

U.S.D.A.W.

RALLY FOR EQUAL PAY

31<sup>ST</sup>

MARCH

IN THE MARKET SQUARE  
NOTTINGHAM

DEBATE ON

SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION

1<sup>ST</sup>

APRIL

IN THE CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION CENTRE  
BROAD STREET, NOTTINGHAM

BOTH COMMENCING AT 1.0 P.M.

by

Elizabeth Coffey

Background to the present situation and reasons for not employing womena) 'Dominant Male'

The most widely held of the traditional justifications why male workers are, and ought to be paid more than females, is rooted in the 'tribal' belief that the male is the dominant partner and 'breadwinner' for the family. This has led to females being categorised as 'secondary earners', working either for 'pin money' or companionship and social contact. Such an attitude largely ignores the facts. In an inflationary economy it has become increasingly common that working class wives have to work to supplement the income of their husbands, in order to maintain decent living standards for their families. Equally, the female in the growing number of one-parent families cannot be categorised as 'secondary earners'.

b) Physical Characteristics

The different physical characteristics have also led to male/female differentials, but these reasons too are no longer relevant. The argument that 'heavy' jobs are better fitted to the greater physical strength of male workers has been considerably eroded, firstly by the employment of women in wartime industry which showed them capable of 'heavy' work; secondly by the fact that the impact of technology has diminished 'heavy' work in industry. Rather than the possession of sheer physical strength, it is arguably more important now, in many industries, to have a degree of manual dexterity or the ability to work within the monotony of an automated production process, or both.

c) Biological Characteristics

The arguments that women are more prone to high rates of labour turnover and absenteeism because of 'biological' characteristics, are not borne out by recent research, which revealed very little difference between male and female rates of turnover in unskilled or low paid jobs.

d) Womens 'Domestic' Role

The domestic position and responsibilities of women workers is a further aspect which has been used to justify low female wage rates. Marriage and the rearing of children inevitably disrupt the working lives of many women, which further prejudices employers against employing women in jobs where an investment in terms of training or education is required. Consequently, the overall position is that 10.4% of young women in employment receive day-release (compared with 39.7% of young men); but if national and local government are excluded the proportion of young women falls to 8.9%.

THE EMPLOYERS' RESPONSE TO THE EQUAL PAY ACT 1970

Confidential memoranda have been issued by various Employers' Associations suggesting ways in which the full economic impact of implementation of the Equal Pay Act can be **avoided**, by such methods as substituting the present women's rate for the minimum unskilled rate; consigning women to low-paid positions in industry and commerce; re-negotiation of agreements re-writing men's rates for heavy work, and women's rates for light work; use of outside contractors in "areas of conflict" i.e. lavatory cleaners; job evaluation - changing the work content of some jobs.

The Trade Union Research Unit concluded that:

a) Employers wherever possible will adopt the 'looser' interpretation of the Equal Pay Act, i.e. equal pay for "work of the same or similar nature", and by means of job descriptions (not titles) will attempt to slot women's jobs into the lowest grades of a unisex structure.

b) Where job evaluation is used to compare the relative value of jobs, employers will inevitably seek to manipulate both the factors chosen and their respective weightings, in order to justify, and thereby legalise, male/female differentials.

The Canadian Royal Commission on the Status of Women was established in 1967. After receiving 468 briefs and 1,000 letters of opinion, the Commission tabled its report on 7th December, 1970. Two general and four particular principles formed the basis of the Report. The general principles were:-

- (i) "that everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights";
- (ii) "there should be equality of opportunity to share the responsibilities to society as well as its privileges and prerogatives".

The specific principles were:-

- (a) "that women should be free to choose whether or not to take employment outside their homes";
- (b) "that the care of children is a responsibility to be shared by the mother, the father and society";
- (c) "that society has a responsibility for women because of pregnancy and child-birth and special treatment related to maternity will always be necessary";
- (d) "that in certain areas women will for an interim period of time require special treatment to overcome the adverse effects of discriminatory practices".

Accordingly the Commission made 167 recommendations concerning women in the Canadian economy, in education, in the family; taxation and child-care allowance; participation of women in public life; immigration and citizenship; criminal law and women offenders. Among these recommendations are several which will be of special interest to women in Britain at this time.

Recommendation 8 deals with the federal Female Employees Equal Pay Act and suggests that penalties be sufficiently heavy to be an effective deterrent.

Recommendation 16 suggests that an employed women be entitled to 18 weeks maternity leave and that her dismissal on any grounds be prohibited during the maternity leave. This recommendation has already been implemented.

