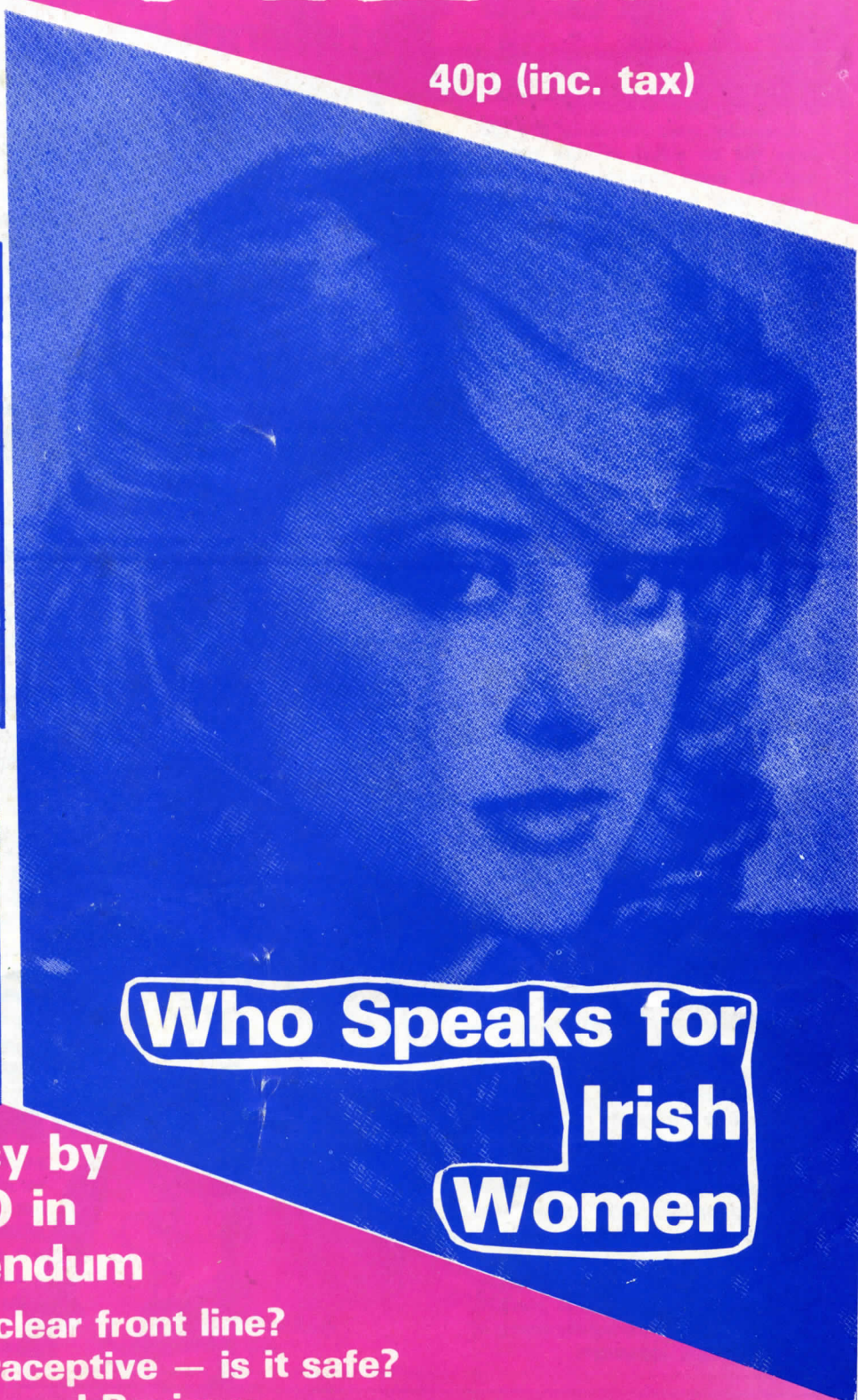


No. 9 Spring/Summer 1983

Ireland's Current  
Affairs Quarterly

# WOMENS VIEW

40p (inc. tax)



**Who Speaks for  
Irish  
Women**

**Protect  
democracy by  
voting NO in  
the referendum**

**Ireland in nuclear front line?  
A new Contraceptive — is it safe?  
News, Views and Reviews**



An extract from the speech by Tomas Mac Giolla  
during the Amendment debate in Dáil Éireann

**T**his is a black day for democracy and will be seen as such in 30 or 40 years time. I want to mention the constant references to pro-life in this debate particularly by Deputy Woods. He referred to pro-life amendment, pro-life people and said: "we are pro-life." I want to declare to this House that I am pro-life and I have been pro-life in many campaigns over a long number of years. I was pro-life in campaigns against the Vietnam War, against other wars, against NATO, against nuclear missiles, against terrorism and against legal executions.

I wonder what record of pro-life have the so called pro-life people had, the small fanatical group who began what they called the pro-life campaign. In many cases they are the very people who support legal executions, nuclear weapons, joining NATO, whipping, lashing and hanging.

I want to nail the pro-life suggestion, that those who oppose the amendment are anti-life and that those who support it are pro-life. The case is almost the reverse. Many babies who were unborn in 1945 when the Atom bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki are dying today and have been dying for many years. Therefore, the actions of Governments in relation to nuclear weapons and all weapons of war should be as vital a concern to the so-called pro-life people and members on the Fianna Fáil benches who have followed this line.

It is no great credit on the Taoiseach either who has shown such political ineptness and lack of political integrity. On his own admission he went into this at the last election knowing it was wrong but for political purposes he went along with it. He says now he knew at that time he should never have done it but he did it to win an election as though that made it alright. This is not political integrity or courage of the type needed here.

We have seen the effect in this House and outside in the past few months where confusion and division has been growing. Just imagine how that will be during the course of the campaign throughout the country at the time of a Referendum on this amendment. We saw the kind of picket outside this House last Tuesday, when bus loads of fanatics came with their posters about slaughter of the innocence, about Herod and Hitler. This is precisely what will happen during the course of a referendum campaign.

## VOTE FOR DEMOCRACY

## Vote NO in the Referendum

**H**ere we have an amendment to the Constitution which is totally meaningless and of no benefit to anyone but a grave danger to many women in the future. The Taoiseach has shown that he is the leader of the people in Government. He is the person that the people look up to for leadership. He is the person who should have made some decision when he saw the situation a few months ago.

We put down an amendment here months ago to have this matter referred to an all-Party committee. Surely the Taoiseach could have seen the difficulties being caused to the country, to himself and his own Party and the other Members. He could at that time have referred it to an all-Party committee where there could have been discussions and perhaps all-Party agreement. So far in this debate all the speakers for the

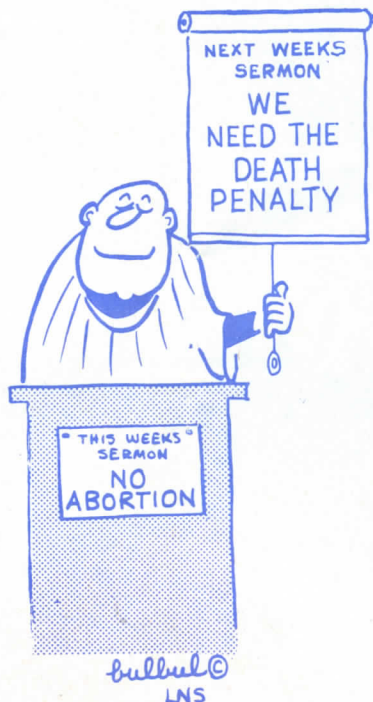
amendment have confined themselves to condemnation of abortion. They have done so day after day, week after week. If a motion were before this House that it condemns abortion, there would be no problem and the motion would be passed. However, that is not the issue. The issue is an amendment to the Constitution which is before the House.

What is perhaps the most serious concern of any responsible elected representative here is to consider the enormity of what this amendment proposes to do. Here, in Ireland, in 1983, in Dáil Éireann, we are proposing to define what no other country at no other time in history had the temerity or audacity to do — we are proposing to define precisely when human life begins and what in essence is a human being. If this amendment is passed it will have to be interpreted and that interpretation will mean such a definition. We are proposing to do what medical science, the philosophers and even the theologians have been unable to do.

But in so far as this country — specifically this small body of politicians — decides to impose on society a precise definition of the moment of humanity, then we are making ourselves preposterous.

The irony of this amendment is that it might very well affect adversely the very people who want children, who are prepared to go to great lengths to have their own children. Those infertile couples who seek the most modern medical treatment to help them conceive and bear children may well be victims.

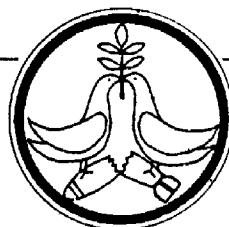
There is no doubt that while most Irish people are opposed to abortion they also feel very strongly that the life in the womb, in all justice, cannot possibly have a stronger claim on life than the woman concerned, a woman, who, in very many cases, is responsible for the care of other children. Thus this phrase "with due regard to the equal right to the life of the mother" was seen in the beginning as an acknowledgement of the woman's claim on her own life, an enshrinement in some way of what we all truly believe. However, this is not the case. A close scrutiny of the phrase itself and the context in which it is put show that it means practically nothing in real human terms. In fact it may be interpreted in such a way as to seriously jeopardise present medical practice.



# WOMENS VIEW

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## contents



**4** **News Briefs**  
*around the country*

**7** **Why The Workers' Party  
opposes the Amendment**

**8** **It's a Quare Name  
but Great Stuff:  
but is it Safe?**  
*a new contraceptive*

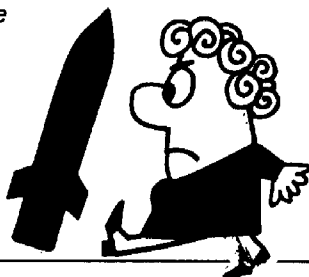
**10** **Where the Action is**  
*Workers' Party women*

**11** **Nicaraguan Women**  
*lead the way*  
*On the spot report  
from central America*

**12** **A Hard and Dirty Job**  
*Home Helps*

**14** **Ireland in Nuclear Front Line**  
*what price neutrality?*

**15** **Europe Demands Peace**  
*Peace is Possible*



**18** **Ruth First**  
*Murdered for her opposition  
to apartheid*

**19** **New Push for Equal  
Rights Amendment**  
*US States don't wait around*

**20** **Sligo women on the Move**  
*the West's awake!*

**Sitting Down on the Job!**  
*turning full circle*

**22** **Family violence**  
*a new study*

**24** **Teachers' Union Conferences**  
*Unity the keynote*

**News Briefs**  
*Around the World*

**27** **Women in the News**

**28** **Reviews**  
*Films*  
*Books*



## New cancer test centre

DUBLIN women who have never had a cervical smear test — or those who have had tests some time ago can now call into the Health Centre at North Strand on the second Thursday of each month between 2 and 4 p.m. for this service.

Appointments are not necessary and women are urged to avail of this test which is free, painless and will take up only a few minutes of their time.

A cervical smear test aims to detect pre-cancerous conditions in the cells of the neck of the womb. The Irish Cancer Society, who are sponsoring the clinic, says cancer of the cervix could be completely eradicated if all women had this simple and painfree test at intervals throughout their lives.

There are thirty other clinics around the country offering the smear test — phone 681855 for details of your local centre.

## Progressive move

THE Minister for Health Mr Desmond has amended the Boarding Out of Children Regulations of 1954 with effect from April 1st. The change will lift the ban which up to now has prevented health boards from placing children in homes of different religions.

Children may now be boarded out or placed with foster parents of a different religion provided their natural parents agree.

The new regulations provide for details to be sent to a nearby minister of the child's own religion and also provide for a minimum number of visits by health board personnel.

## Vaccination scheme extended

THE Department of Health is to extend the free rubella (german measles) vaccination scheme to all girls and women of child-bearing age. The free scheme, started in the Republic in 1971 confined to schoolgirls between 11 and 13, but was broadened some years later to include women *particularly* at risk, such as nurses and teachers.

There are 150,000 women in the Republic who have not been immunised against the disease. Although some may have had german measles as a child, only a blood test can determine for sure.

German measles is a very mild disease of only a couple of days duration but its effect on the foetus can result in severe deformities. The free vaccination service is available at any health board or from your local doctor.



## Tralee women lose equal pay claim

WOMEN workers at a Tralee based subsidiary of Borg-Wagner International Corporation, a US based multinational, lost their claim for equal pay at the Labour Court.

The 122 women were appealing against an equality officer's ruling that they were not entitled to equal pay with a maintenance worker at the factory.

The union claimed the man was not doing all the tasks detailed by the company and the women's work was of equal value because it demanded similar skill, mental effort and responsibility as the man.

