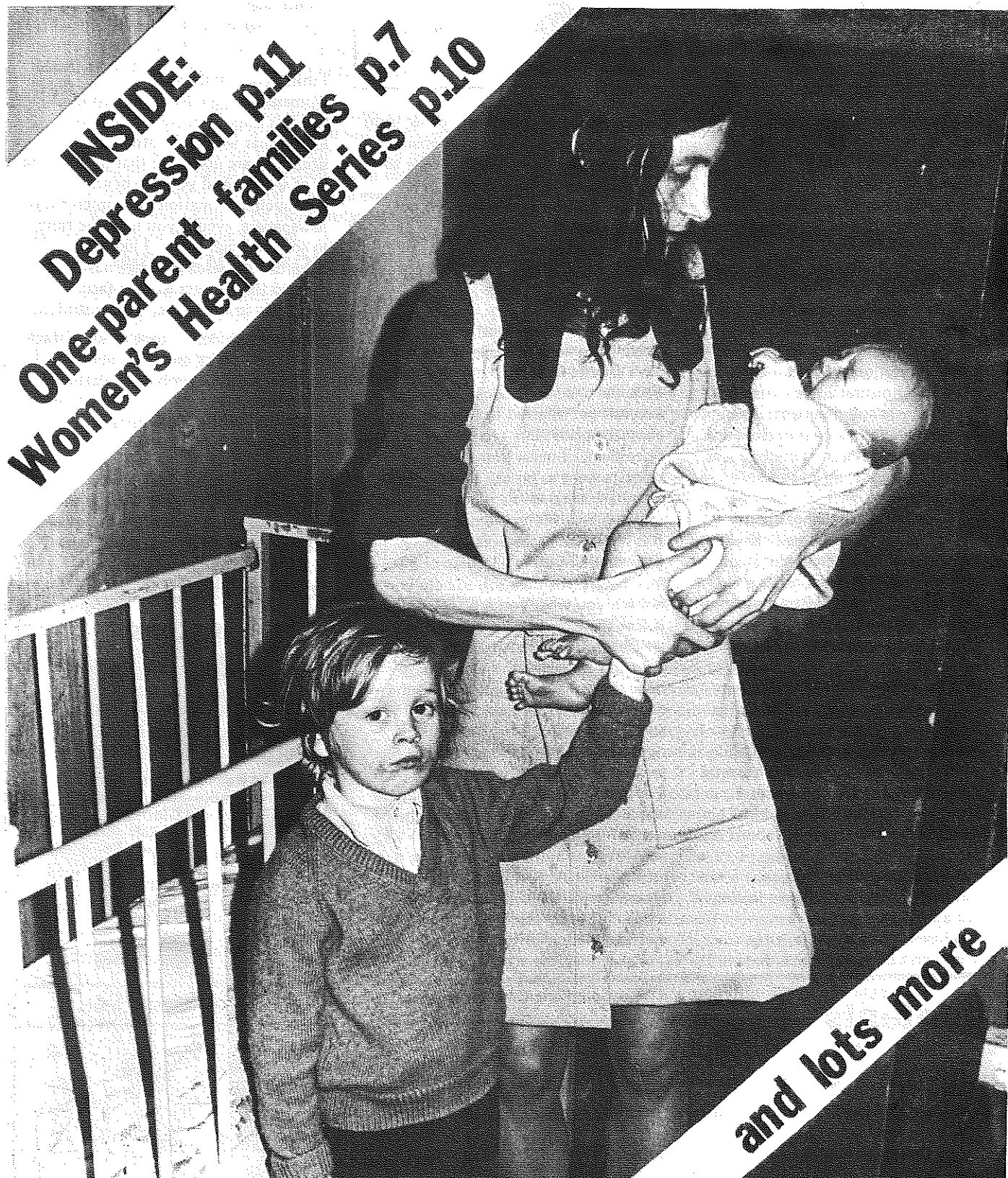


Women's Struggle Notes

No.2

15p.

INSIDE:
Depression p.11
One-parent families p.7
Women's Health Series p.10



and lots more



I had missed one period when I went to see my G.P. to ask for a pregnancy test. He asked me if I wanted to be pregnant. I said 'No' and he telephoned there and then to arrange for me to see a consultant from Tameside Hospital.

The consultant called to see me at home a few days later. He examined me but was unable to confirm whether or not I was pregnant. After a number of fairly straightforward questions he told me to attend the hospital a week later if I thought I was still pregnant. I would then undergo an evacuation abortion. I was surprised that this method was offered so readily without even a pregnancy test.

I hadn't any misgivings about having an abortion, I already have one young child and had had a coil fitted as I don't want another child yet. The abortion by the evacuation method was very convenient, I was given a local anaesthetic. The operation took about 1½ hours and the discomfort was similar to that caused when a contraceptive coil is fitted. I didn't have the difficulty of making arrangements for my child while I spent several days in hospital. The staff were very considerate. There was no attempt to either dissuade me or to moralise about my decision. After the operation I was left to rest for a short time and was then able to walk home feeling just a little shaky.

I haven't had any misgivings since. If it hadn't been made easy for me I

would have still sought any other form of legal abortion. I am not prepared to consider pregnancy with a view to adoption nor do I want to be pressurised into bearing a child I do not wholly want.

Nonie Martin.

I would like to say I really enjoyed reading Womens Struggle Notes No.1. Two articles interested me especially. First the one about Social Workers. I myself got referred to this refuge by a social worker, but I haven't seen him since then. I never knew social workers went as far as calling women man haters and lesbians, just because of being involved in Womens Centres. It is not a Social workers job to tell you whether you're a lesbian or a man hater. It's their job to help you — not tell you what you are. My opinion is that the woman who wrote that article about her social worker did right to beat him up. I would have done the same because he was in the wrong. Unless you kick them up the arse you stay like lying ducks. What right had he got to express his personal feelings about lesbians and man haters. Everybody has the right to live. Someone like him should understand the facts of life before judging other people's lives and then perhaps he'd understand. At first we had the most sympathy for the woman in the article, but after reading it over we have most sympathy for the man in question.

