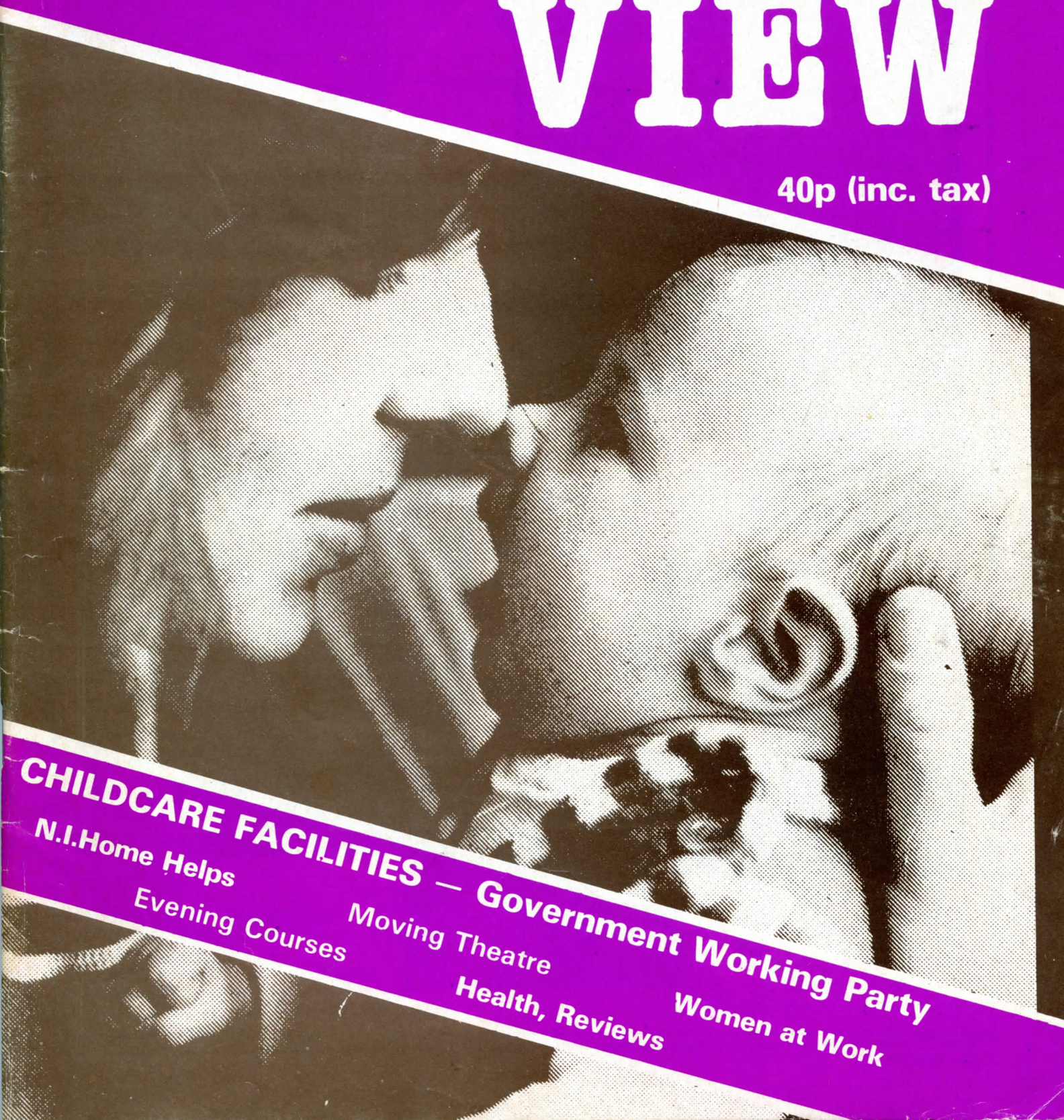


No. 7 Autumn/Winter 1981

Ireland's Current
Affairs Quarterly

WOMENS VIEW

40p (inc. tax)



CHILDCARE FACILITIES — Government Working Party
N.I. Home Helps
Evening Courses
Moving Theatre
Health, Reviews
Women at Work

WOMEN IN THE NEWS



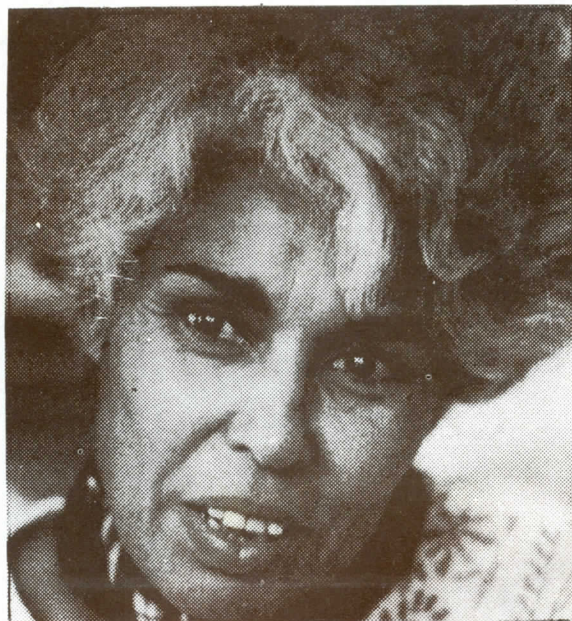
The October General Election in Greece brought the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) to power with 48% of the votes. Greek actress and singer MELINA MERCOURI (first elected to parliament in 1977) will head the Cultural and Science Ministry in the new government.



LIZ McMANUS, Bray Councillor for SFWP was one of the prizewinners of the Hennessy Literary Awards for new Irish writers. This year all of the awards went to women. Other prizewinners were Catherine Coakley, Gabrielle Warnock and Briege Duffaud.



One of the candidates in the local government bye-election for North Belfast in December is MARGARET McNULTY. A native of the area and the mother of two young boys, Margaret is a voluntary community worker in the North Queen Street/New Lodge area of Belfast and is a candidate for Workers Party Republican Clubs.



EGYPTIAN women's rights campaigner NAWAL EL SAADAWI was arrested on 3 September in Cairo in Sadat's sweep against the left. She is still in prison.

Nawal, a psychiatrist, is internationally known for her work and writings in defence of the rights of arab women, especially their sexuality.

Womens View

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FOYLE DAY CARE CENTRE

AFTER almost four years of struggle and dogged determination, the Foyle Day Care Centre in Derry opened its doors to nine children, all under five.

Like most pre-school projects in Ireland, the centre had an uphill battle to be established and its success is due to the hard work put in by its voluntary committee.

Derry has a long tradition of working mothers and, despite growing unemployment, the Centre is badly needed. As far back as 1978 the Department of Health and Social Services agreed the proposal for a Centre but public spending restrictions prevented any further progress.

In 1980, the Foyle Day Care Association was formed and it registered as a charity some time later. Grants from a variety of trusts and from the EOC enabled the hunt for premises to begin and a home for the project was found in the Clooney Terrace Family Centre.

The Centre is staffed by five workers sponsored under the Action for Community Employment Scheme and eventually 20 children will be catered for. Charges are assessed on a sliding scale based on income, and include food and laundry costs.

For single parents with an income under the Family Income Supplement level, as little as £6 per child per week is charged, whereas charges for a child of working parents are £5 per day.

The opening of the Foyle Centre is to be welcomed, not only as an amenity for Derry parents and children, but as a milestone in the development of childcare facilities in the North.

Additional information may

be obtained from Cathy Martin, Clooney Family Centre, Clooney Terrace, Waterside, Derry.



OMAGH WOMEN'S CENTRE

A Women's Centre has opened in Omagh, Co. Tyrone. The Centre aims to advise women about their rights on any specific topic, such as social security, battered women, separation, equal opportunities, sex discrimination or any other problem.

Meetings will be held monthly and guest speakers will be invited to give talks on different topics. It is hoped that this will lead to the setting up of a Women's Group, which will be able to discuss and highlight certain problems which women have in the area and hopefully do something about them.

The Centre is based at the Welfare Rights Office, Community Development Centre, 1 Castle Street, Omagh. Telephone:44712.

The Centre is open every Tuesday from 2.00pm to 5.00pm and every Wednesday between 7.30pm and 9.30pm.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Women's Group can contact Jean Graydon at the above address or telephone number.

FERMANAGH GROUP

FERMANAGH's Women's Action Group has been formed to discuss and take action on such issues as birth induction, facilities for mothers rearing children like creche facilities at the workplace, nursery school and playgroup provisions and on women's rights in general.

Many women today feel that there are a lot of things in society which they would like to change but feel powerless to act because they fear victimisation, or just haven't the confidence or courage to speak out.

At the first meeting, held in the Fermanagh College of Further Education, there were many issues raised by the two guest speakers from the Northern Ireland Women's Aid Federation, Eileen Evason and Cathy Harkin.

The most important issue raised was the birth induction practices at the Erne Hospital. Many women have complained about this method and that they were not given any choice. Every woman must have the right to choose between natural birth or induction.

The Action Group want to see more facilities provided for expectant mothers both before and after their pregnancy as this would reduce the risk of miscarriages and still births and also protect the health of the mother. Specialist care for an expectant mother during her pregnancy is very important for both the unborn child and the mother as well.

Another cause for concern is the Tory Government's attitude to women's rights at work. They are introducing new laws which effect women's legal entitlement to return to work after their pregnancy and will also effect their rights to pay when on maternity leave.

The Women's Action Group will be discussing all these issues and many more. If you are interested in promoting women's rights and wish to

From the Fermanagh Worker, the monthly publication of the Trades Council.

attend the Group's meetings, then contact The Secretary, c/o Castle Barracks, Enniskillen.

TURF LODGE VICTORY

WOMEN of Turf Lodge won a major victory in the long-running campaign for the demolition of the rat-infested high-rise blocks of flats on the West Belfast estate.

The Housing Executive agreed to reduce the rents of remaining tenants by between £4 and £5, a cut of some 50%, creating an historic precedent for other estates facing demolition.

The demand for demolition began some six years ago, but it was the suicide of Rosie Nolan in 1979 which spurred on the women of the area to organise themselves in the Flats and Maisonettes Action Committee.

According to Cathy Thibodeau, a member of the committee, 110 families still live in the high-rise blocks. The rats, she said, are still as bad as ever, and the committee are aware of 11 current cases of dysentery.

The Housing Executive admits that since the decision to demolish the flats maintenance has come to a halt.

The Housing Executive's climb down on rents followed an Executive Board meeting picketed by about 15 of the Turf Lodge women.



LAWS USED AGAINST WOMEN

LEGAL restrictions on workers lifting weights above a certain level do not discriminate against women, says the Employment Equality Agency's review of the regulations.

But since these regulations have been used to stop women getting access to better paid jobs or greater opportunities at work, they suggest various ways such obstacles can be overcome.

The Agency told Labour Minister Liam Kavanagh that provision of mechanical aids to lifting and training in their use should be made compulsory by any new laws. New laws may also require frequent medical checks on workers who lift heavy weights and exemptions for all pregnant women.

The Agency made its report at a special meeting with Liam Kavanagh and Barry Desmond, Minister of State at the Department of Finance to explain why the Agency needs direct consultation with the Government about policy and financing to tackle discrimination at work more actively.

Since the Coalition Government programme states both the Agency and the Equality Officers 'will be given the necessary resources to take a more active role in eliminating discrimination both direct and indirect...' Sylvia Meehan and Agency staff sent along to spell out just what these necessary resources are.

Right now the Agency is coping with inadequate facilities and accommodation as a subsection of the Department of Labour. The Equality Agency sees direct access to the Government as vital to discharge its legal duties to campaign for equality at work.