The company insisted that the man's working conditions were more unpleasant than the women's and the Court backed the equality officer's decision against the women's claims.

At the same factory 16 women quality control inspectors also lost their claim for equal pay when the Labour Court took a similar decision to back the equality officer's recommendation that the women were not entitled to equal pay.

All the women work in the assembly area and are paid £72.86 a week. The male inspector in the machine shop gets a weekly wage of £89.47.

The equality officer ruled that the differences involved in the task at the assembly and the machine shop ruled out the women's claim to be doing similar work. Nor is it of equal value though physical effort and working conditions on both jobs were equally demanding. Once again the union claimed that the male inspector was not doing the range of duties the company had laid down. And that the women had a greater responsibility than the man.

But the labour Court accepted the equality officer original verdict. The Court visited the factory to decide for themselves, examine the work of all those involved in the claim, before reaching its decision.

## Do It Yourself pays off



THREE years of backbreaking but fulfilling work, cake sales, fashion shows, sponsored walks, begging for grants and donations and studying for a playgroup foundation course have paid off for mothers in the Corduff estate in Blanchardstown Co. Dublin.

A playgroup catering for 80 children daily is the result of their dedication. Now housed in a pre-fab on a permanent site, the Playgroup takes in 80 preschoolers each morning in four classes of 20 children each.

All of the mothers help with running the playgroup on a rota basis supervised by the four full time staff of local women; Mary Gorman, Ann Hennessy, Ann O'Shea and Wendy Glennon.

The weekly charge for each child is £2 or £1 if there is no wage coming into the home. This is just enough to meet the running costs for heat, light and equipment.





## Womens AID

EIGHT Irish couples who had given up hope of parenthood following traditional infertility tests have been helped by the AID services provided by the Dublin Well Womens' Centre.

An Artificial Insemination by Donor service has been on offer at the centre for the past eighteen months. So far three couples have become parents and five other women are well into their pregnancies.

Contacting the Centre is usually the end of the line for couples who desperately want children but have proved unable to commence a pregnancy and who may have been victims of the erratic qualifications demanded by many of the adoption agencies.

To date the Well Womens' Centre have been obtaining supplies from Sperm Banks in Liverpool and Birmingham as Ireland has not yet got such a facility. When couples first attend the centre for AID their blood groups and characteristics are matched to a donor on file — but there are no names and addresses and no clues by which the donor can ever be traced.

A woman who starts on AID must attend the centre every four weeks at a cost of £40 per month. Despite counselling women get disappointed very early on if they don't become pregnant but most persevere with the course of inseminations.

The service has been in operation for just over a year and has been used by some 200 couples. A success rate of eight from that number may not seem very great but even one child born to an otherwise infertile couple makes it all worthwhile to the staff of the Dublin Centre.

Interested couples can obtain further information by phoning the Centre at 789366 or 728095 or by writing to Dublin Well Womens' Centre, 63 Lr. Leeson Street, Dublin 2.

## 13 Rape victims pregnant

THERE were 13 pregnancies from rape last year according to new figures from the Rape Crisis Centre.

Ms Cathy O'Brien of the Centre, said that of 152 rapes reported to them last year, only 52 of the victims went to the gardai, and 38 court cases are still pending.

In three cases there were convictions for rape, one for attempted rape and two for indecent assault. Twelve of the victims avoided pregnancy by using the morning-after pill.

She said that one of the most fundamental misapprehensions about rape "is that it is a sexual act prompted by an irresistible urge on the part of the man and attractiveness on the part of a woman.

"This is not the case. We see rape as rather an aggressive, violent act using sex as a weapon to degrade and humiliate women." Most rapists knew their victim and usually it was a premeditated crime.

Ms O'Brien said the Centre is seriously concerned that the abortion amendment could outlaw the morning-after pill for victims of rape.

## N Ireland Maternity Services

A MEETING of The Workers' Party expressed grave disquiet at the delivery of ante-natal and maternity care services. Increasingly womens bodies, and lives, have been taken over and controlled by the male dominated medical profession and technology. Women attending ante-natal clinics are not treated as rational thinking human beings but a mere commodity. It is not uncommon for women to have to wait at least one hour before being seen in ante-natal clinics. The meeting noted that no provision is made for working women to be able to attend such clinics outside of working hours. Neither is any provision made for a woman to have other children minded when she attends.

It is difficult to separate how far deteriorating services are caused by attitudes among professionals or cut backs in funding. Many women are finding that in order to see gynaecologists they have to attend as private patients.

Is it surprising therefore, that Northern Ireland suffers the appalling rates of infant mortality and handicap which can only be improved by better socio-economic conditions and better services. Women in Northern Ireland have the worst of both worlds.

A determined effort must be made to bring services to those in need and search of them, in the community, and the consultants control on the public health services must be broken by a determined campaign to make them public servants.



## Short term fostering

AS long as Irish law allows the security of adoption only to orphans or children of unmarried parents thousands of children must endure institutional life.

One Health Board area — the Eastern — covering Leinster and Dublin City has recently stepped up its campaign to find foster parents for the children in their care.

The Fostering Resource Group says that about 200 children in this area are fostered annually, some on a long term basis and many only for a week or two. Short term fostering is an option in any family crisis and long term is usually the result of a breakdown in the family structure.

The Health Board sees the ideal foster family as one who enjoys and understands children and the pain they can feel. The Board provide a grant for fostering of about £1,300 per year depending on the age of the child as well as the children's allowance.

Information can be obtained from the Summerhill Health Centre, 725755 where the EHB is particularly interested in hearing from families living on Dublin's northside.



## Equality success

A DROGHEDA hairdresser, Teresa Gorman, won £1,500 compensation because her employers, Dinah Smith hair-dressing salon in Peter Street, had objected to employing a married woman.

Teresa Gorman married in April 1982. She had asked for a tax free allowance certificate to be sent to the tax office before she left on her honeymoon.

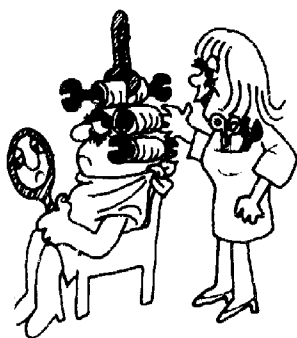
But when she returned her employer told her not to come back to work until she had the certificate. Although Teresa could have gone on emergency tax until her married person's tax free allowance was fixed, Dinah Smith's was not willing to accept this.

Teresa was dismissed. Her employer, Fred Simpson, told Teresa he had prior experience with married women and they were nothing but trouble, a claim that was not denied in the Labour Court report.

The Labour Court decided that despite offers to reinstate Teresa Gorman, and arguments that she was still needed at the salon, that the employer's action made it reasonable for Teresa Gorman to assume she had been dismissed.

As the reasons arose directly from Teresa's new status as a married woman, Dinah Smith's salon had contravened the Employment Equality Act which forbids dismissal because of a worker's marital status.

The Labour Court decided that Teresa Gorman should be paid £1,500 as compensation for the loss of her job.



## Playgroups lose out

THE hardworking Irish Pre-School Playgroups Association — guide and mentor for hundreds of voluntary groups throughout the country, has run foul of one more broken election promise by the government.

In February 1982 they were promised a grant of £16,000 to subsidise office running costs for the year and to pay for the service of a national adviser.

In April they received a cheque for £6,000 and many phone calls and letters later, were told in December that the overdue £10,000 was, like Christmas, coming soon!

In January of this year the cheque for £10,000 arrived at the IPPA office with a note that this was for 1983 and not the balance due for last year as promised.

Children come very low on the government priority list.

## Family Planning

TO coincide with celebrations for International Women's Day the Workers' Party Dublin North-West Women's Group arranged a well-attended meeting on 'Family Planning — The Political Implications'.

The meeting was chaired by Philomena Donnelly who introduced speakers Christine Donaghy of the Irish Family Planning Association and Proinsias De Rossa, local TD for the Workers' Party.

The public meeting was part of the campaign to have the Eastern Health Board open a Family Planning Centre in their Finglas premises. Local Workers' Party branches and the women's group have already collected 2,000 signatures in support of this demand.

They will be meeting Health and Social Service Minister, Barry Desmond to discuss the introduction of this facility.

A corresponding campaign is being organised by the Workers' Party branch in Inchicore, Dublin. However, the local health clinic is unable to take on extra duties in its already overcrowded state, and there is popular support for the immediate commencement of work on the site for the new centre.



## Poor ante-natal care for travellers

THE low level of ante-natal care received by itinerant mothers is the main cause of infant mortality among this section of our population.

Itinerant mothers were four times more likely to lose their babies before birth or in the first week of infancy than better off mothers from settled homes, Dr John Kiely said at the spring seminar of the Association of Teachers of the Travelling People in Dublin.

They were also in greater danger of having babies born with crippling congenital defects such as a spina bifida, he pointed out.

The Dublin conference was told that studies in Northern Ireland and England had revealed congenital birth defects that could be traced to nutrition deficiency suffered by mothers at conception.

Research in Galway had shown that babies of travelling people were likely to have smaller heads in proportion to their bodies.

The conference was told of the need for improved medical facilities for pregnant itinerants. Delegates urged that health workers be introduced to mothers in their caravan homes.

## Belfast Forum

BELFAST's Europa Hotel on Thursday, January 20 was the setting for an apparently innocuous discussion entitled 'The future role of women in Northern Ireland politics' organised by Cllr Muriel Pritchard of the Alliance Party.

An invited audience was asked to listen to a panel of speakers, who despite the variety of titles and parties and groups they belonged to had, with the sole exception of Mary Fehill (Labour Party, Dublin) a depressingly similar range of apolitical views.

Among those present on the platform were Monica Barnes, Mary Harney (Fianna Fáil), Nuala Fennell ('I'm a radical feminist'), Doris Robinson from the WPA and Lesley Abdela of the 300 Group from London.

All these contributors had a very similar theme: Women have very unique qualities to bring to politics, such as humanity, compassion, tenderness, commonsense and such like. One wondered if any of them ever heard of a Margaret Thatcher?

The audience was, mercifully, more disparate than the platform and although there was a very obvious segregation — blue rinses in the front rows and the rest at the rear — the rest were not to be satisfied with a broad recitation of politics as a career opportunity for women.

Doris Robinson took a great deal of pleasure, and almost a heart attack with the excitement which she summoned to tell us of the great joy the WPA had in seeing 14 women TDs enter Dáil Éireann wearing their best hats. Regrettably she was not being funny when she made this profoundly political observation.

As will be gathered, the meeting broke up with disarray into informal groups where, not unnaturally, the blue rinse people were quickly able to identify their own kith and kin and the rest hoped sufficient awkward questions had been asked to prevent the immediate launch of a Northern women's political association.

But perhaps there is a lesson in all this for us. It is no use having the best policies on women in Ireland if we haven't got the women to advocate and argue them.

# WHY WE OPPOSE THE AMENDMENT

**THE WORKERS' PARTY** is totally opposed to the proposal to amend the Constitution so as to include in it the prohibition on abortion that already exists under law in this country.

## **SECTARIAN**

The amendment seeks to include in our Constitution the specific teaching of one Church (the Roman Catholic Church) on abortion. Already the leaders of all other Churches have publicly stated their opposition to the amendment, while emphasising that they do not in any way favour abortion.

To include such a provision in the Constitution against the wishes of Protestant, Jews, and other denominations would be clearly sectarian. Democrats of all religions and none have recognised this fact and there is growing opposition to the proposal. Several prominent Roman Catholic priests have expressed grave doubts about the wisdom of holding a referendum of this nature.

## **NOT APPROPRIATE**

The function of a Constitution is to provide a broad legal and moral framework for all the citizens of the State. It must not incorporate the specific moral code of one particular denomination, as this would debase the Constitution to the level of a sectarian document to which many of our citizens could not, in good faith, subscribe. In a democratic pluralist state, there must be clear separation of Church and State. The Constitution is not the appropriate place to deal with complex moral and social problems.

## **DIVISIVE**

The Workers' Party believes that this amendment will encourage further divisions at a time when our society is already torn by the sectarianism in Northern Ireland. It runs contrary to our desire to unite people of all religions to fight the social and economic problems that affect them daily. This amendment will divert attention away from the real problems and the real crisis.

## **UNNECESSARY**

This amendment is not necessary. Abortion is already illegal in Ireland and carries very heavy penalties. There is no indication of any change of this situation coming about either through the court or the Dáil. Indeed there is no evidence that abortion takes place in Ireland. Women seeking abortions go to English clinics and no Constitutional amendment can change that situation.

