the wrong kind of people.

The Lane Committee recommended in its Report in 1974 that the Act should remain unchanged (with the exception of the reduction of the 28 week upper limit) and that more abortions should be available on the National Health. Following the First Report of the Commons Select Committee on Abortion in August 1975, the DHSS implemented proposals for the tightening up of the provision of abortion.

In the light of this, could it be said that there is now no need for further legislation?

There is a further need — a further need to make it a woman's right: this can be done by Private Members' Bills but none of the right people turn up. You must put them on the defensive instead of us. There is a great problem in that the House did not debate the Lane recommendations and Barbara Castle implemented many of them when she was Minister for Health and Social Security. Women have her to thank for that; I don't think David Ennals would have done the same.

Do you think that if the Government had made better provision for abortion on the National Health Service the alleged abuses would have been avoided?

It seems to me that if the Government made better provision for abortion on the NHS, women would not have to go to these clinics.

Are you in favour of free abortion on demand then?

You have put it in a nutshell. Government has to put more resources into abortion — it is the only way to get freedom, decency and dignity. Special help and care is needed for women having abortions, and the NHS is just not providing it. The real villains of the piece are governments who can make resources available but fail to do so. I think I ought to put the idea of abortion on

demand into perspective. It is a battle to be fought but it would be lost in the House of Commons now. The only way is softly, softly, — making small changes is all that can be done at the moment.

In the light of the Jean Paton case, where a husband tried to obtain an injunction to prevent his wife having an abortion, do you think that the consent of the husband should be a factor?

No I do not. It has to be a woman's right alone to choose but it depends on the relationship. One would hope to have a man's consent as well. This case is a tragedy. A man may feel very bitter when his wife or girlfriend wants an abortion. You cannot legislate for this, but men seem to have more chances to speak about women's rights than women themselves.

On prostitution

It was reported that you attended the meeting of the English Prostitutes' Collective last month. What are your feelings on the subject generally?

It is difficult to ask me that, because I really would rather women did not have to work in that way and were able to get wages for housework, or a decent job. They are increasingly faced with unemployment which the Government is doing nothing to face up to in a radical way; it is pretending to deal with it but knows it cannot, I am sure we are going to see more prostitution — it is the only way some women can get a living, especially one-parent family women. I support my sisters who are prostitutes and will do all I can to help them.

Why is there a demand for decriminalisation rather than legalisation?

Well I think it is because they want to "get off their backs", if I can use that expression, the pimps, touts and fringe criminal elements which surround them. The problem is that you are dealing with men's sexuality; it is not the clients who are turned into the criminals but the women. It is very much a women's issue, they are vulnerable in this situation. The dependence on pimps is entirely due to the law. I am glad the English Collective of Prostitutes has begun, although it is late in the day. I think many of the women who are prostitutes work part-time, not full-time. In countries, like Germany and others, where there has been legalisation, it has not been very successful. State brothels are remarkably unsuccessful.

Why was legalisation unsuccessful in Germany?

I suppose they were too bureaucratic. To equate sex with bureaucracy is a very difficult thing: you know, fill in a form and take it off your tax. Many more prostitutes operate outside the legalised system.

What do you see in the future for prostitutes here?

To be their own people. You know what happens, landlords charge them higher rents, police expect sexual favours. I want to see them standing up for their rights. I am the only MP who will do it. Talking about it logically, a lot of MP's would be reforming in their attitude but they are vote scared: they think if they support this kind of issue, people in their constituencies will see them

as immoral in some way. They have a limited view of the sensibility of ordinary people — they are bound to, they only meet them on polling day. We live in a strange atmosphere here, playing political games which mean nothing to ordinary people. Ridiculous! We are frightfully ridiculous and must accept we have got ourselves into this situation.

Are your ideas different from those of the Young Conservatives who pass a resolution to legalise prostitution every year?

I never notice what Young Conservatives do. I just feel sorry for them.

Do you think that the English Prostitutes' Collective has a list of names, and if it has, and publishes it, what would be the likely effect of publication?

Yes I think it has. In Italy where prostitutes threatened to publish such a list of the names of leading civil servants, judges and Ministers who visited prostitutes, the laws on prostitution were changed within a month. There is a great deal to be said for that. It is a tragedy that one should have to use threats. This is due to the sexual hypocrisy of the British, where people who express "holier than thou" attitudes about prostitutes are the ones who are visiting them. Prostitutes will have to tear down this hypocrisy. They are an important part of the economy; the Foreign Office use them for visiting dignitaries. The names of these people are vital for use in the bargaining process. Helen Buckingham said at the meeting, she had a list of civil servants, Ministers, judges and others in public life who visit prostitutes.

Has the threat to use such a list had any effect as yet?

Did MP's take notice of what was said at the meeting?

It came at a time when they were reeling at the Thorpe case; they could not take in anything else. People I have spoken to here about the meeting are just amused. At any rate I do not know any who have stopped going. The way forward for prostitutes, to get their problems known, is to persuade MP's to change things, using the democratic process. They need to get Private Members' Bills drafted; I am having one drafted at the moment by a collective of lawyers. It is a difficult Bill to draft — there are many very old laws involved and one has to go to experts to provide help. I would not hesitate to put this before the House. I hope to get further support for it after the General Election. Once you begin to reform in this way, you have a very long haul ahead. Most important, and what people do not often realise, is that once a woman has a prostitution offence against her, she has no more rights and no protection against theft, rape, even murder. No radical reforming society would accept this; it is up to the law makers to deal with it.

You said that you would prefer to see wages for housework; would that not be institutionalising housework?

Women have to do housework. When their children are young they have to look after them. There is no-one else to do the job — that is just an acceptance of what life is like, they have no

dependence. I did not used to support "Wages for Housework" but I have come to realise over the last year it is important when women are in the home to give them their own money so that they can have some independence.

I agree women should have an independent income, but I am worried about giving them income for housework. It tends to institutionalise housework, and I do not accept women should bear the burden of raising children and looking after the home.

You have assumed women do housework, but that could change with young men like you — you might stay at home and do housework. Whoever is in the home needs an independent income. How the work is divided is up to the individuals. I should have done that with Keith.

On lesbianism

Under recent legislation, male homosexuals have had certain rights returned to them. This was never a problem for lesbians; they were never subject to any adverse laws, but the prejudice against them has always existed.

Do you think that there is more prejudice against lesbians than against male homosexuals?

I do not think so. There is not so much prejudice against homosexuals as a lack of understanding. It goes back to the sexual hypocrisy of the British. Homosexual men are totally different to lesbian women. They have different needs and different ways of life. What is not known is the number of homosexuals who have remained hidden. Many of the lesbians and homosexuals I know have remained hidden because of fear of losing their jobs or fear of prejudice. This very act of remaining hidden throws up all kinds of psychological problems for the individual. We must get gay people proud of their sexuality, "glad to be gay", so they are not subject to blackmail and not hidden. This is an enormous job for gay liberation people involved at the top of the movement like myself. It throws a lot of problems on to our backs — those of us who are not afraid to stand up and be counted. Of course homosexuals have always been hounded. In the past there was the Wilde case and now the Jeremy Thorpe case which is an anti-gay case — another tragedy for homosexuals, but no one in the homosexual world will stand up and say so. I am trying to get money together for the Campaign for Homosexual Equality.

Does the prejudice come more from men than it does from women?

No I don't think the prejudice comes mostly from men. Take my case for instance: when I first spoke out, a woman MP came up to me and said "Now look what you have done! We'll have to grow our hair long and we won't be able to wear trousers again". I also had a little bit of prejudice from the Tribune Group of which I am a member. They thought it was a little bit "public school" to be gay.

Divorced women who are lesbian frequently encounter severe prejudice in the courts when

fighting for the custody of their children, especially when the father can show that he has found a suitable mother-substitute. Ought lesbians have a right to bring up children?

Yes of course they should have the right to bring up their children. All the lesbians I know are very good mothers. I have been involved in a few custody cases. They are tragic and heartbreaking. The judges in this country should be talked to about the whole meaning of lesbianism. They are like a bunch of Queen Victorias. I have been to see the Lord Chancellor on this matter and he promised me he would look into the cases on this and talk to judges about the problems of being lesbian. We must make judges understand there is no difference as far as parents are concerned, whether they are lesbian, homosexual or straight. It is a matter of painstaking education to destroy people's pre-conceived ideas and lack of knowledge. Gays have suffered a great deal from being the butt of jokes in the same way as the Irish. However, I don't say the jokes should stop. I think one of the tragedies of the Race Relations Act is that it stopped people making jokes. I do like to laugh; the British people like to laugh.

Should lesbians have easy access to AID?

Yes, if that is what they choose to do. I know it has been hard for men to accept that in some circumstances they are redundant. It is very difficult for lesbian women when they have a stable relationship and want children.

Should male homosexuals be allowed to adopt children?

It is time people realised we are not corrupters of children. We should have the same rights as anyone else. It depends if the relationship is suitable. Anyone who wishes to adopt children has to go through stringent tests. I would accept the decision of the social workers on any parents gay or straight.

General points

Do you think legislation plays a very limited part in the fight against women's oppression?

