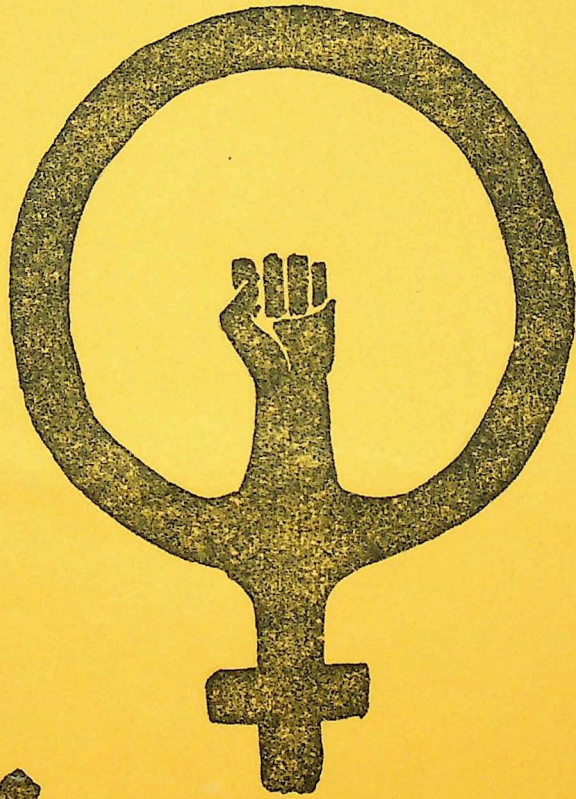


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SCARLET



WOMAN

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York women's liberation group

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## EDITORIAL

The Women's Liberation Group in York has been in existence for almost a year. It came into being after a conference that was held in Oxford last March to discuss the ideas of women's liberation. However, there had been a strong feeling amongst some women members of the university of the need for such a group, and the Oxford conference gave the necessary impetus. Since then the group has widened to include women from town and contacts with the Mother's Alone Group. For this reason we meet at King's Manor rather than on the campus.

The group is concerned with action as well as discussion but action this winter was greatly affected by the visits of two speakers earlier in November. Selma James, who has been writing on Women's Lib since 1953, spoke about the revolutionary perspective of women's lib. Christiana Vause, a shop stewardess who lives and works in York came and talked about women in industry in York.

The principles of the new Women's Liberation movement which has developed in Britain during the past year are based on the fact that women are dissatisfied with the inferior part they have always played in society. Women are at last rejecting the passive role which they have held for so long. We are now beginning to find ways of combatting the injustices and oppressions of a society which treats both men and women so badly that they are often driven into making scapegoats of one another.

We believe that it is time women tried to change this, and to rid themselves of the double oppression which manifests itself in lower pay, unequal educational opportunities, discriminatory legal status, and the lack of even adequate nurseries, contraception and abortion facilities. We in Women's liberation believe that all women must work together to achieve these basic changes in society which are the minimal demands we can make to allow women to be free enough to contribute towards the greater liberation of both men and women.

IF YOU SUPPORT THESE DEMANDS -----

JOIN US IN FIGHTING FOR THEM.

It is time for women to open their Viet-Nam

A lot of contradictions of our present society are now becoming open in all their bitterness. They are by no means new. In a sense what is new is the fact that large masses of people are becoming aware that the capitalistic economic growth is not able to solve them, at the contrary it has some inherent forces that make them deeper and deeper. Anybody militant in a left wing movement knows very well what this means in terms workers, underdeveloped countries, black people, etc., but one basic contradiction of the capitalistic society has not yet been fully politically examined. It seems sometimes that nobody is aware of the fact that there exists a specific exploitation of women in our exploitative society. This exploitation of a great mass of people-hard to define a minority- is taking place in the production line and in the family, without being recognized in its peculiarity

It is impossible to cut a line between the exploitation of women in the factories and the one that occurs in the family, a woman is always doing a 'productive' work. The only difference<sup>is</sup> that in one case she gets a wage, even if lower than her male comrades one, while in the other she is working in precapitalistic conditions. In any case she is increasing production. The productive aspect of her waged work are self evident, but the productive aspects of her house-work are usually hidden behind an ideological jargon. If women would not be exploited as they are in the house, the cost of keeping the working class at the present standard of living would be much higher and so would wages. If women would not play their imposed role it would be very expensive to offer the worker a place to relax, to offer him the best meal possible given the budget constraints, finally to give him the feeling of being finally 'boss' with somebody to rule;

It is so important that women go on in playing their role so that they are prevented ~~to~~<sup>from</sup> choosing any other one.

Modern technology makes the division of roles between men and women totally unjustified. The economic conditions that in ancient societies gave origin to the unfortunate male-female division of labour do not hold any longer. The division of roles is no more justified by the biological distinction of sexes than the social status of the black people is justified by the different colour of their skin. The inferiority of both groups is not determined by a natural inferiority but it is historically determined by the social division of labour. The women role is not natural at all. It can and must be changed.