Recommendation 18 reads "we recommend to the provinces and territories that protective labour legislation be applicable to both sexes". Many opponents of the Anti-Sex Discrimination Bill in Britain say that women workers will be in a far worse position once the Bill is in effect because the special treatment they have received will necessarily be stopped. Having protective legislation extended to men seems a more progressive way of solving this problem of discrimination.

After much controversy, the Commissioners decided to recommend (126) that the Criminal Code be amended to permit abortion by a qualified practitioner on the sole request of any women who has been pregnant for 12 weeks or less.

A pension plan for housewives is outlined in Recommendation 103 and a system of federally and provincially financed day-care centres is called for in Recommendation 118. At a time when the Conservative Government is considering changes in the handling of family allowance payments it is interesting to note that in item 131 a substantial increase in child-care allowance is recommended. In addition it is recommended that this allowance be paid in monthly instalments to the mother. Recommendation 135 proposes that a guaranteed annual income be paid by the federal government to the heads of all one parent families with dependent children.

The Commission's report left no room for doubt. A woman's ability to choose how she wishes to fulfill herself is curtailed by discriminatory practices and by lack of opportunity for her in all fields of Canadian life. On 3rd March, 1971 the Government pledged to give priority consideration to the 167 recommendations with the goal of equality of opportunity, of treatment and of status. The creation of Office of the Co-ordinator, Status of Women and the establishment of an indepartmental committee with five working parties have facilitated the implementation of twenty of these recommendations to date.

by Jane Browne

The right of women workers to receive equal pay has been accepted, in theory, by the Trade Union Movement since the 1880's. However, its failure to take this formal commitment seriously is well illustrated by the latest Government figures for the year ending April 1972. These figures showed that the average weekly earnings of full-time, women manual workers was just about HALF the average for male manual workers - that is £16.6 compared with £32.1 for men!

The Equal Pay Act of 1970

This Act, which does not come into force until the end of 1975, was hailed as a great step forward in the struggle for women's rights. However, as we shall see, the Equal Pay Act does little to alter the basic situation of women as low-paid, unskilled workers. Moreover the Equal Pay Act has, all too often, been used as an excuse for inactivity on the part of the Employers and the Trade Union Movement alike.

The Equal Pay Act sets about attempting to eliminate discrimination between men and women in regard to pay and 'conditions' in TWO main ways:

"by establishing the right of the individual woman to equal treatment when she is employed.

- A. On work of the same or broadly similar nature to that of men.
- B. In a job, which, though different from those of men has been given an equal value under a job evaluation exercise."

Point A is both sloppily and loosely worded, it does not define what constitutes 'sameness' or 'similarity' in a job and consequently allows employers considerable scope to evade equal pay demands. Its provision is further limited by the definition set out in the Department of Employment's 'Guide to Equal Pay' which narrows its scope so much as to cater almost exclusively for situations where men and women are employed, interchangeably, on the same jobs. Now, it is very unusual, throughout the whole of industry, to find men and women employed on the same job, and even where this has been the case, employers have usually been very quick to separate them out. For example, the British Paper Box Federation sent a 'Guidance Note' to its members in September 1970 instructing them to change jobs where areas of conflict are most likely to arise e.g. lavatory cleaners. It adds this suggestion:

"In this connection it is suggested that if, for any reason, it should be impossible to designate this (i.e. lavatory cleaning) as a 'woman's job', then outside contractors should be brought in to take care of the situation, and similarly, of course, with other jobs done by men and women and where it would be impossible to change a light job over to a woman."

The five and a half years allowed for implementation of the Equal Pay Act was supposedly to soften the impact of equal pay on the wage bill. However, as we can see, this interim period has been used to maximum advantage by employers for: rewording agreements; dividing up men's and women's work even further and swiftly manoeuvring their way out of equal pay commitment!

Turning to point B. where a woman is entitled to equal treatment "in a job ... given an equal value under a job evaluation exercise." We must first of all realise that we live in an economic system that constantly deprives us of the full value of our labour power and, in addition, that 'value' here is not value to the worker, or to the community but, solely, to the employer.

Secondly, job evaluation is not a scientific technique. It reflects all the prejudices of the society we live in. So that, for example, in most job evaluation exercises physical strength is assessed at a higher level than manual dexterity. In other words, the job where women predominate are likely to be given a lower 'value' than those on which men are employed.

It is possible, given Trade Union 'policing' of job evaluation at every level, that women workers may gain increased wage rates. However, we must remember that job evaluation grades jobs as "eggs in a packing station" and has the effect of setting everyone against each other in

their determination to maintain their position one rung above the chickens below. Job evaluation is by no means a clear - cut way to equal pay and depends always on Trade Union strength and vigilance to turn it to their advantage.

