

No. 10 WINTER

Ireland's Current
Affairs Quarterly

WOMENS VIEW

40p (inc. tax)



DIVORCE — what can we
expect from Committee on
Marital Breakdown

More features and News,
Views and Reviews of
Books, Cinema and Theatre

CLERYS will never be
the same again

Victims of an Irish solution
to an Irish problem

The Pill — where do
we go from here?

Unfinished Business — pressure
points in the lives of women



This Japanese mother died sheltering her two children

Painting: AKIYAMA Kazuo, 1945

NO MORE Hiroshimas

**No US
Cruise
Missiles
in Continent
of Europe**



**IN THE
NAME
OF
LIFE**

NO

Womens Group (CND)
Irish Campaign
Against Nuclear
Disarmament
16 Lr. Liffey St.
Dublin 1 730877

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**WOMENS
VIEW**

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New Maternity Unit

A NEW MATERNITY unit for the James Connolly Memorial Hospital in Blanchardstown is being planned, to cater for the rapidly expanding population on the north side of the city.

The Department of Health has agreed with the hospital board to provide a 45 bed obstetric unit for mothers and babies as part of general expansion to the hospital services there.

Out patient services will be extended in the project to develop James Connolly Memorial Hospital as an acute general hospital of 500 beds.

News of this development came in an answer from the Minister for Health, Barry Desmond to Tomás MacGiolla, West Dublin deputy anxious at the limited hospital services for the growing north county suburbs.

The planning brief to bring in the necessary changes is nearing completion, the Minister reported.

...and not before time

IRELAND has the highest birth rate in the EEC.

Births exceed deaths by 11 per thousand. In Britain, births exceed deaths by only 1 per thousand, and the population is almost static.

The population growth rate in Europe is still slowing down, with wide variations between rich and poorer countries.

The British population had an estimated drop of 10,000 recorded between 1981 and 1982. Births exceed deaths by 1.0 per thousand.

The expanding populations of Europe, by the same measure, are Italy, 1.5 per thousand; The Netherlands 3.8 per thousand; France 4.7 per thousand; Greece 5.6 per thousand; and Ireland with 11 per thousand.



● Liz McManus, chairperson of Bray Urban District Council, gets her priorities right.

Bray woman gives the lead

LIZ McMANUS, Bray Workers' Party councillor started her term of office in July as Chairperson of the Bray Urban District Council with a firm pledge for action to combat unemployment.

Liz McManus who was vice-chairperson of the UDC last year, is a member of the Bray VEC and convenor of the town's Women's Refuge group for victims of domestic violence.

Her immediate priority on the local council is to tackle the shocking level of unemployment in Bray, where official records show nearly 3,000 people are out of work.

Liz McManus was first elected to the Bray Urban District Council in June 1979. Her long record of local campaigning and hard work on constituents' behalf was acknowledged by the unanimous vote of the entire council to elect her as Bray's second woman chairperson of the council.

Snails pace reforms

WOMEN still meet discrimination at work, despite legislation to tackle inequality at the workplace and a change in social attitudes a recent survey by the Irish Conference of Professional and Service Associations (ICPSA) has shown.

The ICPSA, an umbrella group for white collar workers, has a membership of 60,000 — most of them women. The survey was carried out to provide evidence for their beliefs that women are discriminated against at work, especially in promotion, pensions and maternity leave.

At a meeting to launch the report, Margaret Browne, Secretary of the ICPSA sub-committee on women in employment, said that despite the Anti Discrimination Pay Act (1974) and the Employment Equality Act (1977) there were still problems for women at work.

"In relation to this legislation it can be said that while the letter of the law is being observed, the spirit of the law has not been taken to heart by employers," she said.

"While there may exist, in the strictest sense, equal pay for equal work, and equal entry into a given employment, once in, the opportunities are not the same for a woman.

"While many employers may have the correct policies on paper, in many cases the practice of discrimination against women still continues in the workplace."

The survey showed that in 1980 women accounted for 10% of the top management grades, whereas 66% were in secretarial grades.

Despite the introduction of the Employment Equality Act, these figures changed little between 1976 and 1980.

Figures included in the survey showed that while 90% of women are promoted once compared with 66% of men, only 9% are promoted twice as against 23% of males, and only 1% are promoted more than twice as opposed to 9% males.

Only one of the twelve organisations in the ICPSA had creche facilities.

One worrying aspect of the low participation of women was in trade union activity. Male representation at trade union executive level is nine times



● Equality legislation has meant little change for women 'white collar' workers.

higher than female representation.

More than half (57%) of the membership of the ICPSA was female in 1980, but their representation at executive level was only 13%. There were also very few women involved in the officer boards of unions.

The report recommends that management should provide women with equal opportunities at the recruitment stage, should give reasons for non-selection, and keep statistics on gender breakdown in the firm.

They also recommended that married women rearing a family should not be discriminated against.

The ICPSA recommend that unions should make sure that management keep to these obligations and encourage women to participate more in union affairs. They should also seek equal pension terms.

Women must push themselves, however, and be prepared to report discrimination where they find it. Where they are successful, women should positively encourage others.

Margaret Browne warned that there is a danger that women would become the "button pushers of the new technology" as traditional female skills restrict promotion.

"It is up to women in employment, management and unions to ensure that women do benefit in a positive way from new technology," she said.

Churches see women as second best

BY confining women to a secondary status, and discriminating against them in a blatantly sexist way, the Christian churches have done enormous harm.

This is the view of top theologian Sister Anne Carr. And she warns that the new generation of Christian feminists are determined "to change the Churches radically".

Despite intense opposition, misunderstanding and misrepresentation, Sister Carr says that these feminists are not going to be pushed out of the churches.

Discrimination against women is evident in the churches' use of sexist language in their liturgies, in the limited roles accorded to women, and in their exclusion from the ordained ministry.

"Together with the question of male language, Christian feminists insist that church structures must reflect the equality of the sexes that the Christian message implies."

A Professor of Theology at the University of Chicago — and a recent visitor to Ireland — Sister Carr argues that the Christian churches are the last institutions in the West to open their professional doors to women.

"And, in fact, some of the churches, notably the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox, still have not done so."

"Lagging behind medicine, law and business, the Churches appear to be following secular society in this area of equality and justice, rather than providing moral leadership."

The churches are also to blame, she says, for the continuation of sexual stereotypes in which women are classified as passive, irrational, less organised, incapable of intellectual work, or leadership.

"These views, often sanctified by the churches in official writings and sermons, support out-moded concepts of women, and are difficult to dislodge."

Rough living rough



● Homeless women receive a pittance of £29 each week to feed and house themselves.

SOCIAL worker Kate Sheehan told a SIMON Conference in Dublin that people 'living rough' were being denied social welfare payments. "The assumption seems to be," said Kate, "that if you sleep in the fresh air you can live on fresh air." As it was, it was a struggle to exist on social welfare.

All single hostel dwellers are entitled to an income of £28.90 per week. This just about allows a person to stay in a hostel and eat in dinner houses and day centres each day.

Kate also pointed out that the homeless are very often illiterate and it is extremely difficult for them to fight for their rights. "The Appeals procedure as it stands acts as a deterrent as it involves letter writing and documenting the case history. It also does not take account of urgent financial need."

Dunnes Stores claim

AN APPEAL to the Labour Court on behalf of an equal pay claim by seven part time sales assistants at Dunnes Stores in Newbridge has been lodged by their union, the Irish Union of Distributive Workers and Clerks (IUDWC).

Two similar claims by 17 women at Dunnes Stores in Navan were granted by the Labour Court, but the equality officer ruled that the Newbridge claim of work for equal value was not recommended.

In both supermarkets, the union argued, women part timers were paid a lower rate than a store porter, whose work was more physically demanding with worse conditions, but demanded less skills, mental effort and responsibility than the sales assistants.

The union accused Dunnes Stores of keeping the women part timers on less than 40 hours a week, although at the company's request the part timers worked full time hours over Christmas or during holidays.

Even when they work full time hours, Dunnes only pays them the lowest level on the full time scale, regardless of how many years they have been working for the company.

The equality officer turned down the Newbridge claim because the porter there had "more onerous" working conditions than the sales assistants.

His job in terms of the equal pay law, is of higher value than

● Staff at Dunnes Stores fight for their rights in branches round the country. The latest dispute is at Georges Street in Dublin. Owner Ben Dunne "wants one good strike to rid the stores of the cancer from within".



East Wall women meet

DUBLIN's East Wall has a new women's group — the Women's Information and Activity Group.

The group held its first meeting recently on the theme 'Violence Against Women in Society'. The main speaker was a counsellor from the Rape Crisis Centre who outlined the medical and legal procedures followed in rape cases and explained the support that the Centre can provide to victims of this crime.

Violence in the home was also discussed at some length with local Workers' Party representative Michael White (Solicitor) outlining the legal situation and highlighting the many weaknesses in the way the legal system operates in such cases.

The meeting was well attended and the discussion was lively and provocative. The Group meets on Tuesday evenings at 8 o'clock in St. Joseph's School, East Wall. If you're interested just go along.

similar jobs at the Navan branch, where women part timers won their claim.

The IUDWC say the Newbridge porter's extra duties are recent and should not effect the women's original claim, and have appealed the Labour Court decision.

Korea face problem

PROFESSOR Lee Si-Baek of the Seoul National University in Korea speaking at a seminar sponsored by the Planned Parenthood Federation, made a plea for a one-child family campaign in the country.

Korea Newsreview reports that Professor Lee urged the government to launch a one family — one child campaign to bring the population growth rate of 1.57 per cent down to 1.0 per cent.

At the current rate, 10 million more people will be added by the year 2000 to the current population of 40 million.

Opening the gates...

THE worldwide withdrawal of the 'morning sickness' drug **DEBENDOX** was announced during the summer by its US manufacturers, Merrell Dow. It is estimated that over 30 million women worldwide have used this drug — marketed as **Bendectin** in the United States — during their early pregnancy.

In January 1980 Betty Mekdici took the drug's inventors to court in Florida, USA, claiming that it had caused birth deformities in her son David. A finding against the company, with only a £20,000 award to cover medical expenses was eventually overturned on appeal.

The effect was that hundreds of other families claiming their children had been damaged filed law-suits against the company.

In June of this year another American family won their fight to prove that **Debendox** (**Bendectin**) can cause birth defects. In a month long trial a jury awarded \$750,000 (£500,000) compensatory damages to their 12 year old daughter.

A flood of court actions is now expected. Already 500 cases have been filed in Cincinnati alone and twelve British families have started proceedings.

Merrell Dow also manufactured the drug **Thalidomide** in the 1960s.

Full licence for the distribution of the contraceptive **Depo-Provera** has not yet been granted for its general distribution on the British or Irish markets (see **WOMENS VIEW Summer '83**) meanwhile, the debate continues...

SRI Lankan continues to keep alive the **Depo-Provera** issue. An article in "Weekend Sunday" blames pharmaceutical companies for using Sri Lankan women as guinea pigs to test **Depo-Provera**, a drug banned in the United States.

Dr. Siva Chinnatamby, reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of hormonal contraception. She reports that routine cytology examinations carried out in over 10,000 women in 1978 did not show a single case where malignant changes were attributed to the injectable contraceptive or the pill.

The Health Ministry, faced with growing criticisms of the injectable contraceptive, is quoted in the Daily News as stating "The injectable contraceptive is found to be well accepted, but due to its high cost is supplied only on request to medical personnel, particularly in those areas where other temporary methods have not shown much acceptance".

● 70 years ago Margaret Sanger campaigned for state birth control facilities for all working class women.