It is very important that women become aware, as all workers in general, that their exploitation is not divinely determined. They will start look at each other to unite. They will find the roots of their condition and charge the capitalistic society of the responsibility of keeping their inferiority and surviving on its exploitation. It means that in spite of being traditionally shy, remissive, individually powerless, they will find the strength to struggle against the outside unknown world that discriminate them, and against themselves and the values with which the capitalist society shape them in order to fulfill its needs. At last they will discover themselves and their 'natural' roles

It must be clear that the women's liberation movement is a revolutionary movement and therefore has to be supported by all the forces interested in the destruction of capitalism. In the capitalistic society women are playing a very important supporting role. They are reservoir of man-

power - to be used when production needs them and to be fixed before the others - they offer free some important social services, they perpetuate in the family the embriom of the capitalistic society -accepting to be exploited in a social unity based on inequality - finally they are the ideal consumer, submissive enough to be easily manipulated by advertising. That's why the mystic image that mass media are offering us is by definition weak, sweet, superficial, etc., always at other's disposal, not for free generous choice, but for social slavery.

The breaking of this traditional secondary role would mean ~~the~~ undermining the capitalistic productive system at its basis. It would mean also that new forces, remarkable for entity and courage, will be available for the struggle. In order to move politically this new mass of people, traditionally conservative, we have to examine the roots of their specific exploitation, we have to leave the women 'create' their own issues, as it was necessary for the black people to develop their own values in order to find their dignity and strength to fight. What we want is not 'exceptional' women who share the privileges of men in our male society, but women that are conscious of their condition; conscious of the fact that their present inferiority is determined by the inferior role they played in history. They must also be aware, in order to avoid the mistake made by the suffragettes, that they will never be able to get their full human dignity within a capitalistic system. As we have already seen their present role is too important for the survival of the system to allow women to refuse it substantially.

The women liberation movement does not aim to divide the working class. First of all because the great majority of women are part of the working class, in open and disguised unemployment, then because women in general have to recognize that their crude condition is deeply rooted in the capitalistic society. Even the bourgeois woman, whose work in the house is lighter, whose job, if any, is usually intellectual and less alienating, whose share of the social surplus through the income of her master is higher, is starting to realize that her frustrations can not be cured at individual level, i.e. by psychoanalysts, but, being socially rooted, can be solved only through collective action.

I do hope that from what I said it is clear that the women's liberation movement is not a struggle against men but it is our best help to liberate them as well as us. Our duty is in fact to open ~~the~~ specific contradiction of the capitalism that we live. In a word it is to "open our Viet-Nam". In our struggle we shall face men's chauvinism and we shall fight it. Unfortunately it seems too often that our male comrades are unable to extend their analysis to examine the specific exploitation of women. Actually sometimes it seems that it is not only a problem of logical lacking but of pure chauvinism. This is most unfortunate, not only for women, as it makes their struggle more difficult -both at collective and personale level - but also for men, because it undermines also their action against capitalism.

## THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN FRANCE.

Over the past year in France, as in many other countries, there has been an upsurge of women's consciousness of their exploitation in the capitalist system. May 1968 and the influence of the American women's movement has helped bring home the fact that only action by women themselves can help change their position.

The Communist party, the only political party in France with a substantial number of female militants, already backed two women's movements- the union of French women and the union of French girls. In May 1970 they held two days of discussion "Women today and to-morrow" with 1,200 Communist women present. The C.P. supports women in all their demands for reform within the present system but also recognises the fact that women will only be freed from exploitation by capitalism by joining the class struggle and fighting for socialism, women will only be able to develop fully as individuals in a socialist state.

The other important movement towards discussion came, rather surprisingly, from the middle-class magazine "Elle" It had come in for a certain amount of ridicule from women by seeming to support a Swedish situation it had described where the women went out to work and the men did the housework! It then changed to the feminist position- hiding the class struggle by describing merely the woman's struggle for equality with men. In March they organised a programme of interviews, discussion groups and public debates on many topics- the couple, cultural life, education, political life, work, leisure, health, law, mass-media, teaching, fashion and beauty, urbanism and family life. The programme lasted until October and in November they organised an "Etats- Generaux de la Femme" which was to be a three day conference with the 390 women who had already discussed the topics, plus several hundred more invited women, men, specialists in the topics covered, representatives from the government and the left-wing parties, the unions and several democratic organisations. There was supposedly a cross-section of all French-women. The "Gauchiste" group (Marxist-Leninist) which is the French equivalent of Women's Liberation elsewhere, managed to seize the mike and made an attack on the non-action of governmental and union leaders. They were well applauded by the audience who greeted the government speeches with disapproval especially Michel Debret- minister for National Defense- who even dared to say outright that he considered women's main duty was to have children.

"Elle" probably expected a much less revealing conference, not realising that the very nature of women's situation is due almost directly to a contradiction of capitalist government. It gained a lot of publicity for itself, but, far more important it gained a lot of publicity for the women's movement.

Lastly and belatedly, Pompidou, President of the Republic, rushed to get in on the act. At the beginning of December he made a speech on the family- the union of French women asked him beforehand to talk about why there had been a reduction in the family- allowance, why these allowances were not being reassessed to cover the cost of living, why the orphans allowances were not being extended to cover the cases of children being cared for by one person, why the cost of new creches was being covered by funds taken from the budget for family benefits and why the Vth. economic plan did not provide for all the necessary social facilities complementary to the family etc. etc. What did Pompidou say? A whole lot of philosophical waffle with out once mentioning any material improvement.