Well I think it should set up proper rights in Social Security and Insurance in the same way for women as men. This is the greatest task for the Equal Opportunities Commission. It has held out hope for women which has never been justified. During the passage of the Bill, the Labour women members were the opponents of it. Labour and Tory men consistently supported points which, we said, would never work in law. It is (let me think of a suitably nasty word) a mere "whitewashing", an idea of Harold Wilson's for International Women's Year which men in the House went along with. It has done very little for the lives of women. It never had any meaning for working women. However, I do not want to see it abolished now that it is on the Statute Book. I want to see the Trade Union and the CBI appointments abolished and I want feminist women there. I want the whole situation changed so that, for example, sanctions could be brought against any company which acted against women, in any way discriminating against women applying for jobs or having too few women working in higher positions in relation to

men. All recent legislation has been drafted by men. We need women in the House to change this. Women outside in the pressure groups have seen through the legislation and, unfortunately, stopped fighting it. The only way I can see for women to get a say is for them to give up their "holier than thou" attitude and come into the House and really begin to change things. There are too few women in the House of Commons. The women here may work for certain rights for women but they are not feminists; they are frightened of feminism, they think it might make them less attractive to the men they work with. We have not got any bright, clever, feminist women. My message to women outside, working in the pressure groups, is, for God's sake, come in! Otherwise, you will never have a say.

bring them up to the same number on the committees — a one-off attempt to break into an area which is very tough and male-orientated. It did not succeed. The whips tried to get it out before it even had a hearing.

How will you get women in?

They would have to join the Labour party which is dying or the Tory party which is still surviving, just. It has got a woman leader who is disappointment to women inside and outside. She has no time to spare to talk to other women or even to be a person.

Do you think that many women do not recognise that they are oppressed?

Women limit themselves far too much. I hope the new generation of women will change that. They are more determined and the men are quite different from my generation, but then I am a grandmother. Certainly, there is a lot of hope with the young women in the Prostitutes' Collective or lesbian and other women's groups. There is enormous untapped power and they must work within a frustrating framework. What they must understand is that it is what goes through the House of Commons that is the law. If they are not here to get law changed nothing can be done. For too long women have been getting the crumbs, now we need a bloody great meal.

Do you not think many women feel that they will achieve more outside? They do not think they will achieve much unless there is a much larger number of women MP's.

I think they are wrong. There is very little that can be achieved as a tiny minority. The women on the Labour side cannot even cover all the committees. Often if you are on a committee you can change something — it is a matter of chance and luck. If you are not there you cannot do anything. If we had a Bill before the House in a right wing Parliament to stop equal pay or make abortion more difficult, it would be voted through. Women must be more politically active than men are, and come into the House, It is the only way to get a voice unless the Houses of Parliament are blown up.

You were involved with the Balance of the Sexes Bill, but you have said the Equal Opportunities Act is a failure; how would this have differed?

It was designed to get equal numbers of men and women in public posts and appointments by statutory means. Ministers say there are not enough suitable women but, if it was set up by law, they would have to comply. Political parties would soon find the women. It was an attempt to positively discriminate for women in order to

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FOR LOVE AND MONEY

JANE AUSTEN AND SELMA JAMES AT CHELTENHAM

Two women from different ages. One a great novelist, the other a writer in a different mode. But both concerned with the same subjects. Relations in the family as the microcosm of society. The violence in the home which passes for duty and affection. Should a woman suffer in silence or should she speak up for her own needs? How does a woman get love and money?

At this year's Cheltenham Literary Festival, what these two writers have to say comes together. Selma James, venturing into literary criticism for the first time, brings her experience as housewife, mother and feminist activist since the 1940s to bear on the Jane Austen debate.

"Was Jane Austen 'Gentle Jane' or was she writing with 'Regulated Hatred'? She is acknowledged as a genius, but often for demeaning reasons.

"Although her short life spanned the American, French and Haitian Revolutions, she never mentions them. Instead, she focuses on the politely brutal social relations of the great house. Is that because, being a woman confined to the home, her mind was also confined? Or is it that, being a woman, she breaks with the dominant view of the relationship of the home to the outside world?"

Selma James is speaking on Sunday, 4 November, at 12 noon in the Town Hall, Cheltenham.



Selma James, Falling Wall Press's major author, is internationally renowned for her seminal and controversial writings and speeches on women, and as the founder of the International Wages for Housework Campaign. Her most famous work, written with Mariarosa Dalla Costa, is The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community, a classic of the women's movement. Born in Brooklyn in 1930, Selma James has lived in the United States, the West Indies and Britain.

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Do they really think we can live on social security?

Tell you one thing, I wouldn't live with out it!

Is it rape if he just threatens to stop the housekeeping money?

If she gets more will I get less?

What was that I heard about abolishing the laws against prostitutes?

Would I be better off on the game?

He seems to think I was put on earth to wait on him

Women and Financial Independence

Tell him to get lost!

Where am I gonna go with all the kids and no money

WEA Course,
tutor Selma James
Wednesdays at 7.30
at Women's Centre
71 Tonbridge St. WCI

They finally offered me that nursery place, but Janet's 16 now...

If lesbian women can get AID, why not custody of the children we're raising already?

26 Sept -
Nov 1979

Invited speakers
video
open discussion

What was that I heard about wages for housework?

every mother is a working mother!

I am straight as a rod and they took my kids away - said my husband could 'provide' better!

If work made you rich, imigrant women would be millionaires!

My girls will never be any man's house slaves!

Women and Financial Independence

8 WEEK COURSE
CO-SPONSORED BY
WORKERS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
AND
HOUSEWIVES IN DIALOGUE

Proposed topics, subject to the wishes of
women attending the course:

- 26th Sept. 'Her own pay packet'
Implications of dependence and independence.
The fight for equal pay and better
conditions in jobs outside the home.
- 3rd Oct. The single mother and
supplementary benefit
The first small wage for mothers at home.
- 10th Oct. Sexual choices
How much does the "permissive society"
permit us?
- 17th Oct. Rape and battering
In the family, on the street - and the
movement against it.

ONE WEEK BREAK

31st Oct. Prostitution
The laws, the pay, the working conditions.
Does good money make women bad, or should
the laws be changed?

7th Nov. Older women
Does financial and marital status
influence the ways older women are
treated and viewed?

14th Nov. Black and imigrant women
The experience of coming to Britain
and staying.

21st Nov. Where we've come from,
where we're going
History of some of the gains women
have made. Tactics and strategies for
organising on many fronts and situations.

WEA enrolment fee £2.70 for complete course.
(£1.35 each half)

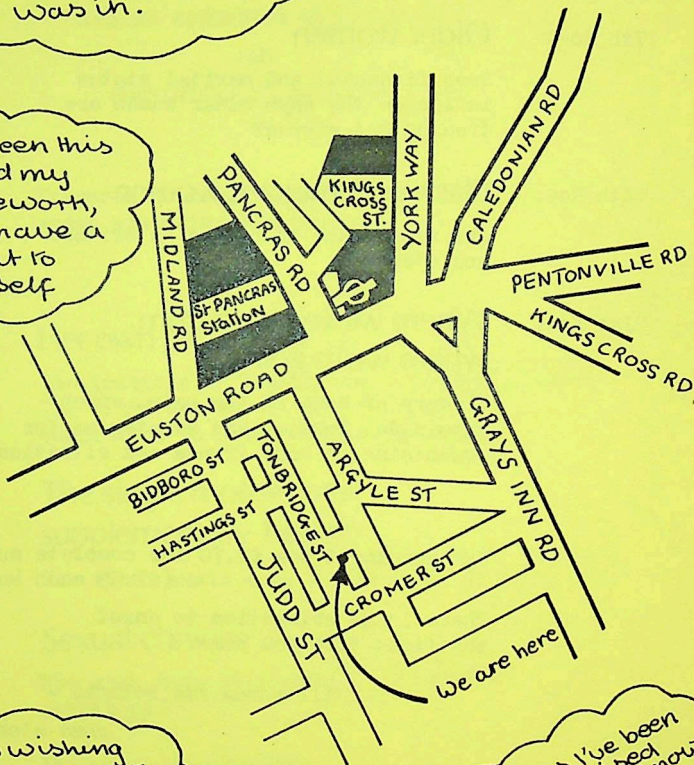
There is no obligation to enrol
the first time you come.

All women are welcome -
come along !

further information from
Housewives in Dialogue Tel: 837.7509

Once we have children and we live on his pay packet, I'll be in the same position my mother was in.

Between this job and my housework, I never have a moment to myself



I was wishing away the years to get out of the house; now I'm wishing away the hours to get out of this bloody office!

60 years I've been working, raised three kids, and now I don't even get my own pension!

Bury and Radcliffe Constituency Labour Party

ELTON BRANCH MEETING

Blue Bell Hotel, Wednesday, June 20, 1979

AGENDA

1. — Apologies for Absence.
2. — Chairman's Remarks.
3. — Minutes of Previous Branch Meeting.
4. — Matters Arising.
5. — Financial Report.
6. — Correspondence.
7. — Reports.
 - (a) Constituency Party.
 - (b) District Party.
 - (c) Branch Organiser.
8. — Membership Drive.
9. — Resolutions.
10. — Any Other Business.

