

ANARCHIST FEMINIST PAPER

25p

RESISTANCE

SEPTEMBER

**& OCTOBER
ISSUE**

'88

No. 18

The Mass Organization of Women Begins



Strike Committee of Dewsbury and Batley Heavy Woollen Weavers, 1875

WOMEN ONLY

DEWSBURY & BATLEY HEAVY WOOLLEN WEAVERS

In 1875, women weavers in the Dewsbury district struck against a sudden and arbitrary decision of their employers to cut rates of pay. Even though the work force was mixed, they elected a wholly female strike committee with Mrs. Kate Comran as secretary, Mrs. Ann Ellis as treasurer, Mrs. Hannah Wood as president and Mrs. Denman and Mrs. Booth to keep accounts of the strike funds received. But as with an earlier strike of mule spinners in the area, the employers quickly converted the strike into a lock-out. Over 50 manufacturers with 2 or 3 firms of finishers and 12 of dyers were involved. The women were given financial support by the Batley Carr Industrial Co-operative Society, some middle class sympathisers, but most of all by working people from Lancashire to Leeds and as far north as Hawick in Scotland. During attempts to mediate by men "tuners" of looms, it came out that some manufacturers had been giving out longer warps (vertical threads) than the weavers had been told, so they had been doing more work than they were paid for. There were large protest meetings of 9,000 people on one occasion and 7,000 on another.

On 3rd April, two days before the strike ended successfully, a public meeting agreed on the formation of the Dewsbury, Batley & Surrounding Districts' Heavy Woollen Weavers' Association. So the women's action had resulted in the setting up of a mixed union.

**RESISTER;
CO BOX DAM,
52 CALL LANE,
LEEDS.**

DEAR READERS DEAR READ

Sorry that number 18 has taken so long to get into the shops/on the stalls, etc, but what with the postal strike, & delayed printing, we decided that the September issue would be out so late in the month, that we might as well make number 18 a September & October issue.

Number 19 should be produced as normal, & we welcome any articles from any women out there! Meanwhile, this issue has an extra four sides to see you through till November!!

Until then, happy reading,

RESISTER.

DEAR READERS DEAR READ

TRICIA JENNINGS VICTORY

In several of our issues, an update has been given about Tricia Jennings, the woman who took Burtons to an industrial Tribunal, accusing them of sex discrimination, after she was sacked during her time in hospital fighting a miscarriage.

Anyway, at long last, the Tribunal has ended, & the result announced. Basically, it was a victory for Tricia - not only did she give birth to a baby girl, but the Tribunal found Burtons guilty of sex discrimination, & was ordered to pay £1,500 compensation.

Hopefully, this case will encourage other women who have been dealt with similarly, (& there must be thousands) to take their bosses to tribunals, & win.

DEADLINE DATE

OCTOBER 22nd

LETTER TO RESISTER...

Dear friends,

As you may be aware, a band called 'Rapeman' will be playing at Leeds polytechnic on October 13th. The person responsible for organising & promoting the gig is Steve Hawkins, who lives at 7 Beulah Mount, Leeds 6, telephone 434357.

Yours in solidarity,

IRELAND

Britain's Dirty War

I didn't know what to expect, I'd read previous accounts of the Troops Out Delegation: of the body searches; the guns trained on children; the feelings of grass roots solidarity amongst a tight knit community brought together by the threat posed by an army of occupation. The week before we set off a section of an army barracks in London was reduced to rubble; a British soldier (who'd done six operational tours of N.Ireland) was shot dead in Ostend; Would the army be out to get revenge on the Anti-Internment March? How would the Irish people react to us considering the British populations overall prejudicial ignorance towards their struggle?

Waiting at Larne for the coach that would take us to Belfast, ten yards away on the right there's an armoured car, through the smoked windows you can see the outlines of the RUC men their guns pointing towards us. A couple of them stand beside it, bullet proof vests and guns making them appear invulnerable. I try not to look at them as if pretending that they aren't there will somehow keep me safe. I think it's known as burying your head in the sand.



"The Nazis had Hitler The British have Thatcher
The Nazis had Auschwitz The British have Long Kesh
The Nazis had the SS The British have the RUC
WELCOME TO NAZI OCCUPIED IRELAND"

The Gibraltar Three

As the coach moves into Belfast I couldn't help but be struck by the contrast between the surrounding hills and the city itself. Rolling green boxes in a decaying city. Some factory must be doing a roaring trade in barbed wire; it's everywhere - in all probability it's an English factory since jobs in Belfast are few and far between. The Divis flats - now half demolished - stand at the bottom of the Falls Rd. It's difficult to tell where the demolition site ends and the inhabited section begins. At the top of the tallest block there's an army post; through the corrugated iron you know that they're watching you watching them, it's a nerve-racking feeling and one that the Belfast people have long since incorporated into daily life.

We're taken on a guided tour around what's left of the Divis. Flats designed to split a community - it's the same story even on the new housing estates. Whole areas built without a single shop, without a community centre, or creche or play facilities; the idea being that if the community have nowhere to meet then they'll lose their solidarity with each other through enforced isolation. In the Divis the opposite happened; the community formed action groups to combat the lack of facilities. They squatted empty flats and turned them into an advice centre; a

playgroup; a skill centre; an education centre; a woman's group - all this without any official funding since the authorities refuse funding to any groups that are connected to Sein Fein. Being in West Belfast you can't help but be aware that Sein Fein are the only political group that are working in the community.

They work in the community because they live in it - unlike the ambitious politicians that we've come to know and loathe in British politics, they aren't separated from the people they are the people.

"We must grow tough but without ever losing our tenderness"

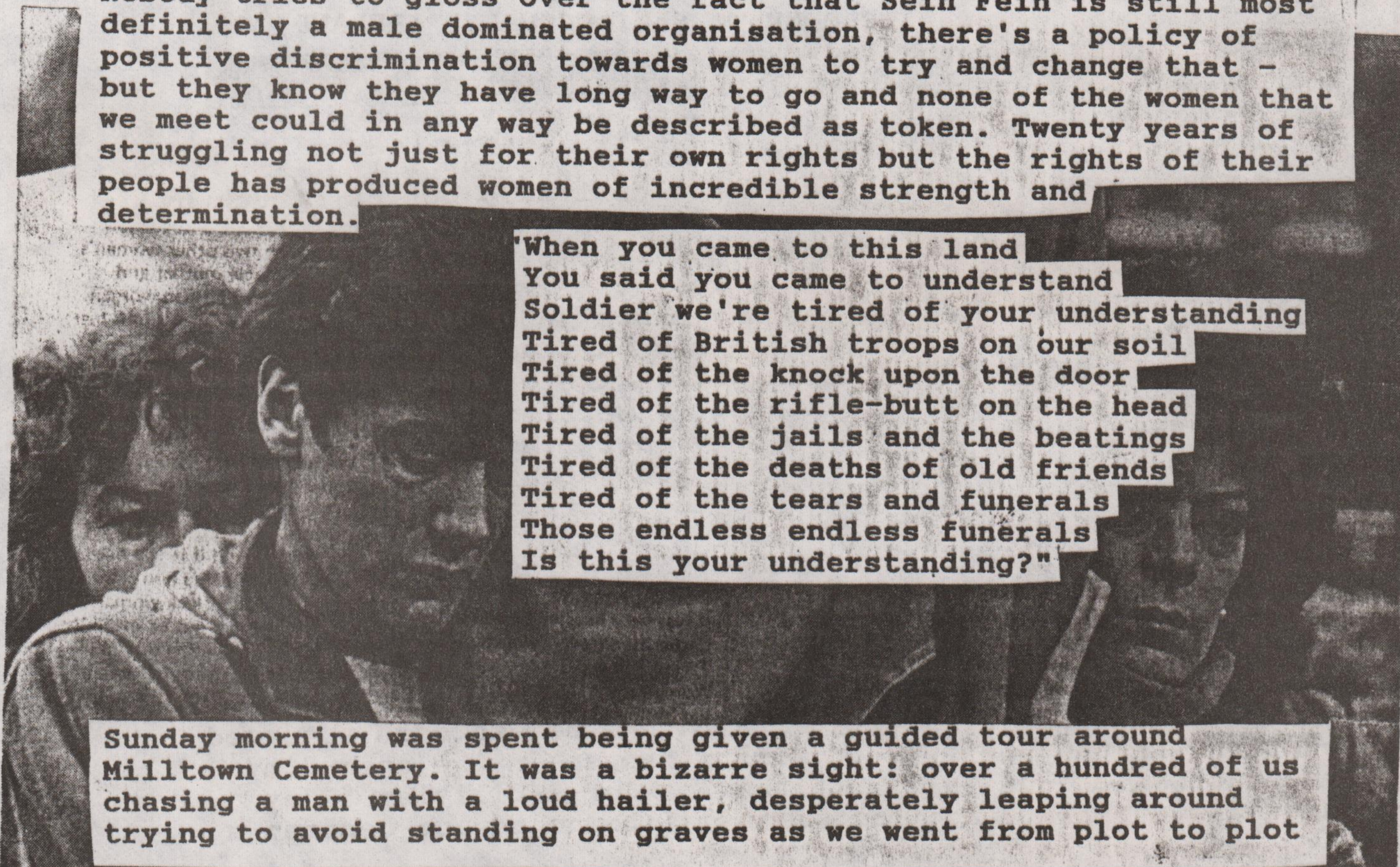
We meet with women representing the Sein Fein Women's Department, they make it clear that to them the war comes first. In the past they've been criticised by English middle class feminists who've said that they should be doing this and that to achieve "personal liberation"; they see it as rhetoric that doesn't apply to their lives - I can understand why. Whilst their country remains occupied by a hostile force there is no such thing as "personal freedom". Getting the British Army off their streets has to be their first priority. There's no such thing as friendly colonialism; whilst the army remains so does the war.

Again they work in the community. Recently they went door to door on the council estates explaining the importance of smear testing and making sure that every woman got access to one.