It remains to be seen if interest in France will continue after these "sensational" events. There is already the danger in women's politics, as in all French politics, of the exasperation of the Communist- Gauchiste split which can end up weakening the whole socialist movement. Women must fight for unity if they are to gain strength and move forward.

THE PROBLEMS OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION

Two major problems have to be resolved before the Women's Liberation Movement can be an effective force in liberating women. First, the interests of the middle-class intellectuals who are leading the movement have to be reconciled with those of the women who have to work at low paid unskilled jobs. For one set of women, liberation means being able to work at the job for which they have been trained. For the other set of women, liberation means being able to stay at home if they wish. For both however liberation involves giving the right of choice -- to work or not, and if they do, the right of being paid justly and equally with men for what they do. It is interesting to consider whether the idea of Women's Liberation is stronger than that of class. Do most women feel that they have more in common with another woman because she is a woman, or more in common with people of her own social background, be they male or female? It is hard to answer this question but it would seem that the ties of womanhood are stronger than previously. When the suffragettes were struggling to get the vote they did not want it for all women, only for all women on the same terms as men. The key to full emancipation for all women is education; education to develop the minds of women to their fullest so that they can contribute fully to society; education in every field so that women are not barred by lack of skilled training from being able to compete on equal terms in every facet of life.

The second problem of the Women's Liberation Movement is not to become too isolated. Women are not the only group suffering from oppression and discrimination. Many men are handicapped by lack of education and opportunity, but one can probably say their women folk are even more ground under. One exception may be the position of negro women in the Deep South of America who tend to be the dominant sex and be better educated than the men. A society that discriminates against its women is also more likely to discriminate against minority groups than one which allows women full expression of their identity as human beings. Likewise a society which is tolerant and undiscriminatory towards minority groups will treat its women fairly.

There are various ways in which women can operate in achieving the rights as individuals to all the benefits of society. Emancipation can come through political means. Obtaining the franchise on equal terms as men was a big breakthrough but there are only limited ways in which the vote can be effective, especially in the field of women's rights. But, since women have the opportunity to enter politics they should do so and play an active part and agitate for improvements in woman's condition. The other way in which political power can be used is in women helping to work towards a society in which they will be treated as individuals with all other citizens.

Despite the efficacy of political action in some people's minds the greatest help in liberating women may come from economics. It is not without significance that the greatest moves forward in the emancipation of women have come in the economically backward and underdeveloped countries of the world. In these countries women have had a far longer and extreme tradition of suppression than has been experienced by women in the Western cultures, especially recently. Yet women are taking a far greater share in running their countries, not only than ever before, but sometimes greater than in many western European countries. No country, least of all the underdeveloped ones can afford to allow fifty per cent of its population to be less economically productive than the other fifty per cent. Women are becoming more aware of their economic importance, especially by political means, and through these methods can demand their full rights as human beings.

Known and pronounced as "NJACCWER", the National Joint Action Committee Campaign for Women's Equal Rights was formed in response to the strike action of women at Ford' in Dagenham who refused any longer to do work equal to that of men without getting equal pay for it.

With this primarily economic perspective, it has grown and developed into a national organization with affiliated groups throughout the country, and it exists also potentially to fight for equality of opportunity and legal status for all women. There is a NJACCWER campaign for law reform to help deserted and divorced women, to enable them to receive adequate child maintenance without the present humiliating necessity of repeated court appearances; NJACCWER recognises the need to fight anomalies in the taxation system; and a long-term aim of the committee, which forms the first point of its recent five-point charter "Equality Now", is to promote equality of opportunity in education and training.

The Committee organised a consolidation meeting in the House of Commons on 1st December 1970. The meeting brought together area representatives of NJACCWER, and also representatives of other interested groups such as Socialist Woman and Women's Liberation. The main focus of the meeting was a discussion of the Equal Pay Bill and its implications. Both Barbara Castle M.P. and Norman Atkinson M.P. emphasised the importance of pressurising the Trade Unions, of increasing their consciousness of women's struggle. Trade Unions will be apathetic, even discriminatory, about women's work and women's pay, and women workers must join their union to press for what they themselves want, rather than getting what others think they want. It is significant that in the transport section of employment, where there is almost compulsory trade union membership, the average wage for women is £16 7s 0d, whereas the overall average wage for women is about £13. The main bug-bears to the realisation of equal pay, according to Mr. Atkinson, are piece work rates determined at local level rather than by national agreements, and the widening differential between men's and women's pay owing to recent pay increases which have not served to bring women's pay towards equality but have done the opposite. Women should actually be awarded greater pay increases than men in order to close this gap; we should keep a close vigilance of percentage pay increases in future.

The real area of struggle in the equal pay issue is the working class section of employment, since most of the professions already have equal pay (if not equality of opportunity), and within the working class the struggle will be at shop-floor level, where all recent successful battles over women's pay have been won. It was repeatedly stressed how important it is that women join their unions, political parties or co-operative societies, and also how important it is to put pressure on local M.P.s to raise the issues which vitally concern women. NJACCWER members also thought that all action on equal pay questions must inevitably and necessarily involve men - men in Parliament, men on the shop floor, men in the Trade Unions. The women at Ford's had the support of the men there; so did the women in the Bakers' union, which turned down a pay offer which was not favourable to women.