## **THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE**

The amendment will do absolutely nothing to relieve enormous pressures on women which leads them to seek a termination of pregnancy in the first place. The most effective way of dealing with the abortion problem is by reducing the demand for pregnancy terminations. Unwanted pregnancies can be reduced through a combination of measures, including improved health care, adequate family planning services and improved counselling. Reform in the area of social policy, and family law in particular, would also help.

## **TOLERANCE, PLURALISM & DEMOCRACY**

The debate surrounding this proposed amendment is not about abortion. It is about the inclusion of a sectarian provision in the Constitution of the State. The Workers' Party has opposed the holding of this referendum since it was first suggested. All of our candidates in the recent general elections refused to give a commitment to support this referendum. We were the only major party to take this stand. Unfortunately other politicians surrendered to the lobbying of the intolerant group which wants this amendment and gave a commitment to hold the referendum.

**The Workers' Party urges you, in the name of tolerance, pluralism and democracy to urge politicians of other parties — even at this late stage — to withdraw their support for this ill-advised amendment.**

**And we urge you to vote against an amendment that will be intolerant, divisive and sectarian.**

**I**rish women are awaiting with interest the outcome of inquiries in Britain and the United States into the risks and benefits of the injectible contraceptive Depo-Provera.

Depo-Provera is not a new drug. It has been available in many countries since the late '60s for treating certain forms of cancer. During the last ten years it has been used increasingly in Third World countries by the World Health Organisation in a mass birth-control programme. It is used extensively in 84 countries around the world, western Europe included, but so far has not been licensed for widespread use as a contraceptive in either Britain or the US.

When the drug first came on the world market it seemed like the answer to every woman's wish, a contraceptive which needed to be administered only once every three months through simple injection — and suitable for thousands of women unable to use the Pill.

Upjohn, the American manufacturers of the drug, have tried for seven years to gain a license in Britain. In April last year the Committee on the Safety of Medicines (CSM) gave cautious approval for long-term use on the British market. They insisted that Depo-Provera be used only as a last resort, where other contraceptive methods were unsuitable, and they published warnings about tests carried out on the drug and its possible side-effects.

**H**owever, the British Ministry for Health refused to license the drug — despite CSM approval for it — *because* "the very restrictions laid down by the CSM suggested that the drug was simply not yet safe enough for long-term use". Health Minister Kenneth Clarke suggested also, that Depo-Provera could only be prescribed when patients fully understood its drawbacks as

## It's a quare name but great stuff

well as its advantages and he felt that "many women would have difficulty in giving informed consent to their treatment".

The CSM reacted angrily to the idea that doctors could not be trusted to prescribe the drug properly. But the Minister's argument has the backing of women's groups who are contesting the Upjohn Company's evidence at the hearing, which is the first of its kind in the history of British public medicine.

The findings of the British inquiry may take up to six months to evaluate, as will recommendations from the special investigation set up by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This special hearing was requested by Upjohn themselves in an effort to gain FDA approval for general contraceptive use of Depo-Provera in the United States.

The FDA has *twice* denied approval for Depo as a contraceptive, citing the drug's possible links to increased risks of breast and cervical cancer.

The Upjohn Company is basing much of its evidence on contradictory claims that Depo can both cause *and* cure cancer. The US National Women's Health Network will give evidence of new findings which show that the components of the drug could reduce cancer causing agents in some organs while promoting them in others.

**T**here is as yet no complete evidence that Depo-Provera elevates the risk of cancer in women. However, the only studies that supply reliable data have not been going on long enough *on women* who have

been using the drug for a long period of time. Over 60% of women in one study have been taking Depo-Provera for only one year.

Nor is there available evidence as to the effect of Depo-Provera on a woman's fertility. In a US study of short term users of the drug, over half became pregnant within one year and 90% within two years of cessation of injections.

Of course, the effectiveness of Depo-Provera as a contraceptive will come under close scrutiny. So just how effective is it? If it is given as recommended within seven days of the beginning of a period, less than one in 200 users become pregnant. When Depo is injected at any time during a woman's cycle the failure rate could rise to 6%.

This less than total effectiveness give rise to a further consequence which will be debated at both inquiries. A possible pregnancy rate of from 0.5% to 6% raises great concern about possible harmful effects to a foetus, should a woman be injected with the drug before it is possible to detect pregnancy.

Studies to date do not prove, one way or the other, that Depo-Provera has a long-term adverse effect on the foetus. But the British women's Co-ordinating Group on Depo-Provera will give evidence which shows that babies who get the drug through their mothers milk are 75% more likely to get infections in the first year of life than babies who do not come in contact with it.

**T**he British Inquiry will also hear evidence that women in many hospitals are being coerced



## — but is it safe?

into accepting the injectable contraceptive or are receiving it without their prior consent. It has become the practice in many areas to administer the drug to women leaving hospital after childbirth along with the rubella (German measles) vaccine.

Much of the evidence from women's groups will centre around documented cases in the United States and Britain, of severe side-effects experienced by women who are using Depo-Provera as a contraceptive. The most common symptom is cessation of monthly periods or notable decline in blood-loss which can occur in four out of five women and in some cases severe depression. But the most serious problem — heavy, prolonged bleeding — is the experience of one in every 200 women using Depo-Provera. In some instances the bleeding continued for up to a year after discontinuing the drug.

● **Depo-Provera is officially approved for limited use in Ireland by the National Drugs Advisory Board. It is approved as a treatment for certain forms of cancer and is also approved as a contraceptive to be used following a rubella (german measles) vaccination, when a woman must not become pregnant for three months.**

**The NDA Board has not approved Depo-Provera for general contraceptive use. The drug is not presently being used by any birth control clinic in Ireland. However any individual doctor can obtain supplies and prescribe it to patients on his or her own responsibility.**

A dramatic increase in weight can be another unhealthy and unwelcome side effect. Upjohn claim that, while all of these symptoms can also be related to long term users of the Pill, *their* drug, Depo-Provera, does not have the added result of androgenic effects such as male type hair growth, greasy skin and acne.

For family planning organisations like the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) the benefits of Depo-Provera outweigh the risks and they based their evidence on information received from studies of its widely based administration to women in Third World countries.

**T**hey have as their goal, world-wide availability of birth control and in their opinion, the drug is extremely effective, convenient, long-acting and reversible, and they claim furthermore that the drug has only minor side effects for most women.

IPPF say that the few women who *have* distressing symptoms after using Depo-Provera could change to a different type of birth control. They argue that high effectiveness of contraceptives is especially crucial in countries where prenatal and childbirth facilities are unsafe and inadequate and where abortion is dangerous or illegal. They also point out that because of the increased risk of Pelvic Inflammatory Disease from the use of the IUD *and* the low quality of health facilities to deal with the problem, that Depo is an important alternative.

Another argument is that Depo-Provera is extremely useful

to women whose partners are hostile to birth control to the extent of destroying supplies of the Pill and refusing to co-operate by using condoms.

The Family Planning groups conclude their case by advocating that extensive studies continue while the drug is in use, but nevertheless stated that the need for a contraceptive such as Depo-Provera by many women is critical enough to merit approval of the drug, i.e. the risks do not outweigh the benefits.

**H**owever, both tribunals must consider the evidence in the light of conditions in their respective countries as distinct from circumstances pertaining in other countries. Other safe and effective methods of birth control are readily available in Britain and the States, abortion is legal in many instances (though more easily obtained in the US) and health care is relatively good, so the need for a new contraceptive is not as urgent as it is in the developing countries.

Therefore, the medical data on Depo's side-effects is what must be most carefully considered. The findings of the British investigation which should be completed by the end of the summer will have particular significance for Irish women. For should the British findings agree that Depo-Provera is prescribed for general contraceptive use, it is almost certain that the facility will be available in Ireland before long. A decision *against* the drug will only mean that the debate will continue on both sides of the Atlantic for many years to come.

If the decision *is* in favour and Depo-Provera does eventually become available here, in the last analysis it will be up to Irish women to decide that the benefits of not becoming pregnant outweigh any risks there might be — even if those risks are *still* uncertain.

**Margaret O'Leary**

## WORKERS' PARTY WOMEN

TO celebrate International Women's Day the Dublin North West Women's Group (of the Workers' Party) organised an exhibition on Peace and Disarmament in the Finglas Public Library which was opened on behalf of the Women's Group by local TD Proinsias De Rossa and Mairin De Burca, campaigner for women's rights.

Speaking at the opening Proinsias De Rossa stressed how important it is that Ireland remain neutral "and that our neutral position be used by our government to assist in the growth of the opposition to the arms race.

"The courageous stand of women at Greenham Common in Britain against the siting of nuclear weapons there is a good example of the power which women can exert. The women of Ireland can be part of that peace demand by insisting that our government maintain neutrality."

The group distributed 5,000 leaflets in the area about International Women's Day and its significance.

## Working for Peace



Mairin De Burca (right) who opened the Peace Exhibition in the Finglas Public Library, with Proinsias De Rossa, T.D. and Philomena Donnelly of The Workers' Party.

**A**n informative conference on Women in Ireland was held at Caxton House Community Centre, North London, with two women speakers from The Workers' Party addressing an audience which included Labour Councillors from the London Borough of Islington.

Marion Banks from Clann na hEireann (Irish Workers Organisation), organisers of the conference, chaired the discussion throughout the day. Workers' Party Councillor Liz McManus, Vice Chairperson of Bray District Council, opened the day's discussion giving an historical background to women in Ireland.

After questions and contributions from the floor, Mary MacMahon (Belfast), from the Workers' Party Executive described the struggles of women in the North of Ireland facing their everyday problems against a backdrop of the British army presence. She stressed that making ends meet in circumstances where unemployment is around 25%, the Payment of Debt Act prevails, housing is deplorable and

## Women In Ireland... London Conference

social services are at crisis point, women have become a greater force for change than any of the major political parties in the North to date.

During the afternoon session Liz McManus touched on some of the major issues effecting women in the Republic today. Although some legislative advances have been made during the past ten years such as equal pay legislation and Family Home Protection Act, there are still many loopholes and blocks to implementation. On the whole, a woman's role is essentially defined as wife and mother.

The lack of family planning facilities and discriminatory social legislation, e.g. separated wives lose their separation allowance if the husband visits the family home once in six months; women must prove

that they are available for work (i.e. no problems with leaving home or children) in order to obtain unemployment benefit, ensure that women remain second class citizens under the law.

Women in the North faced each day primarily concerned about lack of money and work and the presence of British troops was only one obstacle to decent living conditions.

These problems and other current issues e.g. the Anti-Amendment Campaign, were discussed in greater depth during the afternoon workshops entitled Women and Social Issues, Women and Economic Issues and Women and Political Issues.

**Esther Thomey**

# Nicaraguan Women lead the way

**O**n August 27, 1926 a force of United States Marines landed in Nicaragua ostensibly to protect "American lives and property". When the last of the Marines were finally withdrawn from Nicaragua seven years later they left behind two legacies which for the next 46 years terrorised the mass of the Nicaraguan people through the use of murder, torture and oppression — the National Guard which the U.S. had created, armed and trained and the head of the National Guard, Anastasio Somoza Garcia, who later became President of Nicaragua in a fraudulent election, carefully monitored by the hated National Guardsmen.

Somoza maintained a grip on the reins of power through corruption, fraud, press censorship and by murdering, torturing and jailing political opponents. Members of the Somoza family remained in power until July 19, 1979 when they were overthrown by the Sandinista guerrillas.

Prominent in the guerilla struggle against the Somoza dictatorship were thousands of young Nicaraguan women. Around one-third of the guerrillas were women, many of whom became guerrilla leaders.

In August 1978 the attention of the world's news media was focussed on Nicaragua when a group of twenty six guerrillas captured the National Palace in Managua, and held the two thousand occupants hostage. It was a daring, almost suicidal undertaking, yet it succeeded. Somoza was forced to concede to most of the guerrillas' demands, including their safe passage out of the country.

**A**mong the three leaders of the guerrilla group was a

young woman, Dora Maria Tellez, now a member of the Sandinista Government. Other women to the forefront in the struggle against Somoza included Nora Astorga, now Deputy Foreign Minister and Lea Guido, now Minister for Health.

**P**redictably, when the army of the people triumphed on July 19, 1979, the victory was greeted throughout the republic by ecstatic Nicaraguans, particularly by the women to whom the triumph gave hope that their degrading living conditions would now be a thing of the past.

Nicaraguan society has traditionally, like other Latin American countries, been a male dominated society. Machismo was an unquestioned fact of life. The male was the master, the

*The women of Nicaragua are already benefiting from the socialist programme of the Sandinista government*





## TOM HANAHOE reports from a recent visit to the Central American country constantly in the news

female the chattel and obedient servant. When their wives had borne them several children, it became commonplace for husbands to abandon their spouses and children to live with a younger woman. Many women were compelled to become prostitutes to feed themselves and their children.