The abortion issue was raised. It's an uncomfortable topic for the Sein Fein Women because whilst fighting for a women's right to choose within the organisation they are reluctant to slag off Sein Feins stand on it, preferring to skirt around the issue by describing their policy towards it as "progressive".

"Progressive" isn't the word that I'd use to describe a policy that more or less denies a woman's right to choice, but in a community that was raised on catholicism it's an understandably touchy subject.

Nobody tries to gloss over the fact that Sein Fein is still most definitely a male dominated organisation, there's a policy of positive discrimination towards women to try and change that - but they know they have long way to go and none of the women that we meet could in any way be described as token. Twenty years of struggling not just for their own rights but the rights of their people has produced women of incredible strength and determination.



'When you came to this land
You said you came to understand
Soldier we're tired of your understanding
Tired of British troops on our soil
Tired of the knock upon the door
Tired of the rifle-butt on the head
Tired of the jails and the beatings
Tired of the deaths of old friends
Tired of the tears and funerals
Those endless endless funerals
Is this your understanding?"

Sunday morning was spent being given a guided tour around Milltown Cemetery. It was a bizarre sight: over a hundred of us chasing a man with a loud hailer, desperately leaping around trying to avoid standing on graves as we went from plot to plot

listening to the lives and deaths of those buried there. Children killed by plastic bullets; men and women who died from psychological as well as physical torture at the hands of the British State; Hunger strikers who died battling for the right to be recognised as prisoners of war; Freedom fighters who knew that "You can kill the revolutionaries but not the revolution." Graves and headstones are often defiled by the British Soldiers on the last night of their tour of duty; an exercise in rubbing salt into already deep wounds.

The soldiers vandalism isn't confined to the graveyard. Take a walk anywhere in West Belfast and every hundred yards or so you'll come across a wall mural. Colourful and well considered testaments to a peoples resistance they range from messages of solidarity with the ANC to extracts from Bobby Sands' writings. A favourite trick of "The Brits" is to chuck paint all over them and often.



I'd heard about the famous hospitality of the Irish, but it has to be experienced to be believed. (There's 85% unemployment amongst catholics in West Belfast. The jobs that are going are so sought after that the bosses get away with wages that amount to slave labour. One pound forty a hour is seen as an acceptable wage - and food prices aren't any lower than in England.) Moneys tight and it's very difficult for families to manage yet our hosts more or less refused to let us pay for anything. We were taken to republican clubs and offered liberal quantities of both Guinness and friendship everywhere we went. The only payment that they would accept in return is that we go back, "and tell them what's happening to the Irish people". Everyone you meet has suffered in some way in the war. Brotners and sisters killed; homes burnt out; houses torn apart by British troops because they suspect a fourteen year old boy of rioting; fathers and brothers in the notorious H Block; women who have been systematically humiliated by strip searching whilst serving sentences inflicted without a judge or jury; numerous instances of beatings by the troops and the RUC. It gets to the point where you stop being able to comprehend what people are saying to you... but you carry on listening and you wonder why these people trust you enough to share their experiences when the last contact with a Brit they had was a soldier screaming "Fenian Whore" or "Bastard Taig" at them.



The soldiers kept a low profile the weekend of the delegation. Low profile or not they were still there, slinking along the streets, guns pressed against shoulders that were young enough to still suffer from acne. Both the RUC and the Army lined the route of the Anti-Internment march. Guns and bullet proof vests reminding you that they were both protected and armed; it made you feel vulnerable. Knowing that you'd like to be allowed to live a little longer is no protection against a bullet. The feelings of vulnerability were replaced by emotional solidarity as supporters lining the streets clap as you pass.

At the rally we were blocked in by the crowds, the RUC tried to intimidate us by revving the engines of the armoured cars only inches away. In my case it worked... I would have shit myself if I'd have had a spare pair of trousers to change into. We were right next to the spot where the RUC murdered John Downes at

TIME TO GET OUT

point blank range four years ago....so you know it's not just a game.

"For those who believe: No explanation is necessary
For those who don't believe: No explanation is possible"

But to us it's just four days. But even in four days you see and hear enough to know that the conflict in Ireland isn't a case of religious feuding got out of hand. The British troops aren't there to keep the peace between two sectarian groups. Ireland has been a victim of Britain's military oppression for over eight hundred years. True, there wouldn't be instant peace if the troops were all shipped back to our shores tomorrow; but there will certainly never be a resolution to the Irish conflict whilst Britain tries to protect its own colonial interests with an armed presence.

As an Anarchist I have an inbuilt mistrust of all parties and groups claiming to represent the people, none the less I came away from Ireland both supporting Sinn Fein's policies within the community and seeing the necessity of having a political wing along with an armed one. The people who make up Sinn Fein have not been drawn into politics as a career move. They are men and women who have spent years of their lives in jails set up by the British state. They are the people whose houses have been torn apart for the sin of being born Catholic. They are involving themselves in the political arena because if they don't fight for their own communities nobody else will.

All those people who believe that the IRA is an isolated terrorist group should spend a few days in West Belfast. The IRA are not terrorists they are ordinary people who have resorted to arms. They are people who have been faced with the impossible choice of standing up and fighting as Britain's military might tries to crush their communities, or passively accepting the rule of a hostile state which makes laws that openly discriminate against them; which tortures; which kills children and tries to keep the Republican community firmly under the jack boot by using poverty as well as military force as a weapon.

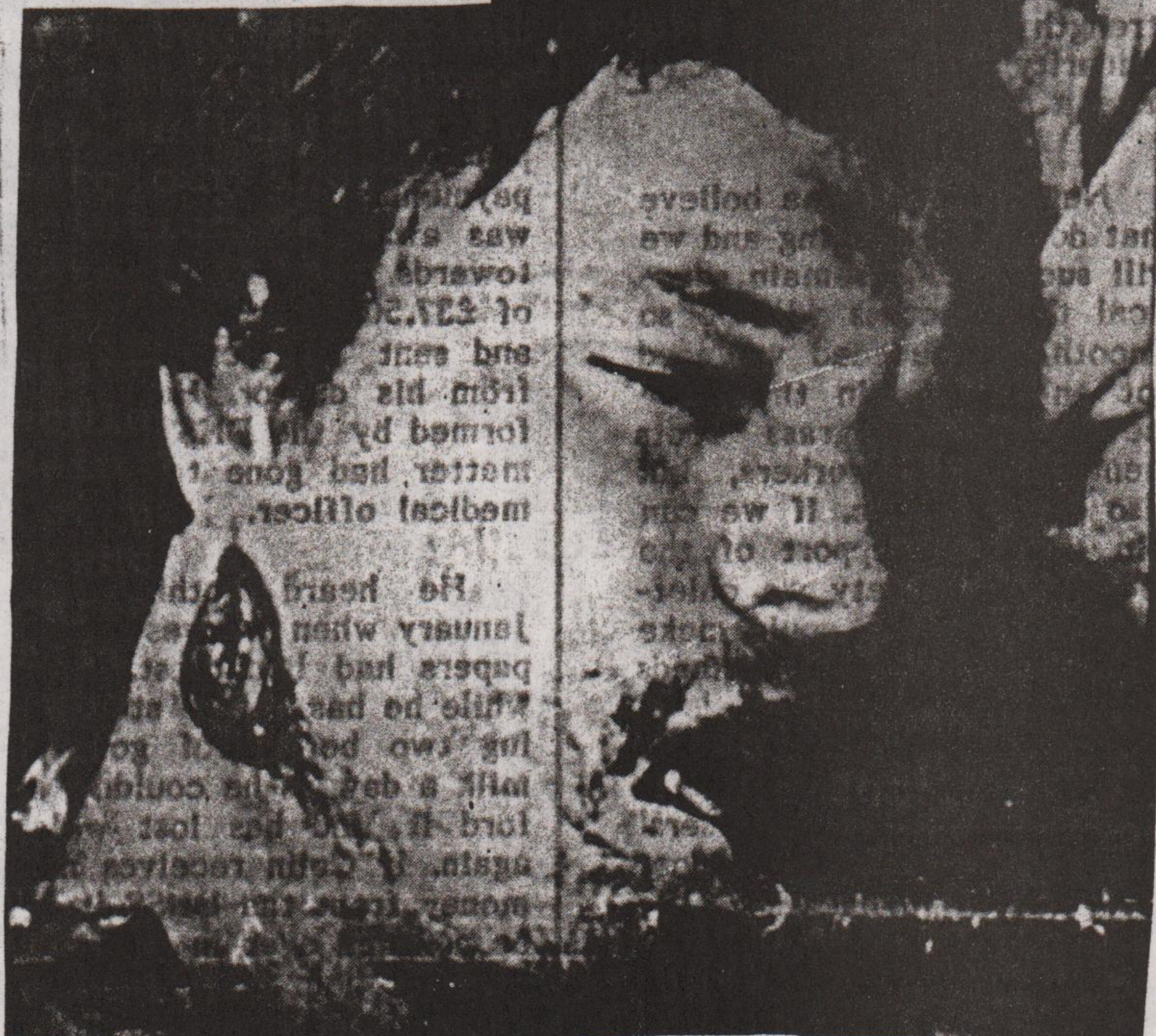
"And you dare to call me a terrorist, while you look down your gun..."

When I think of all the deeds that you have done.
You have plundered many nations, divided many lands.
You have terrorised their peoples, ruled with an iron hand.
And you brought this reign of terror to my land."