The mood of this consolidation meeting was not as militant as



might be hoped - but it was determined. The key-note of NJACCWER might be seen as solidarity - and movements like Women's Liberation can best help by expressing their sympathy and support in any strikes or demonstrations. A NJACCWER demonstration is planned for the spring, and it is hoped that many other groups will join in to show their solidarity with women workers. Women must not be left to feel themselves isolated in their struggle....

In the more long-term situation there is a need to educate women to realise their economic status as independent units rather than as merely pin-money-earning adjuncts to their husbands. As Mary Holland of the Observer pointed out, it is often a real emotional step for women to think of themselves as having equal economic worth to men. Even though Women's Lib. groups may have no women factory workers amongst their members, and can get no closer to the factory floor than the factory gates, they can help to promote a greater awareness among women of their rights as individuals rather than as economic and legal second-class citizens. Messages of support to strikers, going out with the strike marchers, political pressure - all are of significance in this crucial struggle.

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### WOMEN NIGHT CLEANERS' STRIKE.

An important step forward in the class struggle took place recently, from 3rd-10th November of last year, when night cleaning women in two London office buildings came out on strike: important for two reasons.

(1) This was the first time night cleaners have gone on strike: they are beginning to overcome the employers' intimidation, in seeing the need to organize and defend their fellow workers against victimisation by the contracting companies, which they plainly see could happen to any one of them who joins a union.

(2) They were striking for the reinstatement of two shop stewards sacked for attempting to organize the women into the T&GWU and for being involved with the union. The Strand Cleaning Company, like many other office cleaning contractors, does not recognise the union, and they are scared stiff of the unionisation of these women. Up until now, they have relied on the isolation of these women from one another and on their fear of losing their jobs. Last year one of the biggest companies - Pritchards - made a clear profit of £708,152.

Many women take night office cleaning work because they have no choice: they have to support their families, perhaps supplement their husbands' low income, and cannot leave their children during the day. The women involved in the recent strike work a 40 hour week, from 10p.m. to 6a.m., for £13, of which some take home about £8. They get no sick-pay, no redundancy pay, holidays and holiday pay are virtually non-existent. They can be fired without notice, though they must give a week's notice to the company. They get less than half the rate of pay for doing "cover" work, i.e. all the work of an absent cleaner in the time allotted for one worker. Supervisors earn around £18 a

week, which is resented by the cleaners, some of whom have been working for more than ten years while supervisors may have worked for only two.

On Monday November 9th at 10p.m. all the night cleaners at Companies House, Old St., employed by the Strand Cleaning Co., came out in solidarity with strikers at Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith St. employed by the same company ( both buildings are Board of Trade ). The previous Tuesday, Nov. 3rd, two shop stewards at Sanctuary Buildings, Lynne Gilford and Joan Treadgold, were sacked on incredible excuses. Lynne was told she was doing "dirty work"; when challenged later the management admitted she was a "tip-top cleaner, one of the very best, but you are a shop steward, you are taking over the building. Give the union up and I'll let you come back." Lynne told him what to do with his suggestion. Joan was told she was a "fire-risk": a burning sack of rubbish had been found in the basement amongst sacks collected from all floors - it might have come from her floor. She also happened to be a shop steward. Coincidence ?

That same day seven women came out on strike demanding reinstatement for the sacked workers, but the supervisor went in taking six others with her. ( All the women in Sanctuary Buildings had been unionised two weeks previously; when the trouble started the supervisor declared she was 90% with the women, but had a change of arithmetic when she was needed to prove it. )

May Hebbs has been blacklisted from all night cleaning jobs for her militancy. For eight years she has been trying unsuccessfully to get women into the union and to get union recognition from the companies. She frequently came up against indifference from the male dominated T&GWU regarding women cleaners. At the Workers Control Conference in Birmingham on Oct. 24th she exposed the shameful record of the union on this. May is determined to unionise all women cleaners and has launched a Campaign to Organize the Night Cleaners, and to get a T&G subsidiary for night cleaners set up. During the recent campaign over 40 women have joined the union.

Outside Companies House on the night of Nov. 9th-10th the strikers, swelled by strikers from Sanctuary Buildings and supporters from London Socialist Woman Group, Camden Women's Action Group, I.S. Women and the Women's Liberation Workshop picketed the building all night. Their terms for returning to work were reinstatement of the sacked workers. The Area Manager for Strand Cleaning Co., Mr. Harper (once a cleaner himself) had to rely on supervisors from other buildings to scab for the bosses as none of the other women would scab. The supervisor at Companies House was an honourable exception and came out in support of her fellow workers, while scabs whom the women managed to talk to were visably shamed. The unhappy appearance contrasted with the high spirits of the picket, despite the cold wind and their weariness.

On Tuesday Nov. 10th the union negotiated a settlement with the contractors; the shop stewards were reinstated and so the strike was over. It was won because the women showed they meant business, that they won't be intimidated any longer, that they are serious about the union and the right to fight for better conditions.

The winning of this strike represents only the beginning of a serious and principled campaign on the following demands:  
1) £16 minimum wage

- 2) 1 week's notice from employers
- 3) 1 day's holiday pay for every month worked
- 4) Full sick pay
- 5) Full cover money
- 6) Adequate staffing on all buildings
- 7) Recognition of the union.