#### The Effects of the Equal Pay Act on Women Workers

Numerous sources of evidence show conclusively that the employment and training opportunities for women are practically nil. Because of this most women are employed in unskilled and consequently low-paid work, with little opportunity of getting better jobs. The Equal Pay Act makes no provision whatsoever for increased training and job opportunities for women. As long as this situation continues women have little hope of improving their position at work.

Another shortcoming of the Equal Pay Act is that it relates only to wage rates and not to total earnings. Now there are many forms of bonus which can raise earnings above the basic wage rate. It is also clear that bonus schemes etc. will be used by employers to continue to divide the workforce and play off one section against another. While a divided workforce may result in one section gaining a marginal advantage in the short term, in the long term it is only in the interests of employers and the government. One example of how these 'shortcomings' can be exploited is set out in the same 'Guidance Note' from our old friends the British Paper Box Federation.

"In the event of proper provision not being made now to provide for an acceptable differential between the take-home pay of men and women the following discrimination factors are available : long service, merit allowance, attendance bonus, willingness to work overtime."

Need we say more?

#### The General Problem of Low Pay

It is a fact that women predominate in those sectors of industry where the wages of men are generally lower than average. Leonora Lloyd, in her handbook 'Women Workers in Britain' shows that in an industry such as textiles with a high proportion of women workers, the male rate per hour was 56p. Whereas in a sector like the motor industry, where very few women are employed, the male rate was 76p per hour (both figures are for 1970). It follows from this then, that even where women throughout a whole industry gain pay comparable to men, they would still remain in that desperately general category of 'low paid workers'!

#### Progress towards Equal Pay?

The recent report from the Office of Manpower Economics studied the progress towards equal pay contained in 158 wage agreements over the two years 1970-72. 'The women's rate', or the lowest women's rate where there was more than one, was expressed as a percentage of the lowest male rate. In many cases this meant comparing the rates of relatively skilled women workers with those of unskilled male workers. However, even with such unfair comparisons as these the report showed that only  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the new agreements had achieved rates for women at a level of 85% or more, of the male rate. While just under  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the agreements had failed even to achieve 80% of the male rate. Even more disturbing is the fact that the 'pace' of improvement of womens rates had actually slowed down between 1971 and 1972.

#### Equal Pay and Phase II

Clearly the effects of the Equal Pay Act on progress towards the removal of discrimination in basic male/female rates and a narrowing of the 'gaps' in terms of male/female earnings, are, not to put to fine a point on it, 'disappointingly small'. In the light of this the decision embodied in Phase II of the governments Pay Freeze legislation, not to invoke clause 9 of the Act - requiring women's rates to be brought up to 90% of male rates by December of this year, is to add insult to injury. The governments alternative, that in order to obtain an 'orderly progress' existing differentials may be reduced by up to one third by the end of 1973 outside the pay limit if necessary, is misleading as well as being completely inadequate. This is simply because the very next sentence in the Green Paper states that increases outside the Freeze limit of £1 plus 4% will only be allowed where:

"settlements within the limit do not widen the existing relativity between men's and women's rates"



## SEX DISCRIMINATION

The Labour Party "Green Paper" reviewed by Diana Jeuda, Research Officer USDAW

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights declared in a recent report that two groups were particularly likely to meet discrimination in advanced Western Society: coloured workers and their families and women in general. Great Britain is no different from any of its European counterparts in restricting the choices available to women at work in both public and family life.

Although the first meeting of the T.U.C. declared that equal pay for women was part of their fundamental policy, it took more than one hundred years for the Equal Pay Act to reach the Statute Book in 1970. Moreover, even in those trades and industries where equal pay has been fully realised, women still fill occupations at the bottom of the pay scale so that their earnings are frequently little more than half of those of their comparable male colleagues. However, the Equal Pay Act has had an important role to play apart from making it illegal to discriminate between men and women in wage rates and pay scales. It has opened the way to a very much fuller discussion of the role of women in the community and the means by which women can enjoy far greater equality of opportunity in all areas of their lives.

At parliamentary level, Private Members' Bills have been introduced in the House of Commons and the House of Lords which would have provided Race Relations type legislation making it illegal to discriminate between men and women in the world of work. In addition, committees of both the Commons and the Lords have been examining in detail the problems of discrimination and the most effective methods of eliminating them.

Perhaps the most thorough and detailed evidence submitted has been that contained in the Labour Party "Green Paper" on Discrimination Against Women, which has now been published to stimulate further public discussion and to suggest the lines along which a future Labour Government would act.

The documents shows clearly that there is still widespread discrimination against women and suggests a number of policies designed to achieve genuinely equal rights for women, thereby giving them greater independence and standing in the community through the increased freedom of choice opened up to them. But inevitably this could be brought about only if it were accompanied by the kind of marked change in attitude towards the role of women that we saw during the Second World War and which has also taken place in Eastern Europe.