I also liked the article about DHSS

on the back page about How Social Security Paid the H.P. Bills. I think more ought to be published for unsupported mothers, about debts left by their husbands. I myself never knew about unpaid debts until I read the article. I would like to see Womens Struggle Notes published once every month instead of every two months. signed G.B.

I think your first issue of Womens Struggle Notes was good. I feel it's important for women to know what women in other areas or situations are doing, be that in the home or at work. And you can never find out much information on women from newspapers, even if you have the time to scan through them. I liked the Hazards of housework page best as it showed the dangers women face every day in the home. I am a student nursery nurse, and I hope at some stage you will be doing an article about children, and the problems relating to children.

Jill, Liverpool.

We'd like to hear from you, please send letters

DEMOS
NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN
demo., London, Sat. 14th MAY. Beat the Benyon Bill! Details as soon as we know them.

PLAYS
Counteract is going on tour with their play on nursery provision and the cut backs. 'THE DOUBLE SHIFT'
APRIL 18-24 North and East Yorks.
APRIL 25-MAY 1st Scotland, Edinburgh and Aberdeen.
MAY 2 - 8 Scotland: Dundee and Glasgow
Contact them at Counteract Federation, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1, 01.251.4977
NORTH WEST dates will appear next issue.

We would like to thank Report and Moss Side Press for their help in the production of Womens Struggle Notes

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WHO WE ARE WHAT WE THINK

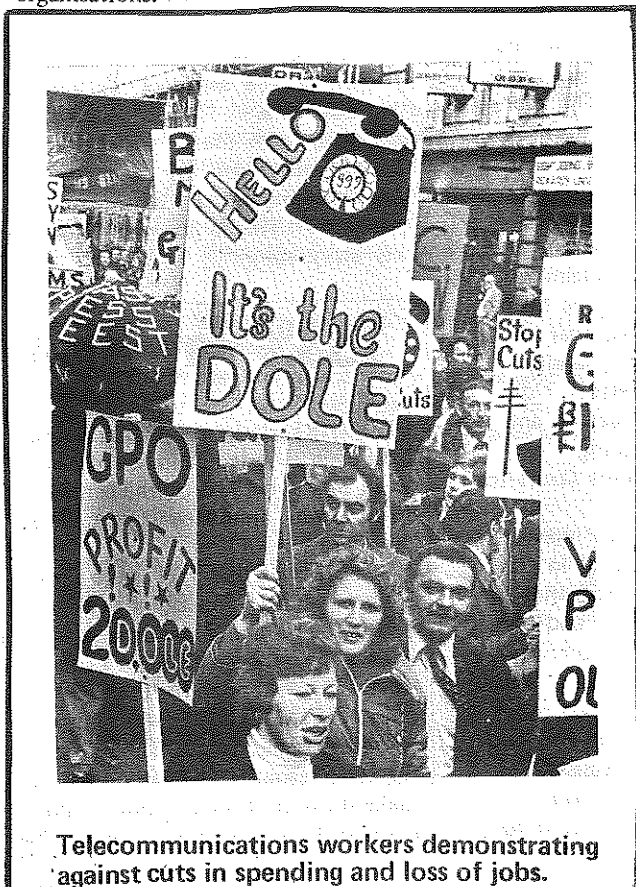
THIS ISSUE of WOMENS STRUGGLE NOTES has been produced by the Northern Editorial Collective. This collective is made up of women in Big Flame, a mixed revolutionary Socialist organisation, from Liverpool and Manchester, with the help of women in Leeds and Sheffield.

Big Flame is in the process of investigating ways of building a new organisation which could unite different sections of the working class movement. At the moment many struggles are isolated and sectional, and therefore have less power. We believe that if we are ever going to get anywhere there needs to be more unity between people who share the same politics.

WOMEN'S POWER

We see the growth of women's power at work and in the community as vital to the development of a strong socialist movement. Part of this initiative is widening the base of the Struggle Notes Editorial board in the north to include any women who agree with our aims. Struggle Notes will be a way of presenting all the various forms of organisation and struggle women are involved in to show that our fight is important and has power.

At the same time we think that a women's magazine like Struggle Notes is an important contribution to the development of a strong autonomous socialist feminist movement in this country. We believe that it is more important than ever before to build strong women's organisations.



Telecommunications workers demonstrating against cuts in spending and loss of jobs.

Andrew Ward (Report)

The capitalist system in which we live exploits and divides working class people from one another, and now it is in CRISIS our lives are under more and more stress. Housing, schooling and health care and whole structure of the Welfare State are under attack. The Social Contract is holding back our wages while prices soar.

In the last three years the cost of electricity has rocketed 123%, gas 78%, coal 85%. More and more people are having to face cut-offs, living in the cold or taking the risk of dangerous fires by reconnecting the services themselves. And food prices have gone up 54% in the last two years.

It's been difficult to fight in the face of this capitalist onslaught. But everywhere women are struggling to improve their conditions whether on their own or in women's centres, battered wives refuges, National Abortion Campaign groups, housing estates or workplaces.

The only way to get anything WE want, the only way to control our own lives and bodies is by organising together resisting the capitalists' plans and showing our power.

How can we best do this? How do we know what other women are doing? How can we learn from one another's struggles? We think that Struggle Notes can play an important part in helping women organise together and communicate their ideas and experiences. Local women's liberation newspapers and newsletters and other feminist magazines like Spare Rib also do this.

A BEGINNING

Those of us working on Women's Struggle Notes have some shared political ideas which are the basis of us working together. We think that one of the main ways that all women are exploited in this society is because whatever else we do, we are expected to do an endless amount of **housework**. Cleaning, cooking, looking after children and men for no money, often trapped in the house with no time to call our own. Some of us may have managed to organise ourselves so we share the housework, and have some financial, emotional and sexual independence. But this is only a beginning, a hope of possible change. For the vast majority of women our lives will only change significantly when we organise together to change the whole of society so it's how we want it. This will only happen when the working class is united and strong and when women are organised autonomously within a strong socialist feminist movement.