A BRITISH woman has been awarded £3,000 damages with costs against the North-West Regional Health Authority because she was injected with **Depo-Provera** without her consent.

The woman, who was given **Depo-Provera** with a post-partum rubella injection, claims that she suffered heavy bleeding, hair loss, acne, lost interest in sex and became depressed.

Mr. Justice Russell said in his judgement: "The injection was carried out without her effective and informed consent... To deprive her of the right to choose is to deprive her of a basic human right to do with her body as she wishes."

A WOMEN'S centre in New Zealand is collecting material on the injectable contraceptive **Depo-Provera**, with the aim of launching a campaign about this issue. The Hecate Women's Health Centre in Wellington is requesting information of women's experiences with the drug.

Minors Rights

THE Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) has hailed the action of the US Court of Appeals in striking down rules promulgated last January by the US Department of Health and Human Services which would have required federally-funded family planning clinics to notify the parents of a minor under 18 after prescription contraceptives were supplied.

PPFA states that as a result of the ruling all federally-funded family planning clinics across the country will be able to preserve the trust of their clients, maintain patient confidentiality and, at the same time, retain sorely needed government funding for the family planning services needed and wanted by millions of American teenagers.



Snap!

IN Puerto Rico, the subject of contraception has been inextricably intertwined with Catholicism and colonialism. Public discussion of a public action on family planning has always been conditioned by the doctrinal position of the church. The extent to which its teaching has influenced the actions of the members of its congregation, however, is another matter.

By 1968, Catholic women between the ages of 15 and 50 had experienced an average of 3.6 live births, exactly the same number as their non-Catholic counterparts. The consequences of Puerto Rico's status as a United States colony has been far more complicated and obscure.

Family planning initiatives were often capriciously cancelled by the overlords in Washington, as in 1936 when the order was issued to terminate the government's limited start in the promotion of birth control.

Once the federal government entered the business of birth control, the effect of its new policies was less subtle and more pervasive. The political relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States facilitated the importation of capital and ideas and the export of people. The large-scale emigration of Puerto Ricans to northern cities both deflected attention from the population issue in Puerto Rico and heightened its importance in the USA.

The island's birth rate for 1980, 22.8 per 1,000 inhabitants, is similar to, or even higher than, that of many Latin American countries that have not been exposed to publicly subsidised contraception.

FAMILY PLANNING

A CONTRACEPTIVE sponge designed to be worn internally by women has been given a licence by the Committee on Safety of Medicines and will be launched in Britain next January.

It is the first new contraceptive to go on the market since the intra-uterine device became widely available in the late sixties.

Natural sponges soaked in vinegar or olive oil have been used since the days of ancient Egypt and were still used in Britain a generation ago. But the concept of combining a disposable plastic sponge with a spermicide is new.

Like the contraceptive diaphragm, the sponge acts as a mechanical and chemical barrier to the sperm, but it is much easier to use and does not need to be fitted by a doctor.

The sponge, made from polyurethane foam, is about two inches in diameter. One side, which is concave, is placed over the cervix (the neck of the womb). The other side has a nape which can be used for removal.

The sponge is moistened

before insertion to release the spermicide and may be retained in the vagina for up to 48 hours without impairing its efficiency.

The device, to be sold under the brand name Today, will cost about £2 for a packet of three. On average, women have been found to use about nine sponges a month. The manufacturers, VLI Corporation of Costa Mesa, California, say it will be sold in Britain through chemists.

In Britain, the sponge has been tested on almost 200 young women of above average fertility at London's Margaret Pyke Centre. In this study the sponge was found to be not so reliable as the diaphragm. However, tests made in five other countries on 2,000 women found the methods equally effective.

The efficiency of both methods in these other countries was 85% — meaning 15 out of 100 women using the method for a year would become pregnant. But with women who follow the right procedures, it is claimed that the device, like the

diaphragm, can be 98% effective.

The sponge may prove most popular with women wishing to space their families, for they would not find an unexpected pregnancy disastrous. The method may also be right for older women who have completed their families but want to get off the pill and do not want to use the intra-uterine device.

Women much preferred the sponge to the diaphragm because it is simple to insert and does not require additional creams prior to intercourse. To be effective it simply has to stay in place for six hours after intercourse.

The great appeal of the sponge is that it offers women a contraceptive they can use themselves almost free of side effects. The only problem is that about 2% of women find the spermicide in the sponge causes allergic irritation.

.....but

THE USA's Food and Drug Administration's rapid approval of the Today contraceptive sponge has come under fire from the Associated Pharma-

cologists and Toxicologists and the Empire State Consumer Association.

According to the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association, these organizations are asking the FDA to withdraw approval of the device in order to conduct further tests on dangers associated with the polyurethane of the sponge and with dioxane residue in the spermicide.

The FDA has so far defended its decision to approve the sponge and has no plans to withdraw that approval.

yet.....

For American women weighing the potential side-effects of birth control Pills against the hassle of the diaphragm, the sponge is cause for excitement.

The sponge is unlikely to have much effect on the population explosion in developing countries since, compared with other forms of contraceptives, it is expensive at £1 a piece.

Another drawback is that it must be moistened in water before insertion and only two-fifths of the Third World's people have easy access to clean water. Religious strictures will also limit the use of contraceptive sponges in the Third World.

● *As we go to press no decision has yet been made to retail the new Contraceptive Sponge on the Irish market.*

THE DUBLIN Regional Council of The Workers' Party held a picket outside a meeting of the Eastern Health Board to highlight their demand for family planning services to be run through the EHB clinics.

The Workers' Party has been campaigning to bring family planning services under the control of the EHB in a number of constituency areas for the past three years.

The party has collected thousands of signatures in support of the campaign and last June

Proinsias De Rossa TD led a deputation from the North-West Women's Group to meet the Minister for Health, Barry Desmond. Under current legislation, Health Boards are only permitted to give advice on family planning and related health issues.

The Workers' Party want to see this Act changed so that local Health Clinics can supply contraceptives as well as giving advice on them.

● *Workers' Party TD Proinsias De Rossa leads the picket on the Eastern Health Board.*

Better service wanted from Health Boards





CLERYYS department store is one of the best known shops in Dublin's O'Connell Street. Its reputation has spread to all corners of Ireland this being mainly due to the business policy of its late owner Denis Guiney.

When Denis Guiney acquired Clerys in 1941 he set out to change the face of the distributive trade, not alone in Dublin, but throughout the country in general. His buying policy was quite simplistic compared to today's marketing techniques. He bought in shiploads and on many occasions bought out manufacturers' stocks completely, thereby cutting out the middle man. This gave him a monopoly on certain ranges of goods which he carried.

This idea of big turnover and low profit margins gained him a huge chunk of the working class market of those times. During the war years Clerys were able to import certain goods into the country which were scarce and this helped to build up his trade.

The stores appearance was quite different to the modern open-plan structure it adopted in the early seventies. It was quite dark inside and most of the sales assistants stood behind huge oak or mahogany counters. Overhead flew shoots to cashiers who checked receipts and change and sent them flying on their way back to the customers.

It was a maze of departments side by side. At one stage there was also a public bar, a public restaurant and of course, the famous ballroom. It worked like an overgrown beehive with people flooding in and out. During this period over 90% of Clery's staff were from the country and a famous saying of the time went "if you walk through Clerys you walk through Kerry".

In 1946 the staff worked a 5½ day week. Wage scales were between 15/- and £3 per week and these rates had to be made up with commission. Female staff

CLERYS

*...back
to work*

were on two thirds of their male work mates.

Working conditions were fairly poor and the staff canteen supplied tea only. There were two queues — one for men and one for women! The old 'are you being served' type Captain Peacocks were very much in existence, and they treated the staff very much as a headmaster would treat unruly school children.

"In those days it was a case that the customer was always right and the staff were always wrong," stated an employee of that time. "We never received any support from the managers. Clerys was sadly lacking in good staff relations and communications" she said, comparing this store with similar establishments in which she had worked in England.

"Women on the picket line recalled stories they had heard of the really early days when live-in quarters existed for staff in the distributive trades. They were run like dormitories — separate accommodation for men and women *and* you had to adhere to time restrictions. So if you lost your job you lost your home too.

Every person had to pay an entry fee to the employer to start an apprenticeship. The bigger the store the larger the fee. The normal fee was between £50 and £100 and your starting wage was as low as 5/- (25p) per week.

These workers were organised by the Irish Union of Distributive Workers and Clerks which was traditionally weak and lacked muscle to negotiate. This gave rise to grievances being stockpiled over the years. The problems which brought the Clerys staff out on strike in did not build up overnight.

The 375 members of the staff who had joined the Irish Transport and General Workers Union served strike notice on Clerys because the members claimed management refused to recognise the IT&GWU and would not enter into discussions on the 23rd wage round.

The workers had left the IUDWC two years earlier due to bad service and they refused to go back even after an Irish Congress of Trades Unions recommendation instructing them to leave the IT&GWU and go back to their original union.

The workers re-applied in November 1982 to join the IT&GWU under a new rule regarding transfers and were accepted. Since then the 85% of staff who are members of the IT&GWU have been given the cold shoulder by management.

As one member of the staff put it, "we had no say in the conditions we had to work in nor had we a say in the 23rd wage round although we made up 85% of the staff of Clerys in the clerical, sales and display grades. It was completely unjust."

The IT&GWU No. 2 Branch asked Clerys management to recognise the members' rights to representation and to put the agreement covering the 23rd wage round to a full hearing of the Labour Court. Management refused and after this the workers felt they had no option but to strike. A long hot summer on the street and the final acceptance by the strikers of a package which included redundancy papers for many of the Clerys staff, will ensure that those who have returned to work there will never accept outdated pay and working conditions ever again.

*The
legend
lives
on but
things
will
never be
the same
again
on the
shop
floor*



Workers' Party Women line up before the start

BELFAST MINI-MARATHON

Did you run the Marathon? That's the question being put to the twenty one women who took part as The Workers' Party team in Belfast's first all-women mini marathon. If the women collect all the money they have been promised for completing the 6.2 miles course through Belfast's inner city and Malone Road areas, then this novel way of raising finance for the Party will be a resounding success.

The day of the Marathon was a bit windy and threatening rain as almost 1,500 women warmed up under the direction of Northern Ireland's 1972 Olympic Pentathlon Gold Medal winner Mary Peters.

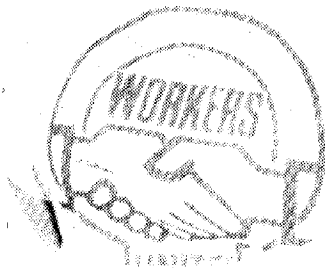
Women of all ages and from many different backgrounds set out from the Botanic Gardens. First home was Moira O'Boyle, the 27 year old manager of Whiterock Leisure Centre. She completed the course in 35 minutes and 56 seconds. The last girl in finished in one hour and 55 minutes.

The members of The Workers' Party team gave a very creditable performance considering that almost all of them were novices to running. Maire Kerrane, a member of the Limerick branch who travelled north for the event, was first home for The Workers' Party in 44 minutes. Next came south Armagh girls Nadine and Deirdre Toner with times of under 48 minutes.

Belfast, Downpatrick and Newcastle branches were represented also in the team. The Markets Branch had five runners, two of whom — Rosaleen Farmer and Rosemary Mullen — were next home after the Toner girls. Rosaleen and Rosemary's idea of a warm-up session is to have a smoke but they proved that sheer determination can speed anyone along! Rosaleen was really pleased with her performance, "it's like the feeling you have just after having a baby" she said just after the run!