On August 21, less than five weeks after the victory, the new Government of National Reconstruction of Nicaragua promulgated a 'Statute on the Rights of Nicaraguans' which spelled out the legal, individual, political, economic social and cultural rights, and duties, of all Nicaraguan people. The Statute mirrored the new status of women in Nicaragua.

Article 37 stated that women shall be given adequate time off with pay from work during the pre and post-natal period and that "the working mother shall have the right to have her minor children cared for by the State while she is at her place of work". Henceforth household work and the rearing of children was to be the joint responsibility of husband and wife.

**A**fter the triumph of the Sandinistas, Nicaraguan women began to play a role in all spheres of life in their homeland, cajoled and guided by the Nicaraguan

*Nora Astorga, Deputy Foreign Minister of Nicaragua.*



women's organisation AMNLAE. When the new government initiated a literacy crusade to eliminate the high incidence of illiteracy, particularly in rural areas, 60,000 volunteer teenage literacy teachers were sent into some of the most deprived and most remote areas of the country.

Around 60% of them were young women. AMNLAE helped set up rehabilitation facilities for prostitutes and street urchins, initiated social welfare programmes, organised creche facilities for working mothers, co-ordinated nationwide immunisation and disease eradication programmes, constructed clinics, and provided family-planning services.

Today Nicaragua is a country under siege...invaded by armed supporters of the deposed dictator Anastasio Somoza, and threatened by a full-scale invasion by the Honduran armed forces, backed by the United States. Nicaragua is also a nation with a crippling foreign debt, much of it the legacy of 45 years of misgovernment by the Somoza dynasty. But despite these difficulties Nicaragua is today a land of hope — a land where the Sandinista leaders, men and women alike, are struggling to bring justice, equality and democracy to a land that has never known justice, equality or democracy.

**T**he Nicaraguan people, particularly the women, made tremendous sacrifices — often the ultimate sacrifice — to defeat the U.S. backed Somoza. But the struggle is not over. President Reagan is determined to overthrow the Sandinista Government and install another pliable and subservient U.S. puppet regime in Nicaragua. The new struggle will not be an easy one. Nicaragua, one of the poorest and weakest nations in the world is opposed by the United States and United States-backed regimes in Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala and El Salvador.

ROSEMARY, JOSIE and SANDRA are home helps working in Belfast. All three are shop stewards in NUPE. (National Union of Public Employees). ELAINE RUSH talked to them about their jobs, how they became involved in the union and how being in NUPE has helped them in their fight for rights at work.

*How did you join the union?*

ROSEMARY was first approached by staff at the social service office. She took a form and filled it in. She has been a member of the union for one and a half years.

JOSIE saw NUPE advertised locally, but didn't take much of an interest in it. But a few friends were going along, and she went with them and joined the union.

SANDRA wasn't involved until her husband went along to the social services office to put in her time sheet. Someone was recruiting for the union outside and he got a form. Sandra filled it in and her husband returned it. Since then she has been a member.

NUPE at this stage were then recruiting outside offices. This was started mainly on the Falls Road. But a decision was made to branch out from there and go into new areas. Recruiting then began on the Shankill Road.

*Did they think recruiting at offices attracted more members?*

ROSEMARY: 'It was the only way to organise us'. She thinks if the union hadn't gone out to the workers it would not have grown and got as many members as they now have.

JOSIE: 'Anyone I saw cleaning windows, I asked them were they home helps. If they were I asked them to join the union. Sometimes I was very mistaken with the people I asked.'

*Why did they join a union?*

The answers were unanimous.

'To get rights'. 'Before you joined you were a nobody. Most importantly, you now have holidays'.

All three women think the union has helped them and, importantly helped the service. It

# 'A Hard and Dirty Job'

has stopped what is a right being turned into a charity. The more gains the workers get the more people are helped. There is no cure for old age, though they stress it is not only old people who need home helps.

They see their role as home-helps mainly in the same light — accountant, banker, jack of all trades, nurse and social workers all rolled into one. They do as they say, "A hard and dirty job."

Their clients are totally dependent on them, as Sandra points out. "I went to my client's home to find that he hadn't had a dinner from the last bite I gave on Friday afternoon until I came again on Monday morning.

"This type of thing is typical of a lot of old people living alone.

Everyone works over their hours and even our families get involved. For instance one of my clients lives round the corner and she will come round if anything is wrong and my husband has done odd jobs for her on many occasions."

The women have to protect their clients as well. "You have to be very trustworthy. If someone unscrupulous knew about an old person living alone they could wipe them out."

They were only too willing to give examples of break ins and robberies carried out in their clients' houses. They also said that they had to tell their clients not to open the door at night and to keep money, valuables etc., out of the way. They believe there is a great need for more community care for the old and more area wardens to safeguard old people.

They all agreed that they enjoyed their work, they needed the money and they had good days and bad days.

'It's the same really in any job.'

One important point came out of the conversation. All three thought there was a lot of drug abuse among their clients. Doctors don't seem to visit patients a lot. They use continual prescriptions and the old people don't really know what they are taking.

After a while they become dependent on them with the danger of a drug overdose without the person understanding the risk involved.

*What is the contact between homehelps over the city?*

Practically none. But when they joined the union they met people that they would not have met with before. It has broken down the sectarian barrier.

They have built up good friendships. When Rosemary went into hospital Sandra offered to take her kids and keep them until she got out of hospital.

She did everything possible to help Rosemary. Rosemary said "It was a totally sisterly act and something I won't forget. Even her mother offered to help."

What do their husbands think of them being in a union? There were different points of view.

SANDRA'S husband backed her up and was glad to see her stand on her own two feet.

JOSIE'S husband had always been in a union and was very glad to see Josie join. He helped her with the proper union terms and she has come on well with his help.

ROSEMARY'S husband is a different kettle of fish. He is a shopsteward himself and feels that people abuse you. Her children are all for her and back her up. He thinks she should be in the home and doesn't want her to have any other interest outside the home.



Belfast Home Helps (above) JOSIE FERRIS and (below) SANDRA MacARTHUR



*How far have they have progressed in the union since they joined.*

JOSIE is now on the Divisional Council of NUPE and is holding one of the reserved seats.

SANDRA is a shopsteward and delegate to the Trades Council. She is also one of the Branch auditors and is on NUPE's Women's Committee.

ROSEMARY is a shopsteward and Branch auditor and editor of the Branch Newspaper.

All three women are now prepared to take on any position within the Trade Union Movement.

The confidence the union has given these women shines through when speaking to them and hopefully they will go on to better things in the union.

**Elaine Rush**

**P**ace camps have added a whole new dimension and depth to peace campaigning. No longer do protesters simply demonstrate for a few hours outside military bases and then go home. Over the last two years committed groups of people have been going to defence installations, demonstrating and staying there in an attempt to reclaim for peace land which is being used in preparation for war.

The energy and inspiration which the camps have given to the peace movement was best seen in the massive demonstration at Greenham Common last December when 30,000 women formed a nine mile human chain and completely surrounded the proposed home of Cruise missiles. It was a privilege to be there. Both the linking-up and the blockades the following day were intensely emotional experiences.

Feelings of elation and joy at being together with so many like-minded women mingled with feelings of despair on realizing the extent of our task if we are to prevent Cruise missiles from being deployed in Europe. At Greenham, however, I felt confident that we have both the strength and the will to achieve our aim.

*Linda Moore, Belfast, and five other CND members launched a surprise dawn raid on the RAF's Bishopscourt base in County Down on Easter Saturday.*

**T**he peace camp at Greenham Common was founded on September 5th 1981 by members of the 'Women for Life on Earth' group following their march from Cardiff. The demand of the marchers was for a live televised debate between representatives of the Government and members of the group. Frustrated by lack of media coverage given to their efforts, several marchers chained themselves to the fence at the base and then decided to stay there.

The idea caught the imagination of both the peace movement and the media and similar camps sprang up throughout Europe becoming the focus for nonviolent direct action against nuclear weapons.

Northern Ireland now has its first peace camp at RAF Bishopscourt, Co. Down. The connection between this early warning radar station and the nuclear arms race may appear rather tenuous at first glance but it is a crucial link in Britain's nuclear defence system. The camp was set up primarily to show solidarity with the women of Greenham Common but also to draw attention to the role of Bishopscourt in the nuclear chain.

## IRELAND IN NUCLEAR FRONT LINE!

Linda Moore

**I**magine, for instance, that the radar did detect an incoming Russian bomber and sent the message to High Wycombe. What would the Government's reaction be? Would they attempt to warn the civilians of this country of the imminent attack? I do not think so. A more likely scenario is that they would immediately retaliate, possibly using nuclear weapons, killing millions of Soviet citizens.

The purpose of RAF Bishopscourt therefore is not to protect the ordinary people of Northern Ireland but is rather for use by the military in their nuclear war games. Furthermore, the radar serves to make Co. Down a certain target for attack in the event of a nuclear war and if it goes mobile, as planned, even larger areas of the country will be turned into nuclear targets.

It is worth remembering as well that the RAF possess large numbers of nuclear weapons although they are not kept at Bishopscourt.

**O**ne danger which I must mention, however, is that those people who, for various reasons, are unable to take part in the peace camp form of protest will feel that they have little to offer to the campaign. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are many other meaningful and important ways of demonstrating for peace.

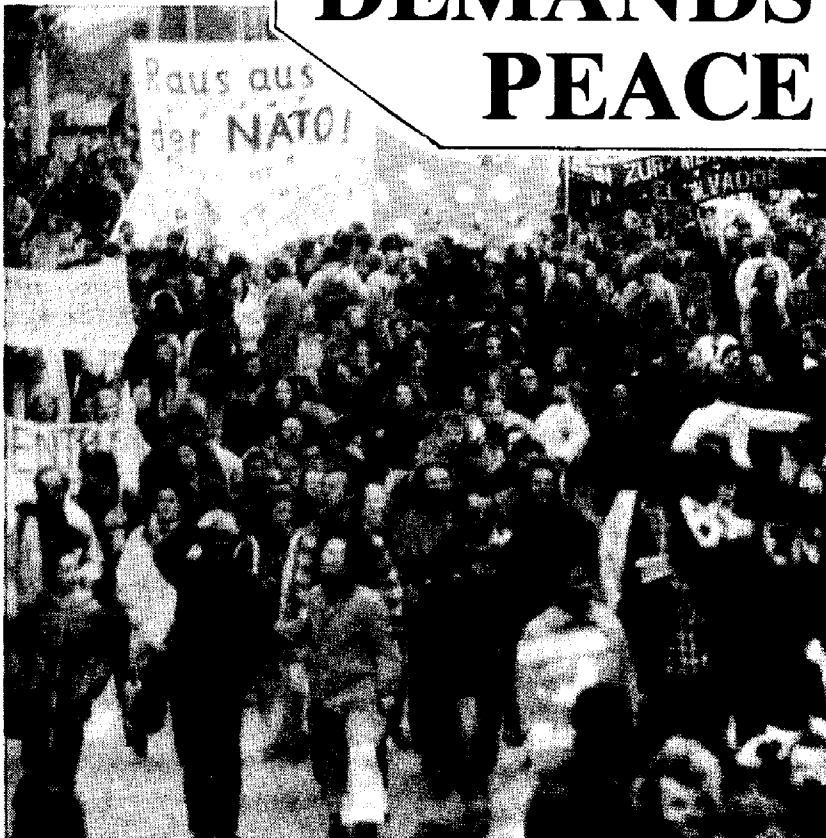
The peace camps have been an important factor in the growth of the new peace movement but just as vital are the everyday jobs of petitioning, leafletting and lobbying politicians which must continue and increase in volume if we are to succeed in mobilizing public opinion against Cruise.







# EUROPE DEMANDS PEACE



## ● HISTORICAL RECORD

Only the United States government has ever used the nuclear bomb and that was against a civilian population, twice — at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan in 1945. Only the US has repeatedly threatened to use the bomb over the three decades since then. In fact the armaments race has always been initiated by the United States and they have maintained a ten years' lead over the Soviet Union in weapon technology.

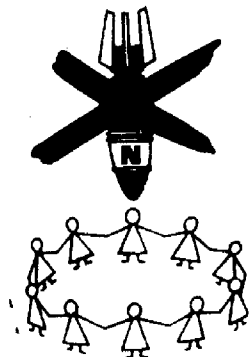
## ● THE FIRST NUCLEAR BOMB

The first atomic bomb, developed by the Manhattan project in the USA, killed 100,000 people instantly when it exploded over Hiroshima. Many thousands died — and are dying of radiation induced illnesses.

Today, three generations later, there are leukemia and cancer victims, malformed children, people with incurable psychological scars, people still dying from the effects of that atomic bomb. The bombs being built today could recreate more than one million Hiroshimas.