We support all women's struggles which increase our power and confidence, and we support the ideas of the women's movement. We want to build a working class perspective in the women's movement and a feminist perspective in class struggle.

We would welcome any women who are interested in developing Womens Struggle Notes to work with us. If you have any ideas, criticisms or contributions for future issues, or would like to sell copies or hold a meeting around Struggle Notes we can be contacted at:

Liverpool: 217 Wavertree Road, Liverpool 7. 051.263.1350

Manchester: 14, Picadilly, Manchester. 061.223.4515

Sheffield: 28 Filey Street, Sheffield. 0742.587120

Leeds: 80 Harehills Avenue, Leeds 7. 0532.620535

London: Box 339, Rising Free, 142 Drummond St. London, NW1

The next issue will be produced in London for mid-June

WOMEN'S STRUGGLES

UNFAIR DISMISSAL

LAST AUTUMN Mrs Neta Stewart, a widow with two teenage sons, left her job at Browns, the wholesale grocers in Leeds. Her arthritis had started while she worked in their cold, damp warehouse and she couldn't face another winter there.

She applied to Baddeley's Cash and Carry and was employed as an invoice clerk. Four out of five men working in her office were OAPs and she suspected they all had 'an arrangement' about their pay, involving a tax fiddle. These men often complained about S.S. scroungers. "I was amazed" said Neta "I told them just how little I got for my two boys and how the State had taken over twice as much out of my pocket through taxation than I'd ever got from them."

This conversation was reported to John Pinder, the managing director's son. It was not long before Neta was accused of "doing nothing." "As soon as I got into the swing of the work, I quickly realised there wasn't really enough work, we were all hanging about. One bloke was writing all his personal mail." Neta explained to Pinder that there wasn't enough work and that she had done all she could. Casually she remarked "If you don't think I'm doing my work properly I might as well leave." Pinder replied "You do as you like." and that was the end of the conversation, or so Neta thought.

Neta worked the next week as usual and the week after she contracted bronchitis. The doctor gave her a sick note which she sent up with her son to the wages clerk. (Not that she expected sick pay, you had to work for the firm for at least a year before you were entitled to

ELECTROLUX BOSSES AVOID EQUAL PAY

300 WOMEN at the Electrolux plant in Luton are out on strike for the Equal Pay which they are entitled to. The women, many of whom train the men to do their jobs, earn on average £12 per week less for doing identical work.

Management are doing all they can to avoid their legal responsibilities over Equal Pay. They have said that only the seven women who went to the Tribunal can get Equal Pay, and that the other 223 must go through this procedure as well. Ann Hutchinson, the women's AUEW shop steward, is adamant that this is rubbish and that the company, which increased its profits from £8 - 16 million last year, must pay up.

But the women have another battle

to fight with their local union. The branch officials were either "too busy" or "couldn't afford" to attend the Tribunal to represent the women. And when management moved the 7 women who'd won Equal Pay off their jobs so that they were no longer entitled to Equal Pay, the union were reluctant to call a factory wide meeting that they could explain the situation and organise a fight.

The Equal Opportunities Commission are now involved in making their first official investigation into an equal pay dispute. But whatever conclusions they come up with, the women are clear that they are the only ones who will be able to force the management to pay them by organising, fighting sticking for their rights.



ANGELA PHILIPPS (IFL)

that!) When Tommy returned to his mother the message from the clerk was...

"As far as we're concerned your mother left last Friday."

So with no P45, no letter of dismissal, no money and a week before Christmas Neta went down to the Job Centre. She was told there that she couldn't claim for unfair dismissal because she hadn't worked there 26 weeks, that an employer no longer was legally bound to produce a letter of dismissal stating his/her reasons and that it wasn't worth going through the Small Claims Court for a maximum of £36.

It has taken Neta two months to get her rightful benefit, in the meantime she has lost £50 that she was entitled to. At the end of this experience she says, "A company can do what they like. They walk all over you and if you don't just suit them, they get rid of you and then by saying I was dismissed they stop me getting my benefit. Social Security is a dirty word to them, and the media don't help

either.

No one I met there was in a union people worked Saturday morning on the base rate. They should never get away with that. All I worry about now is will my "dismissal" prejudice me when I apply for my next job? Whose going to listen to my story fully?"

133% Pay Rise

FIVE GIRL clerks at Bilston, Staffs, have been awarded pay rises of between 74% and 133% by the central Arbitration Committee using a 1946 "fair wages resolution."

The girls, all under 21, were earning between £15 and £23 a week before the ruling. Now their salaries will be between £36 and £40 a week. A spokesman for their union, ASTMS, said "It was a comparability issue. We were able to use the 1946 resolution because the firm make furniture for education authorities so the wages became comparable with local authority wages."

WIVES SUPPORT FIGHT AGAINST REDUNDANCIES

THE OCCUPATION at Wildt Mellor textile machinery factory in Leicester was ended at the beginning of March by a High Court order. The workers were occupying against threatened redundancies and are now picketing 24 hours a day until the management agrees to withdraw compulsory redundancy notices. The wives Support Group which was formed at the beginning of the occupation is still meeting and below we reprint an interview with some of its members.

INTERVIEW WITH WIVES SUPPORT GROUP WED 16th

Those present at Wives Support Group meeting were: Lynne (leader), Lily, Chris, Jenny Nulala, Ruth, Shirley Margaret, Julie, Irene, Diane, Sheila.

Q. Why was the support group formed in the first place?
A. "Because we love our husbands and our kids. If the men are going to fight, we've also got to fight. It's a family matter and we've got to stick together what problems he's got are mine, and what's mine are his."

Q. How many wives are involved?
A. "40 - it's grown a bit, but it's got a hard core. There's lots of work and a lot of women can't come to meetings because they can't get babysitters. We've got a rota system based at Granby Road, and a hardship fund for the wives, which has been collected amongst us. If anybody has any bother at the S.S., and they can't get their proper money, Irene or Lynne or our husbands come and help."