It is suggested that there are eight main areas where proposals need to be made in order to ensure women receive fair treatment.

### ENFORCEMENT

The most important proposal is to make illegal discrimination between men and women, either by amending and strengthening the Race Relations legislation and machinery or by passing separate legislation and establishing an Anti-Discrimination Board along the same principles as, but quite separate from, the race relations machinery. The Labour Party statement recognises that passing legislation and establishing machinery will not in itself end discrimination and prejudice, but they believe that it is important in establishing a climate in which effective strategies can promote equality of opportunity, treatment and status for women.

Discrimination in employment (including recruitment, training and promotion); membership of employers' organisations, trade unions or professional bodies or in the provision of facilities including banking, insurance, mortgages and credits would contravene the law, as would issuing an advertisement indicating an intention to discriminate.

The Party believes that the best method of enforcing the law will be through investigations and conciliation, not through criminal sanctions.

## EDUCATION

The educational system still tends to bolster up the idea that boys are the potential breadwinners and that girls' future role is primarily that of wives and mothers dependent on men. As a result even in co-educational schools, differences exist in the curricula and girls are far less likely to be encouraged to do mathematics or science subjects. Where schools are segregated it is also usual to find appreciably less good facilities for science subjects in girls' schools than are provided in those for boys.

The document also points out that girls tend to be taught domestic science while boys do metal and woodwork. This again shapes future patterns of life in that boys' technical skills can provide paid employment, thereby bringing economic independence, while "home making" is normally unpaid and by itself implies economic dependence for girls.

It is suggested, therefore, that schools should be encouraged to reduce the distinction between "boys" and "girls" subjects and that all pupils should have the opportunity to learn both technical and domestic subjects.

## TRAINING

Training facilities for women need to be substantially improved because of the small numbers currently receiving any. Approximately seven times more boys than girls enter apprenticeships each year and the bulk of those taken up by girls are in hairdressing. As a result, the Labour Party recommends that day or block release should be made compulsory for all young men and women and that Government Training Centres should be expanded in order to assist older women to train and retrain for skilled jobs on their return to work after they have brought up their families.

## EMPLOYMENT

The document emphasises that it is not just earnings that are unequal but that there is substantially different treatment between men and women in sick pay and occupational pensions. For example, just over a quarter of women at work, compared with more than half of all men, are covered by pension schemes. Although no specific recommendations are made in the field of fringe benefits, the Labour Party urges the Government to order that women's rates should reach at least 90% of male rates by the end of 1973.

## CHILD CARE

The Labour Party considers that improved child care services would assist those mothers who have the double workload of job and family responsibilities, and recommends that the Government give local authorities financial encouragement to extend nursery services.

## FAMILY PLANNING

The view is advanced that "Women should be free to decide whether they wish to have a family, to concentrate on a career, or - given the above child care services - to combine the two. They should not be subjected by social pressures to have a family, neither should they suffer unwanted pregnancies nor be driven to seek abortion. Consequently we think sex education and family planning facilities are very relevant to women's freedom of choice." The Party, therefore, recommends that a free family planning service should be available to all through the National Health Service.

## SOCIAL SERVICES

The Labour Party recommends that the future social security scheme should provide earnings related benefits as of right in return for universal and equal earnings related contributions. Working men and women should contribute on exactly the same basis, whether single or married and the scheme should provide insurance coverage for retirement, disability and long-term sickness for non-employed women (and men) in return for minimum rate contributions.

The existing "married women's option" not to pay full national insurance contributions should cease for new entrants. At the same time, the present discrimination against married women in the low rates of sickness and unemployment benefits should also cease.

The needs of the dependent mother and children should further be recognised by increasing family allowances, including a substantial amount for the first child. Family allowances should be paid to the mother, or if the couple separates, to whichever spouse has care of the children.



Maternity grants and allowances should be payable to all mothers irrespective of contributions, and to married and unmarried alike.

Maternity leave should not constitute an interruption of continuous employment. Women who are widowed, divorced, legally separated from their husbands, and unmarried mothers, should receive resettlement benefits for six months following the event. So should a father who has to give up work to look after children in a similar emergency.

A single parent benefit (cash payment) should be paid to all widowed, unsupported, divorced and unmarried mothers in respect of every dependent child. This benefit should be payable to fathers in the same position.

The retirement conditions for men and women should be identical. Both sexes should be able to retire at any time between the ages of 60 and 70, with appropriate adjustments to their pensions.