The bright idea of entering a Workers' Party team came from Margaret Magee, the Party's northern spokesperson on Womens' Rights. Margaret is the mother of two young children, — one of them just 8 months old — and was recently a candidate for The Workers' Party in the Westminster elections. She worked tirelessly and enthusiastically encouraging the members of the marathon team.

"The sight of a long snake of women running through the streets of Belfast was fantastic" said Margaret after the run. "No member would have believed that over twenty four women would have taken part or that people would be so willing to sponsor the runners. All the women got great back up from their branches and none of the husbands failed in the baby sitting department. The commitment of the women in their training sessions has been a real eye-opener for many Party members".



● Team member Anne Marner
(T-shirts available at £3 each from 6
Springfield Road, Belfast!)

All of the members of the team were delighted with promises of money from members and friends. Belfast girl Kate Bolton has been promised over £100 for completing the course. It's no wonder that Kate kept going to the end even though she did feel a bit under pressure along the way.

The only person who was disappointed about the mini-marathon was Belfast's Mary McMahon. It was Mary who goaded many of the women into taking part. "If I can do it then so can you" she said, and who would have argued with that. The irony was that Mary didn't run in the end. A training session a week before the event resulted in a badly sprained ankle when she ran over five miles. Nonetheless Mary was there to cheer on the team. Mind you, the sight of her waving her stick would make anybody run!!

The mini-marathon was certainly one of the most entertaining Party activities that members have been involved in for years. All of the runners are determined to continue jogging as a hobby and there is even talk of trying to get the men out on the roads!

Women's Struggles

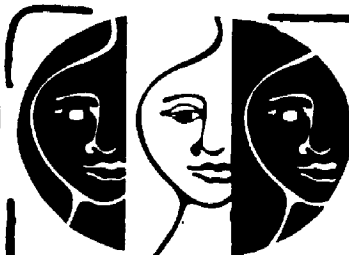
Speaking at a Press Conference in Belfast to disclose details of The Workers' Party Conference, "Women's Struggles: At Home and Abroad" Ms Margaret Magee, Chairperson Northern Women's Committee, said that one of the main purposes of the Conference was educational.

"Part of the problem with politics in Northern Ireland is that they are inward looking. We want to look at societies outside Ireland and see how women have contributed to radical change in those societies as well as the role of women in Socialist countries.

"We are confident from the many applications to attend the discussion that we will have an enthusiastic and enjoyable day's work. We also hope that the participants may help identify campaigns that need to be undertaken here.

"Further we would hope to demonstrate that women's campaigns for a better society will fall on deaf ears unless those women and campaigns become involved in radical anti-sectarian politics. It is only when women come to the fore and start to fight for political change that we can even consider breaking through the male-dominated conservative attitudes in this society."

(Full Report from the Conference in our next issue)



Northern Regional
Womens Committee
of the Workers' Party

**PUBLIC
CONFERENCE**

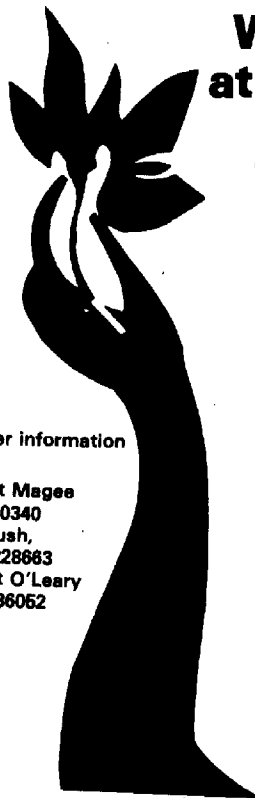
**Womens Struggles
at Home and Abroad**

Sat. November 12,

The Plough Club
1 Trevor Hill
NEWRY

● Further information
from:

Margaret Magee
Newry 30340
Elaire Rush,
Belfast 228683
Margaret O'Leary
Dublin 786052



Victims of an Irish solution to an Irish Problem

Anne and Jim are in their middle thirties and have five children ranging in age from 12 to three. They are buying out their house from the local council. Jim's take-home pay is approximately £108. Sometimes he manages to get overtime, though in recent times this has proved impossible. Anne and Jim built an extension to their house with the help of his brothers and some friends.

Anne would like to get a job, but cannot find one — she would consider anything. They want to educate their children but find it difficult to make ends meet. They can't remember when they had a night out, and their holidays are spent walking in the locality with perhaps a day-trip or two to the nearest seaside resort.

When their fifth child was born they decided not to have any more children, as they felt they could not cope financially. As Anne suffers from varicose veins they ruled out the "Pill" as a contraceptive. The only other means available to them is the condom.

This they can get on prescription (as a married couple), but only two chemists in the locality will supply them. Anne doesn't mind going in with her prescription in her fist if the senior female chemist is about, but feels very embarrassed if it's a junior teenage staff member who's on duty. She often goes away with a packet of tissues or aspirin rather than hand the prescription to a junior.

She feels it is a terrible violation of her privacy to have to get condoms this way. From time to time she overcomes this difficulty by getting members of her family to bring a supply of condoms from England when they are coming home on holiday.

Bernie and Mick are in their early thirties and have five children. They are buying out their own house, but recently Mick was made redundant — his workplace closed down. He is desperately trying to get another job, as their redundancy money is almost gone, and they sold their car as they could no longer afford to keep it on the road.

Their children's ages are 8, 6, 4, 2½ and 9 months. When their fourth child was born Bernie was very ill. She asked her doctor for contraceptives as she dreaded another pregnancy. He gave her a lecture on self-control and the Billings method etc., and when she persisted, he reluctantly prescribed the Pill, as a cycle regulator.

She had to return to him each month to have the prescription renewed for a month's supply. When her baby was nine months she went along to the doctor on her regular monthly visit, and was informed by him that he considered that she was taking advantage of the situation, and as a Catholic he could not condone her actions and would not prescribe the Pill for her again.

He repeated his lecture on self-control. When she broke down and cried he relented slightly, gave her a prescription for another month's supply, and told her not to return for any more. Her next visit to that doctor a few months later was to confirm that she was pregnant.

She spent most of that pregnancy in bed, and was in and out of hospital a number of times. She was extremely ill for three months after the birth. Her good Catholic doctor reluctantly prescribed the Pill for her. He would have no trucking with any other form of contraceptive.

Now that her baby is nine months she dreads returning to him for another prescription. A friend has advised her to contact the Well Woman Centre. She is apprehensive about this as she is afraid people will find out and look down on her.

The annual conference of the Medical Union in November called for a comprehensive family planning service for everybody who needs it. Doctors who denied contraception to couples on moral grounds were told they had no right to interfere in the bedroom.

However, the conference heard that over 1,500 family doctors would opt out of such a family planning service should it be introduced.

The stories of four women living in rural towns with their husbands and children epitomise the misery caused by such doctors and a totally inadequate and antiquated Family Planning law.

Sheila's husband comes home one week-end in the month — his job is nearly 200 miles away.

They have three children, are trying to buy out their house and carry out a lot of renovations on it. It is an old building and requires extensive alterations.

When their third child was born Sheila went to the Family Planning Clinic in Dublin and had the coil fitted. Some time ago the coil fell out and Sheila went to her doctor to have it re-fitted. He nearly had a seizure and lectured her at length on Catholic morals.

She told him to go to ..., walked out, rang the FPC and made an appointment. She took the early morning train to Dublin, had the coil re-fitted and was home again on the evening train.

She is very angry at the judgemental attitude adopted by doctors towards women.

Mary and John are a couple in their late thirties. They have five children ranging in age from 14 to 4½ years. They are buying out their own house. They would like their children to get a good education — at least second level, and if possible third level.

They are independent, industrious and thrifty. Mary is a good "manager". John's take-home pay is £81 per week. To supplement this and help make the repayments on their house, Mary took a part-time job as a cleaner some years ago. This job brings in approximately £30 per week. They rarely go out at night and the thought of a holiday is the ultimate in luxury.

Before the birth of their fifth child, Mary and John decided to seek advice on the availability of contraceptives — at this stage they were reluctant to continue with the rhythm method and its dependence on self-control as a family regulator.

They were told they could get the "Pill" on prescription as a cycle regulator (the "Family Planning Bill" was not yet enacted). Mary went on the "Pill" after the birth of number five. For various reasons (nausea, putting on weight, age and a tendency to veins) she decided to discontinue the use of the "Pill" and they tried condoms.

These were now available to married couples, on prescription and from chemists only (courtesy of the Family Planning Act), but chemists in the locality refused to stock them at the time, so Mary sent to the Family Planning Centre in Dublin for supplies.

Meanwhile, she decided to approach her local doctor and ask for the "coil". He refused on the grounds that this device was an abortifacient and as a Catholic he could not see his way to "sanction" her using it.

A friend put her in touch with the Well Woman Centre in Dublin. She made an appointment and was subsequently fitted with the coil, and was given the name of a sympathetic doctor nearer her home-town (over 35 miles away) who would carry out the necessary check-ups and re-fitting.

She and John are happy with their set-up, but feel very angry at the lack of facilities in their own town.

“Kee*p taking the pill until the end of your current cycle and then seek medical advice.”*

That has been the almost universal advice given to the women who take oral contraceptives and who may now be at greater risk of cancer because of longterm side effects of the pill according to recent findings.

But for many women such reassurance, however correct, will seem inadequate coming as it does by and large from professional people in whom women have lost confidence.

The research which has allegedly proven a link between cancer and contraceptive pills is not conclusive. It is the result of two separate pieces of investigation: one into breast cancer and the other into cervical cancer. And some of the findings, particularly about the breast cancer connection, have been contradicted by previous research work.

A Senior Registrar in Community Medicine Dr. Gabriel Scally, told us: “The results of these studies cannot be taken as conclusive yet, but rather indicate the need for further research.”

Carmel Roulston, from the Women’s Rights Movement said: “This isn’t the first time there has been a scare about the Pill. What is annoying is the secrecy in which these researches and findings are conducted.

It is as if women were just incidental to both the drug companies who manufacture the product and the researchers who carry out the studies. These are all male dominated areas of work.”

It is no secret that there is no widespread population screening strategy. One informed source told us that it would not be too harsh to say that the present screening organisation is chaotic. While such screening is advised every two or three years, many GPs accept a one year in five ratio.

THE PILL



Dr Scally reinforced the importance of screening, “Every woman, but particularly the longterm users of the Pill, should have regular cervical smears.”

The various Health Boards we contacted had differing views on their ability to cope. They had no idea of what the work load or problems would be if every woman suddenly demanded a smear and they felt they could not estimate the size of any increase in demand in light of the new studies.

What to do then? Dr Scally advises: “Women should be prescribed with a pill with the lowest suitable content of both Oestrogen and Progestogen. Women should not stop their present pill in mid-cycle but continue to the end of the current month and seek medical advice. Women who feel strongly enough and wish to discontinue with the pill should adopt some other method of contraception immediately.”

● There are 32 Health Board clinics around the country offering free facilities for cervical smear testing. Phone 681855 (if living in the Republic) for local details. Northern Ireland women should check with health centres in their localities for information.

**WHERE
DO
WE
GO
FROM
HERE?**

DIVORCE



What can we expect from Dáil Comm. on Marital Break- down?

The All-Party Committee on Divorce is not an *all-party* committee, and is not on divorce.

In fact, given the political views of its membership, the committee is likely to recommend *against* divorce. And it excludes representatives of the one party (The Workers' Party) which has put serious proposals before the Dáil to tackle the crisis of broken marriages.