## ● EUROPEAN BATTLEGROUND

On 12th December 1979, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) agreed to a request from the United States to accept 464 Cruise and 108 Pershing (ii) missiles in Europe. These nuclear weapons are to be deployed throughout Europe



from December 1983, Britain taking 106, Italy taking 112, West Germany 96, and Belgium and Holland 48 each. EACH of the 464 missiles will be armed with a 200 kiloton warhead which is equivalent to 15 Hiroshima bombs.

## ● US 'DIRTY TRICKS' DEPARTMENT

Ireland is the only country in the EEC which is not a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). There is great pressure being exerted on this country to do away with our neutrality.

The appointment of

# PEACE IS

THE Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has been in the news since the 1950s. The lines throughout the late '60s household word during

Starting out as a popular campaign in Britain, the 80s has seen its ever growing world-wide

The NATO decision in 1979 to US nuclear weapons throughout the surge of the movement against threat increased a hundredfold acceptance that "limited nuclear justified in order to prevent

Women have been to the forefront of the movement throughout the world. Women and men have joined demonstrations for peace in the EEC and the theme of all International Women's March 8 in Ireland, Britain and

The protest at the use of Greenham Common in the Berkshire countryside in missiles, started by five Welsh women, brought the peace movement back to the Easter weekend tens of thousands of women, including groups from Ireland, circled the base in a declaration against nuclear war and a future without threat for the human race.

*"The citizens of Europe must be informed of the hazards which we face, but they must be assured that the tide of peace can overwhelm the forces that contemplate limited nuclear war."*

(Des O'Hagan, Irish Committee for Nuclear Security)

# POSSIBLE

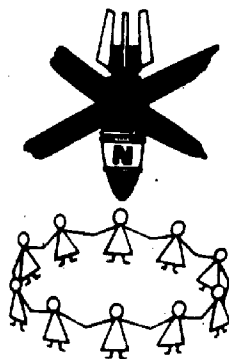
Disarmament (CND) has been in vogue though hardly hitting the headlines in the 60s and '70s, it has become a major theme in the past four years. A worldwide campaign against nuclear bases and its expansion to an enormous, worldwide peace movement. The demand to accede to the deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe has caused the upsurge in the threat of nuclear war; a demand by President Reagan's "nuclear attack" in Europe could be tantamount to a full scale holocaust!

Efforts in spreading the peace message worldwide. Hundreds of thousands of people have taken part in marches and demonstrations in many countries and peace was the theme of Women's Day celebrations on 8th March in the rest of Europe.

Greenham Common in the heart of Wiltshire in England as a base for the US nuclear weapons in September 1981, has brought back to life in Britain. Over the years, mainly women, included in the base in a four mile long line of peace camps and a demand for a human race.

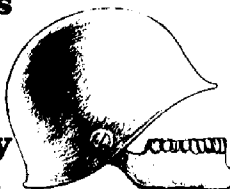
*Europe must not only face the horrific dangers of nuclear war but they must also be able to live in favour of peace and those who oppose nuclear war."*

for European



**The money required to provide adequate food, water, education, health and housing for everyone in the world has been estimated at \$17 billion a year. It is a huge sum of money**

**...about as much as the world spends on arms every two weeks.**



Peter Dailey as US Ambassador to Ireland shows President Reagan's scant regard for our neutral stance.

Ambassador Dailey has been commissioned by the US government — with the backing of a \$65 million budget — to defeat the growing European peace movement in its efforts to prevent the deployment of US nuclear missiles throughout the continent.

The concerted campaign being waged by Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party in Britain against CND can be attributed to Peter Dailey.

## ● FALL-OUT OVER IRELAND

The effect on Ireland of a nuclear explosion in Britain would be to kill, maim and injure people through radioactive fall-out, causing cancers, leukemia, skin bleeding, loss of hair and brain damage.

It would kill unborn babies, cause birth defects and lead to permanent genetic damage

## ● ZERO OPTION

United States negotiations regarding nuclear weapons have become known as President Reagan's 'Zero Option'. What this means, in effect, is that the Soviet Union would lose all their ground-based medium range missiles, while the US can hold on to the equivalent fire-power on planes, ships and submarines and no one could touch the British and French weapons.

## ● SOVIET PROMISE

The Soviet Union has given an undertaking to the world that they will not be "first users" of nuclear weapons. They are willing to reduce their weapon-power to that maintained by Britain and France and will match any reductions by those countries.

## ● WHAT IS CND?

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, of which there is a separate Irish organisation, is a movement which expresses public opposition to nuclear weapons. Their contact address is ICND, 16 Lower Liffey Street, Dublin 1.



# Ruth First murdered for her opposition to apartheid

THE BRUTAL assassination of Ruth First by letterbomb threw into sharp focus the increasing savagery of the apartheid regime in South Africa. With her death, the regime has rid itself of one of its most passionate and dedicated opponents.

I knew Ruth only after she had left South Africa and come to London in the 'sixties, but her reputation had preceded her. She had been a journalist in her home country, working for *Fighting Talk* and for *New Age*, the weekly journal of the ANC.

In fact, it was her exposé of the infamous conditions of the prison labourers on the farms of the Eastern Transvaal that inspired a country-wide potato boycott in the 'fifties; and the success of this weapon undoubtedly played a part in the decision of the ANC to call for an international boycott of South Africa later on.

At the same time, she was actively involved in the Congress movement and the Communist Party of South Africa. She was present at the Congress of the People which adopted the Freedom Charter in 1955, and was one of those tried and acquitted in the Treason Trial shortly afterwards. In 1963 she was detained under the notorious 190-day law.

She wrote her first book about her terrible experience in solitary confinement, an experience that was made more harrowing by the knowledge that her three young daughters had perforce to be left without their mother. After 90 days her jailers released her, only to pick her up again outside the prison and hold her for a further 27 days.

Her spirit, however, was impossible to break, and it was only the realisation that the authorities could make it impossible for her to continue her work inside South Africa that finally induced her to leave.

In exile in Britain, she threw herself into the work of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in London. She came several times to Dublin at the invitation of the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement to address meetings and conferences, and never failed to make a deep impression on her audiences with her lucid analysis and the searching spirit of enquiry with which she attacked every theme.

Her enthusiasm and vitality were not only manifested in political argument.



*Ruth First, South African civil rights leader brutally assassinated by supporters of apartheid.*

The last occasion on which I met her was in fact a few years ago when she and her husband Joe Slovo joined us for a week's holiday in a cottage in the West of Ireland.

The cottage was about as remote from Dublin as you can get, and Ruth, who was essentially an urban person, was not in the best of humour when she arrived after a car journey which had taken them the best part of a day. However, finding herself by the sea, and seeing the lobster pots on the strand, she immediately decided that lobsters for dinner would reconcile her to the absence of city life.

Of course, it proved impossible to obtain lobsters from any shop, let alone a fish shop which naturally did not exist. We were soon deep into explanations of Irish fish-eating habits, the food distribution system, gombeen men, and so on. But Ruth was not to be frustrated, even when the local fishermen tried to explain to her that they were contracted to sell all their produce to the middleman who would then export it to the continent.

All her persuasive powers were brought into play, and the following day were rewarded by the offer of a couple of lobsters, perhaps slightly smaller than the permitted size, which made us a most succulent meal.

At that time she was working in the Department of Sociology at Durham University, where by all accounts she proved a most stimulating and challenging teacher. Yet she was never in any danger of retreating into the ivory tower of academic life.

South Africa was always to the forefront of her concerns, and when she was offered the chance of working in the Centre of African Studies at the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique she once again uprooted herself in order to put her talents to use in serving the development of a country trying to recover from the ravages and depredations of centuries of racist colonial rule.

Yet her commitment to the cause of liberation and to the struggle for a new society in South Africa embraced her family as well as all those thousands of South African women who are forcibly divided from their families by the workings of the apartheid system.

Whatever personal agonies she suffered — and when she was detained they almost led to her suicide — she had ultimately no choice but to continue her fight against apartheid in order to bring about a new South Africa that would benefit all who lived in it.

All her research was directed towards this end. The vigour and incisiveness of her enquiries made her appear intimidating at times when she threw herself into an argument, but in fact hers was the opposite of a closed mind.

She refused to allow her dedication to the cause of freedom to blind her critical faculties. Indeed, as she herself said in her introduction to her book, *The Barrel of a Gun*, which studied military coups in different parts of Africa:

"Harsh judgments are made in this book of Africa's independence leaders. Yet this book is directed not to the criticism but to the liberation of Africa, for I count myself an African, and there is no cause I hold dearer."

Her revolutionary spirit was anathema to the apartheid regime. It was a permanent threat to the monolithic structure of apartheid and the fascist mentality of its rulers. It was for this that they murdered her.

**Louise Asmal**

**W**omen in the United States had their own problems with Constitutional Amendments last year when the Equal Rights Amendment was defeated due to insufficient support from individual states. As the Amendment had not received ratification from 38 states by the final deadline of the end of June 1982, it became another victim of the right wing surge in the US.

Ironically, a lot of the criticism levelled at the ERA was due to ill-defined content.

The complete text read:

Section i: Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Section ii: The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Section iii: This Amendment shall take effect two years after the date of ratification.

In January of this year the Dual Rights Amendment to the US Constitution was re-introduced by the Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill.



# New push for U.S. Equal Rights Amendment

*Behind a conservative man there's a conservative woman!*

Meanwhile, many of the 35 states which backed the original amendment are taking action on their own. Supporters of women's rights disagree over the benefits of a campaign for state equal rights legislation. However, the National Organisation of Women is backing the individual steps being taken while spearheading the campaign for a federal ERA.

It is too early to tell if action by states on behalf of equal rights for all women will prompt the passage of the federal ERA. In any

event, women's rights groups in states across the country are working hard to bring about legislation and social programmes which address the economic realities facing women.

Undoubtedly, the extra emphasis on matters political which will be highlighted by the US presidential contest in the run-up to November 1984 will ensure a high profile for the campaign to ensure the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment this time round.

## When was it?

"A 'Board of Lady Managers', appointed by the federal government supervised the creation of a woman's building that was to display women's contributions to world culture.

"But the Lady Managers, 117 of them from across the country, turned out to be more political than expected. They not only lobbied for, and got jurisdiction, over everything that had to do with women at the Expo, but they also transformed the Woman's Building into a declaration for women's rights.

"Headed by Bertha Palmer, the board solicited contributions from women in more than 40 different

countries. Visitors thronged the Woman's Building to see the French Salon, the Japanese Parlor, the Siamese Pagoda, and especially the Italian Pavilion, with its rare crown lace sent to show sympathy with the Chicago women's work.

"The art of women had finally found a showcase. Superbly fine lacework, weavings, and other crafts from around the world were gathered, for the first time, in one place. There was also painting and sculpture. In fact, the Woman's Building is probably best remembered for one of its murals — 'Modern Woman', by Mary Cassatt.

"The Lady Managers... also built a Children's Building, complete with daycare centre, and staffed by trained nurses. Many educators and parents used the building as a model for local centres in their own hometowns.

"The Woman's Building did more for the cause in six months than 25 years of steady campaigning. It also spurred the women's club movement and encouraged women to aspire to such careers as interior decorating, medicine, and invention. Indeed, 1,500 women carried home medals of honour for their contributions to the fair.

*When was it?  
See inside back cover.*

# SLIGO WOMEN ON THE MOVE

SINCE its banner proclaiming International Womens' Day spanned Sligo's main thoroughfare last March, the Sligo Womens' Group has been active proving it was no flash in the pan effort.

The Group was well pleased at the turnout to its Womens' Day meeting when a capacity audience was addressed by journalist Nell McCafferty, Monica Barnes of Fine Gael and Sylvia Meehan of the Employment Equality Agency.

There was heated discussion on the twin questions of abortion and Constitutional Amendment. However, the S.W.G. is anxious not to become tagged as a one-issue group, by taking sides on short term political issues, but would rather be all-embracing and attracting women with a wide range of views.

Members who have strong beliefs on particular issues like the proposed Amendment can become active in organisations catering for that particular viewpoint.

Right now Sligo's Womens' Group is hammering out a policy for the region. Each woman was asked to list the things she felt needed to be done in Sligo and the Groups policy will be based on their suggestions.

The most pressing need is for a family planning clinic for the Sligo area and there are also ideas for forming a support group for women who are isolated through working in the home.

The Group also wants to emphasise the creative energy of women by establishing a womens' library with reference material on painters, writers musicians and so on. It hopes to stage another Craft Exhibition — similar to the very successful presentation organised on March 8, which displayed textile, painting, pottery, weaving, spinning, flower design and quilting work executed by local women.