RAILWAY WOMEN

A successful equal pay claim won six women railway crossing keepers £42,000 from the Northern Ireland Railways at an industrial tribunal in September.

The railway has agreed to pay the full hourly rate for the job in the future and to instal plumbing and electricity in the two houses without them. And any female resident keeper who hasn't submitted an equal pay claim yet has a verbal undertaking from the railways to get the same offer.

The six women who all live along the railway line between Derry and Coleraine, were helped in their claim by the Northern Ireland Equal Opportunities Commission. (See *Womens View* No. 5 for background to the claim.)

EOC IN THE LURCH

PENNY-pinching government and right-wing business interests have come under strong attack from the Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement (NIWRM) for the failure to fund the EOC at a reasonable level.

The EOC has been left in a position of being unable to fulfil its statutory role in ensuring equality even within the framework of existing legislation.

INTO OFFICIAL

THE Irish National Teachers' Organisation appointed its first full-time woman official. This is a somewhat belated achievement since 71% of the union's 22,000 members are women. Catherine Byrne is in charge of press relations and communications.

DIVORCE GROUP ORGANISE



SFWP deputy Joe Sherlock working for a humane and non-sectarian divorce law.

JOE Sherlock TD was the main speaker at a packed meeting of the Cork branch of the divorce action committee on a platform for public representatives from all parties.

The Sinn Féin The Workers' Party deputy supported the Divorce Action Group call for an end to the constitutional ban on divorce and their campaign to commit the Government to the early establishment of the all-party Oireachtas committee promised by the Coalition agreement.

SFWP recognises the need for a humane and non-sectarian divorce law to help cope with the increasing number of marital breakdowns and as a principle of civil liberties for all citizens. The party has included divorce in its policy for many years and welcomed the foundation of the Divorce Action Group in 1980.

ACROSS THE BORDER

NORTHERN Ireland women have a less than flattering perception of what life is like for women in the Republic of Ireland. And while in a number of aspects their perceptions do not correspond fully to the reality, in a number of important areas they are all too accurate.

This much is clear from the results of a survey commissioned by *IT* magazine and carried out by Ulster Marketing Surveys Ltd. in early 1981. The survey was based on a sample of 447 women at 32 sampling points throughout the north.

A significant proportion of the women interviewed believed that

- ★ the Church in the Republic has more influence over government decisions on matters affecting women

- ★ politicians in the Republic are less concerned about women's issues

- ★ it is much more difficult to get divorce and almost impossible to obtain contraceptives in the Republic

- ★ medical facilities provided by the State do not compare favourably with the National Health Service

- ★ welfare benefits like children's allowances, unemployment benefits and widows pensions are paid at a lower level.

Some of these things are difficult to measure solidly, such as the extent of Church influence or the concern of politicians, but the views expressed certainly strike a chord of recognition in many southern women. It is somewhat surprising that many northern women believe that divorce can be obtained, albeit with much difficulty, in the south.

Certainly southern health services are nowhere near as comprehensive as the NHS (though Tory cutbacks have done their best to undermine it). Children's allowances and widows' pensions are lower, but the difference as regards unemployment benefit is only marginal.

MOVING THEATRE



● Hilary Reynolds and Paul Brennan in 'REVUE'... an ideal show for any social function, women's clubs, factory parties or any community event.

Have audience: Will travel!

PADDY WOODWORTH

Imagine a fantasy play for children where the audience get so involved that a seven-year-old runs on stage to grab the keys to a pair of handcuffs, and the actors effortlessly make the spontaneous interruption part of the action, to the further delight of the young spectators. That's the sort of thing that happens to *MOVING THEATRE*, a group who are unique in professional drama in that they base their work almost entirely in Dublin's local communities.

The stage is likely to be the floor of a parish hall, and the lighting a couple of fluorescent tubes, but their productions have been exciting enough to catch the attention and praise of commercial impresario Noel Pearson, to say nothing of thousands of Dubliners who have never set foot in a theatre in their lives.

The inspiration to form the company came to artistic director Annie Kilmartin when she was acting in *No Entry*, a play about squatting by Peter Sheridan at the Project. It paid some visits to community centres and Annie felt that such a theme really belonged in the areas where it was directly relevant. Another spur was the lack of work for actresses: "The Project was unbelievably male-oriented. Even the large cast plays only had a couple of female parts. So a group

of us decided to do something for ourselves.”

The result was *Legs Eleven*, a major success on the fringe of the Theatre Festival and shortly to be produced by RTE. The play was scripted by Bernard Farrell, who has since gained fame as an Abbey playwright, but was devised by the Theatre Company themselves. They felt that this method of working, where their own ideas are given final shape by a writer, is only gradually being given recognition by other bodies who might want to use the scripts, but they have been fortunate in the willing collaboration of writers like Farrell, Nell McCafferty, Jim Sheridan and Eanna Brophy.

Despite its success, *Legs Eleven* ended in the traditional theatrical manner by losing money. For a year or so *MOVING THEATRE*'s actors returned to the conventional stage, while Annie raised money by working in wine-bars and waited for replies to applications to the Arts Council and Dublin Corporation. In the meantime, with a little help from the latter institution, they began to give drama workshops in Drimnagh, a project which has continued to develop healthily parallel to the theatre company, and has just produced *Deep Water*, a play about cider-drinking, written and presented by Drimnagh teenagers.

The response from the community has been so positive that there is now pressure on *MOVING THEATRE* to get involved in a Summer project and expand the scope of the workshops beyond drama to the other arts. So a special section has been set up within the *MOVING THEATRE* umbrella — Moving Arts and Drama Community Action Programme. That mouthful happily reduces to the initials MADCAP.

This year the company has gained a firmer financial footing with substantial grants from the Arts Council and Dublin Corporation, and help from firms as diverse as the Well Woman Clinic and Guinness. On this basis they have produced three shows since January. The first was *Revue*, a series of topical sketches which received critical praise and good audience response. *Where all your Dreams come true* portrayed the yearnings of a discotheque cloakroom attendant, and *Outside In* dealt with the moral but uproariously funny tale of a sub-teen tele-addict who escapes into the Box to TV Land, only to find that it is far from the paradise she had imagined.

I asked Annie if there wasn't an aura of trendy leftism about all this, bringing culture to the working classes with the same sort of unconscious arrogance that temp-

orarily radical students bring sentimental solidarity to the factory gates. Did they not meet with the same suspicion and rejection?

“Not at all. I'm not from the outside looking in. The research for *Legs Eleven* was done in my mother's club in the flats off York Street. People kept asking us to do things with them, to involve them. As for the kids, they take to theatre very quickly, mime seems to come naturally to them. Some older people might feel shy of going to a play at first, but when they've been once they think it's great crack and keep coming back.”

Apart from their commitment to the local communities *MOVING THEATRE* do not have any particular political message. Basically they want to bring really good entertainment into people's own areas, to provide an alternative to Bingo and the pub. “But we would never do anything trite, and the plays are always relevant to real life and we try to look at what is relevant to huge amounts of people in the community. Who else does plays about Valium? *Legs Eleven* was funny, but it also made people think a little.”

Certainly one old woman was moved to come and tell the company about how it had affected her own attitudes: “My God, I've been on Valium for years now and I



'Outside In' A Childrens Show with Susie Kennedy and Gerry Walsh.

A NEW IDEA

Why not give your Women's Club, Youth Club, Senior Citizens etc. a new kind of entertainment. Booking a Moving Theatre show is easy. Contact us, discuss the show, and negotiate the fee and then all you have to do is get your audience. We arrive one hour before the performance to prepare and then do the show. All we need is a 20 x 20 square of acting space and a power point. It really is as simple as that.

wouldn't go off it at this stage. But that little young one in the play reminded me of my daughter. I'll be warning her off it now."

The greatest challenge Annie sees in the future is building up a solid two-way relationship with as many communities as possible. An administrator has been appointed, and apart from routine management her main tasks will be to seek commercial and trade union sponsorship, and develop a really effective publicity machine in each area. They would like local organisations to start booking them, so as to ensure wider audiences through the network of personal contacts area-based associations would have. It will be an uphill and long-term struggle, but **MOVING THEATRE** have a number of aces up their sleeve.

Far from being a springboard by which inexperienced actors learn their trade and then run off to the Abbey or RTE, the Company (as opposed to the workshops) has the services of a number of actors who have already established a name for themselves, but are glad of the opportunity to play to a broader public. There is also a strong Co-Operative feeling. If any area is stressed, everyone helps, whether it is to paint backdrops or put up posters. Above all, the Company has determination.

"It will take years to build up a situation where people are saying: **MOVING THEATRE** are coming round

again. We're having them next week, when are you having them? It will take a long time to achieve acceptance as a normal part of entertainment in the community. We'll keep going till we get there."

MOVING THEATRE have just gone on the road again with several shows on offer. *Somewhere between frogs and princes*, a play for very young children, opened to general critical acclaim during the Dublin Theatre Festival. The *Irish Times* described the reaction of the youngsters at the Whitefriar Street venue as 'kamikaze merriment'. The *Irish Press* thought the company's youngest actress, Maeve Germaine, had the makings of 'a future Maureen Potter with Audrey Hepburn appeal'.

In a new departure, the company will be taking this show to Belfast and Derry in mid-November, and they also hope to revive *Revue*, their highly successful adult show, for this tour. *Down at the Old Bull and Bush* a play which emerged from their community workshops, and which is aimed at senior citizens, should be ready by the end of the year.

MOVING THEATRE encourage bookings from women's clubs and groups, youth clubs, community associations, trade unions, old folks clubs and anyone else who's interested. Their administrator, Finola O'Doherty, can be contacted at 3 Castle Court, Fairview, Dublin 3. Telephone 334532.

For booking contact:
Finola O'Doherty,
Company Administrator.
MOVING THEATRE

3 CASTLE COURT, DUBLIN 3.
TELEPHONE: 334532

SFWP — A Place for Women

THE second-class citizenship of women and party politics came in for a close and wide-ranging scrutiny at a weekend conference of Sinn Féin The Workers' Party members organised by the Party's National Women's Committee.

Speakers from the north and south described the political culture and social climate that women face in their respective communities.

Discussion among the hundred delegates who attended was held in small workshops to identify and tackle the obstacles women face in leading a full and active political life. They obviously drew strongly on their personal experience.

Liz McManus, a Sinn Féin The Workers' Party councillor from Bray, emphasised the links between working as a public representative with the grass roots movements campaigning for local reforms, and dealing with the individual complaints from women as the consumers of the social services.

Liz has a long record of involvement in community campaigns by Bray women for improved services. In Bray they succeeded in launching a family planning clinic and opened a refuge for battered women and their families.

Work as a councillor means assisting women to win their most basic rights in housing, welfare and health. Dedicated socialist representatives soon discover that they have to act as the "fall guys" for Ireland's inadequate social services, and can spend most of their energy in dealing with poor services instead of exposing them.

Mary MacMahon broadened the picture of women's campaigns in her description of her work as a former Belfast city Councillor and full-time community worker.

Belfast's leisure centres, built with young people in mind, offer new openings to the women of the ghetto areas. They provide a central place to meet in the community and supply child minding services for mothers of the area.

Mary explained the scope for women's campaigning groups to expand or improve services from the agencies of local government such as local health boards and the Department of Health.

Belfast beneficiaries of local government assistance in the last year include the Belfast Women's Centre, Women's Aid and the new Rape Crisis centre which provides a regional service to women.

Mary's account showed the extent to which women in the north are now organising themselves in unprecedented numbers.

Low paid and part-time women workers in public services are joining unions for the first time in their hundreds. Women who have endured appalling housing conditions in Turf Lodge and Divis Flats have come together to take on the Housing Executive in a fight for new homes.

These steps by women present fresh hopes for expanding the activity and community links across the sectarian barriers.