Ireland:



Plastic bullets Victim



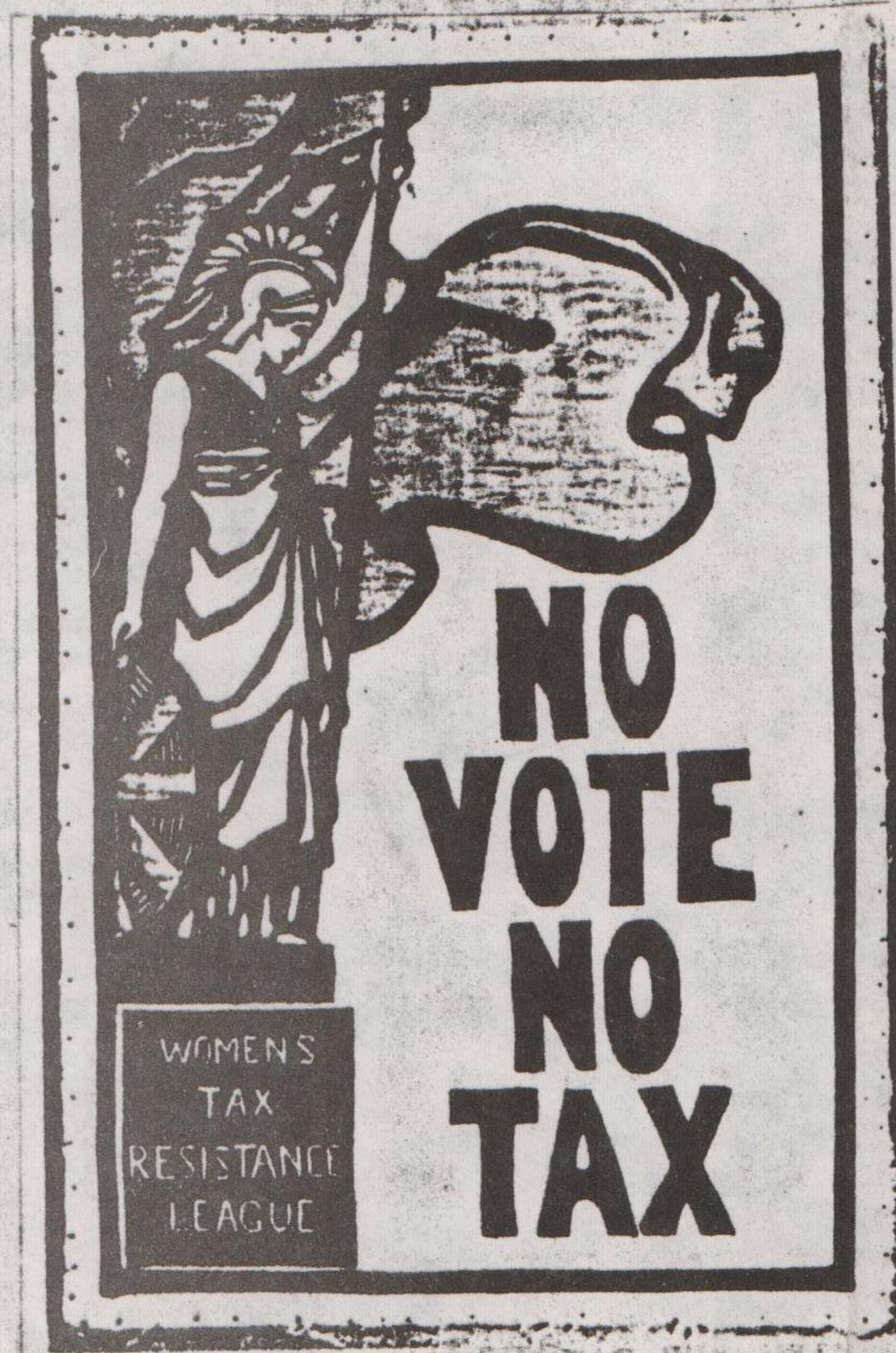
time to go

100 Years of Women's Banners

July and August saw an exhibition, "100 years of Women's Banners" at the Cooper Art Gallery in Barnsley. Textiles, and especially banners, have long been associated with protest, through the Trade Union movement of the 1930's, the Women's Suffrage campaign of the early 20th century, and more recently, the Women's peace movement and miners' support groups. Made for public demonstration, banners bring art to the front line, out of the gallery and onto the street.

The tradition of banner-carrying demonstrations had grown up from the trade union movement of the 1830's. Union banners were an obvious source of inspiration for the Suffragettes, and they adopted the same format of pictorial message combined with a slogan. But whereas trade union banners, since 1837, had nearly all come from the same source - George Tuthill's bannerworks - feminist banners were individual and varied creations. Trade union banners were silken, highly painted works, whereas suffrage banners daringly combined embroidery, paint, collage and raised work in original and equally well finished products. Decades of skill developed for ecclesiastical banners, altarcloths, drawing room drapery and smoking caps lie behind the banners. The use of embroidery was tactical in that it guaranteed the "womanliness" of the campaigners, countering anti-suffrage propaganda which said they were "large-handed, big-footed, flat-chested and thin-lipped". But the femininity evoked was presented as a source of strength, not weakness, banners depicting the achievements of well known women from Boadicea and Joan of Arc to Marie Curie and Mary Moser of the Royal Academy (and even Queen Victoria!).

Demonstrations were an important aspect of the Suffrage protest in the early 20th century. In 1906 Lady Frances Balfour described a demonstration organised by the WPSU to march on the House of Commons: "A huge concourse of working women met with their own flags and carrying their own babies." In 1908, 13,000 Suffragists marched from the Embankment to the Albert Hall. Each trade marched under its own banner; there were actresses, artists, shop assistants, factory workers, home makers and many more. Slogans on the banners included; "ask with courage", "Alliance and Defiance", "Learn & Live", "Dare to be Free" "Courage, Consistency, Success"



Janis Jefferies. *Home of the Brave*. 1986
20.3 x 20.3cm

10 days later a demo organised by the militant Suffragette was of a size never seen before or since - about 1/2 million converged on Hyde Park.