In this way the women will win for themselves a strong bargaining position and will develop a trade union consciousness among this hitherto isolated and demoralised sector of women workers. It has been a valuable experience. The support from women of the Women's Liberation movement was very gladly received and the strikers were impressed at the commitment of those who stayed out all night to support the picket.

May Hobbs will be speaking in York in February at King's Manor and also probably in the University. Both the above report and the article on "NJACOVER" demonstrate the need for women to organise as women in order to make and consolidate any real gains in the struggle for economic and legal equality.

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### Womens Work

One aspect of Womens Liberation which is of immediate importance in York is the situation of women working in the local confectionary and engineering industries.

York Womens Lib. Group was very shocked at the attitude of one local Union representative concerning ~~women~~ the women who work in a well known chocolate factory. According to this Union man the women there are quite well paid IF they accept the highly competitive conditions imposed by the piece work system. He assured us that women have always been in demand in the confectionary industry for their skill in the delicate but rapid work of packing chocolates etc. However he then went on to argue that of course they couldn't expect to be paid as much as men who do 'heavy physical' work because after all the womens work required far less effort! He would not accept that each job called for a 'special skill' - be it nimble fingers or brute strength - and that both jobs had equal value.

<sup>represents</sup> Already this Union official has accepted the employers loopholes in the Equal Pay Bill - under the Bill, men & women doing the same jobs will get the same rate, but women employed on jobs which men have never touched will still generally continue on the lower rate usually paid for 'womens work'.

Its up to the Unions to overcome the backsliding <sup>ambition</sup> which has always characterised their attitude to equal pay - but above all its up to women not to be conned into accepting what is only a half measure. Its no good saying as some women do that they'd rather the extra money went on their husbands pay packets - employers and Unions just dont work that way!

Whilst there's a pool of cheap, casual labour available in women workers its in the interests of employers to keep wages down - so that more women are forced out to work mens at 'womens rates' and the employers wage bill is still less! With the Tory cut backs a womans pay packet is now an essential part of the family budget - On these grounds alone women can no longer afford to leave Union business to the men. Women must organise for themselves -

THIS IS WOMEN'S WORK !

## Report From Worker's Control Conference

During the week-end of the 24th./25th.Oct 1970 I went as a delegate to Institute for Worker's Control Conference held at the Bull-Ring Centre, Birmingham. In view of the proposed Industrial Relations' Bill the principle object of discussion was that action should be taken against such anti-Trade Union laws. Because of fear by the organisers of militant rank and file action, the delegates were split for three quarters of the conference time into seminar groups and therefore there was little chance of any debate from the floor. Two motions were put to the vote and passed--one of which, drawn up by the I.W.C. and amended by I.S. was directly concerned with action that should result from the conference. The speakers, in this case, seemed for the most part especially selected by Bill Jones, the chairman, and among the few people who did speak no woman addressed the floor.

The two seminars which I attended were those on Universities and on Woman's Rights. About a third of those present at the Universities seminar were women. Among them there was no reluctance to speak. It is important to add that all students were advised by their various left-wing groups not to speak in the general debate as there was fear of "outsiders" and the press. As anyone went to speak he was obliged to give the name of his Union.

The Women's Rights seminar was good and encouraging. Connie Harris gave a report from N.J.A.C.C. U.E.R. about its aims and recently renewed activity. Reports about work conditions and Unions were then given by some of the women workers present (the seminar was attended by only three men). May Hobbs, the militant London night cleaner at present out of work and blacklisted due to her activity, gave details of the London cleaners' poor conditions, working from 10pm to 6or7am they receive £7 per week. Sack can be given without warning, although the cleaners themselves had to give notice if they wished to leave. No sickness pay is given and only 15/- per night extra for working for others off sick. Holiday money, although in principle available after one year's work, is effectively nil. This is due to the big London contractors being affiliated, so that the women are transferred from one building to another before their year's work is completed and are thus denied their rights to holiday pay. The T.&G.W.U. has given little support until very recently to the women, especially to those on nights the result being that many women won't join the Union. The women have now organised themselves in force, however, and are consequently better supported by their union.

Sue Prescott, also from the T. & G.W.U. gave a report on the introduction of O.M.O.B.s (one-man-operated-buses), which threaten equal pay for women. Men were the first to be offered driving/conductor work, and although women were assured they could drive too, the places available would inevitably prevent this and the women would be left with light work and office work, all very poorly paid and in bad conditions. Most of the women who have children have to rely on late work ending around 1am, so as not to leave the children on their own. The question of creches in the factories was then raised, but it was pointed out that a creche in a factory would tie the women to the particular factory and that long early jounies might be inevitable for the children. Creches near the home and at the place of work were suggested, although the necessary finance would hardly be made available by the employers or the government.

Audrey Wise of U.S.D.A.W. spoke of the bad conditions of shop-assistants and food-processing workers. In such work where women are certainly in the majority, the union would be expected to consist of three-quarters women. In fact, only half the members are women. Younger girls (especially shop-assistants who are split from any large amount of contact with other women) have only a peripheral interest in their jobs, and although they certainly recognize the pay difference between men and women they don't realise that it is for them to act and alter their situation. At present only one woman is on the E.C. and two on

the T.C. which is ~~even less than~~ in previous years. The pay difference is around £1 at fifteen and the gap increases.