The conference took a frank look at what SFWP can offer such women fighting for change and how women's commitment to party life must contribute to a vibrant political organisation.

The double burden of women's working life has been an obstacle to their full political representation. But low representation among women in party political life had traditionally underestimated women's participation. This is best seen at election times when women's commitment to party activity is at its most visible.

The day wasn't all given over to political discussion. Children enjoyed a full-scale Hallowe'en Party in the creche during the day and the National Women's Committee laid on a social evening afterwards for everyone who had come along.

Mary MacMahon (Belfast) and Councillor Liz McManus (Bray) addressed the closing session of the conference which was chaired by Maura McInerney (right).



(Above) A busy day at the creche too!

WOMEN'S MOVEMENT HELPS MITTERAND TO POWER

The election of socialist Francois Mitterand to the French Presidency was due, at least in part, to the realism which led broad sections of the women's movement to support him — even at the expense of the avowedly 'feminist candidate' — as the candidate on the Left most likely to succeed. This was done in the belief that progressive change for women could most effectively be brought about with a left-wing government in power.

From the start, the French women's movement (which blossomed in the late 60s and 70s) reacted with a strong and lively Left which was firmly entrenched within French society. That Left — and in particular the French Communist Party — had been the main carriers of concepts of equality and liberation prior to the growth of the women's movement and the staunchest allies of the women's movement have always been found in its ranks.

The dialogue between the two movements has been constant and, despite occasional inevitable tensions, it has been fruitful. Now begins the litmus test — what will this government of Socialists and Communists do for women.

The start has been promising. Six of the Ministers in the new Cabinet are women, with responsibilities in Agriculture, National Solidarity, Youth and Sport, in addition to the more predictable areas of Consumer Affairs, the Family and Women's Rights. There are also four women in the President's special team of aides.

These numbers are not spectacular but are certainly significant given that in the French Parliament there are only 29 women (5.3%) overall. Of these 24 are either Socialist or Communist deputies. Yvette Roudy, the Minister with special responsibility for Women's Rights, is probably the best known woman in the Cabinet. Elected as a European Deputy in 1979 she chaired the European Parliament ad-hoc committee on Women's Rights.

Her terms of reference as a Minister are impressive:

"to promote measures that will ensure that women's rights are respected in society; eliminate any form of discrimination against them and increase their guarantees of equality in the political, economic, social and cultural domain... In these domains, especially in matters of employment and health, she will guide and co-ordinate the steps taken by the authorities with regard to women."

She also chairs the joint ministerial committee responsible for action on behalf of women.

Over the next few months these terms of reference will be translated into concrete measures to promote more freedom, equality, employment and responsibility for women. Among the measures being initiated are the abolition of sexist discrimination in matters of recruitment, wages and careers in the public and private sector; the filling of 60% of places by young women on training courses and in on-the-job training contracts since two-thirds of the unemployed under 25 are women; greater protection for part-time workers (whether female or male); anti-discrimination bills in a number of areas; an information campaign on contraception; the provision at police stations of trained personnel to deal with victims of violence and those in distress.

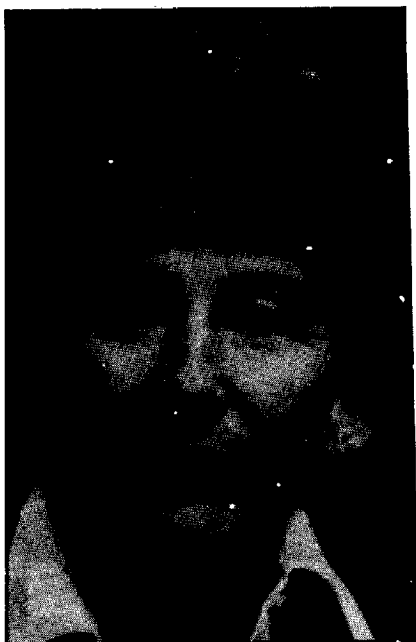
In addition, there is a big drive in the area of information and research so that the real extent of the problems faced by women can be known and dealt with.

So far French President Francois Mitterand has kept his promise to to the Women's Movement.



YVETTE ROUDY —

FRENCH MINISTER FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS



TRIONA DOONEY

YVETTE ROUDY, the new Minister for Women's Rights in France, is no stranger to the working class or women's movements.

Born at Pessac into a working class family, she found out early what class and sex discrimination were all about. At 16 she was a typist and prepared for her "baccalauréat" (equivalent of Leaving Cert.) by correspondence. She later studied in Britain for a time.

Always sensitive to the difficulties encountered by women in French society, she found her ideas crystallised by contact with the growing women's movement and cites Betty Friedman's 'Feminine Mystique' as a particular watershed in her own development.

By the mid-sixties she was an active member of the Socialist Party, then being revitalised and regenerated under Mitterand's leadership. By 1973 she was a member of the Party Executive and was design-

nated national secretary for women's issues in 1977.

Election to the European Parliament came in 1979 and Yvette Roudy chaired the Parliament's prestigious Committee on Women's Rights. In 1981 the Left came to power in France and on May 23rd Yvette Roudy was nominated Minister for Women's Rights.

She sees her Ministry as an active, dynamic, stimulating force, capable of giving women confidence in their ability to change things. Eventually, she hopes, her Ministry will no longer be necessary but that is unlikely to happen for many many years.

Her main preoccupation at the moment is with the law — how to apply existing laws more humanely and effectively as well as the framing of completely new legislation. There is, in the new government, she says, strong political will for change and real progress and Yvette Roudy aims to

use this for the benefit of French women.

She comments somewhat humorously on some of the minor difficulties she has encountered, for instance in French grammar which assumes that a Minister is male. 'Must I change my sex,' she asks somewhat acerbically, 'just because no one foresaw a woman in this job?' With obvious enjoyment she tells the story of the clergyman who fell into a coma and on awakening weeks later was asked "Have you seen God? What is he like?" The clergyman replied "She's black".

Yvette Roudy is not the first French Minister to have responsibility for women's rights. What gives her an opportunity for greater success than her predecessor is the fact that she exercises her Ministry as part of a socialist government — a government which by definition holds women's equality as one of its fundamental principles.

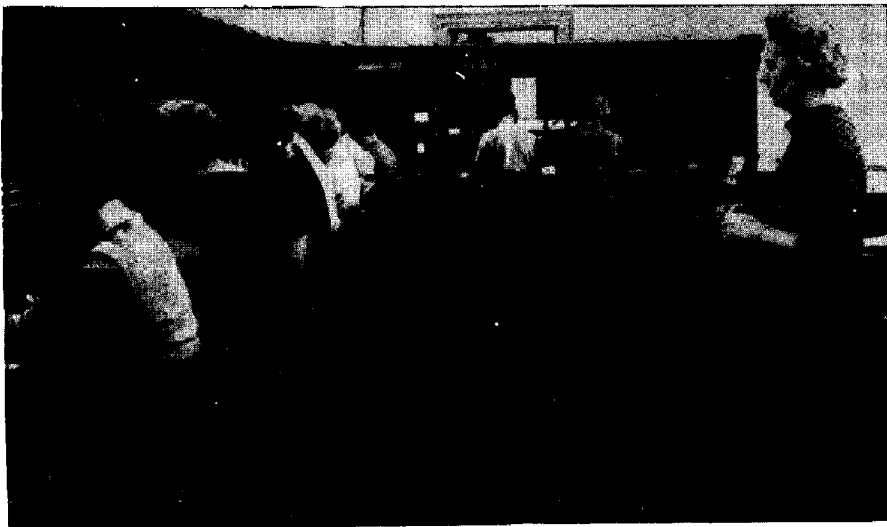
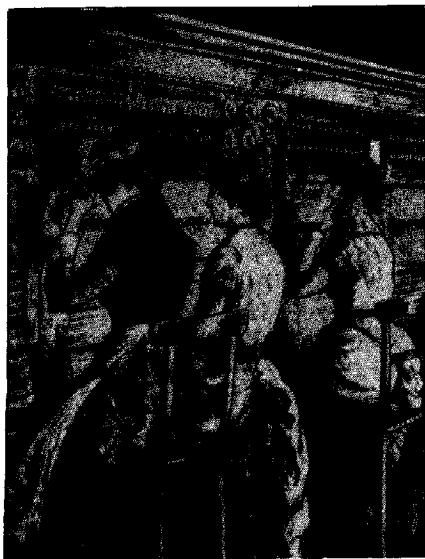
A woman's work ...

There are over one thousand women in the Central Telephone Exchange in Dublin coping with out-of-date and inadequate facilities... many of them young girls who come to Dublin straight from school to work in very impersonal surroundings.

I work in the CTE Dublin where there are 1,200 day telephonists, 90% of whom are women. We work a 42½ hour week and the daily shifts vary from 8am to 4pm to 12pm to 8pm. The basic work of answering calls gets very boring as you repeat the same few standard expressions every few minutes.

There is a supervisor for every ten telephonists and their job is to pare pencils and tell you when you can go to the toilet!

Poor working conditions for the first telephonists...



...and little change a century later!

The exchange buildings are very old and overcrowded. Toilet facilities are very bad with maybe 200 people sharing five toilets, three of which are usually out of order. Canteen facilities also leave a lot to be desired. The service is non-existent on a Sunday and doesn't open at all on Saturday even though we are on duty as usual.

The big talking point in P&T at the moment is the setting up of two semi-state companies to run the postal and Telecommunications systems. Though automation may be welcome it will mean massive job losses in the next few years. Our direct promotional outlet, supervising, will also be plugged, meaning a drop in pay for many telephonists who would normally reach the grade of supervisor.

Dublin telephones are the largest branch in the Post Office Workers Union. There are four officers and a committee of twenty. Two of the officers, the secretary and assistant have full time union duties in the exchange. They handle local

negotiations such as overtime, Christmas arrangements etc. There are a number of women members in the POWU but this is not reflected on our National executive where there is one woman and fourteen men.

Welfare facilities in the CTE are sadly lacking. One welfare officer, who is not properly qualified, to look after the interests of our 1,200 plus another 100 from the International Exchange, Malboro' Street. It has long been a sore point with us that the department won't employ a fully qualified welfare officer and a resident nurse. There are four sick bays with room for two in each, not very adequate.

One very disturbing fact about the exchange is that the amount of work you do in the day is not appreciated. Many of the girls who have personal and health problems are treated no differently from the rest. There is no personal touch which means a lot to most people. We are all just numbers in the system.



N.I. HOME HELPS

A vital service but little recognition

Since 1974 the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) has been engaged in a battle on behalf of the home helps. At that time they had exactly seven members in the service. In spite of a series of meetings it was a very slow process to get these women organised into the trade union movement.

In 1979 after a meeting in Belfast's Upper Springfield area to coincide with International Women's Day organised by the local Women's Rights Group, NUPE decided to go on the road again in an all out effort to organise the home helps.

In December 1980 they won the right to paid annual leave, sick leave, maternity leave and statutory days which was to take effect from April 1981. This did not happen, so after various meetings with different levels of management the union decided to take some action.

The most widely publicised piece of action they took was to picket and then take over the last monthly meeting of the Area Health Board in Musgrave Park hospital.

In support for the action the NUPE members of the catering staff refused to supply the board members with their usual slap-up meal and came out in solidarity with them. They are now waiting to hear from the Board giving a date on which their outstanding claims will be met; and are quite certain it will be in the very near future.

NUPE see the main battle for home helps as the right to guaranteed weekly wages, job security, protective clothing and the right to be treated like every other worker within the health service.

Because, although they are a very important part of the health service, they still remain the Cinderellas within that service

and the only way they will achieve the right to be treated like public servants instead of public skivvies is when they are fully organised into the trade union movement.