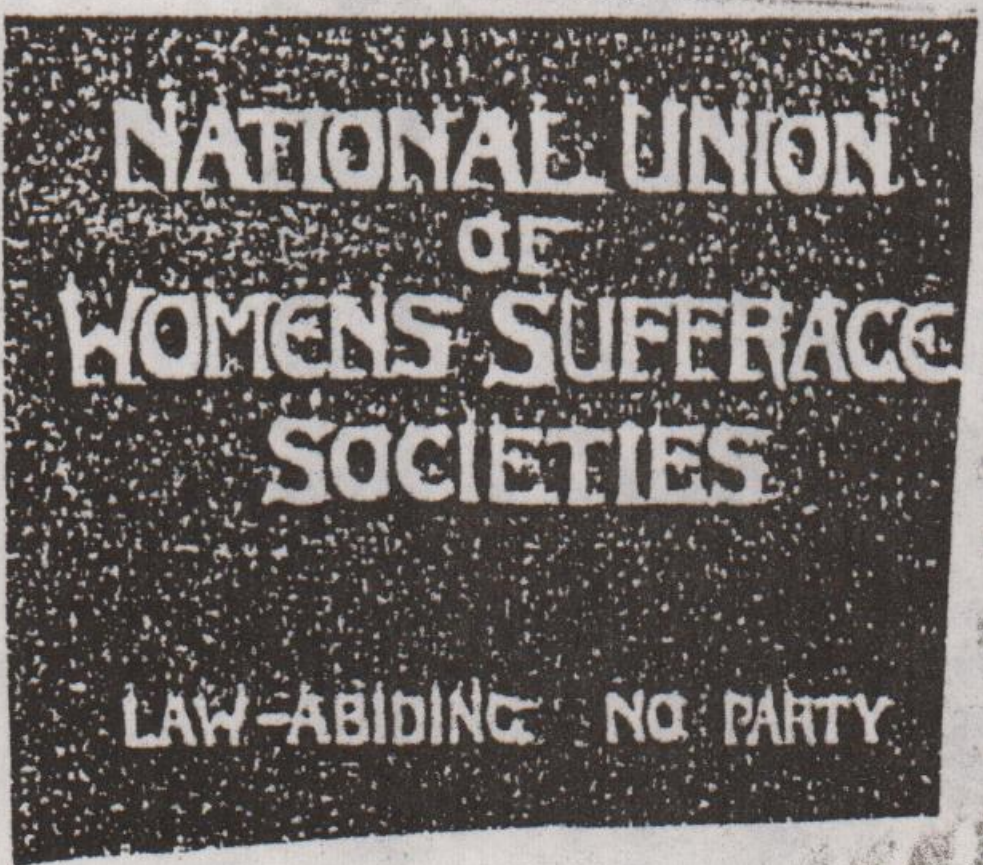
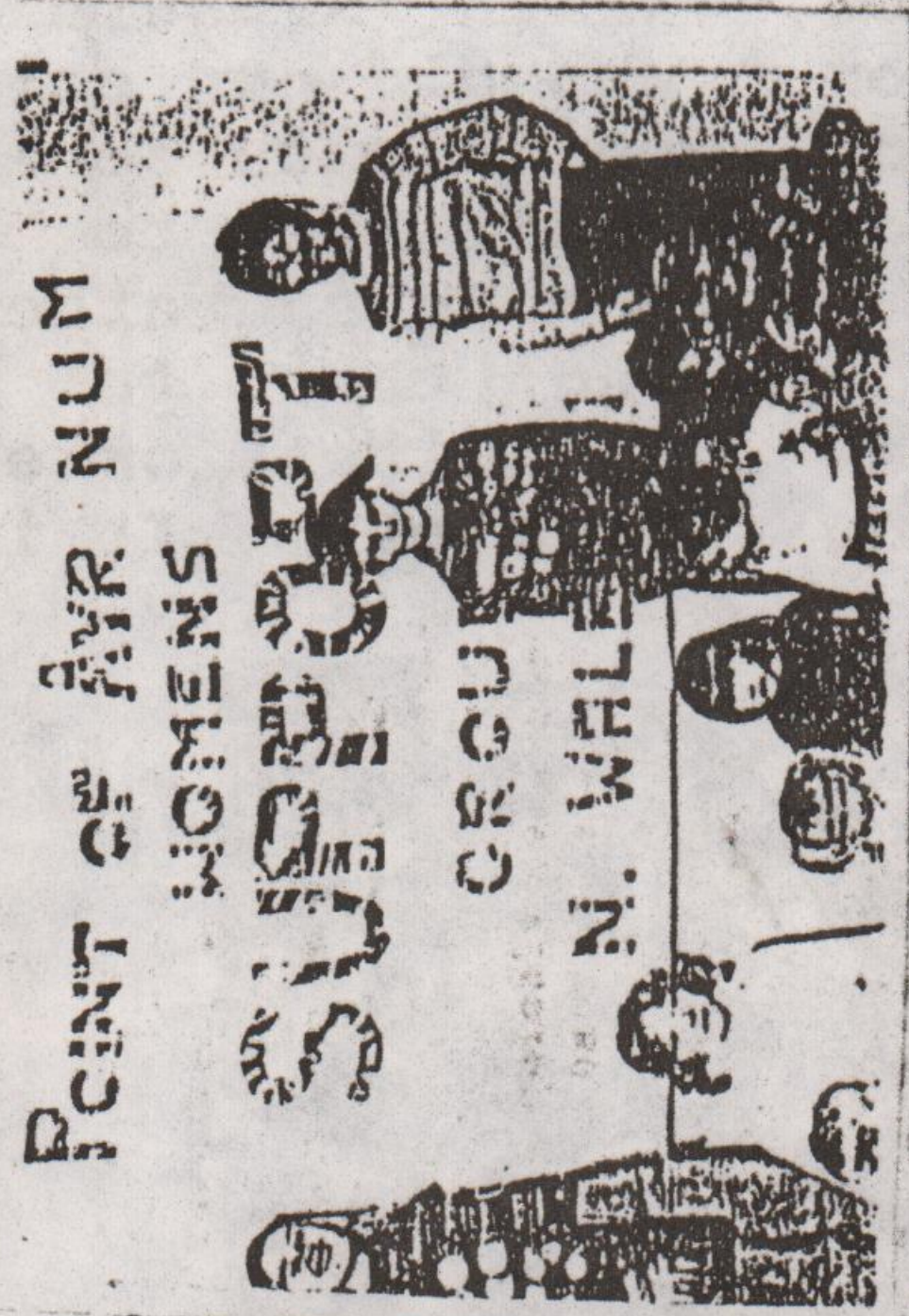
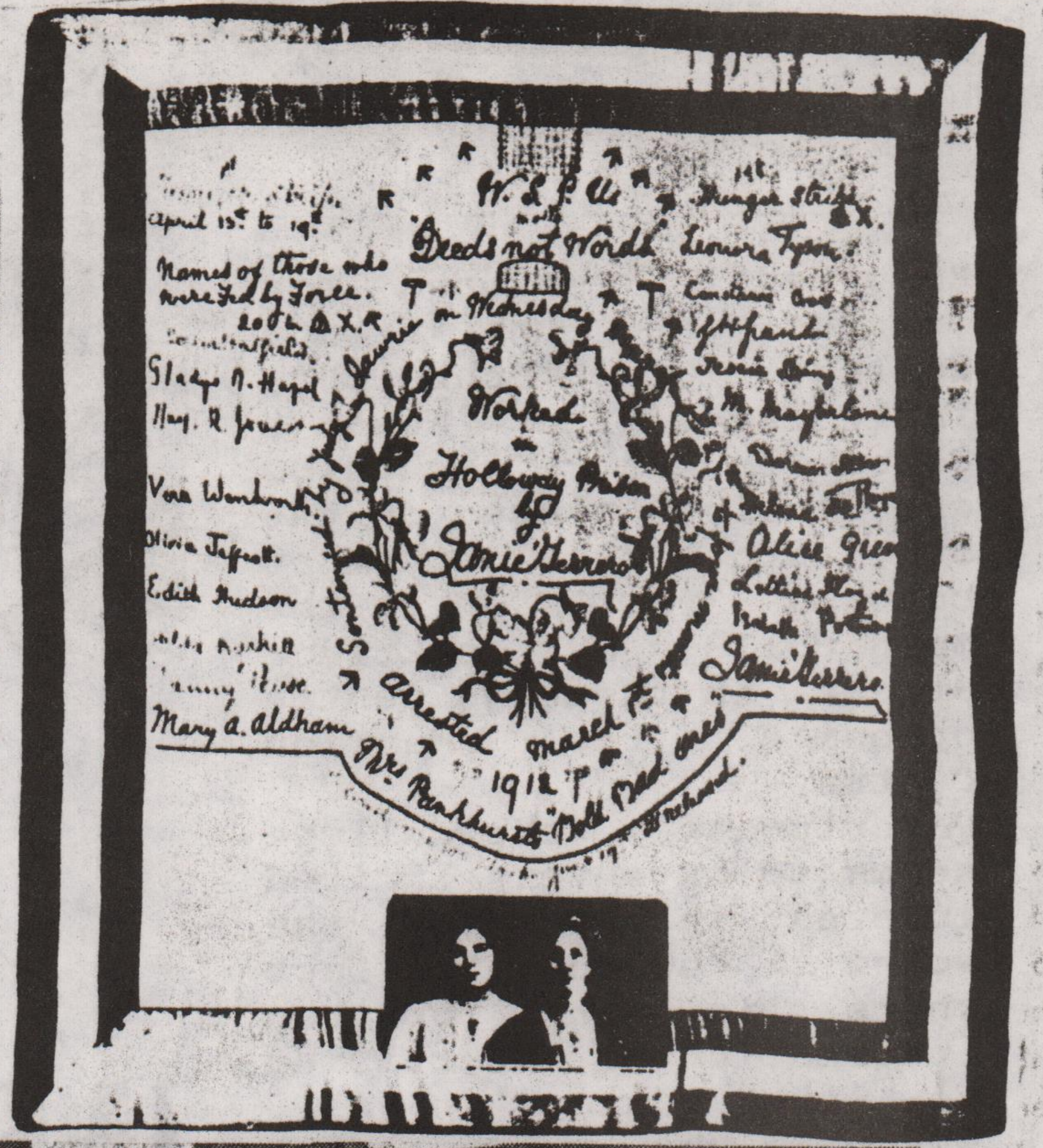
Not only banners but parasols too were embroidered in the Suffragette colours of green, purple and white, with the initials WPSU (Women's Political & Social Union) and carried on the marches.

Imprisoned and on hunger strike, the women embroidered handkerchiefs with their signatures, bringing together the tradition of political petition and protest with a female social tradition by which guests would embroider their signatures for their hostess to commemorate a visit. One suffrage hanky was embroidered by Janie Terreno in 1911 and bears a photograph of Mrs. Pankhurst and Christabel, the signatures of these forcibly fed, and some tiny violets.

Today, the artist Janie Jefferies echoes this work in her piece "Home of the Brave", depicting Greenham women with the slogan "You can't cage the future, on guard at Greenham 1981-86".

Colourful banners, using embroidery, applique and paint have been produced by the women's peace movement since the late 1970's to carry on marches, and during the '80's to attach to the perimeter fence at Greenham. Many of these combine traditional peace motifs, such as the dove, with feminist symbols. They also make links with the Suffrage banners through borrowed imagery and symbolic colour. Textiles are used deliberately in peace banners to emphasise the campaign against nuclear threat as women. The banners, along with giant webs of wool and mementoes declare a boundary between femininity and masculinity, life and death, nature and technology.

During 1984/5 alliances were made between women in the peace movement and women working in support of the Miners' Strike. "Forward Ever Backward Never", a banner made for the Aylesham Women's support group, the first such group to be formed during the strike, shows 3 of its members in front of the pithead at Snowdown Colliery where their husbands were employed - a pit now in the process of closing. It was first displayed at the 1986 Mines Not Missiles Festival in Kent. It has also been used at Wapping in support of the sacked printworkers.



Vertical text on the right edge of the page, partially obscured and difficult to read.

MECHANICS WOMEN'S WORK

Enrolment sessions for courses at the Kitson College Of Technology, including the Women's Course in motor mechanics are taking place on the 5th, 6th & 7th September between 2pm & 8pm at the main college on Cookridge Street in the town centre opposite the Merrion Centre.

Unfortunately the college seems to have very limited interest in promoting the women's course, in fact there is no written information or advertising for the course at all, which is why only a few women do the course each year. I have been to the college to try and find out details of the course and I got the same answer as I got last year: "We don't have any details of the course yet, but tell the women to come to enrol." It seems the way it works is that if enough women come along wanting to learn about car mechanics then they run a course. As you can doubt imagine the amount of thought and preparation put into the women's course is minimal. I get the impression that the teachers at the college who have taught male apprentices for centuries are quite frightened of anything new - especially teaching women!