#### TAXATION

Separate taxation of the earnings of married couples, extended to cover the whole of their income, is recommended. Also, before personal tax allowances are replaced by cash benefits, as ultimately envisaged, they should be redrawn unless there are real and not assumed dependencies.

There is no longer any justification for an allowance to a married man for a wife irrespective of whether she is dependent upon her husband, has young children, or even whether husband and wife are living together .. It is more important for a husband to have a cash benefit for his chronically sick wife than for him to have a tax allowance in respect of a wife who is working full time".

#### MATRIMONIAL LAW

Six objectives for the reform of matrimonial law are listed. The two most important are that the principle of co-ownership of property should be introduced, and that the right of each spouse to occupy the matrimonial home and to use and enjoy the basic household goods should be strengthened. Co-ownership would give both husband and wife an automatic interest in certain property, principally the matrimonial home and household goods.

#### PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS

The Green Paper criticises the narrow criteria by which appointments are made to public bodies. It shows that in January 1971 the membership of 49 public boards of a commercial character (e.g. gas and electricity boards, the Post Office, National Bus Company) comprised 420 men and only five women. Even in part-time appointments, only one in fifty was a woman. The Labour Party also recommends that in future greater account should be taken of the consumer interest which can well be represented by women.

#### CONCLUSION

The Labour Party's Green Paper must be extremely welcome. The fullness of its cover means that policy has been devised in all the major areas where women meet with discrimination, lack of facilities and opportunities. Where so much positive and new thinking has been advanced it is perhaps unappreciative to point to the gaps. Nevertheless one glaring omission, obvious to all trade unionists, is the absence of any firm recommendations to the effect that the Equal Pay Act should be amended to include occupational pension schemes amongst the terms of employment that cannot be varied between men and women.

But, taken as a whole, the document represents a significant advance if it is intended that it be implemented in full by a future Labour Government. What must be hoped is that the legislation is enacted at the beginning of Labour's term of office and not at the end. Perhaps we might then get for the first time the majority of women of this country voting Labour.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S "PROPOSALS FOR A TAX CREDIT SYSTEM"  
OCTOBER, 1972

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Submitted by the Nottingham  
Family Allowance Campaign

The Government is proposing to introduce a Tax Credit System to replace family allowances, family income supplement and some tax allowances. In effect, this will mean that Family Allowances will be abolished, and replaced by what the Government calls "tax credits".

The question of who will receive the tax credit - the father or the mother of the child is, supposedly, left open. From experience, we can assume, that it will be paid to the man in his wage packet, in fact, this assumption is made throughout the proposals. The man will appear to be receiving more take-home pay, while his wife will be taking a cut in cash available for housekeeping.

The introduction of family allowances after the last war was welcomed as a really progressive move in Government's recognition of social responsibility for children. It ensured that the person directly responsible for a child's welfare, in most cases the mother, had some definite, regular, source of money to use in this way. It was introduced by Act of Parliament as a statutory right, and it still is. If it is drawn into the tax system as is proposed in the Green Paper, it can be altered or even abolished, without legislation, by a clause in a Budget. It can be eaten away at any time by further changes in the taxation system. A juggling of figures could easily wipe it out altogether. We must ensure that the Family Allowance is not taken over, then completely lost in this way.

In recent years, we have had taken away from us many social benefits - free school milk, cheap school meals, free prescriptions, cheap welfare foods for babies, controlled rents. Inflation is making it more and more difficult to make ends meet, wages are frozen, and now we are to have a further example of social irresponsibility aimed directly this time at the welfare of children.

The implications of removing the payment of Family Allowances from women are very broad. In many cases it will take away the only money a woman can call her own. Unfortunately, the gross income of a man often bears little relationship to the housekeeping money received by his wife, and yet it is the weekly total of money in the mother's pocket rather than the father's income which determines the standard of living of the family. If the marital situation is not a happy one, the mother and children can be in a desperate situation.

From surveys, letters received, and interviews it seems that the need of mothers in every social class, with self-employed husbands, poor husbands, unreliable husbands, separated or unhappily married, or just with "normal" husbands who have no idea how much it costs to feed and clothe a family, have a great need for an independent source of income.

The Child Poverty Action Group carried out a survey of 1,196 women in the summer of 1972. It was conducted in 20 areas of the country and included middle-class women, manual working class women, mothers drawing supplementary benefits, and a random selection of women. The findings included the following. 71% of all the women interviewed disapproved of the possible abolition of family allowances. Only 8% approved, the remaining 21% having no definite feelings either way. The disapproval was expressed in all categories. 69% of middle class women disapproved, 72% of the working class group, and 77% of mothers drawing supplementary benefits.