The structure of Sligo Womens' Group is fairly informal. The women are agreed that they want an open, democratic organisation with a small administrative committee. They intend to rotate the venue choosing a different Community Centre or housing estate for each meeting, to draw in more of the women who are not used to public activity.

With the plans already in hand it's certain that the S.W.G. will not simply be a 'once a year' womens' group.

Peigin Doyle

## SITTING

Dublin's, and Ireland's, first BIRTHING CHAIR has proved a great success with mothers, doctors and nurses, since it was installed at the Coombe Maternity Hospital recently.

The BIRTHING CHAIR is an American innovation, designed to re-introduce the age-old concept that mothers should give birth in a squatting position and not lying prone as heretofore.

Already the chair has been widely used in America and on the continent, since it was first introduced a few years ago. Now the Master of the Coombe has introduced Irish mothers to the new concept and they have reacted with enthusiasm.

The Master has taken a keen interest in the idea of using the squatting position for delivery of babies. Although the technique is as old as woman, and is used by all primitive women, it was abandoned in Western European Countries often with the introduction of maternity hospitalization and care for mother and baby.

While the Master regards it as too soon to make a quantitative evaluation of the new chair, he is very hopeful that it will live up to its expectations.

"I first saw the chair in use in England. After what I saw and discussions with the medical and nursing staff, I was confident that the chair was good and I became very interested in trying it in use in the Coombe."

It seems that the chair reduces the time taken for the second stage of labour. The baby comes more quickly and therefore the delivery is much easier. The important thing, however, is the attitude of mothers. All mothers delivered in the chair were delighted with it. Those with previous children, who had the advantage of being able to compare delivery in the BIRTHING CHAIR with previous births on a delivery couch, felt that the chair was much more comfortable.



# DOWN ON THE JOB!

They also preferred being in the vertical position than in the dorsal position on the couch and said that they didn't experience as much back-ache in the chair. They also said that they didn't feel at such a disadvantage as they were able to look down at the midwife who sat on a stool.

The midwives felt that the mothers had a quicker second stage of labour with more effective pushing.

Although it would be necessary to have experience of some hundreds of births to fully evaluate the chair, he was already considering a paper comparing the use of the chair with the more conventional position for giving birth.

*The old and the new...doing what comes naturally!*

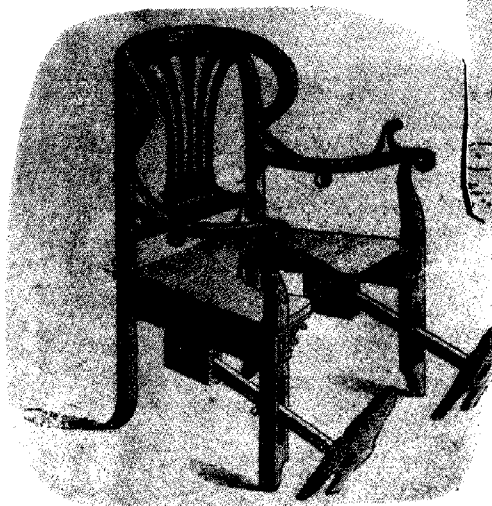
Though the Dublin hospital is the first in Ireland to use the birthing chair, many of the main maternity hospitals have for some time now been encouraging mothers to use the more upright sitting position during delivery. Undoubtedly the Coombe innovation will be watched with interest by other maternity units with a view to following their example.

**T**he Coombe Hospital has 202 maternity beds and some 7,000 babies are delivered there each year, roughly 10% of all the births in the Republic of Ireland. He thought that the experience in the Coombe Hospital would be very representative of the country as a whole, as a result.

The benefits of using the

sitting or squatting position are many:

- Contractions are reported to be stronger and more efficient.
- Women often feel more comfortable and at ease in the sitting position.
- The duration of the second stage of labour may be shortened.
- Women are able to push more effectively in the sitting position. Women often experience less pain.
- The force of gravity assists the labour and delivery process by adding to the pressure exerted by the fetal head in the second stage of labour.
- Circulation to the lower extremities is not restricted because full thigh and foot support is given.
- The woman is able to participate more fully in the birth process because her vision is not obstructed as in the lithotomy position.
- The sitting position is more natural and comfortable and usually allows the mother to be more relaxed during the birth process.



Graphics from 'The Childbirth Book' by Christine Beels

*One of the most surprising findings of your book was that there was no strong relationship between social conditions and wife beating, but do you say that beating was used when the husband's dominance and self esteem came under threat? Would this not mean that whilst conditions outside the home may not be the root cause, things like unemployment and poverty would affect the incidence of battering?*

What I'm saying is, OK, a husband's under threat, but it's not just that which produces violence. There has to be an additional variable and that is the position of the wife as an appropriate victim, as a legitimate target. Because a very high proportion of us are under threat and feel lack of self esteem and are battered around all the time but we don't turn round and assault the person next to us.

It's unfortunate that there are variables like unemployment that would contribute to stress. But should you remove the unemployment and so on, the problem is still going to remain, and that would be the feeling that a wife is a person that you can take out feelings of frustration upon.

*There is an attitude that this is an appropriate way to get rid of stress?*

Yes, and that's what's wrong, I mean I would rather that they thumped people down in the bru or that they thumped a policeman or somebody else.

*Some women's activists, Mary MacMahon in particular, raised the point that although the likelihood of a wife being battered at some time mightn't vary with social class, the actual frequency of batterings would be greater in areas of high unemployment and bad conditions like Turf Lodge. Did you examine this question?*

Oh yes. The single parent family survey was representative. We can't talk about the whole of society but we can say that single parents tend to be drawn from all social classes and the interesting thing in the research is the way in which, if you look at that particular table and you are comparing battered and non battered women, you see that the social class distribution is not very different. In a way I suppose that surprised me as well. I mean the only thing would be that if single parents were not drawn reasonably proportionately from all social classes, which I don't think is the case.

You can talk about it being more prevalent in Turf Lodge — someone like Mary MacMahon would see more people from Turf Lodge. I think I do have a slightly wider experience than her because I travel the country and I actually work with the wives of millionaires as well as the unskilled labourers. I have, say, doctors' wives coming to me for advice on the Q.T. Even if you are

looking at it from an impressionistic viewpoint those of us who work more broadly wouldn't come up with the view that it's more common in this area or that area.

*You mention that married women are often physically prevented from leaving the house after a beating. What is the remedy for that situation?*

Well, I don't really know what you can do in a situation like that. Obviously those situations are extraordinary and appalling. There is no obvious remedy for that, given the sort of arrangement that we have in our society. Most women might manage to make one 'phone call. If the police were very very responsive and the women knew to ring the police that might help.

What we're talking about is how do you provide life long protection for a woman. I don't really know it can be done in individual cases. I think the only thing you can do is work on the broader overall structure to prevent it from happening in the first place. I know that's not satisfactory but offhand I don't know how you do it.

*Do the police not have enough powers, or are they just not using the powers they have?*

It's primarily attitudes. I think that comes out quite clearly. They are not using the powers they have.

There is one obvious gap in the law and that is the problem of co-habitees\*. I don't think that we need to give the police any more power. The police have quite sufficient power to deal with the problem. Even though they have the power we still run across cases.

Karen McMinn \*\*, for example, ran into a situation a while ago where the woman had gone to court, she'd got her exclusion and protection order; the police knew about it but when it came to the bit and the husband harassed the wife they refused to do anything.

● *Turf Lodge social worker, Mary MacMahon recognises that wife-battering is more frequent in families suffering economic deprivation*



# HIDDEN

## A Study of Battered Women in N.Ireland

When Karen argued with them they said, "We don't believe that any magistrate can exclude a husband from his own property". The problem is that the police have the powers and the law is there but things run so counter to people's prejudices and biases that it's like a graft that hasn't taken in some cases.

*You're looking for changes of deep-seated attitudes but is there any immediate measure that could be taken to improve the situation with the police?*

They could put out a directive saying that the law must be enforced, that the powers must be used and that where there is evidence of an assault the husband should be lifted and brought before the court as quickly as possible. Where the order is broken again, the power of automatic arrest that they already have should be used.

*A lot of women interviewed in your survey said that the police told them they couldn't intervene in a domestic dispute. Has this any basis in law?*

No, none at all. An assault is an assault regardless of the marital status of the victim.

*I know that angry husbands at one stage besieged the Portrush refuge. Are they often a problem?*

Yes. Sometimes you can deal with it by just telling the husband to push off. Sometimes you can deal with it by just talking to the husband and they will clear off themselves. Sometimes, if the situation is becoming really difficult, one has to call the police and ask for them to be removed.

*Will the police help?*

They will do, yes. In Derry and Portrush the police are now pretty quick. I can't speak for Belfast but the relationship between the police and the refuges outside Belfast is good. In Portrush that derives from the very strong complaint that went to the chief constable about police behaviour when we were under siege a few years ago. In Derry the police are pretty helpful. The real problem is how do you protect women in the community on a day to day basis?

# VIOLENCE

*Liam Clarke interviewed*

writer **EILEEN EVASON**

We clearly need another refuge in Belfast. They are turning away at quite a high rate. I think they turn away something like ten women a week. Even if you are turning women away if you've got a full refuge, that means you've got something between ten and 15 families.

Now there's no way in which you can make a facility accommodating ten or 15 families a pleasant place to live in. So the problem is that over-crowding not only leads to women being turned away, but it also leads to those women who are admitted, having a very rough time indeed.

We've ended up with very large refuges in Northern Ireland. That is a result of a series of accidents. I would favour not only having more refuges but different refuges having smaller units around the province so that you only had, say, two or three families sharing.

In the Derry refuge the problem is not so much that we're short of space but we're just in the wrong area altogether. It's a property in the city centre. We don't have a garden. We don't have facilities nearby for children to play so it's not at all ideal.

Portrush is better, but again it is an enormous house so to pay the rent you have to keep it full. If it's full it's hell on earth and if it's not full you're wondering how you're going to pay the rent to the housing association every week.

*Do you find that you are always dealing with the same women in the refuges, or is it a changing population?*

You've got a core who come backwards and forwards all the time and often that's not a bad thing. Like there are some women and what they want to do is, say use the refuge every second weekend when the husband is out on a binge. So they come in and they go back when they think they're safe.

Women find it very hard to end a marriage. It is not as if there is any great life waiting for them outside the marriage. That's the really tough part about it. You can actually get a woman who comes into a refuge and you slog your guts out and she gets rehoused and she gets a grant for furniture and the next

thing she's back with the husband.

Now everybody throws up their hands in horror and says the whole thing must have been a fiddle to get a house, to get a grant or whatever. It might be that the husband moved in and there was no way she could remove him, and how do we give protection day in day out to women in the community? Alternatively it might be that she's got so lonely and miserable on her own that she can't think of any other way to live.

*What would be your advice to a woman whose husband starts beating her? Can she hope that he will stop if she sticks it out or is it likely to continue throughout marriage?*

It is unless she takes action of some kind and he's the kind of man that can be shocked out of it. When the woman gets battered, if she takes herself to a refuge, even though she doesn't intend to get a separation order, she's let him know that she doesn't have to stay and take it.

She's shown him that she is not powerless in the situation. We do have women and they go home and say "Well, I gave him such a shock that everything has been much better". Some of our successes would be women who have made it on their own but our successes also would be the women who have gone back and managed to have a happy marriage as a result of it.

*I see that social services were of very little help. Did this surprise you?*

No, but from a legislative point of view they have no statutory authority at all to assist battered women. It's quite surprising but, in fact, if a woman is battered and needs help the social services people can only assist by hanging the whole thing on the possibility of children being at risk. In terms of the

family as such, social workers don't have a responsibility to assist.

*Do you find it hard to get your analysis of the causes of wife battering across? I notice that some of the papers quite seriously misrepresented your outlook.*

It would be much nicer if I could say yes, it's unemployment, yes it's something because it would be much easier to communicate that kind of analysis but unfortunately it just doesn't stand up. You have to do it in the right kind of setting.

I don't find it too hard if I'm invited to talk to a group where I can give a spiel for fifteen or twenty minutes and then we can have a couple of hours discussing it. Now that's with a group of women, but they are a lot farther along the way to understanding it anyway. There are times I must admit, when I despair of communicating that kind of approach to men.

*Is there any action being taken as a result of your book?*

Oh, yes. Already there is a letter going to the minister from the Women's Aid Federation saying "what is going to be done? Is there some kind of coherent policy going to be sorted out for battered women in Northern Ireland?" As I say in the book, the degree of help that a refuge gets should not depend on where the refuge is located. Women's Law and Research will also be sending the minister a copy of the book saying "what action are you going to take on the recommendations". So there is a standard kind of lobby thing but actually I think the book is written mainly as a public education exercise because people know so little about the problem.