Honey Cliff of the N.U.T. pointed out the difficulties of women teachers. The majority of the E.C. of the N.U.T. are men for the women are so used to their subservient role in the capitalist society that they do not involve themselves in any action.

The Birmingham Claimant's Union was also represented at the seminar and an appeal for support was made. One unmarried mother told of the difficulties she encountered in trying to get a home for herself and her child. The only place available was at £8.10/-. The social security was of little help and she was told that a cheaper flat would only be available to a single mother who had three children. The necessity for the prestige and the self-respect of being a mother, if one so chooses, was stressed.

"Equal Pay" was promised by the Labour government to be partially applied by 1975, with the point that it would bring down the national economy and lower the standard of living constantly emphasised. At the seminar it was remarked that if this system has not the means then a different society is necessary. The participants of the seminar recognised, however, that a different or, rather socialist society would not automatically involve equal rights for women and men. Finally an appeal was made to leaflet women not only on equal rights at work but in all sectors and about all aspects of their exploitation in society.

Joan Hardy

#### News from America

A member of last year's Women's Lib group, Roma, is now in the States and is active over there. She has been at two women's demonstrations in New York---one to Mayor Lindsay to protest for free abortion and 24 hour child-care. Betty Friedan was there and spoke of the need to mobilise women's political power. The second demonstration was to the Women's house of detention at Greenwich village---a grim place holds women pre-trial who cannot afford bail and legal aid (mostly black and Puerto-Rican women.) Angela Davis was there and managed to shout to the demo from her room. She has now been extradited to California to face murder and conspiracy charges.

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WOMEN'S LIBERATION -

E D U C A T I O N G R O U P

on Saturday, February 6th,

10.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

at

Lee Corner, 65 St. Anns Lane, Leeds 4.

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## The Ethics of the Cookery Class

At a recent meeting of York W.L.G. an artless request for cookery classes was made ---barely concealed shocked expressions from some others present. On hearing the tale I expressed amusement but I feel forced to follow up an awkward doubt as to whether the possible significance of a cookery class for those whom the capitalist shoe pinches most, is appreciated.

I work in an institution where, after various sorts of breakdown, mothers are sent with their kids, generally as an alternative to prison, separation from the kids, being put in homeless families accommodation or like fate. There is a cookery class! and there is an attempt to teach mothers with children to live on social security at the best material level that the money can provide---and it is not denied that this is a pittance, grudgingly given on degrading conditions. I have been charged with barbarity by social work students on placement and would take this opportunity of defence. Indeed I could retort that it is less barbarous than the casework techniques applied by many social workers with only marginal concern for material problems which they regard as mere symptoms of personal inadequacy.

The women concerned have often reached the rock-bottom in physical and mental resources in attempting to cope with their material circumstances. Nearly all are in heavy debt, have been on various court charges and about three-quarters have been evicted. The least that can be tried is to get health back and then to teach some old tricks known to most grandmothers but which are totally contrary to the ethos of our consumer society. Whether or not unused cooked potatoes or other food should be thrown out---and these can be in great quantity when children's appetites fluctuate---may mean the difference as to whether or not a meter is broken into; or whether or not goods from the supermarket lifted. After discovery in such so-called criminal acts a string of calamitous consequences can occur, one of which is to end up where I work.

Of course this is a patch-up operation which tries to make the family capable of survival on current Social Security rates, but I would contend that this ability to survive is then an essential basis for any more radical action because the mother is then not quite so defenceless and dependent and can stand up to the unpleasantness dealt out to those who ask for more and can resist clinging to the first man that appears. Men are not panaceas. (Incidentally some of the most hope less families are those whose men do not give adequate housekeeping money, do not share in the pressures of a large family, oppose nursery education, women's employment and contraception.) It is no solution to refuse to teach penny-pinching on the theory that the more women there are in prison or hospital, and children in care, then the quicker a social crisis will occur. There is inadequate evidence that overcrowded prisons, and hospitals etc. can sufficiently shake the structure of industry to cause a revolutionary crisis. There is the cost in physical suffering to consider and it seems more effective to teach basic survival ~~teach~~ techniques and also to teach those who need it, that what they experience is not just the individual barbarity of Social Security officials but the desired policy of the rulers who are often absolved by their victims from what goes on at the bottom.

The cookery class in this situation utterly differs from pro-consumption, prestigious 'out to impress' connotations. It can be on the contrary how not to be conned by adverts, TV, women's magazines, travelling salesmen, or supermarkets. Using leftovers (and making ~~cheap~~ clothes from cheap jumble) can be degrading in contrast to current consumer and general societal values. But when it is part of a societal critique the ideal result can be the development of a revolutionary consciousness.

This piece was given at a girls' school for translation into French.

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### HOW TO TELL MAN FROM A WOMAN

What is a man? A man is a creature of superlative intelligence who can understand the principle of jet propulsion, the tote betting system and The Financial Times share index. But he can't work out how to fold a baby's nappy, and he can't grasp the basic theory of the hook and eye.

