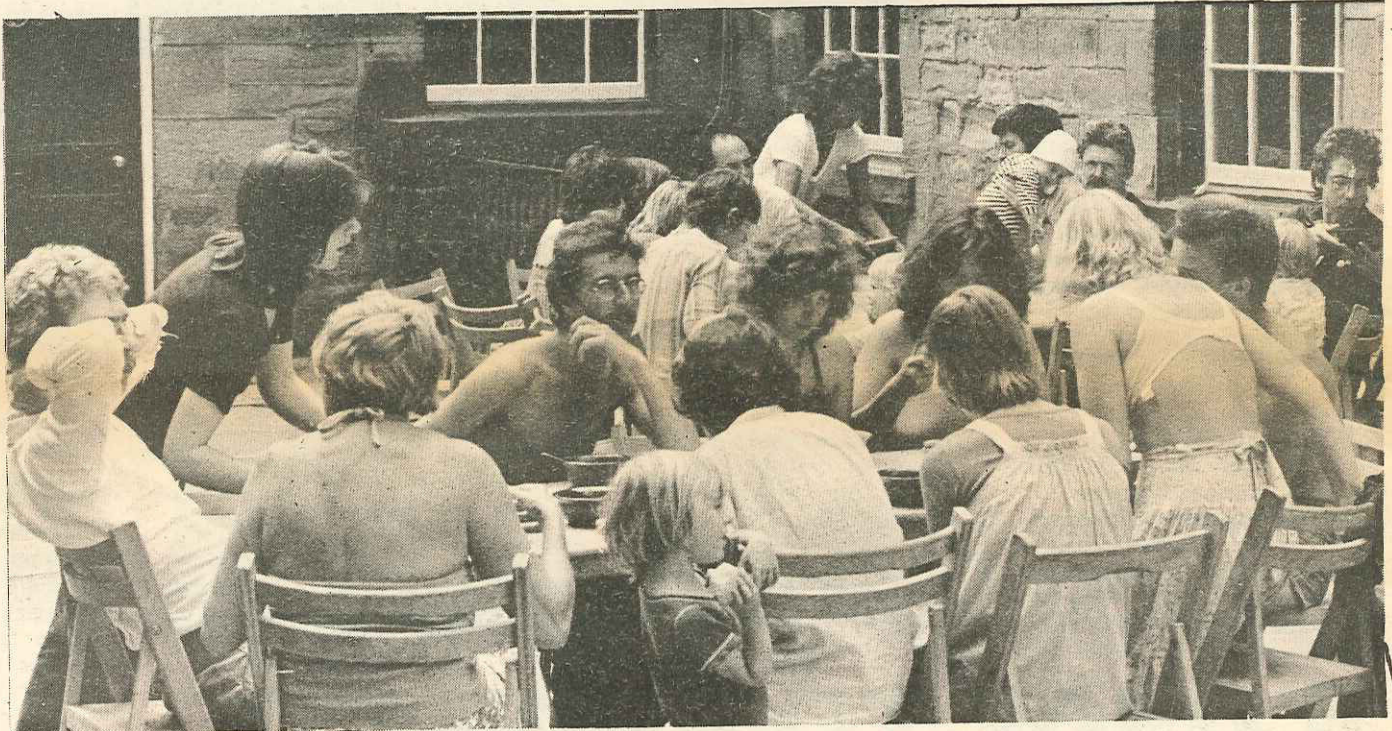


Summer Support



Big Flame Photo

Dear Big Flame,

Coming back from a trip abroad, I read the article on the summer school in the September issues of *Big Flame*. I felt I'd like to write about how I experienced the summer school as a single parent.

Being alone in parenthood is quite a significant kind of isolation. Its peculiar problems have remained qualitatively constant within and out of marriage. Really the single parent family has brought little change in my feelings of isolation, merely helped to crystallise my need to share my problems as they arise.

Obviously occasionally in the ten years I shared a roof with a man I developed a framework of emotional support from friends as I met them. From these connections I became

increasingly aware that there was an alternative way of meeting parenthood. I nurture a fantasy in which my children are in a climate of interested individuals who are involved in a mutual growth enterprise as individuals giving and receiving of themselves.