\* An exclusion order cannot be granted against a man who is not married to the woman he is living with.

\*\* A worker in Belfast Women's Aid.



*Boys who suffered violence from their fathers are most likely to show similar attitudes in their own marriages.*

**T**he 115th Annual Congress of the Irish National Teacher Organisation was held in Wexford from the 4th to the 8th of April 1983. Over 700 delegates were in attendance, roughly one third of whom were women. The ratio of women to men (37:10) present was a most striking feature of Congress, particularly when one considers that 75% of national school teachers are female. This representation however, is indicative of the level of participation of women in the union on the whole. Two of the twenty two members of the central executive committee are women. Only once in the history of the union has there been a woman president.

Nevertheless, the indications are that things are slowly changing. The participation of women at branch level, particularly in some of the larger branches has improved greatly in recent years. There were women speakers on almost all issues which came before congress and indeed only a fraction of the branches represented had no women on their delegation.

A motion calling for the establishment of a special women's committee to advise the central executive on (1) matters relating to professional interests and welfare of women teachers and (2) on matters relating to women's participation in the union gave rise to heated discussion. Although it was pointed out that such committees were already in existence in most of the larger unions some delegates felt that such a development within the INTO would be divisive. They felt that the democratic structures of the union allowed women to participate fully if they didn't lack the initiative to do so. The motion was finally defeated.

In her address to congress the Minister for Education Gemma Hussey spoke at length of the difficult economic problems which face the country at the moment. Her outlook for education was very bleak indeed. Taxpayers, she felt, weren't willing to contribute further towards the financing of services such as education. She made not the vaguest reference to that



*Our children pay the price for government ineptitude*

section of the community which fails to pay its equal share of taxes.

Her speech gave no indication that she had any understanding of the problems being faced today by teachers in national schools. She didn't see, she said, what interests could be served by admitting more students to Colleges of Education than the national school system could absorb. It only resulted in people being unable to get jobs. She didn't wait to hear delegates

*Education Minister Gemma Hussey, out of touch.*



talk of the difficulties encountered by them in classes of over 40. Delegates were most concerned about the damage caused to children in such classes. It was criminal, they pointed out, to tolerate such large classes while hundreds of qualified teachers are unemployed. A small portion of uncollected taxes would finance the recruitment of unemployed teachers and provide for the improvement of educational facilities.

Mr. Joe O'Toole of the C.E.C. told congress that society was refusing to recognise the problems being experienced by teachers in under-privileged areas of the cities. Teachers are left to cope with problems such as violence in the home, incest and marital breakdown. Congress called on the Department of Education to identify schools in disadvantaged areas and to give priority treatment to such schools. Clearly Mrs. Hussey has no understanding of such problems. Then how could she since neither she nor her family have any first hand experience of anything but private schooling!



# *Teachers unions promise to defend free education system*

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The AGM for Second level teachers was held in very subdued fashion in Blarney this year. Absent were the usual heated arguments and faction fights of former years.

For once ASTI were united in their outrage at the proposed cutbacks in education. Few could have disagreed with an impassioned plea from one of our most active members that the maternity leave for adoptive mothers be extended to equal that of natural mothers.

Nor was there any dissenting voice to the motion that ASTI establish a Credit Union. And let's face it, who could become overwrought about job-sharing?

All present agreed that the curriculum should be adjusted to suit the needs of less academic students. It was left to the discussions on Parent-Teacher meetings and Paternal Care to bring a rise to the blood pressure — a pity though that the best debates raged outside the convention hall. Dare I say it, most of the motions which were adopted or rejected could have been dealt with at branch level. But of course, this would do away with the highlight of our year — our annual convention!

Seriously though, there was good, constructive debate on many motions and many concrete decisions. A motion that the union hold talks with the authorities to speed up its policy on pay principles was passed unanimously. Many teachers denounced the denial of the right to lay principalships in the religious run secondary schools as "a national disgrace".

The proposer of the motion said that many schools were presided over by a "supremo" who combined the post of manager and principal. "That kind of double-jobbing," he said, "led to more administrative work and less educational work."

Incoming ASTI President, Ray Kennedy, agreed that it was a disgrace that a union with 10,000 members did not have access to the top job which now commanded a salary of up to £20,000.

ASTI also unanimously agreed that a programme of limited industrial action be drawn up against the education cuts. The speaker on an emergency motion to this effect said that the campaign of publicity and political pressure against the cuts could carry them only so far. Delegates agreed to a joint campaign with the other teachers' unions.

THE dominant theme of this year's Teachers Union of Ireland conference was condemnation of the cuts. Delegate after delegate arose to condemn this savage attack on the free education system and union president Tom Hunt attacked "the scrapping of the concept of free education".

All the delegates at the TUI conference teach in publicly owned schools which depend totally on state funding. Teachers were very angry at the vicious undermining of the state-controlled non-fee-paying schools while subsidies are still being given to fee-charging private schools.

They pointed out that those who suffer most were the *already* under-privileged — those most in need of remedial education and guidance, both in the counselling and career guidance aspect.

This conference was the first since the setting up of the union's Women's Council and evidence of its activities was to be seen in the many motions concerning issues relating to women which appeared on the agenda and reached the floor of Congress.

These included proposals concerning the deletion of questions from application forms relating to marital status and the number of children, and also the separate marking and issuing of exam papers for boys and girls.

A motion on job sharing was referred to the executive when the many dangers inherent in the concept were pointed out by some delegates. It was stressed that in no way could it be seen as a means of alleviating or combating the unemployment problem.

Congress, by a huge majority, passed a motion opposing the holding of a Constitutional Amendment on abortion and supported the ICTU statement on the issue.

In general the Congress was a vibrant, unified and positive event and when it closed delegates left recharged to return to schools all over the country pledged to fight the cuts to the last and to defend a system of education which, perhaps, the Minister preferred did not exist!

## Child Poverty Action Group

IT is unusual for lobbying groups to command all-party support but an organisation set up in Britain to work for improved tax benefit for children at risk has the ear of Labour and the Tories.

The Child Poverty Action Group says that the children's allowance is worth less now than it was in 1955, and that if child benefit had increased since that time in line with the single persons tax allowance it would now be double the current figure.

The CPAG believes that an increase in tax free child benefits is the most effective way of dealing with the poverty trap and of reversing the long term shift in the tax burden against families with children.

With an early election looming on the British horizon the Child Poverty Action Group will use the opportunity to have its demands accepted especially by Margaret Thatcher and the 'Party of the Family' who have done more for poverty than any party in recent times.

In a recently published report entitled 'Thatcherism and the Poor' the CPAG outlines details of how cuts made at the expense of the poor were being given away as tax benefits to the richest section of society.

The report says the Conservative governments policies have been a disaster for the poor:

- Rising unemployment and cuts in social security benefits have meant a massive increase in people dependent on supplementary benefit.
- Cuts in the school meals service have meant higher prices for families and increased stigma for children of poorer families.
- Prescription charges have gone up by 600% since the Thatcher government took office.

## New Greek Family Law

THE Greek Parliament has passed a new Family Law which takes away the husband's total legal control of the family.

Married women will be able to start a business, take their children abroad and choose a school for their children without having to obtain their husband's permission. Women will be able to keep their own names after they marry.

The law allows for the possibility of divorce by mutual consent. If the husband and wife do not both agree to the divorce, divorce would be allowed on the grounds of incompatibility after four years' separation. In a separation, the spouse who was left would receive at least one-third of the family's wealth, unless it could be proved that she had made no contribution to it.

The new law abolishes dowries, which have been used as a tax dodge by the wealthy. Also, it makes a single mother automatically the guardian of her children and gives the children of single mothers legal rights equal to those of children with married parents.

## Netherlands equality scheme

AN INTERESTING pilot project on equal access to vocational training has been completed in the Netherlands.

Starting in 1980, a total of 37 firms took part in the project which was aimed at making it easier for young women to visit and work in the kind of employment that interested them: metalwork, carpentry, electrical installations and other fields not generally deemed 'appropriate' for women.

At the outset, the young women involved had meagre technical knowledge but on-the-spot explanations and training soon redressed the balance.

The participating firms were very pleased with the performance of their new female workers and half of them said that in future they would be prepared to give preference to women.



## Italian anti-violence bill

THE COMMITTEE on Justice in the Italian Chamber of Deputies has approved a new bill on sexual violence. The bill modified Italian law in an important way: in the past the focus was on public morals and decency in such cases but this bill views individuals and their freedom as the primary victims of sexual assaults.

Under the terms of the new bill there will be automatic prosecution for such offences except where spouses and common law couples are concerned, in which case charges will still have to be made.

When cases are being examined or heard, the police and the court must limit themselves to the facts of the case: previous sexual history is not subject to questioning.

Sentences will be heavier when the crime has been committed by relatives or the guardian of the victim, or if a group is involved. The bill also allows for the bringing of charges by organisations such as women's groups.

## London committee

THE GREATER London Council, which is responsible for Britain's most heavily populated local authority area, has recently appointed a women's committee.

The committee, thought to be the first set up by a local council, will be officially responsible for promoting the welfare and interests of women in London.

Its immediate tasks are to assess the impact of new technology on women's employment in the London area and to examine health and childcare needs of women in the area.

## Equality French style

YVETTE Roudy, Minister for Women's Rights in France's Socialist Government, is now into her second major campaign since taking office.

The campaign is on the subject of equal employment opportunities. The processing of a bill on equality at work is being accompanied by a major information drive through the media, particularly television.

The information campaign is designed by the same advertising agency which handled Francois Mitterand's publicity during the Presidential elections. The slogan, roughly translated, is "Come on women, break down the barriers!"

The first poster for the campaign shows a man and a woman at the starting line of a race. The man has a flat race track ahead of him but the woman faces a set of obstacles as though she's hurdling. **Womens View** will be watching the campaign with interest.



**E**l Salvador is a small country, not much larger than Northern Ireland, in the thin line that links Mexico with the continent of South America. Like the North it too is regularly in the news with reports of assassinations, attempted murders and the denial of basic civil rights.

In 1978 four citizens of that country set up a human rights commission to document atrocities by the United States-backed government of El Salvador. All four are now dead — killed by the government army.

The latest victim was **MARIANELLA GARCIA**, the 34 year old trade union activist. Marianella was brutally murdered by the army after being severely tortured for two days. Before being shot in the head seven times she was slashed by a sharp instrument and had the front of her head beaten in.

Marianella had defended many trade unionists arrested during the 70's and documented the



*Marianella Garcia, brutally tortured and beaten and finally murdered for her beliefs.*

murder of hundreds more in her role as President of the Human Rights Commission. In 1981 her name was included in the army 'death list', her home was bombed and her car riddled with bullets.

She visited Ireland on three occasions to speak to members of the Dáil and Senate about the slaughter in her country which has now claimed 35,000 lives in five years.

# United States supports terror in El Salvador

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions and religious leaders have asked for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peter Barry to protest to the U.S. government about the killing of Marianella Garcia and over its intention to continue to provide military support to the military backed government of El Salvador. Latest reports prove that the army are using napalm and phosphorous bombs against civilians.

Groups dedicated to peace and concern for the worlds natural resources and against atomic energy are normally to be found in the role of pressure group or lobbyists.

However, the recent general election in West Germany gave such a group — known commonly as The Greens — a strong voice in the Bundestag (Government). Winning 27 seats throughout the country the Greens bring into the mainstream of political activity for the first time the causes and commitments of the 1960's generation.

They have made it clear they will exploit their new position of power to the full within the political framework while continuing their 'street politics' — protest marches, sit-ins and a campaign of civil disobedience against the installation of new Missiles in West Germany.

The public face of the Greens has until now been endowed on Ms. Petra Kelly, a member of parliament and long time activist against atomic energy and warfare. Petra who gets the Irish surname from her US born stepfather — has pledged that her party will be a lobby for pensioners, children, minority groups and the environment.

## GREENS GROWING



*Petra Kelly, GREENS spokesperson*

The Greens, who have a higher than average women membership both at branch and especially parliamentary level, now have to make the transition from loosely organised pressure groups to an efficient opposition party and will be closely watched by similar groups in other EEC countries.

# Echoes of Ireland

HUNGARY today presents an interesting scenario. Under the socialist leadership of Janos Kadar it pursues an open border policy with its Austrian neighbour.

A number of new approaches to a marxist economy have been adopted while even Western banks have been allowed to function in the capital, Budapest. While these and other benefits have produced the desirable benefits of increased consumer access for Hungarians along Western European lines, they have also resulted to some extent, in the capitalist pitfalls of high inflation as well as susceptibility to pressure from the Western banking system, which during 1981/'82 forced a major financial crisis on the government.