Other than that, the committee is grand. Its full title is the **Joint Oireachtas Committee on Marital Breakdown** (*not*, god forbid, *d.....e*). And it's called 'joint' rather than 'all-party' because one Dáil party has been excluded.

The committee has 16 members — six Fine Gael (one Senator and five TDs), seven Fianna Fáil (two Senators and five TDs), two Labour (one of each), and one Independent Senator.

We'll look at who they are, what they are, and how they'll vote on the crunch issue in a moment. But first let's consider the politics of divorce.

Carefully omitted from the committee are the two Workers' Party TDs, Tomas Mac Giolla and Proinsias de Rossa. Because the fact is that the WP has actually put a Bill for the **introduction** of divorce to the Dáil.

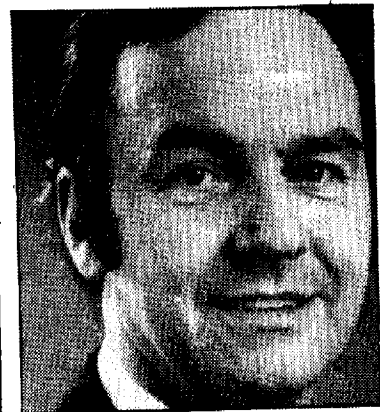
Everyone near died of fright — especially the Labour Party. Here was a chance to *do* something about a serious social problem, as opposed to *talking* about it. They sat on their hands, lowered their heads — and wished those dreadful people would go away. The opportunity passed.

That was last year, and since then the political climate has changed. The recent referendum campaign showed that Irish society is emerging from the conservative, squinting-windowed past.

More important, an *Irish Times*/MRBI opinion poll in September revealed that an astonishing 66% of the electorate actually favoured divorce. Suddenly the Dáil 'liberals' — and the plain opportunists — saw a market for a new political product.

This State is facing the worst economic crisis in its history, and neither Coalition nor Fianna Fáil conservative governments can do anything about *that*. Here was a nice distracting issue, good for miles of newsprint and hours of broadcasting time — and popular. Who could ask for anything more?

How will they vote?



**Myra Barry (Fine Gael) Against
Michael Woods (Fianna Fáil)
Against
Maire Geoghegan-Quinn (Fianna
Fáil) Against**

THE Divorce Action Group replied to a claim that divorce was not the answer to marital breakdown.

Accusing certain clergy of being out of touch with the reality of what followed marital breakdown, Mr John O'Connor, chairman of the group, said that priests were misguided when they claimed that the divorce lobby in Ireland was based on cold secularism.

Mr O'Connor defended the figure of 70,000 people caught in broken marriages claimed by his group.

"Divorce Action Group reiterate their belief that the figure of 70,000 is as accurate as could reasonably be expected in the absence of any poll to obtain accurate results," he declared.

The Republic is the only State in western Europe — and quite probably the world — where it is not possible to legally dissolve a marriage. Divorce here is not only unlawful — it's actually unconstitutional, and it will take another referendum (*groans*) to introduce it.

Not that marriages in the Republic don't break down, any more than Irish couples don't plan their families, or Irish women don't face unwanted pregnancies.

They do of course, and it's estimated that 70,000 married couples are irreconcilably parted.



That is an enormous pool of human misery — 14,000 adults plus their children and their immediate families all locked into an impossible situation from which there is no legal escape.

A farcical aspect (and if we laugh 'tis that we may not weep) is that Catholic Church annulments of marriage are available.

This leads to the ludicrous situation whereby couples with an annulment are deemed never to have married in the Church's eyes. Accordingly they can remarry in church — but when they do, that's bigamy under the law and they can go to jail for it.

It may not be necessary to have money and a good adviser on theological law to get a Church annulment — but it certainly helps. In any case, the provision only applies to a tiny minority of couples with broken marriages.

With public opinion clearly running so much in favour of the legalisation of divorce, why is the 'joint committee' likely to decide against any such proposal? Because the politicians are, once again, a long way behind the people.

Since the opinion poll results were revealed however, the Labour Party has found its courage and announced that it now favours divorce. The party's two representatives on the committee will vote *for*. The Labour backwoods are another matter.

The Fine Gael members are divided between the conservative and 'liberal' wings of the party. As in the amendment campaign, they will go both ways at once. You can, as Abraham Lincoln discovered, fool some of the people all of the time!

Most of the Fianna Fáil representatives will vote against since they were appointed by Charles Haughey. Political analysts put this down to his fear of providing ammunition for those in the party who would be glad of any chance to damage his leadership. He is not, in any case, enamoured of 'all-party' committees, since Fianna Fáil see themselves as the natural party of government — in or out of office.

What is certain is that the majority of the Haughey appointees will vote against divorce if and when the issue arises. One of the FF representatives is a Knight of Columbanus, another is an Opus Dei man, and most are natural conservatives.

YES OR NO

Let's suppose the committee finally comes to a vote. Its members and their probable intentions are:

FINE GAEL

Senator Katherine Bulbulia — close to Garret FitzGerald, voted NO in the Senate on the amendment, from a Protestant background, on divorce will vote YES.

Deputy Dick Dowling — Carlow/Kilkenny (described by one of his own colleagues as a sleeveen), urged YES vote in the amendment... NO.

Deputy Alan Shatter — a 'liberal', handled an important legal case on contraception, from a Jewish family... YES.

Deputy Willie O'Brian, Limerick West, chairman, so shouldn't vote, but if he did, representing the area he does... **NO**.

Deputy Myra Barry — not too bright, but cute enough to know which way the wind blows, no real opinion but probably... **NO**.
Madeleine Taylor-Quinn — kept quiet on the referendum campaign, perhaps **NO**.

FIANNA FÁIL

Senator Treas Honan — spoke in favour of divorce at party meeting, probable **YES**

Senator Tom Hussey — another who said nothing during the amendment debate, likely **NO**.

Deputy Mary Harney FF 'liberal', will vote **YES**.

Deputy Michael Woods — horticulturalist by the way, not a medical doctor, Trilateral Commission, Opus Dei, will vote **NO**.

Deputy Pdraig Flynn — Charlie's man, from West Mayo, PLAC, SPUC etc., definite **NO**.
Deputy Maire Geoghegan-Quinn

THE WORKERS' Party has for many years had as part of its policy the removal of the constitutional ban on divorce and the introduction of a 'humane and non-sectarian' divorce law.

Since the Party's accession to the Dáil, its TDs have made a number of attempts to have the issue of divorce discussed. The most recent attempt was in February last when Proinsias De Rossa TD, tabled a private member's bill to remove the constitutional ban on divorce. He emphasised at the time that the bill did not attempt to frame a divorce law but merely to remove the constitutional ban so that the issue could at least be discussed by the legislature.

When it came to the test, only Tomas Mac Giolla and the Independent TD Tony Gregory supported De Rossa. The Labour Party claims to be in favour of a divorce law yet not one of its TDs supported this bill. In a further moving of the bill, the government spokesperson who opposed the bill in the Dáil was none other than Nuala Fennell TD, onetime champion of women's rights.

— Toyota franchise and all that, will vote **NO**.

Deputy Rory O'Hanlon, Cavan-Monaghan "republican", Knight and hierarchy go-between, sure **NO**.

LABOUR

Senator Mary Robinson — former Trilateral Commission, 'liberal', certain **YES**.

Deputy Eileen Desmond — progressive record, will vote **YES**.

INDEPENDENT

Senator Catherine McGuinness — another 'liberal' close to Garret, and is 'independent' FG, will vote **YES**.

It's finely balanced, as you see, and the mood is changing. But at this stage the likely outcome would be a nine-seven decision against.

The committee will take a long time to come to any decision at all, if its opening sessions are anything to go by. So far it has met twice — once to elect a chairman, and the second time to demand more back-up and administrative staff.

Meanwhile those on the serious left — which means for all practical purposes the Workers' Party — must remember that social issues are not necessarily socialist issues.

Divorce, contraception, illegitimacy and so on do not affect the class structure of this or any other society. The idea that the wealthy and powerful lie awake

at night worrying over such matters is popular with conservative 'radicals' and the ultra-left — but is obvious nonsense.

Politics is about priorities, and class politics is about class priorities. These are jobs, housing, taxation, wages and prices, health, education and social welfare.

The absolute priority for the Workers' Party must be employment — and that means a national production plan.

Give us that, and all else will follow — including social reforms. The reactionary elements in our society will be dragged kicking and screaming into the last quarter of the 20th century whether they like it or not — and most of them don't and won't.

The private profit system is clearly failing, not only in Ireland but throughout what is known as the western world (although Japan is not in the west any more than Donegal is in the south). Millions and more millions of people are being thrown out of work, and the international financial system faces total collapse.

The terrifying prospect now is that capitalism in crisis will do what it has always done — go to war. But this time, that would be mass suicide.

We are in for a rough ride in the next few years. The Workers' Party will have more than social issues to fight on.

● Tomas Mac Giolla, Workers' Party TD, tabled a private member's bill with Deputy Proinsias De Rossa. Women Affairs Minister Nuala Fennell voted against.



Those were the days...

It was a sunny Saturday morning, so I whitened my slippers and put them on the yard roof to dry. I filled a basin of cold water from the sink in the yard and gave myself a quick but fresh wash in the scullery.

Afterwards with my snow white slippers and cotton summer frock I went up to Hannah's the corner shop to get baps and a bundle of sticks to set the fire. It was too warm yet to light it. By the time I got back the rest of the family were up. The wireless was blaring and the laundry man was yelling up the hall.

In the middle of all this I was filling a bucket with water to scrub the outside of our front door. This was to ensure myself of getting the money for the Duncairn — better known to us as the 'Donkey'. After brushing all the water down the grate in the street I then scrubbed the hand tiles in our wee hall with a scrubbing brush and a floor cloth so as to preserve the pattern on the oilcloth.

I'd finish off by removing my slippers and doing the yard with cold water splashing over my feet and legs. On this warm day that was my favourite part of the housework.

Once again I went to the shop. This time it was 'Barrs' in York Street to get three separate quarters of peas, barley and lentils. I enjoyed watching Mr. Barr use the little scoop and serving the ingredients from the little glass fronted biscuit containers which held everything you could think of as well as biscuits.

I also had to get vegetables. This let my mammy prepare the soup early for our Sunday dinner next day.

Before lunch time I called for my chum for confession. She had to go to her granny for the loan of some money for her mammy. Well we both liked to do this message as her granny was sure to give us sixpence each. That was us 'flying' — the money for the pictures, a candy apple and a bubbly. Life was lovely. I felt I had everything.

Now it was time for the pictures. It might as well have been silent movies, because between 'gurning' and fighting we never heard a word. Getting out of the Duncairn was like reaching civilisation again and we took long breaths of fresh air. If my supper wasn't ready by the time I got home I would have a swing or play ball.

Later on after supper I didn't dare move. Being Saturday I knew the bath would be put out any minute, so while the big pots of water were heating on the stove we all got off us and sat and waited in turn for us to be bathed. With the younger ones my mammy washed and my daddy dried.

After the bath was shifted, on went the big fire guard of knickers, vests and socks. When we were all clean and dry we got our treat, a packet of Pixie potato crisps which were really delicious once the little blue packet of salt was shaken over them.

After all this it was time for bed. My brother went up first to turn on the light. Then the fun would start. We used to tie the sheets to the corners of the wooden posts and let on we were in a tent. This gave us a good laugh and then after some joke or story telling we all said our prayers, turned out the light and went to sleep very happy.

by Sheila McGuinness

Womens' Imprisonment — A
Study in Social Control

Pat Carlen — Routledge and
Kegan Paul — £4.95 Sterling
(paperback)

This book is a timely reminder that the Irish authorities are not — as many of us had thought — uniquely uncaring and cretinous when it comes to the treatment of women offenders. But, lest we get too smug, the blurb reminds us that this study of Cornton Vale, Scotland's only female prison, was officially sponsored and the author was granted extensive interviews with sheriffs, policemen, prison personnel and social workers as well as the prisoners themselves. Not something that is likely to happen in Ireland in the foreseeable future!