After the business of the meeting, our guest speakers will be:
Ruth Hall, of the "Women Against Rape" campaign; and Selma
James, of the "Wages For Housework" campaign.

**Southern Housewives are Organising
What About The North ?**

on **TUESDAY, JUNE 19th, 1979**

WOMEN'S MEETING 7-9-30 p.m.

THE ROYAL HOTEL, SILVER STREET, BURY

ADMISSION FREE

FILM: "ALL WORK AND NO PAY"

TWO SPEAKERS: Of Recent T.V. "Man Alive" Programme

SELMA JAMES: National Spokeswoman for Wages For Housework Campaign, the women who call the government's tune over women's money; sex & race discrimination in jobs and out: benefits that are our due from cradle to grave.

RUTH HALL: National Spokeswoman for Women Against Rape, The women who campaign around victims of violence and rape; unfair courts; unconcerned councils; who invade government offices.

AIMS: Changes in attitudes, legislation & community involvement.

*"It's always too late when we sit and wait.
we'll put men on the run as we get things done"*

**All women welcome - whatever race, type, age or opinion
We all do housework — everyone**

VIOLENCE THREATENS ALL WOMEN.

Come along and decide for yourself

Housewives in Dialogue announces the opening of the

WOMEN'S CENTRE

71, Tonbridge street. WC1
Telephone 01-837-7509

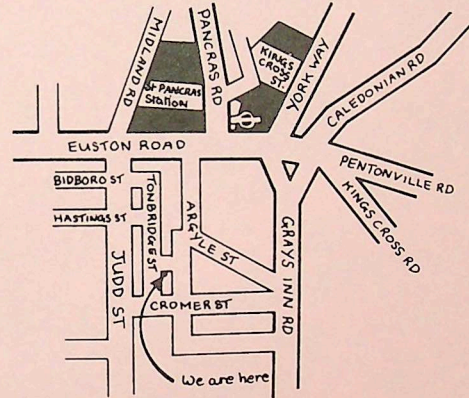
Open Mon-Fri 11am-4pm
Wed-11am-7pm

*Bring your news
and views,
Pop in for a
chat, to get
information
and advice
or to help out-*



all women welcome

Si parla italiano se habla español



HOW TO GET WHAT'S YOURS:

Social Security Custody Problems Child Benefits etc.

You can also get in touch with

**Black Women for Wages
for Housework**

CHILD BENEFIT FOR ALL CAMPAIGN

English Collective of Prostitutes
campaign for the abolition of prostitution laws

**WAGES DUE
LESBIANS**

Wages for Housework
Campaign

WOMEN AGAINST RAPE

GAY NEWS

PLUS
4 PAGE
GAY
GUIDE

NUMBER 100 MAY 31 - JUNE 13 1978 UK/EIRE 35p US/CANADA \$1 FORTNIGHTLY
THE WORLD'S LARGEST CIRCULATION NEWSPAPER FOR HOMOSEXUALS

NEWS

Four weeks to go to Carnival time

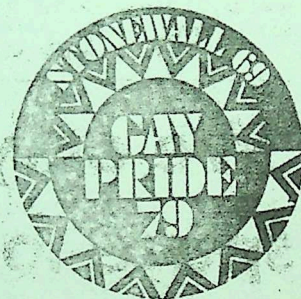
Programme of events

LONDON: An innovation for this year's Gay Pride Week - the London GPW Committee is publishing a special forty-page souvenir programme to mark the tenth anniversary of the modern gay liberation movement.

The glossy-covered programme goes on sale on June 1 - price 40p. It will contain details of events in London (one hundred events had been

arranged when the guide went to press) together with specially commissioned articles about the gay community including an eye-witness account of Stonewall 1969, and a round-up of the past ten years.

Local groups will be able to order copies in bulk at discount from the GPW Committee, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX.



Getting to London

IF YOU want to be in London on June 30 for the Gay Pride carnival and the entertainments arranged around it, there's a chance that a Gay Pride bus will be passing the bottom of your street.

Local bands of gay people have been busy organizing cheap transport down to London from towns and cities all over the country.

Transport plans have been announced already by Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Colchester, Nottingham, Southampton, Winchester, Bristol, West Midlands, Liverpool and Chester. And the Pride Week Committee expects the list to lengthen.

To check details about transport from your area phone your local Gay Switchboard (you'll find the number listed on page 1 of the GN Gay Guide).

Gay organizations from overseas are also sending large contingents of supporters to London for what is expected to be the biggest gay event ever seen in Europe. Countries who have so far made definite arrangements include France, Germany, Holland, Belgium and Denmark. And you make up your own mind whether the Belfast gays who plan to come are "overseas visitors" or not.

Women out in force

LONDON: Lesbians who claim that past Gay Pride marches have been male-dominated and dull are banding together to put both faults right!

A number of women from different organizations - Wages Due Lesbians, Sequel, NOOL and Lesbian Line among them - have ganged up to promote a stronger presence of women at this year's march.

Among plans to be finalized is a float, complete with live music from lesbian luminary Polly Perkins.

"We want women to be seen to be taking part actively and making their presence felt", said

a member of the group. "We also want to liven things up - the march has been very boring in past years."

Wages Due Lesbians plan a women-only meeting on Thursday June 28 upstairs in the Roebuck Pub in Tottenham Court Road at 7.30. The theme will be Look Back In Anger, Look Forward With Confidence.

All gay women are invited to take part. Wages Due would like to hear from anyone who wants to speak, although advance notice is not essential. Wages Due Lesbians can be contacted by writing to PO Box 287, Kilburn, London NW6 5QU.

IN LONDON for the Gay Pride Parade? Want a place to stay for the weekend of June 29-July 1? If you haven't made arrangements yet, send a stamped addressed envelope to GPW, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, telling them how many nights you want to stay and they'll put you in touch with people offering free accommodation.

Teachers

THE GAY Teachers' Group will be celebrating its fifth anniversary with a special meeting during Gay Pride Week.

The Group, founded on the initiative of Sappho in the summer of 1974, will be casting its eye back over the five years since then and examining the prospects for gay teachers in the five years to come.

The meeting takes place at the Prince Albert Pub, Wharfedale Road, London N1 on Wednesday June 27.

DAILY MIRROR

Tuesday, July 11, 1978

8p

PENNILESS WIVES

BRITAIN'S wives are on their uppers — three quarters of them can't save a penny to call their own.

And, thanks partly to mean husbands, even most of those that CAN save put aside only 95p a week—“almost certainly less than their children's pocket money.”

The shock figures are revealed in a survey by the Liberty Life Assurance Company.

It says: “Fifty years after equal voting rights the vast majority of wives are financially battered.”

It was a different story when they were single—on their wedding days they had nest eggs that averaged £680.

But building a home wiped out their savings. Now seventy-five per cent. say they have no savings at all. Another

By ROGER TODD, Home Affairs Correspondent

fifteen per cent. claim they have an average of only £12 to their own names.

Blame

But the lucky top 10 per cent. of well-off wives have £825 put aside, and save an average of £9.50 a week.

It's not just the fault of tight family finances—husbands, says the report, are also to blame.

SHOCKER

They help spend their wives' cash—but only half approve of their wives saving.

The report says: “Wives saved before their marriage and do not accept that wedding bells should sound the end of it.

“But they cannot save more, even given an improvement in family income, until the hus-

bands change their attitudes.”

Even an “amicably run” joint account was only second best in the eyes of most women.

The typical wife with no savings was one left with no money after meeting home expenses, and who did not go out to work.

What the Mirror says: Page 2.

MIRROR COMMENT

His, Hers and Ours

A SURVEY published yesterday said that three out of four wives “do not have a penny to call their own.”

Even many who go out to work have nothing left at the end of the week after paying the household bills.

In the age of women's rights, the pay packet is the last stronghold of men's privilege. They decide how to divide it up.

Of course, millions of men share their wages equally with their wives. Millions more don't. They give a housekeeping allowance. What's left is theirs.

They still believe they have “worked” for their pay while their wives stayed at home “not working.”

A Mirror reader put his attitude

vividly a few weeks ago when he wrote to us complaining about the practice of paying wages and salaries directly into a bank account.

The Friday evening pay packet, he said, was a better aphrodisiac than powdered rhino horn.

There's nothing to be done about him. Except to wonder what would happen if his wife ever got a better-paying job than he has.

According to yesterday's survey, the vast majority of wives desperately want to have money which belongs to them alone.

But isn't the separation of family income into “Hers” and “His” the first step towards going different ways? Shouldn't it all be “Ours” equally?



DO WE CARE ENOUGH FOR OUR CHILDREN?

DO MANY young mothers feel they have to go out to work when they would prefer to be at home with their children? SHOULD WE take a closer look at the welfare of the under-fives? PENELOPE LEACH, a leading authority on child care and herself a mother of two, thinks so. Here the Mirror gives her the chance to air her views.

NO woman who chooses to stay at home to give her children a good start in life should lose out.

But look around you. Almost every other group is better provided for than parents with small children.

There are coffee bars for teenagers, complete with pinball machines and juke boxes. But where are the cafes with high chairs and half portions, toys and play space?

There are tidy gardens with "Keep off the grass" signs. The elderly can sit, the lovers can stroll. But where are the playgrounds with leaves to jump in and trees to climb? Where are the notices which say "Please play on this grass"?