A man has a remarkable memory. He can recall the score of a 1948 football match, the number of seats his party won in the last election and the mileage of his first car. But he can't remember what size socks he wears, the ages of his children or the name of that Richard Rodgers number that his wife refers to as "our song".

And what is a woman? A woman is a scatterbrain who can't read a slide rule, can't follow a road map, can't remember what beats what in poker, and is vague about the make and model of the car she drives. But she can recall in vivid detail the yellow organdie dress she wore to her first dance, and she can mentally multiply 16 people by two and a half cheese canapes while she's ironing a blouse, helping one child compose a letter to Santa Claus, and listening to another child practise scales on the piano.

A man has astounding manual dexterity. He can undo a hopelessly tangled fishing line. He can repair an electric plug, fix a carburettor, operate a power saw and park a 14-foot car in the 13-foot parking space.

A woman can't do anything like that. But she can hang up a bath towel so that the monogram is the right side out and precisely centred. She can unjam a stuck zip. She can remove a splinter and balance a plate of food on her lap.

A man is decisive. He can make instantaneous decisions about mergers and advertising campaigns, cutbacks in production and new share issues. But he has to appeal to his wife to help him decide which tie to wear with his blue suit, and what to send his mother for her birthday.

A man is stoical about thunderstorms and snakes and spiders. He is fearless about guns and single-engined planes, and he'd give his eyeteeth to be an astronaut. He has tremendous physical stamina, and thinks it's great fun to spend all day on a rain-swept golf-course.

A woman is a timorous creature who lies awake hearing strange noises after reading a news item that a psychopathic killer has escaped from a prison hundreds of miles away. But she doesn't quail in terror from a new baby, and when she doesn't feel well, she does a very courageous thing: she goes to a doctor.

All in all, a man is absolutely indispensable. He is brilliant, resourceful, brave, strong, steady and a rock to lean upon. But it is his utter helplessness that's his greatest asset because it gives his wife (that little scatterbrain who can't open a jar of pickles) the certain knowledge that she is indispensable, and he couldn't get on without her. As indeed he couldn't.

Come to think of it, this isn't such a bad state of affairs.

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## YORK WOMEN'S ALONE GROUP

The York group of mothers on their own began in the Spring of 1970 as an offshoot of the Child Poverty Action Group.

The idea was to provide mothers with a central comfortable meeting place and a chance to chat and have a coffee or tea somewhere with enough space for the younger children to play. The group is open to all women faced with the task of bringing up families on their own single handed. Thus members include widows, divorcees, separated or deserted wives, and single mothers.

It soon became obvious that one weekly meeting time would not suit everyone, and so the membership gradually divided in two. The Wednesday group meets weekly from 2 - 3 p.m. and caters for mothers with younger children and who are therefore usually unable to go out to a job. The Thursday group meets on alternate weeks between 3p.m. and 9p.m. and tends to attract the working women and those with older children. Both meetings are held at - 10 Priory Street, and we always welcome new members.

Why belong to such a group? What do the mothers get out of it? The support and companionship provided by a group like ours is hinted at in the name of the Thursday group - 'The Magpies' - "One for sorrow, two for joy".

Faced with desertion, bereavement, or any other great emotional problem, made worse by ever present financial worries a woman trying to manage on her own with children is extremely vulnerable. She is faced by money worries at a time when she is least able to cope with them - and often so called 'friends' from former happier times may well 'not want to know' now especially if divorce or unmarried pregnancy is the problem. Even when someone is ready to listen, a woman in this situation may be reluctant to talk about it for fear that her extreme poverty and distress may be exposed, adding a final dent to her already damaged self respect. In a group like the 'Magpies' however, women can speak freely without the fear of criticism or censure from society at large. Members find it a great relief to discuss their common problems in a sympathetic atmosphere - general cooperation on babysitting, exchange of clothes outgrown by kids, advice on how to deal with Social Security officials - these are just a few of the benefits that we have found as a result of the group.

We have recently established links with other groups in the area, including Womens Liberation and the York Claimants Union.

However our main concern is to try and improve the situation of the woman coping with children on her own in a society which makes very little provision for this - and in which we, the mothers are often not informed of the provisions which are available to us.

We continue to fight as a group by writing letters to the press, government depts. (see letter to Anthony Barber) and by pestering the authorities to change those rules and regulations which tend to discriminate against ~~us~~ ourselves and our children - but most of all we try and build up the self confidence and morale of our individual members to continue with that fight.



Dear Sir,

I have been listening to your speech and to an analysis of what you have been saying. Now I have something to say to you. I firmly believe that you are unaware of how poor people exist, and I am the person to enlighten you because I am poor.