The story she tells is as predictable as it is depressing. Few women in Scotland go to prison, although by Irish standards the figures seem high. In 1980 some 692 women were received to serve sentences, 569 of them aged 21 and over. The average daily population in the women's prison was 147, half having been received for failure to pay a fine, one third for breach of the peace and one third for crimes against property without violence.

In Cornton Vale there are two blocks and each block is divided into units of seven prisoners. Each unit has its own sitting-room, kitchen and bathing facilities and there are degrees of freedom allowed, including access to night-time sanitation. In this, the physical aspect of the prison is totally unlike the small, dark and dank dungeon in Mountjoy which houses the handful of Irish women prisoners.



Womens Prisons offer no solution

But it is in the circumstances of their lives and the social conditions under which they lived that the women most resembled their Irish sisters. The products of a male dominated society which decreed that they should be meek and chaste and subject to their men, living only through their husbands and children but *at the same time* prepared to be the bread winners in times of rampant male unemployment, it was the women who — deliberately or by accident — stepped outside this role who often found themselves in prison.

Speaking to sheriffs and judges and policemen Ms. Carlen found that the woman offender most likely to go to prison was the one that 'failed in her domestic role'.

The woman who had left her husband, the woman whose children were in care, the woman co-habiting with a man not her husband would find themselves in prison where a woman who had committed similar offences but who was conforming to her designated 'female role' would get the Probation Act or a suspended sentence or a payable fine.

The fact that many of the women had children in care or

were living apart from their husbands simply because their husbands had turned out to be brutalising bastards was not something that male magistrates or male policemen seriously considered as an extenuating circumstance. A woman's place was in her husband's home with her children and if she were anywhere else when she committed a crime then she deserved all she got whatever the circumstances of her 'defection'.

As one of the interviewed sheriffs put it 'Other things being equal the appropriate sentence should indicate the appropriate measure of social disfavour. Then you add on or take off marks for particular social circumstances — a few marks for having children a few marks off if you haven't any'.

At the end of the day the typical woman prisoner in Scotland as elsewhere is usually poor, with a broken home or unhappy marriage behind her and often alcoholic or disturbed mentally. She usually has a low educational standard and is totally unable without practical assistance to take the steps needed to improve her circum-

stances, many of the women, for instance, leaving one drunken and brutal husband to go to live with another drunken and brutal man. Because society has bred them to be the subjects of men they believe themselves to be unable to function without a relationship with a man, however degrading or destructive it may be.

A friend of mine when asked by a male editor what she would advocate as a solution to the desperate problems of some of the battered wives she had interviewed, thought long and deep before she eventually answered 'you know, a few pounds would go a long way to solving their problems.' I wonder what it would do for the statistics for women in prison if they were given the financial means to function in life as independent human beings with a free choice of whether or not they wanted to attach themselves to a man?

As one of Ms. Carlen's prison interviewees said of the 'educational' course in the prison "That woman has been teaching us how to work out how much carpet we would need to cover a floor. I've never had a house let alone a bloody carpet!"

by Mairin DeBurca

We asked three people who had been prominent in the campaign against this regressive Amendment to share their views with us...

● *Nancy Moore N.T. in a Provincial town.*

The two main centres of population in Mayo, i.e. Castlebar and Ballina, appear to have been the only areas where an anti-amendment campaign was mounted. The effort in Castlebar was organised by the Womens' Group there. They enlisted a fairly representative group, which included Workers' Party members, and did a door-to-door canvass.

In Ballina The Workers' Party went ahead with their own campaign. Three sets of leaflets were distributed to most houses in the town and also in Killala. A public meeting organised by the Anti-Amendment campaign was broken up by members of SPUC and PLAC who heckled every speaker. Press coverage was very biased in favour of the pro-amendment groups.

Many local people were anxious to stop and discuss the Amendment with Party canvassers. The greatest fear expressed among women was that already limited means of contraception available to them might be further curtailed and they also feared the closure of centres like the Family Planning Clinics and Well Woman Centres.

The aspects which the campaign highlighted for me were as follows:

- The bullying tactics (mainly psychological) of the pro-amendment lobby left many 'no' voters with a fear of becoming overly involved. Ecclesiastical and local economic power crossed party barriers and manifested itself through the Knights of Columbanus.

- There was blatant manipulation of the least privileged of our people to involve them in the 'Yes' campaign. Emotive terms like "murder", "save a baby's life", "protect the unborn" were used to convince them that what they were doing was right and just.

- The willingness of women to discuss their personal lives in relation to the use of contraceptives. Their openness and frankness on this subject is a new development in rural areas and could not have happened in the past

- Peoples acceptance of the limited use of abortion, particularly on emotive issues such as rape, and incest — especially when minors were involved.

- Availability of contraceptives in this area is limited to the pill (supplied only as a cycle regulator) and condoms — available just from two local chemists on prescription only to married couples. Those who wish to avail of other methods must travel to Sligo, Galway or Dublin.

- The campaign in general lacked organisation and co-ordination — paucity of finance and personnel. There was a wrong emphasis on certain aspects. Emphasis *should* have been placed on, for example, a Yes vote resulting in the banning of the IUD and the morning-after Pill.

- Longwinded arguments are okay at an intellectual level, but more positive simple statements of fact are needed for general consumption.

- The fact that so many people resisted the propaganda of the mass-media and the pulpit even in rural areas, is encouraging.

- Their debate has brought hitherto taboo subjects into the open. People have been forced to rethink their attitudes to the church, abortion, contraception and rape.

- In some ways it has strengthened the growing urban/rural divide.

- The fact remains that the Constitution is now a sectarian document.

- However, we now see the start of the erosion of the power of the Catholic church. The first step in resistance is always the hardest.

It is too early to quantify the precise effects of the recent referendum; effects which in the long term will be far wider than the declared objective of the PLAC/SPUC group.

What is obvious so far is that Irish politics has been deeply disturbed by the campaign. Political parties and other groupings in society will be interpreting and basing political decisions on the voting patterns that have emerged, for some time to come.

For those of us concerned about the development of a pluralist, tolerant and socialist society it is essential that we do not settle for a simplistic analysis of the results. We must avoid the tendency to label the 'Yes' voters as reactionaries; the 'No' voters as progressive and those who abstained as 'confused'.

One of the most reliable, if not the only, conclusion that can be drawn from the results is that two thirds of the electorate ignored — for a variety of reasons — strong and unrelenting pressure from Roman Catholic bishops and priests to vote Yes. That is a fact that cannot be denied and it indicates a far more mature and sophisticated electorate than the Pro-Amendment group was prepared to acknowledge in its propaganda.

It can also be argued that political parties played a significant part in voting patterns. In a statistical analysis published in the "Irish Times" it was claimed that there was a strong relationship between the votes for Fianna Fáil in the November election and Yes votes in the referendum, and also between votes for The Workers' Party and Labour in November and those who voted No in the Referendum. There was however, no apparent relationship between Fine Gael support in the general election and voting patterns in the referendum.

The effect of the campaign on the various political parties needs also to be considered. Clearly The Workers' Party came through the campaign stronger than ever, having opposed the referendum clearly

and unambiguously from the beginning. It was virtually the only party that recognised the need for a political response to the efforts of a small clique of reactionaries to impede the movement towards secularism in Irish society.

The instigators of the Referendum campaign selected the question of abortion as the ground on which to mount a stand for 'traditional values'. The leaders of the two major conservative parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael instinctively supported the idea from the beginning, more I believe, from a sense of party preservation than out of alleged concern for the 'unborn'.

The campaign however, has achieved the opposite outcome to that intended by FitzGerald and Haughey, because of the heightened awareness of the implications of the various political positions. Fine Gael faces a bitter struggle for supremacy by the 'traditionalists' over the 'liberals'. Fianna Fáil, united on the surface, faces the same dilemma in reverse. Fianna Fáil is now seen as the guardian of rural 'traditional values' while the electorate is moving away from these values and adopting more liberal viewpoints.

The Amendment debate has exposed much of the double-talk and hypocrisy and verbal concern for social change. The battle lines have been drawn. The conservative parties will try frantically to re-adjust to the new conditions while more and more SPUC-like organisations will sprout on issues such as illegitimacy, divorce, family planning and education control.

We would do well now to take the initiative on these issues. Successful campaigns on family planning facilities, child care and divorce legislation, and control of education and other areas of progress will not in themselves change the class structure of our society.

They will however, present an opportunity to us to demonstrate the fatality of control by non-democratic groups over much of our lives and that must be of benefit to the struggle for socialism and revolutionary change in our society.

● *Triona Dooney, Workers' Party spokesperson on Women's Affairs.*



The campaign to defeat the Amendment was country-wide.

It was a hollow victory for the pro-amendment lobby. Who would have thought that despite the pulpit-thumping that the turnout on polling day would be so low or that the margin of victory would be so slender?

And who would have dreamed that several constituencies would return a majority 'No' vote or that the towns of provincial Ireland would display so much opposition to the moral storm-troopers!

The shadowy organisations in this country fighting a permanent rear-guard action against enlightenment and social progress used the amendment to test their grip on Irish society. They must be severely shaken by the result for there will be no other battleground so solid as the one they have just fought over — and none so completely of their own choosing.

If they are confronted with the same degree of determination on the divorce issue for instance, there is little doubt that they can be roundly defeated.

Few politicians emerged from this campaign with any stature. Indeed, of the four Dáil parties only the Workers' Party will be able to look back on this period without cringing in shame. From the outset the Workers' Party identified the amendment proposal as an assault on women, on democracy, on pluralism, and on progress generally.

Presented with the PLAC pledge at a sensitive electoral time and with much to lose, the Workers' Party refused to be blackmailed. No Workers' Party representative or candidate at local or national level signed the PLAC pledge.

This breaking of the parliamentary consensus was a courageous move which helped to make it possible for many other groups and individuals to publicly voice their reservations about the amendment.

Later in the debate as Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil stated they would not campaign on a party basis, the Workers' Party again took a firm stand. The referendum, we said, "had major political implications and the Workers' Party fully intended to campaign actively as a Party against it", co-operating where it was feasible with other groups opposed to the Amendment.

The most enlightening part of the whole campaign was perhaps the door-to-door canvass. The tacit belief that working class estates might not be sensitive to the 'real' issues of the campaign crumpled rapidly as the canvass progressed. For it was these estates which had the long lists of case histories.

It was here that the inadequacies in our health service — the lack of family planning facilities and the poor support for families were highlighted. Because it was here that the consequences of unwanted pregnancies were most severe.

Very few people declared themselves to be 'for' abortion yet virtually without exception they spoke in an understanding way of the neighbour or friend who became pregnant in her late forties, of the dilemma of the mother whose severely retarded adolescent daughter had become pregnant, or of the woman who had been told she could die if she had any more children.

The narrowness of the victory may help to prevent the more horrific possible consequences of the amendment becoming reality. Attempts to interfere in established medical practice or to outlaw certain popular forms of contraception are certain to run into enormous opposition.

The risk of defeat may help to deter those who would have us regress to the dark ages from the more outrageous of their schemes.

The Labour Party Conference 1983 rejected three composite motions which suggested that women should be given separate and positive discrimination in order to secure greater representation within the Labour Party, at all levels.