Terri Wallis is a home help and a member of NUPE. She is very grateful for what the union has been trying to do for home helps and she joined the union because she thought this the only way for home helps to achieve anything.

She has said that some members wanted to go on strike but when they thought about what a strike would involve they decided against it. She said she would only worry about her old person and what would happen if she didn't go to work.

Terri hopes the claims will be through soon so that home helps will be treated like ordinary workers and not as the so-called skivvies of the health service.

ELAINE RUSH

An important message for all women of childbearing age



German Measles is a very infectious disease, but usually very mild. You may not even know you have had it. The usual symptom is a faint pink rash with a slight fever, perhaps swollen glands or aching joints and a general feeling of being off-colour. It sounds harmless enough, doesn't it?

But German Measles can damage your unborn child.

If a woman catches German Measles when she is pregnant, it can seriously harm her baby. It can damage the baby's brain, sight, hearing or heart. Some babies affected like this die in the first year of their life, those who do not die can face a lifetime of handicap.

This need not happen.

Vaccination can protect you against German Measles.

What to do? Even if you have no intention of becoming pregnant, don't take a chance. If you have not been vaccinated already, see your doctor now and ask for a check to show whether you are immune to German Measles. This is done by a quick and simple blood test. If you are already immune, the test will make it clear.

Ask for a blood test even if you think you have had German Measles. It can be such a mild disease, and so like other childhood illnesses, you can never be absolutely sure you have had it. So don't rely on your memory. Have the test done.

Some family planning clinics will also arrange for you to be given a blood test. Ask at your next appointment.



Is your daughter between 11 and 14? Why not ensure she does not run this risk. Make sure she is immunised whether or not you think she has had German Measles already.

Protection is given usually between the ages of 11 and 14 by one simple injection. This is free of charge and will usually be done at school as part of a programme organised by your local health board or Area Health Authority. Otherwise ask your doctor or health centre about it.

Make sure your doctor knows if:

- ★ your daughter has had another injection within the last three weeks
- ★ she is in any way unwell
- ★ she is taking any medicine or tablets of any kind
- ★ she is allergic to anything.

GERMAN Measles has been at epidemic proportions in Ireland since 1978 but efforts by the health authorities to warn the public of the danger have been hindered by lack of government funds.

As a result there has been a dramatic rise in the number of handicapped children born of mothers suffering from German Measles. However, even exact figures on the size of the epidemic are not available because of inadequate health statistics.

In many countries abortion is legal for pregnant women suffering from the disease.

The sum total of the response in Ireland to the epidemic has been to

provide tests for pregnant women. The only snag is that by then it's too late to do anything about the problem.

A pregnant woman can't be vaccinated against German Measles.

In a belated effort to warn women of the dangers from rubella, a short film has been produced by the Health Education Bureau, but this only appears on RTE sporadically. Not a single leaflet or poster has been produced to educate the public of the danger — or let Irish women know that an epidemic exists here.

Ironically Ireland pioneered the earliest rubella vaccine studies in Europe, but all modern vaccines have to be imported and the costs have soared in recent years.

One simple injection gives protection. If the blood test shows you are not immune, one injection will give you the protection you need. It's free and easily arranged. Ask your doctor or at the family planning clinic.

Side effects. Side effects from the injection are uncommon. You may perhaps have some mild symptoms of the disease itself. But you won't be infectious and most people are able to carry on just as normal.

People especially at risk. Remember, if you are often in contact with young children, either at home or in your job, you run a higher risk of catching German Measles. So it is particularly important for you to be protected against it.

Precautions. Make sure your doctor knows if:

- ★ you think you may be pregnant
- ★ you have had another injection within the last three weeks
- ★ you are unwell in any way
- ★ you are taking medicine or tablets of any kind
- ★ you are allergic to anything

Of course, if you are already pregnant you must not be given German Measles vaccine. But you can arrange for a blood test at your ante-natal clinic and, if you are not immune, you can be vaccinated immediately after the birth of your baby.

Once you have had the vaccination, it is very important that you don't become pregnant for at least three months afterwards. If you would like advice on contraception, talk to your doctor or local family planning clinic.

REMEMBER. When you protect yourself against German Measles, you're protecting your unborn children.

NIWRM Courses at Belfast Centre

"Do you feel life would have been different if you had been a boy?" This is the challenging conclusion to a leaflet on the new "Women's Rights" course being organised by Belfast Women's Centre.

The result of years of campaigning by Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement, the Women's Centre in Donegall Street has recently appointed its first full time worker, Marie Query. Marie, together with NIWRM treasurer Jenny Williams, told us what role they see the centre playing in the struggle to get a fair deal for women.

With a background in adult education, Marie doesn't see women's education taking the traditional lecturer/pupil format. In her view "Women have a lot to contribute from their own experiences and knowledge". Jenny Williams added that often professionals, especially men, lecture women about what they should be doing in terms of child rearing and home life without grasping the practicalities. Courses in the Centre will draw on the practical know-how of ordinary women, with the experts being called in when, how and if those in the classes want it.

As well as the classes an advice centre is provided but, says Marie, the city centre location makes it awkward for women from many housing estates to reach it, so she and the other workers are going out to meet them in their own areas. Besides advice it is offering a novel "rent a creche" service. For £5 a session, trade unions, political parties, community organisations and other groups can rent the basic

equipment to keep children amused during meetings and the centre will put them in contact with trained nursery nurses if necessary.

However the centre doesn't see itself just as providing services.

It aims to play its part identifying common problems and campaigning issues. "Unity" meetings for all women's organisations and interested individuals are held monthly.

Amongst the key issues which Jenny and Marie see facing the women's movement are child care, women in work and fertility control. In the field of employment Marie points out that there has been a long-term tendency for women to be concentrated in low paid ghettos in the service industries and part-time works.

Despite the existence of Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Legislation, many careers are traditionally taboo for women and the differential between average male and female weekly wages has risen from £13.03 in 1972 to £30.70 in 1979.

Child care provision in Northern Ireland is very poor, with no state-run creches. As Marie puts it "in the absence of child care there is no real choice for women on whether to work or not" and adds that there is a real advantage for young children to mix together rather than staying in the home all day.

In the immediate future they see their role as promoting discussions on these and other issues, like domestic violence, so that the women who they effect can map out their own solutions.

Childcare Facilities for Working Parents

A step in the right direction

The National Understanding which is now expiring has been criticised on many counts, but it did bring two important advances for women workers. One was the introduction of legislation on paid maternity leave (from April 1981); the other was the commitment to establishing a Working Party on Childcare Facilities for Working Parents.

People don't normally get too excited about Working Parties: they are usually seen, with much justification, as a way of defusing protest and deferring action — or trying to avoid it altogether. (The Task Force on Childcare Services sat for seven years — and who knows how long the Commission on Taxation will take?) But in fact, this particular Working Party has been treated more seriously and less cynically than most and we can only hope it will produce something worthwhile before all our children are grown up.

Terms of Reference

Its terms of reference are to examine the position of childcare services and facilities for working parents and make recommendations there-

on; and its Chairman is Michael Aherne, Principal Officer in the Department of Labour. It has representatives on it from the unions, the employers, the Employment Equality Agency, the Council for the Status of Women and the various government departments with an interest in the area; it also has four independent members.

So far, the Working Party has met a couple of times (in May and June). It has sought submissions from interested parties, under the following broad headings:-

- Information on existing childcare facilities.
- Present needs and potential demands for childcare facilities.
- The setting of standards, registration and inspection of childcare facilities; and the training of childcare personnel.
- Other aspects — eg. alternative working arrangements.

Apparently, the response has been unusually good. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions made a major submission; so did at least half-a-dozen individual unions; so did many other interested organisations and groups.

It seems, however, that none were able to provide the sort of detailed information that was needed on existing childcare facilities, present needs and potential demand — precisely because the information does not exist and cannot be drawn from official sources or statistics.

Several submissions pointed to the general facts that are clear: that the number of married women in paid employment is rising steadily; that, therefore, many thousands of children now have parents who both work outside the home; that many widowed and separated people work to support young children and need childcare services; and that, also, the children of some 15,000 unmarried mothers must either require daycare while their mothers work, or would require it if their mothers could find work. But exact quantifications are impossible, given the way in which Irish statistics are collected — or not collected.

In general terms, of course, it is also clear that the 66 or so nursery centres for which Health Boards provide funding cannot, within their present terms of reference, cater for the children of working parents — only for children classed as being 'at risk' or 'in need'. And only a hand-

ful of employers are providing workplace creches. So the vast majority of children of working parents are being cared for privately, either by friends or relations, or on some commercial basis. But that there are 25 privately-run nurseries listed in the *Golden Pages*.)

The Working Party must have drawn the obvious conclusion that since no hard-and-fast figures were available, it would have to search them out itself. It has therefore commissioned a survey of existing childcare facilities in this country — which will, of course, delay its deliberations somewhat, but it's a necessary delay.

In the meantime, however, it is clear that a crisis situation exists — and has certainly been exacerbated by the government's recent high-handed decision to raise the school entry age. The type of solutions being put forward by the various trade unions in their submissions are broadly similar: they all argue, basically, for a comprehensive system of community-based childcare services to be provided by the state.

These facilities should be regarded as an important social service and funded accordingly; they should cater for the entire range of welfare and educational

needs of preschool children, as well as providing a focal point for after-school and holiday-time activities for older children when both parents (or the only parent) are at work. All relevant government Departments should be involved to ensure an integrated service, which should be available free to all who need it.

Nevertheless, it regards the provision of workplace nurseries as having obvious attractions (coincidence of working hours and nursery hours; possibility of contact between parents and children during the working day; time together while travelling; etc.) and re-

No figures are currently available of existing childcare facilities in this country.



commends their establishment where feasible. It also suggests that companies willing to provide satisfactory facilities should be given tax relief on expenses thereby incurred.

Childminding

The recent growth of childminding facilities is generally seen as a consequence of the lack of state provision and viewed with caution and concern. Many existing arrangements, while obviously meeting a huge need, are doing so in an uncontrolled, expensive and often inadequate manner. There is a clear need for regularisation; any standards set for state-run childcare facilities should apply strictly to privately-run ones as well.

Pending the availability of free state-run childcare services — which should obviously reduce the demand for private arrangements — many of the unions consider that childminding costs should be tax-deductible for working parents. This would also assist the necessary process of registering those people currently providing such a service.

On the question of alternative working arrangements, all the unions are unanimous in stressing the need for conditions of employment to be improved in such a way as to minimise the stresses of combining work and family commitments and maximise the

extent to which parenting can become a shared responsibility between the sexes. All facilities and benefits (such as family leave or reduced hours) should, of course, be equally available to working fathers as to working mothers.

The type of improvements recommended are: provision of paid paternity leave and family leave; extension of existing provisions for both paid and unpaid maternity leave; shorter and more flexible working hours; a review of attitudes towards part-time working and an extension of protective legislation and trade union organisation to part-timers; examination of school hours and holidays, in conjunction with teachers' unions; use of school



(Pics. ANNE EAGAN)

Workplace nurseries have the obvious advantage of allowing easy contact between parents and children during the day and must therefore be regarded as a priority goal for the Working Party.



Existing arrangements for childcare — while meeting an obvious need — are doing so in an uncontrolled and expensive manner.

and recreational facilities, plus adequate funding, for youth activities; and the elimination of all employment limitations imposed on women who choose to remain at home for a period and then wish to return to work, (eg. removal of unnecessary age or educational qualifications; provision of training facilities and 'refresher' courses etc.)

The above in no way exhausts all the many points made by the various unions, but it has probably exhausted the reader, so better to leave it there! Next issue we hope to look at some of the submissions which have been made by other groups and organisations.

Of vital importance, of course is the proper staffing of these childcare facilities. All the union submissions place heavy emphasis on the setting of good standards in this area, as well as the registration and regular inspection of all the services.