A typical comment was "I depend on it on Tuesday to carry me through the next week". The importance of this midweek payment has been proven by the London Study of low income families which was carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group. Most social workers emphasise the importance of the Tuesday payment. Mothers generally rely on it to eke out the housekeeping, or to buy shoes or clothing for the children - certainly not for drinking and bingo as some unthinking and unfeeling critics say.

Many mothers commented "I'll be nearly £2.00 short for groceries", which illustrates another finding of the Study - that nearly half the mothers had doubts about whether they would receive any extra housekeeping money if the credits were paid to the father. He would feel he'd got an unexpected raise - while in reality the family income would be remaining the same - the mother not receiving the child credits and therefore having to manage on less money for her housekeeping than before.

Under the new system, mothers with self-employed husbands, and unsupported mothers receiving maintenance payments, and with incomes of less than £8.00 per week would lose their family allowance, and receive no compensation for the loss. Unsupported mothers, or married mothers depending on supplementary benefit would lose their family allowance, but their supplementary benefit would be increased to compensate for the loss. There would, however, be no compensation for the loss of security involved. The allowance book which just has to be presented at the Post Office is a far more reliable and certain source of money than social security payments which are always subject to fluctuations according to slight or temporary changes in conditions, and sometimes to unco-operative social security officers. The student mother is left out of the new system completely!

The new Tax Credit proposals are posed as being a streamlining of cumbersome administrative process-making administration cheaper and more efficient, (yet the cost of putting them into force is estimated in the region of £130,000,000.) In the Green Paper outlining the proposals, it is even admitted that some mothers may experience hardship - and yet the proposals are pushed forward regardless of this fact, on the excuse of more efficiency and questionable economy! We cannot accept that human considerations, affecting women and children can be sacrificed for supposed efficiency and economy, social benefit must surely outweigh administrative convenience.

The abolishing of Family Allowances, small as they are, leaving mothers even more dependant, can mean an increased demand by them for jobs - even part time, and poorly paid jobs so that they may have some extra independant income. Women with no money of their own are forced to take jobs at any pay, under any conditions, any hours, in order to meet the bills, and eke out the housekeeping. The greater the competition for women's jobs, (especially in the low paid areas) the more difficult it will be for women to wage a battle for equal pay. Militant women can easily be sacked because many more women will be waiting for their jobs, and they will be too dependant on those jobs to risk losing them by agitating for higher or equal pay. In fact, the Green Paper states that "the needs of the economy require the continued employment of large numbers of married women, and the system must be such that they feel it worth their while going to work". Here is stated clearly the idea that women constitute a pool of reserve cheap labour to be called upon when the needs of the economy require it.

The Green Paper states that it covers 90% of the population plus dependants! The dependants, of course, are women and children, and this is the attitude shown toward women throughout the document - that they are dependants, who can continue to feed and clothe and care for children on as much or as little cash as they can arrange to receive from husbands. At the same time this "dependancy" is going to be useful in that it will make women an amenable and docile unit in a large pool of cheap female labour. As for women who have no one to be dependant upon, it seems that they are just problem cases that have to be sacrificed in the interest of administrative efficiency.

The absence of Family Allowance payments will strengthen the idea that men should be paid more than women because they supposedly have to provide for children - whereas women only work for 'extras' - for 'pin money'. Independant statutory benefits payable for care of children are absolutely essential if women and men are to be treated equally in the labour force and in society. Again, in times of unemployment, stike, injury, sickness, death, there is now some regular cash which can be relied upon to tide things over - minimal though it is. Under the new Tax Credit system - there would be nothing immediate to rely on.

The Government claims that it is not really concerned about the method of operating the tax credit system - about the way, or to whom, child credits are paid - but we are concerned! There is only one clear way to cut through the discriminatory attitudes and implications, and that is to ensure that they are widely known, and to campaign and fight for the following:-

1. That Family Allowances remain a statutory benefit payable to the mother.
2. That Family Allowances be extended to cover the first child.
3. That Family Allowances be increased to cover the rise in the cost of living since they were fixed at their present rate.
4. That automatic increases be made yearly to cope with inflation.

### WOMEN ON THE SS (SOCIAL SECURITY)

by some women of Nottingham Claimants Union

We want to see Unsupported Mothers treated with more respect as we are doing a good job bringing our children up, acting as both mother and father to our families. Unsupported mums should get equal rights. We Unsupported Mothers look forward to our family allowance on Tuesdays and the Government is trying to deprive us of this. They can't put the family allowance in our wage packet because we don't get one, only a mean few pounds to draw on a Monday, from the SS, and you have to tell them your life history to get this, and be a good girl.

We demand more money as like married women we would like a night or two out a week, after having kids all day. We demand grants for our kids four times a year (at least). Extra allowances at Christmas so our kids can hang up their stockings and wake up on Xmas morning, and find their stockings full instead of empty. Also to sit down to Turkey and all the trimmings instead of 10p Breast of Mutton.