Women delegates condemned the marginalisation of women's issues by confining them to the non-policy making annual women's conference.

The defeated motions covered five points:

1. The right of Labour Women's Conference to elect the Women's Section of the NEC.
2. The right of Labour Women's Conference to forward five resolutions direct to Annual Conference to be debated as of right.
3. The right of Labour Women's Conference to elect the National Labour Women's Committee.
4. The calling of a rules conference to constitutionally establish the Women's Organisation in the Party.
5. That at least one woman should be on every short list.

In support of these motions, delegates pointed out that Labour's National Executive had only seven women members compared to 21 men and while 52% of the electorate are women (three million of whom belong to trade unions) only 10 of Labour's 209 MPs are women.

The conference had only one black, woman delegate so it is no surprise that the Labour Party was accused of being dominated by white males.

In response to patronising comments from the Chairman who, on the first day, called on the 'girl' at the back to speak, a woman speaker prefaced her address to conference with "Comrade Chairboy and boys". Such remarks were seen by many delegates as a barrier of trivia to a proper and serious debate about the profound problems of involving women in the movement.

At the well attended fringe meeting organised by The Women's Action Committee and the Royal Arsenal Co-Op Political Committee, Frances Morrell of the

British Labour Party Conference:

"Does Labour believe in Women's Rights?"

GLC Women's Committee and Leader of the Inner London Education Authority, commented "Labour now believes in Women's Rights — it just doesn't believe in women"...

Jo Richardson stressed the need for women to be seen as 'political animals' not just campaigners for so-called "women's issues". Child care, health care and full employment must be fought for by men and women together as in the campaign for world peace.

Another successful fringe meeting Chaired by Harriet Harman MP, and organised by "The Women's Committee of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee" debated three main topics.

1. Women's Low Pay.
2. Equal Opportunities for women in Trade Unions.
3. The Relationship between Paid and Domestic Work.

The speakers were Sandra Horne, Equality Officer, ACTT; Sheila Rowbotham, Feminist writer and member of the GLC Popular Planning Unit who concentrates on the issue of domestic work within the economy; and Emma MacLennan of The Low Pay Unit. (It was a matter of some concern to many women delegates that the Low Pay Unit organised a fringe meeting on low pay at which all the main speakers were men.)

The large number of women at the LCC's "Women at Work" meeting reflected the growing feeling that the years spent concentrating on increasing women's organisational strength within the party needed to be supplemented by opportunities to discuss policy issues.



● Patricia Hewitt, former Gen. Sec. of the National Council for Civil Liberties, was appointed personal secretary to new Party leader Neil Kinnock.

The Labour Campaign for Peace and Progress in Ireland organised a very successful fringe meeting at the 1983 Labour Party Conference. Among the panel of speakers was Janey Buchan, Labour Member of the European Parliament who recalled her childhood experiences in Glasgow to illustrate the social damage caused by sectarian education.

She made a strong appeal for an integrated education system as a fundamental prerequisite to the elimination of sectarian attitudes among the working class. The LCPPI which was set up to defend the Labour Party policy of Unity by Consent, invited a panel of speakers as part of the effort to open up dialogue between the Irish and British Labour Movements.

Speakers included Tomas MacGiolla; Gerry Fitt, Socialist member of the House of Lords; Tom Pendry, Labour MP; Seamus Lynch, Chairman of the Northern Ireland Executive, The Workers' Party; and was Chaired by Sean Rogers, Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Davyhuilme.

There were over 200 people at the meeting which made the demand for Peace and Democracy in Ireland and rejected calls for 'Troops Out Now'; the organisation of a British Labour Party in Northern Ireland; and any other attempts to disregard the wishes of all working people in Northern Ireland.

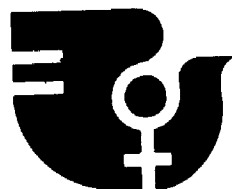
UN Decade for women

IN a joint statement with 15 other women's organisations issued at the February-March preparatory meeting for the 1985 End of Women's Decade Conference, the International Alliance of Women urged top priority for key issues affecting the status of women.

The IAW Newsletter says that these included water supply and food production — especially for rural women, education and training programmes, and assistance for all refugee women and children. They urged that the Conference should concentrate on women's issues and not be diverted by discussion of other problems which were more properly the concern of other forums. The Conference should be oriented towards action and implementation.

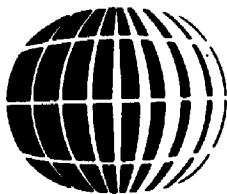
Ways should be sought of implementing non-governmental organisations goals already set by the 1975 and 1980 World Conferences. The opinions of NGOs with UN Consultative Status should continue to be taken into account when Conference decisions were formulated and at every stage of the preparatory process.

Governments and NGOs should endeavour to include in their delegations to the Conference, women working at the local level.



1975

1985



Women Minister speaks up Down Under!

SENATOR Susan Ryan is a strong voice for the women's movement in the Labour Cabinet of Bob Hawke. Her promotion of an anti-discrimination bill for Australia has been getting wide coverage in the Australian press.

Senator Ryan is also Federal Minister for Education and despite the very real economic crisis besetting the country, has managed to slightly increase the funding available for education. Under Labour, educational reforms are getting a new lease of life, denied them under the Fraser regime. Youth Affairs, previously the responsibility of the Employment Department, has also been made part of Senator Ryan's responsibilities. It is intended to encourage more 16-19 year olds to stay in fulltime schooling as part of a strategy to mop up teenage unemployment. At present more than 25% of the 16-19 age group are unemployed.

US women testify

ON June 28, 1983, the same day as the United States Senate voted on an anti-abortion amendment to the USA's constitution, the first hearing ever held by the House of Representatives on the medical and public health aspects of abortion was convened.

The hearings are intended to outline for the Congress the issues of contraception, pregnancy and abortion.

The first panel of witnesses included a couple whose child died of Tay-Sachs disease and who then experienced the abortion of a fetus diagnosed as having the disease; a 42 year-old woman who found herself pregnant while suffering from serious illness and whose doctors recommended abortion; a 25 year-old woman who became pregnant at 16 and discussed the consequence of being a mother at that age; and a 13 year-old girl who had been raped and who underwent an abortion.



EQUAL — Not so says the International Olympic Committee

Olympic Games Comm. discriminate against women

THE American Civil Liberties Union has filed a sex discrimination suit against Olympic organisations, protesting against the exclusion of women's 5,000 and 10,000 metre races from the Los Angeles games next year.

"The International Olympic Committee has a long history of discrimination against

women and, in particular, against women long-distance runners," the suit, filed in the Los Angeles superior court, said.

The suit, seeking to have the two races included in the 1984 games, was filed by Susan McGreivy, a lawyer for the ACLU, on behalf of a group called the International Runners Committee and more than 50 women athletes from various countries.

President of the Los Angeles committee, Peter Ueberroth, issued a statement saying: "We are offended by the suit, especially since we have singularly fought for the women's marathon and other important women's events."

The marathon and women's 3,000 metre race will be included in next year's games. "They have sued the wrong party at the wrong time for all of the wrong reasons," Mr Ueberroth said.

He said money which would be used defending the suit would reduce the amount of the profit from the games which would have gone, among other things, to help women's sports.

In a statement in Helsinki the International Runners Committee, which includes many of the world's top athletes, said that "nothing less than parity with men's events is fair or just".

The committee has assembled an impressive array of women athletes in support of the suit, including two gold medallists from the Helsinki world championships.

British teenagers act responsibly

THE number of teenage girls in Britain who get pregnant has dropped and is now at a 10 year low, according to figures compiled from official sources. The Brook centres, which give birth control advice to young people, said that in 1971, for every 1,000 girls aged 15 to 19 in England and Wales, 64 became pregnant. By 1980 the rate had dropped to 49, and last year it was down to 44.

The abortion rate had risen slightly over the same period, but this rise was more than compensated for by the drop in the birth rate among teenagers.

The chairman of the Brook Advisory Centres, Ms Caroline Woodroffe, commented: "Young people are not so careless of the future for themselves. More and more teenagers previously at risk of unwanted pregnancy have decided to use contraception responsibly."

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A review of the controversial book 'Pressure Points in the Lives of Women' by Maggie Scarf

MOST people know that more women than men suffer from depressive disorders. Most women don't need to read a book to be able to tell you why! But what attracted me to this book was that Maggie Scarf was not just looking at women and depression, but also at the stages of development and the issues confronting women, during the different decades of their lives, and how these contribute to the unequal number of women suffering from depressive disorders. Besides, who among us had not at some time felt depressed?

An American journalist and specialist in scientific studies, Maggie Scarf was awarded a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard University, then won an Alicia Patterson Foundation Grant. She is a fellow of the Centre for Advanced Study in the Behavioural Sciences at Stanford University.

This book is the culmination of years of research, during which she interviewed scores of clinicians, brain physiologists, hormone specialists, sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists and most important of all — depressed women. Her findings are presented in this book through a series of women's stories, interspersed with deeper analyses of the issues raised in the stories.

"...Although there were certain overarching depressive themes and issues... which could crop up at any point in a woman's life — the issues and difficulties of the different life decades tended to fall into distinct psychological baskets. Women in the same phase of life were by and large, depressed about similar sorts of things." This was one of the first conclusions Maggie Scarf drew from her work. "The depressed woman was someone who had lost. She had lost something. The tone was of something profoundly significant having been taken away, of some crucial life territories having been

surrendered. And what emerged, with what came to seem to me an amazing regularity, was that the loss in question was the loss of an important, self-defining, powerful, and binding emotional relationship.

"Despite the complex, varying, dizzyingly diverse matters and difficulties that any person could potentially become depressed about, it appears to be one kind of a loss, more than any other, that can trigger depressive episodes in women. And this is the loss of a love-bond."

"Women suffer similar difficulties in similar age groups"

So there are more women presenting with depressive disorders because women are affected more by the loss of love-bonds. I found that a fairly sweeping statement to accept — no matter how many years she'd been researching!

Certainly the women of this book would substantiate her theory. There are nine women in all, from different backgrounds, and spanning several decades in age range.

First, there's Anne, a 17 year old who'd just had an abortion, and Debra Theery who was rushed into University of Pittsburgh's Western Psychiatric Institute because of her 'out-of-control' tearful episodes during which she'd talked of wanting to "simply give up and die". Both these young women were suffering depressive disorders because they hadn't managed to pass through the myriad of issues that confront women moving from adolescence to young adulthood. The matters pre-occupying these two young women were the same issues in fact that Maggie Scarf found in all the teenage girls she studied.

"I have in fact never, during the course of interviewing, encountered a depressed adolescent girl whose major concerns did not centre on separating her "self" from her family. The difficulties that she was experiencing (whatever it was that had brought her to seek help or treatment) might seem, at first, remote from 'unfinished parenting'. But they never did turn out to be so."

The next two women, Maria and Sandy, hadn't presented themselves for treatment nor were they displaying many of the signs of clinical depression. Maria Sirota was working as an assistant to the author. She had separated from her husband after eight years of disastrous marriage. Through therapy Maria came to appreciate that her depression was as much related to the relationship between herself and her parents — before she married — as it was to do with her relationship with her husband.

Sandy Geller, a 25 year old nurse, was divorced with a little girl. During the year since her divorce Sandy had been feeling "unhappy", "self-critical", "disappointed in things". Not dramatic symptoms, but in terms of psychological pain, it was undoubtedly true that her lack of self-esteem was really hurting. What concerned her most was her "promiscuous" relations with men. It's in this chapter that Maggie Scarf explores such complex questions as "When is a person's sexuality an affirmation of life, and when is it to be seen as self-defeating, masochistic, hurtful of the self (and of others)?"