Another recurring point is the question of pay rates for childcare

staff. The ITGWU, for example, points to the need for training courses on all the different aspects of childcare and the development of proper career structures for people working in the new service. It goes on to say:-

"Pay rates within the service should reflect the social importance of such work, the necessity for highest standards throughout, and the need for personnel to acquire specific qualifications in many different areas (eg. teaching, nursing, child psychology, etc.). It is also worth noting that many new employment opportunities, in both training and staffing of the childcare service, would thereby be created."

While pressing strongly for state-run, community-based childcare facilities as the ideal, most of the union submissions recognise a continuing role for other forms of childcare as well. Congress

says, for example, that "workplace nurseries may meet the needs of some parents" and should be established "where satisfactory facilities can be obtained through negotiations between the unions and the employer".

The ITGWU has the same guarded approach, saying that it "shares some of the traditional apprehensions of the trade union movement" about workplace nurseries — based on "fears that employers would use the provision of childcare facilities to attract women workers to low-paid jobs, reduce their bargaining power in relation to improvement of wages and other conditions and restrict their mobility within the labour market".

DEIRDRE MALONE

Irish Women Workers

organised since 1911

THERESE MORIARTY

The Irish Women Workers' Union first met in Dublin on 5 September, 1911. Seventy years to the day we sat in a smoky kitchen in a Queen's residential hall to hear Margaret Ward's account of the founding and early years of the union.

This timely occasion was the women's slot in the Irish Labour History Society's eighth annual symposium, and the workshop attracted most of the women attending the weekend programme.

Irish political life was transformed in the early years of the century, said Margaret Ward. Trade unionism was expanding, socialism had put down native roots and women were demanding admission to the closed chambers of male organisations and privilege.

Bean na hEireann, the journal of nationalist women, and women's suffrage campaigners, began to investigate the plight of women workers neglected by the structures of trade unionism.

Trade union organisation of women was almost exclusively limited to Belfast, where mill workers were organised in the Textile Operatives' Union.

Dublin women worked in the scattered, unmechanised workshops of the sweated trades. Only 18,596 women in the city were counted as industrial workers, which includes over seven thousand dressmakers, milliners, stays makers, seamstresses and shirtmakers.

Women's working conditions were exposed in a regular column in the *Irish Worker* written by Delia Larkin. The progress of the IWWU, which she headed, is traced in the column's reports of the developing industrial militancy among women, notably a six month strike by the Pembroke Laundry workers.



Women workers in a Derry Shirt factory at the turn of the century.

In the Dublin lockout 1,100 women were effected, the largest groups of them, 250, from Jacobs factory. When it finished many of them were widows or workers without male earners to support them.

The IWWU set up sewing shops which had a premises on Eden Quay by Liberty Hall. Shirts bearing the badge of the ITGWU were made in this workshop though no trace of them survives.

Most of these women were to join the Irish Citizen Army and their sewing shop was finally destroyed by shelling during the Easter Rising.

By 1918 the IWWU was quite independent of Liberty Hall. They moved into separate premises and built their organisation from the laundry workers and printers who remain the basis of the membership today.

In Belfast, where Connolly was organising, the militant women workers of the mills were drawn, by his less paternalistic leadership, into a special textile section and not a separate union as in Dublin under Larkin.

The disputes this led to in the Belfast trade union movement where a textile union already existed were raised again in the second session of our workshop

discussion.

Spurred on by a remark in an earlier session, that women were silent during a debate on sectarianism in the workplace, we tried to examine the reasons for this.

There was a plea to include the study of women within the histories of the working class. Where historians leave them out they should make it clear their conclusions are based on small or specific sections of the class.

Labour historians studying the northern Irish working class have, almost to a man, ignored the predominantly female proletariat of Derry. The argument that arose between Connolly and Margaret Galway on trade unionism has never been published though his dispute with William Walker about socialism is well known.

The workshop was a side show to the theme of the weekend on the Scottish dimension of the Irish Labour movement, yet it was one of the better sessions of it.

Historians with the commitment of Margaret Ward who has devoted most of her studies to women's organisations are few. The Irish Labour History Society should address itself to developing this rich field for historical research.

EVENING COURSES CANNOT MEET DEMAND

Over the past decade many Irish women have developed a new awareness of themselves and their view of their role in the family, in their work place and in society in general has changed. Various factors have awakened the desire to examine their own life situations and many have been encouraged to actively participate in the campaign for equality and to lift the chains which have kept women as second-class human beings for centuries.

An indication of this increased awareness has been the huge demand for places on evening courses dealing with various aspects of the women's question in the Dublin area this year.

The People's College, which until recently had been the only college offering a course on the subject of "women", has been unable to facilitate all its applicants even though it increased its class size from 20 to 34 participants. The College initiated the course under the guidance of Eunice McCarthy following the publication of the report on the Commission for the Status of Women. Eunice herself did most of the research work for the commission.

The aim of the course is to give a clearer understanding of the actual position of women in our present society and of how that position can be changed. The course which has also attracted a number of men over the years covers such areas as women in family life; women at work and women in society. Specialists are invited to lecture on such aspects as family law and anti-discrimination legislation.

Feed-back from students has been very positive according to Shiela Conroy of the People's College. However, there is a general complaint that the course which consists of ten lectures is far too short. Although lectures are scheduled to run for one hour they invariably run over their time due to the commitment of the lecturers and the interest and involvement of the students. The cost of the course is £5 and lectures commence on Tuesday evenings at 6.30.

For the first time the extra mural courses in UDC include a course on women. The course which is also arranged by Eunice McCarthy, is called "Women and Social Change". In this course specialist lecturers from various disciplines including psychology, sociology, philosophy, politics and literature will examine the values, ideology and images which shape the cultural roles of women and men in Irish society and the effects which the changing role of women has had on Irish society over the past decade.

Masculinity, femininity, androgyny, differences and similarities between men and women; women's participation in the workforce and politics; as well as women and the family and women and education are among the issues to be considered. Lectures commence on Wednesday evenings at 8.30 in Belfield and the course fee is £11.

Applicants for places on the new course which has commenced at the College of Industrial Relations, called *Women at Work* have outnumbered the places available three

to one. Because of the class format numbers have to be confined to thirty. Under the tutorship of Patricia Brand the course is of a more specialist nature than those described above.

According to the College prospectus "it is particularly appropriate for women who are active in trade unions; women in managerial positions; women in professions; women with dual roles and women committed to change and development in their lives and careers."

The course is designed (a) to provide such women with relevant information and (b) to equip them with the skills which their work will require e.g. skills in communication, leadership and organisation change. Classes which run for two hours every Tuesday evening are based on the group system.

The role of the lecturer is to provide a stimulating input which will encourage discussion. The individual students are expected to contribute by participation in group discussions and by imparting to the other group members the knowledge and skills learned or developed through various work situation.

On the practical level home exercises are assigned to "facilitate learning". Classes are held on Tuesday evenings and the fee for the year is £22 which may be paid in two instalments.

MARY DISKIN

Punk a way of escape!



Punk as a fashion hit Ireland after Britain, but to many it became more than a fashion, it became a way of life.

Many Irish teenagers were bored and angry, unemployment was abundant — jobs were far and few between. Punk was a way of escape, our way of showing society we neither knew nor cared. So we spiked and dyed our hair, stuck safety pins through our ears and noses and set about showing the older generation what we thought of their system.

Religion was out. Punks turned their backs on the church and its teachings, they looked on it as a money making farce — the last hope that the older generation had to cling to in a corrupt, decadent society.

It was the music that first influenced us; the Sex Pistols, the Damned, early Clash and Siouxsie and the Banshees. Siouxsie proved to us that the girls in punk could be just as good as the boys both musically and visually.

Although the punk music scene in Dublin has never been healthy, today it is at an all time low. None of the English bands have recently graced us with a visit. Apart from the music festivals during the summer (which cost a fair amount of money for fares and entrance, never mind food and drink), there is nothing for the average punk in Dublin.

However there is always the Magnet if you are desperate for somewhere to go — but the bands can hardly be described as hard core punk and the drinks are dear. Anyway most of the more outrageous punks are denied entrance because of their dress. The whole point of having somewhere to go is a place where the various groups such as punks can show off their styles without harassment.

There is no such place in Dublin. One look at the clothes and hair and a punk will be denied entrance to most, if not all the bars in Dublin. Most people who know next to nothing about us see punks as rowdy, aggressive morons, into nothing except violence and destruction. This is rubbish. Of course you find the occasionally violent punk, but violent people are found in all walks of life and punk is no exception to this rule.

The majority of punks however channel their aggression into a creative vein such as their clothes and hair rather than deliberately picking a fight with someone on the street for no reason.

The violent image of punk can be attributed to the media — papers like the *Star*, the *Sun*, and the *Mirror* revel in shock-horror stories about the evils of Punk Rock. People actually believe these stories: for instance I was in the office of a bar not long ago buying cigarettes when I was confronted by a large man who was slightly drunk. He began his conversation with "Please don't hit me for asking, but how do you get your hair that colour?" I told him that punks don't want to hit people, they want to shock them. He seemed satisfied with this and wandered off.

Until this distorted image of punk and its beliefs wears off the general public, there will be few gigs and no drinking in pubs. All the same, punks will refuse to conform to the standards set by society. We live off your reactions and will continue to do so. We will remain confined to drink in back lanes off the city centre. There's a song by a Northern punk band called Stiff Little Fingers (Here we are nowhere), that sums it all up:

"Here we are nowhere
Maybe that's where we
belong."

BLATHNAID BEHAN

Germany — Pale Mother



Germany — Pale Mother is the story of a particular family's experiences during the Second World War. Hans and Lene meet and marry in the Germany of the rising Nazi party. At the outset of the war Hans is sent to fight in Poland. When he visits home on leave, the couple's initial delight in each other is replaced by jealousy and suspicion. The birth of a daughter further estranges them, and Lene is forced to cope with an ever-increasing load of difficulties: lack of accommodation when their home is destroyed by a bomb, shortages of food and money.

When peace is eventually declared Lene finds that the hardships are not over. She has lost interest in sex and her relationship with Hans deteriorates, their daughter becoming a divisive rather than a unifying factor. As their circumstances worsen, Hans sees the advancement of ex-Nazis around him and is disillusioned; Lene becomes very ill. The plot finishes in disarray rather than resolution.

This film has much to set it aside from the normal run

of Second World War movies: it does not attempt to portray the fighting as being in any way glorious, and little of the mass hysteria cited as a reason, or excuse, for Hitler's success, is shown. **Germany — Pale Mother's** most striking images are in stark contrast to any supposed glory in this war: a swastika flag crawling with flies, the death of some Polish peasants in their field, the ruin of Hans' and Lene's home after a bomb attack. Helma Sanders-Brahms prefers to focus on female capacity to adapt and survive rather than conventional male heroics. The central character, Lene, displays an extraordinary strength in difficult situations, cracking under the strain only when the war is over and she finds that readjustment to peace is difficult too.