What do the SS expect us to hang up in our windows? Sack bags? as they don't give us money for curtains or crockery or cutlery, bedding, floor covering, towels, cooking utensils. I myself have not had a new pair of shoes for 9 years and I am now suffering from bad feet through wearing shoes bought at jumble sales at 2p a pair. My children have all been lousy and had scabies from wearing second-hand clothes.

One old age pensioner had all her clothes and possessions stolen. The SS refused to help her - anyone would think it was THEIR personal money they were dealing with BUT THIS IS THE PUBLIC MONEY.

Nottingham Claimants Union is a self-governing body without any organisers - because we all organise ourselves and help each other. We have meetings on Sundays at 11 Houseman Street off Mayfield Grove, Meadows, Mondays at 45 Dryden Street, Tuesday at 3 Chad's Road, Off Carlton Hill, Thursday at Dispensary House (Gregory Blvd) near the Library. All at 8.00

by Lizzie Waters

The Labour Party recently published a Green Paper on the question of women. The aim of the report was to discover the extent of discrimination against women in all spheres of life and suggest what policies could be adopted to further the achievement of equal rights.

You don't have to look very far to see that in our society women are considered to be second-class citizens and the paper brought forward a great deal of factual information showing how the unwritten law that women should be the most exploited members of the community underlies our legal and taxation system, our social services and all our social institutions.

School, training, pay, marriage, public life ... you name it and the Green Paper offers evidence that here too being a woman is a big drawback.

In the classroom girls are often segregated off to learn homemaking subjects, they leave school earlier with fewer qualifications. There are less training schemes open to them: while over 40% of boys go into apprenticeships only 7% of girls do. Women, in the struggle to make ends meet, to pay the rent and cope with rising prices are finding themselves having to go out to work. Nine million women are already wage earners and this figure is expected to increase by over a million in the next 15 years. However, because of their lack of qualifications and the pressure of domestic commitments ( $\frac{3}{4}$  of working women do all the housework without assistance of any kind) they are in unskilled and badly paid employment.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of all working women are doing jobs that require under six months training. Of solicitors only 2.9% are women, of chartered accountants only 1.1%. On average though women work a 38 hour week they bring home only 59% the average male wage packet and in manual employment the percentage is even lower 51%.

The paper recognises that although the need to establish better training facilities for women and to fight for equal pay is one of the key issues, there are other problems to be overcome before we could say that all's right with the world.

Not all women are at present in a position to gain independence through earning their own living. Many married women unable to find a suitable alternative for their children have to stay housebound and dependent on their husbands. And those who have committed the 'crime' of being unsupported remain dependent on the state. As the Green Paper rightly points out, social security is very much about women but is not at the moment able to guarantee the millions of women who come within it a decent standard of living. Detailed recommendations are put forward as to how the system might be improved:- all women to pay some kind of benefit insurance contributions that would entitle them to more benefits; maternity and family allowances to be increased; more help to the unsupported, widowed, divorced and unmarried mother. The paper further suggests that the law be altered in accordance with the dignity of women i.e. that they be taxed separately yet with due regard as to their ability to pay, that the right of custody and guardianship be extended to women and that child allowances be made payable to them.

The paper gives a good picture of the different and difficult situations faced by women in Britain today but the recommendations for change that it puts forward have an air of unreality about them; they do not seem to correspond at all with the enormity of the problems as outlined.

If women are to ever take an equal place in society they must, for one thing, be relieved of the soul-destroying task that society has always allotted them - that of the unpaid and overworked domestic skivvy. Yet, although the paper mentions social services the only concrete suggestions it comes up with are that 'Local authorities should be given financial encouragement by central government to extend nursery school services' that the practice of meals on wheels and home helps be extended. This clearly does not go nearly far enough. Unless a really adequate network of public facilities are established to relieve the working woman of her household cares; unless creches and nursery school accommodation are set up for her children she is still unable to go on courses, take advantage of better employment opportunities opened up thereby and will be forced then as now to take unskilled work that hopefully gives her time to muddle through at home and does not interfere too much with family routine.

We need the comprehensive provision of pre-school facilities that would not just be dumping ground but centres that a working women could recognise as adequately fulfilling the tasks of looking after her children and in fact being a better arrangement for all concerned offering her the opportunity to go out into the wider world and her children a more healthy alternative to being cooped up all day with a bored and housebound mother. We need laundries near to where we live and not a 10p bus ride away; laundries that are cheap and efficient.