"When is a person's sexuality self-defeating?"

You can't set her free. But you can help her feel less anxious.



● Drug companies cash in on human misery — Anti-depressants are big business.

In both these stories of women in their "twenties", focal preoccupations tended to be those having to do with search for intimacy and commitment; the career costs that might be incurred, should one put the "loving" tasks ahead of the work ones — or, indeed, should one do things the other way round!

The 'single' career woman and the happily married mother of three, both in their thirties are Maggie Scarf's next subjects. Here issues raised were associated with the mistakes that had already been made and the payment exacted: "...A sense that the fantasies and dreams of girlhood had not been and might never be satisfied."

The last three stories of 40 year old Diana, 50 year old Dorris, and 60 year old Margaret actually struck me as the most moving. At mid-life and later, these women were "dealing with the loss of certain identity conferring roles or ways of being — roles which, in many an instance, had been perceived as a person's sole source of interpersonal power or meaning."

In reading all these stories I felt torn between interest in individual women's stories and thinking about

the issues that each story raised for me personally. As the author claims *Unfinished Business* really is "a reflection on girlhood, love, parents, commitment. On promiscuity, divorce, childbearing, ... reproductive hormones ...among other things"!

I was very struck by the different treatments available to depressed women in the USA. It would prove illuminating to compare these with what happens in Ireland!

By far the most interesting part of the book is the chapter entitled "Femininity as Symptom" which looks into the effect of sex role stereotyping and the diagnosis of depression. One mental disorder for example, "Hysterical Personality", now known as "Hystrionic Personality Disorder", describes symptoms like "the patient is superficially warm and charming, and appealing, vain, egocentric, and self absorbed, dependent, helpless, constantly seeking reassurance" and maybe given up to uninhibited displays of sexuality, e.g. flirtatiousness", or "Indulgence in frequent flights of romantic fantasy" and just in case the diagnosing physician misses the point — "In both sexes, behaviour that is a caricature of femininity"!!!

One report she looks at, carried out by J and D Broverman for the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* is particularly worrying. The Broverman group asked three groups, psychologists, psychiatrists and psychiatric social workers to define the characteristics of the "healthy adult female" and the "healthy adult male". The researchers concluded, "...clinicians are more likely to suggest that healthy women differ from healthy men by being more submissive, less independent, less aduerturous, more easily influenced, less aggressive, more excitable in minor crises, having their feelings more easily hurt, being more emotional, more conceited about their appearance, less objective, and disliking maths and science. This constellation seems a most unusual way of describing any mature, healthy individual."

What was worse, these groups' definition of the healthy adult turned out to be completely indistinguishable from the "healthy adult male". In short, the characteristics that traditionally have been associated with being female may also be associated with being psychologically unhealthy!

Other studies that the author draws from include study of female infants and their greater attunement or sensitivity to "other people" in contrast to male babies. But the point is made very clearly that it is 'social training that brings the inborn seedlings into the full bloom of female behaviour'. Dr Helen Lewis in her book, *Psychic War in Men and Women*, sums it up as follows: "The biological and cultural expectation that they (women) will be mothers makes it appear natural that they should spend their lives devoted to others — husbands and children...)

**"a book of interest to
women but not totally
convincing"**

"But our society also scorns people who are not self-sufficient and independent of others. Women thus learn early that they should be ashamed of the very set of qualities which are particularly theirs. Ironically, at the same time, they are constantly threatened by the prospect that if they are not affectionate enough and as close and loving to others as they ought to be, they will have failed in their own and others' eyes."

Unfinished Business raises a lot of questions for women but in my view the author isn't convincing in the answers she puts forward. The style of writing can sometimes be very irritating also, as Ms Scarf drifts occasionally into an unnecessarily sensationalist style. For all that her characters have a real warmth about them and are very convincing. The book is also surprisingly simple considering the complex issues being discussed. Perhaps the greatest failing of the book is the absence of any attempt whatsoever to look at the socio-economic considerations which could be major factors in the kind of pressures that women face. However, that may be the subject for another book.

For its limitations *Unfinished Business* is a book that should be of interest to all women and should stimulate some controversial food for thought for men also.

Christine Donaghy

LAY UP YOUR ENDS

LAY UP YOUR ENDS was a command to the mill girls to get ready to spin a new yarn. It is also the title of a remarkable new play about the Belfast linen workers' strike of 1911.

The play recalls the poverty and deprivation suffered by the city's working people in the years before the Great War, but it also rejoices in their indomitable spirit, their wit and humour, their traditions, their small pleasures and their songs.

In leisure centres and community halls all over Belfast, and in theatres on both sides of the border, it has been enthusiastically received by large audiences and lavishly praised by the critics. Over the summer they toured centres south of the border including performances at the Dublin Theatre Festival.

Lay up your Ends, a journey into Belfast's past, was born out of one of the harshest realities of Belfast's present — unemployment. Five actresses who were tired of being on the dole decided to create their own employment: to research, write and produce a play about the experiences of Belfast women.

Between them, Maureen MacAuley, Eleanor Methvyn, Brenda Winter, Sarah Jones and Carol Scanlon had years of experience in professional drama and dance, but none of them had ever written a play before. So they approached Martin Lynch from Turf Lodge and asked

him to help. A committed socialist (he is a member of the Workers' Party) Martin has won a considerable reputation with his plays about the lives and concerns of Belfast's working people.

"When we began to discuss the idea," says Martin, "we realised that the women of today couldn't be viewed in isolation from the history of our own mothers and grandmothers. Their experience, in many senses, made the Belfast women of today."

So how best to relate the history of the earlier Belfast women? "Someone suggested that Belfast as a city reached its peak at the turn of the century, so why not start there? This was broadened to include the years up to the beginning of the First World War. But then we felt that this brief was too wide, we needed a focus, perhaps a particular female experience of the time."

As the five actresses threw themselves head-first into the research of the period, it became apparent that the struggle of the Belfast mill girls stood head and shoulders above everything else.

"Here were the headquarters of the largest linen mills in the world," explains Martin. Thousands of Belfast women, from eight to 70 years of age, were toiling and sweating in the most atrocious, non-unionised conditions to be found anywhere in Europe.

"Here was a story well worth telling, and bearing in mind the current attacks by the likes of Thatcher and Tebbit on the very principle of organised trade unionism, the story would serve as a timely reminder to female (and male) workers of today, just why trade unions are vital and how exactly our parents and grandparents suffered and struggled in their time to make life that much more bearable for the working classes of today."

In the mills women worked a six day week, starting at six in the morning. They had to endure the deafening noise of the machines. They worked barefoot and ankle-deep in water and were forced to obey petty rules — "no singing, no talking, no stopping to fix your hair".

Many of the women rebelled against these conditions, but the immediate cause of the strike was the mill-owners' decision to reduce working hours and cut wages.

The five actresses put a considerable amount of thought, time and effort into researching the story of the mill girls. They dug out and read old press cuttings and books, they examined union records, they spent countless hours talking to women who had worked in the mills and they sought the advice of veteran trade unionists like Sadie Patterson.

After four months' hard work the team — actresses and playwright — had produced a script they were happy with. They christened their newly-formed theater company "Charabanc" (after the charabancs which used to take Belfast people on day-trips away from the troubles of everyday life), and set out to tour the local halls and centres.

Charabanc is very much a community theatre group and they are particularly pleased that their play has succeeded in attracting large numbers of people who wouldn't normally go to the theatre.

Lay Up Your Ends is directed by Pam Brighton, who has worked with a number of companies including the Young Vic, 7:84, and the Royal Court in London. The Musical Director (and performing musician) is David Jenkins and the producer is Ian McElhinney. Belfast City Council and Action for Community Employment gave financial support to the production.

Maureen, Eleanor, Brenda, Sarah and Carol — better known as CHARABANC



EDUCATING RITA

MICHAEL Caine has called *Educating Rita* the most feminist film he's ever done. To many people, this story of a hairdresser who brings about a radical self-improvement by taking Open University classes will seem like a fairly drastic parable of women's liberation: in order to fulfil herself, Rita has to stop dyeing her hair, get educated, be ditched by her husband, give up her hairdressing job and change her name back to Susan. (Nothing wrong with the first few transformations, but what's so bad about the name Rita?)

Certainly *Educating Rita* is a direct result of the effect which women's liberation has had on the cinema. There are now far fewer films made where the heroine is merely, in both senses of the word, a lay figure. And there are quite a number where the female lead is obviously cleverer than the men: *Body Heat*, *The Year of Living Dangerously*, even *Alien*.

The working-class heroine of *Educating Rita* (Julie Walters) is neither as intelligent nor as privileged as the academic poet 'hero', Frank (Michael Caine), but she has something infinitely more important: a sense of direction. At the end of the film he has painted himself into a corner — his drinking and generally boorish behaviour have left him with only one option: to get out. Rita, on the other hand, has a few choices open to her.

Told another way, the story might have been clichéd, but Julie Walters manages to make the changing character of Rita/Susan believable. As Rita moves from one world to another, she reaches a stage where she's excluded both from the academic world of Frank and his largely pretentious friends and the more familiar circle of her husband and family. Julie Walters creates enough tension in the role to make you feel that she is caught by the pull of both lifestyles, and that the choice she finally makes is a hard one.

It's also worth listening to what the film says about education. *Educating Rita* brings out sharply the contrast between the people who, like Rita, are really motivated to learn, and those who are at university simply because it's the place to be — the 'real students', as Rita calls them. And while the people in the film



● Julie Walters brings Rita to life

who've been excluded from third-level education see it as something to aspire to, those who've enjoyed its benefits view it as of little importance. *Educating Rita*, if it has a message, suggests that you need to have the choice before you can make an informed judgement. It's unrealistic in that it doesn't touch on the issue of the economic independence needed to 'get educated' — Rita seems always to have limitless money and endless free time!

However, half the pleasure for Irish audiences will be in recognising the locations where the film was shot. The 'provincial university' turns out to be Trinity College, the trendy bistro is McArthur's, and CIE buses

are unusually plentiful! Also, *Educating Rita* is full of players seen more frequently on the Dublin stage than on the cinema screen: Malcolm Douglas, Godfrey Quigley, Christopher Casson, Jeananne Crowley.

At just under two hours long, *Educating Rita* is constant entertainment. It's not a totally honest film as unpleasant facts are glossed over for the sake of light comedy, but it throws out some good ideas and boasts some fine acting. And as well as being a treat for Dubliners, it's a positive film for women — even those called Rita!

by Rita Dalton

On Women and the Family



Jenny von Westphalen who married Karl Marx in 1843. An active socialist and women's rights campaigner, Jenny was the first critic of her husband's works and conducted negotiations with editors and publishers to get them into print.

Available at all good bookshops. Published by Repsol. IR£4.95.

MARXISM and feminism have had an uneasy relationship. Those who decide to classify themselves as socialist-feminists are pushed and pulled by the demands of "the class struggle" and the "fight against male supremacy" and are criticised and even condemned by their comrades and sisters who give priority to either one. This book will therefore be welcomed by socialist-feminists who may want to present it to their "straight left" or radical feminist friends.

One of the most striking features of the extracts from Marx, Engels and Lenin reproduced here is that the issues discussed are of current interest to terests of women's emancipation and socialism.

gressed beyond the stage reached by these writers. Lenin's comments on

"the liberation of love" and the limits of both "bourgeois sexual morality" and the "revolution" against it are continually echoed in feminist discussions today. All three writers point to the conflict between the necessity for women to break out of what Lenin calls "their stupefying home and kitchen environment" and the new problems caused by breaking into the oppressive and exploitative environment of capitalist production. Of continued interest also are their comments on the need for working-class men — and especially communists — to change their individual behaviour to take on domestic labour, in the interests of women's emancipation and socialism.