There are machines for sanitary towels in ladies loos. But where are the machines for disposable nappies?

Job

Parents—particularly mothers—do the most important and demanding job there is. Hours and duty add up to twenty-four per day.

There are no weekends off, no holidays. Basic pay is usually awful and there is no overtime money.

No union would stand for it, but parents don't have a union.

With women who stay at home being referred to as cabbages, and with no one giving mothers any credit for the job of bringing up kids, it's not surprising work often seems like a good alternative.

Since full-time mothercare in a community is geared only to grown-ups, we often go back to work.

After all, the money is a big bonus.

But whether a woman stays at home or goes to



CARING: Penelope Leach



AN EXPERT'S VERDICT: 'No mother with a child under three should go to work because she's broke'

work, it's guilt all the way.

If you don't work, haven't you said apologetically. "Of course, I'm only a mother."

If you are a mother and go out to work, haven't you worried about leaving the children?

I would like to see a parents' revolution. No mother with a child under three ought to be forced out to work because she is broke.

And no woman who chooses to leave her job to give her children a good start in life should feel she's losing out in the field of other work.

Stay

Children matter. They are guilt-edged investments for society.

Let's have a Caring Allowance as a right so that mothers can choose to stay at home without being under financial strain.

Nurseries are not the answer. No child under

three can get the individual care he needs in an institution.

Evenings and weekends at home aren't enough while he is so young.

Let authorities put the money they have promised for more day nurseries into making mothering at home better for everyone.

Sense

Let the big firms put their creche money into organising part-time jobs, and "keep-in-touch" courses.

Then we'll show them that a woman with school-aged children is a grade A employment prospect.

She has maturity, a sense of responsibility, and plenty of managerial skill.

People who choose to care for their children shouldn't feel lonely, bored or second-class citizens.

If there's nowhere to go, nothing to do, no

sense of purpose, no pride, then the fault is ours.

Pre-school playgroups, mother and baby groups, toddler groups, young family centres... they all help, but we need more.

We've got to

make our communities good places to live for young human beings—and their parents. Haven't we?

As green Costa Rica tree

NOW let us know what you think...

Three wives out of four 'financially battered'

By MICHAEL BECKET, City Staff

THREE wives out of four are so personally poor they "may be fairly described as financially battered," a report sponsored by Liberty Life Assurance said yesterday.

"They have average personal savings of £12, and save an average of 95p a week — almost less than their children receive in pocket-money."

The poorest 25 per cent. have neither personal nor joint savings, yet most women want financial independence, the survey showed.

Some 82 per cent. had saved before marriage, and between 71 per cent. and 84 per cent. — rising with age — wanted personal savings after marriage.

No money left

This desire, said the report, probably reflected "progressive dissatisfaction at being a financial non-person or growing disillusion with marriage, or both."

But "42 per cent. of all wives, half of whom go out to work, had no money left after household expense," the survey found.

Of wives who stayed at home only one-in-seven managed to put any money by.

Despite this massive vote for building up personal savings, the women did not think their husbands agreed. Only one-in-two thought the husband wanted to save, "indicating massive lack of communication or lack of agreement."

The report added that although women have had the vote for 50 years, and their lot has been eased by the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act, there is still a long way to go.

Contract right

The Family Law Reform Act gave wives the right to enter independent contracts, but the law had still failed to reach into the home to give wives financial independence, it said.

To coincide with the findings of its survey the company devised a "divorce-proof" savings policy for women. The aim is to help wives continue saving after marriage even if husbands disagree. If the marriage breaks up the husband cannot get his hands on the money saved.

WIFE WORTH 90p AN HOUR, JUDGE RULES

AN injured wife and mother was entitled to compensation for "loss of income as a housewife," a High Court judge ruled yesterday.

The compensation should be based on what it would have cost Mrs VERONICA DALY, 41, of Thornhill Road, Mount Merrion, Co Dublin, and her family to employ a part-time housekeeper to help her—even though the family had not been able to afford one, said Mr Justice BRANDON.

He put the figure at 90p an hour for 10 hours a week from the time of Mrs Daly's accident in July, 1971, to date—a total of £2,691—with a further £8,736 for her future loss of income.

To that the judge added £9,689 for pain and suffering and special damages, giving her a total award of £21,116 for the injuries she suffered on board a car ferry in Rosslare Harbour.

The family were setting out on holiday when a mooring rope whiplashed and broke Mrs Daly's right arm. She sued GENERAL STEAM NAVIGATION, owners of the ferry, who had denied negligence.

£125,000 FOR VICTIM OF NEGLIGENCE

A 42-year-old man paralysed during a kidney investigation in hospital was awarded agreed damages of £125,000 in the High Court in Manchester yesterday.

The award went to Mr Keith Grantham, of Alderley Edge, Cheshire, and was against a consultant radiologist, Mr Alan Haylock and the Mersey Regional Health Authority.

Mr George Carman, Q.C, for Mr Grantham, said it was a "very tragic case" involving medical negligence. During an X-ray at Macclesfield Infirmary his central nervous system was damaged.

7P DAILY

Saturday December 23 1978

Council workers issue a warning

'A £60 minimum basic, and not a penny on the rates' — that is the demand of council manual workers in the Borough of Wandsworth, south London.

Incensed by the 5 per cent offer made in response to the 40 per cent wage demand of 1.25 million local council workers, a delegation from Wandsworth went to see employers' leader Brian Rusbridge on Thursday.

The delegation entered the comfortable Belgravia offices of the local authorities' National Joint Council, which negotiates wages, and held a token demonstration inside.

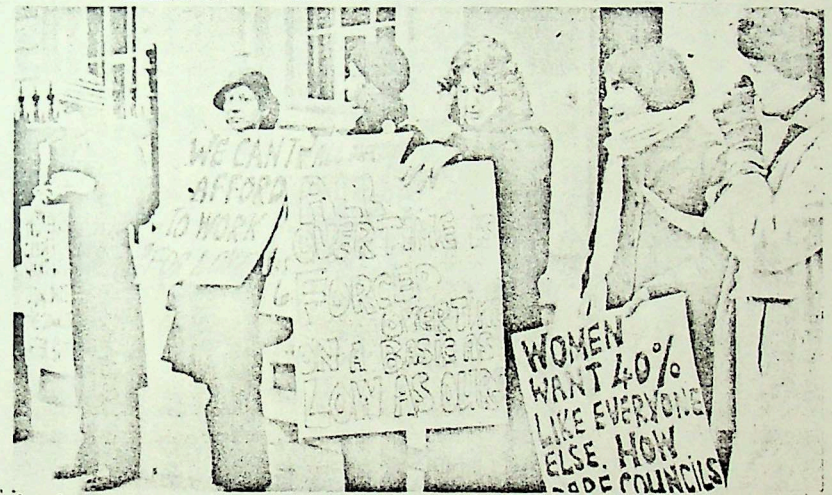
They delivered a letter to Rusbridge, warning: 'We

are no longer prepared to do (local authorities') dirty work for a pittance.'

The letter, signed by manual workers' convenor Mike French, said that trade unionists would not tolerate 'the arrogance and gross contempt that you display towards the women who make up the vast majority of council employees'.

Annual increases of 60p and 25p which most women workers would receive show that 'your offer is fit for little more than the rubbish tip'.

The letter says that under four years of the Labour government, council workers have 'educated themselves' about the 'social contract', and points out 'the gap between our average earnings and national average earn-



Local government workers outside their employers' Belgrave Square offices

ings has tripled since 1974, from £7 to £21.

'Since economists concede that our contribution to the Gross National Product now totals billions of pounds sterling, how dare you tell us that "the till is empty".'

Wandsworth council workers have formed their own demands, which go far beyond the demands put by the national union officials who will lead the expected council workers' strike in the New Year. The list includes:

● £60 basic wage, and 'not a penny on the rates'. 'We do not see why our rightful due

should be stolen back from us and others through rate increases,' says the letter.

● A 35-hour week, 'the right to work less'.

● £7 per 40-hour week for those denied a bonus — mainly women.

● Inflation-indexed rises: 'We do not see why our wages should be stolen back from us in increased prices.'

● Increased shift payments, particularly for those on night-work and anti-social shifts in hospitals and old people's homes.

● Guaranteed full sick pay.

● Improved holiday — 'at the moment council workers get three weeks and three days per year.

● An end to cash limits, and no redundancies. The letter says council workers' just pay demands should not be the pretext for public service cuts, nor for sackings.

The final paragraph of the letter expresses the determination of council workers to fight the Labour government's 5-per-cent pay 'guidelines': 'We, the low paid of the public sector, will be out after Christmas, in our hundreds of thousands, to collect what's owed to us.'

Children... now their mothers are collecting the cash

Revenge of the wives



— Living Standards —

EDITED BY SUE THOMAS

IF YOU are a mother, you don't have to go out to work or have private means to get an income of your own these days. You will get £3 a week from the Post Office for each of your children. It is tax free, and can make quite a difference to your spending power.

While wives have been benefiting from increases in the child benefit, men have gradually been losing the extra tax relief that children bring.

In 1976, when child tax relief was at its peak, an ordinary taxpayer would get about

£2 extra in his pay packet each week for each child. His wife meanwhile collected nothing for the oldest child, and £1.50 a time for younger ones.