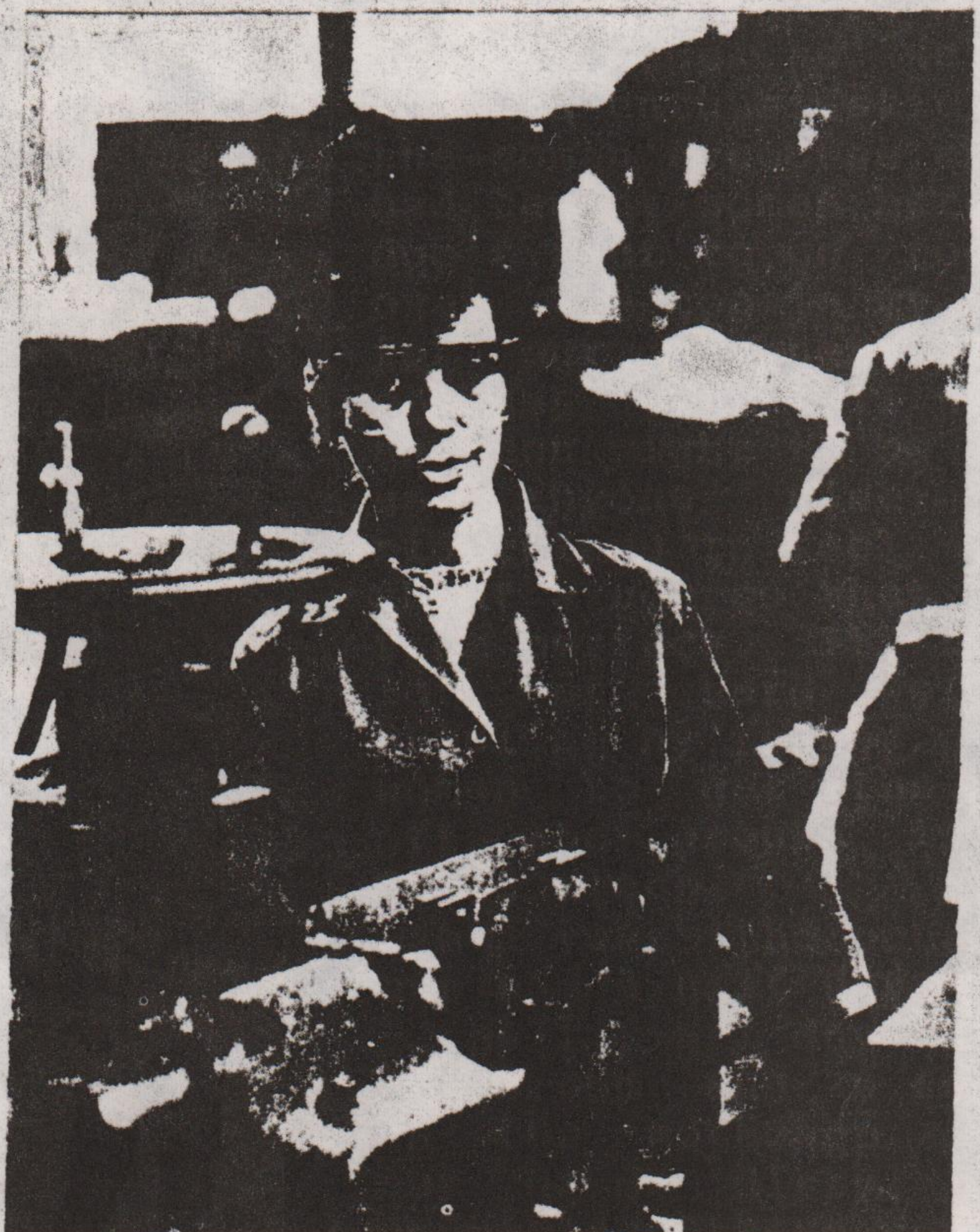
Unfortunately there are no women teachers at the college - plenty of women work in the office, library and kitchen but

none actually teaching. Having said all this however I do consider that we were relatively "lucky" last year - myself and about seven other women did the course with a



teacher who was as new to the college as we were, who was enthusiastic about the women's course and who had taught women before. I don't want to go too far over the top in my praise for our teacher or the course, after all we have as much right to be there as anyone else. It's ridiculous to feel "lucky" about a course that is far from perfect. It took a lot of hard work and hassling by some of the women to get the course off the ground in the first place.

Last year the course was one and a half days a week - half a day in a classroom and a full day in the workshop getting our hands dirty. It is possible to take your own vehicles to college to work on, which is useful. The women who did own cars or vans weren't rich so it was good for them to be able to do jobs rather than taking them to a garage and quite often getting ripped off. It is



MECHANICS CONT....

important for women to become involved in learning about what goes on under the bonnets of their vehicles; partly to stop those in positions of power - ie. men working in garages - exploiting us and maintaining the myth that only men can do that sort of work and also because it's enjoyable. Obviously not everyone

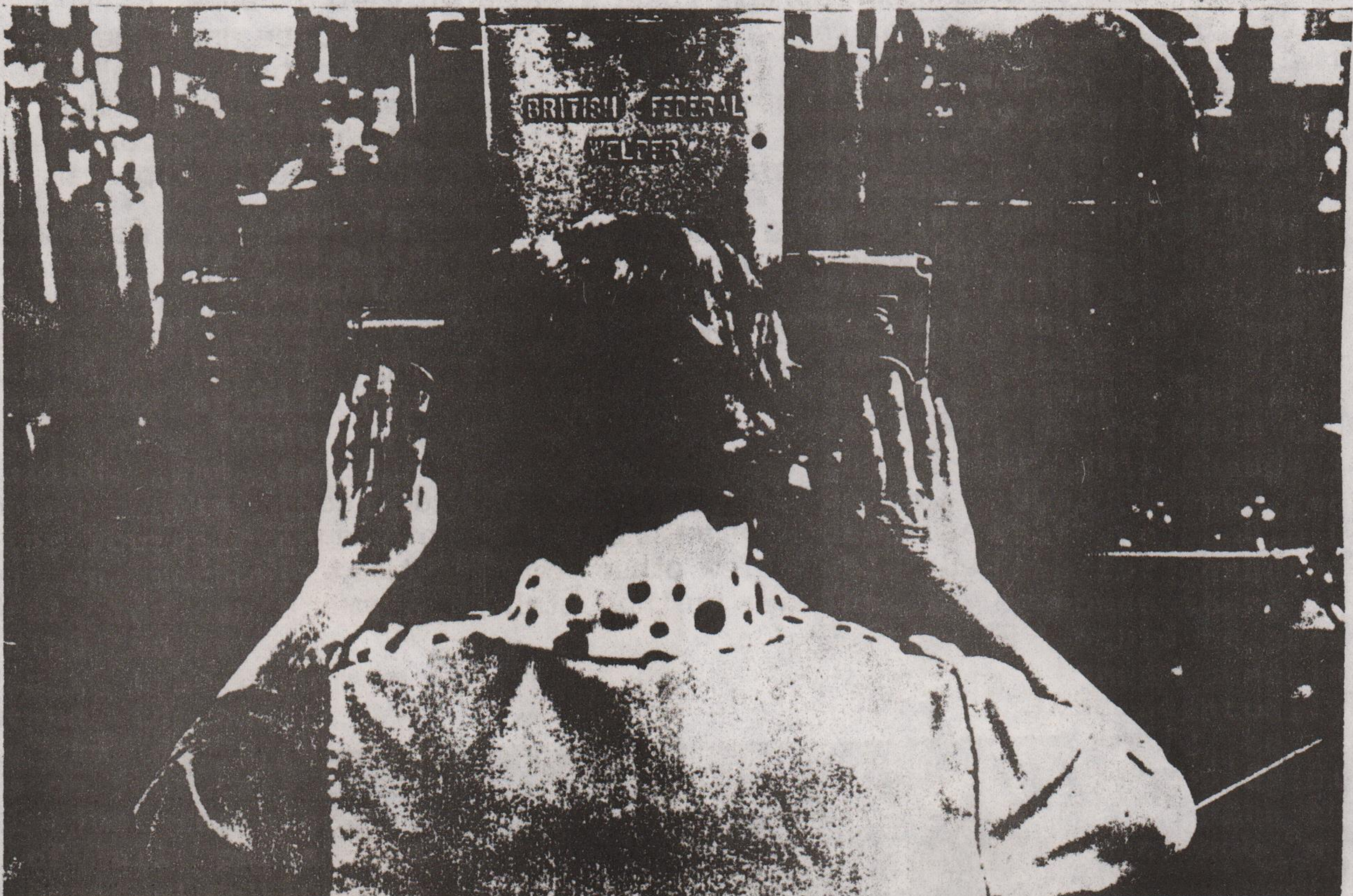
would enjoy it but I can only speak for myself when I say I found it fascinating. The feeling of being able to fix something yourself and not relying on mechanics is wonderful. You can't learn everything in a year but it doesn't take long to understand the basics and be able to do a simple service on your car. It is helpful just learning the names of all parts and their basic functions so that at least you have some idea of what might be wrong if you have to take your car to a garage.

Unfortunately there are no child-care facilities at Kitson College which is only to be expected I suppose in a male-

dominated place such as this. Last year one woman with a child had to make her own arrangements. The teacher we had last year (Ken Pearson) had quite a lot of ideas for this year's women's course and hopefully it will be much better. Even though I learnt a lot from the course and would love to see more women there this year I think it only fair to say that as regards women's studies, Kitson College leaves a lot to be desired. Having said that this will only change if we get down there and demand what we should be able to take for granted. The more women there the better. It would be great to see women teaching other women eventually, although it would be a brave woman who could sit in the staff-room with the delightful men who she

would have to endure as work-mates!

The phone number of Kitson College is Leeds 430381. Unfortunately I have no details about fees, only that it's free if you are unemployed.



HOW TO PUT TOGETHER A RESISTER!!

1) ARTICLES-This is the most taxing bit. First of all you need to get stimulated to write about something-whether it be something you've read in the paper, seen on TV, been involved with, etc. Once you've found your subject, sit down & put pen to paper. This seems to get easier the more you do it, & the more confident you get. Perhaps ring around a few other women involved in other issues, & get them to write about their 'pet' subject.

2) RESISTER COVER & WHATS ON PAGE-We decided to use the theme of a Resister per month, which involves picking your friends brains for resisting women, & borrowing books & pamphlets, & watching a lot of channel 4 programs! As for whats on, you find that you become obsessed with picking up leaflets for demos, reading local & national Anarchist or womens papers, etc. Leeds has also got a lefty weekly (LOP.), which makes life easier for us.

3) TYPING-once written, you need a typewriter to get your article legible. None of us can type 'properly', but we are lucky in that we've got access to a couple of electric typewriters-the print quality is much better than on non-electric ones. Perhaps there's a community centre housing coop, or willing friend near you with such facilities. OR, if you're really keen, either save up or throw a jumble sale & buy a small portable electric for about £130!