By anyone's standards Eva Mattes' performance in this role is excellent. However, the central characters, for all their remarkable qualities, do not constitute a strong enough foundation for the film. I found myself much more

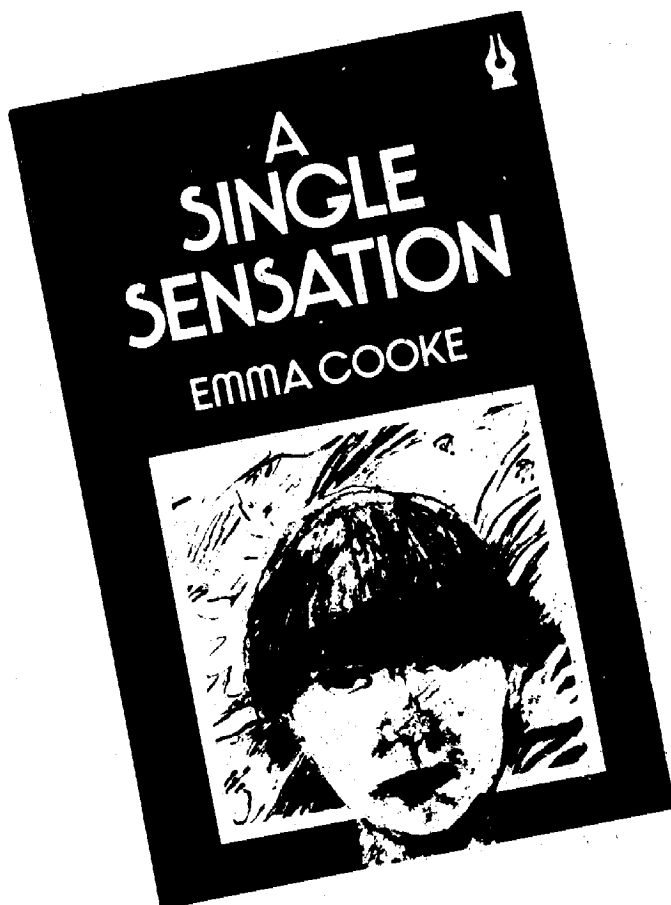
interested in action on the fringes of the plot and characters on the periphery: Lene's sister, Hanne, her attraction for the Nazi Ulrich, and through him for the ideals of his party; the fate of Jewish families in the neighbourhood; Hans' experiences at work when he returns. In Hans and Lene I began to see the proverbial 'silent majority' — those who do not oppose brutality and injustice out of fear, or apathy, or a sense that 'it-can't-happen-here-and-if-it-does-I'll-be-exempt-anyway'. Hans and Lene despise the Nazis — secretly. Lene prevents her sister from going to the assistance of a Jewish girl who is being attacked. They have no sympathy for Hitler's foreign policy, yet Hans goes to war. Shooting innocent Poles upsets him, yet he does it. And while Helma Sanders-Brahms intended **Germany — Pale Mother** to be 'a story about... the women who kept life going while their men were used for killings' it emerges more as a tale of those who do not wish to get involved but are caught up in events

Cabaret, another film of Nazi Germany which was televised a few days after I saw **Germany — Pale Mother**, contained a scene reminiscent of the attitude of Hans and Lene. The Baron Maximilian is driven in his chauffeured limousine past the scene of a Nazi atrocity; 'The Nazis will get rid of the Communists', he says, 'then it'll be easy to deal with them'. But it wasn't — and that is generally what happens when people leave others to solve their problems.

Germany — Pale Mother fulfils some of Helma Sanders-Brahms' aims: it shows the experiences of the women and those who are left behind in a conflict. She has called it a positive story: it is not. I came away from it with the feeling that Lene's virtues — placidity, resourcefulness, inner strength and quietness — good as they may be, are unfortunately not enough in the face of something like Fascism, and never will be.

RITA DALTON

Books



A SINGLE SENSATION is not really a novel about abortion. Neither is it, as the cover claims, the story of "a girl from a middle-class midlands family whose unwanted pregnancy brings her face to face with the awful dilemma which some 10,000 unmarried Irish girls every year solve by making a tragic journey to Britain".

The "awful dilemma" faced by Jessica is not whether or not to have an abortion — that is a decision which she has already made, and made apparently without much difficulty. She has the money for the abortion, the arrangements have been made, she will travel to Britain at the appointed time and return to her job, her flat in Dublin and no one need ever know.

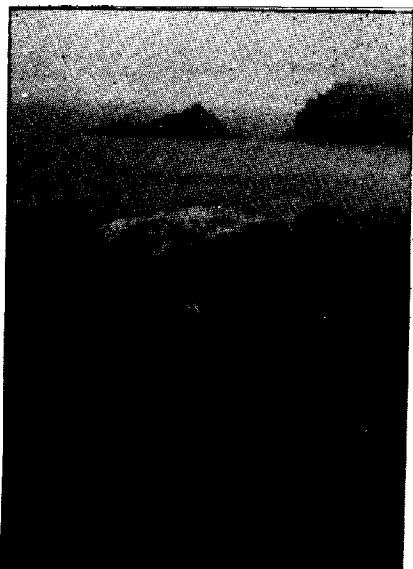
She is not a confused and frightened 17 year old from a small town who must either face the fury of her family — or worse, the tears and recrimination — or steal away like a criminal, lie about a weekend away with friends and then live that lie for years.

No, Jessica's dilemma is that she is a mature single woman who finds herself suddenly very much alone, facing an uncertain future in

a society where most women her age have settled down with a man, a mortgage and motherhood.

Simply told the story of A SINGLE SENSATION is that Jessica's young lover is killed in a car crash. A short time later a drunken night with a Dutchman ends in an unwanted pregnancy. The abortion is arranged and just before she leaves for London she returns home to the Midlands for a funeral. The book tells of the evening and morning she spends with her mother and married sister and the trouble that follows when she reveals that she is to have an abortion.

But the story is not simply told. Jessica's narrative twists in and out of the past, a collage of disjointed conversations, scattered images, imagined scenes, childhood memories, remembered lovers and a restless turning over of old hurts. The author Emma Cooke is obviously more concerned with technique than plot. But then she is not so much telling a story as exploring the relationship between the three women and between Jessica herself, her past, and her present.



Treat yourself or a friend to the **REAL IRELAND** calendar 1982

Available from all good newsagents. Price £3.50p or from Real Ireland Ltd., 4a Higgins Court, Lad Lane, Dublin 2. P&P extra.

THE 1982 Irish Women's Diary & Guide Book is now available.

An extensive text provides information on some 35 topics ranging from the aged to youth and includes a guide to some 300 groups and organisations.

This year the Guide has a major feature on Northern Ireland, describing the main legal, social and economic obstacles faced by women there as they differ from the South. A discussion of the current economic crisis in both the North and the South is also given considerable space.

At £2.41½ (inclusive of VAT) the Guide represents good value for money and would be a welcome gift. It is available from bookshops and newsagents.



The Guide is published by Irish Feminist Information, c/o Books Upstairs, 25 Market Arcade, Dublin 2.

There are few points of contact and little understanding between Jessica and the two women. Esme is a happily married mother of nine, devout Catholic and model wife of a Limerick dentist. The mother, once an "Irish beauty of the golden twenties" is abandoned by her husband for a red-haired lady publican, forced to sell her home and furniture, to put up with the pity and the pointing fingers, and to live alone in a small flat. But now she is getting married again, so Jessica who has had more lovers than either of them is the only one left without a man and a mapped out future.

Esme and the mother may not understand Jessica, her way of life or her decision to have an abortion, but then Jessica makes no effort to understand them, or to help them understand her.

A SINGLE SENSATION could have been a very sad story — the tragic death of Jessica's lover, her loneliness, the few minutes of joyless sex with a stranger which end in pregnancy, her desperate attempts to miscarry — a nightmare of crochet needles and gin — the con-

sultation with a doctor which ends when he unzips his trousers, her return home to the past that has haunted her.

But I found it impossible to be moved by Jessica's plight. Partly because she feels so much pity for herself. She sees herself as "a little matchgirl", "a stranded jellyfish waiting to be squashed to pieces" and "a lonely little petunia in an onion patch".

'the book is full of images and phrases that jar'

And her (perhaps natural) absorption in her own problems degenerates into destructive selfishness. She chooses for example, the very moment when her mother announced her engagement to tell them that she is about to have an abortion, so robbing her mother of whatever little happiness the occasion might have given her. Like a spoilt child, Jessica cannot bear to see anyone else happy when she is not.

Jessica's self absorption is such that I find myself agreeing with Esme — although I'm sure the author didn't intend it — when she says "People are being blown up, starving, shot in the back, dying of incurable diseases. You're not the worst off..."

The author chooses to use a consciously poetic language. But striving for effect, she overreaches herself and the book is full of images and phrases that jar. Jessica, for example, describes her pregnancy as "my womb's gates closed around an unwanted bud" and refers to her sister's period as "her droplets of fuschia benediction".

The fragmentary disjointed narrative, the overly poetic language and the author's failure to create a sympathetic principal character all combine to weaken the emotional impact of the novel. And it doesn't really succeed on an intellectual level either. A SINGLE SENSATION raises a number of important issues — for the individual and for society — but then it fails to deal with them in any depth.

Instead we are left with a confusing collage of impressions which add little to our understanding of Irish society or of an individual in Jessica's position.

The cover of A SINGLE SENSATION claims that it "reveals the hurt humanity beneath the tangled passions of abortion in Ireland". But the novel reveals neither the "hurt humanity" nor the "tangled passions". Indeed it is a pity that Emma Cooke, having chosen such an important, controversial and socially revealing subject, should have done so little with it.

A SINGLE SENSATION has reached the bestsellers' list and will doubtless remain there for some time. Indeed you could argue that any work by an Irish writer which is advertised as a book about abortion is bound to sell well. But it remains to be seen whether this book will achieve any lasting recognition. I, for one, have my doubts.

Dee McGarry

A SINGLE SENSATION by Emma Cooke. Published by Poolbeg Press. Paperback £2.87½p including taxes.

BREAKING THE CHAINS: Selected writings of James Connolly on women, published by the Northern Area Women's Committee, Communist Party of Ireland. Price 60p.

Breaking the Chains is a selection of writings on women by James Connolly, published by the Northern Area Women's Committee of the Communist Party of Ireland.

The pamphlet sets out Connolly's references to women in Irish society with brief comments from the unnamed selectors, rather than offering a full survey or analysis of Connolly's views.

Connolly was very alert to the particular plight of women which is reflected in the language that he used. The authors point to his repeated use of the distinction 'men and women', 'boys and girls', 'brothers and sisters', although like many a socialist of his day (and since),

Connolly often wrote as though the working class was exclusively male.

'Shake up for us the dry bones of history,' he wrote in his American paper *The Harp*, 'and tell us about the wives, mothers and daughters of the producing class of our native country.'

Yet much of his work as a trade union organiser was among women, notably the Belfast linen workers.

'Wherever there is a great demand for female labour as in Belfast, we find that the woman tends to become the chief support of the house. Driven out to work at the earliest possible age, she remains fettered to her wage earning — a slave for life.'

The pamphlet boldly tackles Connolly's traditional views on marriage and the family and his uncomfortably harsh dismissal of Bebel's classic, *Women and Socialism* as 'an excrescence upon the movement'. Auguste Bebel's pioneering study of women's oppression made the question of women's emancipation an integral part of socialist thinking before the First World War. Connolly's rejection of Bebel's argument came before he had joined forces with militant women labour and suffrage campaigners.

The decision to bring together Connolly's statements on women as a series

of quotes interspersed with comment and occasional backup from Lenin, makes the pamphlet difficult to read. The broken text, made even more unreadable in places by underlining, offers neither the flow of Connolly's ideas nor the value of a sustained commentary.

Breaking the Chains is, nevertheless, a useful and thoughtful introduction to Connolly's writings on women and bridges that gap in most established Connolly biographies and anthologies.

THERESE MORIARTY

'BLOOD SISTERS'

Take a dozen or so significant dates in Ireland's recent history. Invent a family tree to tie in with the events and personalities of the period. Involve the younger generation in the Provos' terrorist bombing campaign on both sides of the Irish sea... and there you have it — the perfect novell!

Such is the claim of the publishers of **BLOOD SISTERS** by American author Valerie Miner. In theory this recipe could have produced a very good novel — the procedure has often been used to good effect — but in this instance it just doesn't work.