A year ago, the value of the man's tax relief had dropped to just over £1 a week per child and his wife was getting £1 a child from the Post Office.

Today the standard tax-paying father gets relief worth little more than 60p per child each week, while his wife gets her £3. And from April, when child benefit rises to £4, the tax relief will fade away to nothing.

The idea of the switch from men's pay-slips to women's purses was to put money direct into the hands of the person who usually buys for the children—the mother.

Some men seem unaware of the size of the Post Office handouts, and I wonder if wives are turning the tables and taking revenge for their husband's secrecy about pay?

Anyway British mothers take £42 million each week for their children. If you think that's a lot, compare our £3 week per child with the allowances paid to Belgian mothers, who get £6 a week for the first child, another £10 for the second and a further £13.50 for the third, plus age allowances for children over six.

I asked mothers (right) in the Kensington branch of Mothercare how they were faring with the new allowances. . . .



FELICITY SMITH, of East Sheen, collects £6 a week for her two children, and tries to save it for their clothes and presents. "Gifts for their friends' parties cost a lot too," she added.



SHEILA CAREY, of Wimbledon, lets her child benefit build up in the Post Office—sometimes for as long as four months. "Then if the kids need things I spend it on them."

LONE McCOURT, of Chiswick, is a part-time teacher with one child, 14-month-old Sam. "I never leave my child benefit for more than two or three weeks. It goes into the general housekeeping. I don't just keep it aside to spend on Sam. I think housewives should get paid a proper wage."

EVENING STANDARD

Tues. February 27, 1979

GAY NEWS

PLUS
4 PAGE
GAY
GUIDE

NUMBER 162 MARCH 8 - 21 1979 UK/EIRE 30p US/CANADA \$1 FORTNIGHTLY
THE WORLD'S LARGEST CIRCULATION NEWSPAPER FOR HOMOSEXUALS

NEW:

UK lesbians join States protests

British lesbians have joined Americans in demanding fair treatment for two San Franciscan women beaten up by police after they left a women's bar in the Californian city.

Signatures from individuals and organisations in Britain have been added to American protests sent to the Mayor of San Francisco, Dianne Feinstein. A large number were collected during the opening days of the Gay Times Festival in London.

The two women, Sue Davis and Shirley Wilson, were stopped by police as they left the bar. They were handcuffed, beaten and taken separately to different police stations, where they were further abused physically and verbally.

They were finally charged with resisting arrest, public drunkenness and failing to identify themselves.

Wages Due Lesbians is demanding that the police be publicly reprimanded, the charges against Sue and Shirley dropped and compensation paid for their medical and legal costs, loss of earnings while recovering from their injuries and a payment for the emotional stress caused by the incident.

"To have the police wait outside our bars to arrest and beat us is an intolerable situation," the protesters have told the mayor, reminding her of her

pledge to "make the streets safe for everyone."

Among the first to sign the British protest was feminist MP Maureen Colquhoun.

Trade union
for mothers

THERE should be a properly organised Mother's Trade Union. Mothering is a skilled occupation, grossly undervalued by society. The consequences of this undervaluing of women (or men) as mother figures are legion. Women (or men) in their capacity of mothers need organisation, representation and recognition. I am not talking of wages for housework, but feel that in the foreseeable future those with the willingness and ability to supply mothering skills in society—whether privately within their own family or extended to other's children, must receive recognition and assistance with education and training. Arising out of this it follows that proper representation from amongst the rank and file is essential.

Without financial reward for our works, for example, an ac-of-eight realistic child benefit paid as wages, we could not be entitled to be part of the Trades Union movement—yet as part of the Trades Union movement we could negotiate direct with central Government.

In this International Year of the Child, I want to see the full-time mother or mother-substitute recognised as a worker in society, acknowledged as doing a very important job and given the status and dignity such recognition would confer. Mary Cain.

15 Chesham Road,
London, N.W.5 1BX.

PARLIAMENT GUARDIAN

Tax: fairer deal for women ahead

By our Political Staff

WORKING women who are owed PAYE tax rebates will now have them paid direct rather than to their husbands, the Commons decided yesterday.

A new clause to this effect was inserted into the Finance Bill—the measure giving effect to the Budget proposals—without a division. But a Tory-supported amendment marginally extending the fiscal independence of women still further was narrowly defeated, by 259 votes to 243.

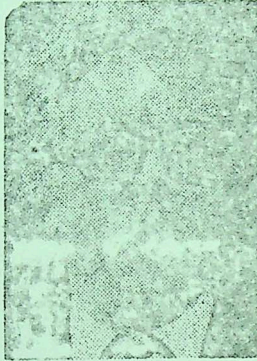
Moving the new clause, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Mr Joel Barnett, said it was incredible that nothing had been done already to correct the existing system, which affected six million working wives. But he could not pretend that the new clause dealt with the fundamental problem of aggregation of husband's and wife's income, which had existed since the first imposition of income tax in 1806.

The new clause, said Mr Barnett, would go a long way to solving the problem of tax repayments made to husbands—even when the husbands had left home. In cases where the wives were the breadwinners, and tax repayments were due as a result of the husband's additional allowances being unused, they would now go to the wife instead of the husband.

The Government was also taking administrative steps to help working wives. Instructions had been issued to district tax offices that letters about wives' earned income would go to them instead of to their husbands.

In addition, the instruction on tax form 33, that women, if married, should give it to their husbands to fill in, was to be rephrased. Women, said Mr Barnett, rightly considered it insulting.

The Shadow Chancellor, Sir Geoffrey Howe, said the Government proposals were



Sir Geoffrey Howe



Mr Joel Barnett

“a less than adequate response to the growing chorus of dissent at the way the present tax system operates between the sexes.”

A Tory Government, Sir Geoffrey promised, would carry on the work on which Mr Barnett had made a modest start. It was surely wrong that there was insufficient recognition for women who stayed at home. The tax system encouraged mothers and wives to go out to work.

The Equal Opportunities Commission, Sir Geoffrey reminded Mrs had suggested a tax payment or an allowance in recognition of wives who stayed at home. This was one of the options being studied by Conservatives.

But Mr Marcus Linnart (C. Gainsborough) claimed there was no great demand for the new measures. He said: “In my experience most women faced with an income tax demand shove it across to their husband, or at best their accountant.”

A Government new clause arising out of a commitment made in the committee stage of the Bill, to exempt all disabled people receiving mobility allowance from paying the £50 annual excise licence for cars, was approved without a vote.

Mr Robert Sheldon, Finan-

cial Secretary to the Treasury, said it could not start until December 1. The Department of Health and Social Security had said it would take this time to deal with the administrative aspects, such as identifying those who received mobility allowance.

Mr Anthony Newton (C. Braintree) urged that the scheme should start in September. He also called for an assurance that the exemption would apply to disabled people who got mobility allowance but did not drive. Under the old scheme it did not apply unless they always used the car. But an amendment which he moved to bring the date forward to September 1 was defeated by 274 to 256 (Government majority 18).

A backbench Tory proposal to make income from health insurance policies tax free was defeated by 264 votes to 239 (Government majority 25).

Mr Barnett, for the Treasury, said there was no evidence that the absence of relief on such policies was causing hardship. To exempt the benefits from taxation would be a fundamental change in the tax system.

Mr Nicholas Ridley (C. Cirencester and Tewkesbury)

put forward a proposal to make unemployment, sickness and supplementary benefits taxable. He said: “Those who are for a short time in receipt of benefit during a normal earning year and those who are retired and using benefit as a supplement to their pension should not be allowed to achieve this benefit tax free.”

The Shadow Chancellor, Sir Geoffrey Howe, said it was wrong that someone drawing a wage of £50 a week had to pay tax when a man drawing £50 in benefit was not taxed.

Labour backbencher, Mr George Cunningham (Islington S and Finsbury) interrupted in apparent agreement with the Shadow Chancellor. He told member he knew of a printer in the newspaper industry who was “working three nights a week and earning an enormous income compared with most people in this country, so much so that he was very much in the higher tax bracket.”

This same printer he said also drew unemployment benefit for the rest of the week he was not working and this was tax free.

Sir Geoffrey said this was a “most dramatic” example and one which no one would be prepared to defend.

Mr Sheldon said that the increase in the number of civil servants and bureaucracy involved in the Tory amendment would be unjustifiable, although he admitted that the taxation of benefits was right in principle.

The amendment was rejected without a vote.

12778

The early blonde catches up with her four jobs

THE MIRROR'S golden heart pendant, in nine-carat gold, goes today to Mrs. Ivy Searle—the latest of our Unsung Heroines of 1979. She was nominated by her youngest daughter Michelle because she is "kind, considerate, unselfish, loving and the first person to help anybody in need."



IVY with Michelle (In front) and Debbie and Jacqueline (behind).

Picture: PETER STONE

WHY IVY'S CLINGING ON

AT No. 55 the alarm clock always rings at 5.30. Ivy slips out of bed quietly so as not to disturb husband Eddie. She shuffles into a dressing gown and tiptoes downstairs.

Upstairs again clutching the coal bucket she kneels down to light the lounge fire. Eddie and the girls are still asleep.