4) LAYING OUT-Now that the articles are readable, it needs presenting. We use photocopied pictures & patterns from books & magazines, or buy postcards & such like. Then the article & decoration is arranged on to a blank piece of A4, & stuck down. Pritt seems to be the best sort of glue, not only because it's the 'less sticky sticky stuff', but as it's not so runny & so doesn't stretch & wrinkle the paper! They're also easier to nick.

5) PRINTING-Now to make all your work into a paper. Originally, we didn't know of any cheap printing facilities, & so we ended up photocopying each issue. That worked out ok, as long as the photocopier was of decent quality-& they do vary a hell of a lot! It works out half the price if you can get your own paper. There are usually adult education centres which are easy to nick from, if not, you'll probably find that you won't be covering your costs.

We were then informed of a dirt cheap community print shop (council funded), in Manchester. And so once a month, you'll find a Resister carload heading 50 miles across the penines, all to print a Leeds anarchist feminist paper!! So once you've found your printer, you'll need someone trained in printing to help produce your work. Preferably, they'll be someone you've dragged along, otherwise they'll provide someone. Then, very basically, it's a matter of making up a paper or metal 'plate', of each page. With paper plates (which are cheaper), this is just a matter of photocopying your page onto special paper, & 'fixing' it by sending it through the photocopier again. The plate is then placed onto the appropriate roller, & wiped with 'etch'. Fanned (ie separated) paper is put into the paper tray, & it gets automatically fed through. Once one page has been printed the required number of times, then that plate is removed, & the 'blanket' roller (which is the roller which does not have the plate attached to it, is rubbed down with standard dry', to remove the print of the first plate. The second plate can now be put on the roller etc. Whether photocopying or printing, it'll take a good few hours to complete. So be prepared!!

6) COLLATING-ie, sorting the pages & stapling together. This is most definitely the most boring bit of the job!! It seems to take absolutely ages, so make it a social event & get loads of women round to reduce the workload! Good staplers are essential-we borrow one from a housing coop, & one of us actually 'owns' one! This is one of the advantages of using a printer or photocopier that can reproduce A3 material, all you have to do is fold it in half, & that makes it all that bit easier!!

And hey presto...one paper. Now to find someone to sell it! We didn't actually have much luck in Leeds, in terms of book or healthfood shops, so it's a matter of dragging them to women only events & festivals etc. We do sell them in a few other towns & cities, & that came about by writing to various Anarchist gps-to put them on their stalls, & to women centres & political book shops.

And that's about it really.....

STRONG, BLACK & SWEET:
NICARAGUAN WOMEN'S COFFEE BRIGADE.

This is an article we received at the July Anarchist conference for women.

by Sylvia Bernat

How do you get together a women's brigade? Forty five women prepared to leave their homes and families for forty days, to pick coffee in the first ever Nicaraguan women's coffee brigade.

Nicaragua may be a revolutionary country but it still has a thick crust of machismo. Confronting this problem is difficult. Marta Valle, organiser of the brigade who works with UNAG (small farmers + cattle ranchers union which recently opened a women's section) was responsible for recruiting the women. She had to face the old age problem of patriarchy. Every father or husband had to be approached individually in an attempt to make them understand that winning women's experience is important ideological work for the Revolution. Marta's main credential is that she is from the same background - a campesina - and knows how to approach the men.

The men put forward various arguments against the women joining the brigade: they are needed at home to help with the maize; they must look after the children and so on; while some say "no!"

But it happens, here we are, 58 women, 8 children, 1 man, 5 women internationalists in Matagalpa on the 28 November 1987. We are each presented with a nice purple scarf bearing the name of the brigade: "MARIA CASTIL BLANCO" (a woman who was killed by the Somoza National Guard). Everyone is excited! For some of the women it is the first time away from her family and they have had to argue fiercely for this freedom. Some have had to bring their children with them and one woman came with her husband.

There is lot of work to do, picking coffee from 5am to 5pm and even more work to do toward the emancipation of women. One of the aims of the Revolution is sexual equality and opportunity but only 50% of farming cooperatives have women members and in 1987, they make up only 6% of the total membership. Nevertheless, women are the main workers on the cooperatives because they work in the fields and the home. One example of the invisibility of women's work on the cooperatives and state farms is the long and arduous work carried out in the kitchens where women prepare food in crude conditions for all the workers and the families for comparatively low pay. The arrival of a Nicaraguan women's brigade brought recognition of the essential contribution made by the women in the kitchens to the success coffee harvest. The women in the brigade took turns, getting up at 1am to help to make the tortillas.

The experience of working in a women's brigade began the process of consciousness-raising as women talk together and exchange their life stories including their own experiences as "colaboradoras" of the Sandinista Front before - "The Triumph". (when about 30% of the Sandinista armed forces were women. At first, the women were inclined to diminish their own contributions as "the little jobs", and only gradually recognised the value of their part in the Triumph: acting as couriers, keeping safehouses, storing arms, providing food etc... It is important that the brigade is made up of a cross-section of women from cities, country, young, middle aged, single, mothers, grand mothers, all learning from and about each other.

As one of the 5 internationalist women, I share the intensity of the first week and excitement of getting to know each other. As well as discovering that picking coffee in the plantation is hard work. After the first few days, I feel so tired but it was great working in such beautiful countryside, singing, shouting slogans, smiling at each other and eating the rice, beans and tortillas.

There is one thing puzzling me, so I ask a member of AMNLAE (National Nicaraguan Women's Association): "there is a man on this brigade and I don't understand what he is doing here", she tells me: "we cannot ignore the men and they have the right to be here. He came because he didn't want to let his wife and daughter go alone to the brigade, so he joined too!". This was one of the many things I heard from some women. At first, I got really mad but eventually I cooled down, tried not to let my own feelings obstruct creative discussion. For instance when I hear some women talking about wife beating as something that happens to women because they want it!

Even going to the cooperative's party with all the brigade is difficult. The women of the cooperatives are prevented from coming to the party because they have to take care of the children. Our offer to organise a creche is turned down and we realise that the men don't want their women there because they want to enjoy themselves dancing and flirting with other women. It's hard to get the Nicaraguan women to discuss this. The response of the AMNLAE women is again "men have the right to be here". AMNLAE now have two different types of women: the feminist and the feminine. In the brigade, we have the feminine. They are really committed to helping women but will not challenge men. Fraternity is the word of the organisation. The motto "together in everything" takes the masculine form. Juntos en todo (rather juntas). Lea Guido, Secretary General of AMNLAE says in Barricada on March 20 1987: "basically, we are not talking about the opposition of the sexes, nor of revenge, which is impossible in any case. What we are proposing is a struggle. Logically, women will be more insistent because they are more aware of issues, but ours is not an attack on masculine sex. On the contrary, the women's movement will make it possible for both sexes to fulfill their potential. The women's movement means the emancipation of both sexes".

Each week, the brigade moved to a different cooperative, all in the northern region and everywhere we talk about the cooperative movement and the women's place in them in addition to picking coffee. Some time was spent talking with individual men, trying to get them to understand that women's greater involvement in the cooperative would increase production and therefore increase the family income. This is already recognised by the Sandinista Government because the participation of women in production is crucial to Nicaragua's development.

In the brigade, women talk a lot together, all the time there is happiness and many women share an incredible complicity. Personally I am amazed that I can get up at 4 o'clock in the morning, in good mood and walk to the coffee plantation singing !!

Tonight, we are leaving for a more dangerous area and the women are so proud to receive their guns: "we are the women of the Sandinista Front"; "for each bean picked, a contra crushed"; "adelante compañera, de la frontera no pasaran". This time, we don't sing in the lorry: it's cold, the road is dangerous (two other lorries were attacked by the contras last week on the same road), everyone is scared and we are on the alert, guns at the ready. Each night of the week, we took turns doing vigilante work. The weather was really awful; raining day and night. It was miserable for children sitting under a plastic sheet in the rain while their mothers pick coffee. It's important the women pick as much coffee as they can in order to go home to husbands or fathers and say "look how money I have earned". To make life more pleasant and enjoyable for the children, we internationalists and a few Nicaraguan women start a creche. (with the aid of foreign donation, the Government is beginning to construct buildings for creches on each cooperative and state farm).

Under the Land Reform Act, men and women can be granted property rights but in practice the vast majority of land goes to men. Whether a woman is single, separated or married, she is economically dependent on a man. A lot of time, the earnings of women and children go to the "head" of the family and he gets the privilege of being in charge of the money.

There is a lot of criticism about the women's situation here but in no way can I or anyone else be judgemental. Within this brigade, an enormous evolution took place in the life of the campesinas. These 58 women learn and share a lot and are very hopeful that they will recruit many more women for the women's brigade next year. The huge barriers between country women "campesina" and city women "obrera" have been broken down through this experience of living and working together. The campesinas are really encouraged by the opportunity to join the women's section of small farmers and cattle ranchers union "UNAG" and by the union's and Sandinista Government commitment to women's full participation. Some of these women are or will be presidents of their cooperatives, some women are determined to organise meetings of women on their cooperatives to get the issue of women's right taken seriously.

Everything is possible here because it's a revolutionary country. The war puts limitation on the availabilities of safe birth control, child-care, etc... Also it gives to women new opportunities because the men are mobilised into the army, so the women take over "men's" jobs like driving tractors. We will see what changes when the war finishes.

BUT the Revolution is like a hat, Sandino's hat. Men put it on for going out and when they return home, hang it up behind the door. Where can we find a revolution that has not required women to fight for their rights? WOMEN'S REVOLUTION.

In Nicaragua, the women may find another model of hat to symbolise their revolution and not a simple reproduction of a man's hat.