"We've picketed the Holiday Inn and the Leicester Mercury because there were two letters published that attacked the Wildt workers and we had sent a lot of letters praising Wildts and the men, and what it meant to the community - none of these were printed."

"We knew all the letters were hidden; when I got into the offices I took in photocopies of the letters we'd sent. The man said he hadn't set eyes on them before - then it comes out that all the letters had been locked in a little drawer by the man who sorts out the letters page in the Mercury."

Because the women complained, the Mercury offered to interview them for their story.....

"Nothing in the interview or story that we gave them was printed, or why we had that interview. The public didn't know why we were complaining, because it wasn't written down."

Q. What did you think of the Cowley Wives?
A. "We were told by the Mercury if we went against our husbands we'd get more coverage. Perhaps they (the Cowley wives) thought their husbands weren't justified in having gone on strike - we think our husbands are justified."

"Our men are losing their jobs and that just isn't fair, they're just moving them to Bookham, Surrey, where the pay is lower."

Q. How do the kids react?
A. "Oh, they love it."
"My kids go to school and say 'my dad's on strike, but for a good reason. They may take his job off him, but it's his job.'"

Q. What about the March on the 19th?
A. "We hope to show the people of Leicester just exactly what we're fighting for - so that they'll take notice. We distributed leaflets last Saturday and it was absolutely great. In half an hour 2,000 leaflets had gone out. They were stopping you and asking you about the sit-in and picket."

"I asked a chap - would you like to read this, it might affect you if you work in a factory - he said: 'won't affect me, I'm a brain surgeon.' so I said 'you bleeding well look like one as well, right scruffy bugger.' Some other people said 'no' but a lot took leaflets and were genuinely interested."

Q. What happened when the occupation had to be ended?
A. "The management, I think, were expecting trouble and the men showed them up by coming out peaceably and singing - even the police said we couldn't have done it better!"

"They came out dignified, and men."
"The management were really sick because there wasn't a fight. They looked dejected while the men were great - it makes me want to cry again."

Q. Do you think you might get involved in anything else?
A. "At the minute I think we're just for Wildts. I think, if we take that sort of line we'll be classed as militatns, which is what we're not. We're just wives."

Q. What about Women's Liberation, and left groups, have they helped you?

A. "It's a lot just trying to sell papers, and get us to go to their meetings. Womens Liberation are very helpful, they gave us some addresses to write to, to put our case over in London. They didn't try and convert us, they let you speak, let you alone - didn't try to mould you into what they were. We went purely for advice and go it."

"When you're just an ordinary housewife and a mum and you just do a little thing like this, it grows and grows, and you have to be wary - some of the things said and the big words used, I mean we all look at each other and say 'what's that bloody mean?' so we don't go too high but we want as much help as we can."



John Sturrock (Report)

Irish wives of internees chain themselves to Downing Street railings to protest against the ending of political status for internees. London 1st March 1977

NO TO HOSPITAL CLOSURE

MILL ROAD Maternity Hospital, Liverpool, is threatened with closure this July, a casualty of the cuts in the NHS and the 'falling birth rate.' If it's allowed to go in July, its services would be transferred to inadequate and unmodernised wards in other hospitals miles away. There'd be no special baby care units as there now are at Mill Road. Many women speak warmly of Mill Road, they say it's friendly, the service is good, equipment up to date, they can rely on the place. They've gone back by choice for every baby, every gynae and obstetric problem. It's a good local hospital for women.

CAMPAIGN TO KEEP MILL ROAD

It may not close yet though, as the campaign to keep it open gathers momentum. The workers there describe themselves as non-militant. The Action Committee say they've done all they can - which is write letters to MPs, councillors, GPs and get a 11,000 signature petition up. The only union to back them is NUPE. The other unions say they'll make sure they get jobs at other hospitals - they think the hospital should close. The Community Health Council is opposing closure only because other services won't have been upgraded. If this happens, they'll sit back and let it close.

When we heard the closure was to be brought forward to July before the necessary upgrading had taken place at other hospitals, some women from Big Flame and the Women's Centre went up to see the women in the Action Group at Mill Road. We offered help, to do articles and leaflets, to organise a support group. We told them about the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson occupation, and encouraged them to see that occupation might be the only way to keep Mill Road open. We suggested that a really important part of the campaign would be to involve women **outside** the hospital - to get them to carry on using the hospital.

We organised a petition with posters about Mill Road, which we've had on a stall in the city centre and local markets on Saturdays.

HEALTH BOSSES STRATEGY

Despite the growing and warm response to stop the closure, we have to face the fact that this alone won't stop the Area Health Authority's plans. They say they must cut spending (and this is particularly bad in Liverpool) and because of the falling birth rate, maternity services must be 'rationalised.' This will mean more travelling for women to other maternity units stretched to capacity, and giving a poorer standard of care. They've already closed wards at Mill Road, and at the nearest maternity hospital, Oxford Street, the ratio of medical staff to patient is now three times less than at Mill Road. And to try and lower the

reputation of Mill Road, and put women off it, they've closed one of the upgraded wards and a spacious nursery, cramming women and babies instead into the older, smaller wards.

To confuse and dampen morale, they're advertising alternative jobs for staff at other hospitals. So some people have left, and their jobs of course haven't been replaced. But many of the workers left are now refusing to be interviewed for alternative jobs.

THE SUPPORT GROUP

The support Group was started by 3 of us in Big Flame

One of us works in another hospital and we've been involved in the struggle against the cuts producing leaflets for the Liverpool hospitals. We did one about Mill Road for other hospitals. As the Support Group gets bigger, involving more women in the Womens Movement, we intend doing leaflets for the many local factories employing thousands of women. Some of the women who work in Mill Road seem to be getting more confident about coming out on the streets, petitioning and being prepared to address meetings. We're hoping they may organise a meeting inside the hospital for workers and outsiders with the EGA film and speaker. At the moment things are progressing well with the street petitioning and talking to women, but we recognise that a lot more hard work will need to be done to **organise** this support into effective opposition to AHA plans.