The Hungarian media has played its role in promoting debate on these developments and also raising issues such as inefficiency and the role of censorship. It is against this background that the film *ANOTHER WAY* (Director Karoly Mark) recently shown at the IRISH FILM THEATRE, should be interpreted.

Obtensibly a film about the problems of a lesbian love affair, it provides a broader political allegory on the situation in Hungary after the 1956 counter Revolution.

It tells the story of two journalists, one Livia — married to an army officer who becomes involved in a gay affair with the other Eva. The dilemma of the two women in sorting out their sexuality is contrasted with the debates of an Editorial Board over what should be printed in their magazine, and implicitly, the general question of which way Hungary itself is — or should be going.

The screenplay is full of references to post — 1956 disillusionment. Eva,

asked why she refused to join the Communist Party explained that she was a member in 1956 and if the Party was wrong again she did not want to be wrong with it.

It is here that the film falls down as a commentary on the Hungary of the 1980's. The underlying theme is that of pessimism and hopelessness. Yet, while these may have been the emotions of Hungary and its people 20 years ago, the country has long picked itself up again, while the Socialist government has succeeded in accommodating the ideas of most citizens.

As a commentary on the position of gays and women it is more difficult to assess the film. Are these central themes of the film or merely a cover for a political commentary on Hungary.

The interrogation of Eva towards the end of the film for instance, conveys anything but a feeling of

State oppression of gays by the police. The officer in charge of the interrogation conveys more the confusion of his own understanding of homosexuality than of hostility. Though the scene where the police accost Livia and Eva in a park, sending Livia "home to her husband" while Eva is arrested, could happen in any Irish city.

In the end then the film (based on a semi-autobiographical story by a Hungarian writer) while enjoyable is probably best viewed with a certain amount scepticism.

The problem is that in a country where we are deprived of any objective information on developments in Socialist countries *ANOTHER WAY* is probably the closest most people here will get to seeing the real Hungary.

Lorraine Kennedy



*Political journalist Eva  
the central character*



## 'Tootsie' message falls flat

THERE are those whom the mere sight of a man dressed up as a woman is hilariously funny. S(He) doesn't have to speak or do anything particularly amusing, just stand in wig, gown and make up and they fall around the aisles. I am not one of those people. I find men in drag at worst sexist and offensive and at best boring and uninteresting. You never find a man dressing up in the kind of comfortable intelligent clothes many women now wear but in tight slinky gowns with six-inch heeled shoes and six inches of make up topped off with several pairs of false eyelashes and a bosom on which you could lay a dinner for five.

In Tootsie, Dustin Hoffman gets into female clothes to find work. In the process he becomes a success as an actress, falls in love and learns something about male oppression of women. Unfortunately the movie

stresses the first two achievements and mutes to the point of disappearance of the last one.

Occasionally, when a sexist producer puts his hand on the bottom of one of the actresses, he, Tootsie, looks thoughtful. Nothing militant mind you and a galloping horse would never notice it. He objects to being called Tootsie because it is not his name and because it is a put down like other patronising nicknames for women such as 'love' or 'ducks' or 'honey' or whatever.

And that is about it. For the rest he uses his masculine physical strength to beat off advances and drag a queue jumping man out of a taxi — a course of action open to few women — declares himself to his true love who had thought that s(he) was a lesbian and lives happily ever after.

Hoffman has said in

interviews that making the film taught him a lot about the oppression of women. For the first time he knew from personal experience what women have been talking about during all these years of protest. We must be glad if this is so, but the film won't make any male converts (or indeed female ones) to feminism. Apart from mild comments on a woman's right to be treated as an equal and intelligent human being it settles for fairly cheap laughs.

Hoffman/Tootsie bats his eyelashes, pulls down his corset, pats his coiffure and generally behaves like no female I have ever known. He doesn't quite mince his steps but it's a close thing.

Even his 'feminist' moments are pure male chauvinism as when he objects to the director pawing the girl he has fallen in love with — 'his'

girl should not be mauled by other men.

I did find one genuinely funny scene in the film. When Hoffman/Tootsie's male flatmate comes in to find him/her being grabbed by the burly leading man who immediately mistakes the flatmate for Tootsie's boyfriend and assures him that 'nothing happened here tonight' his expression of deadpan appreciation of the scene is a delight. Other than that there are a few giggles sprinkled fairly sparsely throughout the film.

Go to it if you must for a bit of light relief from SPUC and Alan Dukes and Ronnie Reagan but don't expect a feminist tract or even a half decent social comment. Hollywood doesn't change its sexist spots.

**Mairin De Burca**

*Dustin Hoffman does his best with a poor script*



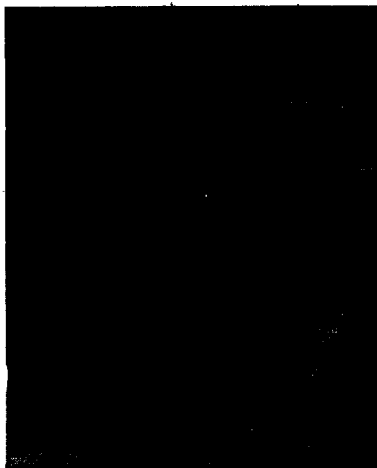
## REVIEW

**WOMEN'S PICTURES** by Annette Kuhn (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982)

**SUBTITLED 'Feminism and Cinema'**, Annette Kuhn's book is a long overdue feminist look at modern cinema. It begins by defining the concept of *dominant* cinema, that which is produced for mass markets. One of the main characteristics of dominant cinema is that 'masculine subjectivity... (is advanced) as the only subjectivity available' (p.63). In other words, things are regarded from a male point of view, and the only way a woman can participate in this type of cinema is by identifying with this way of looking at things.

Masculine subjectivity, which should be familiar to all of us from conventional advertising, concentrates on woman as a spectacle — it puts the emphasis on physical appearance and superficialities rather than anything else. Pornography, Annette Kuhn concludes, is this brought to its logical conclusion.

It is in her treatment of pornography, a topic which must be central to any analysis of women in cinema, that Annette Kuhn is at her most forceful and coherent. She quotes\* Paul Willemen who explains hard-core



Oscar winner Ellen Burstyn, star of *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*

pornography in terms of a crisis of male self-confidence; pornography, he claims, is man trying to re-assert his 'natural' dominance over women. That the growth in pornography coincides with the rise of the women's movement may not be entirely coincidental.

Kuhn sees some positive signs in the representation of women in the modern film; for instance, the recent trend towards showing a woman's progress towards independence — *An Unmarried Woman*, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. On the debit side is the existence of so many films whose main theme is violence towards

# Feminism and the cinema

women. To really come to terms with feminism, cinema must now address itself towards women rather than use them as ornaments, objects or adjuncts to the main action.

Most of what Annette Kuhn says is fairly sound, if not startlingly original. It's a pity that she has chosen to write *Women's Pictures* in a highly technical and lacklustre style, because it's worth reading both for its central argument and for the many insights into cinema to be found in the book.

Rita Dalton

## Short Story prizewinners

Four years ago Arlen House announced the first short story competition for women writers in Ireland. The decision to organise a literary competition exclusively for women was a natural one for a women's press.

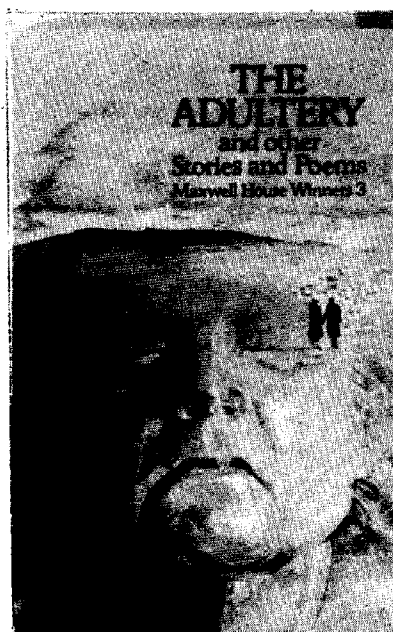
Historically, women's contribution to the arts has too often been unacknowledged.

**ARLEN HOUSE** (The Womens' Press) is committed to the encouragement and celebration of creative talent in women and the closed nature of the competition is a short term gesture of encouragement on their part to new talent and to the talent latent in the community of women.

The present book is published as a result of the judging of the third competition. This time as a further encouragement to unpublished writers, a bursary scheme was started. Entrants who were not shortlisted for prizes, were nominated to share in the Maxwell House Bursary scheme.

**THE ADULTERY** and other Stories and Poems is the latest prize-winning collection of the Maxwell House Womens Literary Competition.

Good stories and good value at only £2.95 although there is a distinctly dismal theme running through most of the entries. A sign of the times perhaps!



## WP women support Dunnes strikers

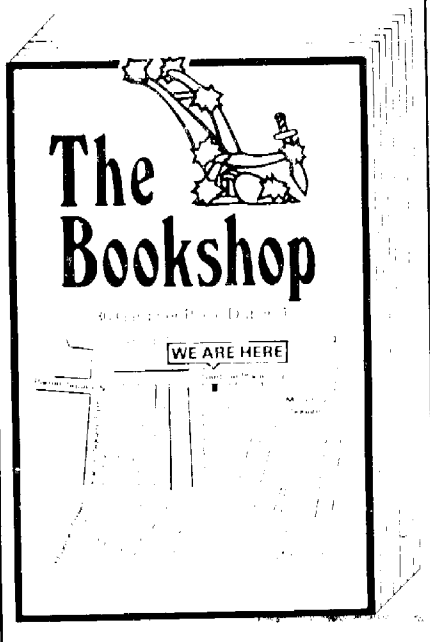
WOMEN from the Dunnes Stores picket lines were guests of honour at the International Women's Day social organised by the Dublin Women's Committee of the Workers' Party.

The social raised £100 which was donated to the strike fund.

News of the settlement of the strike had just filtered through so the celebrations had a particularly festive edge. A short fighting speech from one of the strikers left us in no doubt that they knew their union rights and would continue to stand up for them.



## The search for good books ends here



## *When was it?*

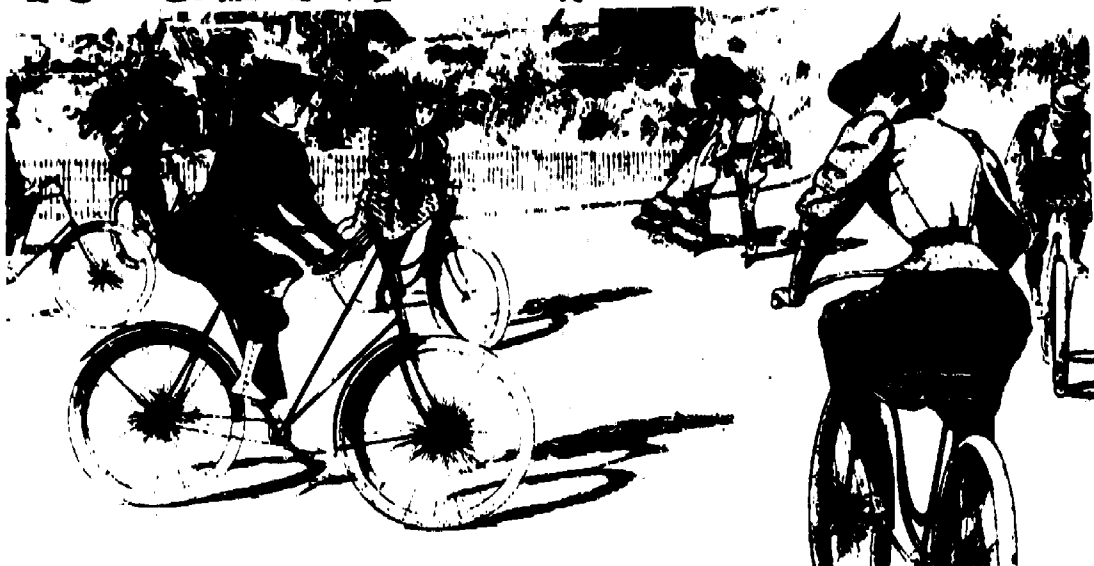
Incredibly, the year was 1893! Almost 100 years later the Women's Committee for the 1992 World Exposition in Chicago will seek to emulate THE FAIR WOMEN, also the title chosen by Jeanne Weimann for her book describing in detail the story of the Women's Building at the 1893 World Fair.

Last December, the Sunbow Foundation — an

all-women construction firm in Illinois, USA, bought a 10 storey hotel which they hope will become a 1992 Women's Pavilion and afterwards a Women's Museum.

The project will recruit minority women for federally-funded apprenticeships as carpenters, plumbers and electricians to renovate the crumbling hotel, originally built for the 1893 Exposition.

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**Title:** Women's View, No. 9  
**Organisation:** Workers' Party  
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