Even so Nicaragua is still an incredible country in so many ways. Accusations that this is a totalitarian country are a laugh. It is a country where you don't need to steal books because they're so cheap; where the military give you rides in jeeps and trucks; where women in the brigade love you for what you are and not for what you look like; where children play with a plastic detergent bottle on wooden wheels and look so happy and laugh so much and the same children kiss you so strongly saying "you have beautiful eyes"; where you feel so relaxed you don't notice time pass by; where you see market women, teachers, students, union workers, military all marching for freedom and peace; where you see red and black flags by the thousands everywhere; where everyone is so sure and determined to win the war even if they have to kill every fucking Contra; where the capacity for forgiveness is so great that in reality Contras when captured are given good treatment and help to rehabilitate as Nicaraguans; where the short montage preceding the news, on the TV includes a clip showing the police beating up women at Greenham.

The women in this brigade have one incredible skill which we (in the west) don't have - they know they are revolutionary - they knew why, how, where, and when and they are full of life and hope.

When I think about the women who live in the so called "1st world country" I recall some saying exactly the same things: if women get battered they ask for it or I hear them shouting against abortion. How many women in our "civilised" countries even after decades of "emancipation" still don't recognise their oppression and accept the status-quo? Here in Nicaragua, in 9 years of Revolution, there is a long way still to go but women are moving quickly.

CUIDADO, CUIDADO QUE CAMINA LA LUCHA FEMINISTA POR AMERICA LATINA
WATCH OUT, WATCH OUT THE FEMINIST STRUGGLE FOR LATIN AMERICA IS
ON THE ROAD

* I am a french/spanish white woman who worked for 40 days with the Nicaraguan women's brigade during the 1987/88 coffee harvest. As there was no Nicaraguan women's technicians available to make a video film of the brigade I was engaged by the UNAG to do it. Various technical hitches prevented the film being made but I took many slides and photographs.

**A women's battalion from the army was mobilised to pick coffee in 1982 but there was no emphasis on discussion groups to raise awareness of the exploitation of women.

*** Thanks to Joan Smith for help to translation.

Managua, Nicaragua Libre FEB 88.

IF I DID'T LIVE

* Gioconda Belli*

If I didn't live in a country besieged
That surrounded by death gives us life
If I didn't believe in the power of thought
And thought it only useful
To exercise my brain.

If I didn't wake up each morning
With something less
Something that no longer is :
- soap, candlesticks, milk -
I will have to invent for myself
even light

And grow content
With the primitive and good
That there is in each house
In each heart.

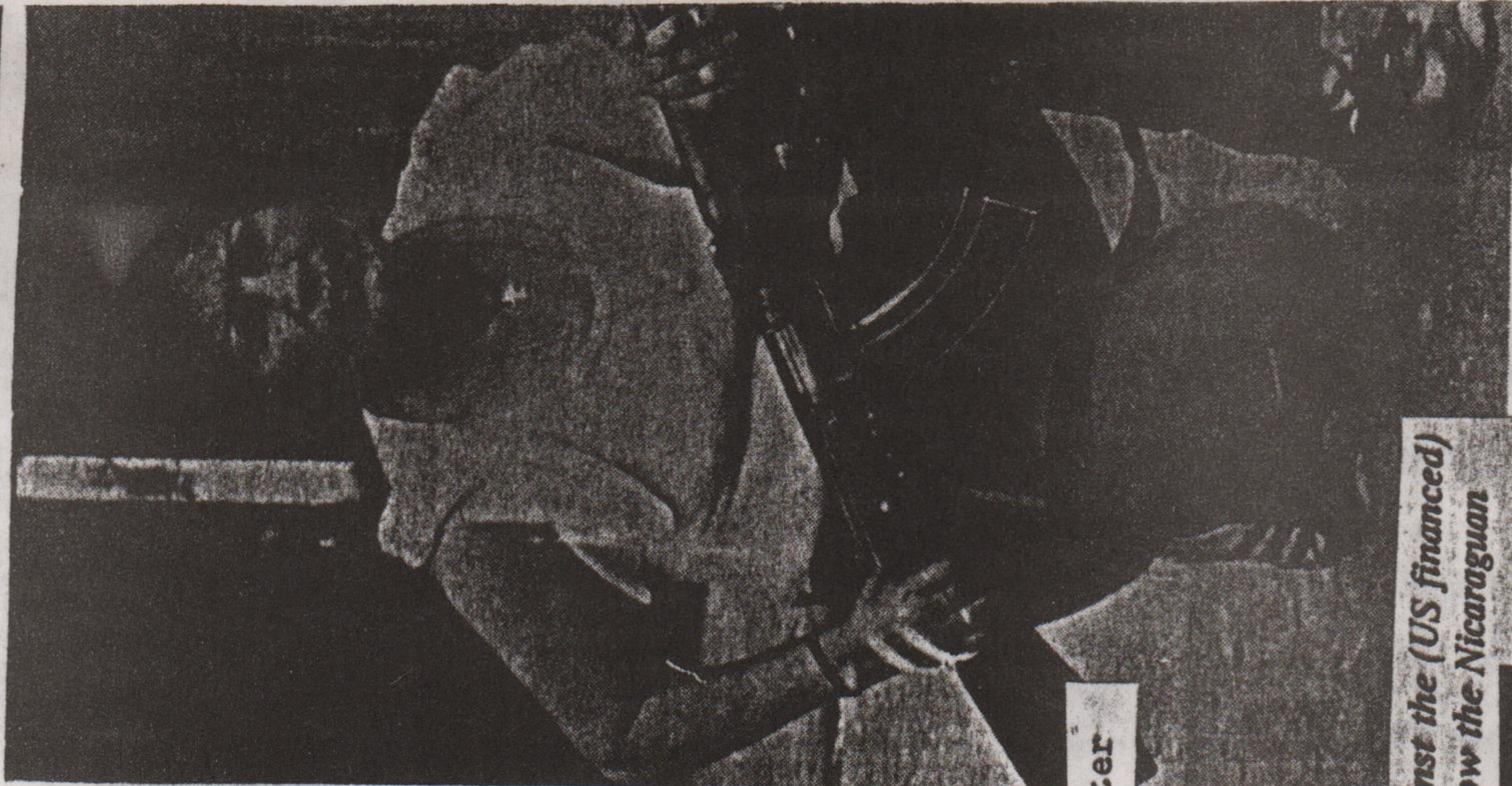
If I didn't walk every day
On the razoredge that separates
clouds
From heaven and hell
And were a linen woman
In a starched-and-ironed country,
A developed one
Full of everything we lack here....

Surely
I would have passed by your side
Without looking at you
Without your seeing me.

Surely
Neither you
Nor I
Would be sitting here now
Looking at the other
Caressing
Time
As a child

Tr : Priscilla Hunter

Woman guarding tobacco industry against the (US financed)
controls who are attempting to overthrow the Nicaraguan
government.



Women axe section 28

WE ARE A NEW GROUP, CREATED FROM THE PREVIOUS WOMEN'S SECTION OF THE NORTH WEST CAMPAIGN FOR LESBIAN AND GAY EQUALITY. WE LEFT THE CAMPAIGN BECAUSE WE WANTED TO ORGANISE SEPARATELY AS WOMEN AND TO EXPAND OUR AIMS BEYOND FIGHTING SECTION 28.

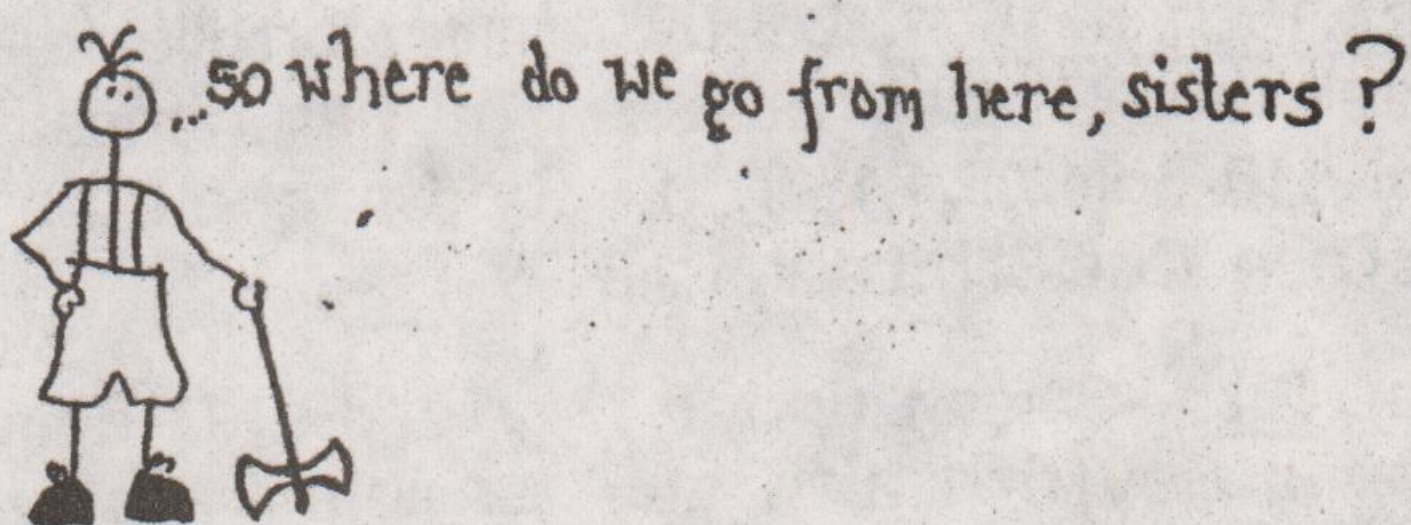


WE FEEL THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO BUILD ON THE ENERGY AND STRENGTH THAT WAS CREATED FROM THE ANGER AGAINST SECTION 28.

NOW WE WANT TO MAXIMISE ON THE POWER WE HAVE AS WOMEN, WHICH WAS RESTRICTED WITHIN A MIXED CAMPAIGN.

WE SEE OURSELVES AS PART OF A MOVEMENT WHICH EVOLVED INITIALLY FROM FIGHTING AGAINST THE CLAUSE.

ONLY UNITY CAN GIVE THIS MOVEMENT DIRECTION.