It appears from this selection of writings that Engels and Lenin were in

advance of Marx in discussing the question of women's oppression. Indeed, in one extract included here, (from a letter from Marx to Kugelmann, page 89), Marx is quite sexist by modern standards. The fact that Engels' interest in and contribution to discussions on women's equality was so much greater than that of Marx is of interest in itself and has already given rise to some discussion in volumes produced to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Marx.

Many of the extracts here are from Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. It is extremely useful to have a short version of this important work; these extracts may inspire people to read the complete text. According to Michele Barrett (in *Karl Marx 100 Years On*):

"Scarcely a Marxist-feminist text is produced which does not refer somewhere to Engels' argument and if one had to identify one major contribution from Marxism to feminism it would have to be this text."

Engels' contribution, which is supported by many other extracts in this book, is to show that class is not the only factor to be considered in the struggle for women's equality. While the class struggle and the fight against women's oppression overlap and influence each other, they are separate conflicts and cannot be reduced to each other. The importance of both these struggles is underlined by Lenin: "Unless women are brought up to take an independent part not only in political life generally, but also in daily and universal public service, it is no use talking about democracy, let alone socialism."

WORKPLACE NIGHTMARE

RECOGNITION of the hidden problems faced by women at work can be obtained in this new *TUC Guide and Workplace Programme* for trade unionists. The pamphlet is a blistering attack on sexist attitudes, on traditional views of women's role in the workplace and on sexual harassment.

Pricked by this criticism many male chauvinist trade unionists have recently cried at branch meetings "but what IS sexual harassment?" For their benefit consider this TUC definition:

Repeated and unwanted verbal or sexual advances, sexually explicit derogatory statements or sexually discriminating remarks made by someone in the workplace which are offensive to the worker involved, which cause the worker to feel threatened, humiliated, patronised or harassed, or which interfere with the workers' job performance.

This makes it clear that sexual harassment is the imposition of unwelcome attention or action on one person often by a person in a superior position. One example could be where there is a clear cut division of status between female secretarial staff and male overseers or where harassment is used as a weapon to undermine the authority of women supervisors, managers or tutors.



Many women discovered that if the workplace 'romeo' was also the boss the only thing to do was look for another job. But times are changing.

The TUC is remarkably forthright in condemning a society where, "too often women workers are seen in terms of their family caring roles or as sexually attractive objects and not as workers trying to earn a living." Furthermore the TUC demands a change in attitudes of workers towards each other. Trade unions are instructed that they have a duty to make members

aware of the nature and scope of the problems involved and to take action to prevent sexual harassment occurring.

The majority of reported incidents of sexual pestering, of course, come from women but men can also suffer. The stress caused by harassment has been linked to depression and physical illness such as cystitis, headaches,

digestive problems, nausea, general physical disability and lack of resistance to infection.

The document proposes a model "sexual harassment clause" for inclusion in agreements, to oppose this form of worker intimidation. This defines harassment as "Unnecessary touching or unwanted physical contact, suggestive remarks or other verbal abuse; leering at a person's body, compromising invitations, demands for sexual favours and physical assault.

One of the main problems is that many trade unionists at present refuse to take the problem seriously.

The time is long overdue for male trade unionists in particular to examine their behaviour towards women at work to make sure that any actions that they may regard as 'only good clean fun' are not actually constituting sexual harassment.

It is heartening to report that a start has been made on this front in Northern Ireland with the NI Public Service Alliance about to issue its members with guidelines on sexual harassment at work. The NI committee of ICTU is planning to hold a seminar on sexual pestering in the workplace.

(Sexual Harassment at Work - a TUC Guide and Workplace Programme for trade unionists is available from the TUC Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS. Price 15p (plus p&P).

BOOKS

IRELAND's newest publishing company, the Women's Community Press, grew out of an innovative and unusual training course funded by AnCO's Equal Opportunities programme and run by Irish Feminist Publications. The course took 12 unemployed women from different backgrounds and introduced them to the variety of skills needed to translate an idea into a printed book.

Singled Out (62 pages) £1.95. *Missing Pieces* (64 pages) £2.00 and *If you can talk you can write* (64 pages) £2.00.

The first three titles from the Press were actually projects undertaken as part of the course. *Singled Out* is a joint venture with Cherish and provides a wide range of information for and about the single mother in Ireland.

It deals briefly with practical problems like maintenance, accommodation, child care facilities, employment and taxation and looks at issues like illegitimacy and social attitudes to marriage and the family. It also raises important questions about the right to housing, to social welfare benefits and to equality before the law.

As its name suggests, this new publishing company intends to concentrate on women's issues, and women's interests, with a strong emphasis on co-operation with community groups and organisations. It hopes to publish the sort of material which 'mainstream' companies are reluctant or unwilling to handle, while maintaining the same standards, (in terms of design, printing and marketing) as the commercial publishers.

WOMEN'S COMMUNITY PRESS

Singled Out was written by Cherish members themselves and they hope that it will become a source book for parents, teachers, students and social policy makers.

Conventional history books give the impression that women played little or no role in the shaping of modern Ireland. The truth, of course, is rather different, as *Missing Pieces* sets out to show. The book introduces one hundred women who have contributed significantly to Irish life since the Famine, from Mary Alkenhead, founder of the Irish Sisters of Charity, to Jennie Wyse-Power, a

Vice President of Sinn Féin who later became a Free State senator.

Some of the women — like Countess Markievicz and Fanny Parnell — are household names, while others have never been recognised outside their particular field of work or their own home town.

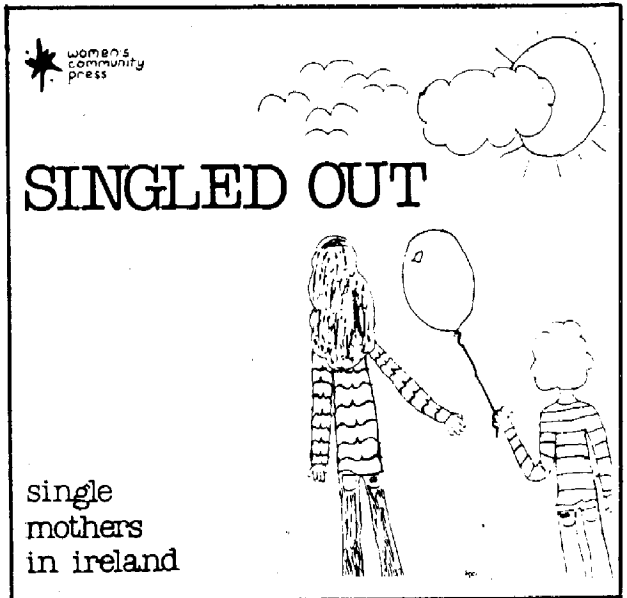
Equal space is given to each entry, so Biddy Early the 'White Witch' from Clare, and Maudie Healy, an embalmer who worked for Fanagans Undertakers get the same attention as Charlotte Despard and Delia Larkin. And the biographies are very brief indeed — only about 100 words each.

However, *Missing Pieces*

is timely because it reveals just how much work has yet to be done on women in Irish history, and at the very least it should stimulate the demand for more information on these neglected writers, scholars, politicians, artists and social reformers.

The third book from Women's Community Press is *If you can talk, you can write*, an illustrated collection of poems and articles by women living in the Kilbarrack area.

The Women's Community Press can be contacted at 48 Fleet Street, Dublin 2.



Irish Women's Diary and Guide Book 1984 now available from all bookshops. Only £2.75. Includes Guide to courses, classes and discussion groups of interest to women. Also useful contacts and addresses and relevant books and bookshops.

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IRISH WOMEN'S DIARY AND GUIDEBOOK 1984

1984
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Women's
Diary
and
Guide
Book



THE WOMEN'S CENTRE, 53 Dame Street, (side entrance), Dublin 2, has just published the first issue of a proposed new monthly round-up of women's events and news. Please send notices of any women's news to the above address. Just 10p per copy. Check with the Women's Centre to find out where it is available. 710088.

Selina Arafel lives in a village called Itanda on the Mueda plateau in northern Mozambique. She rarely washes herself or her children. Cristina Nculungua, however, who lives only 20 kilometres away in the village of Namaua, washes herself and her children thoroughly every day. The reason is obvious. It takes Selina five and a half hours to fetch the same bucket of water that Cristina takes fifteen minutes to collect from the standpipe in her village.

The Mueda Plateau, just south of the Tanzanian border, is home to about 90,000 people. One of the fonts of Mozambican nationalism, it was the scene of fierce fighting during the struggle for independence. The plateau is fertile and, lying at an elevation of 1,000 metres, has a comparatively healthy climate.

Unfortunately, it is lacking in streams and wells and traditionally women have had to trudge many miles to fetch water from springs down the bordering escarpments. Even the names of Selina's and Cristina's villages emphasise the preoccupation of the local people with their water problems. *Itanda* means "marsh" and *Namaua* means "place of wasps" after the insects that swarmed around the old water hole.

Once having won their independence, the people looked to the new government to help them overcome their water shortage. Their hopes were soon rewarded. A \$3.5 million project, half of it paid by UNICEF, was undertaken to pump water from springs located at the edge of the plateau to standpipes in 35 villages. The project is not yet complete, but already its impact on the lives of women and their children is dramatically evident.

The village of Itanda, where Selina Arafel lives, has not yet been reached by the new water supply system. Selina must walk 10 kilometres to the edge of the plateau, and then continue down the escarpment on a winding trail stretching 200 metres below to the nearest spring. Then she must



● *Five hours for one bucket of water*

struggle back with a 20 or even 30 litre can on her head. It is not a trip you make every day, and every drop of water is precious.

By making the trek four or five times a week, she can barely provide each of the five people in her family with four litres — about a gallon a day. This must suffice for drinking, cooking and cleaning. Not surprisingly, she rarely washes herself or her children.

Recently, Selina started getting her water from a standpipe in a nearby village. The queues are so long that it still takes her five and a half hours to make a round trip, but at least the water is clean instead of muddy — which she appreciates. And there are no lions about. In the year before this standpipe arrived in this village, two women were killed by lions at the old water hole.

Cristina Nculungua is in a very different position. The water standpipe arrived in Manaua in May 1981, and Cristina and her neighbours use an average five litres of water per day to wash their small children, while the women of Itanda use five litres per month for the same purpose. The effect is dramatic: in Itanda, about one child in 12 has heavily inflamed eyes from infections probably caused by lack of bathing. In Namaua no child has inflamed eyes.

Villagers say that another gain

Water of life

is the time the women are able to save, and instead to devote to other activities such as attendance at the women's organisation meetings. In villages with water, women are growing more nutritionally significant crops like groundnuts, for which they had no time before. And it appears that baby feeding has improved. Previously, babies still on the breast but too heavy to carry to the water hole, had to be left many hours without food.

Studies are still going on to determine the full impact of the water supply system on health. A conference, bringing together health and water specialists, is soon to be held on the plateau. But it already seems clear that there is no need for a major health education programme about the uses of water and the value of clean water. The women already understand its virtues, even if they have not yet fully changed all their health habits, built up over generations when water was scarce.

It seems that the biggest health gains have come from the savings in women's time, and this may guide the next course of development plans for Mueda. Many questions need answers, and they cannot all be supplied by the specialists. Just as the people joined in the struggle for their freedom, and for their water supply, they will join in the plans about what to do next.

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