WOMEN FIGHT FOR OUR

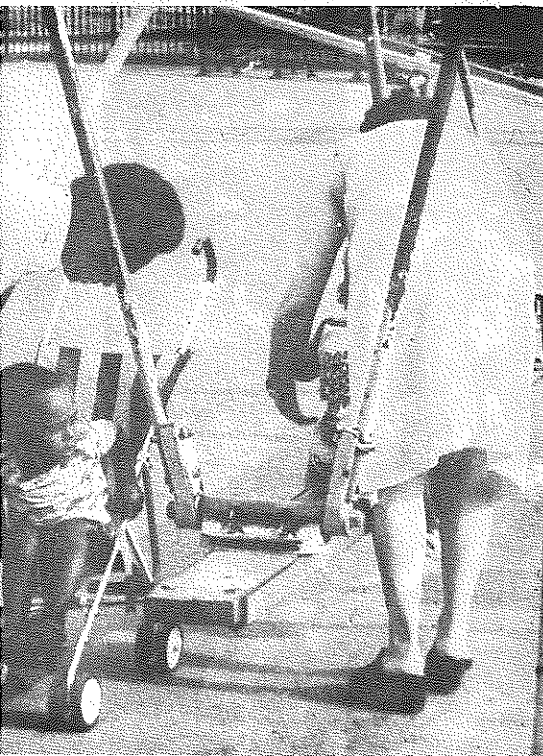


BLACK WOMEN AND SURER

AS A BLACK woman, I felt the need to relate to other black women as a special need because it is an oversimplification to see our problems as the same as all women whatever our colour. We are superexploited firstly because we are black, secondly because we are women. We have to stretch an analysis of this society wider, for even if and when we are rid of a capitalist system, we will still be left with racism. We will be no better off.

Ten years ago we set up a black womens group, but fell out over wigs. In a discussion we fell out because some women couldn't come to terms

TOGETHER GETTING OUR NEEDS



Big Flame photo

GETTING STRONGER OF OURSELVES

with the fact that we shouldn't imitate our white sisters. The group failed.

Since then I have attended womens groups, but as a rule black women did not participate in these. The politics of these groups in theory were good but they had not analysed exactly what a racist society inflicts on us black women. For example we attended a meeting with women from Angola on the platform and right away white women started asking about nursery provision. They seemed to dismiss the extended family as a means of child care in African society. They didn't take it into consideration.

"CHIP BUTTY KIDS"

ONE PARENT FAMILIES ORGANISING

ONE PARENT families have their own specific problems in coping with getting enough money together to live on; finding a decent home and overcoming isolation and loneliness.

Iris, Rose and Irene are all one parent families and they chat here about their experiences.

Iris "Because I was homeless I put myself in Moorbank, a hostel for mothers and children in Manchester. It was terrible, I got put in an attic room and given one blanket for my kids cot. We didn't get proper nourishment and everybody was run down. The warden used to say "It's good enough for you lot - You're just 'chip Butty Kids'." To get something decent to eat we had to pinch her keys. Girls were really pressurised to give up their kids, you had to be awfully strong because they kept saying you couldn't give your kid this or that and they had adoption papers ready. The social workers that came went round that place with their eyes shut. In the end we all got so fed up we locked the warden in her room. She had a book on us all saying what kind of mothers we were. We buried that in the garden. We sent for councillors and got Granada Reports down. The place is better now, fumigated and remodernised.

I got a council flat in Wythenshawe outside Manchester, and the rent book had 'Homeless Family' stamped on it. I caused a fuss and got a letter of apology. I was really isolated there so I got moved to Ancoats walk-up flats near Manchester centre."

Irene "I had terrible trouble getting a council flat. After I had the baby I lived in some terrible bedsits and I was ill. I sat in the Town Hall and refused to budge until they gave me a flat; I got one of the Ancoats walk-ups. People just tread down on unmarried mothers, they assume you're a bad lot."

Rose "The community worker on Ancoats organised a one parent family group. About ten women were involved, just organising trips for the kids and having social evenings for the women to get them out of the house so they didn't go mad. The group broke up but me, Iris and Irene started to run a voluntary advice service."

Rose "It turned out to be a real stroke of luck 'cause we got a job out of it. We got Job Creation for six months and hope to get it extended. It's better than social security."

Irene "When the weather gets better we'll try and set up another one parent family group. There are lots around here but they won't all come out and say so, they keep themselves to themselves. We've started a food co-op. We buy fruit and veg at Smithfield Market (a wholesale market) and sell it on Saturdays at wholesale prices. We've also started an action group with others from Ancoats walk-up flats. We all want to get rehoused, but we want the council to maintain the flats properly while we're still here. If I'm in these flats much longer I won't be able to let my kid out to play until he's about six.

Before European influence in Africa, socialism was practised in some places. The women were once again trying to inflict the inhibitions European women have developed since the industrial revolution onto us black women.

We feel a need to relate to each other as black women and since October we have met regularly each week. Education for our children has evoked much discussion. We all feel this is a multiracial society, but this is nowhere reflected in the teaching in schools, in fact it is often racist. We organised a fund-raising event to

finance a conference later in the year which can act as a forum where black women from around the UK can discuss the education of their kids. Hopefully the conference will act as a focus where we can teach each other and exchange experiences.

It's early days yet. The group is getting stronger and surer of ourselves. While we are working well we prefer help and guidance when WE ask for it, not when others, no matter how well meaning, think we need it. The white left is often well meaning but not well thought out and can easily undermine people in the group.

SPANISH WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AFTER FRANCO - THE SPACE TO ORGANISE

THE SPANISH WOMENS DAY of action organised by Mujeres Libres (Free Women) last spring, was a major turning point for the Spanish Women's Movement. The post Franco government was beginning to ease up on political repression which gave space to feminists and socialists to organise.