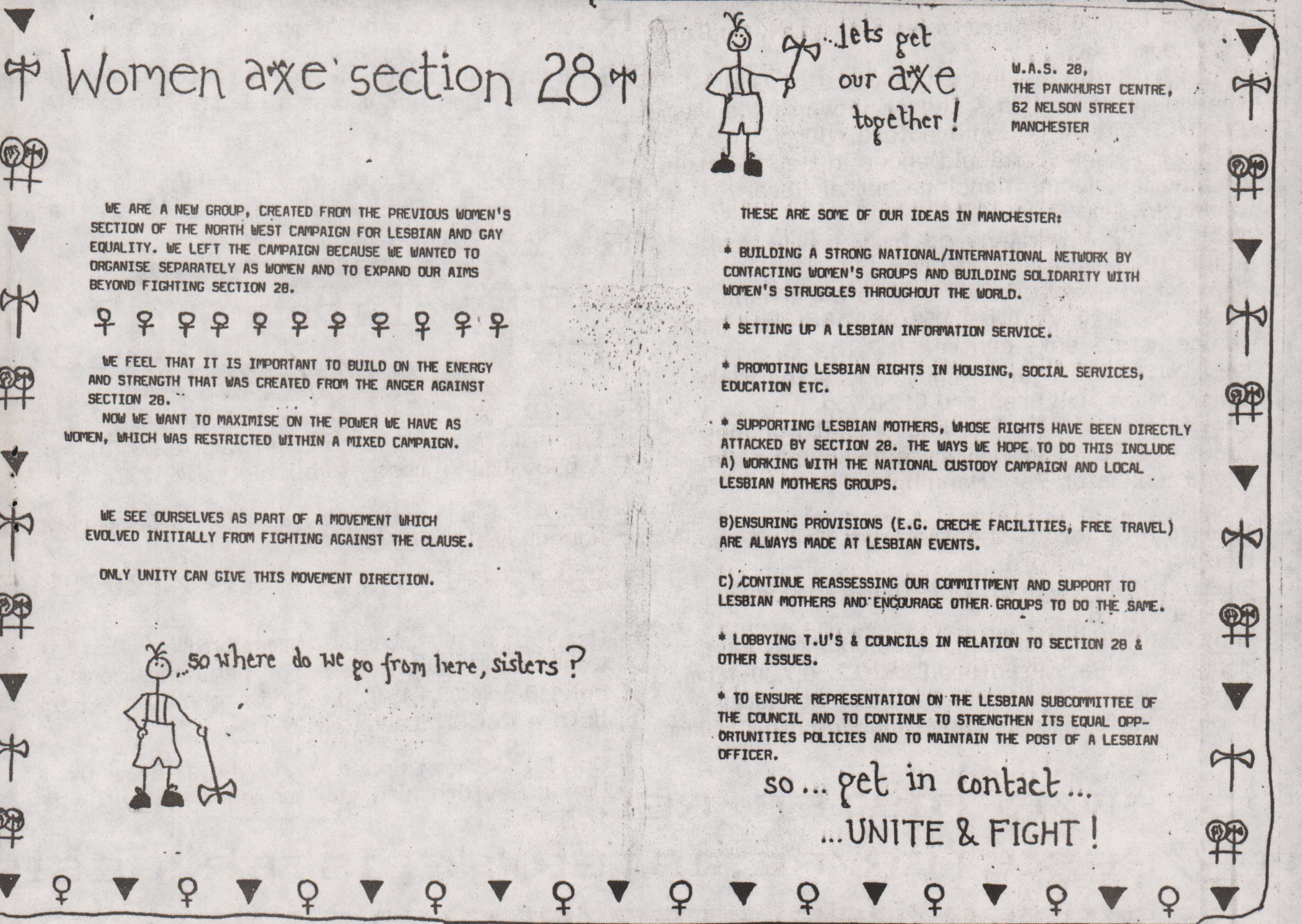
lets get
our axe
together!

W.A.S. 28,
THE PANKHURST CENTRE,
62 NELSON STREET
MANCHESTER

THESE ARE SOME OF OUR IDEAS IN MANCHESTER:

- * BUILDING A STRONG NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL NETWORK BY CONTACTING WOMEN'S GROUPS AND BUILDING SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN'S STRUGGLES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.
- * SETTING UP A LESBIAN INFORMATION SERVICE.
- * PROMOTING LESBIAN RIGHTS IN HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES, EDUCATION ETC.
- * SUPPORTING LESBIAN MOTHERS, WHOSE RIGHTS HAVE BEEN DIRECTLY ATTACKED BY SECTION 28. THE WAYS WE HOPE TO DO THIS INCLUDE
A) WORKING WITH THE NATIONAL CUSTODY CAMPAIGN AND LOCAL LESBIAN MOTHERS GROUPS.
B) ENSURING PROVISIONS (E.G. CRECHE FACILITIES, FREE TRAVEL) ARE ALWAYS MADE AT LESBIAN EVENTS.
C) CONTINUE REASSESSING OUR COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT TO LESBIAN MOTHERS AND ENCOURAGE OTHER GROUPS TO DO THE SAME.
- * LOBBYING T.U'S & COUNCILS IN RELATION TO SECTION 28 & OTHER ISSUES.
- * TO ENSURE REPRESENTATION ON THE LESBIAN SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL AND TO CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN ITS EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICIES AND TO MAINTAIN THE POST OF A LESBIAN OFFICER.

so ... get in contact ...
... UNITE & FIGHT !



whats on

SEPTEMBER

Sept.22nd-Activate '88;a disability cabaret event.Afternoon & evening.Including:Isobel

Ward(singer)& Ellen Wilkie(poet/singer),9t. Georges Hall,Bradford.£1/£2.50.2pm & 7.30pm.

Sept.22nd-'Shalom'.An evening of Jewish music & dance,featuring:Shvester-(female folk gp). £3/£2.Midland Hotel.8pm.

Sept.22nd.-Video Vera screening & social Videos,discussion & food,6.30pm.The Pavilion, Woodhouse Lane,Leeds.Childcare & signers available if required.

Sept.23rd-Single Bass,& Skeeta(Nottingham womens band.)Marquee,Manningham park,Bradford £3/£2.9pm-1am.

Sept.23rd-Billy Jenkins & the voice of God,& the House of spirits & the fabulous dirt sister £4.50/£3.50.queens Hall,Bradford.7.30pm.

Sept.23rd-Nahid Siddiqui.Dancer in Kathak style of classical Indian dancing.Central library theatre.7.30pm.£3.50/£2.50.

Sept.23rd-Shalawambe,band from Zambia.West Indian Centre,Leeds.£4/£3.8pm.

Sept.24th-Barbara Thompsons paraphernalia. Jazz,funk & fusion.8pm.£3.50/£2.50.Burnley mechanics arts & ents centre.

Sept.24th-Irish Ceilidh night.June & the Night Owls.queens Hall,Bradford.£1.50/75p.

Sept.24th-Under 8's Fun Factory,with puppet shows,Rosy the clown,storytelling,singing,play area.Free.Lister Park,Manningham Lane,Bradford 12-5pm.

Sept.24th-Childrens theatre from Mimika.Free. Lister Park,Bradford.

Sept.24th & 25th-Arts & craft market.Lister Park,Bradford

Sept.25th-Kit Hollerbach,comedienne.Marquee, Manningham Park,Bradford.£3.50/£2.50.7.30-12pm.

Sept.25th-Bradford Festival finale at Lister Park.Stalls,food,music,dance,juggling,etc.10.30am

August-Sept.30th-Oakwell investigated.Children art exhibition,Oakwell Hall,nr.Birstall.

August-October 2nd-'City of our Child'.Miriam Lords work with Bradford children & the community.1921-68.Cartwright Hall,Lister Park,Brad.

Sept.3rd-Oct.1st-'Angels & Fishwives'Sculpture by Michelle Leon & painting by Emma Bolland.

Huddersfield art gallery,Princess Alexandra

Sept.3rd-Oct.1st-Sculptures by Sophie Ryder.St Pauls Gallery,Leeds.

Sept.6th onwards-'Light of Torch'exhibition. Five women artists & photographers.Impressions Gallery,17 Colliergate,York.

Sept.8th-Oct.4th-Ceramics exhibition by Karin Hesseberg.At th Craft centre & design gallery under Leeds city art gallery.

Sept.16th-25th-Photographic exhibition by local Bradford photographer Mary Waters.St.Augustines centre,Otley Rd.Free.

Sept.17th-Nov.6th-'Special Effects'.An exhibition of jewelry made from all sorts of materials.Cartwright Hall,Bradford.Free.

Sept.19th-24th-'Pinholes in the Park'.Workshops in Lister Park,Bradford,with Mabel Odyssey. Take & process your own pinhole photos.Free.

Sept.-Dec.-Opening exhibition by Patricia Forbes of Leeds(printmaker),at the Gate Gallery,Springfield Mill,Norman RD,Denby Dale.

REGULAR EVENTS

Every other Thursday, from Aug 11th - Women's disco at Checkpoint, Bradford.

Every Thursday - Women's football, Woodhouse Moor. Contact Women's Centre for exact times.

Thursdays - Quatsh (gay/straight disco) alternates with women only discos, at the Phono, Merrion Centre, Leeds.

OCTOBER

Oct.4th.-WAC meeting.Civic Hall,7.45pm. Signers,transport for women with disabilities, & babysitting money available.Tel.421232.

Oct.7th.-Chris Williamson & Tret fure.Astoria, Roundhay Rd,Leeds.£5/£4.50.

Oct.15th & 16th.-Leeds Animation Workshop weekend.A 2 day course for beginners.Women only.10-5pm.£5/£15/£30.Food.Creche.Please book before Oct.8th.Leeds 484997.

Oct.15th.-Smash upper Heyford.CND demo at Upper Heyford airbase.Assemble main gate 12.30pm.