The reason is that the author seems to have just picked headlines at random from the daily papers and built her characters around them — with a good helping of clichés thrown in for good measure. This is a pity because the theme of the novel is one which needs to be dealt with and because too it raises the contemporary debate between the main female characters of their divided political priorities: Liz's to women and Beth's to Ireland!

BLOOD SISTERS is set in London and California from 1974 to '76 and opens with Liz bidding farewell to her brother Larry and mother Polly as she leaves for a first-ever visit to London and her mother's twin sister Gerry and daughter Beth. Polly and Gerry had been raised in the 'Republican Faith' by parents Elizabeth and Patrick, veterans of the Easter Rising and the Civil War, but in their new lives in California and London respectively, the sisters find little reason for adhering to the old beliefs.

Though Polly wants to forget the past, Liz intends her trip to London to be merely a stopping-off point on her way to Ireland to 'find her roots'. With some journalistic experience behind her she hopes to become a correspondent covering the 'situation' in Ireland.

But she soon becomes deeply involved with her cousin and through her with the Provisionals' activists in London. Despite a brief sojourn in a commune, a falling out with Beth because of Provo policy, and disillusionment with her job on a so-called liberal magazine, Liz postpones her visit to 'the old country' indefinitely.

When Liz takes up writing for a magazine of the women's movement she tries to win Beth over to her side but Beth's attempts to involve the movement in Provo solidarity campaigns drives the cousins apart once again.

Her brother Larry's decision to come to London to study doesn't help either. Before long he is involved in a relationship with Beth which estranges herself and Liz even further when, through Liz, his involvement with the Provos grows from fund raising to terrorist actions.

Larry plants a bomb outside a crowded restaurant but it goes off prematurely and he loses his right hand. With the help of a family friend in the US senate he avoids prosecution and is flown home.

The incident reunites the cousins and Liz returns to share the falt with Beth and Gerry. Liz's attempts to help

Topical theme but unreal characters

Beth cope with Larry's departure and the necessity for her to break all contact with the Provisionals to avoid detection following the bomb blast brings the cousins closer together and they gain a new understanding of each other's point of view.

The trip to Ireland is eventually decided upon and Polly is due to arrive from the States over the weekend. But the past is not so easily disposed of. Through an old contact Beth discovers that the Provos intend to plant bombs in the government offices in Whitehall... where her mother Gerry works as a typist.

Beth's knowledge of the entrances to the building makes her involvement necessary to their plans and they leak the information to her. They allow her to believe that she has persuaded them to plant the bombs at night thinking that her mother will be safe and she decides on a night when she believes that Gerry regularly does a novena.

But, deed done, and racing from the building with her Provo compatriot, Beth sees lights in her mother's office and realises that Gerry is working overtime. There is no time for a warning — Beth and her companion have carried out their task well. Beth is the only survivor and

though critically injured lives to face the result of her actions.

Polly remains only for the funeral and returns home. Liz stays on — stays to support Liz through convalescence, the trial and inevitable imprisonment, and pledges to herself she will write a book to help others understand — if only she can figure it all out herself!

What's wrong with this book is that the author really didn't understand her subjects either. Although the novel is well researched, the whole mood is very detached.

Valerie Miner is an experienced writer who works in London and teaches fiction and media at the University of California. She has obviously created her characters from facets of personalities within the Irish community in both locations — which would account for the rather clichéd style of the whole novel. Nonetheless, it is an interesting book and worth reading.

MARGARET O'LEARY

BLOOD SISTERS (An Examination of Conscience)
by Valerie Miner. Published by The Women's Press. Paperback. U.K. Price £3.50.

British Right to Choose campaign has lessons for Ireland

MARY McMAHON

Abortion Politics is unlikely to find its way onto the bookshelves of anyone wishing to learn about the politics of abortion. It more correctly belongs to the library of political science departments as a reference book for students of parliamentary politics and particularly those wishing to research the committee stages of private members legislation.

According to the back flap, the Corrie Bill is used "to examine how our elected representatives choose to vote when freed from the constraints of the party whip". That might provide interesting political reading. But the book is badly written, repetitive (for example we are told three times that 50 amendments were placed in 28 separate groups) and highly sectionalised. It is written with the academic's detached involvement from the human consequences of the proposed legislation and very clearly underlines that the 1967 Abortion Act has very little to do with 'A woman's right to choose'.

The failure of either of the main political parties in Britain to actively support abortion legislation is interesting from two points of view. It proves very clearly that abortion is a class issue, as well as a women's issue and the Conservative Party, almost unanimously in Parliament

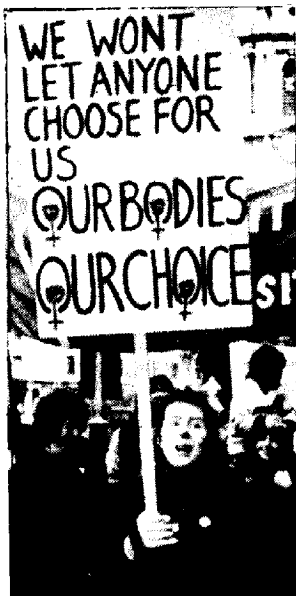
(and including the Prime Minister) have always supported measures aimed at weakening the 1967 legislation. On the other hand, despite the belated decision of the Labour Party to support abortion in 1975, no subsequent Labour Government took any initiative to introduce progressive change in the 1967 Act, such as removing the two doctors' consent clause. But it was always favourably disposed towards individual MPs who wished to introduce progressive change and would defend the existing legislation against attacks like Corrie's.

The book very clearly demonstrates that were it not for the presence of the Woman's Officer from the National Executive Committee at many of the debates on Corrie, then some Labour MPs would have been less than willing to obey Party policy. The other disturbing factor that the book reveals is the influence, and almost god-like status in which MPs of all parties hold medical opinion. Indeed substantially more space is given to dis-

cussing the views and methods of lobbying by the various medical and paramedical groups on the Corrie Bill than women's groups.

One can certainly learn a lot from this book about the inner workings of committees in Parliament and the legislative process. The knowledge that it was only the determined pro-abortion MPs whose knowledge of that system led to the ultimate defeat of the Corrie Bill is disturbing for those who think that the 1967 Act is secure.

Abortion legislation will never be secure until it is in law as well as slogans, a woman's right to choose and the medical professions are placed at the disposal of the people they are supposed to serve instead of acting as their patrons. And for those who think the '67 Act should be extended into Northern Ireland as it is or copied as a basis for legislation in the Republic, I can only advise that much better legislation would be new legislation based on what women want, not what the medical profession will allow.



Girls magazines — early brainwashing

Shocking Pink is a magazine for young women — with a difference. It is not the usual girls' magazine crammed with boy meets girl romance and pathetic love stories. Instead it discusses topics other so called girls' magazines fail to mention such as under age sex, sexism and the problems of lesbianism.

Magazines such as *Jackie*, *My Guy*, *Loving* are not reality. They are full of girls chasing boys, with no other ideas in their heads except thoughts of love and marriage. These magazines are also full of advertisements for make-up, hair remover etc., usually

accompanied by a drippy story showing girls that they too can be a hit at the local disco if they use such and such. **Shocking Pink** sees teenage girls as much more than just stereotypes interested in nothing more than cosmetics and the latest fashions. It shows them as independent, thinking individuals just as intelligent as boys of their own age.

Shocking Pink is well laid out and is full of information as well as light-hearted anti-sexism stories. I particularly enjoyed the ones about Penny Sillin, a feminist punk, and another about Cindy, a

feminist doll, both were extremely entertaining and anti-sexist. In the second issue there was an interesting piece on women as musicians, showing girls that it's not only the boys who have the ability to form bands and play gigs. It also reviews plays and gigs, a worthwhile column instead of the usual problem page in most drippy girls' magazines.

Shocking Pink is available from 4 Essex Road, London W3. Mail order costs 34p including postage, and is well worth buying if you're fed up to the teeth of the magazines available for girls in Ireland.



T.V.

If you're depending on the Box for entertainment during the long winter nights — don't! The Autumn/Winter TV schedules were announced at the beginning of October and all in all are a motley lot.

If you live in an area that only gets RTE better renew those library tickets and check out the prospect of evening classes. Still, if you're a Gaybo fan you'll be okay on Saturday nights, for he's back on a two-hour slot twenty years on and still going strong.

To be fair The Late Late has given an airing to many subjects which deserved publicity and were denied it elsewhere. It often provides interesting viewing if you can put up with Gaybo's condescending attitude to issues he disapproves of.

There are one or two bright spots on offer. The

Sunday evening Play spot shows promise. Their first effort, **THE BONDAGE FIELD**, was about a young Manchester girl married to a Belfast lad who, unknown to her, is an IRA activist.

The other plays in this series will also deal with topical themes so could be worth watching.

Monday and Tuesday on RTE has little to excite the viewer. With the exception of Today Tonight which is usually interesting, good old MASH is the only programme worth a mention. A pleasure for anybody who likes Alan Alda's special style of cynicism. In its own way it has an anti-war message which is badly needed in the wake of recent maniacal proposals from Ronald 'Strangelove' Reagan.

PRIVATE SCHULZ on RTE 2 Wednesday is definitely worth setting aside an hour for — it's one of the funniest programmes on view right now. Coincidentally,

COVER STORY, the (painful) new quiz game on RTE's first channel on the same night, recently featured Gunther Shutz, a German spy who escaped from Mountjoy Jail during the war and who could have been the prototype of **PRIVATE SHULTZ**.



Jeananne Crowley

Viewers in multi-channel land are a little luckier. The series of films starring Glenda Jackson was superb.

Don't miss **WOMEN IN THE EIGHTIES**, BBC 2 late on Sunday nights. The first programme in the series featured the seven

month fight by women workers at Lee Jeans, Greenock, Scotland.

BBC 2 has that compelling feature, **THE BORGIIAS** every Wednesday night.

Not to be missed is a new ten-part drama series on BBC 1 on Thursday nights which will run until the end of the year. **TENKO** recalls the traumatic effects on European women of their capture and incarceration by the Japanese during the Second World War. Irish actress (and journalist) Jeananne Crowley plays one of the leading parts.

Few highlights on offer from Ulster TV but some regular good current affairs programmes. BBC's second channel of course continues to be excellent in this regard. And that's about it...

Did I forget to mention the Muppets? Still the best lighthearted programme on television for kids of any age!

MARGARET O'LEARY

Limerick hosts first women's arts festival



Ireland's first ever Festival of Women's Art was organised by the Limerick Women's Collective during September in the Belltable Arts Centre in Limerick. MAURA McINERNEY who visited the exhibition sent us her own impressions of some of the works on show — but asked us to bear in mind that she has no pretensions to being an art critic!

The exhibition was free and each of the artists involved had been asked to send in five pieces. It was an exhibition by women artists as opposed to an exhibition on the theme 'Women'.

Some of the pieces did have feminist themes, in particular most of the works by Charlotte Cryer and *Openings* by Sarah Davidmann. (*Openings* was a series of what looked like tin boxes on a piece of hardboard, all crushed into different shapes representing vaginas of differing shapes and sizes.)

Impending Doom by Jacinta Feeny (titled *Imprisoned* at the actual exhibition) I particularly liked although it was less than subtle — a group of women doing everyday things but with prison bars superimposed on the whole scene. Jean Duncan's *The Peaceful Road to Socialism*

was a small woven wall hanging with clumps of wool hanging out of it. I couldn't make any sense out of it myself!

Geraldine Sadler's drawings were particularly good. Charlotte Cryer's *Birthday Cake* was huge — it was in the middle of the floor — at first I thought it was a seat and almost sat on it!

Generally, visitors to the Women's Exhibition seemed to think it was a good idea but tended to believe that the artistic merit of some of the items was a little dubious — my own reactions exactly.