DEMANDS

The crowning point was a meeting attended by over 1,000 women when militants of various women's organisations including the leaders of the textile workers (at that time, in the middle of a strike), hammered out a ten point programme of women's rights. It could be considered more advanced than the classic demands of the British women's movement. It called for the socialisation of housework as well as for the abolition of those laws which discriminate against the woman in sexual matters, such as prostitution. It ended with a demand for the legalisation of abortion, free on demand within the national health system.

FASCIST HERITAGE

The press began to take up the women's question, printing word for word in many cases statements made by feminist organisations. The memory of Franco began to recede, and there was growing intolerance of his fascist heritage.

Fascism not only wiped out all the gains made by women during the Second Republic (1931-39) but also laid a firm legal base for discrimination against women in every sphere of life. A fascist law is still in force which makes adultery by a woman (though not a man) punishable by long prison sentences. Divorce is illegal and women have no property rights in marriage. A woman who recently faced a jail sentence of seven years had it reduced to six months after demonstrations by women in several cities. Single mothers and women who become pregnant while working are usually sacked without appeal. Women under 21 are subject to total control by their fathers.



30th June 1976 - neighbourhood association in Madrid demonstrate for 'Decent Housing - not Human Beehives.'

The combination of Catholic morality and fascist hatred for the woman can be seen at its worst when it comes to prostitution and abortion. Prostitutes, who have recently begun to organise against police repression in Barcelona, are hunted vigorously off the streets, although it is unheard of for their clients to be prosecuted.

ABORTION

Abortion is a very serious offence, even though sex education is non-existent and officially persecuted.

In a short space of time the feminist groups have succeeded in turning abortion and contraception into public issues. Many of the left wing parties are taking up positions of support on these questions. Some doctors are courageously carrying out abortions, despite the 12 year penalty if they are caught. It seems that one of the first acts of any newly elected govern-

ment will be to change the law on divorce and marriage. Scared that these repressive laws may be about to disappear, the Church is now arguing that it has sole rights of decree over questions of marriage. But the Church is likely to find itself out in the cold. Anti-clericalism is far stronger in Spain, and it is worth remembering that in another strongly Catholic country, Italy, the Vatican got knocked back when it tried to revoke the law giving the right to divorce.

HOUSEWIVES

Spanish women are not only campaigning on abortion and divorce. There are many well established organisations. On the one hand are the feminists and then there are the housewives associations. These organisations have been campaigning over amnesty for political prisoners, especially the women like Eva Forest who have

been held for years without trial. Lately, the campaign has been extended to the common prisoners who include many women convicted on sexist laws (adultery, prostitution, abortion). And they have fought in the cities against the appalling social conditions which fall most heavily on women's shoulders. Last year in Sabadell, a satellite town of Barcelona, women and children marched through the centre demanding better schools. The police waded in with truncheons. The result was another march of protest, supported by teachers and factory workers, and a general strike which continued until the police released the women they had arrested.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Very few women work outside the home, and then only in a restricted range of industries. Spanish capitalism has been so well supplied with cheap male labour that it has been able to afford keeping the women at home. Some feminist organisations argue that the key to liberation is in bringing women out of this 'ghetto' and integrating them into the workforce. Others, rejecting this as undesirable and unlikely, put the stress on women organising in the community. It is similar to debates among English feminists.

Now, housewives organisations in Madrid are organising a boycott of the markets in protest against price rises. In one district of Madrid, Las Aguilas, women have launched a campaign for control of a projected market so that they can reduce the effects of the monopoly power of the food companies. Profiteering in Spain goes unrestricted — land-speculation and gerry-building are rife.

Women have been very important in the fight against bad social conditions. For example, the Pilar district of Madrid with a population of 125,000 has no nurseries, only a quarter of the needed secondary school places, no recreation or social facilities and only two surgeries for the entire population.

This year, the women's movement in Spain has taken an important step forward with the creation of a national federation of feminist organisations. There are also local coordinating committees at city level which have just organised big meetings to celebrate International Women's Day.

You can find out more about Spanish women and their struggle, especially against the prisons, by contacting the Free Eva Forest Campaign at 38 Earlham St., London W.1.

POEMS

THESE POEMS are selected from two working class writers' groups — the Scotland Road Writers' Workshop which operates in an Irish Catholic dockside area of Liverpool, and the Liverpool 8 Writers' Workshop, a predominantly, but not exclusively, black group. The Scotland Road group has produced two magazines — *Voices of Scotland Road and Nearby (1 and 2)* and is about to produce a third. The newly-formed Liverpool 8 group is about to produce its first publication. Anyone interested in either of these groups could write to 1 Wyndcote Road, Liverpool 18.

WAVE OF HER HAND

Waving her hand at me.
All she ever does
Do this Babs, do
that Babs, be a good girl, Babs, mind
the baby, Babs. That's
all she ever says to me, never here's
two bob, girl, want to go out girl?
She don't know the
meaning of go out, oh I hate being young.

*Barbara Kildare (13)
from Voices of Scotland Road (1)*

SATURDAY NIGHT

"Oh, no. Not again"
Poor Sheila despairs,
As she watches her husband
Sidle around the stairs.
She knows very well
What that simpering means,
It's happened so often before.
That grinning is only the prelude
To belt, fist and boot.

Oh how she wished
That Saturday's could
be forbidden by law.
She was a familiar sight
In the hospitals now
Because of Saturday night.

Her parents were dead
And her mother-in-law thought
It was Sheila's own fault
For provoking her son.
Quick! rush to placate him
Offer him coffee or tea
Or anything to divert him
No matter what.

Too late she thought
As she felt the first blow
Before losing her consciousness
She formed her last thought
"Will he kill me this time"

Iris Warburton

SINNERS

So, she's a sinner.
Who casts the first stone?
The tax evader?
Moral judgements so easy to make
When they're on someone else.
Examine your motives
Look at your lives
Have you never cheated
Stolen or lied
Had sexual adventures with
Other men's wives
So now we're all sinners
Who casts the first stone?