Then she has to wash a couple of shirts for Eddie and a pair of jeans for one of the girls.

That done she starts on breakfast for five. And Eddie's lunch sandwiches.

Only then does she chivvy her family awake.

After Ivy Searle has shepherded Eddie, 16-year-old Debbie, 13-year-old Jackie and 11-year-old she quietly gets dressed — for work.

Ivy has a part-time job in a chemists' shop down the road in Hameway, East Ham, London.

Such a woman is enough to make any woman a Women's Libber—but not 38-year-old Ivy Searle, though she sometimes feels a little rebellious.

Relaxing in an armchair after yet another hard day's work Ivy said: "Men still have more independence than women. They can shut the door on problems and go down to the pub. Today a

woman has four jobs. She has to be wife, mother, woman and worker all in one.

"I'd like to see housewives given some kind of thanks, like a wage from the Government.

"After all, what would happen if we went on strike?

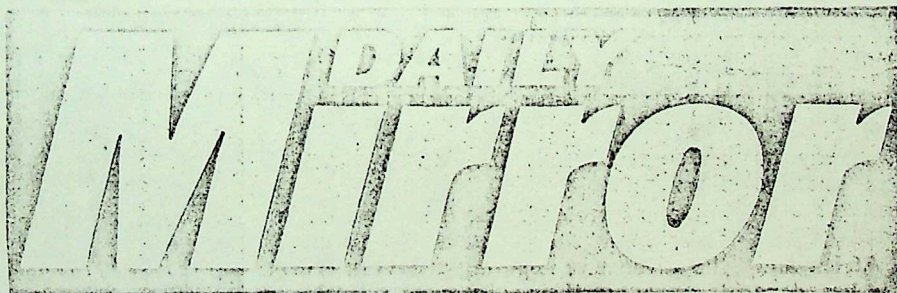
"We have about £60 coming in a week, including the money I make," she said. "But that doesn't go far. I spend £19 just on food for the weekend."

She met Eddie, a motor mechanic, when she was sixteen.

Eddie, now 48, sees marriage as a partnership, but admits when loyalties have been tested it's Ivy who does the plying. For instance, she scrimped and saved and went without to get Debbie on a school trip to Germany — even though she has never been abroad.

And after all those bad years of marriage?

"If I could start again I'd marry the same man," said Ivy.

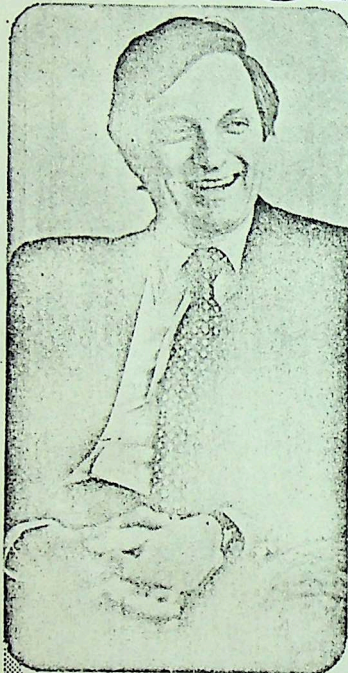


Tuesday, March 27, 1979



EVERY DAY the page for WOMEN

I'M ON YOUR SIDE . . .



CAMPAIGN TONIC: battling for equal rights.

Picture: PETER STONE

Why M.A.S.H. star Alan

soldiers bravely on for equality

WOMEN always bring a challenging glint to actor Alan Alda's eyes. They are his favourite subject — and he has serious views about them.

When we met, he looked more like an elegant hospital consultant in a pin stripe suit. That's probably because we are used to seeing him in the familiar sloppy army gear on BBC-2 TV.

His wit and humour are a real turn-on. Add his good looks and it's easy to see why women everywhere are glued to their sets on "M.A.S.H." nights.

But delicious Mr Alda, 42, doesn't see his sex appeal as a weapon to conquer women.

Rely

"They have a right to be turned on by what ever they damn well like. That's nothing to do with me," he said.

"I'd rather talk much more seriously about them. For centuries women have sustained men. They've cooked, cared and cleaned for them."

"Men rely on them, for it's women who do the most important work. And they know more about us men than we do about ourselves — but then a slave always learns everything about its master to survive."

The charming Mr. Alda positively welcomes the idea of treating a woman as a friend and equal.

BY SUE TRANTER

Some of his best friends are women.

"There's so much to be gained from a platonic friendship. Men who see females just as sex objects are missing out."

"Women are sensitive. They appreciate and understand feelings. It's possible to relax with them where as friendships with men tend to be competitive."

The lucky Mrs. Alda has no need to worry about her husband's commitment to the opposite sex. They've just celebrated twenty two years of marriage.

Between filming "M.A.S.H." episodes he commutes thousands of miles to be with her and their three teenage daughters.

In America he writes, campaigns and lectures on women's equality. It makes him enemies

and sometimes it is women themselves who are hostile. But he's not surprised.

"It's tough being a woman. They see equality as a threat to their protected role and the little security they have."

"Remember most women are only one man away from welfare."

Unfortunately, while he is clearly woman's best friend, respecting us for ourselves rather than for the shape of our figures, it's hard to return the compliment.

Rate

The millions of female chauvinists who rate him as their favourite male sex object are not too bothered about his brain.

Still it's nice to know he's on our side.



COMIC TONIC: fighting for laughs on TV

Freeing housewives from the kitchen sink

THAT universally ignored worker, the housewife, is beginning to break away from the dictatorship of the kitchen sink, and the hot stove, with the help of a Camden based women's group.

Called Housewives In Dialogue, it is bringing women out from behind closed doors and into the open to discuss the many problems they face as unpaid and unacknowledged workers of the world.

The women that attend Housewives in Dialogue come from all walks of life. Many of them are immigrant women from Italy, Turkey, Bangladesh and elsewhere who emerge from the murky depths of the surrounding estates to meet in tiny premises off Grays Inn Road.

Project

"But despite the fact that the women attending the centre have many varying backgrounds, they have far more in common than differences," said Solveig Francis, one of the four community workers who run the centre.

"Isolation and poverty are just two of these linking factors," she added.

Set up three years ago and

Angela Cobbina meets a group fighting for women's rights

now run as a Job Creation project, Housewives in Dialogue is in fact an umbrella organisation which coordinates the activities of a number of groups such as Black Women's Wages for Housework, Union of Turkish Women, Child Benefits Campaign, Women Against Rape and Prostitute Laws are Non-sense.

Explained Carolina Begue, another community worker and herself an immigrant from Argentina.

"A great deal of the work obviously overlaps but each group basically aims to inform women about their basic legal and welfare rights and to lead campaigns and research work into the fundamental issues which affect women.

"The child benefits issue where the Government is trying to save itself £70 million by denying immigrant

women tax allowance for their children overseas, is a case in point.

"The latest stage in our campaign is to lobby parliament with a nationwide petition demanding child benefits for all."

But Housewives In Dialogue also fight for the rights of individual women who are trapped by the tight fist of bureaucracy or the long arm of the law — rape victims, single mothers, battered wives. The list is long.

"We take on much of the work swept under the carpet by statutory organisations and authorities," commented Solveig.

"Many women have been frightened away from the institutions and they are more likely to receive sympathetic and individual attention when they meet us to thrash out their difficulties."

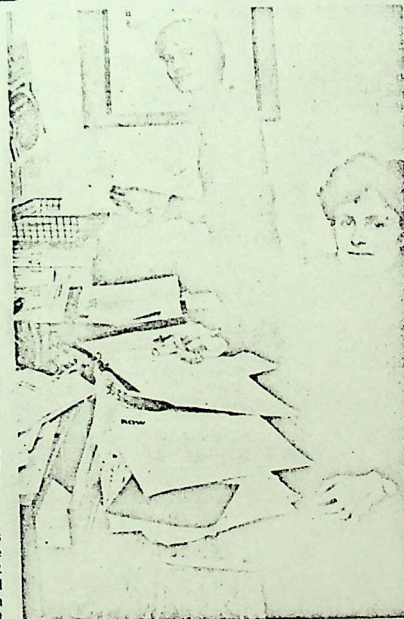
Housewives In Dialogue has rocked the boat in many directions. This is perhaps a clue to their initial cool reception from Camden Council.

Support

From derelict premises in Drummond Street, Somers Town, the council moved the centre to a tiny room in Mount Pleasant, shadowed by Grays Inn Buildings and the Holborn office blocks, charging £25 a week for the privilege.

"But our relations with the council have improved and they have promised to move us again," said Carolina.

Added Solveig: "Housewives in Dialogue is simply re-establishing the tradition of help and support that women all over the world have always given to each other. This network of support is the weapon with which women will fight to get their heads above water."



COMMUNITY workers Solveig Francis and Ruth Chimowitz trying to give women more breathing space in their cramped headquarters.

BURY housewife Dodie Seymour believes women have a right to wages for the work they do in the house and is aiming to do something about it.

She says that an insurance company has assessed the wage they deserve at £115 per week and wants the Government to compel private industry to provide half their profits for women's wages.

"The Government exploits all women by giving them no money," she says. "If we had money it would give women a voice and could give men a leverage to get more."