COURTS AID PART-TIME WORKERS

FATTER pay packets for women who have part-time jobs may come from a decision of the European Communities Court of Justice.

The case was brought before the Court by Ms Jenkins, with the backing of the Equal Opportunities Commission. As a part-time worker, she had been receiving 10p an hour less than her male counterparts working full-time and she felt that she was the victim of discrimination on the grounds of sex.

The industrial tribunal to which the case was first referred found for the employer, who explained the difference in wages by saying it was due to material factors. An appeal court referred the matter to the Court of Justice of the European Communities for its view on whether article 119 of the Treaty of Rome was applicable.

The Court of Justice stated that there might be objective reasons why the hourly wage paid for part-time work should be lower than that paid for full-time work. But it pointed out that if the wage rate depends on the sex of the person working, this would constitute discrimination.

This opinion introduces the concept of "indirect discrimination" in the interpretation of British law on equal pay. Industrial tribunals dealing with similar cases will have to look at the facts of the case, including the background to the differences in wages between full-time and part-time work.

OVER 1,000 women from 132 countries condemned state violence and the terror campaign of the paramilitaries in Northern Ireland at a World Congress of Women held in the Czechoslovak capital of Prague.

Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement delegate Carmel Roulston found one of the most interesting aspects of the Congress was "the contacts which you made with women from all over the world". She learnt from US delegates that women from racial minorities face compulsory sterilisation when they enter hospital for routine operations.



POLAND'S F.P. SERVICES

POLAND's Catholic Church has traditionally been very powerful, but it is only comparatively recently that Church antagonism to family planning agencies in Poland has come strongly to the fore.

That opposition had always been there but because of the government's firm support for TRR, the established family planning agency, it had not posed a serious threat to services, although Catholic groups set up several thousand of their own 'Marital Counselling' centres.

From the mid-seventies on, the situation deteriorated. Increasing public unrest in Poland led the government to rely more heavily on Church support. When this was allied to the policy of a high birthrate of Edward Gierak (First Secretary of the Communist Party of that time), who wanted a demographically strong country, it was inevitable that family planning services should come under threat.

This process reached its peak in 1980. With the emergency of Solidarity, Catholic groups began to campaign actively and openly against TRR services. TRR are counter-campaigning for the services to remain accessible. They point out that Poland's birth rate remains one of the

highest in Europe (19.5 per 1,000 in 1979) and that far from being a threat to the population, family planning is essential if the material and social conditions of families are not to decline.

TRR strongly emphasises the need for public health personnel to be well informed on all contraceptive methods, "natural" or otherwise and argue strongly that since contraception is closely linked to the health of women and the family, it should be treated like any other branch of preventive medicine.

They also feel strongly that the existing fairly liberal abortion laws should not be restricted. Making abortion illegal would only push it into the backstreets and TRR feels that the only really effective measure against abortion is good information and availability of contraception.

The recent upheavals in Poland and the increasing strength of Solidarity have led to Catholic groups obtaining greater freedom to work openly. It is somewhat ironic that these groups, hailed among western liberals as champions of freedom of conscience and religion, should use that freedom to launch a sectarian crusade against family planning.

Native American Indians are amongst those most likely to suffer the abuse. Delegates were also amazed at the primitive conditions in many of the third world countries in the American sphere of influence. Carmel recalls "In Guyana there is not one single family planning clinic".

In the session on "Women for National Independence and Development" a spokesperson for the Latin American Union of Women roundly condemned "the criminal character of US intervention" in the region.

The conditions described by women from socialist countries were in marked contrast. Another NIWRM delegate commented "creche and child care facilities were excellent", and added that in most of the socialist bloc at least a year's paid maternity leave was provided, with plans being considered to extend the period to three or even six years where a woman had two or more young children.

ITALIAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

THREE hundred women, from every region of Italy, met in Rome for the fourth national conference of women farm workers who are members of the federation of women agricultural labourers attached to CGIL, the national confederation of labour.

Discussions bore not just on usual union matters such as jobs and the organisation of work, but took in other aspects of women workers on the land such as health, maternity and social services.

At this year's national conference of the CGIL, about 200 women spoke on the various committees and in the general assembly. Luciano Lama, the general secretary pointed out how greatly the entry of women into the world of work had transformed society, including the internal changes within the trade union movement.

NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN AT RISK

ANGRY at the way that Northern Ireland's politicians, clerics and media sweep the 'Abortion Trail' under the carpet, the Northern Ireland Abortion Campaign (NIAC) forced the issue into the headlines by sending Westminster MPs a symbol of what abortion means to many local women — a coathanger.

The campaign for safe, legal abortion in Northern Ireland got underway following the tragic death in 1979 of Charlotte Hutton from Sandy



Row in Belfast. Charlotte died at the hands of local GP and backstreet abortionist Harvey Jackson, who was convicted earlier this year.

NIAC's submission to the MPs presents the stark alternatives facing women with unwanted pregnancies. "By the end of 1981," they point out, "nearly 3,000 women will have travelled from Northern Ireland to England to obtain a private abortion."

"Women who cannot afford the fare and the cost of a private abortion (£200) will have turned to the backstreet or to themselves using any implements from knitting needles to coat hangers, risking sterility and death."

There have been cases in Northern Ireland of rape victims, 13 year old schoolgirls, and women with serious mental and social problems all being refused abortion.

BIASED

Damages paid to victims of personal violence raises the worrying question of how far male bias effects judges' decisions?

A single page of the *Bulletin of Northern Ireland Law* lists three cases where compensation was paid out to claimants under the North's criminal injuries legislation. The three awards were made to two women and a man.

In the first case the young woman suffered severe physical injuries and nervous shock that led to her being detained in hospital for six weeks. Since then she had had difficulty sleeping and is afraid to go out. She also underwent a change in her personality.

The second woman was a young nurse only 17 years old who was attacked and raped three times. She was ten weeks pregnant at the time and was badly bruised as a result of her ordeal.

Shock and distress made it impossible for her to continue with her pregnancy and she had an abortion. She finds it difficult now to have relationships with men and to continue with her social life.

The middle aged man was injured by a kick in the testicles. His personal injuries were bruises, pain and suffering. And whilst he had no lasting injury he was left impotent by the attack.

What seems so baffling in these cases is the discrepancy in the damages that three different judges thought these injuries warranted.

- The young woman who was sexually assaulted and hospitalised for six weeks was awarded £3,500.

- The woman who was raped was awarded £5,000.

- The man who was made impotent was awarded £20,000. This was reduced to £17,500 since he had not gone to the doctors for treatment, which might have had some success at overcoming his impotence.

Do the Republic's judges come to such varying awards? It's not possible to know since the Criminal Injuries Tribunal doesn't make the relevant information available.

EQUAL PAY VICTORIES IN LAB. COURT

IN a long-running battle in the Labour Court the Irish Union of Distributive Workers and Clerks have won equal pay for almost 130 women workers of the PMPA, backdated to 1978, although it has been strongly resisted by the company.

Although equal pay for all women officials in the PMPA was won almost four years ago, the company has fought every individual claim forcing the union to return each time to the Labour Court to win former employees of the firm their equal rights.

Each case had to be made separately by comparison with a named man working at 'like work' and being paid a higher rate for the job.

The first breakthrough in winning back payment came with the equality officer's recommendation No. 20 in 1980 when fifteen women won back pay. Even when five cases

were lost, the union succeeded in getting the equality officer's recommendations reversed.

But even then the company didn't pay out and over fifty of the cases were taken to the High Court.

The Executive Committee of the Distributive and Clerks union are taking up these cases and expect a decision soon.

★ *MARGARET Bobbet, a former sales representative with Inter Beauty, an Irish subsidiary of Innox, won equal pay for like work with a salesman still working for the company.*

When she applied for equal pay Inter Beauty would only offer her a rise in her wages. So she left the job since this meant she could not get her full entitlement to equal and back pay.

She continued her claim

against Inter Beauty and won her rights for equal pay from 1977 until she left the firm last year.

★ *CARMEL Fagan and Sally Fay, waiting-room attendants at Dublin's Connolly Station won equal pay for work of equal value with five carriage cleaners and depotmen at the same station.*

CIE told the women that they were not doing the same work but they could apply for two new vacancies for cleaning workers.

Since this meant the women would lose their entitlement under the equal pay law to back pay for the time they had been doing the same duties as the men, both women refused CIE's offer.

They won their case after an appeal to the Labour Court with back payment for three years.



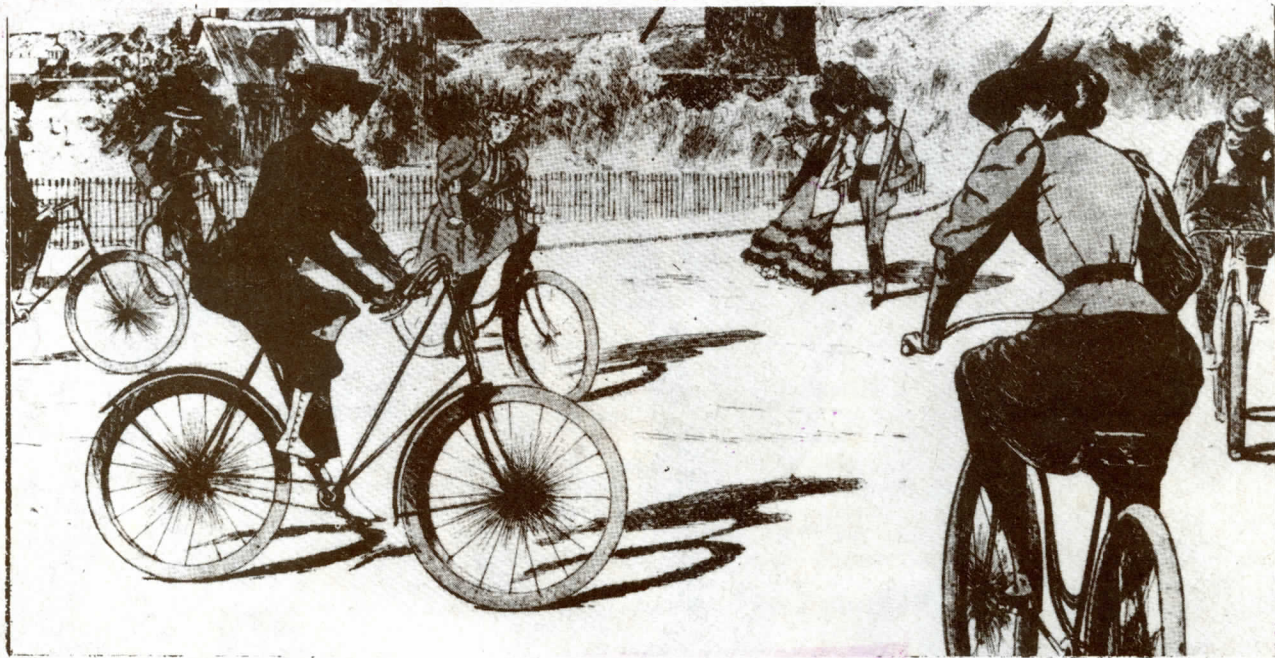
If we choose to walk alone,
For us there is no safety zone,
If we're attacked we bear the blame,
They say that we began the game.
And though you prove your injury,
The judge may set the rapist free:
Therefore the victim is to blame,
Call it nature, but rape's the name.

NEXT ISSUE

Reclaim the night and win the day,
We want the right that should be our own:
A freedom women have seldom known:
The right to live, the right to walk alone,
Without fear. (Words: Peggy Seeger/Ewan McColl)

**HOW RAPE LIMITS EVERY
WOMAN'S FREEDOM**
BY Ann O'Donnell (Rape Crisis Centre)

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