*Iris Warburton
Liverpool 8*

THE THIEF AND THE WHORE

"They" say she's a whore
and "they" say he's a thief
The children are many
and bastards.
But those who bothered
To meet with this family
Found that she simply
Was friendly and warm,
Welcomed all to her friendly abode.

He too was friendly,
But a bit absent minded,
Borrowed things he forgot to return
They were legally married
So the children did not deserve
The title "They" gave them.
Oh how I wish that
Those who spread rumours
The whisperers, realised it is they
Who are the thieves and the whores.
They steal others good names
And prostitute honour.

Iris Warburton

*There must be lots of you who've
written poems or short stories
but not known who to show
them to. We'd like to see
them so we can have a regular
page for your writing.*

OUR BODIES OURSELVES

A series on womens health

THE HEALTH SERVICE, which WE pay for is getting worse and worse — especially for women. We use it most, both for ourselves and our children. Even when women are healthy, they are still likely to need health care sometime — for birth control, pregnancy, abortion or the menopause. But now the cutbacks mean less facilities and less paid work, as well as more unpaid work, time and worry at home.

Even if we get money put back into the NHS, women will still have to fight to be treated properly. Our problems are considered trivial — often dealt with by giving a prescription of valium. Women are rarely given information about what is happening. Overworked medical staff think we are just troublesome if we dare to ask questions, (and they don't have to be overworked to think that either!)

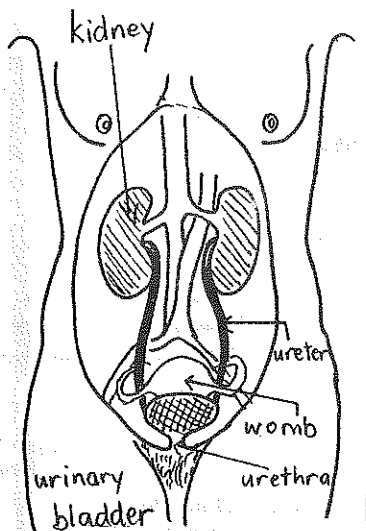
We don't see why there should be any mysteries about our bodies! We need a health service that suits us. To help spread information about our health we want to include an article in each issue of Womens Struggle Notes, dealing with particular problems. We would welcome any comments, helpful hints and experiences from other women.

CYSTITIS - CAUSES AND CURES

Lots of women get cystitis. It is a feeling of discomfort when you pass water — usually described as a burning sensation. With this comes the urge to pass water often even though there is only a small amount to pass.

These symptoms are due to inflammation of the bladder and its outlet pipe, the urethra, which may bleed slightly.

URINARY SYSTEM



WHAT CAUSES IT?

Normal intestinal bacteria, called E.Coli, can often cause cystitis by getting into the urine, usually from the anus. Because the anus, vagina and urethra are close together in women, it is easier for the bacteria to get to the urethra. Cystitis can also occur if the acidic balance in the urinary system is upset, or if your resistance is low. It is likely to occur when there is damage from childbirth or intercourse, although no-one has yet explained why some women continually get it and others don't.

PREVENTING CYSTITIS

1. Help the natural defences of your bladder. Keep up a good flushing through effect by drinking large quantities of fluid so as to maintain a urine output of at least 2 litres (5 pints) every day. Empty your bladder frequently — at least 6 times a day.

2. One bath a day is not sufficient. It is necessary to keep a special flannel for the purpose of washing the perineum (this is the skin area around the entrance to the urethra) each morning and evening and *always* after passing a stool. No strong soaps, deodorants, antiseptics, creams or powders, just simple cool water.

3. If your symptoms are related to sexual intercourse occurring regularly sometime during the 48 hours after intercourse, you may prevent attacks by the following measures: both partners wash before intercourse with plain cool water. Dry gently. Use a lubricant KY Jelly By Johnson and Johnson to prevent soreness and bruising. Empty your bladder within 15 minutes of intercourse.

4. If your normal urine burns and you need to pass water quite a lot, it could be that it is too strong. With blue litmus papers from the chemist, test one in your urine. If it turns red there must be an uncomfortable amount of acid crystals present, so drink plenty of water. If the urine hurts then a level teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda in water will also help.

IF AN ATTACK STARTS

Drink ½ pint of water every 20 minutes. Drink barleywater and each hour for three hours take a level teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda to lessen the burning sensation. Keep warm and wash the perineum front to back after every visit to the lavatory. After these three hours the attack will have lessened sufficiently for you to go to the doctor. Avoid tea and coffee which can irritate the bladder. Try a hot water bottle on your abdomen and back, and soak in a hot bath

WHEN YOU GO TO THE DOCTOR

Take with you a specimen of urine so it can be tested to make sure you do have cystitis. Usually the treatment is pills, taken several times a day for about two weeks. The symptoms should disappear after a couple of days. Doctors usually prescribe antibiotics which don't always succeed because they may only treat the symptoms and not the cause. They may cause vaginal infections like thrush. If the cystitis keeps coming back it may be necessary to go for an X-ray to make sure that the bladder and kidneys are working properly.

For more information on cystitis write to the U & I Club, 9e Compton Road, London N.1. Tel: 01.359.0403 for the publications: *Self help in Cystitis and Understanding Cystitis*.

Also free leaflets are available from The Health Education Council, 78 New Oxford Street, London, WC1 1AH called *Cystitis - what you should know about it*. Much of the information in the article above is taken from this very useful leaflet.

IF LEFT UNTREATED, cystitis can lead to a kidney infection, so you need to see a doctor.

HAZARDS of Housework

DEPRESSION 'I just couldn't see the point of living'

WOMEN IN BRITAIN today consume twice as many tranquilisers and anti-depressants as men. Why are women so much more vulnerable than men to depression when we are all victims of the same exploitative system?

The following interview with Jenny, a 29 year old mother of two from Leeds, reveals some of the specific 'hazards' of being a housewife which can lead to a dependency on anti-depressants like Valium.

