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A FORTNIGHTLY SOCIALIST NEWSPAPER

Who Runs Australia?

**The Labor Government,
or the Capitalist State?**



WHAT THE ASIO RAID MEANS

also in this issue: **Which Way for the Socialist Left?**

Right-wing attack on AUS at Latrobe

Students Reject Gay-baiting at Macquarie

Is Biology Woman's Destiny? by Evelyn Reed

International Women's Day 1973

Melbourne

BY DOT TUMNEY

Two events marked International Women's Day in Melbourne this year. The two events, a speakout and a demonstration, were attended by roughly 2,500 people.

A women's speakout held on March 8 packed Melbourne's Assembly Hall to capacity. Probably 500 women attended to hear three short talks including a brief history of International Women's Day. The rest of the time was taken up by women from the audience giving their own personal testimonies concerning experiences and problems which they encountered around matters such as child care, working conditions, job discrimination, abortion and other subjects.

At one stage the speakout was disrupted by two women from a sectarian grouplet which calls itself the Spartacist League. They seized the microphone and began to abuse the women present for fighting around women's liberation demands instead of "struggling for revolution as members of the working class around workers' demands". Women, these people asserted, of course welcome progress around issues such as abortion, contraception and child care but they should not fight around such issues because such struggles are not around "revolutionary demands".

The audience's reaction to this behaviour was hostile, showing that few of those present shared the sectarians' illusions that women's rights would be won without a struggle conducted by women. Never has the revolutionary socialist movement denied that women should organise independently to fight the specific injustices which they suffer as a sex. The fact that these sectarians put forward such a position indicates the degree of their separation from reality.

The second part of the International Women's Day celebrations was the march held on March 10. According to the Melbourne daily "The Herald", which gave the march front page coverage, 2,000 people demonstrated. Over three quarters of the marchers were women.

Demands put forward by the marchers were:

- * For the right to work and equal pay
- * Equal opportunities for work and education
- * Free child care and pre-school facilities
- * Free, safe contraception
- * Safe legal abortion on request

The march left the City Square after an

hour long rally during which speakers addressed the crowd on the main demands of the women's movement and women's liberation songs were sung.

A contingent from Melbourne Gay Liberation participated in the march, illustrating the common interests of women and homosexuals in their struggle against sexual oppression. At a rally after the march a lesbian addressed the crowd on her oppression both as a woman and a homosexual and she was well received.

The success of the International Women's Day activities gives an indication of the sympathy which exists for the demands of women in Melbourne. The women's liberation movement is growing and this should be reflected in further mass action in the near future.

Sydney

BY NITA KEIG

On March 17-18 a Women's Commission was held in Sydney as part of nationwide activities in celebration of International Women's Day (March 8). The Commission was conceived as a large gathering where women would give and hear testimony about the oppression they suffer in their everyday lives. It would be a time when women could see that the discriminations, problems and frustrations of their lives were not unique but were shared by women everywhere. It was to be an occasion where women placed on trial the men, the laws and the institutions which oppress them and attempted to recognize and understand the patterns of their oppression better. Sessions were planned covering five broad topics: "Women as Mothers", "Women as Workers - Paid, Underpaid and Not Paid", "Women as Sex Objects", "Women and Marriage" and "Other Forms of Discrimination", although it was recognized that testimonies would obviously overlap all these areas.

Approximately 600 women attended over the two days, with between 350 and 450 attending each session. Rather than taking the form of abstract reports, the testimonies were living, spontaneous and often very moving descriptions of life as a woman. The meeting was heterogeneous. Women of all ages, different classes, married, unmarried, lesbians, mothers, factory workers, students, housewives, teachers, pensioners and secretaries were all present.

Discussion ranged over a seemingly infinite list of subjects. There was often spontaneous clapping, laughing, hissing and tears. The mood was one of mutual support and solidarity. There wasn't time for everyone who wanted to speak, to do so. The two days provided a vivid picture of the breadth of the oppression

of women, and how no aspect of one's life can be isolated or remain untouched by it.

The Commission reflected the growth and expansion of the movement over the past year or so. Of the women's groups participating in the event were organizations as diverse as Gay Women's Liberation, Women's Electoral Lobby and Christian Women Concerned, along with women from a variety of women's liberation groups.

What was clearly revealed was the revolutionary nature of the women's liberation movement and its massive potential for reaching out to thousands of women, even the most downtrodden and super-exploited, and giving them a revolutionary understanding of the society around them, and the confidence to fight it. A recognition of the role of the family, one of the most important pillars of capitalism, is key in this process. Many women who testified had read very little, if anything about women's liberation but rapidly and strongly identified with the movement under the impetus of their own experiences. In this consciousness there is a clear anti-capitalist dynamic. It is incompatible to believe in women's liberation and to believe in capitalism. This was assumed by many of the women who spoke. However, what did come across was the refusal of women to accept the subordination or postponement of their struggle to some later date, and the insinuation often made by "left" organizations that the women's movement is of secondary importance, and even a divisive movement in the revolutionary struggle.

The Commission was the most successful event of its kind yet organized by women in Sydney. The new understanding and the enthusiasm flowing from the discussion can only lead many women to want to act upon it. The Commission should herald a period of increasing activity and growth in the women's movement. Already an action has been planned for the Saturday preceding Mothers Day with a focus on the demands of women as mothers, and interest in all issues seems high.

The women's liberation movement will continue to grow, and the impact of its ideas will continue to be felt. It is a movement whose deepening thrust attacks the very roots of the capitalist social system.

Adelaide

BY PENELOPE JACKSON

Women in Adelaide celebrated International Women's Day by marching through the city and rallying afterwards with the

specific aim of talking with other women.

The number of women marching was about 200. However, although small in numbers, the feeling of solidarity, strength and sisterhood was overwhelming. The marchers sang songs of liberation and chanted the demands which were:

- * Free abortion on demand.
- * Free 24 - hour community controlled child-care centres.
- * Free, readily available contraceptives.
- * Equal job opportunity.

Afterwards, at the rally, there was street theatre and two speakers. One outlined the demands of the march and the importance of them, and the other spoke on the topic 'Is sisterhood powerful?', basically outlining the fronts on which women can fight, stressing the need for women to build an outgoing, powerful movement capable of reaching masses of women. Despite heavy criticisms of demonstrations from some sections in the Women's Liberation movement, the march proved to be a success and proved that women are indeed striking back against their oppression in this society in a confident and active way.

Brisbane

BY JANE BECKMAN

On Friday March 9, women from the Women's Liberation movement and the Children by Choice Association staged a demonstration in King George Square around the theme; "Abortion is a woman's right to choose." The demonstration took place during the lunch-hour and about 30 women leafleted and spoke to the lunch-time crowds about the abortion issue. Liz Passmore from the Children by Choice addressed the crowd and a very effective street theatre performance was the highlight of the whole demonstration. Despite the fact that we had been refused a permit by the city council the police contented themselves with taking down people's names.

The situation regarding abortion in Queensland is particularly repressive. Legally a woman can get seven years gaol for attempting to procure an abortion for herself or helping another woman procure an abortion and a doctor can get up to fourteen years gaol. This forces women in Queensland to travel inter-state at great expense where they have more hope of obtaining an illegal abortion.

Actions around the abortion issue are needed to force the Labor government to face the abortion issue and to force it to meet this demand of women. The recent success of our sisters in America over this issue can only inspire us to wage a campaign as broad and powerful. Sisterhood IS powerful.

Top: Women's Commission, Sydney.