Mrs Seymour, 32, is married with three children and lives at 21, New George Street, Bury. She hopes to establish branches in Bury of the two sister organisations, Wages for Housework (WFH) and Women Against Rape (WAR) in the near future.

'We want half'

"Women are suffering all their lives," she says. "We are the real working class. Because of our housework we are exhausted at the end of the day. It's slavery."

"Women's financial dependence on men is also the cause of battery and rape. They serve men sexually and emotionally and it is only right that firms should pay the housewives for looking after the workers. We just want half of what they make from us, we don't want something we have not deserved."

She says the aim of the WFH and WAR campaigns is to bring women together on the common ground of housework. The WFH movement began in Toronto in 1972 and has since branched out considerably on an international scale. WAR was established 18 months later as a sister organisation.

Mrs Seymour has approached leaders of the movement in London and they have agreed to send a speaker and make films available when a date has been finalised for a meeting in Bury. She says that

some of her friends have supported her ideas though some men have been cynical.

"It is something women have to do on their own," she said.

She leads local campaign for housewives' pay

Paddington Times

No. 3382

Est. 1859

With which is incorporated MARYLEBONE TIMES and ST. PANCRAS GUARDIAN
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FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 1979

Registered as a newspaper at the

Coming out proudly in Gay Pride week

NEXT week is "Gay Pride" week—the tenth anniversary of the Stonewall riots in New York which marked a crucial turning point for homosexuals all over the world. American homosexuals took to the streets in protest at a police raid on a New York gay bar, and for many gay men and women it was the first public demonstration of their strength.

Gay Pride week is being celebrated all over Britain with a variety of events. Several north-west London women's groups are organising meetings and demonstrations.

On Monday, members of a Kilburn lesbian group will be going to Bristol to talk at a meeting to discuss the problems of rape, and custody of children.

On Thursday of next week, the Wages Due Lesbian group has called its own meeting to debate the question, "How Gay is Gay?"

The meeting will be held at the Roebuck pub in Tottenham

Court Road at 8 pm and women will be speaking about immigration, rape, prostitution, health, housing, jobs, social security, motherhood, racism and the "gay" scene.

On Saturday plans have been made for a mass rally and carnival celebration. Gay men and women will meet at the Tottenham underground station at 11.30 am and will march to the rally which will be held in Hyde Park.

More information about events during Gay Pride Week is available from PO Box 237, London NW6 5QU.

Peter Cole's "Weekend Watch" on Gay Pride week last Monday brought dozens of readers' letters — and a demonstration — to the Guardian. Here we publish one long response to "Weekend Watch" and a selection of the letters received. We are giving space to replies not because we have doubts about the original article and not because of noisy demonstrations but because a large number of readers clearly have differing views and we would wish to see their arguments expressed.

How Weekend Watch wounded Gay Pride

ON JUNE 30, as part of the International Gay Pride Week, 10,000 lesbians and gay men marched through London to a carnival in Hyde Park; it was the largest demonstration of strength and solidarity among homosexuals outside the US, and the first time that lesbians have participated here in large numbers.

Those of us who marched were taking the risk, even in 1979, of losing our jobs, losing our children, being ostracised or even physically attacked. We took the risk to show that we exist and that we are not ashamed or even apologetic.

Visibility is important, not only for our own confidence, but also to give confidence to those gays who at the moment, for whatever reason, have to remain hidden and therefore invisible. Most lesbians and gay men grow up thinking there is no one else like them, since homosexuals are not immediately recognisable, despite the stereotypes, and taboos on homosexuality mean that it is rarely mentioned and often actively ignored. Saturday's march

was an indication that we can no longer be ignored.

Another way of negating the importance of our movement is to trivialise it, or treat it as a joke, as Peter Cole chose to do in his Weekend Watch article last Monday. The police, however, did not treat it as a joke. There was an enormous police presence; they split the march and intimidated us by hemming us in and subjecting us to verbal and physical abuse.

Police harassment is no news to the gay community (or indeed any other minority group); neither is it news to the straight community — they never read about it. What they can read about are myths of gays as child molesters, unfit mothers and sad pathetic figures of fun. The lack of serious coverage of gay activities allows these myths to be perpetuated.

This march was not an isolated event. It was the culmination of a week of intense cultural and social activity, during which as many as 12 events could be seen on one day, ranging from puppet shows and poetry readings, picnics and parties to cabarets, theatre

shows, music events, readings and films, not to mention the many discussions and workshops.

During the week, venues throughout London showing 113 publicised events were dominated for once by the gay culture which has been steadily growing and developing over the last few years. Capacity audiences, including many non-gays, made nonsense of the claim that our culture is of minority interest.

The more established groups were there, like Gay Sweatshop and Tom Robinson, but the real cultural explosion can be gauged by the emergence in the last year or two, of a wide variety of new groups, such as Brixton Faeries, an all-male revue; Poetic Justice, a women's poetry group; Coventry Lesbian Theatre and their hilarious revue Female Complaints; singer-songwriters Lottie and Ada; and Hormone Imbalance whose surreal first show has gained them rave reviews; music groups like Ova, two feminist musicians; and FUN, a mixture of humorous and serious material from three women musicians.

Because these performers have emerged from the gay and women's movements, they remain resolutely part of their audience. Events become a forum for the exchange of ideas and the presentation of positive images of gays.

As new groups form, advice and contacts, equipment and even personnel are shared. Without money, either from the Arts Council, nor from overcharging at the box office, this is not only an ideal, but often a necessity. Economic survival in a society hostile to gays has been a constant battle for all gay organisations.

The growth of the gay community dates back to the early sixties and the campaign for law reform. Laws against homosexual activity have only ever applied to men, so these reforms did not affect women nor indeed men under the age of 21 for whom it is still an offence. So the explosion of the Gay Liberation Front in the early 1970s was a mainly male affair, and it was the growth of the Women's Liberation Movement which gave many lesbians the confidence and

support to stand up against attacks specific to lesbians, for example the issue of child custody. As a result of these movements there are now social groups, gay switchboards, Help services and gay publications in every large town.

It has become clear throughout the seventies that we are not going to go away, and this has escalated attacks against us. The first major attack was Mary Whitehouse's successful prosecution of Gay News for blasphemous libel in 1977, followed by W. H. Smith's ban on Gay News.

In January 1978 the London Evening News carried a sensationalised article on artificial insemination used by lesbians. This was in fact a pretext for an attack on all lesbian mothers. Actions such as these encouraged a climate in which violence against lesbians and gay men could increase. The most graphic example was the brutal murder of Peter Benyon outside a gay club in North London a week after the Gay News trial verdict.

The gay response has been formidable. The Gay News verdict provoked a massive

demonstration of support in London in February 1978. Lesbians forced the Evening News to publish a reply to the AID article. W. H. Smith faced the most sustained campaign the gay community had yet mounted.

So, ten years after the Stonewall riots in New York, when for the first time gays fought back against police harassment, the gay community is still fighting for the right to exist openly. The problems of being gay are not a result of our homosexuality, but because we become victims of homophobia (fear of gayness).

Where does this fear come from? Lesbians are attacked because we do not respond to the sexual advances of men (indeed "Lesbian" has always been the ultimate insult to throw at any actively independent woman). Heterosexual men also feel threatened by gay men, who, they mistakenly assume, will inevitably make passes at them.

In both cases, heterosexual man's prerogative to make sexual advances is challenged. Homosexuals are seen as not being "real" women and "real" men, because we

do not take part in the power relationship between men and women, predator and prey. A heterosexual man showing a softer side will be called "queer," "faggot" (indeed this is a standard part of a army toughening up programmes).

So heterosexual men prove their manliness to each other by boasting of their conquests and bashing queers. The more intellectual use sophisticated jokes and clever allusions and we should be aware of these "civilised" forms of queerbashing.

The National Front, for instance, in its journal Spearhead uses an articulate style to give a veneer of respectability to the hatred of its bootboys. The far from adequate coverage of serious gay events in the liberal press at home does little to counteract the effect that the rest of the press has on the public. The lack of reporting of Gay Pride Week was an example. Maybe it is easier to take seriously events further from home.

● This article has been contributed by a group of people who work in the lesbian and gay movements.

Snide
and

wished. But the fault did not lie in that it was not "outrageous" enough (though from the way Mr Cole wrote the article one may have been forgiven for believing the

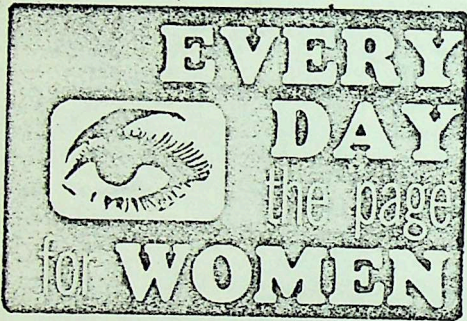
one of the "many of no prejudice at all"—unless, of course, you assume that objectivity is the prerogative of male heterosexuals. I am sorry that he is

tor to a reputedly liberal newspaper. Susan Clarke. London SE22.

for imagined effect ("a number of gays were weaving through the crowd picking up the detritus . . . they were all women"), indulge in irrelevant and belittling com-

badges "I love Terry"—"I love Michael." We didn't know them, will probably never see or hear of them again, but we know that they believe they have the right

straight throughout their lives, yet we are represented only by the few MPs who have had the courage to declare themselves straight, and fight in Parliament for us.