Briefly I felt I met this ideal in Leeds, without having any clear expectations of the summer school I found myself in a completely autonomous situation which then reflected on my four children and vice versa. Of course meeting the reality created problems for me and I am sure for the children. Feelings of redundancy and relief beyond imagination. However, in the open system where communication seemed easy these feelings were in fact dissipated.

In that week I felt I met

the reinforcement to move myself and my children towards that ideal.

In the environment in which I live there is a general climate of feeling that children are a "burden" and "belong" to the person(s) who has given them birth and the only alternative to inadequacy is state institutionalisation.

Whilst I was at the summer school I felt that there was an overall acceptance of mutual responsibility and for the first time in my life I felt free of a "burden" that society says I must accept unconditionally as my own "unfortunate" consequences of my actions.

I feel in a privileged position sharing and enriching my life with growing individuals. A feeling often under pressure because of my isolation.

An isolation often exacerbated by social expectations and requirements. A woman on her own is often viewed as a social risk by welfare agencies and the schools themselves do nothing to recognise this ever present life situation, still reinforcing the bliss of family life on my children who have very real unrecognised experiences of their own.

I have experienced difficulties in the past mostly by my own overwhelmed emotional and frustrated self. Without the outlet of an ongoing supportive system I feel I have often come close to being at risk personally and socially. What I realised at Leeds was the depth and breadth of my situation in the clarity of a socialist alternative.

F. Cambridge.

sub advertisements



of the Cuts

Perhaps this was because WAN was only "action-orientated" casting "the Nazis" as the enemy. And similarly, Women against the Cuts might only recruit more women to give out more leaflets rather than do something about the way cuts will place women even more under the thumb and at the beck and call of the men-in-her life (husband, boss, wolf whistler etc.)

Would it be possible for there to be a Women against the Cuts group which didn't fall into these traps, maybe including discussion and consciousness-raising as part of its way of organising?
JK (Nottingham)

SHEFFIELD ANTI-Imperialist evening. Revolutionary music from Asia, Latin America, Zimbabwe and Britain. Dancing and food. Friday Nov 16th 7.30pm at Attercliffe Vestry Hall. Organised by Big Flame, Chilean MIR and ZANU. Tickets 80p, 40p unwaged.

NATIONAL LOBBY AGAINST the Cuts, Parliament. 28th Nov (Wednesday). Initiated by South Yorkshire Association of Trades Councils, with backing from Sheffield and S. Yorks Labour Parties, Yorkshire NUM and many more

POWER MAD—A Red Ladder Show. Friday 2nd Nov. 7.30 pm Langsett and Walkley Community Centre, top of Burnaby St., Sheffield 6. Tickets £1. Also in other Yorks venues. Ring Sheffield 331417 for details.

YORKSHIRE REGION Womens Liberation Conference, Sheffield Nov 17th/18th.

"EDUCATION UNDER ATTACK" 10th/11th Nov. Second Education conference organised by Rank and File teacher and Socialist Teachers Alliance. At Starcross School, London NW1. Focus of defence of education against the cuts and arguments needed for a socialist strategy. Credentials from 13 Bloomfield St., London N6.

The 4th National Big Flame Conference will take place in Leeds on November 24/25. Sympathisers interested in attending should contact the National Secretary at 217 Wavertree Rd., Liverpool 7. Two sets of Conference documents are available at 30p each (including postage). There will be no admittance without prior booking.

PUBLIC MEETING ON ZIMBABWE Patriotic Front speaker, special film St. Annes, Venn St., Clapham, London, 8th Nov., 7:30 pm.

THE PATRIOT GAME—new film about the Irish situation. Graves Cinema, Sheffield University Students' Union. Nov 1st, 7:30pm

BIRMINGHAM: Big Flame Public Meeting on 'Beyond the Fragments' Speaker: Lynne Segal Monday 12th Nov., 7:30pm Carrs Lane Church Centre Carrs Lane (behind Marks & Sparks)

LEEDS BIG FLAME PUBLIC meeting. Barbara Ehrenreich on Feminism, Socialism and Class Analysis. Friday 2nd Nov 8pm Trades Club Leeds 7.

MANCHESTER BIG FLAME Public meeting on 'Beyond the Fragments' 21st November (for venue contact 061-224-3972)