HOUSEWORK

'The husband likes to come home to his tea on the table, telly and feet up. The neighbours all around you expect certain things like posh furniture, carpets a clean house, nicely dressed kids. I feel pressure from all sides — the capitalists want a well looked after worker and the community frowns on the ones who can't cope. If only women would share their fears and anxieties they'd soon find out that all us neighbours feel the same.'

KIDS — A FEELING OF EMPTINESS

You feel you have to do certain things for the kids or you're letting them down, not being a good mother. You meet a bloke, settle down, have 2 or 3 kids and then you find yourself stuck at home, lost all contact with your old friends because you don't go out any more and you feel empty. You feel like something's missing and then immediately you think you're not normal, there's something lacking in your ability as woman and mother. I hate housework, my life totally revolved round children, but I used to get depressed because I felt my life wasn't whole, now I know that I'm a person and I can fight back. Once you start struggling, it might be for a zebra crossing or free electricity you're beginning to fight back at what really oppresses you. Then you feel better.

MONEY

Money is a problem for everyone but more so for the woman. She has the responsibility for making sure everyone's fed, the rent and bills are paid. Having to struggle all your life is very depressing, never being able to afford the nice things.

I went to a psychiatrist once, for a year. All the help offered was to get someone to sort out my money problems. I could do that myself. Although I was £700 in debt, I knew

on paper how to spin my money out but I didn't want to scrimp and save and worry all the time.



'...is that all there is?'

- * 20% of all women in the UK take anti-depressants or tranquillisers.
- * Drug companies spend £32mil. a year on advertising in the UK.
- * Total spent on nursery education by all local education authorities was £9mil.
- * Roche embezzled £12,877,000 from the NHS between 1966-70, and 1973/4, enough to build all the 92 health centres whose construction was frozen in 1971.

DEPRESSION

I felt like I was really scared, as if I was going to have four teeth out with no laughing gas. I was convinced I was going to die. I just couldn't see the point of living any more, nothing mattered. However hard I tried I couldn't manage to enjoy myself. I kept remembering a song called ".....is that all there is?" I went back to the psychiatrist and she prescribed valium and Anafranil 10. I took these tablets for six months, three of each a day and began to feel better.

Taking valium, to Jenny now is just a part of life. The same goes for over 20% of women in this country. Jenny says "taking valium away from working class women is like taking a life belt from a drowning man." We certainly don't want to abolish valium, but rather abolish the system that gives rise to the need.

Roche, the big chemical firm that produces valium enjoys a profit margin of 40-50%. Are we as women being drugged into submission, while big business profits from our depression??

HAZARDS OF CUT-OFFS

Lily blacks out the town

MOTHER of two Lily Brown blacked out part of a town when she tried to restore her electricity supply — cut off because of unpaid bills. Yesterday Mrs Brown, aged 22, of Garden Street, Mexborough, Yorks, was put on probation for a year at Doncaster after jamming a screwdriver in the fuse-box.

SLAVE LABOUR IN NURSERIES

I WORKED in a shop for nearly eleven years although since I left school I had wanted to be a nursery nurse. Unfortunately I had the courage to give up my job to go to college at the same time as the government decided to make education cuts!

Two weeks after the course started we were told that only three grants had been allocated between ninety students. Unfortunately lots of the mature women had to leave the course because of having no means of financial support, or they needed the money to supplement the family income. We go to college one week and work in a nursery the next. I don't receive any sort of financial aid so I am dependent on my husband.

Working with children is very hard work, lots of my romantic images of kids are rapidly disappearing. This is not the fault of the kids I work with, I love them, but it's the circumstances I have to work in with them. A nursery nurse has to be a mother, nurse, teacher and cleaner. You prepare the kids food, wash dirty nappies and clothes and you clean — the kids, the nursery toys, the floors, the toilets, even the playground. That's what every mother has to do anyway and it's hard enough with one or two kids. The problem is magnified a hundred times when there are only a couple of you trying to cope with thirty two kids. Their needs are immediate and you have to have plenty of ideas for stimulating and occupying them. It's no good saying to kids 'wait a minute' it's a life time to a child.

Education cuts have meant nursery schools closing down and newly built nurseries not even being fitted out to be opened. In 1948 when they needed women in industry there were 71,045 state day nurseries. Today there are 25,700. Existing places are short of money to buy materials. How do you tell an enthusiastic child 'you can't paint another picture because we are short of paper'? Kids will just lose their enthusiasm especially if they can't get materials or parents are too tired after work to give encouragement at home.

State nurseries are talked about at college as pre-school provisions, as if places are provided for all children. It's not True they are not provided as a right. Only 34% of middle class children have access to nursery places, be that private or otherwise, and only 16% of working class children have access. Priority for state nursery places is based on bad social conditions. Some nurseries have waiting lists of two hundred children, these kids will have a school place before they even get near the front of a nursery waiting lists

All of our kids have a right to good educational and play facilities provided for by the state. Despite the obvious need for nurseries, it's unlikely that there will be a job for me or the other 200 students at the end of the two year course.

The cuts mean that no new nurseries are being built and in some places they're even closing them down.

While we're at college, there is plenty of demand for our unpaid work in the existing nurseries and schools where we train. They are crying out for unpaid students to supplement their existing staff and save money. Even if you're lucky enough to get a job the wages as usual for working with kids, are low — it's seen as women's work and 'not very important'. No men are employed in nurseries and very few in infant schools. No men have ever done the nursery course. I wonder why?

A SMILE FOR £300

NURSERY NURSE Christella McCloskey was supposed to smile all the time she was at work. But one day she found she just couldn't, had a row with her boss, and was sacked.

The smile was back yesterday as she was awarded more than £300 compensation by an industrial tribunal for unfair dismissal.

She was under orders to smile and be happy and cheerful at her work at Warley Green Kindergarten, Smethwick.

One day, when she was in the process of divorcing her husband, the roof of her flat had blown off and she had had a row with workmen she could not manage a smile.



EVERY
TIME IT RAINS,
IT RAINS - PENNIES
FROM HEAVEN

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