MORE and more women believe they should be paid for running their homes.

The campaigners for women's wages have just won a notable victory in the United States.

A divorce court lawyer set the worth of his client, an American wife, at about £20,000 a year. And the judge agreed in principle that "the economic value of the homemaker must be considered in the settlement."

In Britain, the National Housewives Association valued a housewife at £11,000 a year, taking into account such duties as those of a cleaner, launderer, cook, nutritionist, gardener,

psychologist, nanny, nurse, hostess and housekeeper.

But the Wages for Housework movement goes further and suggests

adding sexual services, public relations expertise and economics to the list.

Campaigner Ruth Hall says there is more to housework than cleaning.

"Women have developed the capacity to be more understanding and sympathetic.

"The economy of this country may depend on men. But it's the house-

wives who keep the men ticking over.

People say you can't put a price on the job women do and point out they do it for love.

"But there are other professions where people love their work, and they aren't expected to do it for nothing."

Ruth Hall believes it

won't be long before wages for women become a reality.

She believes that social security payments made to women are the beginnings of a wage and should be called a wage.

"And if they called it a wage," she says, "everybody would realise that it is far too low!"

What's a wife REALLY worth?

by PENNY BURTON

© WE recently reported, as a result of information we had no reason to doubt, that a gift pack of suspender belt and stockings by Elbeo could be bought at Hallmark concessions throughout the country. It has since become clear that we were misinformed.

The packs were available only at certain shops which also sell Hallmark Products. Hallmark do not own shops but provide products and services to independent outlets.

What do YOU think?

Write to "Wives," Daily Mirror, Holborn Circus, London EC1P 1DQ.

CLOSE-UP

DISPUTE

GO SLOW WHEN CRIME DOESN'T PAY

£10 a week, and that is expected to cover meals, drinks, taxis, telephones and tips.

When they shadow a suspect into a nightclub they have to ask for lemonade—a sure give-away that they are cops.

When a Paris detective is sent out of town on a job the situation is slightly different. He is

allowed a "generous" allowance of £11 a day to cover everything—though it won't ever give him a bed in a doss/house.

So now the police have been forced into taking more positive action.

The work-to-rule strike means they will be on the job from nine to five—and no more overtime.

There will be no enter-

taining underworld squealers, either. Even more important, in future they will obey the traffic regulations.

They say they will never drive over 35 mph—the legal Paris limit—even when chasing a suspect.

Even if they are trailing Jacques Mesrine, France's Public Enemy No. 1, they say they will stick to the rules.

PETER STEPHENS
Paris

DEFENCE

Sailing ahead to Doomsday

AGAINST dire economic warnings, it might seem an act of nuclear-scale folly to spend £4,000 million on a weapon which in global terms would raise hardly a mushroom-cloud on the horizon in the event of war.

But that is what the Thatcher Government must do in coming months. And if they take the advice of senior officers and defence scientists, Britain could be buying America's Trident missile as an insurance policy for the 21st century.

At present, we have an independent nuclear deterrent force of four submarines, each with 16 Polaris missiles capable of delivering three warheads a distance of 2,800 miles with an ever-decreasing chance of success.

They are being updated for £500 million—but even keeping only one ship on patrol at a time the fleet of ageing hulls will not last much into the Eighties.

A Trident programme would arm a new fleet of subs with a shower of nuclear missiles which could be individually steered and targeted 4,000 miles.

It is not merely a question of national pride. There is no conventional answer to overwhelming Iron Curtain forces—or any alternative to surrender without a nuclear option.

There is no guarantee that in an extreme crisis America would support Europe to the point of her own destruction.

And in any case most of the money would be spent in job-hungry British shipyards and factories over ten years. About 1,000 companies were involved in building the Polaris fleet.

ELLIS PLAICE

CAMPAIGN

AN intriguing new educational course is starting for women today in London.

It is designed to teach women about money.

"When men ask for financial rewards for their work they are considered practical. But when women want money for themselves they are considered heartless," said the head tutor of the course, Selma James.

The eight-week teaching co-sponsored by the Workers' Education Association and Housewives in Dialogue, aims to teach women about existing entitlements and to encourage them to fight for more.

"Millions of women are tied to the home by housework and children," said Selma. "Many take mundane, under-paid jobs just to escape boredom. Others would like the opportunity of getting off Social Security but find they get less

money by taking a job.

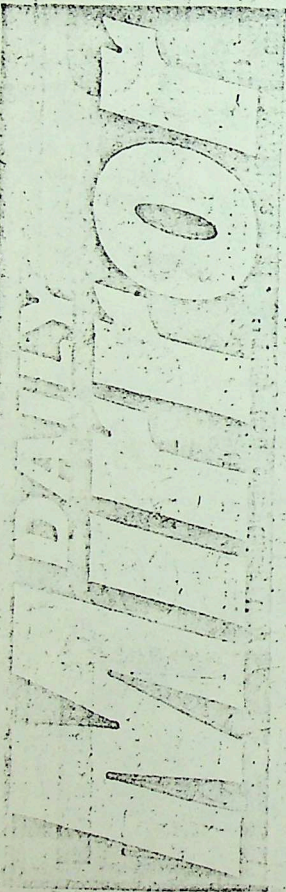
"Many divorced mothers feel bitter that the court has given custody of their children to their husbands just because they have financial security," she explained.

But what will happen to the kids while Mum is learning to cope on her own?

"A man is going to baby-sit for mothers during the eight sessions," said Selma triumphantly.

SARAH STIDDER

HERITAGE



Wednesday, September 26, 1979

Parent wage to stay home 'will combat family break-ups'

THE ACHIEVEMENT of a happy and united family life was a more important goal than a holiday in Majorca or a second colour television, Councillor Richard Kemp, of Liverpool, told the assembly.

"Too many people are after second jobs within the family, not for necessities but for luxuries," he said. "While gaining these luxuries, too many children are losing out because parents are not in when they get home — and when they do get in are too tired to do anything with the children."

Councillor Kemp, the former chairman of Liverpool Corporation's housing committee and parliamentary candidate for Runcorn, was moving a motion — "the family in the community" — which attributed some current social problems to the break-up of family life. It called for financial inducement for a parent to stay at home; the extension of school use so that unemployed teachers could take volunteer classes at night or during holidays; encouragement of parents to play a part in their children's education; the provision of "village-type" living accommodation to promote community growth and increased leisure facilities, controlled by those who use them.

Councillor Kemp asked: "Why is it that at a time when we spend more on personal social services than ever before there are more and more people still in need of the aid of the social service departments? Why is it that when we spend more than ever before on education standards are declining faster than an iceberg in the Gulf Stream?"

The answer to both he said, lay in the continuing break-up of family life. Education in particular could only thrive in the right atmosphere — teachers had children for a maximum of only four-and-a-half hours every day. Without a correct home environment the efforts of teachers would be largely wasted.

Greater financial incentives to one parent, male or female, to stay at home should be self-financing. For every person who decided to stay off work and benefit from such a proposal, a vacancy would be created for someone else to fill.

Councillor Christina Baron, former parliamentary candidate at Bridgwater, moved an



Richard Kemp

amendment on behalf of the Women's Liberal Federation rejecting the idea of "financial inducement" and substituting realistic child benefits, so that families could make a choice about full or part-time employment or remaining at home.

The proposed inducements, she said would only result in moonlighting by the parent at home — usually the woman. "The motion tends to try to show it knows what's best for us," she said.

Lord Banks insisted that it was important to reassert the need for better child benefits, preferably index-linked. Since 1964, the percentage of income paid in tax by a single person had increased by 54 per cent, but for the married couple with two children the increase was 185 per cent.

The assembly accepted a minor alteration in wording proposed in the amendment, but rejected its principal clause about child benefits.

In the main debate Mr Clement Freud, MP, spoke against the motion, saying he had been reminded of Clemenceau's words: "I have heard argument which has changed my mind, but my vote — never." Mr Freud urged the party not to try to "legislate for happiness." He added: "If this is a demand to pay a salary to housewives, let us have none of it."

The motion was carried by a large majority.

Today's agenda

DEBATES on local government autonomy, party strategy and Northern Ireland. MPs will also answer questions from delegates.

DAILY MIRROR

Thursday, November 1, 1979

BREAKTHROUGH

NEWS that Swiss husbands may be obliged by law to pay wives for housework has got little enthusiasm from two British organisations for women.

Proposals, yet to be passed by the Swiss parliament, would entitle wives to something between salary and pocket money.

"We're glad the Swiss are proposing to recompense housewives," said Anne Neale, Wages for Housework Campaign. "But some of us don't have husbands and most men don't earn enough to give women wages. Governments should pay."

Judit Kertesz, for Women Against Rape, said: "One Government has realised women need their own money. This law will do nothing for women's independence."

Wages for the wife?

"It's rape when wives have to sleep with husbands to get money for the kids' food."

Dr. Mia Pringle of the National Children's Bureau agrees with husbands paying wives for bringing up kids.

"Whoever stays home caring for children should get, as of right, wages from the working partner's earnings. Only when that partner is unable to work should the Government pay that money."

LOUISE MONTGOMERY