I am a married woman but separated from my husband and have custody of our one child, a boy of 12. I am fortunate, I actually receive my maintenance, but it is taxed at 8/3 in the pound. I work full time and am taxed as a single person. I am still on emergency code although I have worked at the same company since May 1970. Deductions from my pay are 15/- national insurance, 1/2 graduated pension, 16/- tax. My total income is £12 12s. 10d. per week. Four pounds of this I must NOT spend, it pays my rent £2 10s., rates 10/- and the other pound I save for my electricity bill. So we are left with £8 12s. 10d. My other expenses which have to be met are as follows:-

For food, cleaning materials, i.e. toothpaste,	£	s.	d.	per week
soap, soap powder, vim, floor polish, shoe polish	14	9		coal
and clothes I am left with the vast sum of	8	0		milk
£6 5s. 1d. per week. First food, coffee has	4	2		papers
gone up from 4/1 to 5/10, sugar from 1/4 to	10	0		private ins-
1/6 for 2 pounds, flour between 1/7 to 2/1 for	10	0		T.V. (urane
3 pounds, tea between 2/6 to 3/1. The	<u>£2 6 11</u>			
cheapest butter has gone up from 1/5 to 1/7				
for 1/2 pound.				

Are you letting the price of food go up so that when we creep into the Common Market you can say there now, they aren't so much higher are they? But we are feeling the pinch now, you aren't fooling anybody with this ruse. I have applied for a rate rebate and at the time of writing am awaiting a decision. I have also applied for and received a grant for school clothes, free meals and one pair of shoes for my son. The clothes grant was for £10. I was informed I could buy two pairs of trousers, two shirts, one pullover, one school tie, one blazer and a duffle coat. In actual fact I bought one pair of long trousers, two shirts and two pullovers - that came to £9 15s. 0d. They are not top quality, and I bought them plenty big enough so he can grow into them.

In York alone there are an estimated 800 women who are widows, divorced, or separated. Do you expect them to struggle on for ever? Have you ever stood at the meat counter of a large store (where I might add the meat is the cheapest) and watched an old age pensioner pick up the cheapest joint she can find, look at the price, put it down and turn away? You want to weep as you wonder what she will have for her Sunday lunch. I can't afford a joint either. Since when did you have sausages for your Sunday lunch? The firm I work for do not supply luncheon vouchers as many do in London. I don't know of any firm in York that does supply them. I take sandwiches. Don't suggest I get a better job, it took from November 1969 to May 1970 to find this one. All my clothes are hand me down from kind friends, my shoes are birthday or Christmas presents. I haven't been in a store to buy a coat or a dress for years. I am sick and tired of the eternal struggle to make ends meet. If I hear another report where someone says the housewife will have to bear the cost I'll scream. Another phrase that makes me contemplate murder is 'pockets of poverty'. Believe me this is a myth. There are old age pensioners, mentally handicapped, physically handicapped, one-parent families, low-income families, just to mention a few. There are blankets, huge blankets of poverty. Stop this propaganda where people think there are just a few here and there.

Has it ever occurred to you what would happen if the entire working population of women went on strike for equal pay or for better social benefits for people in desperate need? I know men smile at the thought of women on strike, but the idea is spreading, believe me. We could

bring the entire country to a stop. Just think for a moment of all the places where women are employed today, from doctors and lawyers to char ladies.

So the Tories have got what they want, POWER, what are you doing with it? Helping the richer get richer and the poor get poorer? If so, the one thing I value above all else on this earth I will have to give up, my son will have to go into care. He will lose the parent he has left, to be looked after by people who don't know him or love him. Because I can't struggle for much longer.

So the next time you open your fridge door, switch on your central heating, hear the noise of a vacuum cleaner or washing machine, just think of all the people who haven't got these so call necessities, and for God's sake help us.

Yours faithfully,

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. . . . DEMONSTRATION . . . .

FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

NORTHERN GROUPS MARCH IN LIVERPOOL

on SATURDAY 6th MARCH

to demand....

1. Equal Pay and job opportunities
2. Equality in Education
3. Nurseries
4. Contraception and Abortion

Accommodation and creche available if required.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Women's Liberation, c/o 27 Field View, York  
or phone 29321.

YORK WOMEN'S LIBERATION GROUP

Spring Term 1971

PLEASE NOTE that meetings this term will be on Tue days  
of each week, in our usual room - 2/285, King's Manor, 7.30.

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- Tuesday Jan 14 Discussion on: Marriage and the family.  
Are these institutions, and their oppressive  
effects on women, inevitably the outcome  
of a bourgeois society?
- Friday Jan 22 DISCOTHEQUE in Derwent College, University of  
York. Entrance charge 2/6 - money goes to  
help the University creche. 8.00 p.m.
- Tuesday Jan 26 Speaker from the Mothers Alone Group.
- Feb 2 Speaker on Role Conflict and Mental Disorder  
in Women. Discussion.
- Feb 9 Speaker: May Hobbs: Militant Action and the Night Cleaners.  
(It is hoped that May Hobbs will speak at the  
Socialist Federation meeting to be held at the  
University on the afternoon of February 9th,  
as well as at the evening Women's Lib meeting  
in King's Manor.)
- Feb 16 Paper to be read on Women in Education.  
Discussion will follow.
- Feb 23 Discussion of plans for Women's Liberation  
National Demonstration, and for International  
Women's Day.
- Friday Feb 26 FILM: "Salt of the Earth". University,  
Physics Block, Room EX 001. 7.30 p.m. 3/-
- March 2 To be decided.
- SATURDAY Mar 6 NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION  
GROUPS.
- Mar 9 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY.
- Mar 16 To be decided.
- Mar 23 Discussion of plans for Summer Term.
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York Women's Liberation :

Derwent College,  
York University.

Or 'phone York 29321.