We need eating places that provide a more varied diet than fish and chips and cater for the pockets of ordinary mortals and not just the rich business man, eating places that we could use every day and not just as an annual treat or on summer holidays.

We need homes designed to minimise household chores and technology harnessed to see that dusting and cleaning took only a matter of minutes and could be the paid work of certain individuals and not the unpaid responsibility of each housewife.

Are these demands so fantastic? Of course not - but what then is preventing them from being carried out?

The Green Paper hints at the reason: the special boards set up by the Industrial Training Act of 1964 with the purpose of encouraging firms to provide more training particularly for girls failed, it notes, not because girls were apathetic but because the employers were unwilling to co-operate. Here we have the matter in a nutshell. You can call for the 'wholesale revision of retraining provision for women', better paid more satisfying jobs, creches etc., till the cows come home, but the employers control the purse strings and they will use any excuse so as not to have to increase expenditure.

On the level of proposing policies that might go toward ending discrimination the Green Paper is thus entirely unsatisfactory. Even where it does show the direction in which change should be made its proposals on education etc. it avoids the problem of how reforms could be actually financed and carried out. In general the report seems to accept that the whole attempt to liberate women is a bit hopeless anyway (which it is given the failure to analyse and tackle the problem at its roots) and can only suggest that we give more recognition to the homemaking function (when we need to socialise house work) protect the woman who is unable to acquire property presumably this means property in the sense of a roof over her head and an income sufficient to ensure survival and patch up the social security system (when we need to change and remove the situations that make for unemployment and render women unemployable and dependent on someone else). Because they (quite rightly) cannot see their suggestions as radically changing womens position the paper relies on changing attitudes and values to do the trick.

But in whose interest are the present attitudes and present values? In whose interest is it that a woman should slave away at home and work for pittance wages? Certainly not in her own, or her husband's or her children's'.

Discrimination of this kind is in no ones interest but the employers. Equal pay alone would cost them an estimated billion. It would cut their profits. Thats why they will fight tooth and nail any plans to lighten the life of the ordinary woman. The few have always deemed it their right to live off the labour of the many and since women have been less able to stand and fight back they have come in for the worst deal. While 90% of the national wealth is in the hands of 10% of the population and the whole economy dominated by a couple of hundred monopolies it would be utopian to believe that working people could achieve a better standard of life and that women could win equality. This is where the report loses all credibility. Reading about the 'liberating effects' of entering employment for women and the need to obtain maximum 'security' for them you might think that men lived in paradise already and not that we are all involved in a struggle to win the right to work and maintain our standard of living.

What good is equality if it means an equal deprivation of rights in a society where the mass of people, both men and women, are obliged to work long hours to merely maintain an inadequate standard of living. What good is the end of sexual discrimination if the majority of us

continue to be discriminated against by the big business men who seem to think that we only need overtime and bread and jam whereas they need idleness and three-course luncheons.

The problem of women in our society is clearly not the problem of women as women in an abstract sense but of women in a society run for profit and not people. If we take any aspect of the so-called 'woman question' we can see that it is a part and a very important part of one of the issues facing the working class people as a whole.

The demands for abortion on demand and for legislation to protect maternity are part of the fight to achieve a decent health service.

The demand for equal opportunities for women in all levels of education and training is part of the struggle for a fully comprehensive educational system that offers a wage to all who stay in full time education beyond the required leaving age and thus gives meaning to the talk of an equal chance for all.

Equal Pay is part of the battle for a minimum wage tied to the cost of living and payable to all pensioners and all unemployed regardless of sex or marital status and all who are forced to remain at home through lack of local nursery facilities.

These demands must be fought for as part of a whole programme to bring to public ownership and under democratic control the main monopolies the private banks and insurance companies. Only by these measures would we be able to really plan the best use of our economic resources and provide ourselves with a good health service, education system etc.

Only then would the basis for discrimination along sexual racial or any other lines be done away with once and for all.

Only then would it be possible to establish the public services that would free the working class woman from the drudgery of household chores, provide the education and training to enable her to play a meaningful role in social production thereby ensuring that she could take a truly equal part in social and political life.

Only the organised power of the working class has the power to make such changes and hence the vital necessity of forging a strong and united trade union and labour movement. Without the support and active participation of women who are after all for half of the working class and nearly 40% of the labour force - this task is impossible. Although women have begun to show that they will no longer tolerate the burdens 'society' places upon them the majority are still ununionised or atomised at home and uninvolved in the social and political issues of the day. How to bring women into the organised movement of the working class is thus one of the most urgent questions we face and is what we ought to be discussing at this rally.

The Labour Party Green Paper emphasised that the whole question of women in society deserved explicit response from the labour movement. It is up to us to make sure that this response is forthcoming and that it measures up to the situation.